

WHAT'S GOING ON

by  
Jeremy John

Jeremy John  
10 Masons Arms  
109 East Street  
London SE17 2SB  
2jeremyjohn@gmail.com  
+44(0)7792 568937

INT. BEDROOM, GAYE FAMILY HOME, LOS ANGELES - DAY

(Los Angeles, 1984) DISTANT SOUND OF CHURCH BELLS. Half-light. Bath-robed, bearded MARVIN GAYE (43) sits on a bed next to plump MOM GAY (65). They gaze at an open bible on her lap.

MARVIN & MOM  
(chanting)  
Thank you Jesus... thank you  
Lord... thank you Jesus...

The door opens. A slight, elderly man enters unseen. His face is haggard. He raises a gun. He aims at Marvin.

Marvin glances up. His sleepy, far-away eyes are almost laughing. They seem to gaze through the man with the gun.

MARVIN V.O. AS NARRATOR  
(relaxed lilt)  
My father and I, guess we never  
could just talk things over.

FLASHBACK TO:

I/E. LIMO THROUGH SMART SUBURB, WASHINGTON D.C. - DAY

(Washington D.C., 1963). Handsome, clean-shaven Marvin (23) cruises in the limo with brother FRANKIE (20), and cheerful Mom in the middle. Marvin's eyes twinkle.

MARVIN  
Ten rooms, twenty rooms, doesn't  
matter Mom. You don't have to do a  
thing.

FRANKIE  
Except check for dust.

LAUGHTER.

MOM  
Lord knows, Marvin. It ain't right  
to take advantage.

MARVIN  
Now you can look straight ahead.  
Look the whole world in the face...  
(flat)  
Look father in his face.

The mood darkens. Marvin pretends to unbuckle his belt. He glares upward a little, eyes blazing.

MARVIN (cont'd)  
I'm gonna whup you son.

LAUGHTER. Marvin tilts his head down a little, eyes goggling.

MARVIN (cont'd)  
Wh-what I done now?

LAUGHTER. It's a release, a routine. The chauffeur turns.

MOM  
Always gettin' into scrapes.

MARVIN  
Frankie too.

Mom glances at Frankie. His face is a little softer than Marvin's.

MOM  
You could repent. Look sorry like  
you meant it...  
(to Marvin)  
You never could.

Marvin sighs.

CHAUFFEUR  
Sir, you want me to pull up?

Marvin peers forward, at a driveway with 'for sale' sign.

MARVIN  
Yeah man, that's the one.

The Washington Monument obelisk is glimpsed beyond.

FLASHBACK TO:

EXT. THE MALL - DAY

(1951) The Washington Monument dominates. SWEEPING ANGLES show the imperial grandeur of the White House and the Lincoln Memorial.

Young Marvin (11) is with other black schoolchildren. They gaze up at the statue of Abraham Lincoln and, to one side, at the mural of the Angel Of Truth with freed slaves.

MARVIN V.O. AS NARRATOR  
Growing up I was curious about  
everything...

I/E. BUS, CITY STREET - DAY

A bus drives between grand city buildings, with the Capitol dome in B/G. Young Marvin and Mom make their way toward the segregated rear section of the bus. Marvin glances at the white passengers.

MARVIN V.O. AS NARRATOR  
A lot of questions.

And down at a discarded newspaper with image of a hydrogen bomb explosion.

INT. SCHOOL ROOM - DAY

A BELL RINGS LOUD. Marvin's class dive for shelter under their desks, shielding their eyes. Marvin dares to peek at the windows.

TEACHER

OK, children. Back to your seats.  
Let's pray it never happens.

EXT. SLUM AREA - DAY

Low-rise project houses with patches of greenery. The Washington Monument is glimpsed in mid-distance. SOUND OF GOSPEL SINGING, "Journey To The Sky".

INT. FRONT ROOM, GAY SNR'S FAMILY PROJECT HOME

GOSPEL SINGING CONTINUES. The humble room is packed with families of worshipers, under a 'House Of God' banner. The women are head-to-toe in white, the men wear dark suits.

MARVIN GAY SENIOR (38) is the pastor, wearing a Pentecostal robe with Star Of David.

MARVIN V.O. AS NARRATOR

My father was a strict  
fundamentalist.

Young Marvin leads the SINGING from a piano. The women admire him. Mom is proud, along with her other children, JEANNE (13), Frankie (8) and SWEETSIE (6).

Gay Senior raises his arms for silence.

GAY SENIOR

Hallelujah! Hallelujah! The Lord  
welcomes all of us humble  
sinners...

He notices something about Jeanne. His eyes scan from her face, down her white gown to her open-toe shoes. His eyes blaze. Jeanne looks at her bare toes, shamed. She bends her legs, enough to let the hem of her gown cover her toes.

Marvin urgently RESUMES SINGING, to distract his father. The CONGREGATION JOIN IN.

Gay Senior glares at Marvin, but is obliged to sing again too. Emotions lift to a FRENZY OF SPIRITUAL TARRYING. Marvin is thrilled by the impassioned mood that he's created.

EXT. FRONT PORCH & STREET

The congregation spills out. Women chatter and fuss over Marvin. A stout woman hugs him to her bosom.

FIRST WOMAN

You sure got somethin' Marvin.

Marvin smiles at the admiring faces, enjoying the intimacy. Neighbourhood kids arrive and taunt.

KIDS

Hey Marv, what you doin'?

They bounce a basketball toward him. Marvin sorely wishes he could play. But he lets the ball bounce by. The kids LAUGH and CHANT as they move on.

KIDS (cont'd)

Marvin is a weirdo, Marvin is a weirdo...

MARVIN V.O. AS NARRATOR

Our faith had its peculiarities.  
The seventh day was Saturday, tough  
luck.

Gay Senior steps out from the house, with a swish of his robe. With practiced smile he distributes typed handouts from a leather attache case.

He stares at Marvin, who is suddenly apprehensive.

INT. FRONT ROOM - NIGHT

Gay Senior struts in front of his children (now in regular clothes). He glares at Marvin, who is almost equal height. He glares at Jeanne. He points at her toes. She wears socks now.

GAY SENIOR

Shame on you, flaunting your body  
in the House Of God.

Jeanne winces. Mom cries out.

MOM

No father, no.

MARVIN

She didn't mean to upset you.

GAY SENIOR

Silence! It was God she insulted...  
(to Jeanne)  
Go get undressed and await your  
punishment.

MARVIN

It ain't right. I just know it  
ain't right.

Jeanne scurries away. Father eyeballs Marvin.

GAY SENIOR

You too, son. Such disrespect.

Marvin slowly backs away, bristling defiance. Gay Senior sits down at the piano, self-absorbed. He PLAYS THE CHORDS OF A SPIRITUAL. He BEGINS TO SING.

INT. A BEDROOM (A LITTLE LATER)

Marvin and Frankie sit on the bed. They SOFTLY SING DOOWOP HARMONIES in defiance of FATHER'S SINGING FROM BELOW. Frankie gets the harmony wrong.

MARVIN  
Concentrate.

INT. FRONT ROOM (A LITTLE LATER)

Gay Senior types a sermon. It's headed 'The Lord Gives Us Strength'. He refers to a newspaper item about the Ku Klux Klan. A photo shows hooded clan members under a burning cross.

Mother darns a sock. She nervously glances at her husband. He checks his watch. He stands. He begins to unbuckle his belt. Mom falls to her knees in front of him, in tears.

MOM  
Father, no!

He brushes past her. He pulls his belt loose.

INT. FOOT OF STAIRS (A LITTLE LATER)

Mom waits, fearful. SOUND OF WHACKING as Frankie and Sweetsie help sore Jeanne down the stairs.

GAY SENIOR O.S.  
Repent... repent...

WHACK... WHACK... WHACK... Mom glances up the stairs.

MOM  
Oh Lord, oh Lord...

EXT. FRONT PORCH & STREET (LATER)

Marvin sneaks out of the front door, coping with the pain.

MARVIN V.O. AS NARRATOR  
I was always a little rebellious.  
In fact quite a bit.

He circles round, deep-breathing the cool night air. He runs, faster, exhilarated, liberated. He shadow-boxes. He dribbles an imaginary basketball. He shoots. He celebrates like a star.

He WHOOPS. He runs away into the distance, arms stretched wide, imitating an aeroplane.

DISSOLVE TO:

I/E. 'DOOWOP MONTAGE' - DAY/NIGHT

(1956) DOOWOP MUSIC PLAYS on automobile radios, at a milk-bar, a skating rink, a sock hop.

STREET CORNER. Marvin (16) is tall now. He has a regal air, like his father, though with a smiling grace. He SINGS "Baby It's You" with The DC Tones doowop group. Girls admire him, but he's shy.

MARVIN V.O. AS NARRATOR  
 Father didn't like that I was  
 singing all the popular music...

HIGH SCHOOL CONCERT. The song continues, with Marvin at piano.

MARVIN V.O. AS NARRATOR (cont'd)  
 Said we don't shake that way for  
 the Lord.

HOWARD THEATRE. "Sh-Boom" PLAYS OVER. Marvin and friends stare up at the marquee. Group names - The Cadillacs, The Penguins, The Dominoes, The Chords - are displayed.

MARVIN V.O. AS NARRATOR (cont'd)  
 I was cutting class.

Inside, Marvin and friends are in a youthful audience, avidly watching The Chords PERFORM "Sh-Boom".

MARVIN V.O. AS NARRATOR (cont'd)  
 The Howard was my real high school.  
 The shows were knockouts. I  
 memorized everything. I was living  
 to sing!

INT. FRONT ROOM, GAY SNR'S FAMILY PROJECT HOME - DAY

The Gay family worship alone, in normal clothes. The House of God banner has gone. The mood is more dutiful than fervent.

MARVIN V.O. AS NARRATOR  
 By now, father had lost his  
 congregation. Some kind of division  
 in the church.

The family SING "Jesus Gave Me Water" with Marvin at the piano. Gay Senior looks dapper in dark slacks and white shirt. He eyes Marvin.

EXT. FRONT PORCH

Gay Senior uses a hose to water the small patch of front lawn. He wears a natty straw hat. He settles in an old wicker chair on the porch. He opens a newspaper.

MARVIN V.O. AS NARRATOR  
Tried a few nine-to-five jobs, but  
mostly he'd just sit around all  
day, like he were king.

INT. FRONT ROOM

Marvin and Mom sit reading a bible. They're tense. Gay Senior suddenly looms at the open door. He stares at Marvin.

GAY SENIOR  
You broke curfew. Again.

He begins to unbuckle his belt.

MOM  
Oh Lord.

Marvin quickly gets to his feet. His hands raise just a little, forming fists. Father, surprised, takes his hands off his belt buckle. He opts to sit, motioning for Marvin to do the same.

Mom offers a silent prayer of thanks. Father takes his time, then speaks with grave intensity.

GAY SENIOR  
Son, I have done my utmost to  
prepare you for the harsh world  
outside. To impart the value of a  
decent education. I am sorely  
disappointed. Seems you'll never  
make the grade.

Marvin gazes at his father, then defiantly beyond, out of the window.

EXT. HOME & VICINITY

CAMERA PULLS BACK from the house in a liberating sweep across the neighborhood.

EXT. THE MALL

CAMERA SWEEPS over the capitol dome, and on above the Washington Monument, to pure blue sky.

INT. CINEMA SCREEN - NIGHT

SCREAMING ROAR over blue sky. William Holden flies a jet plane in 'Toward The Unknown'. Marvin watches, engrossed.

MARVIN V.O. AS NARRATOR  
I tried one last shot at doing the  
right thing.

I/E. 'TEXAS AIRFORCE BASE MONTAGE' - DAY/NIGHT

PARADE GROUND. A BAND PLAYS in front of a jet plane on display. Marvin is in cadet uniform. He stands proudly to attention at an initiation ceremony.

CADET CLASSROOM. Marvin sits at a desk, daydreaming.

KITCHEN ENTRANCE. Marvin peels potatoes, bored.

AIRFIELD. A rig is in position by a jet fighter. A numeral is half painted. Marvin is sprawled on the rig, amid paint and brushes. He's taking a nap. An officer approaches.

OFFICER

Hey jackass, get back to work.

Marvin opens his eyes. He frowns a little. He casually gets to his feet. The rig becomes his stage. He tilts his head up in defiance. He throws his arms, balladeer style.

MARVIN

(sings)

Life could be a dream, sh-boom, sh-boom...

EXT. GREYHOUND BUS, CITY STREET, WASHINGTON D.C. - NIGHT

The bus pulls up. Marvin exits. He wears civilian clothes and clutches a suitcase. He starts walking.

MARVIN V.O. AS NARRATOR

I merited an honorable discharge.  
Temperamentally unsuited. Never did  
get to fly.

INT. OFFICE BUILDING

Grand, marble-floored lobby. Mom and Marvin sit on a bench. Mom has a mop and bucket.

MARVIN

I've just got to sing, Momma. It's  
all I know.

Mom smiles encouragement through tears.

MOM

If that's what you have to do.

Marvin checks her work-roughened hands. He presses them to his cheeks.

MARVIN

I'll make good. Promise I will.

INT. DRUGSTORE - DAY

Marvin (18) washes dishes behind the lunch counter. He SINGS "Rags To Riches" AMID CLATTER OF PLATES. He glances around. He's surprised, angered, to see his father enter.

Gay Senior wears a white outfit of sheer shirt, slacks and baseball cap. His attache case and a newspaper are tucked under an arm. He sits down at a table. His attention is on Marvin. His steady, inscrutable gaze seems mocking.

Marvin gets back to work, trying to ignore his father.

MARVIN V.O. AS NARRATOR  
Sure had to get out from under.

INT. NIGHTCLUB - NIGHT

Modest decor. The blue-suited Marquees SING "Such A Night" to an appreciative audience. Marvin SHARES THE LEAD SINGING. He radiates fresh confidence.

Burly, bespectacled BO DIDDLEY (29) observes from the dark end of a bar. He nods to his foxy lady, impressed.

MARVIN V.O. AS NARRATOR  
Somebody liked us...

I/E. HOWARD THEATRE - NIGHT

Bo SINGS electrifying "Bo Diddley". He plays distorted vibrato on his trademark box-shaped guitar.

MARVIN V.O. AS NARRATOR  
Yeah, the man, Bo Diddley! In town for just one hot minute but he recommended us to mister Harvey Fuqua!

The marquee shows 'Harvey & The Moonglows'.

Harvey and The Moonglows PERFORM soulful "The Ten Commandments Of Love". HARVEY FUQUA (33) is tall with sleek good looks. The audience is wowed.

MARVIN V.O. AS NARRATOR (cont'd)  
The Moonglows were massive.

INT. HOTEL ROOM

Marvin's Marquees SING "Sincerely" for Harvey. Harvey gestures for silence.

HARVEY  
(sharp)  
You've got a lot to learn.

Disappointed faces.

HARVEY (cont'd)  
 But I can make a few calls. Maybe  
 get you on a road show.

Brighter faces. Marvin especially.

HARVEY (cont'd)  
 Or maybe you can change your  
 name...

Puzzled glances.

HARVEY (cont'd)  
 You want to be my new Moonglows?

Incredulity.

HARVEY (cont'd)  
 Got to re-form anyway, what with  
 contract disputes. So whadya say?

Marvin and his pals exchange excited glances.

EXT. STREETS

Marvin runs home.

MARVIN V.O. AS NARRATOR  
 Slight problem. I was too young to  
 sign up. I needed my father's  
 consent.

EXT. GAY SNR'S FAMILY PROJECT HOME

He races up the steps. He tries to enter. The door is locked.  
 He KNOCKS, AND KNOCKS. No response. He turns away, frustrated.

FRANKIE (O.S.)  
 Marv... Marv...

Marvin glances up at a window. Frankie tosses out a package.  
 Marvin catches it. He opens a plastic lunchbox. Sandwiches, an  
 apple and a few dollars. Marvin gestures thanks.

He trudges back along the street, lost in anxious thought.

EXT. PORCH - DAY

Gay Senior relaxes with a newspaper. He looks showy in satin  
 singlet, natty shorts and shades.

A taxi pulls up. Harvey and Marvin get out and approach. The  
 taxi waits. Gay Senior rises to his feet, concerned.

GAY SENIOR  
 He's not in any trouble I hope.

HARVEY

No sir. In fact, quite the contrary.

