

JIMI

by

Max Borenstein

A True Story

First Draft
August 18, 2009

we begin in whiteness

a landscape of pure sound.

the sound of thirty-thousand human beings waiting in silence.

listening for the first whisper of music, a primordial rhythm

ch-chk-chick-chicka-chaka-chicka-chak-chk

a pick scratching muted strings

long brown fingers

against the white plastic sheen of a Fender electric guitar.

chick-chak-chicka-chak

the guttural rhythm rising

and then the voice

wah-wahwah-wahwahwah

not a human voice.

but the yearning cry of a man's soul

wah-wahwah-waah

It is the sound of Jimi Hendrix.

The song is Voodoo Child (Slight Return)

but it cuts short with an abrupt squawk of feedback. The buzz of distortion. Just a false start. And we are

EXT. WOODSTOCK FESTIVAL - BEFORE DAWN (1969)

A muddy expanse of farmland littered with refuse of the "Summer of Love": smoldering joints, sagging tents, soggy flower children stricken by heat, exhaustion, the bummers.

This is the portrait of a generation. But it is not the generation that concerns us. It is the man on stage. The black gypsy with a white guitar. Cigarette in his teeth. Drenched in sweat. Searching for something. Looking displeased. But focusing on the sound.

JIMI

If you just, uh, bear with me for a minute and a half while we tune up.

He taps a harmonic triad. Nothing musical. But enough to elicit a boisterous scream from the crowd. It distracts him.

JIMI (CONT'D)
(wincing)
Yeah, baby, I love you, too. But if
you don't mind, uh, little quiet.

For these people he is a god. For you he may be a legend. For others a cliché- that voice on the radio, face on a T-shirt.

For us he is only... JIMI. The aching hero of our story.

(Note: It is 1969. But no chyron tells us so. This is not a history lesson. This is the story of a young man.)

Fade on super: **Woodstock. 26 years old.**

The back-up band is growing restless.

Jimi's harried manager, MICHAEL JEFFREY, paces in the wings. He is a pint-sized English pitbull. Calculator for a heart. Snagging the head roadie (GERRY; cockney, good-natured)-

JEFFREY
How long's he been up there?

GERRY
Almost three hours.

JEFFREY
Jesus. Get him off.

Jeffrey signals "cut" to the drummer (MITCH).

JEFFREY (CONT'D)
(mouthing)
One more song! Tell him!

But Jimi is in his own private universe. Obsessively tuning, searching, fixated on the sound. As his cigarette burns out. Gerry hustles up to replace it. Lighting a fresh one.

JIMI
(off mic)
How bad is it?

His eyes are bloodshot. He hasn't slept in days.

GERRY
Bad? No. It's great. Great set! But
we're just thinking it's almost
sunrise. Mr. Jeffrey's thinking
maybe it's about time...

But Jimi leans into the mic.

JIMI
You all ready to quit?

The crowd roars. They are not.

JIMI (CONT'D)
(back to Gerry)
Guess we're still searching.

Gerry scampers offstage as Jimi picks up the rhythm. *Wah-wah-chicka-chicka*. The band joins in. Drums. Then bass. A groove taking shape. Becoming a melody. Jimi can start to feel it...

JIMI (CONT'D)
WELL, I STAND UP NEXT TO A MOUNTAIN
CHOP IT DOWN WITH THE EDGE OF...
(stops short)

He has seen something in the crowd-

A woman, dancing. Or not a woman. The mere suggestion of a woman. Barely more than a blur of otherworldly light. And yet as she twirls- the glint of a warm smile- and kind eyes- uncanny- connecting with Jimi alone across this sea of humanity. Returning his hypnotized gaze. Penetrating him.

INT. CATSKILL BEDROOM - DAY (ONE WEEK EARLIER)

A quiet space. Only the whir of a portable 8-track recorder. As Jimi noodles the first line of a tune on his guitar. Then repeats it. Refining it. He is alone. His eyes are shut in a sort of agony. Birth pangs. He is writing a new song. And this one is a struggle. Blood from a stone.

JIMI
(replaying the phrase as
he tests lyrics)
ANGEL GO UP...
ANGEL GO DOWN...
ANGEL COME DOWN

Yes. That's it. But just as he takes a step forward...

JIMI (CONT'D)
ANGEL COME DOWN-

A blast of raucous clatter cuts him short. Door swinging open. Stoned revelers stumbling in. The party has found him.

VOICES
Hey Jimi! Putting on a show?

EXT. WOODSTOCK FESTIVAL - AS BEFORE

The show has stopped. Jimi is frozen on stage. Eyes wide. Transfixed by that dancing woman in the crowd. As the band trades nervous looks. Restarting the groove. Repeating Jimi's cue. Once, twice... But no use. Finally falling silent.

MITCH

Jimi?

IN THE WINGS-

Jeffrey grabs a blitzed-out hippie by the lapel.

JEFFREY

What the hell did you give him?

HIPPIE

Nothing- nothing all week!

INT. CATSKILL LODGE - DAY (ONE WEEK EARLIER)

A sprawling former hunting lodge. Taxidermy. Bohemian transplants. But we catch the milieu only in passing. We are tight on Jimi, guitar in hand, moving through the endless party, jostling, searching for a quiet place to play. But around every corner, through every door- more people.

JIMI

(forcing hospitality)

Yeah, groovy, baby- glad you could make it.

Jimi "knows" them all. None know him. Just bodies. Noise. Confusion. Closing in. No peace, no relief.

But amidst the bustle-

We see something Jimi does not. The blur of a woman dancing. A glimpse of those eyes. Kind eyes. Watching him.

(Note: This woman will continue to appear. Always dancing. Always fleeting. Visible only to Jimi. His angel.)

VOICES

Do Jimi! Read Jimi!

Hands snare him. Tugging him to-

A table scattered with tarot cards. A patchwork of images. Pictograms. Cups, swords, symbols... faces.

JIMI

Hm, me? Oh, no. Naw, man. I'm not-
I mean, I don't really go in for-

VOICES

Come on, Jimi! Pick a card!

Hands gather up the images... offering Jimi the deck. He hesitates. But he is trapped.

EXT. WOODSTOCK FESTIVAL - AS BEFORE

The crowd is growing restless. Heads turning. What does Jimi see? An agitated documentary director barks into his walkie.

MARTIN SCORSESE

Hey, what's he looking at? Can
camera six get a shot?

Camera six whips the ocean of bodies, following Jimi's gaze to where the woman was standing. But the camera sees nothing.

INT. CATSKILL LODGE - AS BEFORE

Jimi has drawn a card. He is studying it intently. It has given him pause...

It is The Jack: a brown-skin man with a stringed instrument. Vague resemblance to Jimi.

VOICES

Jimi, it's you! What's it mean?

Hands consult an amateur manual: The Mystery of Tarot.

VOICES (CONT'D)

(reads, grimacing)

The Jack is pain. Loss. Old wounds-

To these people this is no more than a parlor game. A lark.

VOICES (CONT'D)

Bummer... pick another!

But Jimi is suddenly intrigued. He grabs the book.

JIMI

(reads)

Are you stuck? Trapped? Isolated?
Even despite outward success?

The others laugh. But this is speaking to Jimi.

JIMI (CONT'D)
 Wrongs from the past are blocking
 your future.

Jimi flips the page, a haunted look.

JIMI (CONT'D)
 Draw the next four cards... to
 determine the root of your pain.

EXT. WOODSTOCK FESTIVAL - AS BEFORE

Jimi, captivated by the woman only he can see. Dancing to a music only she can hear. Her face just a blur. Yet as she twirls- the glimmer of a star-shaped earring... the red streak of a stockinged foot... mismatched gloves... a white flower... Each glimpse is another clue to her mystery.

INT. CATSKILL LODGE - AS BEFORE

Jimi lays out the next four tarot cards. They are The Queens.

JIMI
 (reads)
 Perhaps they represent a person in
 your life. Or people. If they are
 face cards, do they look familiar?

And they do. Each with a different key attribute-

A pair of star-shaped earrings... red stockings... mismatched gloves... a white flower... As we

FLASH TO:

The woman at Woodstock. Dancing. A blur of light. And

STILL FARTHER:

A distant memory in fleeting glimpses: A night sky. Fireworks exploding. And the same woman below. Seared by the light.

JIMI (V.O.) (CONT'D)
*A wrong has been committed. You
 hurt these people. Or they hurt
 you. This wrong has you trapped.*

The fireworks fade. And at last the woman's eyes resolve from the light. Kind eyes. A warm smile. But instantly...

EXT. WOODSTOCK FESTIVAL - AS BEFORE

A flare of blinding light as sunrise crests the hills.

Jimi lurches, squinting, guitar whining feedback... And the woman is gone.

JIMI (V.O.)
*Seek them out. Resolve this past to
 clear a path to your future.*

Jimi scans the crowd, frantic. As feedback mounts to shrill, excruciating heights. The crowd cringes. Too much to bear.

JEFFREY
 Enough! Cut it! Get him off!

Gerry scrambles for the audio cut-off switch. But just then—
 Born out of the sonic wreckage... that voice.

The sound of Jimi's guitar.

Playing notes crisp and pure as any we've ever heard. It is a familiar tune. It is The Star-Spangled Banner.

But we have never heard it like this before. Keening, searing, exploding like firecrackers through distortion.

The band joins in a military cadence.

Jeffrey and Gerry freeze...

The crowd is rapt, hearing their nation's anthem made new, for a new generation...

But for Jimi this song is not political. It is personal. The crying wail of his soul. Eyes shut. Face contorted in anguish. Yearning for a memory, just out of reach.

As a final, piercing high note swirls back into noise, nothingness, pure sound. And then

JIMI
 AFTER ALL THE JACKS ARE IN THEIR
 BOXES—

First chords of a song: The Wind Cries Mary. We will hear it again. Soon. But for the moment, it cuts short.

JIMI (PRE-LAP) (CONT'D)
*You may now draw a final card to
 determine the outcome...*

INT. CATSKILL LODGE - DAY

Tremulous fingers. Haunted eyes. As Jimi draws a final card. It is Judgement: a graveyard scene. Sallow corpses writhing up from open crypts. Their arms outstretched. Up to heaven. Where a beautiful angel is just emerging from the clouds.

VOICES

What does it mean? Check the book.

But he doesn't have to. Jimi already knows. He has all along.

JIMI

(as a fact, simply)

I'm going to die.

EXT. WOODSTOCK FESTIVAL - DAY

An avalanche of applause. The show has just ended. Jimi is spent, staggering offstage into a crush of well-wishers and hangers-on.

VOICES

(clamoring)

Jimi... Jimi... Jimi...

But through the chaos-

Jimi glimpses, for an instant: the woman. Her kind eyes. Warm. Smiling. As Jimi's POV swirls to whiteness.

Guitar clattering. Body going limp. And *thunk*.

VOICES (CONT'D)

...Jimi?!

Smash to title:

JIMI

INT. HOTEL SUITE - DAY (1970)

Jimi's eyes slam open. He is in bed. Amid a tangle of sheets. Waking, his POV skitters about the unfamiliar suite... another day, another city, taking in the damage. The debris of a never-ending tour: butts, roaches, dead soldiers.

Daylight slices the curtains. Jimi squints. He should be asleep. He gropes the floor for a phial of prescription sleeping pills... all out. And there will be no sleep without pills. Jimi falls back to the pillow. Lighting a cigarette.

His battered guitar case is open by the bedside. Jimi pulls out the white Fender Stratocaster. It gleams in the sun.

As Jimi lays it across his chest like a missing appendage. Finally taking a breath. Calm washing over him as his long fingers settle onto the strings. This guitar is his peace, his salvation, his home. He powers on a portable amp. And begins to play...

Plunk-plunk. The strings are muted. There is a card woven through the fret-board. Jimi slides it out: a tarot card. Judgement. Jimi darkens. Memory flooding back. Haunted.

SUE

Still stuck?

Jimi jolts. He thought he was alone. He is not. SUE is 18, a groupie, yawning up from the tangled bedsheets.

SUE (CONT'D)

I dig the intro-

(sings)

ANGEL TAKE ME...

(stops)

Guess that's pretty much all you got, so far. I like it though.

Really- speaks to me. Ya know?

A beat. Finally-

JIMI

Sure.

She smiles, relieved.

JIMI (CONT'D)

What's it say?

SUE

The song?

Gulp. This stumps her.

SUE (CONT'D)

Well- um- like-

(uncertain)

There's an angel? Taking you? But-

I guess you'd know better than me.

Jimi stares. At this child. So desperate to please. He could destroy her. But he relents. She can be of use.

JIMI

Where are we?

He sits up, woozily.

SUE
Don't you remember?

She hops out of bed, yanking open the curtains to reveal- the space needle set against a gloomy Northwest sky.

SUE (CONT'D)
You're home!

Chyron: **Seattle, Washington. 27 years old.**

Sue steps out onto the balcony. Peering down-

SUE (CONT'D)
Just last night, that was me-

To the sidewalk below. A few dozen teenage fans are holding a round-the-clock vigil. Waiting for a glimpse of their hero.

SUE (CONT'D)
Then you pointed down, and *voilà*...

A cheer rises as the fans spot Jimi- wearily stepping out.

SUE (CONT'D)
(waving back)
This morning, I'm a queen!

Jimi flinches. This word strikes a nerve. He spins back and tugs the curtains shut, stranding Sue on the balcony.

SUE (CONT'D)
Jimi?

She pokes in, sheepishly.

JIMI
You should go.

He is rifling his guitar case-

Searching for something, amidst scraps of paper. Notes. Lyrics. Finally finding... the four tarot Queens.

SUE
Go? But- is it something I-

JIMI
(flashing anger)
Ain't you got a home or something?!

His eyes are fierce, cruel. And instantly, Sue is in tears.

SUE

Oh, I always ruin everything!

She bites back sobs, fumbling to gather her clothes. Dropping things. Empathetic. And Jimi cannot help it- anger subsiding- he feels her pain. He is this way with women.

JIMI

Hey- naw- I didn't mean it. Don't cry, girl. Don't ever cry.

He stops her, wiping tears with his fingers.

SUE

...Sue.

JIMI

I remember. Seattle Sue. Don't you know how much I like you?

SUE

You do?

JIMI

Sure I do. Even wrote you a song!

And in a single motion, he slings on the guitar, tweaks the tuning, and strums into a familiar melody. The same song he began at Woodstock: The Wind Cries Mary.

JIMI (CONT'D)

AFTER ALL THE JACKS ARE IN THEIR
BOXES

SUE

Aw, don't tease.

JIMI

Who's teasing?

SUE

I'm your biggest fan, remember?
That's an old one. You just met me
last night.

She has a point. But it is no match for Jimi's charm.

JIMI

Yeah, girl, but you my queen,
remember? I knew you were coming.

(sings)

AND THE CLOWNS HAVE ALL GONE TO BED
YOU CAN HEAR HAPPINESS STAGGERING
ON DOWN THE STREET

(MORE)

JIMI (CONT'D)
FOOTPRINTS DRESSED IN RED
AND THE WIND CRIES... SUE

If ever a man had an element, these are Jimi's: a guitar. And a woman. She melts. And as the song continues we drift out to

INT. HOTEL CORRIDOR - DAY

Several maids crouch above a discarded tray of room service, eavesdropping on the free show.

JEFFREY
Tickets are 2.75 at the stadium,
ladies!

Jeffrey barrels up with a clipboard, the harried Svengali.

JEFFREY (CONT'D)
No refunds!

He shoos them off, briefly glancing at the room service bill. Tallying the figures. Always tallying figures. Displeased.

As a Western Union messenger boy appears-

MESSENGER
Telegram for Mr. Hendrix?

JEFFREY
He's mine.

Jeffrey snatches it, ignoring the customary tip. He scans the message for a name, reading...

JEFFREY (CONT'D)
Kathy.

His perennial frown droops to a grimace. This could spell more than the usual trouble.

JEFFREY (CONT'D)
Shit.

INT. HOTEL SUITE - AS BEFORE

Jimi is just finishing the song for a spellbound Sue.

JIMI
AND THE WIND CRIES...

As Jeffrey barges in- cutting him off.

JEFFREY

Jail bait.
(a stern look)
Now drop the ax and let her go.

INT. HOTEL CORRIDORS - DAY

Moving at a rapid clip. Jeffrey leads the way. Jimi lags behind, preoccupied by the telegram. Gerry trails them both, escorting Jimi's precious guitar case.

JIMI

(reading aloud)
In Seattle Fairmont Hotel. Miss
you, stop. Kathy.

JEFFREY

'Nother one from the woodwork, eh?
How long's it been?
(pointed)
Nine months?

But Jimi has stopped in his tracks, wheels spinning.

JIMI

Hm?

JEFFREY

You know- since you and her last-

JIMI

(distracted)
Oh, um- three years.

JEFFREY

That's a relief. I'll tell her to
piss off then.

He checks the item off his list. Tugs Jimi along.

JEFFREY (CONT'D)

Now then: that contract we talked
about...

JIMI

I hurt her.

JEFFREY

(ignoring him)
Just a basic extension of our
arrangement...

He produces paperwork: a management contract.

JEFFREY (CONT'D)
 Boilerplate, really. I say, what's
 a signature between friends? Word
 is bond, all that. But you know the
 lawyers...
 (finally stops, hearing)
 You what?

Jimi, that haunted look.

JEFFREY (CONT'D)
 Jesus. Fine. Invite her to the
 show. Just no more freebies. If we
 comp every bird you ever shagged,
 we'll never earn a dime.
 (next item)
 Which reminds me...

More paperwork on the clipboard: a travel itinerary.

JEFFREY (CONT'D)
 Your British dates. Eight weeks
 then Europe. We leave tomorrow.

JIMI
 No. I told you. I can't. I'm-

JEFFREY
 Stuck. Yes, I remember. Like that
 record we promised. Two years ago.
 The one we had to build a brand-new
 studio to record. Six figures and a
 couple ulcers later, I'm juggling
 death threats from Warner Brothers.
 And you're seeing ghosts!
 (off Jimi's look)
 Yeah- Gerry told me.

JIMI
 It was a woman.