Marvin looks a little coy. Harvey politely pauses at the base of the porch steps.

HARVEY (cont'd)

Harvey Fuqua, sir.

He starts to reach out his hand in greeting. Gay Senior just stares. Marvin urgently prompts.

MARVIN

Father, he's The Moonglows.

Harvey gestures for silence. Gay Senior seems impressed by this hint of authority.

HARVEY

You've heard of us maybe?

Gay Senior offers the slightest shrug.

HARVEY (cont'd)

Marvin has great potential. He says he owes all of his wonderful talent to you.

Marvin glances at his father in hope of a warm reaction. There is none.

GAY SENIOR

What exactly is your business here, Mr Fuqua?

HARVEY

Sir, I'd like to sign Marvin to The Moonglows. Effectively, I wish to manage his career.

GAY SENIOR

I would much prefer that my boy sing for God.

HARVEY

That's totally understandable, sir. But our music is pretty much respectful. Romantically inclined.

GAY SENIOR

He's not yet of age. You require my authority.

HARVEY

Certainly. And I'd be glad to talk things over.

He pulls a typed document from his jacket pocket. He reaches up and presents it.

HARVEY (cont'd)  
This is a standard contract.

Gay Senior accepts the document.

GAY SENIOR  
I appreciate your interest in Marvin. But it's the whole issue of show-business, needs careful consideration. If you wish to come back tonight.

Harvey smiles agreement.

HARVEY  
Why, of course.

Marvin can't hide his frustration.

EXT. TAXI ALONG STREET

The taxi drives Harvey away. It passes Mom. She trudges home carrying bags of shopping.

EXT. PORCH - NIGHT

Gay Senior emerges. He's now in white shirt and dark slacks, and fixing a cravat. He sits down, deep in thought.

INT. KITCHEN

Mom, Jeanne and Sweetsie prepare supper. Marvin frets.

SWEETSIE  
He has to let you go.

JEANNE  
Can't dominate you anymore.

FRANKIE  
Don't see how he can say no.

MARVIN  
Sure he can, for the hell of it.

Mom LIGHTLY SMACKS THE TABLE.

MOM  
Language.

Marvin looks contrite.

MOM (cont'd)  
It's an awful big decision.

INT. FRONT ROOM

Supper table. Harvey sits with Marvin and his father. Mom, Jeanne and Sweetsie clear things away. Frankie peeks in.

GAY SENIOR

No parent wants a child to go into show business. It brings most everyone down.

HARVEY

Believe me, Mr Gay, that's what I tell so many kids. Nothing is for certain in life, least of all in entertainment. But Marvin is exceptional. I wouldn't be here otherwise.

MARVIN

Father, I can never be what you want me to be. I'm washing dishes. The only way is up.

MOM

Don't aim too high, Marvin. That way lies disappointment.

MARVIN

Sure Momma, but I need to do this. I have to try.

All eyes on Gay Senior. He turns to Harvey.

GAY SENIOR

From what I hear, your music is more on the sweet side. If Marvin wants to go... well, from one Kentuckian to another, I feel better having him go with you.

Marvin tries, poorly, to hide his elation.

GAY SENIOR (cont'd)

But don't just let him run wild. Train him. Teach him.

HARVEY

You have my word, Mr Gay. I run a tight ship.

They shake hands.

MARVIN

Thank you, father.

GAY SENIOR

Now where's that...?

Mom, smiling, gives him his attache case. He takes out the contract. Also a typed note with carbon copy, for Harvey to read. Harvey does so, showing due respect.

HARVEY

I think that's acceptable.

He signs with a gold pen. Gay Senior beams, turning to Marvin.

GAY SENIOR

A contract breaker, son. Any time  
in the first twelve months, if  
you've had enough, Mr Fuqua will  
give you a ticket home.

Marvin nods, Mom smiles, impressed. Harvey offers his pen. Gay Senior signs the contract with a flourish.

GAY SENIOR (cont'd)

Coffee on the porch, mother.

He gets up from the table. Marvin gives Mom a big hug.

MOM

Go on my darlin'. Make something of  
yourself.

Marvin shapes to give his father a hug too. But Gay Senior resists, discretely fending Marvin away. Marvin looks dismayed as CAMERA PULLS BACK.

EXT. PORCH & STREET

CAMERA SWEEPS AWAY from the house.

EXT. TRAIN ACROSS INDIANA PLAINS - DAY

The train ROARS by.

INT. TRAIN COMPARTMENT

Harvey REHEARSES "Twelve Months Of The Year" with his new Moonglows. He's vigorous.

HARVEY

Ain't do-do-do, It's who-who-who.  
Blow harmony. Push it out on the  
lyric. Make it work huh?

The Moonglows get it right. Harvey gives Marvin's cheek a friendly slap. Marvin flashes a megawatt smile. LAUGHTER.

I/E. 'CHICAGO MONTAGE' - DAY/NIGHT

(1959). The lakeshore skyline, Union Station's grand hall, the Tribune Building. VIBRANT JAZZ PLAYS OVER.

MARVIN V.O. AS NARRATOR

Harvey knew a lot of people.

INT. CHESS RECORDING STUDIO - DAY

The Moonglows SING EXUBERANT BACKING for Chuck Berry on his "Almost Grown". Marvin's enthusiasm causes Chuck to laugh.

EXT. TOUR BUS ALONG HIGHWAY - DAY/NIGHT

The rickety bus speeds through sun and rain. CITY BORDER SIGNS DISSOLVE THROUGH (Lima, Columbus, Pittsburgh...)

MARVIN V.O. AS NARRATOR

We went on the road, working the clubs and dance-halls. Heading back east.

INT. STAGE, DANCE-HALL - NIGHT

Sexy JOSETTE (25) shake-dances to BUMP & GRIND MUSIC. She exits stage. She shimmies close to Marvin in the wings, teasing.

The Moonglows SING "Mama Loochie". Marvin steps forward and SINGS SOLO. His voice and smooth style excite the women in the audience.

They crowd closer. Marvin is rattled, but flashes his shy-sexy smile. SCREAMS OF AROUSED DELIGHT. Marvin steps back. He pulls a 'who me?' face at Harvey. Harvey grins back, impressed.

INT. BEDROOM, BOARDING HOUSE - DAY

Seedy decor. Marvin lies in bed with Josette. Flustered.

MARVIN

I'll get the hang of it.

Josette searches her handbag, unconcerned. She retrieves a half-smoked reefer.

MARVIN (cont'd)

And I'll make it up to you.

Josette tidies the reefer. Marvin puts on a brave face.

MARVIN (cont'd)

I'm going all the way. Gonna sing solo.

Josette lights the reefer.

MARVIN (cont'd)

You think I can do it?

JOSETTE

Sure, why not?

MARVIN

I'll sing mellow, like Sam Cooke or Sinatra...

(MORE)

MARVIN (cont'd)

(flat)

Then my father might even approve.

He looks doubtful. Josette drags on the reefer. She passes it to Marvin. He's clumsy but inhales manfully. His eyes widen. He SPLUTTERS. Josette LAUGHS. She gets out of bed. Marvin admires her as he gamely smokes some more.

MARVIN (cont'd)

Yeah, I'm gonna be someone.  
Gonna look after you.

Josette starts to dress. Marvin stumbles out of bed, dizzy. He steadies. He puts his arms around her.

MARVIN (cont'd)

I mean it, stick around.

JOSETTE

Now don't you spoil the party.

She pulls away. She squeezes into a silky dress.

MARVIN

Gonna be my woman... Best of  
everything...

Josette casts a sour look around the cheap room. She picks up her handbag. She heads for the door.

JOSETTE

Lucky you ain't paying, boy.

Marvin starts toward her but spins round. He collapses back on the bed. His eyes close. Smoke from the reefer stub in his outstretched hand.

INT. STAGE, 'SINATRA FANTASY' - NIGHT

Spotlight on Marvin, in sharp suit and hat, perched on a chrome stool with a cigarette. He SINGS "Easy Living" with the cool stage style of Sinatra.

ORCHESTRA SWELLS. Glamorous women cluster at his feet. They gaze, adoring. Marvin smiles like he's well used to this.

INT. TOUR BUS, SLUM DISTRICT, WASHINGTON D.C. - DAY

Marvin dozes. The crowded bus JUDDERS TO A HALT, shaking him out of his reverie.

MOONGLOWS BUDDIES

Hey Marv, Simple City. You're home.

EXT. HOME STREET

Marvin strides along the street like he owns it. He waves to a neighbor.

MARVIN V.O. AS NARRATOR  
We were performing that night.  
Harvey gave me tickets for the  
family.

He approaches home. He tenses.

EXT. GAY SNR'S FAMILY PROJECT HOME

Marvin steps up onto the porch.

INT. FRONT ROOM

He cautiously enters. He hears GOSPEL SINGING ON A RADIO. He heads toward the kitchen. Gay Senior suddenly emerges, wearing vest and satin shorts. He's drinking from a vodka flask.

Marvin is astonished, dismayed. His father, taken by surprise too, stares straight ahead.

GAY SENIOR  
What are you doing back, son?

He walks on out to the porch with exaggerated dignity.

INT. LIMO THROUGH SMART SUBURB

(1963). The limo glides on with Marvin, Mom and Frankie.

MARVIN  
That's when you should have left  
him.

MOM  
Hush.

MARVIN  
We let him walk all over us.

MOM  
I said hush now, have mercy. Your  
father's a good man, and proud.  
He's tangling with stuff goes way  
back. Hurting...

MARVIN  
Why take it out on us?

Mom pats Marvin's hand. She brightly changes the subject.

MOM  
Whatever happened to that nice man  
from Kentucky?

MARVIN  
Harvey?

FLASHBACK TO:

I/E. AUTOMOBILE FACTORY - DAY/NIGHT

(Detroit 1961). Hectic scenes of production lines. Barrett Strong's "Money" PLAYS OVER.

INTERCUT footage of the Kennedy and Nixon election campaign. Wilmer Rudolph sprints for gold at the Rome Olympics. Test firing of Polaris missile from a submarine. Mahalia Jackson sings at President Kennedy's inauguration.

MARVIN V.O. AS NARRATOR

We wound up in Motor City.

EXT. MOTOWN STUDIO - DAY

JERKY, HOME-MOVIES IMAGERY. Harvey and Marvin casually lean against an automobile. The Miracles' "Shop Around" PLAYS OVER.

MARVIN V.O. AS NARRATOR

The game was up for the doowop style of music. Harvey had ideas on me as a solo act...

Harvey makes a 'Marvin the star' gesture.

MARVIN V.O. AS NARRATOR (cont'd)

(chuckles)

Well, I was all for that.

Sassy GWEN GORDY (31) and vivacious ANNA GORDY (35) join them. Harvey slips an arm around Gwen.

MARVIN V.O. AS NARRATOR (cont'd)

Harv took a shine to Gwen Gordy. Now she owned a little record company with her sister Anna.

The CAMERA SHAKES, as though changing operators. Confident, compact BERRY GORDY (30) joins the group.

MARVIN V.O. AS NARRATOR (cont'd)

And when their kid brother started Tamla Motown they got in with him. That's right, Berry Gordy. BG. Mister Motown!

Berry proudly gestures at the detached house behind. A giant sign above the door reads 'Hitsville USA'. Builders work on an extension to the house.

Berry signals for the supervisor to come on over. Rangy, genial POP GORDY (54) approaches. He's persuaded to pose in the middle of the group.

MARVIN V.O. AS NARRATOR (cont'd)

And Pop Gordy pitched in too. A very likable man.

Anna takes Marvin's hand and pulls him close. His bashful, sunshine smile gets everyone laughing. Anna eyes him.

MARVIN V.O. AS NARRATOR (cont'd)  
 Yeah, Anna. High class. All the  
 Gordy sisters.

INT. 'MOTOWN STUDIO MONTAGE'

"Shop Around" CONTINUES OVER. HOME-MOVIES CAMERA SHOWS busy, attractive secretaries. Mix of excitement, curiosity and shyness on seeing the camera. MARY WELLS (18) responds to someone off-camera and hurries out.

Dapper producer MICKEY STEVENSON (30) tries to wave the camera away. Elegant SMOKEY ROBINSON (21) plays piano. Mary Wells checks a lyric sheet and prepares to sing...

CAMERA DISTURBS a couple kissing in a kitchen...

Basement studio. The Supremes rehearse with The Funk Brothers. The singers act 'girly' to camera, the band stay cool.

CAMERA continues into a control room. Technicians are busy fitting new equipment. HOME-MOVIE SEQUENCE ENDS WITH EFFECT OF FILM 'RUNNING OUT'.

EXT. MOTOWN STUDIO & NEIGHBOURHOOD - NIGHT

The lights are burning in just one house. The Motown building. "Please Mr Postman" PLAYS OVER.

INT. 'BUSY MARVIN MONTAGE' - DAY/NIGHT

The Marvelettes RECORD "Please Mr Postman" with Marvin on drums. Berry, Smokey and Harvey are in the control-room, sporting big grins.

MARVIN V.O. AS NARRATOR  
 They kept me plenty busy at Motown.

Marvin on PIANO and co-writers work on "Beechwood 4-5789".

MARVIN V.O. AS NARRATOR (cont'd)  
 I started writing songs too.

Marvin RECORDS "Let Your Conscience Be Your Guide" with smooth jazz backing. Harvey supervises. Anna slips in to the control room. She eyes Marvin.

MARVIN V.O. AS NARRATOR (cont'd)  
 And in between they let me cut some  
 ballads.

INT. MOTOWN STUDIO, HOUSE PARTY - NIGHT

Marvin eases through the exuberant crowd. A prickly musician has Smokey and Mickey Stevenson cornered.

MUSICIAN

I played good.

MICKEY

Sure, you got all the licks, man.

MUSICIAN

So why did you do it over?

MICKEY

A few licks too many. Gotta keep it  
in the groove.

Marvin moves on. Girls chatter.

FIRST GIRL

What kinda work?

SECOND GIRL

Mostly secretarial, but I sung some  
backing.

THIRD GIRL

I shook a tambourine on 'Mr  
Postman'.

SECOND GIRL

It's a start.

FIRST GIRL

Wow, who's the dreamboat?

The girls spot Marvin. They act casual, but as he passes by they pantomime hot desire. Berry, Harvey and Gwen observe, LAUGHING. A cocky guy beckons Marvin over.

COCKY GUY

You Marvin?

MARVIN

Yeah man.

COCKY GUY

Gay?

His pals CACKLE. Marvin shapes to throw a punch. Anna steps in. The guys react with respectful admiration. Anna grabs Marvin's hand and leads him away.

ANNA

I couldn't let such a handsome boy  
get damaged.

MARVIN

Don't have to worry about me. I  
coulda whooped 'em all.

Anna leads him past intrigued party faces. Marvin is embarrassed about being led. He moves in close, with his hands on Anna's neat waist.

INT. SUPPER CLUB

Marvin and Anna dine at a cosy table, drinking wine.

ANNA

We have high hopes, if we can only  
position you right.

Marvin flashes a cheeky grin.

MARVIN

I'm gonna be the black Sinatra.

Anna likes his confidence.

ANNA

Be a safer bet to sing soul.

Marvin takes his time to answer.

MARVIN

Not so comfortable with that.

ANNA

Why? Because your daddy's a  
preacher?

Marvin smarts a little.

MARVIN

He gave me the gift of music. But  
it came with strict limits.

ANNA

Don't mess with that devil stuff,  
huh?

MARVIN

Wouldn't even watch me sing with  
The Moonglows...  
(mimics his father)  
Too much booty-shaking.

Anna BURSTS OUT LAUGHING. Marvin brightens.

MARVIN (cont'd)

Besides, not sure I can deal with  
all those hot screaming women.

Anna LAUGHS SOME MORE. Marvin's smile gets bigger. Anna eyes  
him with intent.

ANNA

Think you can deal with me?

Marvin is lost for words. His smile says he'd sure like to try.

INT. ANNA'S APARTMENT

Stylish, cosy apartment. Marvin embraces Anna. He's too eager. Something hurts her. She extracts a pen from his jacket.

ANNA

I'd better teach you some  
finessing.

The PHONE RINGS. Anna answers it, and responds with SEDUCTIVE LAUGHTER. She wanders away with the phone.

ANNA (ON PHONE) (cont'd)

That's a little presumptuous...