JEFFREY
 Isn't it always. Dancing in
 shimmering light, was she? I swear
 that head of yours is a fucking
 Chinese box. Riddle in a riddle.
 When the only mystery you need to
 solve is how to shut it off.

They reach an elevator- doors gliding shut. Descending.

JIMI
 I just need to get things straight.

JEFFREY
Is that why you're calling Chas
Chandler?

This catches Jimi off guard. It was meant to.

JIMI
That's private.

JEFFREY
Not when I pay the phone bills-
Still more paperwork: the hotel phone bill.

JEFFREY (CONT'D)
Forty-three quid to Newcastle?

JIMI
Chas is a friend.

JEFFREY
You don't have friends, Jimi.
You're a 27-year-old millionaire
with charmed fingers and a 10-inch
cock. Everybody wants something.

He draws a bottle of barbiturates from his coat pocket: red
devils. Planting it in Jimi's palm.

JEFFREY (CONT'D)
Now take two of these. And smile!

Ding. The doors open onto- an explosion of flashbulbs.

INT. EMPLOYEE LOCKER ROOM - DAY

Brown fingers unfold Jimi's room service bill... The tempting
undertones of a practiced black-marketeer.

REGGIE
Hot off the presses.

REGGIE is 40s, black and streetwise, in a dishwasher's smock.
The "Guest Signature" is an illegible scrawl. TOBY is wary.

TOBY
(inspects it)
Are you sure it's really him?

He is 18, white, callow, changing out of a bellhop uniform.

REGGIE

Presidential Suite. Heard him phone
the order myself: cheeseburger,
fries, apple pie for dessert.
(feigning impatience)
Say, I thought your girl was a fan.

TOBY

Well, she is, but-

Reggie snatches it back.

REGGIE

Then it's twenty for the tickets.
Ten for the signature. And another
fiver for housekeeping.

TOBY

Thirty five? That's a whole week.

REGGIE

Tell you what. I was gonna price
this item separate-

He unfurls a cellophane wrapper to reveal... a long strand of
kinky black hair.

REGGIE (CONT'D)

Two white chicks went into that
room last night, both of 'em
blonde. Go on, have a feel. Just
for you. A little piece of Jimi.

INT. HOTEL LOBBY - DAY

The explosion of flashbulbs. A media frenzy. Assaulting Jimi.
Jeffrey gobbles it up with a shark-tooth grin.

JEFFREY

Thank you- Certainly- Seattle is a
very special place for Jimi-

We catch only snippets of the flurry:

MEDIA VOICES

*Jimi! Jimi! What do you say to the-
Rumors...? Lawsuits...? Drug
bust...? Album delay...? Burnt
out...? Flash in the pan...?*

But Jimi hears none of this. His POV scanning the crowd to
spot- Gerry, transporting his guitar through a service exit.
Jimi tries to follow, but he is cut off... trapped.

Like a deer in the headlights. Petrified. Desperate to escape. But with nowhere left to run. Then suddenly-

Jimi turns to the cameras... and smiles. That megawatt charm. Flashbulbs explode in a flood of blinding light.

MEDIA VOICES (CONT'D)

Jimi! Jimi! Jimi!

Until the blindness clears. Lenses, eyeballs darting about...

MEDIA VOICES (CONT'D)

Jimi?

But Jimi is gone. Service doors swinging in his wake.

EXT. HOTEL PARKING LOT - DAY

A beat-up Volkswagon Beetle. Tattered ragtop. Peeling banana paint. But a brand-new state-of-the-art stereo, playing-

Jimi Hendrix: Crosstown Traffic.

SONG (ON RADIO)

*YOU JUMP IN FRONT OF MY CAR
WHEN YOU KNOW ALL THE TIME
THAT NINETY MILES AN HOUR, GIRL
IS THE SPEED I DRIVE*

As the bug pulls out into traffic

INT. VW BUG - CONTINUOUS

Toby is at the wheel. Distracted by his new purchase: the scalped tickets, room-service bill, strand of hair. A hint of buyer's remorse. Did he really just pay for this?

*YOU TELL ME IT'S ALRIGHT
YOU DON'T MIND A LITTLE PAIN
YOU SAY YOU JUST WANT ME TO
TAKE YOU FOR A RIDE*

And just then, from the corner of his eye-

A figure darts out ahead. Toby slamming the brakes- *screech*- within inches of... Jimi.

Guitar in hand. Staring back. And looks to be in a hurry.

*YOU'RE JUST LIKE CROSSTOWN TRAFFIC
SO HARD TO GET THROUGH TO YOU
CROSSTOWN TRAFFIC
I DON'T NEED TO RUN OVER YOU
(MORE)*

SONG (ON RADIO) (CONT'D)
CROSSTOWN TRAFFIC
ALL YOU DO IS SLOW ME DOWN

JIMI
Goin' my way?

Toby, jaw in his lap. As Jimi hops in. And they peel out...

SONG (ON RADIO)
*AND I'M TRYIN' TO GET
ON THE OTHER SIDE OF TOWN*

EXT. HOTEL - MOMENTS LATER

Jeffrey bursts out the service exit to find- Gerry at the tour bus, loading gear. Jimi's guitar is gone.

JEFFREY
Where the hell is he?

INT. VW BUG - DAY

Rounding a corner... and out of sight. As Jimi lets out a whoop, laughing, drinking the freedom. Wind in his hair.

JIMI
Got a name, brother?

Toby is in shock.

TOBY
Uh- erm-

He spots the cellophane wrapper: tickets, room-service bill, strand of hair. Sweeping it to the floor before Jimi notices.

TOBY (CONT'D)
Toby.

JIMI
Far out. Call me Jim.

EXT. AFFLUENT SUBURB - DAY

A tree-lined street. Green lawns. Picket fences. Toby parks the bug in front of a well-kept home. Leaving the key in the ignition. The door unlocked.

JIMI
Nice neighborhood.

Which means, not the kind that Jimi is used to.

TOBY
Aren't you from Seattle?

JIMI
Not this one.

He is drawing glances. The conservative neighbor on his porch. The nosy housewife snipping her azaleas... Eyeing the black stranger with suspicion, outright hostility.

TOBY
You can come in if you want. Only
take a minute.

INT. AFFLUENT HOME - MOMENTS LATER

Plush, homey decor. Radiating warmth. Family. Jimi inspects the home-spun poem on a woven wall-hanging:

"Here may you find comfort and rest
Here you are always our welcome guest."

Banal, sure. But to a man without a home, nirvana.

JIMI
(marvelling)
Home sweet home.

A pristine baby-grand piano is topped with an array of family portraits. Tow-heads. Mother, father, teenage daughter: Lane.

JIMI (CONT'D)
Your girlfriend?

Toby pauses at the stairs. Thinking twice.

TOBY
Maybe just hang down here a beat.
She's- kind of a fan.

INT. UPSTAIRS BEDROOM - DAY

This is Lane's room. A veritable shrine to Jimi Hendrix. Walls plastered with his two-dimensional image: posters, news clippings, ticket stubs. (The way we know Jimi today.)

A record spins on the turntable: Voodoo Chile.

SONG (ON RECORD)
 YEAH, I'M A VODOO CHILE
 LORD, I'M A VODOO CHILE

The door is a life-size cutout of Jimi. Toby pokes in behind it...

TOBY
 Lane?

But the music is too loud. Steam is billowing from the bathroom door, slightly ajar. And through it- just the faintest wisp of blonde hair, naked skin. Toby is caught staring... when he accidentally bumps the turntable.

SONG (ON RECORD)
 (skipping)
 VODOO CHILE... VODOO CHILE...
 VODOO CHILE...

LANE
 Next time you sneak up on a girl,
 try not to skip the record.

LANE is 18, fresh from the shower, stunning. She corners him.

TOBY
 No, uh- wait, we're not-

LANE
 It's cool. My mom's at the store.
 (hopeful)
 Did you get the tickets?

TOBY
 The-? Oh. Uh- yeah, but there's
 actually something else you-

LANE
 Shh!

The solo kicks in- plaintive moan of Jimi's guitar.

LANE (CONT'D)
 (plucks her bubble gum)
 I love this part.

INT. DOWNSTAIRS WASHROOM - SAME

Floral wallpaper. Potpourri. The song faintly audible from above. Jimi is alone at the sink. Studying... the pictograms of his four tarot Queens. We do not yet see them in full.

Only their key attributes: red stockings on one... mismatched gloves on another... a white flower... star-shaped earrings.

And maybe for an instant- behind Jimi in the mirror, the briefest blur of light- that woman, dancing. His angel.

But then gone. His heart skips a beat. Shaken.

Jimi pockets the cards. Uncapping the bottle of barbiturates. Two pills... three. He gulps them with a handful of water.

Sound of a car door slamming. As Jimi reenters

INT. LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Coming face to face with- MARIE, 40s, elegant, just returning with a bundle of groceries. She shrieks, spilling groceries.

JIMI
No- wait, wait-

MARIE
(stumbling back)
Take anything!

JIMI
Don't run-

MARIE
Where's Lanie? Where's my baby?

JIMI
She's- just upstairs, I think.
With, uh, Toby.

MARIE
Toby?

A beat. Trying to process-

MARIE (CONT'D)
Toby Comstock?

JIMI
Must be. Yeah.

MARIE
(narrows her eyes)
You do look familiar.

The face from her daughter's shrine.

JIMI

Oh, yeah?

So much for freedom. But Marie can't quite seem to place it.

MARIE

Do you work at the hotel?

JIMI

Uh- yes ma'am!

Jimi grins- blissful anonymity.

JIMI (CONT'D)

Elevator operator. Here, let me get those.

He kneels to collect her groceries. Repacking the bundle. And Marie is impressed. A perfect gentleman, despite the sizable afro, hippie attire... not to mention, well, being black.

MARIE

Thank you, that's very- polite.

Jimi meets her smile. That irresistible charm.

JIMI

You have musical hands.

He takes one- by way of returning the repacked groceries. It sends a girlish flush to her cheek. She does not pull away.

MARIE

Oh! Well- I teach.

AT THE PIANO - A MOMENT LATER

Jimi and Marie sit side by side.

MARIE

Now don't slouch! Proper playing requires a proper posture.

JIMI

I think you'll find I'm chock full
of bad habits, miss-?
(fishing for her name)

MARIE

Marie.

JIMI

Truly?

(lighting up at the name)

Sweet Marie! How about that! You're not going to believe this... but I think I wrote you a song.

INT. LANE'S ROOM - DAY

Up here, the record has come to an end. Needle rhythmically scuffing the center groove. As Toby and Lane make out... Sound of piano music wafting up from below.

TOBY

Do you hear that?

LANE

(between kisses)

Mm? Mom must have a student.

TOBY

Oh- right.

(then, remembering)

Jimi!

LANE

What?

Toby springs to the window, spreading the blinds to reveal-Marie's station wagon parked below. He sprints out.

LANE (CONT'D)

(following)

Where are you going?

INT. LIVING ROOM - SAME

Jimi chords a piano rendition of The Wind Cries Mary. An old song. But this time for a new audience. Marie is rapt.

JIMI

THE TRAFFIC LIGHTS, THEY TURN BLUE
TOMORROW
AND SHINE THEIR EMPTINESS DOWN ON
MY BED
THE TINY ISLAND SAGS DOWNSTREAM
'CAUSE THE LIFE THAT LIVED IS DEAD
AND THE WIND SCREAMS... MARIE

But just now, it is Lane who screams... seeing Jimi Hendrix in her living room, with her mother.

MARIE
 (shushing her)
 Quiet, dear!

But Jimi does not miss a beat. He is lost in the song, reinventing it for virgin ears. Hearing it, himself, anew.

JIMI
 WILL THE WIND EVER REMEMBER
 THE NAMES IT HAS BLOWN IN THE PAST?

His eyelids flutter shut. An electric guitar picking up on track for an extended solo. As we

FLASHBACK:

EXT. LONDON - ESTABLISHING - DUSK (1966)

A TWA jumbo jet touching down on the Heathrow tarmac.

INT. HEATHROW TERMINAL - DUSK

A sea of English travelers. White faces. Among whom the black American stands out: Dylan style-curls, cowboy boots, Cherokee hat. Not yet a star. But already a peacock. Carrying the same battered guitar case. As a CUSTOMS AGENT studies his passport: "Occupation: Musician"

CUSTOMS AGENT
 This is a non-work visa.
 (knits a brow)
 That wouldn't be your instrument,
 would it?

Chyron: **London. 23 years old.**

JIMI
 Oh- um-

CHAS
 No, sir!
 (cuts in, snatching it)
 All mine.

CHAS is 30, working-class Brit. Mod hair, three-piece suit. Newcastle boy made good. He is Jimi's brand-new manager.

CHAS (CONT'D)
 (reassuring)
 Mr. Hendrix is here exclusively on
 pleasure.

The Customs Agent chews a cheek, dubious. Then stamps the passport. Waving them through. Chas exhales relief.

CHAS (CONT'D)
 (to Jimi, *sotto*)
 Right then, let's hope not. First
 step, find you a band. I've already
 placed an advert. I'm thinking bare
 minimum: drums, bass, you...

But his voice drowns into the din- guitar solo rising on track- as Jimi stares across the crowded terminal, fixated on... the red stockings of a TWA stewardess. Her alabaster skin, ginger hair in an up-do, blue eyes unabashed, returning his gaze with an instant, carnal attraction. This is KATHY.

CHAS (CONT'D)
 What do you think? Jimi?

CUT TO:

INT. SOHO FLAT - THE NEXT DAY

Jimi is buck naked on the windowsill- dangling a post-coital cigarette. Finishing the same song on his guitar.

JIMI
 AND WITH THIS CRUTCH, ITS OLD AGE,
 AND ITS WISDOM
 IT WHISPERS NO, THIS WILL BE THE
 LAST
 AND THE WIND CRIES... KATHY

Kathy is brewing a pot of tea. She is cockney. Streetwise beyond her 20 years.

KATHY
 For me, eh? You use that line on
 every girl you shag? 'Cause we only
 met last night and frankly I didn't
 see you do much song-writing.

Jimi spreads a coy grin, plays a sexy lick on the guitar.

KATHY (CONT'D)
 Do you always let that instrument
 do the talking?

He does it again, making the guitar "talk": *Mm-hm.*

KATHY (CONT'D)
 I might get tired of this.

The room is sparse, student-chic. Jimi notices a ceramic bust on the mantel. Talks the guitar: *Who's that?*

KATHY (CONT'D)

Him? Georg Handel. The composer. He used to live just across the yard.

JIMI

You don't say?

(peers out, captured)

Heavy. I live next door to Handel.

This takes Kathy by surprise.

KATHY

Moved in already, have you?

JIMI

(shrugs)

Why not? Got all my possessions right here.

He reels her in with the neck of his guitar.

KATHY

Now just what exactly are you calling a possession?

JIMI

Well-

He snags her red underpants with a free hand, slips them off-

JIMI (CONT'D)

How about these for starters?

and sails them out the window with a flip of the wrist.

EXT. SOHO - ESTABLISHING - NIGHT

The Polytechnic Theater. Ground zero of mod, happening London. Sassoon haircuts. Carnaby Street duds.

A marquee announcing: "Eric Clapton and Cream"

INT. BACKSTAGE - NIGHT

A dusky labyrinth. Chas leads the way. Past scenesters, roadies. Jimi keeps up, Kathy on his arm. Already an item.

KATHY

Eric Clapton? Really?!

JIMI
Can you dig it, Kath? Wants to hear
me!

CHAS
Do I do my job, or do I do my job?

The reach the dressing room door. Jimi pauses to reflect.

JIMI
Back home no one knows my name.

CHAS
Back home you never had me.

And into

INT. DRESSING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

ERIC CLAPTON is 21, hair in curlers. Not yet the elder
statesman. Here, just a cocky prince.

CLAPTON
Chas Chandler! What do you think?

He is trying on a T-shirt in the mirror: "Clapton is God"

CLAPTON (CONT'D)
Fan printed up a whole box. Never
went in much for church, but this I
could get used to.

CHAS
Eric, there's someone I'd like you
to-

CLAPTON
(turning back)
Hello, love.

He glosses right past Jimi- taking Kathy by the hand. She
blushes. Jimi sees it. Chas is slightly thrown.

CHAS
Erm- Eric, this is Jimi Hendrix.

CLAPTON
Of course. The Yankee sensation-
who no one's even heard play!

JIMI
(weathering this)
Glad to meet you.

Clapton casually avoids his handshake.

CLAPTON

But who needs to hear a man with a face like that? Chas says you're the genuine article. A real blues man- with the skin to prove it. You have any idea what my mates and I'd have given for that?

JIMI

(a slow burn)

Trust me- it ain't all roses.

CLAPTON

Cries the coconut with a little white dove on his arm!

(pointed)

We English always did have a taste for the exotic.

Jimi is ready to flare. But Chas stays him.

STAGE MANAGER

On in 5! Clear out, please!

CLAPTON

(to Kathy)

Oh, you can stay, love.

Throws Jimi a T-shirt-

CLAPTON (CONT'D)

T-shirt, Johnnie?

INT. POLYTECHNIC THEATER - NIGHT

An elite crowd. VIP faces we might recognize. White, English faces. Jimi storms past. Tossing the T-shirt.

CHAS

Jimi, wait! Hold up-

(chasing him)

Listen, it isn't personal. You're the new cock on the walk, he's threatened. It's only human.

Chas catches him at the door. Jimi spins back, noticing-

JIMI

Where's Kathy?

CHAS
I, uh- thought she was following.
(a shot in the dark)
Maybe the loo?

But they both know exactly where she is.

CHAS (CONT'D)
You just met her, Jimi. Better now-

JIMI
(determined)
Get me up there.

The stage. House lights beginning to dim.

CHAS
Of course. In good time.

JIMI
No. Here. Tonight.

CHAS
Well, Jimi, that's not-

JIMI
This is the scene, isn't it? Where
it's at?

CHAS
Well, yes- but we can't just-

But Jimi is resolved.

JIMI
Where's my guitar? I'm sitting in.

CHAS
You can't!

LOUDSPEAKER
Ladies and gentlemen...