Marvin, jealous, picks up a newspaper for distraction. The headline reads "Russian Missiles Sighted In Cuba". He sees an ad for a Motown Review, with his name on the bill. He writes an 'E' on the end of 'Gay'. He inspects it.

I/E. 'SELLING MOTOWN MONTAGE' - DAY/NIGHT

(1962) Office. The Contours' "Do You Love Me?" PLAYS OVER. Berry, Harvey, Smokey and others review demo singles. There's a focussed intensity. Berry casts a beady eye around for reactions and show-of-hands votes.

INTERCUT Motown disc-cutting; singles labels and album covers; chart entries; stars' photo calls. Marvin poses with his 'Soul Moods Of Marvin Gaye' album.

INTERCUT Motown acts, performing to a packed dance-hall crowd. Berry urgently prepares The Supremes for the next spot.

I/E. MOTOWN REHEARSAL BUILDING - DAY

A sign reads "Artists' Development".

Inside, a rehearsal room is being decorated. Pop Gordy checks progress of his crew amid ladders, paint cans and dust sheets.

"You've Really Got A Hold On Me" PLAYS ON A RECORD PLAYER. Lively CHOLLY ATKINS (45) choreographs dynamic stage moves with Smokey Robinson and The Miracles.

Marvin relaxes on a banquette, reading a 'Ring' boxing magazine with Sonny Liston on the cover. Pop Gordy approaches.

POP GORDY

They're gonna make you dance?

MARVIN

All part of the deal, Pop. For  
letting me record the album.

Pop Gordy CHUCKLES.

POP GORDY

Everything's about making a deal.  
That's if you want to get along.  
When I proposed to my dear wife she  
said, "On one condition. I want a  
partner, not a boss." Best deal I  
ever made.

The comment hits home to Marvin. He's thoughtful.

MARVIN

Should be mandatory.

Berry breezes in with BARNEY ALES (35), a sleek, bullish  
Italian-American executive.

BERRY

Cash-flow man. If they ain't paying  
don't deliver.

ALES

They're slow is all, cos they're  
big and we need 'em.

BERRY

OK, so I put you in charge of  
collecting too.

Ales winces. Berry spots his father.

BERRY (cont'd)

Hi Pops.

He sees Marvin.

BERRY (cont'd)

You rehearsed your moves?

Marvin eases his legs up. He does fancy footwork in the air.  
LAUGHTER. Anna enters, power-dressed, carrying a briefcase. She  
sashays forward with style. She kisses Pop Gordy. She smiles at  
Berry and Ales. She turns to Marvin.

ANNA

And how's my fine young man?

MARVIN

Hey babe.

He gestures a casual greeting. Anna bends and gives him a showy  
kiss. Berry eyes him.

BERRY

You got the moves alright.

LAUGHTER. The Miracles' rehearsal breaks up. Cholly changes the  
record.

CHOLLY

OK Marvin, let's go.

Marvin is reluctant. Cholly urges with a brief TAP DANCE. The others wait expectantly. Marvin signals for them to leave first. LAUGHTER as they exit.

INT. DANCE-HALL STAGE - NIGHT

Marvin SINGS ballad "What Kind Of Fool Am I?" He's tentative. Women offer encouraging swoons but others in the audience BEGIN TO WHISTLE & JEER.

Berry urgently gestures 'lift the tempo' from the floor. Marvin signals to the band. He SINGS Ray Charles' "I Got A Woman". Audience SCREAMS approval at his HOT SINGING. Marvin looks mighty relieved. Anna observes from the wings.

DRESSING-ROOM

Berry and Anna face Marvin.

BERRY

You handle the ballads OK, but you're just too young to sing like you lived them.

ANNA

That's why you ain't selling.

MARVIN

Yeah?

BERRY

Yeah, have to stick to the hot jive.

He jerks a thumb at the door.

BERRY (cont'd)

That's what they want.

Marvin is long-faced.

MARVIN

Ain't my style.

BERRY

(sharp)  
Is now.

He stretches a consoling arm up over Marvin's shoulder.

BERRY (cont'd)

It's your best shot. You can sing anything, but we gotta work on your best shot.

EXT. LAKE SHORE BEAUTY SPOT - NIGHT

Moonlit. Marvin and Anna stroll.

ANNA

You wowed them with the hot stuff.

MARVIN

Yeah, I used my gospel chops. Felt like a fraud.

Anna steps away and spins around.

ANNA

There's a bunch of other singers, just begging for the chances you've had.

MARVIN

So get sweet with them.

Anna flares. Marvin wanders away.

MARVIN V.O. AS NARRATOR

I was on the inside, mouthing off. Should have known better.

ANNA

(calls)

Don't you cop out, honey. You're my big time boy.

She follows after him, thoughtful.

ANNA (cont'd)

We'll work it out.

He turns. They embrace.

ANNA (cont'd)

Some stubborn guy.

I/E. "STUBBORN" MOTOWN RECORDING MONTAGE' - NIGHT

Rehearsal room. Marvin writes and SINGS "Stubborn Kind Of Fellow" at the piano with Mickey Stevenson. Berry hovers, impatient. The MUSIC STUMBLES. Berry leans in and prompts with DIFFERENT CHORDS. They're better.

Studio. Marvin RECORDS "Stubborn Kind Of Fellow", with Martha and The Vandellas backing. He's keyed up, determined. Berry, Mickey and Anna are in the control room.

Front steps. Marvin slumps, exhausted, with Anna as MUSIC CONTINUES OVER.

MARVIN

We got something?

I/E. "'STUBBORN" SUCCESS MONTAGE' - DAY/NIGHT

Marvin SINGS "Stubborn Kind Of Fellow" on stage. Ecstatic fans. Women try to grab him. Marvin enjoys the adulation but he's nervy about it too.

INTERCUT images of jukebox, car radio, promo photos of Marvin.

INSERT. "Stubborn Kind Of Fellow" is at 10 on the R&B chart.

INT. GAY SNR'S FAMILY PROJECT HOME, WASHINGTON D.C. - DAY

Mom is on the phone, beaming. Gay Senior observes close by.

MOM

We're all so proud of you.

INT. RADIO STATION OFFICE, DETROIT

Marvin is on the phone, lounging, feet up. Secretaries discretely admire.

MARVIN (ON PHONE)

(beams)

Thanks Mom. I'm mostly happy for you...

INT. GAY SNR'S FAMILY PROJECT HOME

Gay Senior takes the phone.

MARVIN (PHONE VOICE)

(sour)

Ask father if I made the grade.

GAY SENIOR (ON PHONE)

Son, you've surpassed all my expectations. Wasting your God-given gift.

INT. RADIO STATION INTERVIEW, DETROIT

Marvin is tense, distracted.

DISC JOCKEY

So what are your plans, Marvin?

MARVIN

Well, it's been kind of non-stop. I'd like to take a break for a while.

I/E. LIMO, OUTSIDE RADIO STATION

FANS SCREAM as bodyguards bustle Marvin and Anna into the limo. It speeds away. Inside, Berry eyeballs Marvin.

BERRY

You're way out of line. All that investment, now you've got to hustle extra hard.

He glances at Anna. She shrugs agreement. Marvin bristles defiance. Anna squeezes his hand.

BERRY (cont'd)

And if you ain't gonna dance at least look 'em in the eye.

He snaps open a newspaper. The headline reads 'Mississippi Riots'.

I/E. 'DEEP SOUTH TOUR MONTAGE' - DAY/NIGHT

Highways. A crowded 'Motown Review' bus hurtles along. SOUTHERN CITY SIGNS DISSOLVE THROUGH (Tampa, Jacksonville, Macon...) Martha and the Vandellas' "Heatwave" PLAYS OVER.

Inside, some of the guys play poker. The Supremes rehearse, Smokey and Marvin chat. Mary Wells reads a letter. LITTLE STEVIE WONDER (12) rests up along a luggage rack, with leg dangling.

Gas station. A white attendant tries to refuse gas.

Lunch counter. The manager pulls the blinds down and displays a 'closed' sign.

Motel. A sign reads 'Whites Only'.

MARVIN V.O. AS NARRATOR

We were used to segregation. But the Deep South was something else. There was real hate.

City street. The bus is stuck in a civil rights protest march. A white mob throw stones, SMASHING A WINDOW. They try to tip the bus over.

MOB

Go home niggers! Get outa here!

Tear gas billows. SHOTS ARE FIRED.

MARVIN V.O. AS NARRATOR

We pressed on with the shows. A lot of states, a lot of cities.

Highway. The bus motors on. Most of the tour party are asleep. Others look tense.

Early light. Stevie Wonder edges along the aisle PLAYING HARMONICA. Passengers wake, furious. Marvin offers a reefer.

MARVIN

Here, Stevie. Suck on this.

STEVIE

My man.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. ROOF TERRACE, ANNA'S APARTMENT, DETROIT - NIGHT

Partygoers emerge, smoking fat joints, laughing, stoned. Marvin and Anna lie on cushions. They gaze up at the night sky.

ANNA

You know how old I am?

MARVIN

I know.

ANNA

Does it bother you?

MARVIN

No, Momma.

ANNA

Why, you young pup...

She lays into Marvin. They wrestle, GASPING & LAUGHING.

MARVIN

So how come you never married?

ANNA

Too busy I suppose. Working hard...

(sly)

And playing.

She squeezes him tight. They kiss.

ANNA (cont'd)

But I'm kind of getting used to you.

INT. BEDROOM, ANNA'S APARTMENT

Marvin and Anna lie together. Anna reluctantly gets out of bed.

ANNA

Maybe I ought to kick you out.

MARVIN

Now what've I done?

Anna enters the bathroom. Marvin watches her return, drinking a glass of water.

ANNA

It's what you're gonna do, if you let all the attention get to you.

She gives the glass to Marvin to finish.

ANNA (cont'd)  
Sweet distractions, little games.  
And maybe too young to handle it.

She flops back on the bed, snuggling with Marvin.

ANNA (cont'd)  
We've got something good, babe. An  
understanding.

Marvin looks puzzled.

ANNA (cont'd)  
Go easy, use discretion. Then we  
can be for keeps.

Marvin's puzzlement increases.

JUMP CUT TO:

I/E. WEDDING RECEPTION, MOTOWN STUDIO - DAY

Wedding cake. Marvin's "Pride And Joy" PLAYS OVER. Motown  
artists and staff mingle. Radiant Anna wears a bridal dress,  
Marvin is the immaculate groom. They cut the cake.

Exuberant guests feature Berry, Pop Gordy and his wife, Diana  
Ross, Harvey, Gwen, Smokey, Stevie Wonder and Barney Ales. But  
no sign of Marvin's family.

A flirty woman catches Marvin's eye. Berry leans in to him.

BERRY  
Gotcha.

MARVIN  
(defensive)  
What's that, BG?

BERRY  
Hooked up man. Family.

He grins and moves on. The flirty woman sneaks close. Marvin is  
wary. Anna observes, frowning. Pop Gordy diplomatically steps  
in and embraces Anna.

POP GORDY  
Hey, hey. My beautiful girl.

ANNA  
Think we'll be alright?

POP GORDY  
Oh, Marvin's maybe a little too  
young and mixed up, but he means  
well.

## BACK OFFICE

Fierce poker game. Berry, Smokey, Harvey, Clarence and Mickey play for serious money. SOUNDS OF PARTYING CONTINUE IN B/G. The door opens. Marvin leans in.

MARVIN  
BG, how're we doing?

BERRY  
Couple of grand ahead.

MARVIN  
Cool.

He returns to the party action.

## CORRIDOR

The flirty woman is persistent. She squeezes past guests to be next to Marvin. She whispers in his ear. Marvin reacts.

MARVIN  
You'd better scram.

They don't see Anna approach. She fiercely butts in.

ANNA  
Beat it, bitch.

Marvin stares at Anna, surprised. She slips off a shoe. She WHACKS him on the head with it. GASPS AND STUNNED SILENCE.

Anna shows concern, still clutching her shoe.

ANNA (cont'd)  
Oh, so sorry honey. Let me kiss it better.

LAUGHTER.

I/E. LIMO AT GRAND HOUSE, SMART SUBURB, WASHINGTON D.C. - DAY

The chauffeur reads a newspaper with 'Martin Luther King Arrested' headline.

INT. GRAND HOUSE

The house is unfurnished. Mom Gay circles around, clutching a wedding photo album. She's embarrassed by the spaciousness.

Marvin and Frankie gaze at her. There's a small plaster on the side of Marvin's forehead.

MARVIN  
You like it?

MOM

There's no denying...

MARVIN

It's all yours...

(sour)

That's if father has no objection.

INT. LIMO

Marvin, Mom and Frankie are inside as the limo drives away. Mom glances through the photo album.

MOM

She's very pretty, and you looking so handsome. I wish I could have been there.

MARVIN

He would never have agreed.

MOM

Even so.

MARVIN

Wants nothing to do with Motown.

He glances at Frankie.

MARVIN (cont'd)

Is he still drinking?

FRANKIE

Keeps it hid.

MOM

He's been getting out more.

I/E. LIMO, STREET IN SLUM DISTRICT

Gay Senior strolls along the street, head held high. He posts a couple of letters from his attache case.

The limo tails him. Inside, Marvin and Frankie discretely observe.

FRANKIE

This ain't right, Marv.

MARVIN

Only trying to understand him.

I/E. PRINTING SHOP, DOWNTOWN

Gay Senior enters. He picks up a pile of xeroxed leaflets. They're titled 'God Is With You'. The printer resignedly gestures 'no charge'. Gay Senior raises a hand in blessing. His benevolent smile sustains as he scans the text.

EXT. LIMO, BUS STOP

Gay Senior approaches a lone, elderly man at a bus stop. He engages him in conversation. The man seems politely interested. Marvin and Frankie observe from the limo.

MARVIN  
He has to play the preacher, even  
without a church.

FRANKIE  
That's his calling.

MARVIN  
That's his pride.

FRANKIE  
Better than sitting at home moping.

A bus approaches. Gay Senior offers a leaflet to the man, but he gestures no and hurries onto the bus. Gay Senior is motionless for a moment, then turns stiffly away, with head still high.

INT. ANOTHER DANCE-HALL STAGE - NIGHT

Marvin SINGS "Can I Get A Witness?" He dabs sweat from his brow with a silk handkerchief. Teasing, he tosses it to the SCREAMING women. They clamor for it. Marvin pretends to undo his shirt. More SCREAMS.

MARVIN  
(on mike)  
Not sure I should be doing this...  
(flat)  
What would my father say?

His eyes sweep across, picking out individual women, stoking the passions. Women rush the stage. Stewards grab them. Marvin is both thrilled and freaked by the power of his seductive control.

MARVIN (cont'd)  
I guess we oughta cool it some.

MORE SCREAMS.

REPORTER (V.O.)  
Marvin, how do you cope with all  
those admiring fans?

MARVIN (V.O.)  
Oh, it's nice that I'm giving them  
entertainment. But only a  
distraction from the real issues...

## I/E. 'NEWS FOOTAGE MONTAGE' - DAY/NIGHT

(1963-64). President Kennedy says segregation is morally wrong. It is "time to act." The National Guard protect black students from an angry mob as they enter a public school. Doctor Martin Luther King makes his "I have a dream" speech. President Kennedy assassination news, with shocked reactions, as Vice-president Johnson is sworn in.

MARVIN V.O. AS NARRATOR

It wasn't all despair.

The Beatles land at Kennedy airport. Cassius Clay defeats Sonny Liston for the World Heavyweight Title. "I shook up the world!" Sidney Poitier accepts an Oscar from Anne Bancroft. Berry presents Martin Luther King with a 'Great March To Freedom' album of his speeches.

MARVIN V.O. AS NARRATOR (cont'd)

Then Motown hit the jackpot.

## I/E. 'MOTOWN WORLD SUCCESS MONTAGE' - DAY/NIGHT

The Supremes dance along a Motor City auto assembly-line while "Baby Love" PLAYS OVER.

Motown stars are filmed sightseeing and signing autographs in London, Paris and Rome, in-between PERFORMING mega-hits. (The Four Tops' "Reach Out", Marvin's "Ain't That Peculiar", The Temptations' "Ain't Too Proud To Beg", Stevie Wonder's "Uptight", The Supremes' "You Can't Hurry Love").

Airplane in mid-flight. A newspaper headline is glimpsed - "US Troops To Vietnam". Marvin, Berry, Diana Ross and Stevie Wonder relax, SINGING "You Are My Sunshine". Berry and Diana hold hands, sharing intimate glances.

DISSOLVE TO:

## INT. MOTOWN STUDIO, DETROIT - DAY

Framed gold discs dominates a wall in reception. A young assistant BANGS A NAIL IN, and adds another disc. He pauses, distracted by DISTANT SOUND OF EXPLOSIONS.

## EXT. 'DETROIT RIOTS MONTAGE' - DAY

(1967). Civil Rights protest march. Rioting, looting. National Guardsmen are on rooftop curfew duty. Armored tanks patrol the streets. Tear gas is fired.

## I/E. MOTOWN STUDIO

Protesters retreat past the Hitsville building. Staff emerge, concerned. Marvin too.

A taxi SCREECHES TO A HALT. Anna gets out. The taxi speeds away. LOUD EXPLOSIONS & SOUND OF BULLETS.

The staff retreat inside. Anna tries to pull Marvin in too. A teargas canister explodes close by. Marvin, engulfed by smoke, finally retreats.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. '20 GRAND' SUPPERCLUB, DRESSING ROOM - NIGHT

Reefer smoke fills the air. SOUND OF FUNKY JAZZ FROM STAGE. Marvin is dressed to perform, but he's slumped in a chair. The club manager plies coffee, desperate.

CLUB MANAGER

You have to sing now.

Berry storms in.

BERRY

Marvin, get your butt out there.

No response. Berry grabs Marvin by his stage suit lapels. He hauls him up. He shakes him hard.

BERRY (cont'd)

Don't mess with the drugs, Marvin.  
Don't mess with your career.

Still no response. Berry slaps Marvin's face.

BERRY (cont'd)

Get on out or I'll kick you out.

The slap penetrates Marvin's senses. He gulps the coffee. He eyes Berry.

MARVIN

They just sent my brother to  
Vietnam.

BERRY

Oh jeez, we'll talk later. But  
right now you've got a job of work  
to do.

He helps Marvin up on his feet. He smooths his clothes.

BERRY (cont'd)

Don't forget the dedication.

INT. '20 GRAND' SUPPERCLUB, STAGE

Stylish setting. Marvin, transformed, coolly walks out on stage. EXUBERANT APPLAUSE, especially from the high-class women in the audience.

Anna preens a little. She looks pregnant. She sits at a front table with Diana, Harvey and Gwen. Berry rejoins them.

MARVIN

(on mike)

Thank you, thank you. It sure is great to be back here at the 20 Grand, with all you wonderful people.

APPLAUSE.

MARVIN (cont'd)

And I'd like to thank the management for making this a benefit night for the Civil Rights campaign. Let's hear it.

WARM APPLAUSE.

MARVIN (cont'd)

And to you of course for giving so generously.

He gestures to the band.

MARVIN (cont'd)

Thank you Rudi. This song is about a special lady in my life...

He gestures toward Anna.

MARVIN (cont'd)

Taught me all I know...

(grins)

Well almost. And I love her dearly.

Anna smiles back and blows a kiss. Marvin SINGS "You're A Wonderful One".

INT. KITCHEN, GRAND HOUSE, WASHINGTON D.C. - DAY

Marvin writes a letter. Jeanne sets the table for tea. Sweetsie helps Mom prepare a parcel. They pack a cake, underwear, socks, a bible and letters. Mom is tearful. Sweetsie comforts her.

MOM

Hardly any training.

MARVIN

Frankie'll be OK.

He places his letter in with the others. He gives Mom a reassuring hug. Gay Senior enters. He wears a satin-trimmed lounge robe. His hair has grown out a little.

MARVIN (cont'd)

Hello father, you're looking well.

GAY SENIOR

Hello son.

He keeps his hands firmly in his pockets. No chance of a welcoming embrace. He observes as Mom places a few 'God Is With You' leaflets in the parcel.

GAY SENIOR (cont'd)

All we can do is pray.

He gestures. The family gather around the table.

GAY SENIOR (cont'd)

Oh Lord our merciful Father, we pray for Frankie at this difficult time...

(becoming impassioned)

Almighty God, almighty God, we beg that you may shelter him from the storm...

A LITTLE LATER

Sitting at the table.

MARVIN

So father, you're still spreading the word?

Gay Senior regards him with suspicion.

GAY SENIOR

I do what I can, wherever I can. Prayers, counseling.

MARVIN

That's good. Good.

An awkward silence.

MOM

Father, we have some new photos.

JEANNE

Show him, Marvin.

Marvin warily shows a photo of he and Anna with their little son, JUNIOR (2).

GAY SENIOR

Oh, he's coming on strong.

Mom offers more photos. But father turns to Marvin.

GAY SENIOR (cont'd)

Are you here to stay?

MARVIN

Just overnight. I wish it could be longer...

(MORE)

MARVIN (cont'd)  
(glances around)  
I'm glad you've settled in OK.

Gay Senior gives Marvin a quizzical stare. He has a proper look at the photos of Junior. He can't stop a smile softening his face. He murmurs to the photo.

GAY SENIOR  
Maybe you'll be a preacher...

Mom smiles with joy at his little display of affection. But the tone of his voice sours.

GAY SENIOR (cont'd)  
That's if you're wise to all the  
falsity around.

He returns his gaze to Marvin.

GAY SENIOR (cont'd)  
You think I don't wonder why you  
keep us apart from your  
entertainment crowd?

All are suddenly tense.

MARVIN  
Now that's not...

Gay Senior gestures around.

GAY SENIOR  
You think this house compensates  
for your God forsaking music?

MARVIN  
I just came to say hello and show  
the photos.

Mom touches Gay Senior's hand.

MOM  
Go easy, father.

GAY SENIOR  
(to Marvin)  
You may mean well. But it seems  
you're trying to make an impression  
with your success.

MARVIN  
(sighs)  
Only want to make life a little  
easier.

GAY SENIOR  
You cannot change me. It isn't  
going to make me feel any different  
about what you do.

Marvin gestures despair.

JEANNE

Father please, be reasonable.

GAY SENIOR

Hush child. Know your place.

He maintains his gaze on Marvin.

GAY SENIOR (cont'd)

I introduced you to the teachings  
of Jesus.

MARVIN

And I'm forever grateful.

GAY SENIOR

What hopes I had for you. Even when  
I let you go I prayed you would  
find a way to sing for God.

MARVIN

(murmurs)

Maybe you hoped I'd come crawling  
back.

GAY SENIOR

What did you say?

Marvin holds up his hands in a gesture of apology. He brightens and takes a record album, wrapped in gift paper, from the sideboard. He offers it.

MARVIN

Father, I really don't want us to  
have any disagreements. And in a  
spirit of harmony I hope you'll  
accept this little gift.

Gay Senior slowly stands.

GAY SENIOR

When I became a minister I swore to  
a poverty life. I don't want my  
reward here on earth, so take your  
gift.

He waves it away and walks toward the grandly curving stairs. Marvin glowers. He tears the paper from the record. It's "The Great March To Freedom". He starts up the stairs after his father. Mom wrings her hands.

MOM

Oh Lord.

Jeanne comforts her.

INT. UPPER HALL

Gay Senior approaches his room. Marvin catches up.

MARVIN

It's Doctor King. He signed a copy  
of his speeches...

Gay Senior turns around. Marvin shows the record.

MARVIN (cont'd)

Dedicated to you.

Gay Senior shakes his head in disappointment.

GAY SENIOR

There you go again. Still trying to  
impress.

Marvin can't cope with the put-downs anymore.

MARVIN

You're just impossible!

He shapes to lash out with a fist. Gay Senior flinches. Marvin  
backs away, confused, ashamed of his intent.

MARVIN (cont'd)

I-I'm sorry, father.

His father's eyes blaze. There's a glint of triumph.

GAY SENIOR

Son, if you ever lay a hand on  
me...

He calmly enters his room and closes the door. Marvin wanders  
away. He sits on the top stair and slumps against the wall.

MOM (O.S.)

Marvin?... Marvin?

INT. GAY SENIOR'S ROOM

A spartan study/bedroom with bathroom attached. Gay Senior stands  
motionless, drawing a couple of deep breaths. His priestly robe,  
in plastic covering, hangs behind the door.

The room has a single bed, a desk with a bible and neat paperwork,  
A small TV, a radio-cassette player, a bookcase and a filing  
cabinet. There's a stack of newspapers and magazines. A painting  
of Jesus and a photo of Mahalia Jackson hang on the walls.

Gay Senior unlocks the filing cabinet. He takes a flask of  
vodka out and drinks direct from the bottle.

INT. MOM'S BEDROOM

Marvin lies with his head in Mom's lap. Her hands massage his  
temples.

MARVIN

Wish he could just accept me as I am.

MOM

There's the pity.

MARVIN

He ain't so perfect.

MOM

You know his kinfolk had some bad ways.

Marvin is quietly alert now.

MOM (cont'd)

There were shootings.

MARVIN

I know, Momma...

(cautious)

Heard there was kinky stuff too.

Mom reacts defensively, giving Marvin a little slap.

MOM

That's just talk. The way folks build things up.

MARVIN

Did father ever wear your clothes?

Mom turns away, further embarrassed.

MOM

He's always had a gentle side.

INT. GAY SENIOR'S ROOM (CONTINUOUS)

Gay Senior takes off his lounge robe, revealing his trim physique. He's clad only in skimpy, polka-dot briefs. He opens a closet. Colorful clothes hang inside, made of fancy fabrics. He checks himself in the built-in mirror, preening a little.

INT. AEROPLANE IN MIDFLIGHT - DAY

Marvin settles back in his seat.

MARVIN V.O. AS NARRATOR

I sought refuge from my father's scorn, singing sweet and innocent. Romantic duets with Mary Wilson and Kim Weston...

(sighs)

And Tammi...

INT. MOTOWN STUDIO - DAY

Marvin RECORDS "Ain't No Mountain High Enough" with young, vivacious TAMMI TERRELL (22). He wears a skipper's cap. Their duo charisma excites Harvey and co-producer Johnny Bristol, and the musicians.

TAMMI

You don't mind singing with me?

Marvin grins. He fits his cap on her at a jaunty angle.

MARVIN

Tammi, we're cookin'.

Anna slips into the control-room. She watches, suspicious.

INT. 'MARVIN & TAMMI TV MONTAGE' - DAY

They SING "Ain't No Mountain High Enough" on the 'Hullabaloo' TV show. They enchant the young, mostly white audience.

INTERCUT: Gaye/Terrell record label titles ("If I Could Build My Whole World Around You", "Ain't Nothing Like The Real Thing", "You're All I Need To Get By").

INTERCUT: romantic couples with transistor radios; in a car, on a sofa, on a beach, in a London park, in a boat on an Amsterdam canal, on a Hong Kong ferry, in a truck in the Australian outback.

Marvin and Tammi make love with their eyes as they sing.

MARVIN V.O. AS NARRATOR

We had a kind of magic together,  
which didn't do me any favors on  
the marriage front.

INT. BERRY'S OFFICE, MOTOWN STUDIO - DAY

With showbiz photos, state-of-the-art hi-fi and TV consoles. Berry sits at his desk. Anna paces the office.

ANNA

How can you not suspect?

BERRY

You want me to break up a solid  
gold hit machine on suspicion?

INT. OFFICE RECEPTION

Secretaries anxiously listen to INDISTINCT VOICES from the office. Marvin approaches, pent-up. He carries little MARVIN JUNIOR.

SECRETARY

I-I'm sorry Marvin, Mr Gordy's busy right now.

Marvin continues on toward the office. He pauses, wondering what to do with Junior. The secretaries quickly converge to fuss and take care of him. Marvin gives him a kiss. He takes a deep breath.

INT. BERRY'S OFFICE

Marvin marches in.

MARVIN

You guys got a problem?

BERRY

Yeah, why don't you knock?

Brief, tense silence. Anna is ready to explode.

MARVIN

Well, if you're talking about Tammi and me then sure, we got something.

ANNA

So you admit it.

MARVIN

I'm in love with that girl, when we're singing. And that's all it is...

(indicates his neck)

I had it up to here. I'm through.

Anna glares back. Berry hurries to put himself between them.

BERRY

Just a little misunderstanding is all.

He eyes Anna, coaxing co-operation. He eyes Marvin.

INT. BEDROOM, MARVIN & ANNA'S MANSION HOME - NIGHT

Marvin is still fired up. He jabs an accusing finger.

MARVIN

Let's talk about you.

He ducks as a bottle of talc CRASHES INTO THE WALL behind him. Powder billows out. Anna is by the bathroom door. She glares back across the lavishly decorated room.

OMINOUS INTRO OF "Heard It Through The Grapevine" KICKS IN.

INT. MOTOWN STUDIO - NIGHT

Marvin RECORDS "Heard It Through The Grapevine". He's impassioned.

MARVIN

(sings)

Don't you know that I heard it  
through the grapevine, Not much  
longer would you be mine...

PRODUCER (O.S.)

(intercom)

Yeah, sing it like it is, man. All  
about your hot bitch woman.

EXT. MARVIN & ANNA'S MANSION HOME - DAY

A grand house in wooded grounds. Anna flounces out of the front door as "Heard It Through The Grapevine" CONTINUES OVER.

MARVIN AS NARRATOR

Could say Anna was inspirational  
with 'Grapevine'.

A chauffeur opens the door of a Rolls Royce for her. The Rolls glides toward the main gates.

EXT. GARAGE ANNEXE

The doors of the garage lift open. Marvin strolls along a row of classic cars.

MARVIN V.O. AS NARRATOR

We were in love alright but,  
looking back, in the pressure  
cooker of Motown, things were bound  
to get out of hand...

He gets into a '56 Mercedes coupe.

MARVIN V.O. AS NARRATOR (cont'd)

Temptations, accusations.

The ENGINE ROARS. Marvin drives out through the gates.

EXT. MERCEDES ALONG SUBURBAN STREETS

CAR RADIO PLAYS The Originals' "Baby, I'm For Real".

MARVIN V.O. AS NARRATOR

On our good days we wrote a few  
hits together for The Originals. I  
produced them, learning my chops.  
Meanwhile...

INT. MARVIN & TAMMI ON STAGE - NIGHT

Marvin and Tammi SING "Your Precious Love". Their charisma wows the audience. On stage, Tammi suddenly collapses into Marvin's arms. She recovers a little. She tries to continue, but Marvin carries her off.

SOUND OF AMBULANCE SIREN.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. MARVIN'S PRIVATE STUDIO, SUNSET BLVD, LOS ANGELES

(1973). A framed photo of Tammi and Marvin is examined by a scholarly JOURNALIST (35) in raggedy safari jacket.

JOURNALIST

Poor kid.

The room is a loft conversion, with wood-panelling and plush fittings. INTERMITTENT B/G SOUNDS OF DRILLING AND BANGING. The journalist places the photo on the floor, among other photos stacked for hanging. Marvin observes.

MARVIN

Tammi was very special.

He looks radically different. The dapper, Motown image is replaced by a beard, T-shirt and jeans. The journalist picks up his portable tape-recorder.

JOURNALIST

A brain tumor I believe.

MARVIN

The doctors weren't sure for a while. We recorded some more songs, but she was getting weaker.

JOURNALIST

You stopped all your activities about then.

Marvin turns away, pained.

MARVIN

It was a crazy time.

FLASHBACK TO:

INT. 'MOTOWN STUDIO & NEWS MONTAGE' - DAY

(1967-69). Marvin RECORDS heartfelt "Abraham, Martin and John".

INTERCUT NEWS FOOTAGE: Vietnam war Tet Offensive, GIs in street fighting, Walter Cronkite V.O., "It seems now more certain than ever that the bloody experience of Vietnam is a stalemate."

Mohammad Ali declares, "I ain't got no quarrel with the Vietcong. No Vietcong ever called me nigger."

MARVIN V.O.

(sings)

Has any body here seen my old  
friend Martin? Can you tell me,  
where he's gone...?

Dr King speaks at a gathering, "I've been to the mountain top".  
Newspaper headline "Martin Luther King shot dead".

Berry, Sammy Davis Jnr and Sidney Poitier join the Poor  
People's March to Freedom.

MARVIN V.O. (cont'd)

He freed a lot of people, but it seems  
the good die young...