CHAS
This isn't some pub band, Jimi,
it's-

LOUDSPEAKER
...Cream!

Cream taking the stage. Clapton, basking in the cheers.
Spotting Jimi in the crowd- and Kathy, just emerging from
backstage. He gives her a wink. And that's the straw.

JIMI
Screw it.

CHAS
Jimi!

But in a flash... Jimi darts to the front of the theater, climbing a guardrail and mounting the stage.

KATHY
(returning to Chas)
What the hell is he doing?

CHAS
Where were you?

KATHY
Went to the loo. Why?

CHAS
Oh, shit.

A confused murmur ripples the crowd, as Jimi bounds up the stage- to Clapton's rack of guitars. All right-handed.

JIMI
Mind if I borrow one of these?

Clapton stammers, caught off guard.

CLAPTON
We- erm- were about to play a set,
Johnnie.

JIMI
It's Jimi-
(leans into the mic)
Jimi Hendrix.

The crowd falls silent. No idea who he is. But piqued.

JIMI (CONT'D)
What do you say, folks? Y'all think
god here is ready for a dance with
the devil?

He slings on a right-handed guitar- upside down.

JIMI (CONT'D)
'Course I normally play lefty, but
I reckon he deserves a little
handicap.

This wins a laugh from the crowd. Clapton is not pleased.

CLAPTON
 (a whispered shout to
 security in the wings)
 What the hell are you waiting for?
 Get him off!

A pair of massive bouncers promptly rush the stage, but-

VOICES
Let him play!

The crowd cheers in affirmation. Hungry for a showdown. And Clapton finds himself between a rock and, well, a rock-star.

CLAPTON
 Very well, then.
 (rising to the challenge)
 Twelve-bar blues?

Jimi grins.

JIMI
 Name that tune.

And with a nod to the band... Clapton kicks off a bluesy rhythm. The song is Crossroads.

CLAPTON
 I WENT DOWN TO THE CROSSROADS
 FELL DOWN ON MY KNEES

Jimi joins in.

JIMI
 I WENT DOWN TO THE CROSSROADS
 FELL DOWN ON MY KNEES
 ASKED THE LORD ABOVE FOR MERCY
 SAVE ME IF YOU PLEASE

Clapton takes the first solo. A pentatonic run. Nothing flashy. Simple. Virtuositic. Finishing high and sweet.

CLAPTON
 I WENT DOWN TO THE CROSSROADS
 TRIED TO FLAG A RIDE
 I WENT DOWN TO THE CROSSROADS
 TRIED TO FLAG A RIDE

Clapton is singing directly to Kathy in the crowd. Jimi sees.

JIMI
 NOBODY SEEMED TO KNOW ME
 EVERYBODY PASSED ME BY

And now it is his turn. The next solo. Jimi launches in without restraint. Shredding up and down the scales. No doubt about it. He is showing off. And a shade too much, at that.

CHAS
(rooting quietly)
Don't force it, Jimi.

Jeffrey sidles up with a whisky. Assessing Jimi, dubious.

JEFFREY
This the new phenom, Chas?

CLAPTON
YOU CAN RUN, YOU CAN RUN
TELL MY FRIEND POOR WILLIE BROWN

JIMI
YOU CAN RUN, YOU CAN RUN
TELL MY FRIEND POOR WILLIE BROWN

And the next solos trade fast and free. Phrase by phrase. Riff by riff. Each one-upping the last. As the crowd, rapt, judges every trill, hammer-on, and flourish.

JEFFREY
(unimpressed)
Me-thinks the lady doth protest too much.

And he's right...

Clapton tones it down for the last solo. A plaintive, crisp retort to Jimi's flash. Slaying him. With a final, devastating wink to Kathy. That leaves Jimi, seething.

CLAPTON
AND I'M STANDING AT THE CROSSROADS

JIMI
BELIEVE I'M SINKING DOWN

The crowd goes wild. Rendering a unanimous verdict: Clapton is still their god.

Chas sinks, defeated- so much for the next sensation.

On stage, the bouncers close in. As Jimi, thinking fast-

JIMI (CONT'D)
(grabs the mic)
This next song goes out to the
white dove in the red panties.

Cheers subside. Jimi is staring right at Kathy. She blushes.

JIMI (CONT'D)
Baby, you know who you are.

And with that-

Jimi spools his volume knob, blasting overdrive. A tidal-wave of distortion smacking the crowd. Obliterating the blues. This is the new sound. This is why it is called "rock".

JIMI (CONT'D)
Try to keep up, boys-

Crashing into a power chord intro-

JIMI (CONT'D)
ALRIGHT, NOW DIG THIS BABY
YOU DON'T CARE FOR ME?
I DON'T CARE ABOUT THAT
YOU GOT A NEW FOOL?
HA! I LIKE IT LIKE THAT

He is singing to Kathy. Heads turn. She is mortified.

JIMI (CONT'D)
I HAVE ONLY ONE BURNING DESIRE
LET ME STAND NEXT TO YOUR FIRE!

Jimi tears into a frenzied solo- wild, but nothing forced about it. This is scorching, erotic...

It vibrates seats in the house. Rumbling more than guts. Women bite their lips. Pure sound has invaded them.

JEFFREY
What'd he say his name was?

Chas smiles. This is Jimi Hendrix.

On stage, even Clapton is humbled, in awe. As Jimi literally nudges him aside-

JIMI
*OH! MOVE OVER, ROVER
AND LET JIMI TAKE OVER!*

Jimi skids across the stage for a final blistering solo... playing the guitar behind his back, with his tongue, his teeth. It is a pyrotechnic explosion that surmounts mere music. This is complete theater. The guitar solo that will change the face of rock and roll... And then it's over.

And for a moment-

Jimi hangs there, spent.

The longest silence in the world.

Then- thunder. Crowd leaping to its feet. Worshipping their new god.

And for the first time in his life to this point- Jimi feels the love- soaking it in- squinting into the spotlights...

But sees Kathy storming out.

INT. BACKSTAGE - MOMENTS LATER

VIPs crush in to greet the new sensation.

CHAS

Jimi, this is Michael Jeffrey. He manages The Animals.

JEFFREY

And you next, I hope!
(adding, as an
afterthought)
Along with Chas, of course.

But Jimi is distracted. Craning for Kathy. She is gone.

JIMI

Uh- yeah, groovy. Will you excuse me?

EXT. SOHO STREET - NIGHT

Kathy stalking off...

JIMI

Hey there! Where you running?
(hustling up)
Hang tight, will ya?

KATHY

If you've come to stake a claim,
try lifting your leg on a wall. I'm
nobody's trophy.

She hails a taxicab. Pops the door. Jimi stops her.

JIMI

Aw, no, come on. I'd never think so-
I just got carried away is all.

Kathy takes him in, genuinely perplexed.

KATHY
Who are you?

JIMI
You remember, girl. Just Jimi.

KATHY
Then who the hell was that?

Back in the club. Back on the stage.

JIMI
I- I don't know. When I'm up there-
it's different. Something comes
over me.

KATHY
Doctor Jeckyll and Mister Hendrix?
Is that it?

JIMI
No. Well, I guess- it's like up
there, I feel- whole.

Jimi is baring his soul. Kathy sneers.

KATHY
Lovely. Then why don't you go shag
an audience and leave me out of it?

She slides into the cab.

JIMI
No, wait! Listen, don't leave-
please.

KATHY
Give me one good reason.

But Jimi the on-stage dynamo has shrunk back to human scale.
From hound dog to whimpering puppy.

JIMI
Didn't you dig the music?

A beat. It is the best he's got. It is plenty.

KATHY
Yes.
(laughing)
Yes, it was amazing!

Jimi smiles- a glimmer of that hound dog trickling back.

JIMI

Anyhow- I can think of at least one
more thing in this life- makes me
feel whole.

Those bedroom eyes. Kathy, falling in. Falling hard. As we

RETURN TO:

INT. SEATTLE HOTEL - DAY (1970)

Jeffrey's suite. A frenzied hive of activity. Roadies bustle about, lackeys deflect reporters.

JEFFREY

(into phone)

No, no one ran off... yes, Jimi
is... of course it was a planned...
He'll be back for the show!

He slams the phone. Just as Chas comes through the door.
Startled by the hubbub.

CHAS

What's all this?

REPORTERS

(descending like vultures)

Chas? Chas Chandler? Are you back
in Jimi's life? Do you know where
he's gone?

CHAS

(confused)

Gone?

Jeffrey elbows them aside, tugging Chas into-

THE BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

Where a startled Gerry is just having a piss. Jeffrey slams
the door. Fists at Chas' lapels. Fury in his eyes.

JEFFREY

You!

CHAS

Pleasure's mutual.

JEFFREY
Where is he?

CHAS
Who? Jimi? Isn't he here?

Jeffrey reads him. A beat. But Chas is clearly in the dark.

JEFFREY
Shit.

GERRY
Guess we can cross Chandler off the list.

He shakes it, zipping up.

GERRY (CONT'D)
(offering a hand)
Chas.

CHAS
(avoiding it)
What list? What's going on?

JEFFREY
Why don't you tell me? Forty-three quid in phone calls to an old manager across the pond?

CHAS
He's been upset. Home town always puts him on edge.

JEFFREY
Is that why you just happen to roll in the very day he pisses off without a word?

CHAS
You know Jimi- probably skipped out for a shag.

JEFFREY
So find him.

CHAS
That's your job. Maybe Jimi wants to be gone. I know I did.

He moves to the door, but Jeffrey blocks him.

JEFFREY

The door tonight is a hundred
grand.

This is an old game. Chas knows it. Wants no part.

CHAS

(brushing past)
Which you can enjoy in peace.

JEFFREY

Bring him back alive, you take home
twenty.

Chas stops. Slowly turning back-

CHAS

Alive?

INT. JIMI'S SUITE - DAY

It has been torn apart. Scavenged for clues. But all they
managed to find was- a single tarot card: Judgement.

SUE

(teary-eyed)
He was obsessing over it all night.

Chas inspects the pictogram. Ominous. But still-

CHAS

It's just a tarot card. So what?

Sue looks to Jeffrey. He gives her the nod.

SUE

He was writing a song. Having a
hard time. It was a new one. I
never heard it before.

JEFFREY

You know Jimi hasn't written a new
song in two years.

CHAS

Well, then- that's good! What's the
worry?

SUE

This was about an angel. Coming
down- to take him away.

Just like the image on the tarot card. Chas darkens. As Jeffrey pulls up the portable 8-track. Pressing "play"...

Recorded sound: Jimi working out that unfinished song.

JIMI (RECORDED)
ANGEL COME DOWN...
ANGEL FLY DOWN...
ANGEL TAKE ME...

The guitar finally stops.

JIMI (RECORDED) (CONT'D)
 (muttering)
I'm going to die.

Thunk. Sound of the mic dropping. *Sssss...* Then silence.

JEFFREY
 Last night, he's recording a
 suicide note. Today, he's MIA with
 a bottle full of red devils.

CHAS
 Barbs? Who gave him those?!

Who else?

JEFFREY
 How the hell was I supposed to
 know?

INT. VW BUG - DAY

Driving. An awkward silence. Jimi is lost in thought.

Toby and Lane sneak glances. Trying not to. But they cannot help it. They are staring.

Jimi finally notices. He smiles. Just trying to be normal. But Toby and Lane quickly turn away.

Normal is out of the question.

TOBY
 Little music?

He switches on the stereo. The Who: My Generation.

SONG (ON RADIO)
PEOPLE TRY TO PUT US D-DOWN
JUST BECAUSE WE GET AROUND
 (MORE)

SONG (ON RADIO) (CONT'D)
THINGS THEY DO LOOK AWFUL C-C-COLD
I HOPE I DIE BEFORE I GET OLD

This lyric strikes a nerve-

JIMI

No!

He snaps it shut. Toby and Lane, surprised.

JIMI (CONT'D)
 (blushes, covering)
 If it's all the same to you, just-
 a little quiet.

He sinks back into the busted seat, shutting his eyes. Tuning out the world. But the sound-scape consumes him: rumbling tires, creaking springs, the clank-tap of an engine... all coalescing into- a rhythm. The same rhythm. He cannot escape.

THE WHO (PRE-LAP)
WHY DON'T YOU ALL F-FADE AWAY?-

FLASH BACK:

EXT. MONTEREY POP FESTIVAL - DUSK (1967)

A sea of young people taking in The Who on stage.

THE WHO
 I'M NOT TRYING TO CAUSE A B-BIG S-S-
 SENSATION
 I'M JUST TALKIN' 'BOUT MY G-G-
 GENERATION

Their sound is fierce, but the act is static. Four mop-top white kids with dour, art-school pretensions. Hardly the kinetic bad boys of rock they will one day become.

THE WHO (CONT'D)
 THIS IS MY GENERATION
 THIS IS MY GENERATION, BABY

A manic drum solo carries us to

EXT. FAIRGROUNDS - SAME

An airstream dressing trailer just beyond the stage.

CHAS
 Jimi? Open up, love-

He pounds at the locked door. Jeffrey, losing patience.

JEFFREY
Where's my gun? I'll blow the
fucking lock!

Chyron: **Monterey Pop Festival. 24 years old.**

GERRY
Got her!

Gerry rushes up, dragging-

KATHY
What's going on? Is Jimi in there?

CHAS
Pete Townsend won the coin toss.
Took The Who on first. I tried to
tell Jimi it's better this way- he
can close the show.

JEFFREY
But the prima donna in there
refuses to follow!
(shouts at the door)
You have any idea what kind of
strings I had to pull for this? A
fucking unknown, first show back in
the States- and he pulls this!

Jeffrey kicks the trailer door, denting the tin.

CHAS
He's right, though, Kath. It's all
building to this. We flake now-
there won't be another chance.

JEFFREY
Fuck another chance- another
breath!

Kathy spots an open window above the trailer door.

KATHY
(hitching her skirt)
Can you lift me up?

INT. AIRSTREAM TRAILER - DUSK

Sound of The Who still playing outside. As Kathy wriggles
through the upper window...

JIMI
Tell Jeffrey no dice!

Jimi is curled on the cot, a fetal ball.

KATHY
Have you looked out there? That's
90,000 ears, Jimi. You've been
waiting all your life for this.

JIMI
Not tonight, not feeling it-

KATHY
Then a stage is just the thing,
isn't it? Make you whole again.

Then she sees his face- green to the gills, shivering.
Finding a sheet of acid... half the tabs used up.

KATHY (CONT'D)
Jesus. How many tabs did you take?

JIMI
Not enough to follow that.

He nods out the window at- The Who on stage, finishing their
act with a crescendo of adolescent fury: Keith Moon kicking
over his drums. Townsend smashing his guitar.

And Kathy suddenly realizes. They had it all wrong.

KATHY
Poor thing, you're no prima donna-
you're a nervous wreck.

She cradles him, maternally.

JIMI
I should never have come back.

KATHY
Is this the same man who took
London by storm? Torched Clapton at
his own gig?

JIMI
This is a different scene. These
folks don't know me.

KATHY
Well I do- and I also know the two
things in life that make you whole.
The bedroom and the stage.
(MORE)

KATHY (CONT'D)

Did you ever stop to think what they have in common? Love, Jimi. A vast ocean of it. And it's out there. Waiting for you to go up and win it. Like you won me.

Jimi glances up for the first time- a glimmer of that old, seductive charm. Pulling her close.

JIMI

(suggestive)

With you, I had a different set of tools at my disposal.

But Kathy glides a hand past his crotch... to the neck of his guitar.

KATHY

Far as I can tell, you only really needed one.

EXT. FESTIVAL STAGE - NIGHT

Facing utter darkness. A vast, swelling ocean of silhouettes. Jimi is on the pitch black stage. Eyes flitting. Heart pounding. Jaw chomping bubble gum. Trying to steel himself, struggling trying to center. But hearing only-

A cacophony of distracting sounds: the band settling in... Chas pacing in the wings... Jeffrey barking orders... Kathy biting her fingernails... strangers shifting/coughing/waiting in the crowd... This whirlwind swelling to a climax. Until it is too much to bear. And then, suddenly-

The spotlight- like an angel from heaven.

Flooding Jimi, and instantly bringing his world to silence. Nothing but the tremolo gasp of his guitar...

The sound swells, filling him. Literally reviving him. And

Buh-buh-wah!

His gaze finds a girl in the crowd- singling her out.

JIMI

NOW YOU KNOW YOU ARE A CUTE LITTLE
HEARTBREAKER
FOXY!

The next line to another girl-

JIMI (CONT'D)
 AND YOU KNOW YOU ARE A SWEET LITTLE
 LOVE-MAKER
 FOXY!

And on like this- a different girl for every line.

JIMI (CONT'D)
 I WANNA TAKE YOU HOME
 I WON'T DO YOU NO HARM, NO
 YOU'VE GOT TO BE ALL MINE, ALL MINE
 WHOO, FOXY LADY!

Jimi blisters into a solo, eyes shut, tongue licking up at the night sky in sync- lost in the music...

As boys clutch their girlfriends tight. Girls squeeze their boyfriends back. But every one is picturing Jimi.

Jeffrey marvels from the wings.

JEFFREY
 (to Kathy)
 What the hell did you give him back there?

KATHY
 Everything you can't.

And this line goes right to Kathy-

JIMI
 HERE I COME BABY
 I'M COMIN' TO GET YA
 OOH, FOXY LADY!

And we

TIME LAPSE-

Later in the set. The massive crowd, stirred electric.

JIMI
 PURPLE HAZE ALL IN MY BRAIN
 LATELY THINGS DON'T SEEM THE SAME
 ACTIN' FUNNY AND I DON'T KNOW WHY
 'SCUSE ME WHILE I KISS THE SKY

Jimi is feeding off their love- giving it back in song.

JIMI (CONT'D)
 PURPLE HAZE ALL AROUND
 DON'T KNOW IF I'M COMIN' UP OR DOWN
 (MORE)

JIMI (CONT'D)
 AM I HAPPY, OR IN MISERY?
 WHATEVER IT IS, THAT GIRL PUT A
 SPELL ON ME

Another sizzling solo, and we

TIME LAPSE AGAIN-

The crowd goes wild. Jimi is exhilarated, drenched in sweat-soaking it in like a drug.