Aftermath of Robert Kennedy assassination.

MARVIN V.O. (cont'd)

Has anybody here seen my old friend  
Bobby? Can you tell me where he's  
gone...?

INT. MOTEL ROOM, DETROIT - NIGHT

A bedside phone hangs off the hook.

MARVIN V.O. AS NARRATOR

Showbiz seemed irrelevant with my  
brother in Vietnam and all else  
going on. Then the taxman came  
knocking. My marriage hit the  
rocks. I quit performing. Cancelled  
everything.

Bathroom. Marvin is slumped on the floor. There are traces of  
cocaine on his face. A gun is in his hand.

The door breaks open. Pop Gordy rushes in.

POP GORDY

Hey, hey Marvin. Why do you want to  
go acting the fool? Give me that  
thing boy, before you hurt  
yourself.

He takes the gun. He wipes the cocaine off Marvin's face. He  
helps him up onto the bed.

MARVIN (V.O.)

I nearly cancelled me.

FLASHBACK ENDS:

INT. MARVIN'S PRIVATE STUDIO, LOS ANGELES - DAY

(1973). Marvin leads the intrigued journalist toward spiral stairs. A bedroom area is glimpsed through a door in b/g.

MARVIN

But that's a sin against God...

He starts down the stairs.

MARVIN (cont'd)

And anyway, I was chicken.

The journalist follows. Below, they walk past electricians and carpet fitters at work in a studio complex. Marvin leads the journalist into a lounge. He pauses at a large painting of Jesus with children and flying doves.

MARVIN (cont'd)

I should be singing for Jesus, like my father wanted. That's my calling. Preaching the spirit of pure love. Those songs with Tammi, about as close as I got.

FLASHBACK TO:

EXT. GRAVEYARD, SHARON HILL, PENNSYLVANIA - DAY

(1970) Rainswept. Marvin is alone at Tammi's grave. He looks lost, devastated. LEAVES SWIRL IN A GUST OF WIND.

INT. BEDROOM, MARVIN & ANNA'S MANSION HOME, DETROIT - DAY

Marvin lazes in bed, stubble-bearded, half-asleep. He watches TV news. BRIEF FOOTAGE of US strategic bombing in Vietnam. Oscar film nomination clips on TV.

Suddenly, Gay Senior stares out from the TV in his priestly robe.

GAY SENIOR (ON TV)

Don't be a bum, son. Sing for Jesus.

Marvin is briefly startled by the 'vision'. He rubs his eyes. Berry's PHONE VOICE CUTS IN.

BERRY (V.O. ON PHONE)

Marvin, quit loafing. Get back to work.

MARVIN (V.O.)

What am I, BG? A puppet?

BERRY (V.O. ON PHONE)

Don't get smart. We need more product. You're losing your audience and the cupboard is bare.

Marvin stretches. He re-settles, closing his eyes. Junior (6) sticks his head round the door.

JUNIOR  
Hi Dad.

MARVIN  
You off to school?

JUNIOR  
(puzzles)  
I'm just back.

He runs off. Marvin settles down again.

BERRY (V.O. ON PHONE)  
I'm fending off the media. You want me to tell 'em you're washed up? Retired?

Marvin sighs and shapes to get out of bed.

MARVIN (V.O.)  
Aw man.

I/E. SPORTS TRAINING MONTAGE - DAY

Parkland. Marvin runs with athletic DAVE SIMMONS (30). He tires. Dave urges him on.

MARVIN V.O. AS NARRATOR  
My good friend Dave got me back into condition.

College sports hall. Dave coaches young basketball players. Marvin plays with them. He's ultra competitive. They break off. LAUGHTER.

Pro football training ground. Marvin and Dave train with a couple of pro footballers.

MARVIN V.O. AS NARRATOR (cont'd)  
We even trained with the Detroit Lions. That was a gas. I could have played for 'em too...  
(laughs)  
I'd like to think.

I/E. MARVIN & ANNA'S MANSION HOME - DAY

A maid carries a pot of tea and snacks out from the lounge through the French doors.

Terrace. Genial OBIE BENSON (30) PLAYS GUITAR.

Marvin PICKS UP ON THE MUSIC, PLAYING ON AN ELECTRIC PIANO. He wears a cut-off sweatshirt and shorts.

AL CLEVELAND (30) scrutinizes lyrics in his notebook.

MARVIN

(sings)

Picket lines and picket signs,  
don't punish me with brutality,  
talk to me so you can see...

MARVIN & OBIE

Yeah what's goin' on? What's goin'  
on?

The MUSIC BREAKS UP.

MARVIN

Obie, Al, you've got the makings of  
a good song. Wouldn't mind  
producing it for The Originals.

OBIE

No man, it's perfect for you.

MARVIN

(wary)

Yeah?

AL

It's a call for understanding.  
Makes a change from all the angry  
message stuff.

Marvin leans back, thinking. A PHONE RINGS CLOSE BY. Marvin reaches and takes the call.

MARVIN (ON PHONE)

Oh, hi BG. How's LA?...

Obie and Al shape to leave. Marvin slyly smiles and signals them to stay put.

MARVIN (ON PHONE) (cont'd)

Yeah, well I'm working on  
something... Now don't rush me...

He pulls a 'naughty boy' face. The others wince.

EXT. 'THE FORUM', LOS ANGELES

The marquee shows 'The Supremes - Farewell Tour'. Berry leans against his chauffeured limo, on the phone.

BERRY (ON PHONE)

You owe me four albums, and  
counting... Diana? She's fine. She  
knows how to hustle.

INT. AEROPLANE IN MID FLIGHT - DAY

Marvin (now smartly dressed) and Anna relax with Pop Gordy and his wife.

MARVIN  
Your kids are pushing me too hard.

POP GORDY  
What's new about that?

LAUGHTER. Anna leans into Marvin.

ANNA  
You're no good just goofing around  
the house.

MARVIN  
See? She wants to kick me out.

MORE LAUGHTER. Marvin and Anna share brief, fiery glances.

INT. 'THE FORUM' - NIGHT

The Supremes PERFORM "Let The Sun Shine In". Cool Marvin sits with Anna and Berry.

BERRY  
(to Marvin)  
I'm cutting a movie deal for  
Diana...  
(eyeballs)  
Get back to work and maybe I'll  
find you a movie too...

Marvin smiles cagily.

BERRY (cont'd)  
But you've got to shift to LA.

He emphatically jabs a 'right here' finger down. Diana Ross approaches, SINGING, looking sensational. Berry beams with pride. Diana graciously offers the microphone to Marvin.

DIANA  
Marvin, why don't you help me out?

Marvin diffidently resists, but the audience expects. Marvin SINGS A GOSPEL TINGED VERSE. He effortlessly wows the audience. He modestly bows and hands the microphone back to Diana.

Anna discretely, firmly, grips his hand. A possessive impulse amid all the female adulation. Marvin leans over to Berry, with a sly smile.

MARVIN  
Only place I'm going is back to  
D.C.....

Berry sours. Marvin's smile lights up.

MARVIN (cont'd)  
'Cos Frankie's coming home!

I/E. GRAND HOUSE, WASHINGTON D.C. - DAY

A banner over the front door reads 'Welcome Home Frankie'. Frankie, with crewcut and in G.I. uniform, is given a rousing reception by family and friends.

WELL-WISHERS

Good to have you back Frankie...  
Been too long... We're mighty proud  
of you...

Mom and Marvin hug him. Jeanne too. Sweetsie jumps on him. He's tearful, too overcome with emotions to speak.

WELL-WISHERS (cont'd)

You've done a grand job, no matter  
about the protests... Those damn  
drop-outs... Hey this ain't no time  
for politics... OK, OK...

Marvin pokes Frankie's flat stomach.

MARVIN

Frankie, you need Momma's cooking.

LAUGHTER.

MOM

Folks, you're all welcome to the  
barbecue out back.

JEANNE

Momma, the cakes! They'll burn!

Mom throws up her hands. WARM LAUGHTER as Jeanne hurries inside with her.

Frankie sees his father wait expectantly, standing with a small group slightly apart. Frankie starts toward him. There's a pause in celebrations, out of respect for the moment and for Gay Senior's aura of specialness.

Gay Senior smiles. He briefly, but warmly, embraces Frankie. Marvin looks on, a little wistful.

GAY SENIOR

My precious son, our prayers have  
been answered.

EXT. BACK GARDEN - NIGHT

Gay Senior sits with Marvin and Frankie.

FRANKIE

He looked at me with real hate in  
his eyes. A rookie G.I. like me,  
but from the Deep South. Didn't  
want to share the same tent with a  
black man. Draped a rebel flag over  
his locker.

Marvin shakes his head in disgust.

FRANKIE (cont'd)  
The others made him get rid of it.

GAY SENIOR  
Intolerance. The bible has a lot to say about that.

FRANKIE  
Next day I asked him what I'd done to make him look down on me. I asked if there were any black men or women he respected. Made a name for themselves. He said "Well, maybe"...

Gay Senior bristles. Marvin senses the direction Frankie's headed. He discretely shakes his head, cautioning. Frankie takes heed.

FRANKIE (cont'd)  
Having to stand up and be counted against all the prejudice. Banned from hotels yet rise up above it on the campaign trail. Or on stage. Or taking the calls from the umpires, the boos from the crowd, and still focus on hitting the ball...

Gay Senior grips Frankie's hand.

GAY SENIOR  
Did you mention the bible? The second commandment?

MARVIN  
(murmurs)  
Love your neighbor as yourself.

FRANKIE  
Well, that was the sentiment. But I didn't want to press too hard.

GAY SENIOR  
Don't equivocate with the Lord's business.

FRANKIE  
Had the guy thinking anyway. We became pals. Good pals.

Gay Senior loses interest. He starts up from the table and walks away. Marvin and Frankie exchange wary glances.

MARVIN  
You did good, Frankie. Don't have to preach. Just show love and understanding.

INT. BEDROOM

Marvin and Frankie face each other, sitting on twin beds.

MARVIN  
Come on bro, tell me.

FRANKIE  
Aw, you've seen it all on TV.

MARVIN  
Talk to me.

Frankie leans away with a heavy sigh.

FRANKIE  
You don't want to know.

A LITTLE LATER

Frankie paces the room, his pained words tumbling out.

FRANKIE (cont'd)  
The jungles were so dense. The rain, the stinking rot. Couldn't stand up a lot of times. Had to crawl over things that moved when you touched them. We were so covered in mud. And the enemy, maybe crouched behind the next tree or looming over us.

He flops down on his back. Marvin is hunched on his bed, intent on finding out more.

LATER

Frankie is still on his back, motionless.

FRANKIE (cont'd)  
Once you see people dying, mutilated, tortured even, day after day... you become desensitized. Then paranoid. The terror. The crazy waste of lives. Indiscriminate. Women, children...

LATER

Frankie paces again.

FRANKIE (cont'd)  
What was really going on was fear, panic, madness. 'Zap the Cong boys', 'Torch the commie geeks'. Man, we were disgusted with it all. Now we're looking for 'Peace With Honor'. What honor?

He covers his face with his hands, despairing.

FRANKIE (cont'd)  
 (sobbing)  
 Still you want to believe there's a  
 reason for what's happening, and  
 that good will come of it...

Marvin tries to comfort him.

MARVIN  
 You're home now, Frankie.

EXT. RIOT DAMAGED NEIGHBORHOOD - DAY

Marvin and Frankie wander along a street with burned out stores  
 and other buildings reduced to rubble.

MARVIN  
 The backlash after Doctor King was  
 shot. Didn't want to worry you in  
 our letters.

The top of the Washington Monument becomes visible in B/G.

EXT. LINCOLN MEMORIAL, THE MALL

Marvin and Frankie stroll out from the Lincoln Memorial. Marvin  
 lights up a fat reefer. Frankie is shocked.

FRANKIE  
 Marv, not here!

Marvin offers the reefer.

MARVIN  
 After what you've been through?

Frankie grins. They LAUGH. For Frankie it's a release of  
 tension. He smokes the reefer.

MARVIN (cont'd)  
 I've been stuck on a song. A  
 protest thing. Maybe it should have  
 something about you, little  
 brother.

Frankie is intrigued.

MARVIN (cont'd)  
 Back home from Vietnam. From one  
 crazy nightmare to another.

INT. MOTOWN STUDIO - DAY

Control room. Marvin PLAYS A DEMO of "What's Going On" to  
 arranger DAVID VAN DePITTE (40).

VAN DEPITTE  
It's different alright. But just  
too radical. Won't fly with BG.

MARVIN  
I'm gonna do it anyway.

His eager gaze energizes.

VAN DEPITTE  
(cautious smile)  
Well, always like a challenge.

Marvin opens up, excited.

MARVIN  
For starters I want a more jazzy  
beat. And we free up James on the  
bass. A lot of percussion effects.  
Kind of a global sound.

Studio. Marvin PLAYS PIANO. Sonorous chords.

MARVIN (cont'd)  
And we create a swooping, swirling  
strings theme, a little ominous in  
places, y'know like notes between  
the notes. Like the people are  
waking up to all the craziness  
going on.

Van DePitte blows his cheeks, a little daunted. But his eyes  
shine. He makes notes on a music score sheet. He jumps in and  
EMBELISHES MARVIN'S PIANO THEME.

INT. 'MOTOWN STUDIO MONTAGE' - DAY/NIGHT

"What's Going On" Recording sessions. Marvin wears a red wool  
beanie hat to augment his funky casual look. He chain-smokes  
reefers, calmly focussed throughout.

HE GUIDES THE RHYTHM SECTION FROM THE PIANO. There's an array  
of percussionists; tambourine, congas, bongos, vibes and other,  
more exotic sounds.

AN ALTO SAXOPHONIST PLAYS. His sound is fresh, uplifting.  
Marvin and Van DePitte look elated in the control room.

SAXOPHONIST  
OK, Marv. I'm ready.

MARVIN (INTERCOM)  
We've got it, Eli.

SAXOPHONIST  
I was just goofin' off.

MARVIN (INTERCOM)  
Well, you goofed exquisitely.

A STRINGS SECTION PLAYS, squeezed into the studio but enjoying the challenge. Van DePitte conducts. Marvin prowls behind.

MARVIN SINGS with hand-held mike. Frankie and Dave Simmons are in the studio, adding encouragement. Stevie Wonder is glimpsed in the control-room enjoying the music. A young engineer PLAYS BACK TWO LEAD VOCALS IN SYNC, BY MISTAKE.

ENGINEER

Aw, sorry Marv.

MARVIN

(intrigued)

Let it run. I like the possibilities.

Marvin embellishes with MORE OVERLAYED VOCALS, and FEMALE HARMONIES. He prompts Frankie, Dave and His Detroit Lions pals to add PARTY-JIVE BANTER. He beams through the reefer haze.

MARVIN (cont'd)

OK BG, I'm back!

EXT. PARAMOUNT PICTURES LOT, HOLLYWOOD - DAY

A huge camera crane is pushed into a studio. A production sign by the studio door reads 'Lady Sings The Blues'. CAMERA SWINGS AWAY TO A FIRST FLOOR PRODUCTION OFFICE opposite.

I/E. BERRY'S PARAMOUNT OFFICE

Marvin climbs steps to the busy office. A couple of female assistants swoon a little at Marvin. Berry gestures for everyone to leave. He eyes Marvin's funky clothes.

BERRY

What happened to the dress code?  
Look like a hippie.

Marvin shrugs off the remark. Berry gestures at a vast storyboard of 'Lady Sings The Blues' on a wall.

BERRY (cont'd)

This is the business. You could be a natural.

MARVIN

(grins)

Yeah?

He hands over a cassette tape. Berry slots it into a player.

BERRY

Better be good. We waited long enough.

Marvin paces impatiently.

MARVIN

I'm working on ideas for a whole album.

"What's Going On" BEGINS TO PLAY. Berry grins on hearing the party jive. The beat kicks in. Berry is up and dancing.

MARVIN'S RECORDED VOICE

Mother, mother, there's too many of you crying... Brother, brother, brother, there's far too many of you dying...

Berry freezes as he listens to the lyrics.

BERRY

You've got to be kidding.

He slumps into a chair.

BERRY (cont'd)

You're the 'love man'. Don't go gettin' sidetracked on issues.

Marvin glowers.

MARVIN

We've got to respond to the times, BG. This is how I feel. How a lot of people feel.