JIMI
 Thank you! Hah! Y'all don't know
 what this means!

More love than he's felt in a lifetime- consuming,
 overwhelming him. He glances to Kathy: "*What now?*"

JIMI (CONT'D)
 I just, uh- I could sit up here all
 night and say "thank you, thank
 you, thank you"- but what I really
 want to do is just- grab you and-
Mmmm!- every last one of you!

A woman's bra flies up on stage.

IN THE WINGS-

JEFFREY
 Did he just say he wanted to fuck
 every last one of them?

CHAS
 I believe he said "*mmmm*".

JEFFREY
 Yeah, well-
 (to Kathy)
 I'd look out if I was you.

BACK ON STAGE-

JIMI
 I do! I do! But I just can't do
 that!

The crowd cheering. As Jimi paces- wracking his brain.

JIMI (CONT'D)
 I just gotta- find some other way
 to show my-

Another bra flies up, snagging a mosquito lantern- and
 knocking over a squeeze-bottle of kerosene... which rolls
 upstage to Jimi's feet. He sees it.

JIMI (CONT'D)
 (an idea dawning)
 Show my sacrifice-

His eyes find Kathy-

JIMI (CONT'D)
 That's what love is, right?
 (snatching the kerosene)
 That's what I'm gonna do. Sacrifice-
 something that I really love.

Jimi spins to the band, inspired-

JIMI (CONT'D)
 Alright, now-
 (back to the crowd)
 Y'all ready? Bear with me. 'Cause I
 don't think I'm losing my mind...
 And I want everybody to join in,
 too! 'Cause there's nothing more I
 can do for all these- look at it-
 all these beautiful people!

He maxes the volume on his guitar- sending a hurricane of
 feedback through the air... waves of rumbling sound.

Jimi shuts his eyes. Grinding the guitar against his hip,
 like a mystic shaman conjuring primal, elemental noise.

He spans the fret-board, squeezes the tremolo, causing the
 instrument to belch forth shocks of screaming overdrive...

Each new sound eliciting a collective wince/gasp/shudder from
 the crowd. Jimi is playing them all- right to the brink.

And then, finally-

The release: that first thundering chord chop.

JIMI (CONT'D)
 Come on, sing it with me!
 (singing)
 WILD THING!

Band kicking in.

JIMI (CONT'D)
 YOU MAKE MY HEART SING
 YOU MAKE EVERYTHING GROOVY
 WILD THING

Jimi thrusts to each beat- and the whole crowd responds in sync. 90,000 people dancing in perfect rhythm.

JIMI (CONT'D)
 WILD THING, I THINK YOU MOVE ME
 BUT I WANT A KNOW FOR SURE
 COME AND SSSSOCK IT TO ME ONE MORE
 TIME
 (snps his tongue)
 YOU MOVE ME

Another chorus, this time the whole crowd joining in. Jimi is working them up to a fever.

JIMI (CONT'D)
WILD THING, I THINK YOU MOVE ME
BUT I WANT TO KNOW FOR SURE

Guitar at his crotch, stroking the neck- once, twice.

JIMI (CONT'D)
COME ON AND SSSSOCK IT TO ME ONE
MORE TIME AGAIN
AW SHUCKS! I LOVE YA!

He thrusts the guitar between his legs for a feverish solo. Falling to his knees- straddling the instrument like a woman- whacking the tremolo bar- arching his back in ecstasy.

The crowd, throbbing- verging on sonic climax.

JIMI (CONT'D)
 (howling)
 WILD THING, I THINK I LOVE YOU!

And with a physical shudder- Jimi unleashes a stream of kerosene, dousing the prone, wailing instrument.

JEFFREY
 What the bloody hell? No! Our
 fucking insurance!

But Jimi- seeing Kathy, locks eyes- sparks a post-coital match and... *Whoosh!* The guitar bursts into flames.

JEFFREY (CONT'D)
 (grabs Gerry)
 What are you waiting for? Put it
 out!

CHAS
 (stops him)
 Wait! Listen!

The crowd is roaring at the greatest sex they've ever had. As Jimi, drained, blows them a kiss-

And staggers off.

CHAS (CONT'D)
 (rushing the mic)
 Jimi Hendrix!

EXT. BACKSTAGE - CONTINUOUS

Jimi sees Kathy and their eyes meet. Rushing together...

But a swarm of humanity floods between them: star-fuckers, sycophants- swallowing Jimi whole.

And leaving Kathy cut off, alone.

INT. AIRSTREAM TRAILER - NIGHT

The cramped space now teems with hipsters and pop royalty- laughing, swooning, clamoring for their taste of Jimi...

He is splayed on the cot, encircled by a trio of gorgeous young groupies- the PLASTER CASTERS. They are: DELORES, mixing up plaster in a vase; MARGE, keeping minutes in a log; and CYNTHIA, stroking fingers up his thigh.

CYNTHIA
 We already got Frank Zappa. And the whole Rolling Stones.

JIMI
 Well- uh, which hand do you want?

CYNTHIA
 Oh, no hands.
 (unzips his fly)
 We like to get- to the root of a star's power.

And down she goes. Jimi, gasping- caught, quite literally with his pants down- as the crowd casually ogles his public fellating. He does not exactly fight it off... And yet something is missing. Jimi spots the open window.

EXT. FAIRGROUNDS - NIGHT

Kathy has wandered off. She is having a lonely smoke. As roadies strike the stage nearby. When... from the airstream window behind her- the blur of a figure slipping out.

KATHY

Jimi?

She spins, but the figure is gone. Nothing but a sheet of tarpaulin on the dewy grass. Kathy loses hope, turning back- As the tarp flies up... Jimi wrapping her from behind.

JIMI

Did you miss me?

They are under the tarp. Face to face. A private world. Lit only by the ember of her cigarette.

KATHY

(laughing)

I thought you were busy "mmmm"-ing every last one of them.

JIMI

Let my guitar do that-
(palm to her cheek)
All I want is you.

But her fingers find... his unzipped fly, specks of plaster.

KATHY

And what did she want?

JIMI

(a guilty look)

That- uh- it's not what it-

KATHY

You can spare the bull. I'm a modern girl, I know the rules. And I don't care what you do with other girls. All I need is my Jimi- the real one. Whole.

Their eyes meet. Then their lips. And- the tarp rolls to the grass, hiding them from view. As we

RETURN TO:

EXT. FAIRMONT HOTEL - DAY (1970)

Downtown Seattle. The beat-up bug parked at the curb.

INT. VW BUG - SAME

Toby and Lane have been left alone. With Jimi's battered guitar case on the seat between them. They trade wary glances: this is the holy grail, at their fingertips.

LANE
Should we- Can we-

TOBY
(stopping her)
Wait!
(then)
Do you think he'd-

LANE
Together.

They reach out, tremulously- in unison- and pop the latch. Slowly prying open the case to reveal...

The white Strat. Gleaming. When suddenly-

Rata-tata-rata-tata-rat!

The machine gun burst of Jimi's guitar.

They slam the lid with a terrified gasp.

But the song continues. Machine Gun. It is coming from the stereo of a passing car, just stopped at a traffic light.

SONG (ON RADIO)
MACHINE GUN
TEARIN' MY BODY ALL APART

And it drives off, taking the sound of Jimi with it. Toby and Lane exhale in unison, exchanging rattled looks...

Just the radio. Or was it?

INT. FAIRMONT HOTEL LOBBY - DAY

An august hall. Burl wood, marble. Posh clientele. A pair of stately black valets cast sideways glances at Jimi- setting him on edge. His hand jitters as he slides Kathy's telegram across the front desk.

JIMI
I'm, uh- here to see a guest?

CONCIERGE
Of course, sir. If you could just-

CONCIERGE stops, seeing him. Taking more than casual notice.

CONCIERGE (CONT'D)
I'll have to phone up from the
back.

INT. BACK OFFICE - MOMENTS LATER

Concierge briskly shuts the door... dialing a number on the
telephone. It rings. Then-

CONCIERGE
This is the Fairmont Hotel...
(a beat)
Yes sir- he just arrived.

INTERCUT-

CHAS
(on phone)
Brilliant! Keep him right there.

He hooks the phone, rushing into

INT. BEDROOM - JEFFREY'S SUITE - CONTINUOUS

Jeffrey is with an older man in a conservative suit, hunched
over a spread of paperwork. A life insurance policy.

LAWYER
I'm afraid this policy on Mr.
Hendrix does have a two year
suicide exclusion.

JEFFREY
Exclusion? So you're saying I'd get
nothing?

CHAS
Glad to see your motives are still
intact.

Jeffrey rolls an eye.

JEFFREY
Heaven spare me from the righteous.
(looks up, realizing)
You found him!

CHAS
You're a terrible human being.

JEFFREY

About to be terribly generous.
Where is he? Sixty-forty split- the
whole tour!

INT. LOBBY - FAIRMONT HOTEL - DAY

Concierge is returning from the back office.

CONCIERGE

If you'll just wait here, Mr.
Hendrix. Your friend will be right-

But Jimi is gone.

CONCIERGE (CONT'D)

Mr. Hendrix?

And we

FLASH BACK:

Hands pulling a pair of closet doors shut. Trapping us in-

INT. LINEN CLOSET - DAY (1968)

Near blackness. The mere shadows of Jimi and Kathy- keeping
hush as distant voices call their names: *Jimi? Jimi? Jimi?*

They are hiding from the world.

KATHY

Come on, then- we can't hide in
here forever.

JIMI

Shh!

(whispering)

Sure we can. Every second I'm not
on stage- just you and me, our own
private universe.

KATHY

I'm pretty sure it's a linen
pantry.

And suddenly- the doors fling open, daylight flooding in.

AYAKO

There you are!

AYAKO JINKA is 40s, Japanese. Brimming with guileless good cheer. She yanks them out into

INT. HENDRIX-JINKA HOUSE - DAY

Tugging them down the hall...

AYAKO
Come- I make chicken. Tempura fry.

KATHY
Thank you, Ayako. Sounds delicious.
Doesn't it, Jimi?

AYAKO
Call me mom!

Jimi bristles, clinging to Kathy.

JIMI
(through gritted teeth)
Don't call her that.

KATHY
Oh, lighten up, will you? It's
sweet.

JIMI
It's a circus.

And into

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

A modest home. Teeming with strangers. Guests from the neighborhood. People Jimi does not know. But they all know Jimi. Heads turning. Bald-faced stares. A banner strings the stair-rail: "Welcome Home, Jimmy!"

Chyron: **Seattle. 25 years old.**

This Jimi is only months older than we left him at Monterey. But his life has changed. He is, forevermore, a celebrity.

AYAKO
(prodding him on)
Oh, you just shy like your papa!

AL HENDRIX is nearby, holding court to a group of guests including Chas and a barely sentient Jeffrey. Al is 40s, short of stature but long on swagger. "Shy" is far from the operative descriptor.

AL

This is where it all started, folks-
Showing off an old, beat-up electric guitar.

AL (CONT'D)

Whole week's pay right here. I
bought it for him after he set the
first afire. Back then, it wasn't
no act, neither- Jimmy was trying
to quit. Only I wouldn't let him!
Always encouraged the boy.

CHAS

Sounds like we should be paying you
twenty percent.

AL

(lights up)

See? Now there's an idea!

The talk of money is enough to startle Jeffrey from his
stupor. Shooting Chas a glare.

JEFFREY

Joking! Chas is only joking.

NEARBY-

Kathy and Jimi look on. They cannot hear the conversation.

KATHY

See how proud he is?

JIMI

You don't know him.

KATHY

(exasperated)

Well- maybe you don't either. Ever
thought of that?

And frankly, he has not.

KATHY (CONT'D)

Trust, Jimi. Love. Some people
manage to find it outside the
bedroom or the stage. Anyway, you
can't well live your life always
waiting for the other shoe to drop.
People grow up. People change.

(off Al)

You should try it, sometime.

Ayako returns on cue with a heaping plate of tempura.

KATHY (CONT'D)
Thank you, mom!

Jimi glowers.

AL
Katie!
(bounding up)
Get over here, girl.

Jimi winces.

JIMI
(correcting him)
It's Kathy, pop-

KATHY
(cuts him off)
It's fine.

She takes Al's hand.

AL
Come on, sweetheart.

Kathy glances back to Jimi- a pointed look- and he relents, gradually forcing himself to trust. He steps to follow, but-

AL (CONT'D)
Not you, boy. Can't well dish the
dirt with him sulking around.
(leading Kathy off)
Did you know he first learned to
play the blues on my push broom?

And they are gone. Leaving Jimi, alone. So much for change.

INT. DEN - MOMENTS LATER

A framed portrait of Jimi rests on the mantel- promotional shot, the man and his guitar, signed: "For Pop Your Son Jimi" His record spins on the brand-new hi-fi. Not the only sign in this house of recent, profligate spending. Courtesy Jimi.

SONG (ON RECORD)
*MANIC DEPRESSION IS TOUCHING MY
SOUL
I KNOW WHAT I WANT BUT I JUST DON'T
KNOW
HOW TO GO ABOUT GETTIN' IT*

Jimi, momentarily lost in his own lyric. He can relate.

JANIE

Is that you?

JANIE is 6, Asian... craning up innocently at the strange man in the pictures.

JIMI

So they say.

JANIE

My name is Janie. Mama says I'm your sister.

JIMI

Well- then I guess you are.

He kneels to take her hand.

JIMI (CONT'D)

Nice to meet you, Janie.

Jimi notices a shelf of dusty old 78 records. Mostly jazz, blues... this is the music of his youth. He slides one out: "Benny Goodman Sextet with Charlie Christian" A grinning black man with a hollow-body electric guitar.

JIMI (CONT'D)

Say, sis- you like to dance?

Jimi yanks the needle on his own song. Cuing up the old 78: the crackle of pitted grooves...

VOICE (ON RECORD)

Charlie Christian on guitar.

Playing: "Chonk, Charlie, Chonk!"

On record: a blast of horns leads into the staccato jangle of old-time guitar. Such a far cry from Jimi's sound. But this is where it all began.

JIMI

You know, my papa was a world-class dancer? Met my mama at a contest. She was the only lady short enough to be his partner.

JANIE

He met my mama at the church.

Jimi cannot help but smile. Not the Al he remembers.

JIMI
People do change.
(then)
Come on, step up-

He takes her hands- pulling Janie up onto the tops of his feet. Swaying her to the music.

JANIE
Am I short enough?

JIMI
You? Far as I'm concerned, sister,
you're just right.

And they dance like this to the sweet guitar. Brother and sister. A new family. Until suddenly...

Sounds of commotion from the other room. Angry voices. Shouting. Jimi perks at- a man's voice, a voice he knows.

EXT. PORCH - SAME

The voice belongs to LEON HENDRIX, 20, polyester suit. He dodges a swinging broomstick as Ayako chases off the stoop.

LEON
Hey now! Watch it!

AYAKO
Stay out of my house! You not welcome!

LEON
I ain't come for your damn house,
lady! Where's my brother? Where's
Jimi?

JIMI
Leon?

Jimi shoves through a crowd at the doorway- seeing him.

LEON
Buster.

And they crash together. Brothers. Embracing for dear life.

JIMI
Pop said you skipped town.

LEON

Hey-
(shrugs it)
Who ain't got troubles?

And Jimi gets a good look at Leon for the first time-
noticing needle pricks, track marks, hollow eyes...

Leon hikes his sleeves, hiding it.

LEON (CONT'D)

No reason to miss my main man's
homecoming!

A car full of unsavory-looking street hoods is parked across
the street. Waiting for Leon. Jimi notices.

JIMI

You know, I got plenty of bread
these days. 'Case you're owin'.

LEON

Me? Naw, you kidding? I'm king
around here! Those cats are pals.

And that may be even worse.

LEON (CONT'D)

(changing the subject)
I got all your records, you know?
Some of those brothers can't dig
it. Say it got no soul. I say they
got no ears. I hear how you do,
Jimmy- whole world full of blues.

The car horn honks across the street.

JIMI

Why don't you tell those boys to
beat it, Leon?
(taking his hand)
Come on home.

But-

AL

Let him go, Jimi!

Al barrels up, snatching the broomstick.

LEON

Missed you, pop.

AL
You ain't welcome.

JIMI
Hey, pop, wait a minute-

But Al brushes Jimi aside.

AL
This ain't your concern.
(to Leon)
Cops is on their way, boy.

JIMI
Cops? Pop!

But Leon backs away- tossing up his hands.

LEON
It's cool, baby! We cool. Ain't
gotta go where I ain't wanted.

JIMI
No- he don't mean it, man. Come on
back here- this is family.

LEON
Who needs family?
(stumbling back)
You know how it is, Jimmy. Guys
like us got the whole wide world-

And into the busy street- cars swerving. Neighbors looking on
from porches, fire-escapes.

LEON (CONT'D)
Shoot, I'm Jimi Hendrix's brother!

INT. FINISHED BASEMENT - LATER

Muffled sounds of the party up above. Jimi is taking refuge.

A cork board wall is tacked with report cards and Polaroids
of Janie and four other Asian children... But no sign of Leon
nor Jimi. This is Al's new family.

AL
Sorry you had to see that.

Al descends the stairs with a bottle of bourbon, two glasses.

AL (CONT'D)
Damn fool pimp he done made his-
self.

JIMI
Can't see how it helps things
tossing him out.

AL
Man grows up, learns it ain't no
use trying to fix the past. Best
start looking to the future.

He pours the bourbon, giving one to Jimi.

AL (CONT'D)
There's a lawyer upstairs. Mel
Steingart. Smart fella. Handled the
adoption.

JIMI
Adoption?

AL
Yako didn't tell you?

He indicates the cork board family... genuine pride.

AL (CONT'D)
They're mine now. Ours. Call that a
fresh start.

Jimi had not heard, and it throws him.

AL (CONT'D)
Anyway, Mel's been chewing my ear
off about a will. There's this
thing called a "beneficiary".

JIMI
(catching on)
It's cool, pop- you leave it all to
them. I got plenty.

But that's not quite what Al is getting at.

AL
Well, see- that's what we been
talking about, me and Mel: plenty,
what you got. Even too much not to
spread around.

And Jimi begins to understand.

JIMI

You mean-

AL

When's your birthday, October?

JIMI

November.

AL

And how old you turning?

JIMI

Twenty-six.

AL

Getting on, see? Time to start looking past your own self. To the future.

JIMI

You want my money.

AL

Well not yet, boy! But this life is a fragile thing. 'Specially in your line, candle burning at both ends.

Jimi absorbs this, shattering.

JIMI

You want me to die.

AL

Now don't be a fool! Just got a family to think of now. Big one.

JIMI

Yeah, I get it, you and that lawyer- adopting five new kids when you could never even care for your own.

This stings- it is meant to. And Al slaps him hard across the face. Pain, fury gushing up from someplace deep.

AL

You boys are just like your mama! Cherokee blood pumping through you like a poison, burning everyone you touch. Like that pretty girl up there. Seems to think you really in love-

(ice cold)

How long before it burns her, too?

He swigs his bourbon, and thrusts the bottle.

AL (CONT'D)
Go on, take it. It was your mama's
favorite.
(beat)
I'll go get Mel.

He stalks out. Leaving Jimi, for a long beat, dazed. This was the old Al. The one Jimi expected all along. And slowly... he smiles. Deriving some morbid satisfaction. He was right: people never change.

EXT. GARFIELD HIGH - AFTERNOON

The run down campus of an inner-city high school. Cinder-block. Black Power graffiti. At odds with the limousine parked out front. Next to the "Jimi Hendrix" tour bus.

INT. ASSEMBLY HALL - SAME

A blown-up year-book photo of Jimi spans the stage. Beneath it, a drum kit, Marshall stack. These face a sea of indifferent faces. Students. All black. They are not fans.

PRINCIPAL
Today, we sons and daughters of
Garfield have special reason to be-

Something clatters from the wings, turning heads. It is an empty bourbon bottle, rolling to the stage.

PRINCIPAL (CONT'D)
-erm- proud.

IN THE WINGS-

Jimi is a wobble-kneed wreck.

JIMI
Where's my bottle? Get my bottle-

KATHY
Christ, Jimi!
(imploring)
You can't let him go on like this.

JEFFREY
Let him? He asked for it. Took me
six months to set this up.
(MORE)

JEFFREY (CONT'D)
 Fucking bureaucrats. Drive a harder
 bargain than the Fillmore!

Jimi gulps, and retches into a waste-bin.

CHAS
 Maybe just a Q&A?

JEFFREY
 Q&A? Are you daft? This is fucking
 rock and roll.

Jimi's Caucasian band-mates peer out, seeing- a cadre of
 Black Panthers at the front of the crowd. Stone-faced. Scary.

NOEL
 It's not exactly our fan base.

JEFFREY
 Fan base? 10 years ago, that was
 Jimi out there! Wishing one day
 he'd make it here, where he is
 today.

Jimi is puking into a rubbish bin.

JEFFREY (CONT'D)
 This is for that dreamer!

CHAS
 And because Motown is starting to
 move more units than Capitol.

JEFFREY
 (shrugs, shamelessly)
 I don't know about you blokes, but
 my wallet is color blind.

And with that-

PRINCIPAL
*Let's have a warm hand for one of
 our very own- Mr. Jimi Hendrix!*

KATHY
 (stops him, a tender hand)
 You don't have to do this, love-

But Jimi bats her away. The icy look of Mr. Hyde. And onto

THE STAGE - CONTINUOUS

Jimi staggers out to scattered, tepid applause. Fumbling his guitar. It emits a sour squawk.

JIMI

'Scuse me- I just need to-

He trips, stumbling over a mic stand.

BLACK PANTHERS

*He's drunk! Get off the stage,
uncle tom!*

JIMI

Hey now- that's not-

BLACK PANTHERS

Honky-lover! Freak!

The catcalls slam him like a whirlwind. Shaking him. A far cry from the love Jimi has come to expect on stage.

Until finally...

And Kathy can take no more, rushing out.

BLACK PANTHERS (CONT'D)

(hissing)

Little Miss Ann! White meat!

KATHY

That's it, Jimi, let's go!

JIMI

But don't you see?

(his stare is cold)

They love me-

Litter sails up, pelting them. But Jimi just stands there.

JIMI (CONT'D)

Just like you.

EXT. GARFIELD HIGH - MOMENTS LATER

The limousine peeling out...

As Kathy and the others emerge, just in time to see: Jimi's middle finger, receding down the street. Slicing the wind.

INT. FLEABAG MOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

A motley crew of hustlers and hos from the old hood. Smoking, snorting, spiking, and swigging. This is Leon's new family. Jimi noodles his guitar in a blitzed-out haze.

JIMI
IS THAT THE STARS IN THE SKY
OR IS IT RAIN FALLIN' DOWN?
WILL IT BURN ME IF I TOUCH THE SUN
SO BIG, SO ROUND?

He is singing this to a trashy tart on either arm-

JIMI (CONT'D)
WOULD I BE TRUTHFUL, YEAH
IN CHOOSIN' YOU AS THE ONE FOR ME?

A hush falls...

Kathy is standing in the doorway. Catcalls start up. But-

LEON
Y'all shut up! That's Jimi's girl!
Makes us family.

Leon shows her in, past a gauntlet of unnerving stares. In fact, the only eyes not fixed on Kathy belong to Jimi...

Still playing his guitar.

LEON (CONT'D)
(to tarts)
Go on, scram!

The tarts begin to scoot aside, but Jimi stops them.

JIMI
Did I say go?
(singing)
OH, MY HEAD IS POUNDIN', POUNDIN'

KATHY
Look at me, Jimi.

But here he is again, letting his guitar do the talking.

JIMI
GOIN' ROUND AND ROUND AND ROUND AND
ROUND

KATHY
Let's go home.

Jimi plays a violent riff...

Kathy flinching, summoning composure.

KATHY (CONT'D)
Give me your hand.

JIMI
Ain't the old man told you? Touch
me, you're gonna get burned.

KATHY
That's not you, Jimi.

JIMI
(icicles)
People change.
(singing)
OH, MY HEART BURNS WITH FEELIN'

KATHY
Jimi, stop it.

JIMI
BUT MY MIND IS COLD AND REELIN'

KATHY
(tears welling)
I love you. Remember?

And the *coup de grace*-

JIMI
BUT IS THIS LOVE, BABY?
OR IS IT CONFUSION?

A stinging solo...

Kathy can take no more. She grabs the guitar.

KATHY
Enough!

Jimi flashes up and slaps her face. Like Al slapped him.

The party skids to a halt. All eyes on-

Kathy, welt rising, too stunned to cry;

And Jimi, ice cold. After a beat, he settles back calmly. Re-tuning his guitar.

RETURN TO:

INT. FAIRMONT HOTEL - DAY (1970)

A washroom mirror. Jimi's eyes are bloodshot wells of regret. He is alone, scrutinizing a tarot Queen. His hands trembling. Face glistening a cold sweat. This more than just nerves. He spills a handful of pills into his palm. Considering it... But swallows only two.

And for a sudden instant, in the mirror behind him, a blur of light: those kind eyes, smiling. But just then-

TOBY (O.S.)
(rattling the door)
Mr. Hendrix?

INTERCUT-

Toby in the hall. Concerned.

TOBY
Your friends are waiting.

JIMI
(hopeful)
Kathy?
(then, hesitating)
Who else?

TOBY
Some English guy. Raymond? Redmon?
Her husband, I think.

Jimi pales.

INT. LOBBY - DAY

Concierge continues to wait with Kathy and her husband. Cardigan, chinos, a proper English gent.

CONCIERGE
I am sorry, ma'am. I expect he'll
have to come out sometime.

But Kathy, knowing better-

KATHY
Does that john have a window?

EXT. FAIRMONT HOTEL - MOMENTS LATER

The bug squeals off...

As Kathy rushes out, just a moment too late.

INT. VW BUG - CONTINUOUS

Jimi hunkering low in the back seat- watching the smudged reflection of Kathy in the rearview, receding out of sight.

INT. FAIRMONT WASHROOM - LATER

Chas and Jeffrey have arrived. Finding the tarot card left propped above the sink. It is The Queen of Wands. And for the first time we get a full look at her pictogram: her red stockings, ginger hair, alabaster skin...

She is the spitting image of Kathy.

JEFFREY

Another tarot? Has he gone totally
fucking bonkers?! What next? We
hunt down every doll he ever
boffed?

But Chas is catching on.

CHAS

No, not every. Just the queens.

EXT. SPANISH CASTLE - ESTABLISHING - DAY

A backwoods blues joint in the shade of the great sequoias. The bug rumbles up a gravel drive, raising dust...

If we didn't know better, this could be another age. Instead, it is a place out of time.

INT. BLUES JOINT - MOMENTS LATER

All sawdust and peeling wood. A few barflies shoot pool. An old blind blues man coaxes music from a battered guitar.

All of these faces are black. And a few heads turn as Jimi enters with Toby and Lane. But the stares don't bother Jimi. He is captivated by the man with the guitar. Singing a slow, simple rendition of a tune that Jimi has made famous.

BLIND BLUES MAN

I SHOULD HAVE QUIT YOU
A LONG TIME AGO
I SHOULD HAVE QUIT YOU, BABY
A LONG TIME AGO
(MORE)

BLIND BLUES MAN (CONT'D)
 BUT YOU GOT ME MESSIN' ROUND WITH
 YOU, BABY
 YOU GOT ME CRYIN' ON A KILLIN'
 FLOOR

Jimi steps nearer as the old man plays- his own fingers tracking an imaginary fret board in imitation. Absorbing some subtle new techniques. When suddenly-

BLIND BLUES MAN (CONT'D)
 Well?

The old man is facing Jimi. Like somehow he can "see" him.

BLIND BLUES MAN (CONT'D)
 (re: guitar case)
 You planning to play that ax, or
 just buy it a cocktail?

MOMENTS LATER-

Jimi is on stage with the old man. Trading casual licks. As Toby and Lane look on in awe, sipping soda-pop.

BLIND BLUES MAN
 Smooth riff. You write that one?

It is the intro melody to the unfinished song we heard before. The one Jimi that cannot seem to crack.

JIMI
 Trying. All I got so far-

Plays it again. And again. And again- but no farther. Stuck.

JIMI (CONT'D)
 Just- ain't feelin' it lately. You
 ever had that?

BLIND BLUES MAN
 Me? I had just about everything
 they is to have, one time or
 another. Used to think that's what
 the blues was all about: gotta live
 'em to play 'em. Buncha baloney.
 Lifetime of misery and regret,
 'fore I finally realized this music
 ain't about being blue, it's about
 healin' it.

And the blind man is "looking" at Jimi... through him.

BLIND BLUES MAN (CONT'D)
 Your fingers already got what it
 takes, boy. Try shinin' a little
 love on the rest of you for a
 change.

This resonates. The blind man solos into a 12-bar blues...

BLIND BLUES MAN (CONT'D)
 OH YEAH, OH YEAH
 EVERYTHING'S GONNA BE ALRIGHT THIS
 MORNIN'
 HAVE MERCY!

He howls along with a wailing lick-

BLIND BLUES MAN (CONT'D)
 WHEN I WAS A YOUNG BOY
 'ROUND ABOUT THE AGE OF FIVE
 MAMA SAID I WAS GONNA BE
 THE GREATEST MAN ALIVE

JIMI
 (joining)
 BUT NOW I'M A MAN
 WAY PAST TWENTY-ONE
 WANT YOU TO BELIEVE ME, BABY
 I HAD A WHOLE LOT OF FUN

And as they jam, for the first time in a long time, Jimi
 seems at peace... lost in the sheer exuberance of the song.

FLASH BACK:

INT. HARLEM APOLLO - NIGHT (1965)

A world apart. A palatial theater buzzing with hep cats and
 rouged womens, all bumping and jiving to a rollicking R&B
 rendition of the same song. Mannish Boy.

LITTLE RICHARD
 I'M A MAN
 SPELLED M - A - N

LITTLE RICHARD is 35, sky-high hair, sequin suit. A human
 fireball, bounding across the stage, conducting-

A full band, among whom...

Jimi in a matching skinny suit, pompadour, pencil mustache.
 No more than back-up guitar. But yearning for the spotlight.

Richard gyrates to the front row. Making the women swoon.

LITTLE RICHARD (CONT'D)
 M - A - N, M - A - N
 DO-DOO-DO-DOO-DOO-DO-DO-DOO-DO-DOO!

Pure showmanship. Jimi learned it here, first. In fact, he is learning it right now. Imitating the moves... And absorbing fast. He flashes a wink to some ladies in the front row.

Richard sees this. Glowering.

LITTLE RICHARD (CONT'D)
 (shimmying over)
 Listen up, pimple face, I thought I
 told you to shave that mustache!
 (singing)
 'CAUSE I'M A MAN
 (back to Jimi)
 I am Little Richard. The
 Originator. The Georgia Peach!
 (back to the ladies)
 NATURAL BORN LOVERS MAN
 (pointed)
 And I am the only one in this show
 allowed to look pretty!

He cues the horn section with a pelvic thrust.

JIMI
 Sorry, boss- ran outta soap.

But Richard shoots a withering look.

LITTLE RICHARD
 Then pluck it with your fingertips!

Those ladies in the front row, still making eyes at Jimi.

LITTLE RICHARD (CONT'D)
 Welcome to the rhythm section, boy.

He spins down the volume knob on Jimi's guitar.

LITTLE RICHARD (CONT'D)
 (to RHYTHM GUITARIST)
 You there, take his solo.

The rhythm guitarist is caught off guard. He weakly runs a scale. No flash, no style...

As Richard sweeps back across stage to reclaim his audience.

Jimi endures the lackluster performance as long as he can, but finally cracks. Cranking his volume-

And tearing into a dizzying riff. Dazzling the crowd with a flurry of guitar pyrotechnics.

Richard spins back, upstaged by the upstart. Livid.

As Jimi finishes his solo with a skid across stage- and right up to Richard's mic for a final, shouted chorus:

JIMI
YES, I'M A MAN!

EXT. BACK ALLEY - NIGHT

The stage door slams open. Jimi being cast out. No more trace of the strutting cock. He is meek, pleading.

JIMI
I'm real sorry, Mr. Richard-

LITTLE RICHARD
Real finished, is what you is! I
knew I should have left you back in
Memphis. You're Chitlin' Circuit
through and through. Born to be
background.
(to BOUNCER)
That guitar stays with the act.

The bouncer snatches it back.

LITTLE RICHARD (CONT'D)
And the suit.

Jimi glumly forks over his sequin coat and tie.

JIMI
I know I shouldn't'a cut in like
that, but Randy just can't solo.
And you always say "put on a show"!

LITTLE RICHARD
Yeah, boy, my show.

And with that, he's gone. Bouncer nodding to the rest of Jimi's costume: shiny slacks, patent leather spats. And we

EXT. HARLEM STREETS - NIGHT

Jimi is stripped to his boxers, undershirt, and a pair of threadbare socks. Tip-toeing between puddles... but wearing a cocky grin despite it all.

Chyron: **Harlem. 22 years old.**

OLD GRANNY
Good lord, what happened to your
clothes, son?

JIMI
(acting surprised)
Hm? Well, how about that? Guess I
just played so dang hot, it burned
'em off!

EXT. HARLEM TENEMENT - NIGHT

Local whores mill about the stoop, touching up nail-polish,
gossiping. They spot Jimi, returning home in the buff.

WHORES
Lookin' good, Jim-bo!

INT. TENEMENT ROOM - DAY

An Oriental screen divides the tiny flat in two. From behind
it, the rhythmic huff and thud of sex. Jimi is alone on his
side, trying to drown it out, but his fingers are fretting an
imaginary guitar. His battered guitar case is empty.

JIMI
(singing softly)
A BROOM IS DREARILY SWEEPING
UP THE BROKEN PIECES OF YESTERDAY'S
LIFE
SOMEWHERE A QUEEN IS WEEPING
SOMEWHERE A KING HAS NO WIFE
AND THE WIND, IT CRIES-

But a shout cuts him short.

DEVON
Fuck me!

It comes from behind the screen. DEVON is 16, a Black Lolita,
red lips. Belly-up on a rickety cot, bland look in her eyes,
as an anonymous "John" humps her furiously.

DEVON (CONT'D)
(to Jimi)
Y'all better pay royalties on this
rhythm section, pervert!

Jimi drops his hands, giving up. No use.

He pulls a dog-eared record sleeve from the battered guitar case: Bob Dylan. "Highway 61 Revisited." The printed lyrics have been marked up, underlined, annotated by Jimi.

He cranks up the disc on an old Victrola, mouthing along-

SONG (ON RECORD)
ONCE UPON A TIME YOU DRESSED SO
FINE
THREW THE BUMS A DIME IN YOUR
PRIME, DIDN'T YOU?

Jimi moves into the

KITCHENETTE - CONTINUOUS

No more than a hotplate and a dripping faucet. Nary a crumb in the pantry. But Jimi goes straight for the rat trap on the bottom shelf, easing it aside to reveal a cigar tin. Devon's private stash: rolled bills, assorted pills. Jimi swallows a few with a handful of water. Peeling off some cash...

NOW YOU DON'T TALK SO LOUD
NOW YOU DON'T SEEM SO PROUD
ABOUT HAVING TO BE SCROUNGING
YOUR NEXT MEAL

As Devon pops up behind him- Jimi jolts.

DEVON
I'm gonna spot you those uppers.
But I ain't recall hiring no pimp.

She snatches the cash.

JIMI
(pleading)
You know I ain't no thief, Dev!
Just a loan. Get my ax out of hock.
I can pay you back right after the
gig, promise. Do not pass "go"!

The "John" appears, zipping up. Tossing a few bills.

DEVON
(counts it)
Hold it, Negro. You're short.

"JOHN"
Call it a tax. For making me listen
to this honky shit.

"John" moves off... but in a flash, Devon slings out a large butcher knife, pressing it to his throat.

DEVON

Only person paying a tax tonight is you!

"JOHN"

Whoa! Simmer down, bitch!

He retrieves a billfold with shaking hands- Devon grabs it.