BERRY

We're in the entertainment business. Stick to what you do. Stick to what works.

MARVIN

So it's all about product to you.

BERRY

You're damned right.

A DOOR BURSTS OPEN.

DIANA

No! No! No!...

Marvin and Berry turn in surprise. Diana flounces forward. She flings costume designs to the floor, rejecting them one by one.

DIANA (cont'd)

No! No! No! No!

She sees Marvin.

DIANA (cont'd)

Hey, Marv!

Even Marvin's intense mood can't prevent a 'wow' smile at Diana. She gives him a showy kiss. She reacts to the music.

DIANA (cont'd)  
Sounds great.

Marvin eye-balls Berry.

MARVIN  
You gotta release it.

Berry jumps up.

BERRY  
No way!

INSERT SHOT: "What's Going On" MOTOWN LABELS, machine-pressed onto 45rpm records.

I/E. LIMO ALONG LOS ANGELES HIGHWAY - DAY

Berry is on the phone while referring to a movie script. A WEATHER REPORT CONCLUDES ON RADIO.

DJ (ON RADIO)  
And talking of hot, here it is again folks...

"What's Going On" PLAYS ON LIMO RADIO. Berry is furious.

BERRY (ON PHONE)  
Who put it out?!

ALES' PHONE VOICE  
The distributors were on our back. We had to give 'em something. But hey, we're shifting big numbers. It's a smash.

BERRY  
Yeah?

I/E. 'WGO RECORD SUCCESS MONTAGE' - DAY/NIGHT

(1971) "What's Going On" PLAYS ON CAR RADIOS & TRANSISTOR RADIOS in city ghettos. At a college campus. An American soldiers' base in Vietnam.

It PLAYS OVER heavy industry sites with spuming waste gases and toxic waste into a river.

AND OVER children playing amid dumped automobiles, fridges and washing-machines.

INT. LOUNGE, MARVIN & ANNA'S MANSION HOME, DETROIT - DAY

Anna is dressed to go out. She eyes Berry and Harvey.

ANNA  
He's got you this time, BG.

She blows a kiss goodbye.

Marvin saunters down the stairs, acting surprised.

MARVIN  
Hey, BG. Harv.

Berry glowers.

MARVIN (cont'd)  
You want to watch the game?

He casually switches a TV on. He flops onto a sofa. Berry grabs the remote and turns the TV off.

BERRY  
You know why we're here. We have a big hit and no album to back it up.

Marvin looks thoughtful. Berry slumps a little.

BERRY (cont'd)  
Damn it Marv, you were right, we were wrong. I learned something. Now what about those other songs?

Marvin feigns puzzlement.

HARVEY  
Said you were working on them.

MARVIN  
Oh, well they're pretty sketchy right now.

BERRY  
Come on man, I'm begging you. We're losing a fortune on potential sales.

MARVIN  
You think I can just crank out an album to order?

BERRY  
I'll give you exclusive use of the new studio.

Marvin is warily impressed. He makes show of considering, while lighting a reefer.

MARVIN  
Complete control?

Berry nods.

BERRY  
Make the album of your dreams.

Marvin is suddenly energized, enthused.

MARVIN

It'll be based on the themes of the single. I imagine all the songs to flow from beginning to end...

BERRY

Sure.

MARVIN

Lock the drums and bass in deep.

HARVEY

Nice.

MARVIN

I want to use The Andantes for harmonies. But not the 'baby baby' stuff. More like sound textures.

He sits at the piano. He PLAYS THE THEME OF "Inner City Blues".

MARVIN (cont'd)

I want to bring in Mr Nyx.

BERRY

Gentleman Jim at switchboard? He's always pitching stuff. He's tone deaf.

MARVIN

Writes good lyrics.

Berry shrugs.

BERRY

Whatever.

He starts out.

BERRY (cont'd)

But you have to finish in thirty days.

Marvin looks taken aback. Harvey flashes a sly smile.

INT. MOTOWN STUDIO B - DAY

Marvin and Van dePitte enter a spacious new studio.

VAN DEPITTE

Thirty days?!

Marvin turns a slow circle, enjoying the facility, the challenge. "Mercy Mercy Me" FADES IN.

INT. MARVIN'S PRIVATE STUDIO, LOS ANGELES - NIGHT

(1973) "Mercy Mercy Me" CONTINUES OVER. The journalist inspects a "What's Going On" album cover.

MARVIN

I was betting my life on that album.

He flops onto a sofa under the Jesus painting.

MARVIN (cont'd)

BG made a wager I wouldn't finish in time. A big wager. He knew I was running scared of the tax man. I had to deliver.

Sweetsie serves drinks.

SWEETSIE

It was a breakthrough. Protest by seduction.

MARVIN

(laughs)

I like that. You know, listening to Lester Young play horn I finally learned how to sing. Learned to relax.

JOURNALIST

You opened up a lot of creative space for the others... Stevie, Michael...

MARVIN

(sly smile)

Yeah, I should have won a Grammy.

LAUGHTER. The journalist gazes at a framed silver key with ribbon.

MARVIN (cont'd)

Now that was something...

FLASHBACK TO:

EXT. CARDOZA HIGH SCHOOL, WASHINGTON D.C. - DAY

(1972) Entrance gates. A banner reads 'Marvin Gaye Day'. The top of the Washington Monument is visible in b/g.

"Mercy Mercy Me" CONTINUES OVER as eager schoolchildren hurry in through the gates.

INT. DRESSING-ROOM

"Mercy Mercy Me" CONTINUES OVER. Marvin, with trim beard and white suit, gazes at photos of school drama productions on the wall. He stares into a mirror, tense.

Frankie (now with full head of hair and a beard) prepares a drink for Marvin, with honey and careful addition of hot water. He checks the temperature against the back of his hand.

Marvin secretively licks a finger, dabs it in a little container of cocaine, and rubs the powder into his gums.

INT. ASSEMBLY HALL

Marvin is elegant, inspired. He SINGS "Mercy Mercy Me" to the thrilled students. Behind him is a huge, handmade map-of-the-world collage.

Children parade hand-painted posters of wildlife across the stage. Some of them collapse in stagey death spasms.

MARVIN

(sings)

Oh, mercy, mercy me. Ah, things  
ain't what they used to be, no, no,  
no... Radiation underground and in  
the sky, animals and birds who live  
nearby are dying...

(talks)

We've learned how to walk on the  
moon, but we're pretty dumb about  
the damage we're doing down here,  
on our own fragile Earth. Right?

The young audience WOOP AND HOLLER AGREEMENT.

MARVIN (cont'd)

Time for you young folks to do the  
educating.

MORE HOLLERS OF SUPPORT.

MARVIN (cont'd)

We have to teach the businessmen  
and politicians about ecology and  
saving the world...

(sings)

Oh, mercy mercy me...

Marvin's proud family sit at the front of the audience. Gay Senior wears a dark suit and fancy tie. He's inscrutable behind a stiff smile and shades.

EXT. TOWN HALL STEPS

Marvin is surrounded by civic dignitaries. He smiles at his parents, with his arms around them. Gay Senior hides resentment of such familiarity. Mom is overcome with emotions. The Mayor presents Marvin with a silver 'Key To The City'. Marvin graciously accepts. CROWD CHEERS.

MAYOR

(aside)

Maybe you'd like to say a few words  
about the danger of drugs.

Marvin is briefly taken aback.

EXT. MOTORCADE, CITY STREET

MARCHING BANDS lead the motorcade. Marvin smiles and waves from an open-top limo. His parents ride with him.

I/E. STAGE, KENNEDY CENTRE - NIGHT

Marvin, still in white suit, SINGS "How Sweet It Is" to a rapturous homecoming audience. Backed by a large band. He's deeply moved by the strength of affection for him.

MARVIN

I thank you all for being here at  
my attempt to return to live  
performing...

HOLLERS OF APPLAUSE. Stewards in 'Pride Incorporated' T-shirts urge donations.

MARVIN (cont'd)

I guess I've been away too long.

WILD APPLAUSE.

MARVIN (cont'd)

And I'd like to thank Mrs Martin  
Luther King for her wonderful  
telegram of support...

RESPECTFULL APPLAUSE.

He SINGS "Inner City Blues".

EXT. FOYER

A flurry of media and security as Marvin emerges. A limo pulls up. Marvin hugs and kisses Mom, and helps her into the limo. He hugs Jeanne and Sweetsie as they follow her inside. Gay Senior shakes Marvin's hand.

GAY SENIOR

I'm real proud of you, son.

Marvin is overcome with emotion. He gestures to share the hug he's always craved.

MARVIN

Glad you could make it, father.

But Gay Senior seems perturbed by Marvin's remark. He steps away and inside the limo.

Still no hug. Marvin hides his pain as he gets into another limo with Frankie.

INT. LIMO THROUGH CITY

Frankie stares at him, questioning. Marvin slumps back.

MARVIN

"Glad you could make it". That's all I said. Sure I was glad. First time he's ever come to see me sing.

FRANKIE

Maybe he thought you were being sarcastic.

MARVIN

Maybe that's what he wanted me to suppose he was thinking.

FRANKIE

It's a negative spiral. You need his unconditional love, he needs to be top dog. So he's holding back. But he does love you, Marvin...

MARVIN

(sour)  
Yeah, right.

FRANKIE

Sure he does. Just can't admit it.

MARVIN

Maybe us moving to LA will make a difference.

FRANKIE

Fresh start.

EXT. GAY FAMILY HOME, GRAMERCY PLACE, LOS ANGELES - DAY

(1973) A large, double-gabled house and gardens.

INT. HALL

The floor is bare. Removals tea-chests and rolls of carpet are stacked on one side.

Marvin and Frankie play ball with Junior (8). The hall ECHOES WITH LAUGHTER & BOUNCING BALL.

Gay Senior, in a robe, leans down from the top of the grand staircase.

GAY SENIOR

Shut the hell up!

Junior is surprised, bewildered. Marvin too.

MARVIN

What happened, father? Never heard you talk like that before.

GAY SENIOR  
I'll talk however I like in my own  
home.

He retreats from view. Marvin starts after him.

MARVIN  
And just who paid for it?

FRANKIE  
Easy, Marv.

Marvin pauses. He returns to Junior, placing a comforting hand on his shoulder.

INT. KITCHEN

Marvin, Frankie and Junior enter, downcast. A RADIO PLAYS GOSPEL MUSIC. They watch Mom prepare a chicken. Junior cradles the ball.

MOM  
Why the long faces?

Shrugs in response. Junior drinks lemonade. Mom stuffs the chicken. Marvin embraces her.

MARVIN  
You're the best cook ever...

FRANKIE  
(to Junior)  
Momma cooked for the rich folks  
too, back in DC.

MOM  
Had to make ends meet.

Junior admires biscuits fresh from the oven. He glances appealingly at Mom.

MOM (cont'd)  
(laughs)  
Go on, help yourself little  
darlin'. But mind, they're still  
hot.

Junior grins and swoops on a biscuit. He nibbles at it. He wanders over to the lounge and switches on the TV. It shows news of the Watergate enquiry. Junior changes channels, to Sesame Street.

Marvin confides to Mom, indicating upstairs.

MARVIN  
He's going too far, blaspheming.  
And in front of Junior.

MOM  
Tolerance Marvin. We'll pray for  
tolerance.

Marvin looks her square in the eye.

MARVIN  
Mom, why don't you separate?

Mom stiffens. Frankie looks uneasy. Mom takes her time to  
answer.

MOM  
It's not easy, if once you loved a  
man, just to desert him.

MARVIN  
Wish I had your faith.

Mom embraces him.

MOM  
You have my darlin'.

MARVIN  
He's turned his back on us, like he  
gave up on the Church.

MOM  
He resents the Church so much. He  
thinks it let him down.

FRANKIE  
Because he missed out on Chief  
Apostle.

MOM  
Oh, that took its toll. But  
something else shook him too, more  
fundamental.

She dabs a tear from her eye. Marvin grips her hands.

MARVIN  
Go on, Momma.

MOM  
(hesitant)  
It was the Seventh Day Adventist  
Convention in Kentucky. Remember we  
scraped up enough money one year  
for him finally to go?

FRANKIE  
I remember.

MOM  
It was the calling of the clan and  
he was happy as a lark. So excited.  
(MORE)

MOM (cont'd)

But when he saw all the other ministers driving up in fancy cars, stepping out in fine suits and diamonds on their fingers, well...

Marvin shakes his head in silent anger.

MARVIN

And they preaching humility.

SOUND OF JUNIOR LAUGHING AT TV. Marvin brightens.

EXT. SWIMMING POOL, LUXURY APARTMENTS

Marvin races Junior and his pals. LAUGHTER. He gets out and flops onto a lounge. Anna approaches, waving to Junior.

MARVIN

Hey babe, nice lunch?

Anna kisses him and perches on the lounge, being careful not to get wet.

ANNA

Berry's on about you doing a duet with Diana.

MARVIN

I'm through with duets.

ANNA

Got to keep in with the public.

MARVIN

Can't argue with that.

ANNA

So talk to him.

Marvin pulls a face. Anna strokes his arm. He gestures submission.

MARVIN

OK Momma.

Anna smarts, resenting the friendly jibe. She stands, making display of her still eye-catching figure. A beady-eyed swimmer admires her from the edge of the pool.

ANNA

I had another look at that house in Beverly. It's really something.

MARVIN

(flat)  
Yeah?

ANNA

Yeah!

She starts away, calling out to Junior.

ANNA (cont'd)  
Homework!

She walks away.

The swimmer emerges from the pool. He approaches Marvin and shakes his hand. He sits on an adjacent lounge. Marvin seems at ease with him.

The man slides a briefcase out from under his lounge. He gives a glossy presentation folder to Marvin to read. He's hustling.

INT. LUXURY APARTMENT - NIGHT

Balcony views over LA. A maid clears the supper table.

Marvin and Anna check Junior, sleeping in his bedroom. They share smiles. Anna is fresh from a shower, in short gown.

A LITTLE LATER

Marvin watches TV news of a dramatic hike in oil prices, and queues for petrol. Anna flirts with him.

ANNA  
My fine young man.

MARVIN  
Not so young anymore.

Anna abruptly leans away. Marvin grips her hand and gently pulls her in. They tenderly kiss. Anna becomes more passionate. Marvin resists. Anna slumps back, but their hands remain linked.

MARVIN (cont'd)  
I'm sorry, honey. Out of sorts.

ANNA  
No, it's more than that. This move to LA. You want to break out. You need fresh inspiration.

Marvin is wary of Anna's resigned tone. Their fingers intertwine, performing a tender little dance together, of attraction and retreat. Anna's hand finally pulls away.

EXT. GARDEN, GAY FAMILY HOME, GRAMERCY PLACE - DAY

SOUND OF MOTOR MOWER. Marvin and Mom relax on the terrace.

MARVIN  
We've had our transgressions, and reconciled. But now she's getting moody about our future.

MOM

Oh my sweet. I suppose it was inevitable.

MARVIN

I still love her, but it's the whole Motown thing too. They took me in as a kid. Well, I ain't a kid anymore.

He glances at the source of the MOWER NOISE. Gay Senior cuts the extensive lawn. He sits like a lord, in sun hat and shorts, on the top-of-the-line machine. A black poodle romps about.

MARVIN (cont'd)

I need some independence, Momma. Anna knows it, I know it. But I dread the thought of breaking out.

MOM

Let's hope for the best.

Marvin gets to his feet.

MARVIN

I have to work.

MOM

Oh, stay a while.

Marvin kisses her goodbye. She reaches for a cake tin.

MOM (cont'd)

Don't forget your coodies.

INT. MARVIN'S PRIVATE STUDIO - DAY

Marvin is at the control desk. He's alone, nibbling a cookie.

He PLAYS his jazz-tinged "Trouble Man", making tweaks to the mix. Jeanne enters. She thrusts a business letter at him.

JEANNE

Marvin, did you agree to this?

Marvin scans the letter.

JEANNE (cont'd)

What do you know about managing boxers?

MARVIN

He could go all the way. World champ.

Jeanne gestures frustration. She thrusts another letter.

JEANNE

And this one.

MARVIN

He's a pal. It's a good idea, an investment.

JEANNE

How am I supposed to keep on top of things?

Marvin gestures surrender. Frankie enters.

FRANKIE

Marv, there's a girl here says she has a song from Ed Townsend.