DEVON

And that "honky shit" is called ambiance!

With a shove out the door-

DEVON (CONT'D)

Classless motherfucker.

She counts out her pay, giving the extra cash to Jimi.

JIMI

Thanks, Dev! You're a real pal.

DEVON

Naw, just a sucker for a boy with motherless eyes.

A beat. Jimi moving off.

DEVON (CONT'D)

He ain't wrong, though-
(re: Dylan album)
Soul brother like you got no
business with this cracker.

The organ solo whirls up on track, carrying over

EXT. NYC STREETS - DAY/DUSK

Jimi on his long walk from Harlem to Greenwich Village...

Taking in the panoply of urban life along the way: players and pimps, bankers and bums, ad men and flower children. Jimi is a part of this world, yet apart from it.

SONG

HOW DOES IT FEEL?
HOW DOES IT FEEL?
TO BE WITHOUT A HOME?
LIKE A COMPLETE UNKNOWN?

Jimi ducks into

INT. PAWN SHOP - DUSK

Forking over the cash and retrieving his cheap knock-off guitar. Jimi signs a pawn slip for the umpteenth time...

Pawnbroker rolling an eye: *"He'll be back..."* And finally

INT. EAST VILLAGE DIVE BAR - NIGHT

A smoke-clouded cave. A world apart from Harlem. Sparse all-white crowd of Hippies and Beats. Paying no attention to-

JIMI
(singing on stage)
WHEN YOU AIN'T GOT NOTHING
YOU GOT NOTHING TO LOSE
YOU'RE INVISIBLE NOW
YOU GOT NO SECRETS TO CONCEAL

His act is unpolished. But he sings with a hard-fought feeling Dylan never approached. He knows how it feels.

JIMI (CONT'D)
HOW DOES IT FEEL?
HOW DOES IT FEEL?
TO BE ON YOUR OWN?
WITH NO DIRECTION HOME?
LIKE A COMPLETE UNKNOWN?
LIKE A ROLLING STONE?

Jimi solos out to finish the tune. And then it's over. And no one seems to notice, except...

A round of vigorous applause from a back table. White gloves, clapping. This is LINDA, 20, jet-black hair, ivory skin. Her eyes meet Jimi across the dusky room. Connecting. Piercing. Perhaps he is not so invisible now, after all.

INT. JANE STREET WALK-UP - DAWN

A bohemian pad. Hazy with reefer. Floor spread with records: blues, folk, rock and roll. And on an island in the middle, Jimi plays guitar. The last chords of a familiar song.

JIMI
AND THE WIND WHISPERS... LINDA

Linda laughs, charmed. It is the end of a long-night. And much to our astonishment, they are both still fully-clothed.

JIMI (CONT'D)
(self-conscious)
You don't dig it.

LINDA
Dig it? It's brilliant!

An English accent, upper crust.

LINDA (CONT'D)
I just wonder who the wind cried
for last night.

JIMI
(a Cheshire smile)
Only you, girl. Only ever you.

His hand moves for hers. She casually ignores it.

LINDA
(changing the subject)
Try these-

She ties on a houndstooth scarf, pair of dark sunglasses.

LINDA (CONT'D)
Bobby Dylan in black face.

Turning him to the mirror-

LINDA (CONT'D)
You'll have to lose the Pompadour,
though. And that D.A.

She musses a hand through his grease-straitened conk.

LINDA (CONT'D)
You have such wonderful curls. Why
not let them out? There...

Jimi blurts laughter. She has given him a Dylan fro.

LINDA (CONT'D)
Don't you like it?

JIMI
Times may be a' changin', but I go
back uptown like this, they'll
reject my Harlem passport.

LINDA
So let them! You belong down here.

JIMI
Got that right!

His hand finds her thigh. But Linda avoids it.

LINDA
I mean downtown. You and your
music.

JIMI
That part's easier said.

He reaches for her cheek.

LINDA
(stopping him)
I want you to meet a friend.

JIMI
Anything you say, Miss Ann.

LINDA
Who's that- "Miss Ann"?

Jimi gives a smile: her ignorance says it all.

JIMI
Only everything you is... and I
ain't.

LINDA
Don't patronize me, Jimmy James.
You're gonna conquer the world.
Harlem can get in line.

Jimi laughs, noodling an old blues.

JIMI
GYPSY WOMAN TOLD MY MOTHER 'FORE I
WAS BORN
YOU GOT A BOY-CHILD COMIN'

LINDA
(cuts in, she knows it)
GONNA BE A SON OF A GUN
MAKE ALL THE PRETTY WOMENS
JUMP AND SHOUT
AND THEN THE WHOLE WORLD WANNA KNOW
WHAT THIS ALL ABOUT

She grins. Jimi is impressed.

JIMI

Where'd such a pretty English
sister learn Willie Dixon?

LINDA

My boyfriend likes the blues.

And this drops- "boyfriend"- with a thud.

JIMI

(taking a hint)

Oh.

LINDA

Where'd a Harlem brother learn Bob
Dylan?

A beat. Jimi unties the scarf, sunglasses.

JIMI

(moving to go)

Just fooling his-self, I guess.

Linda stops him.

LINDA

I don't think he is. I think music
is bigger than black and white. Big
enough to change us.

JIMI

Sure, sister. Big enough to change
us all-

He flips through her records...

JIMI (CONT'D)

From Chuck Berry to Elvis Presley.
From Bo Diddley to the Beatles.

For every black original, a more popular white imitator.

JIMI (CONT'D)

Muddy Waters to-
(what's next?)
The Rolling Stones.

Linda is stung. Jimi softens, taking her hand.

JIMI (CONT'D)

Look, you're a sweet kid.

LINDA

I told you I have a boyfriend.

JIMI
 (glances around)
 Where?

And he leans in, planting a kiss on her neck.

JIMI (CONT'D)
 Here?
 (her earlobe)
 Or maybe in here. I'll keep
 searchin'.

Fingers undoing her blouse.

LINDA
 Actually, you're already looking at
 him.

The Rolling Stones record: a young Keith Richards.

JIMI
 Him?

LINDA
 He may not have been born with the
 blues, but he plays like he was.
 (driving it home)
 Just like Jimmy James plays rock
 and roll.

JIMI
 That was ours, too. White cats just
 took it.

But Linda is having none of his self-pity.

LINDA
 So stop whining and take it back!

She tosses another record to his chest. A white folk singer
 with a guitar. Tim Rose: Hey Joe. And we

CUT TO:

The record needle drops on the bitter folk ballad. Carrying
 over a montage of Jimi's transformation:

--In his dingy tenement, studying the song. Singing along
 with the record.

SONG (ON RECORD)
*HEY JOE, WHERE YOU GOIN' WITH THAT
 GUN IN YOUR HAND?*

JIMI
 HEY JOE, I SAID WHERE YOU GOIN'
 WITH THAT GUN IN YOUR HAND?

As Devon rolls her eyes behind the Oriental screen;

--In Linda's flat, she works Jimi's straightened hair into curlers. He continues to play. He is getting better.

JIMI (CONT'D)
 I'M GOING DOWN TO SHOOT MY OLD LADY
 YOU KNOW I CAUGHT HER MESSIN'
 AROUND WITH ANOTHER MAN

She removes the curlers. Revealing his hip new Dylan fro;

--In vintage Village clothes shops, hunting the racks for paisley shirts, wide-brim hats, feathered boas;

--In Harlem, drawing stares from the zootsuiters... but ignoring them. Jimi is coming into his own;

SONG (ON RECORD)
 HEY JOE, I HEARD YOU SHOT YOUR
 WOMAN DOWN
 SHOT HER DOWN TO THE GROUND

--At a downtown recording studio, Linda leads Jimi past security with a friendly smile. Opening the doors on...

A room of gleaming electric guitars. Jimi is in paradise. As he picks up his first gleaming white Fender Stratocaster.

EXT. CAFÉ WHA? - NIGHT

Hip crowd wandering up. Past the chalkboard marquee. Opening act: "Jimmy James and the Blue Flames"

INT. CAFÉ WHA? - NIGHT

Hub of the white Village rock scene. Jimi has transformed: linen shirt, hobnail boots, hair in a small fro. He has also made the song his own, turning folk ballad to muscular rock.

JIMI
 YES I DID, I SHOT HER
 YOU KNOW I CAUGHT HER MESSIN'
 AROUND TOWN

He may still be hampered by nerves. But raw talent and natural stage charisma shine through.

JIMI (CONT'D)
AND I GAVE HER THE GUN
I SHOT HER!

Jimi fires into an extended solo...

As Linda watches from a front table with ANDREW OLDHAM, 30s,
a music manager who takes it in without reaction. Linda,
studying his poker face. And we realize: this is an audition.

LINDA
So? What do you think?

OLDHAM
Keith told me about your little
Pygmalion project.

He is another jaded Londoner, not easily impressed.

OLDHAM (CONT'D)
Have got to admit I was skeptical.

LINDA
He can play, though, can't he?

Oldham shrugs. A suggestive look-

OLDHAM
I just wonder what else he can do.

LINDA
You're not suggesting-

OLDHAM
It's a modern world, Linda.
"Colorblind", wasn't that the
pitch?

LINDA
This is business, Andrew.

OLDHAM
Glad to hear it. So is this-

He scoots back his chair, standing to go-

OLDHAM (CONT'D)
Keith is my biggest client. He also
happens to be your boyfriend.

LINDA
I'm telling you, this isn't-

OLDHAM

Then what is it? If you want to
live vicariously, Linda, have a
child.

From on stage, Jimi sees this exchange. But cannot hear it.

JIMI

HEY JOE
WHERE YOU GONNA RUN TO NOW?

Linda grabs Oldham on his way to the door-

LINDA

He's a brilliant guitarist!

OLDHAM

Of course he is. Best I ever heard-
when you shut your eyes.

Jimi is blazing through a final solo, eyes shut.

OLDHAM (CONT'D)

But if you want to be in this
business, Linda-love, here's a tip:
try keeping them open for a change.

He tugs away, brushing past her to the door...

Where Chas Chandler has just arrived. And stands frozen,
watching Jimi in awe. He stops Oldham.

CHAS

Hey Andy, is he one of yours?

OLDHAM

Him? What's it look like I run, a
minstrel show?

And with that, he departs. Opportunity out the door. As the
song ends. Jimi, finally opening his eyes to see-

Linda, crestfallen... Oldham is gone.

EXT. VILLAGE STREETS - NIGHT

Jimi hotfoots out the club, across Washington Square Park.

LINDA

(hustling to keep up)
It's one manager, Jimi-

JIMI
One of three. In a week.

LINDA
The others are still thinking.

JIMI
Yeah, thinking the same thing he
did: too downtown for Harlem, too
uptown for here.

LINDA
Who cares what they think? You
belong on that stage.

She catches him, but he spins back.

JIMI
I don't belong anywhere.
(glancing around)
Look around you, girl!

The park is abuzz with Hippie life: white faces, every one.
Casting oblong stares at Jimi, black man with a white girl.

LINDA
So let them look!

She tugs him up, kissing him hard, for all to see. And she
means it. But Jimi is steely.

JIMI
And here I thought I was the one
trying to be somebody else.

LINDA
I love you.

JIMI
No. You love the idea of me. And I
don't blame you. So did I.

He shoves back the borrowed guitar.

JIMI (CONT'D)
Thank Keith for the ax.

And he brushes past, leaving Linda, spurned in his wake.

RETURN TO:

INT. BLUES JOINT - DAY (1970)

The Spanish Castle. Bustling now. Happy hour crowd on the dance floor. And among them, we just might notice-

A pair of mismatched gloves, one black, one white.

But Jimi does not see. He is hunched at a corner pay phone, beads of sweat risen on his brow. Hands trembling. It rings.

INTERCUT-

A white glove answering the phone in a Manhattan flat.

LINDA
(into phone)
Hello?

Sounds of a posh party in her background...

Jimi bites his tongue.

LINDA (CONT'D)
Jimi is that you? Are you okay?

He slams the receiver.

Jimi pops another dose of barbiturates with palsied fingers.

Drawing out another tarot card: Queen of Coins. Jet-black hair, ivory skin, white glove. For all the world like Linda.

INT. MANHATTAN FLAT - NIGHT

Linda quickly dials the number written on a pad. After a beat-

LINDA
Hello, Chas?

FLASH BACK:

EXT. VILLAGE STREET - NIGHT (1965)

Only moments after we just left Jimi, rushing off.

CHAS
Hey! You! Hi there! Wait up!
(hurrying up, winded)
James, isn't it? Jimmy James?

But not anymore. That dream is dead.

JIMI
Hendrix.

CHAS
Oh. Well, I just saw you at the
"Wha?" Bloody brilliant!

Jimi absorbs this, but shakes it. Walking on.

CHAS (CONT'D)
I'm Chas Chandler, by the way. I
play bass with the Animals. "House
of the Rising Sun"?

JIMI
Y'all stole that from Leadbelly.

CHAS
Erm- yes, I suppose- that's true.
But actually this is my last tour
with the band. I'm becoming a
manager. I've never heard anyone
play like you.

JIMI
Come uptown. Anytime. Welcome to
take whatever you can steal.

He moves on. Chas, dogged.

CHAS
But- no- that's not- that is, I
couldn't even if I tried.
(cuts him off)
I want you to play it-
(flashing a BUSINESS CARD)
As my first client.

Jimi stops, warily inspecting the card.

JIMI
Well, at least your ears work.

CHAS
Thank you.

JIMI
(as a fact, not bitterly)
But you might want to do something
about those peepers.

And he walks off.

INT. HARLEM HOUSE PARTY - NIGHT

Black folks sipping whiskey, smoking reefer. Jimi plays slithering sexy blues on his guitar, cigarette dangling.

JIMI
THERE'S A RED HOUSE OVER YONDER
THAT'S WHERE MY BABY STAYS
THERE'S A RED HOUSE OVER YONDER,
BABY
THAT'S WHERE MY BABY STAYS

Devon sidles up. She looks a trashy shade of "elegant" in long black gloves, red lipstick. Musing his "downtown" hair.

DEVON
Shit, fetch this boy some lye! He
gone all kinky on us!

JIMI
WELL I AIN'T BEEN HOME TO SEE MY
BABY
IN ABOUT NINETY NINE AND ONE HALF
DAYS

Devon grooves along-

DEVON
'BOUT TIME YOU SEE HER NOW!
(a drag of his smoke)
Is good to have you back in Kansas,
Dorothy. Get this from the wizard?

She has found the business card: "Chas Chandler/Music Manager"

JIMI
English cat. Says I'm the best he
ever heard.
(sings)
WAIT A MINUTE, SOMETHING'S WRONG
MY KEY WONT UNLOCK THIS DOOR
(grinning)
Wants to sign me.

DEVON
Must be needing a new butler.
(yelps)
Ooh-ee! Burn!

But Jimi is too cool to feel the jibe.

JIMI

Naw, mama. Rock and roll act.

(sings)

I GOT A BAD, BAD FEELING, MAMA
MY BABY DON'T LIVE HERE NO MORE

(then)

Gonna take me to London. Says over
there things is different.

And Devon sees he means it.

DEVON

London, England?

(a hint of envy cracks the
cynical shell)

Well, shit!

JIMI

Reckon I could still use someone to
darn my socks. Gotta get a
passport, though.

Devon lights up. With it all, still just an innocent girl.

DEVON

You mean it?! Ha! Society Devon!

(doing "British")

The honor is mine, your majesty!

She sounds ridiculous. Jimi busts out laughing.

JIMI

Dream on, girl! You can't even fake
an orgasm!

But Devon has let down her guard, and this stings.

JIMI (CONT'D)

'CAUSE IF MY BABY DON'T LOVE ME NO
MORE

I KNOW HER SISTER WILL

DEVON

(lashes out, old defenses
springing back)

Well fuck you, too, Hendrix!

This brings the party, and Jimi's song, to a screeching halt.

JIMI

Whoa! Hey, Dev, I'm only teasing.

DEVON

You think you just one of a kind,
don't you? Remake yourself at the
drop of a hat. Well, I got news for
ya, Jimi. You may win the world on
that guitar. But take it off-
(yanks it)
You just another lonely nigger.

Devon crumples the business card, and storms out.

RETURN TO:

INT. BLUES JOINT - DAY (1970)

The pay phone dangles, abandoned. Emitting a steady dial
tone. As Chas rushes up. Once again, too late to find Jimi.

CHAS

(into phone)
Hello, operator? Can I have the
reverse directory on a call just
placed to New York City?

After a beat, the phone rings. Someone picks up.

CHAS (CONT'D)

Linda?

But instead we

INTERCUT-

A Harlem sanitarium. Hollow-eyed patients in the background.

NURSE

Wrong number, pal.

CHAS

(confused)
I'm sorry? Did you just get a long-
distance call from a man called
Jimi?

NURSE

Oh. Seattle, right? Guy was calling
for a patient. Devon Wilson.

Chas makes the connection.

CHAS

Of course: Devon! Could you please
put her on?

NURSE

Well, buddy, I'd like to- 'cept she
died. Few weeks back. Suicide.

Chas turns ashen.

Slowly hooking the receiver... when he notices the tarot card
tucked into the change slot. Chas unfolds it to reveal: Queen
of Coins. A wider view this time. Revealing that this woman
has two faces. One white, the other black. Red lips. Lolita
lips. And a long black gloves. A dead ringer for Devon.

INT. VW BUG - DAY

Jimi in the passenger seat, a hollow gaze. Shivering from a
cold sweat. The shakes are getting worse. He needs a fix.

JIMI

Are we, uh- near a bathroom?

Toby and Lane trade concerned looks.

LANE

Almost home.

TOBY

Could take you back to the hotel,
though. Or the stadium?

But just then

EXT. AFFLUENT SUBURB - CONTINUOUS

The bug screeches to a stop... within inches of a mob of
neighborhood teens.

TEEN VOICES

There he is!

They are fans. Dozens of them. Swarming the vehicle.

INT. VW BUG - CONTINUOUS

Toby shifts quickly into reverse, but...

TEEN VOICES

Jimi! Jimi! Jimi!

They are surrounded. Fists pounding the glass. Toby honks.