JANICE HUNTER (17) steps in. She's lithe, pretty, with tan complexion. She clutches a reel-to-reel tape box.

JAN

Oh hi, I-I always wanted to meet you.

She sticks out a nervous hand. Marvin is spellbound. The fascination is mutual. They talk, but their eyes do the real talking.

MARVIN

So you know Ed?

JAN

Yeah, he's got a song he'd love to give you. Needs lyrics.

MARVIN

I'd like to work with him.

JAN

You met?

MARVIN

Sure, a while back. He worked with Nelson Riddle.

JAN

Yeah?

MARVIN

And Nelson Riddle worked with Sinatra. Now that's pedigree. That's class all the way.

The intensity of their mutual gaze causes Jan to shyly tilt her head down. Marvin gently tilts it up again.

MARVIN (cont'd)

Babe, you've got class.

JAN

I've got freckles.

Marvin LAUGHS, causing Jan to LAUGH TOO. She lifts the tape box up to cover her face.

MARVIN V.O. AS NARRATOR  
 I was hooked. Jan was my fantasy,  
 my muse. My heart was pounding fit  
 to bust.

DISSOLVE

Studio. Marvin RECORDS "Let's Get It On". He gazes at Jan through his reflection in the control room window. Jan gazes back, determined to overcome her shyness.

MARVIN  
 (sings)  
 I've been really trying baby... To  
 hold back these feelings for so  
 long... And if you feel like I feel  
 baby... Come on, come on... Let's  
 get it on...

EXT. BEACH ALONG PACIFIC HIGHWAY - DAY

"Let's Get It On" CONTINUES OVER.

MARVIN'S RECORDED VOICE  
 We're all sensitive people, with so  
 much to give...

Marvin and Jan stroll along an isolated stretch of beach, teasing and smooching.

JAN  
 I like to dance...

MARVIN  
 Uh oh, never did like that. Too shy  
 with the girls.

Jan LAUGHS.

JAN  
 You do OK on TV.

Marvin wiggles his hips a little.

MARVIN  
 That's all choreographed. Hey, you  
 like movies?

JAN  
 Sure.

MARVIN  
 I like all kind of movies. It's  
 nice to escape for a couple of  
 hours.

JAN  
 Yeah.

MARVIN  
So, what else?

JAN  
Oh, I sing a little.

Marvin looks suddenly guarded.

I/E. JEEP, SANTA MONICA MOUNTAINS

"Let's Get It On" CONTINUES OVER. Marvin drives Jan in a Cherokee jeep. They drive up into the mountains.

They venture along a dirt-track. It takes them to a timber, hide-away house on a steep incline.

EXT. HIDE-AWAY HOUSE, MOUNTAINS - DAY/NIGHT

"Let's Get It On" CONTINUES OVER. They get out of the jeep and look around. The house is unoccupied, 'For Sale'.

The other side reveals a dramatic view down to Los Angeles.

They sit on a rock and share a reefer, as the daylight fails and the city lights switch on.

MARVIN  
Guess you know I'm, well kind of,  
y'know...

JAN  
Yeah, I know. Married.

MARVIN  
And you, well you seem so...

Jan silences him with a tender kiss.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. BEDROOM, HIDE-AWAY HOUSE - NIGHT

Marvin and Jan make love. MUSIC FADES.

DISTANT SOUND OF GAY SENIOR'S PREACHING VOICE, JUST AUDIBLE ABOVE GUSTING WIND.

GAY SENIOR (V.O.)  
He that commits adultery destroys  
his very soul...

Marvin reacts, startled. He stares at a balcony. At wind-blown curtains that suggest swirling priestly robes.

EXT. HIDE-AWAY HOUSE - DAY

BIRD SONG. Marvin and Jan stroll, hand in hand, near the house.

MARVIN

He wanted so much for me to sing  
for Jesus.

JAN

Yeah?

MARVIN

I think he had it in mind for me to  
go out on the road with him,  
evangelizing.

JAN

But it's your life to live.

She pauses to pick wild flowers.

INT. LOUNGE

Semi-decorated, with dust sheets and paint cans. Wood beams, a  
stone fireplace and view of Los Angeles.

A PHONE RINGS. ANSWER-VOICE CLICKS IN.

MARVIN'S ANSWER VOICE

Hello from Paradise. If you leave a  
message we'll try to get back.

INT. MUSIC ROOM

The spartan room has an electric piano and basic recording  
equipment. Tapes and scraps of paper with lyrics are scattered  
about.

A bird hops in through the window, and out again.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. VILLAGE, MOUNTAINS - DAY

A few rustic buildings either side of a bend in the mountain  
road. Marvin's jeep pulls up at a general store.

EXT. CAFE

A squirrel climbs a nearby tree. Marvin and Jan relax with  
coffees and newspapers. Marvin flicks through some mail.

Jan teases open the wrapping on a package. Enough to reveal a  
gold album disc in wood frame.

JAN

We should go into town and  
celebrate.

Marvin casually gestures around at the scenery.

MARVIN  
Babe, this is the celebration.

Jan shows just a hint of frustration.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. KITCHEN, HIDE-AWAY HOUSE - DAY

Jan wears a flour-dusted apron and oven gloves. She anxiously opens the oven. She pulls out a tray with a loaf of bread. She skips about in girlish delight. She hurries out.

JAN (O.S.)  
Marvin! Marvin!

EXT. VICINITY

Marvin pauses from CHOPPING WOOD.

INT. LOUNGE

Marvin watches a baseball game on TV. Jan brings him a lemonade. She cozies up.

JAN  
Honey, I'd like you to hear something.

She flourishes a cassette tape.

JAN (cont'd)  
Told you I like to sing.

Marvin eyes her.

MARVIN  
Hell of a business. You don't want any part of it.

Jan stares at him.

JAN  
You're not even interested?

Marvin gazes back, taking a few moments to answer.

MARVIN  
Oh I'm sure you can sing, but are you ready for all the hard knocks while you pay your dues?

JAN  
Sure.

MARVIN  
Then you don't need me.

Jan is flustered, not sure what to say. She takes a breath. She rushes toward him and embraces him.

JAN  
You don't think I'm trying to crowd  
you?

She kisses him before he has a chance to answer.

JAN (cont'd)  
Just want me to cook and clean,  
huh? And be your mistress.

She straddles him, provocative, tempting.

MARVIN  
(sighs)  
If you put it like that...

He rolls her over. She SHRIEKS IN DELIGHT.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. PORCH - DAY

Marvin reads a magazine, with image of a nuclear explosion on the cover. Rain begins to fall. Jan approaches from a stroll. She looks pregnant. She slips. Marvin rushes to support her.

MARVIN  
Hey, you'd better slow down.

INT. MUSIC ROOM - NIGHT

SOUND OF HEAVY RAIN. Marvin enters, carrying the phone on extension lead. He picks up the receiver. He hesitates. He replaces it. He picks it up again and dials.

INT. LOUNGE

RAIN LASHES AGAINST THE WINDOW. Jan stares out, down to the distant lights of Los Angeles. In B/G a log fire blazes.

INT. MUSIC ROOM

MARVIN (ON PHONE)  
Honey, it happened. She's sure  
worked some magic on my soul. I  
love her and I'm gonna do right by  
her... Well, no, actually I can't  
come back...

INT. LUXURY APARTMENT, LOS ANGELES

Anna jumps up from a sofa, clutching the phone.

ANNA (ON PHONE)  
 So you're gonna let some stupid  
 infatuation destroy everything? Is  
 that what you want?

INT. MUSIC ROOM, HIDE-AWAY HOUSE

MARVIN (ON PHONE)  
 Thought we had an understanding.  
 Now it's about moving on. Besides,  
 she's...  
 (pained)  
 Oh, nothing...

INT. LUXURY APARTMENT, LOS ANGELES

Anna slumps down on the sofa.

ANNA (ON PHONE)  
 I miss my fine young man.

She caresses the phone.

INT. MUSIC ROOM, HIDE-AWAY HOUSE

Marvin listens on the phone, emotions crossing his face. He suddenly frowns.

MARVIN  
 What?

INT. LOUNGE

Jan remains at the window, gazing out. Marvin solemnly approaches. He wraps his arms around her. He strokes her stomach.

MARVIN  
 Divorce. Strictly business now.  
 They'll take me for all I've got,  
 and more.

Jan turns and gazes at him.

MARVIN (cont'd)  
 I have to hit the road again. Shake  
 my booty.

Jan hugs him.

JAN  
 Oh babe, long as we're together.

INT. BEDROOM

HEAVY RAIN CONTINUES. THE WIND HOWLS. The balcony curtains billow. Jan sleeps. Marvin lies next to her, restless. Flashes of lightning. SOUND OF THUNDER.

Marvin starts up in surprise. Gay Senior stands at the foot of the bed, a little ghostly, in priestly robe and mitre hat. He glares at Marvin and Jan.

GAY SENIOR  
Base fornication.

MARVIN  
I wish I could reason with you.  
No preachifying.

GAY SENIOR  
I'm listening.

Marvin composes himself for serious debate.

MARVIN  
Let's talk about the man woman  
thing.

His father winces.

MARVIN (cont'd)  
You say that sex is only for  
procreation.

GAY SENIOR  
That's right, for begetting  
children in wedlock.

MARVIN  
That sex just for fun is taboo.

GAY SENIOR  
There lies wickedness, even in  
wedlock.

MARVIN  
But it can be a beautiful way to  
give and receive pleasure.

GAY SENIOR  
It's fornication, plain and simple.

He pulls the sheet covering Marvin and Jan away.

GAY SENIOR (cont'd)  
Wanton corruption of the flesh.

He averts his gaze. Marvin replaces the sheet.

MARVIN  
But we're in love.

GAY SENIOR

Love is all abiding. It is not a  
license for crude desires.

Marvin is surprised to see Mom emerge from behind his father,  
dressed in white robe head to toe.

MOM

Your father and I haven't done the  
nasty for years.

Marvin ponders the word.

MARVIN

The nasty... the nasty... Well  
don't you just miss it?

MOM

Oh, four lovely children was quite  
enough.

More flashes of lightning. Marvin shields his eyes. He opens them.  
Father and Mother have disappeared. The THUNDER IS LOUDER. WIND  
HOWLS LOUDER. RAIN FALLS HARDER. The BALCONY WINDOWS SLAM.

Jan wakes. Marvin hurries to close the windows.

But a VIOLENT, RENDING, SHUDDERING, SPLINTERING CACOPHONY causes  
him to stumble.

EXT. HIDE-AWAY HOUSE

The RAIN POUNDS INTO THE SODDEN GROUND. A corner of the house  
subsides in the steep incline.

Above, the balcony is wrenched away. Marvin stands at the  
jagged edge. Jan pulls him back.

I/E. JEEP, MOUNTAIN ROAD

DISTANT THUNDER. Rain still falls. Marvin drives Jan down from  
their mountain retreat. Headlights pick out wind-torn debris on  
the road. The jeep lurches. Marvin throws out a protecting  
hand. The jeep slows.

MARVIN

I fancy a change of style anyway. A  
ranch maybe.

Jan is pensive.

JAN

That'd be nice. But not too far  
out.

INT. STAGE, OAKLAND COLISEUM, LOS ANGELES - DAY

Musicians take a break from rehearsal. Marvin prowls the stage. He looks hot, nervy. Frankie provides water and a towel.

MARVIN

Hope they show up tonight. Maybe  
I'll give 'em the love man. Maybe  
I'll flunk it. Maybe I should quit  
now.

FRANKIE

You'll be great.

INT. STAGE - NIGHT

Marvin SINGS "Distant Lover". He shimmies with funky harmony singers and dancers. He beams his sexy, dreamy smile. IMPASSIONED SCREAMS FROM WOMEN IN THE AUDIENCE.

Soft missiles fly onto the stage. Panties. Marvin nonchalantly mops his brow with them. MORE SCREAMS. He gazes beyond.

MARVIN

(sings)  
Distant lover...

INT. PRIVATE ROOM, HOSPITAL - DAY

Jan is propped up in bed with her baby, NONA. She's blissful. Proud Marvin is overjoyed. He takes polaroid photos.

MARVIN

Look at those pretty eyes.

INT. HOSPITAL CORRIDOR

Marvin is in a phone booth. He gazes at a polaroid.

MARVIN (ON PHONE)

She's just beautiful. Changed my  
whole perspective... Yeah I'm a  
poppa, and I tell you what I'm  
gonna do...

INT. LAWYER'S OFFICE

Affable CURTIS SHAW (30) is on the phone. His smile suddenly fades.

CURTIS (ON PHONE)

(Texas twang)  
Cancel the tour?... No Marvin.  
That's no reason to cancel. You'd  
be crazy. Cost you a fortune in  
litigation.

## I/E. TOUR COACH ALONG MIDWEST HIGHWAY - DAY

A customized Greyhound coach motors across vast plains. An assistant checks Marvin's wardrobe. A chef prepares soul food. Frankie and musicians relax. The backing singers rehearse.

Jan observes while breastfeeding little Nona. She's a little jealous of the singers.

The upper section has a lounge and sleeping berth. Marvin watches a news item on a portable TV - aftermath of President Nixon's impeachment over Watergate. Jan places Nona on the bed. She eyes Marvin, testing his mood.

JAN

Honey, maybe I could sing in the chorus.

MARVIN

I don't think so.

JAN

But I'm bored.

Marvin SIGHS frustration. He opens a little container of coke. Jan, feeling hot, opens a side window. The rush of air blows some of the coke away.

MARVIN

Goddamn.

JAN

Oh jeez, sorry.

She swiftly licks a finger and dabs it in the trail of powder. She rubs it in her mouth, defiant. Marvin glares.

MARVIN

No drugs! They're no good!

Jan gives him a mocking stare. Marvin SIGHS. He cuddles Nona. The coach motors past a Kentucky state border sign.

## EXT. PARK, LEXINGTON, KENTUCKY - DAY

The tour party play touch football. Jan has the ball. She jinks past a few players. She stumbles. Marvin drops down next to her. They LAUGH and embrace.

Marvin gazes at a white building, semi-obscured by trees.

## I/E. HOUSE OF GOD

The building is an assembly hall. Inside, a star of David and depictions of the 'Ten Commandments' are on display.

BISHOP SIMON RAWLINGS (65) walks with Marvin and Frankie. He's of slight build, similar to Gay Senior. He has an aura of calmness. Marvin is earnest.

MARVIN

I never could understand us worshipping on Saturdays.

BISHOP RAWLINGS

Ah but it is written. Mr Gay and I, all our ministers, were divinely inspired by close reading of the Bible. The Old Testament in particular. It is our fundamental guide.

MARVIN

May I ask what caused the split?

Bishop Rawlings pauses, frowning slightly.

BISHOP RAWLINGS

Ah yes, the split.

He walks on.

BISHOP RAWLINGS (cont'd)

Well, a faction of our people opted for a different form of worship. They created the House Of The Living God. Though in all essentials it was the same. Eventually your father returned to our church. By then I'd left Washington and come back home.

INT. VESTMENT ROOM

Bishop Rawlings sits with Marvin and Frankie, sharing tea and biscuits. Marvin shows several of Gay Senior's sermonizing leaflets, each printed on a different pastel colored paper.

MARVIN

He still tries to preach a little.

He breaks down for a moment.

MARVIN (cont'd)

Maybe I should have been more understanding.

FRANKIE

Hey, don't take on so. Father was always strong willed.

BISHOP RAWLINGS

Oh he was that.

He becomes wistful.

BISHOP RAWLINGS (cont'd)

You know, I was an ardent admirer of your mother.

Marvin sharply eyes the bishop.

BISHOP RAWLINGS (cont'd)  
 Oh, nothing came of it. Alberta  
 couldn't decide which of us to  
 marry, but Mr Gay was more  
 persistent. I was heartbroken when  
 she finally made her choice.

Marvin and Frankie share bemused glances. Bishop Rawlings opens  
 a closet and takes out an ornate, silken robe.

BISHOP RAWLINGS (cont'd)  
 Would you like for us to pray now  
 for your father?

MARVIN  
 Thank you. We'd like that very  
 much.

INT. HALL

The hall is filled with joyous worshippers. They SING GOSPEL  
 accompanied by an EXUBERANT BAND. The men are in dark suits the  
 women in white gowns, though without head-to-toe covering.