TOBY
Sorry, Jimi!

LANE
Swear we didn't breathe a word!

But Jimi has noticed, across the way, the conservative man on his porch. The nosy housewife snipping azaleas. So much for his own private universe.

TOBY
Show starts in a few hours, anyway.
Maybe it is best we-

But Jimi pops the door lock.

JIMI
What's the difference? Crowd's a crowd.
(grabs his guitar)
And I'm just another lonely nigger.

And steps out into the clamoring throng. Turning it on.

JIMI (CONT'D)
Y'all come here for a show?

INT. AFFLUENT HOUSE - DAY

Another red devil down the hatch. Jimi, steeling himself. As the shakes subside... at least for the moment.

INT. LIVING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Neighborhood teens pack the house like sardines. Jimi is back at the piano bench, this time with his guitar. Plugged into a borrowed amp. He riffs into a mournful blues.

JIMI
WELL I WAIT AROUND THAT TRAIN
STATION
WAITING FOR THE TRAIN
TO TAKE ME FROM THIS
LONESOME PLACE

The song, taking us back to

FLASH BACK:

EXT. AFFLUENT SUBURB - DAY (1958)

The same tree lined street, a decade earlier. Picket fences. Green lawns. Black gardeners hard at work. Except for-

Jimi, up in a tree branch, playing his cheap guitar. Push mower parked below, the grass still uncut.

JIMI
I'M GONNA LEAVE THIS TOWN
GOTTA LEAVE THIS TOWN
GONNA MAKE A WHOLE LOT OF MONEY
GONNA BE BIG YEAH

He is serenading his sweetheart: BETTY JEAN, 16, brown ringlets, saucer eyes. Poodle skirt flared on the lawn.

JIMI (CONT'D)
GONNA BUY THIS TOWN
AND PUT IT ALL IN MY SHOE
MIGHT EVEN GIVE A PIECE TO YOU!
THAT'S WHAT I'M GONNA DO

Betty Jean claps exuberantly.

BETTY JEAN
You getting better all the time,
Jimmy!

Chyron: **Seattle. 16 years old.**

JIMI
Ain't nuthin' without my muse.

He hops down, falling to the grass with his head in her lap. Guitar in his own.

BETTY JEAN
What's that, a guitar thing?

JIMI
Naw, muse is a person. Person in
your life makes you feel things.
Person you play for.

BETTY JEAN
Oh-
(fishing)
So who's yours?

JIMI
You kidding, girl?

He plucks a white flower from the grass, tucking it behind her ear. Leaning in for a kiss. But just then-

They are cut short by the sound of a car rumbling up. Creaking suspension, squealing brakes. Jimi instinctively grabs his guitar.

JIMI (CONT'D)

Shoot!

(leaping up)

You better skedaddle.

He tugs her to her feet.

BETTY JEAN

Why? Who is it, Jimmy?

JIMI

This way!

He hoists her over the back gate-

As an old jalopy rounds the corner: "Hendrix Landscapes"

JIMI (CONT'D)

(frantic)

And take her, will you?

Jimi passes the guitar carefully over the fence. This is his true queen.

JIMI (CONT'D)

He'll only smash her up again.

Betty Jean hesitates, reaching for his hand but Jimi is gone.

AL

What the hell, boy? You been
snippin' these blades one at a
time?

Jimi hustles back to the push mower.

JIMI

Sorry pop, uh, lost a-

AL

Lost your good sense, most like!

He grabs Jimi by the hand, inspecting his callous-tipped fingers. Jimi has been playing the guitar.

AL (CONT'D)
Get these from hard work, did you?
Probably think you beguillin' the
poor girl with that devil music.
Only it's the other way 'round.

He collects the push mower, rake, gardening tools.

AL (CONT'D)
That's how the woman lays her hooks
in. Makes you feel like king of the
world. Then drops you flat. 'Fore
you know it, no more music, no more
dancin'. Just a skinny young punk
turned into a big fat zero like me.

Al yanks Jimi to the truck.

JIMI
What's the big hurry, another yard?

INT. OLD JALOPY - CONTINUOUS

Al shoves Jimi inside.

AL
Scoot over, boy-

LEON is here. He is 8, wide-eyed and good natured

JIMI
Don't he have school?

AL
(climbing in)
Not today.

He cranks the ignition. As Leon beams.

LEON
Mama's coming home!

EXT. CENTRAL DISTRICT - DAY

An inner-city street of ramshackle row houses, run to seed.
The jalopy parked out front.

INT. HENDRIX ROW HOUSE - DAY

Once upon a time this was a home. Now, it is barely a house. Seriously lacking a woman's touch. But the boys rush about, doing what they can to whip the place into shape.

Al unpacks a shoebox of dusty old photos on the mantel.

AL

Your old man could really cut a rug
back in those days! At one with the
music, you know?

Jimi pauses on an old picture, lingering on the image: the face of a beautiful young woman. It is Lucille, his mother.

AL (CONT'D)

And real music, too. Swing. Bop.
All the big bands used to come
through town before the war.

(swats Jimi)

Don't just stare at the dust, boy,
clean it!

Al pauses on a photo of him and Lucille with a dance trophy.

AL (CONT'D)

That night it was the King himself:
Benny Goodman, and his main man,
Charlie Christian. Now there was a
brother who could play. This was
the biggest contest of the season-

The boys chime in:

BOYS

"Washington Hall"

AL

That's right! But you know us
Hendrix folks: what the good Lord
done give in beauty-

BOYS

He done took away in size.

AL

Not where it counts, mind you!

The boys laugh. They have heard the same story a thousand times. But tender moments are few and far between.

AL (CONT'D)
 Anyhow, your mama got that Cherokee
 blood. So outta all the girls in
 Seattle-

And this is the key line, right here:

BOYS
 She was the perfect fit.

AL
 (lost in the memory)
 Meant to be.

BOYS
 Kismet!

Now they're mocking him.

AL
 Well shoot, I gonna tell this
 story, or you?

LEON
 You!

AL
 Well-
 (but the good cheer fades)
 That was it, really. Took her home,
 had our fun. 9 months later-

A glance at Jimi, some deep resentment.

AL (CONT'D)
 No more dancing.

But Jimi is too distracted to feel the sting. He is studying
 the old picture of Lucille, so young, so alive.

LEON
 She gonna stay this time?

Harsh reality sinking back.

AL
 Docs say she kicked the sauce.
 Still a fragile little bird. But
 that woman already done me wrong
 every way to Sunday. Reckon there's
 no surprises left.

Al shrugs, a simmering stew of mixed emotions.

AL (CONT'D)
Maybe that's the meaning of love,
right there.

Sound of a car pulling up out front. Toot of a horn.

LEON
It's her!

AL
(suddenly excited)
Go on, then!
(then wavers)
No, wait! Get back over here!

Al smooths their hair, adjusting threadbare trousers to cover the holes. Even now, he is no more than a silly fool in love.

EXT. ROW HOUSE - DAY

A white ambulance. Big red cross. Several orderlies help a frail woman to the curb. Parting to reveal her gaunt figure. Jaundiced skin. Sallow cheeks. Limbs palsied from the DTs. LUCILLE is only 35, but twice that in wear.

LEON
Mama! Mama!

Leon rushes up exuberantly, too young to recognize the horror. But Al and Jimi stand back, petrified at the sight. Of their vibrant, beautiful wife/mother... now a mere ghost.

LUCILLE
Look at you, my little man! All
grewed up.
(squints at Jimi)
Buster, is that you?

LEON
It's Jimmy, now, mama.

Lucille spreads her arms, but Jimi is frozen.

AL
(smacks him)
Well? What you waiting for, boy? Go
give your mama a kiss!

Al, ever the master of sensitivity. He spansks Jimi onward because he cannot bear to go himself.

JIMI
Uh- welcome home, mama.

INT. HENDRIX ROW HOUSE - LATER

The family is having afternoon tea in the Depression glass that passes for fine china. Lucille fights tremors just to bring a cup to her lips... but it spills, scalding her.

LUCILLE

(blushing)

Now there, look how clumsy! Must be the music in my bones.

Al nudges Jimi to wipe the mess.

LUCILLE (CONT'D)

But I hear it runs in the family.
Papa says you took up an
instrument? Says you got talent!

And this is a surprise. Papa said that? Jimi glances to Al. He thought that subject was taboo.

JIMI

Uh- well-

LEON

Jimmy plays the guitar!

LUCILLE

Oh my! Did you know that's always been my favorite? Well, where is it? Let's hear something!

JIMI

Oh, um- actually- well it ain't exactly-

LEON

Papa won't let him keep it in the house.

Al blushes.

AL

Leon, now don't be a fool.

LEON

But you said it's the devil's music. Same what done in mama.

From the mouths of babes. Al, mortified.

AL

Boy's imagination, Lucy! Jimmy was just wasting too much time, is all-ruinin' his schooling.

(prods Jimi)

Well, go on! Don't let the grass grow! Get that guitar so you can play something for your mama.

Jimi hesitates.

JIMI

But- really, mama, I ain't so hot or nothing.

LUCILLE

Hogwash!

She brightens for the first time. A glimmer of her former self. And how could Jimi possibly resist that?

LUCILLE (CONT'D)

I bet you'll have me up and dancing in no time!

EXT. PUGET SOUND - DUSK

A pebbly beach. Waves lapping in. Jimi plays a song we have heard before, many times.

JIMI

AND THE WIND CRIES... BETTY

His eyes flutter open, sheepish. He has been playing for Betty Jean.

JIMI (CONT'D)

I mean, I know the words is stupid.

BETTY JEAN

Stupid? Jimmy, they beautiful!

JIMI

Yeah?

(then)

I wrote it for you.

She sparkles. Jimi, marvelling at the power of his music.

BETTY JEAN

You mean it? Like your muse?
(takes his hand)

JIMI

Think she'd like it, though?

BETTY JEAN

Hm? Oh- Your mama? Sure she would, Jimmy!

JIMI

She used to sing me stories. 'Bout far off places. Seein' the world. Crazy dreams. Never rhymed or nuthin', just made 'em up as she went along. But she used to say singin' something makes it real.

He darkens. The recent memory returning.

JIMI (CONT'D)

Man, Betty, you should have seen her. Like a ghost, or something. 'Til Leon mentioned the guitar, then she just- lit up, you know? Her eyes. Almost like she used to.

BETTY JEAN

That's great, Jimmy.

JIMI

Great? Foolishness is what it is. Like some dumb song could fix her.

BETTY JEAN

Maybe it can. Maybe it's like she says, maybe singing makes it real.

JIMI

If a song could do that, I'd write one for us.

Fashioning a "ship" from the sand-

JIMI (CONT'D)

'Bout a big ol' sailin' ship.

Betty Jean sidles close, sharing the fantasy.

BETTY JEAN

Carry us across the universe!

JIMI

Far away from here.

Her fingers find his.

BETTY JEAN
 You gonna write that song, Jimi.
 And when you do, just promise it's
 me you take along for the ride.

JIMI
 (laughs)
 Who else, girl?

And at least for the moment, he means this.

JIMI (CONT'D)
 You my queen.

Their lips meet. Rolling softly to the sand... As the tide
 licks up, washing away their "ship". Music rising on track.

JIMI (PRE-LAP) (CONT'D)
 SHE DREW HER WHEELCHAIR TO THE EDGE
 OF THE SHORE
 AND TO HER LEGS SHE SMILED YOU
 WON'T HURT ME NO MORE
 BUT THEN A SIGHT SHE'D NEVER SEEN
 MADE HER JUMP AND SAY
 LOOK, A GOLDEN-WINGED SHIP IS
 PASSING MY WAY!

RETURN TO:

INT. AFFLUENT HOUSE - DAY (1970)

Jimi, lost in the song, the past.

JIMI
 AND SO CASTLES MADE OF SAND
 SLIPS INTO THE SEA, EVENTUALLY

And as he opens his eyes- for a flash, through the crowd of
 ogling neighborhood fans, Jimi glimpses: a blur of light, and
 those kind eyes, smiling. His angel. Or ghost.

And then she's gone. Jimi, haunted.

EXT. SICK'S STADIUM - DAY

Jeffrey elbows through a horde of ravening press.

VOICES
Where is he? Where's Jimi?

JEFFREY

If you want to see him, pay for a ticket!

He slams the doors behind him. As we crane up the marquee:
"One Night Only: Jimi Hendrix"

INT. DRESSING ROOM - DAY

Still no Jimi. Chas is scrutinizing the tarot cards. Wracking his brain. As tape spins on the portable 8-track. Recording: Jimi and his guitar, struggling with the unfinished song.

JIMI (RECORDED)

ANGEL COME DOWN...

ANGEL FLY DOWN...

ANGEL TAKE ME...

Chas studies the Judgement card: angel peering from the heavens. Corpses writhing up. What does it mean?

INT. CONCERT ARENA - DAY

Roadies prep the stage. As Jeffrey barrels through... Gerry scampering along.

GERRY

I phoned our contact at the police department.

JEFFREY

And how much to keep the news away from those buzzards?
(re: press)

GERRY

Two-hundred.

Jeffrey winces.

GERRY (CONT'D)

And the insurance company called-
(rifling clipboard)
Ten million. So long as it's not by his own hand.

Jeffrey swallows a handful of antacid.

JEFFREY

All this heartache, the bastard's worth more dead than alive!

He bursts into

INT. DRESSING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Where Chas is still studying the tarot, lost in thought.

JEFFREY

Your time is up, mate! Cops are
involved now. And I want you out.

But Chas has reached a conclusion.

CHAS

Let him go.

JEFFREY

I beg your pardon?

CHAS

Don't you get it, Jeffrey? Jimi
isn't lost. He's escaped. And he's
better off that way! It's all this-
(snatches clipboard)
It's us that'll kill him!

JEFFREY

Kill him? You daft ponce! We
fucking made him, you and me!

CHAS

He's a lonely kid.

JEFFREY

He's an act! All this?

He throws open the door to the stage, crew, empty arena...

JEFFREY (CONT'D)

Me? You? Gerry, here? The fucking
boys in the fucking sound booth?
The fucking spotlights? This is
Jimi Hendrix, right here!

(grabs the tarot)

Him? He's just some bloke we pay to
play the guitar.

(tosses it)

So get out of the way, or fucking
find him. And if he really wants to
snuff it, tell him to do it on
stage, where he belongs!

He shoves past, walking off. As the phone rings.

GERRY
(answers it, eyes go wide)
It's the cops!

Jeffrey stops. Chas turns back.

GERRY (CONT'D)
House party out in the suburbs.
Neighbors just called to complain-
some strange negro with a guitar.

INT. AFFLUENT HOUSE - DAY

A bathroom mirror. Jimi is alone. Sallow, pallid. Icy beads of sweat on his brow. That haunted look.

His hands are once again aquiver as he fumbles to uncap the bottle of barbiturates, accidentally spilling pills across the counter. Jimi collects them into his palm. Begins to funnel them back... when he stops. A whole handful of pills.

Maybe this is what he has been searching for all along...
True escape.

Jimi squeezes his eyes shut. And mouths the entire handful of pills. A suicidal dose. Swallowing it with a wince.

And then a long beat. He's done it.

But nothing happens yet. Just the wait. Cuckoo clock ticking among homey knickknacks on the wall.

LANE
(steps in)
Oh! Sorry-

Jimi quickly pockets the empty pill bottle.

LANE (CONT'D)
I didn't realize-

But she stops, seeing Jimi's face. Ashen, clammed in sweat.

LANE (CONT'D)
(concerned)
Do you need anything?

Jimi spreads that irresistible smile.

JIMI
Just a little peace.

Despite it all, managing to put her at ease.

JIMI (CONT'D)
 Why, you got some?

INT. LANE'S ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Lane unfolds a tin foil pouch to reveal two tabs of acid. She licks one up, offering the other to Jimi. He takes it. And they fall back to the bed. Side by side. Gazing up at walls plastered with images of "Jimi Hendrix". A record spins.

SONG (ON RECORD)
I AIN'T READY!
I AIN'T READY!
LET ME LIVE!

The song is 51st Anniversary. After a long beat-

LANE
 What's it like?

JIMI
 Hm?
 (then)
 Tingles.

LANE
 No. I mean being famous. Being him.

The posters, clippings, album sleeves.

JIMI
 Oh. Pretty flat, I guess.

LANE
 Huh? Oh, I get it. Flat. You're funny.

SONG (ON RECORD)
LET ME LIVE!
LET ME LIVE A LITTLE LONGER!

The song ends and another begins. It is The Wind Cries Mary.

LANE
 (laughs)
 I still can't believe you told my mom you wrote this for her.

But Jimi is drifting, pills beginning to take effect.

JIMI
 I wrote it for you.

LANE
Ha ha ha. How many girls you tell
that, anyway?

JIMI
Every one.

Lane giggles. But Jimi means this. It is a confession.

LANE
So who's it really for, then?

JIMI
I-

And this is hard. This is frightening.

JIMI (CONT'D)
I don't know. But I hurt her. I
hurt them all. And I'm dying.

LANE
Don't say that!

JIMI
Forgive me. Please.

He shuts his eyes.

LANE
(suddenly terrified)
Jimi!

She rolls on top of him, shaking.

LANE (CONT'D)
Jimi, wake up! Help!

But he is not gone, yet. Eyes flickering, as he sees behind her- that blur of light: kind eyes, smiling back.

LANE (CONT'D)
(smacks him)
Jimi? Stay with me! You didn't hurt
anyone. Do you hear me? We love
you. You wrote this for us! You
wrote it for all of us!

She kisses him. Hard, desperate, flush on the mouth...

And his eyes slam wide- seeing her blonde hair falling loose
above him, exposing the glint of silver earrings.

They are star-shaped earrings.

TOBY
 (rushing in)
 Lane? Jimi?

But Jimi is suddenly wide awake, rifling his pocket for-
 another tarot card: Queen of Swords. Blonde hair, blue eyes,
 and a pair of star-shaped earrings... She is Lane.

EXT. AFFLUENT SUBURB - MOMENTS LATER

Jimi barges out, past the ogling neighborhood fans. And up to
 the bug parked in the drive... key still in the ignition.

TOBY
 Jimi, wait!

But Jimi peels out.

INT. VW BUG - CONTINUOUS

Jimi is drenched in sweat, teeth jittering, fighting the
 imminent overdose as he speeds across town. He cannot let go.
 Not yet. There is something left to do. His body is running
 on pure adrenaline. Hyper-alert. When he notices...

The cellophane wrapper on the floor: concert tickets, room
 service receipt, and a kinky strand of hair.

FLASH BACK:

EXT. CENTRAL DISTRICT - DAWN (1958)

A woman's fingers weave through Jimi's kinky hair...

JIMI
 I better hustle. Pop's gonna have
 my-

Fingers plucking a strand-

JIMI (CONT'D)
 Ouch!

The fingers belong to Betty Jean. She plucks a hair of her
 own and twines it with Jimi's in an infinite knot.

BETTY JEAN
 Take it.

They are in the same clothes, damp from a night on the beach.

BETTY JEAN (CONT'D)
Means we won't ever be apart.

She wants an oath. But Jimi is preoccupied.

JIMI
Betty, I really gotta-

But this is important to her. He sees this. And takes it.

JIMI (CONT'D)
You bet it does.

Jimi sprints off around a corner.

EXT. HENDRIX ROW HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

A police cruiser is parked out front, dome lights flashing in the pre-dawn. Jimi skids up across the street, seeing this.

JIMI
Shit. Must have called in a search party.

INT. BOYS' BEDROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Jimi shimmies up a drain pipe on the side of the house, climbing in through the window, to find...

Both beds are still made. Leon is missing.

JIMI
Leon?

INT. LIVING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Jimi steps in cautiously, still holding his guitar. Seeing a frazzled Al at the table, surrounded by police.

JIMI
Hey, sorry I'm late- I ain't hurt or nuthin'-

Heads turn. Jimi sees Leon's tear-stained face.

JIMI (CONT'D)
(realizing)
Where's mama?

EXT. FUNERAL HOME - THE NEXT DAY

Al staggers down the steps, pale as a sheet. Ordinarily a tough customer. But this blow has laid him low. He pauses a beat to steel himself, bury the pain...

Before returning to the old jalopy parked in the drive.

INT. OLD JALOPY - CONTINUOUS

The boys wait within. Leon whimpering. Jimi just gazing ahead, numb. As Al pops the passenger door-

AL
Y'all can go take a gander if you
want-
(avoiding eye contact)
Ain't much to see, but I suppose
her good looks went some time ago.

He tugs Leon.

AL (CONT'D)
Go on, be a lesson to you.

But Jimi grabs him-

JIMI
(fiercely protective)
Leave him be.

Their eyes meet. Al's are stinging.

AL
Ain't you even want to see for
yourself what you done? Old girl
wanted music so bad, when you never
showed up, she snuck out and found
some. Music and whiskey. Danced
'til she dropped out the door.
Ruptured her spleen. Bust clean
open. Poisoned her from the inside.
But still peaceful as an angel, on
the out. Doc says it ain't nobody's
fault but her own-

But Al thinks otherwise. He climbs in, starts the engine.

AL (CONT'D)
(back to Jimi)
What do you think?

EXT. HENDRIX ROW HOUSE - DUSK

Jimi sits on the stoop, lost in guilt, regret, cradling his guitar. But not playing. Not even noticing the nightfall. As Al teeters out behind him, a half-drunk bottle of bourbon in his fist. Probably not the first.

AL
Gettin' cold.

Jimi merely stares ahead. Shattered. Even Al feels a pang.

AL (CONT'D)
Look, boy-

This is Al showing concern. He searches for the words.

AL (CONT'D)
That woman was a mess long before
she ever brought you into this
world.

Jimi continues to stare.

AL (CONT'D)
What I mean to say- well- I ain't
blamin' you, is all.

This is the best he can do. It is not enough.

AL (CONT'D)
Smoke?

He pries a cigarette from the pack, but his own hands are shaking. He fumbles a matchbook, dropping it.

Jimi remains silent.

AL (CONT'D)
Anyway, funeral's down south a
ways. Place called Greenwood. Only
a pauper's grave. I ain't goin'.

All that anger, pain. He swallows it back, making an effort.

AL (CONT'D)
But no one's stoppin' you. If you
want, that is.

Al empties some change from his pocket- maybe a dollar.

AL (CONT'D)
 You can go ahead and take your
 brother on the bus. I'll mow the
 lawns myself, tomorrow.

And for Al, this is a great effort. But Jimi remains silent.
 Eyes to the front.

AL (CONT'D)
 Well-

Al falls silent.

He is a man ordinarily more comfortable that way. And yet
 just now he wishes for all the world he could find the words.

AL (CONT'D)
 Guess I'll be turnin' in.

He sets the bottle of bourbon on the stoop, next to Jimi.

AL (CONT'D)
 (wistful)
 It was her favorite.

And walks back in.

INT. HENDRIX ROW HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

Al shuts the bedroom door behind him. Finding himself alone
 for the first time. And breaks down, sobbing uncontrollably.
 Here, by himself, letting tears flow. When he notices...

Firelight flickering in from the window. Al peers out to see-

EXT. STREET - CONTINUOUS

Jimi's guitar in the middle of the street. It has been set
 ablaze. Jimi stands above it, pouring on the bourbon. This is
 not a sacrifice. It is a suicide.

Varnish blisters... Strings pop... Flames crackle an erratic
 rhythm... All reflected in his dark eyes.

INT. BASEMENT BEDROOM - NIGHT

A girl's bedroom. Betty Jean is in shock, consoling.

BETTY JEAN
 Oh, lord! Oh, Jesus! Oh, Jimi!

She embraces him, but Jimi stands frozen, benumbed.

JIMI
She was waiting for me.

BETTY JEAN
You didn't do this, Jimi. Do you
hear me?

She reaches for him, but he flinches back

BETTY JEAN (CONT'D)
I need to you listen. This wasn't
you. This is not on you.

JIMI
I'm leaving.

BETTY JEAN
You- When? Now?
(trying to process)
Well- you know what? That's good! I
mean, why not? Let's do it.
Wherever you want to go! Across the
universe!

She moves to the dresser, rummaging a coffee tin.

BETTY JEAN (CONT'D)
I even got money for the-

But stops, seeing...

The army enlistment form. Jimi's name is on the dotted line.

BETTY JEAN (CONT'D)
(shatters)
Oh.

EXT. BETTY JEAN'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Jimi climbs out the basement window. Pausing to look back-

JIMI
Promise I'll write.

Betty Jean forces a smile. But bites back tears. She knows
this is goodbye.

RETURN TO:

EXT. CENTRAL DISTRICT - DUSK (1970)

Jimi stands outside the same house. The same basement window. Dark, now. Reflecting his eyes, deep wells of regret.

When suddenly- a reflection in the glass: that blur of light, those kind eyes. Jimi spins back.

JIMI

Hey!

The blur is gone. But Jimi is tired. Time is running out.

JIMI (CONT'D)

Who are you?! Speak to me!

A light comes on above him, in the upstairs window of the house. The silhouette of a woman peering out. It is

BETTY JEAN

Somebody out there?

Jimi freezes. And

INT. VW BUG - MOMENTS LATER

Jimi floors the gas, speeding off.

EXT. BETTY JEAN'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

As the front door throws open, Betty Jean rushing out. But his gone. She holds a newborn child in her arms. Signs of warm family life through the door within. She has moved on.

She notices... a square of color on the path. A tarot card.

INT. VW BUG - MOMENTS LATER

Jimi jerks to a stop at a red light. His reflexes are shot. He is fighting the drugs, drifting in and out of focus.

EXT. BETTY JEAN'S HOUSE - SAME

Betty Jean kneels to inspect the tarot card: Queen of Cups. A woman seated by the sea shore on a sand-castle throne. Brown skin, black ringlets, a white flower in her hair.

She is Betty Jean.

INT. VW BUG - DUSK

A car horn blares. Jolting Jimi awake. The light has changed. But Jimi is fading. On the brink of blacking out...

When he notices something. A roadside billboard: "Greenwood Memorial Park - 10 miles"

AL (FROM MEMORY)
*Funeral's down south a ways. Place
 called Greenwood.*

Jimi stiffens at the memory. And suddenly he knows where he has to go. Where he has been headed all along.

Music fades up on track: All Along the Watchtower. As we

CUT TO:

The drive south. Jimi, fighting off the mounting overdose. One thing left to do. As his mind flashes a montage of memory. Kathy, Linda, Devon, Lane, Betty Jean... his Queens.

SONG
*THERE MUST BE SOME KIND OF WAY OUT
 OF HERE
 SAID THE JOKER TO THE THIEF
 THERE'S TOO MUCH CONFUSION
 I CAN'T GET NO RELIEF*

Snippets of voices we've heard-

VOICES (FROM MEMORY)
*Wrongs from the past... You hurt
 these people... Seek them out...
 I'm a queen!... You my queen... Who
 are you?! Speak to me!...
 (and finally)
 I'm dying.*

Arriving at

EXT. MEMORIAL PARK - NIGHT

Jimi skids onto the curb, staggering out.

SONG
*ALL ALONG THE WATCHTOWER
 PRINCES KEPT THE VIEW
 WHILE ALL THE WOMEN CAME AND WENT
 BARE-FOOT SERVANTS, TOO*

EXT. CEMETARY GROUNDS - NIGHT

Jimi stumbles through the headstone maze of an overgrown welfare section, scouring the plain granite markers...

SONG

*OUTSIDE IN THE COLD DISTANCE
A WILD CAT DID GROWL
TWO RIDERS WERE APPROACHING
AND THE WIND BEGAN TO HOWL!*

The song fades.

When-

A sudden movement in the gloaming: that blur of light. Jimi spinning back to see... the glint of an earring. Then gone.

Another blur-

Jimi spins... this time, a streak of crimson red.

Jimi loses his balance, bracing himself on a headstone. And suddenly, there before him:

The woman from Woodstock- twirling in the bright light.

Red heels... mismatched gloves, one white, the other black... star-shaped earrings... a white flower in her hair.

And she spins to face us

FLASH BACK:

EXT. CENTRAL DISTRICT - NIGHT (1948)

The same woman, dancing under a flare of fireworks in the night sky. Bleaching her face for a moment. Then revealing-

She is Lucille.

Young. Vibrant. Stunning, in red heels, black and white gloves, star-shaped earrings, a white flower in her hair.

She is alive. In a memory Jimi has all but forgotten.

BUSTER is 6, wide-eyed, craning up at his mama...

She is dancing with Al on the porch. A Lindy Hop with wild, cheerful abandon. Carefree, in love.

As the entire neighborhood gathers to watch. None more spellbound than Buster/Jimi...

Knowing now and forever: this is his Queen.

The swing tune ends. Followed briefly by a flourish of the Star-Spangled Banner. It is July 4.

Lucille twirls to a stop, facing Buster/Jimi with those kind eyes, smiling warmly. She offers her hand for the next dance.

ANNOUNCER (ON RADIO)
And now, ladies and gentlemen...

Buster/Jimi takes her hand.

ANNOUNCER (ON RADIO) (CONT'D)
...Jimi Hendrix!

And instead of old-time swing, we hear- over this same radio, the first, ghostly chords of a familiar song.

SONG (ON RADIO)
AFTER ALL THE JACKS ARE IN THEIR
BOXES
AND THE CLOWNS HAVE ALL GONE TO BED
YOU CAN HEAR HAPPINESS STAGGERING
ON DOWN THE STREET
FOOTPRINTS DRESSED IN RED

Mother and son begin to dance. And as the song continues, playing whole for the first time, we

FLASH TO:

Jimi through the years, singing this same song to every woman in his life.

A BROOM IS DREARILY SWEEPING
UP THE BROKEN PIECES OF YESTERDAY'S
LIFE
SOMEWHERE A QUEEN IS WEEPING
SOMEWHERE A KING HAS NO WIFE

Kathy, Linda, Devon, Betty Jean...

THE TRAFFIC LIGHTS, THEY TURN BLUE
TOMORROW
AND SHINE THEIR EMPTINESS DOWN ON
MY BED
THE TINY ISLAND SAGS DOWN STREAM
'CAUSE THE LIFE THAT LIVED IS DEAD

And finally

FLASH BACK:

INT. HENDRIX ROW HOUSE - NIGHT (1958)

That fateful day. A frail Lucille. On the evening of her return from hospital. Only this is a fantasy...

Jimi has returned with his guitar. And Lucille is alive. He is playing for her. He is saving her life. And his own.

SONG

*WILL THE WIND EVER REMEMBER
THE NAMES IT HAS BLOWN IN THE PAST?
AND WITH THIS CRUTCH, ITS OLD AGE,
AND ITS WISDOM
IT WHISPERS, "NO, THIS WILL BE THE
LAST"*

RETURN TO:

EXT. CEMETARY - NIGHT (1970)

Jimi is standing face to face with a young Lucille. A deep calm consuming him. As he realizes now, for the first time-

JIMI

I wrote it for you.

But she has known all along.

LUCILLE

I know.

He takes her hand. The great regret of his life. Finally fulfilled. And we

FADE TO BLACK.

SONG

AND THE WIND CRIES MARY

SMASH BACK TO:

Jimi, alone. Hovering above a simple headstone: "Lucille Hendrix - Loving Mother"

CARETAKER

That your man?

Chas rushes up.

CHAS

Jimi!

But Jimi appears to be fine. He is not shaking. And, miraculously, no longer covered in sweat. Seemingly at peace.

It is Chas who looks like the nervous wreck.

JIMI

You okay, man? Look like you seen a ghost.

EXT. MEMORIAL PARK - MOMENTS LATER

Chas and Jimi return to a waiting limo. As Jeffrey snags the caretaker.

JEFFREY

You there!
(a wad of cash)
Not a word of this- ever.

EXT. CONCERT ARENA - NIGHT

Masses filing in. Among them, Toby and Lane. Almost showtime.

INT. DRESSING ROOM - NIGHT

Jimi steps in with his battered guitar case. Back to the old life. Chas lingers at the door, a hint of residual concern.

CHAS

You, uh- sure everything's groovy?
I don't care what Jeffrey says, no one's forcing you out there tonight.

Jimi looks back. This means something. But for the first time in a long time, there is something easy about his smile-

JIMI

(reassuring)
I'm ready to go.

Chas nods. And leaves him in privacy.

After a beat, Jimi locks the door behind him.

Retrieving the empty pill bottle from his pocket.

He sets it down on the coffee table before him. And sinks back into the couch. Allowing himself, finally, to relax.

Allowing the drugs to wash back over him. He begins to drift.

When he notices... a tarot card on the floor beside him.

It is Judgement. The pictogram: corpses emerging from their graves. Yearning up at an angel in the clouds... We have seen it before. But this time we see something new.

The face of the angel. She is Lucille.

And suddenly-

Something clicks in. This image is not an end. It is a beginning. Jimi quickly grabs his guitar, plugging in-

As beads of sweat rise again on his brow. His fingers beginning to tremble as he plays.

JIMI (CONT'D)
ANGEL CAME DOWN
(writing as he goes)
FROM HEAVEN YESTERDAY
STAYED WITH ME JUST LONG ENOUGH TO-

But the word literally chokes in his throat.

Jimi convulses with an electric shot, as the drugs finally take hold. But now he is not ready.

He tries to fight it. Playing again-

JIMI (CONT'D)
STAYED WITH ME JUST LONG ENOUGH-

But his fingers slip like noodles from the strings.

Jimi staggers to his feet, but trips to the floor. Struggling to pull himself to the door...

As another shudder rocks him. He cannot make it any farther.

The room swirls, sputters, fades.

But just then- up above: those kind eyes, that beatific face staring back, smiling. Lucille. His angel.

INT. BACKSTAGE - NIGHT

Lights flash.

GERRY
Five minutes, everyone!

He reaches the dressing room door. Knocking-

GERRY (CONT'D)

Jimi?

(knocks again)

Jimi, you in there?

No response. Sudden concern.

INT. DRESSING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

The door smashes in...

CHAS

Jimi?

But he is gone. Gerry and Chas spin about, perplexed.

When suddenly-

Sounds of retching from the bathroom. They pound the door.

CHAS (CONT'D)

Jimi? Jimi, open up!

Spotting the empty pill bottle, guitar on the floor.

CHAS (CONT'D)

Knock it in!

Gerry reels back to kick, but just then-

Sound of a toilet flushing. And the door swings open.

Jimi is staring back- a little pale, but alive.

JIMI

I finished the song.

INT. CONCERT ARENA - NIGHT

Capacity crowd. Jimi is on stage- refreshed, reborn.

JIMI

ANGEL CAME DOWN

FROM HEAVEN YESTERDAY

STAYED WITH ME JUST LONG ENOUGH TO

RESCUE ME

A raw, stirring poem of redemption.

JIMI (CONT'D)

AND SHE TOLD ME A STORY YESTERDAY

ABOUT THE SWEET LOVE

(MORE)

JIMI (CONT'D)
BETWEEN THE MOON AND THE DEEP BLUE
SEA

We notice Kathy in the crowd- she has come for her friend.

JIMI (CONT'D)
THEN SHE SPREAD HER WINGS HIGH OVER
ME
SHE SAID, I SHALL RETURN TOMORROW

And we stay with Jimi for the whole song...

JIMI (CONT'D)
AND I SAID FLY ON, MY SWEET ANGEL
FLY ON THROUGH THE SKY

Chyron: **Jimi was 27 years old.**

JIMI (CONT'D)
FLY ON, MY SWEET ANGEL
TOMORROW I WILL BE BY YOUR SIDE

Chyron: **This was the last song he ever wrote.**

But as the song ends, we

FADE TO:

A final chyron over white: **He lives on...**

Credits roll to David Bowie: Ziggy Stardust.

SONG
OH, YEAH
ZIGGY PLAYED GUITAR
JAMMIN' GOOD WITH WEIRD AND GILLY
AND THE SPIDERS FROM MARS
HE PLAYED IT LEFT HAND
BUT MADE IT TOO FAR
BECAME THE SPECIAL MAN
THEN WE WERE ZIGGY'S BAND (ETC.)

FADE OUT.