Bishop Rawlings wears his fine robe and a mitre hat. He calms  
 the mood.

Marvin steps forward and SINGS "Amazing Grace". Frankie  
 observes with tears in his eyes.

EXT. PARK, LOS ANGELES - DAY

Marvin sits with Mom on a bench. Mom blushes a little.

MOM  
 Simon Rawlings. My, my, it's been  
 so long. He was a gentleman. They  
 both were. They took me out for  
 picnics, dances. My head was  
 spinning with all their attentions.

MARVIN  
 What decided you, Momma?

Mom looks embarrassed.

MOM  
 Well, Simon was a little more level-  
 headed. But what persuaded me  
 was... let's just say your father  
 seemed more virile.

MARVIN  
 (wry smile)  
 All comes down to the same thing.

The black poodle bounds toward him.

MARVIN (cont'd)  
 Hey Angel, you had good walkies?

Gay Senior approaches in jazzy shorts and T-shirt. He's accompanied by a slightly surly youth, LAWRENCE (18). Marvin eyes Gay Senior with quizzical smile.

MARVIN (cont'd)  
 Hello, father.

GAY SENIOR  
 Son.

MOM  
 (discrete, to Marvin)  
 Lawrence is in rehab...  
 (to the others)  
 You've had a nice chat?

Gay Senior prompts Lawrence to answer.

LAWRENCE  
 Yeah, thank you m'am.

GAY SENIOR  
 Lawrence is going to start a course  
 in engineering.

MOM  
 Oh that's very sensible.

Angel arrives with a stick in its mouth, playfully distracting Lawrence.

MARVIN  
 You're doing good work, father.

GAY SENIOR  
 My conscience is clear.

He gives Marvin a particularly penetrating gaze, causing Marvin to flinch a little.

GAY SENIOR (cont'd)  
 What's for supper, mother?

MOM  
 Your favorite casserole.

GAY SENIOR  
 Fine, fine.

He and Lawrence walk on toward the park gates, with Angel jumping around them.

MOM  
 He seems to have found contentment  
 with the mentoring...

Marvin still gazes after his father.

MOM (cont'd)  
 Only too happy to help out when  
 they're short.

INT. GYMNASIUM - DAY

A light-heavyweight boxer, LEE (27), spars in the ring. He's observed by an old-timer trainer. Marvin, Junior (15) and Dave Simmons approach with Reverend JESSE JACKSON (30), a reporter and a photographer.

JESSE JACKSON  
 Marvin's kindly performing a  
 benefit at Black Expo.

MARVIN  
 Yeah, 'Save the Children'. Jesse's  
 doin' a fine job on awareness. It's  
 an honor to help...  
 (sly smile)  
 Long as I top the bill.

LAUGHTER. Marvin waves a greeting to the boxer.

REPORTER  
 Your boy's up against it this next  
 fight.

Marvin crooks an arm around the reporter's neck. He glances up at the boxer.

MARVIN  
 Say Lee, we got a guy here wants to  
 check you out.

The boxer scowls. He beckons for the reporter to come up and join him. The reporter holds up his hands in hasty surrender.  
 LAUGHTER.

EXT. HACIENDA, HIDDEN HILLS - DAY

The entrance gates are secured by padlock and chains. A smarmy realtor unlocks them. He shows Marvin, Jan and Nona around the large, Spanish ranch style property and grounds. Jan looks thrilled.

INT. BOXING ARENA - NIGHT

Lee fights his scrappy opponent, trying to hold him off. The CROWD HOLLERS. Marvin, Jan, Frankie and Dave Simmons have ringside seats. They're animated, concerned. The trainer too.

TRAINER  
 Stick him! Jab twice and out!

MARVIN  
 Keep out of trouble! Pick him off!

The BELL RINGS. The trainer SLAPS & CUSSES Lee. A wise-guy sneers at Marvin.

WISE GUY  
Your boy's a wimp.

MARVIN  
He's cruisin' man.

A blond bimbo displays a 'Round 2' sign. The BELL RINGS. Lee tries to fend off a flurry of blows.

INT. LAWYER'S OFFICE - DAY

Marvin is sprawled on a sofa, reefer in hand. He pretends to parry blows as Curtis stands earnestly berating him.

CURTIS  
Three households to support. Your wife suing for divorce. Taxman's getting heavy again. Studio's losing money. Your speculations are downright catastrophic, those that I know about...  
(shrugs)  
Technically you're bankrupt...

He drops into his chair.

CURTIS (cont'd)  
And now you want to buy a ranch.

Marvin calmly puffs on his reefer.

I/E. PRIVATE AIRFIELD - NIGHT

Berry exits a light aeroplane. He approaches a limo. A waiting executive follows him inside.

INT. LIMO

The limo accelerates. Berry stares at the flustered executive.

EXECUTIVE  
It's Marvin.

Berry looks pained.

EXECUTIVE (cont'd)  
He's needs an advance on the new contract.

BERRY  
We're still in negotiation!

EXECUTIVE  
It's a... er... special favor.

BERRY  
What's he take me for?

EXECUTIVE  
A million dollars. Like now.

BERRY  
A million?!

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. HACIENDA - DAY

Weekend party at Marvin's and Jan's new ranch home. A clown entertains children. A softball game is in progress.

Mom, Jan and Nona (2) watch as Frankie pitches. Junior hits a flyer. Dave collects and throws the ball to Sweetsie at last base. Junior scrambles home.

Marvin runs forward with the batting team, HOLLERING DELIGHT.

MARVIN  
We whooped 'em, skip!

EXT. GOLF CLUB

Berry, Smokey and Curtis watch as Harvey places his ball on the tee.

BERRY  
You ever work him out, let me know.

HARVEY  
That'll be never, BG. Mister  
Unpredictable.

SMOKEY  
Guess that's part of the  
attraction.

LAUGHTER. Harvey drives his ball. THWACK. He shrugs. He gets into a golf buggy with Smokey. They start up the fairway. Berry and Curtis stroll to another buggy.

BERRY  
So what's the poop on the divorce?

CURTIS  
Marvin thinks you and Anna want to  
screw him for everything.

BERRY  
That's just plain dumb. I don't  
want any part of it. I want him  
happy. I want him to make more  
records.

They get into the buggy.

BERRY (cont'd)

Used to be I could kick butt. Now the cats are gettin' too presumptuous. First Marvin, then Stevie. They'll all be catching on soon. Takes 'em a year to cut an album, what used to take a week.

CURTIS

It's a no win situation with Marvin. He sees no point in working any more. He's convinced Anna will just sue him for the profits.

They start after the others.

BERRY

Got to be a solution.

CURTIS

I'll figure something.

EXT. HACIENDA

Lavish barbecue. Waiters attend to the guests. Marvin chats to Frankie and Dave, with little Nona in his arms. Jan walks with Mom, away from the others. She whispers something in Mom's ear. Mom hugs Jan.

MOM

Oh, how wonderful.

Jan's broad smile fades.

JAN

Another reason to sort out the divorce.

Marvin approaches.

MARVIN

How's my girls?

Mom smiles brightly. Jan acts a little coy. Marvin is intrigued.

MARVIN (cont'd)

What?... What?

Jan teases some more with her silence. Now both she and Mom are smiling fit to burst. Marvin catches on.

MARVIN (cont'd)

Yeah?!

JAN

Yeah. I think we're going to have another baby.

Marvin is overjoyed. He hugs Jan and Mom. He calls out.

MARVIN  
Hey everybody!

JAN  
No, no! Not until we're sure.

INT. LOUNGE - NIGHT

Animated party people dance to Donna Summer's "Hot Stuff". Frankie dances with a foxy young woman. He glances around at all the slick cavorting. He looks uncomfortable. A sparky dude, LEROY (30) bumps into him.

Frankie escapes to the main lounge area, where Jan cuddles close to Marvin on a sofa.

FRANKIE  
Had a great day, Marv. But I'm out of here.

MARVIN  
Hey, it's early yet.

FRANKIE  
The fast crowd are taking over.

He fixes Marvin with a disapproving gaze, just long enough to make a point. Jan jumps up and kisses him.

JAN  
Thanks for all your help.

Frankie starts away. He eyes Leroy with suspicion, then walks on. Jan motions for Marvin to dance with her. He resists. She flounces onto the dance-floor alone. Harvey approaches and sits with Marvin.

HARVEY  
Go on, dance with your lady.

MARVIN  
And make a fool of myself? I prefer to watch.

Harvey CHUCKLES.

HARVEY  
Heard you did an athletes' benefit.

MARVIN  
Yeah, those cats, they can pick up an injury and it's all over. Besides, I don't mind working for nothing. Then I got nothing to lose.

HARVEY  
No sense getting bitter. Whatever you do, keep singing. That's your validation.

Marvin SIGHS. He's distracted by the dancers. He glimpses Jan. She exuberantly dances with a sleek, handsome man.

EXT. TERRACE & ORCHARD GARDEN

Moonlight. Marvin and Leroy step away across a lawn. PARTY MUSIC CONTINUES IN B/G. Marvin rubs cocaine inside his mouth. Leroy has a twitchy way of walking, and a CACKLING VOICE.

LEROY

It's top grade, man.

Marvin gestures for more. They briefly huddle for the exchange. Marvin shudders with reflexive pleasure.

LEROY (cont'd)

Git you more. But we gotta move tonight, or the jocks'll hog it all.

MARVIN

Players?

LEROY

Sure. Football, basketball, the best...

He grandly gestures at Marvin 'the star'.

LEROY (cont'd)

They'll dig you. They'll love you. Let's go.

MARVIN

Hey, I got my own party right here.

He gestures back at the villa.

I/E. GAZEBO IN ORCHARD

Tangled tree branches are silhouetted against the moonlit sky. B/G SOUND OF PEOPLE LAUGHING & CARS DRIVING AWAY. A light glows in a multi-faceted gazebo. Marvin lies on a wicker lounge inside.

GAY SENIOR (O.S.)

Your life is a mess...

Marvin reacts with a start. Gay Senior leans into the gazebo. He wears a candy-stripe bathrobe. But when Marvin turns to look at him he pops up at other sides, in other fancy clothes, while talking.

GAY SENIOR (cont'd)

You're a fool taking those drugs...

Marvin sinks back down on the lounge.

MARVIN

How else to rise above my  
anxieties...

(sour)

Father.

GAY SENIOR

The blame game. What about your  
marriage falling apart? Who's fault  
is that?

MARVIN

You never did approve.

GAY SENIOR

Loose living, a bastard child...

Marvin jumps to his feet.

MARVIN

A beautiful child.

He glares at each version of his father in quick succession.

GAY SENIOR

You're spitting in God's eye.

MARVIN

Go! Quit! Get out of here!

He sweeps a dismissive arm across. The multiple Gay Seniors  
vanish. Marvin glances about him, bitterly relieved.

INT. LOUNGE

The party's over. A few couples are sprawled around. Marvin  
enters. He taps a shoulder.

MARVIN

Where's Jan?

The shoulder shrugs. A VOICE CALLS OUT, A LITTLE BLURRY.

PARTY GUY

She went out to a disco, Marv.

MARVIN

(sharp)

Who with?

PARTY GUY

Oh, a bunch of people.

Marvin turns to find Leroy approaching.

I/E. LUXURY MOTOR YACHT, MARINA

DISCO MUSIC PLAYS OVER. Good-time girls gyrate on a little dance floor. A group of men relax nearby, LAUGHING, drinking. Some have the physique of athletes.

Marvin relaxes among them, enjoying the banter. A girl is beckoned over. She dances and contrives to fall into Marvin's arms. LAUGHTER.

LATER

Marvin is alone with two businessmen. One jots figures on a piece of paper. Marvin looks impressed.

MARVIN V.O. AS NARRATOR  
 After all my bad moves I was about  
 to make another. No money down. I  
 thought it was just talk. Guess  
 they thought I was loaded.

Leroy slips Marvin a package.

INT. KITCHEN, HACIENDA - DAY

Junior has breakfast. A maid attends to Nona. Marvin enters.

MARVIN  
 Hey, skip.

JUNIOR  
 Dad, you look awful.

MARVIN  
 (sighs)  
 Yeah.

He kisses Nona. The maid pours him coffee.

INT. BEDROOM

Jan sleeps, looking radiant. Marvin gazes at her. He silently moves away.

INT. GUEST BEDROOM

Mom sits up in bed. She's a little embarrassed at the fuss as the maid takes a breakfast tray away.

MOM  
 Thank you my dear.

MAID  
 You're welcome.

The maid passes Marvin on her way out. Marvin wears a bathrobe. He looks freshly showered.

MOM  
Treating me like royalty.

MARVIN  
Oh Momma, stay as long as you like.

MOM  
You know I have to get back.

Marvin perches on the bed.

MARVIN  
I hope the party didn't wake you.

MOM  
I slept like a...  
(beams)  
Hey, Jan is so excited.

Marvin is expressionless.

MARVIN  
I don't want to lose her.

MOM  
Heavens, why?

Marvin flops down, with his head on her lap. She begins to massage his temples.

MARVIN  
(murmurs)  
She's a free spirit at heart. And I'm  
just about wiped out.

MOM  
She's only young. Everything's new  
to her. She's bound to be  
changeable.

MARVIN  
Maybe I'm fated to screw things up.  
Maybe I enjoy the pain.

INT. ROLLS ROYCE, HACIENDA DRIVEWAY

The Rolls is parked. The chauffeur waits by the entrance door. Jan cautiously emerges and approaches the Rolls.

Anna is inside. She lowers her window.

ANNA  
I hope you don't mind.

She motions for Jan to sit with her. Jan hesitates, then obliges. They exchange brief, catty smiles.

ANNA (cont'd)  
You're very pretty.

JAN

Thank you.

ANNA

How is your child?

JAN

Oh, Nona's fine. Growing up fast.

ANNA

I wanted us to have this little chat to help smooth things. Maybe I can give you good advice.

Jan looks puzzled.

ANNA (cont'd)

You happen to be living with a very complicated person.

JAN

That I know.

ANNA

Marvin will forever be his own worst enemy, so don't expect to change him. Just enjoy all his better qualities while you can.

Jan frowns.

JAN

Just how do you mean?

ANNA

Oh, I don't know how you two tick, but in our situation it was a roller-coaster, with kiss and make up along the way. Which, I suppose, meant life was never dull. Maybe you can give him the peace of mind he surely needs now.

Jan warms to Anna a little.

JAN

We started with love at first sight. Seems kind of corny.

ANNA

Oh, I don't knock it. But in this business don't rely on it either.

I/E. GUEST BEDROOM & DRIVEWAY

Marvin glances out of a window. He sees Jan get out of the Rolls. Jan gives Junior a hug as he gets into the Rolls. It drives away. Marvin turns back to Mom.

MARVIN

Maybe the divorce will bring us all  
peace of mind.

JUMP CUT TO:

EXT. HACIENDA - DAY

The doors of a removals van SLAM SHUT. A burly official checks  
a clipboard.

OFFICIAL

That's it.

The van drives away. The entrance gates swing shut. Another  
official padlocks the gates. CAMERA ZOOMS IN ON A PROPERTY  
CONFISCATION NOTICE.

INT. LOUNGE, MARVIN'S PRIVATE STUDIO - DAY

Marvin paces in a haze of reefer smoke. He's on the phone.

MARVIN (ON PHONE)

Aw babe, pick up the phone. I love  
you, I miss you. I'll sort this  
out.

SUDDEN LOUD BANGING FROM BELOW. Marvin is on alert.

EXT. STREET ENTRANCE

A sour bailiff observes as his burly assistant swings an axe.  
The AXE SMASHES INTO THE DOOR. A cop moves a gaping crowd  
along.

An automobile pulls up. Curtis jumps out.

INT. LOUNGE

Curtis looks Marvin square in the eyes.

CURTIS

Berry's just paid out and saved  
your ass. Now you've got to go to  
work again.

MARVIN

Goddamn. Always got me in the  
clinch.

CURTIS

He cares about you.

MARVIN

I know. I'll call him.

CURTIS

Here's the deal on the divorce. You cut a new album, Anna takes the profit.

He gestures finality. Marvin ponders the stark simplicity of the offer.

MARVIN

That's it?

CURTIS

Took a lot of persuasion.

Frankie enters with Jeanne and Sweetsie.

FRANKIE

Hey Marv...

JEANNE

Marvin, you OK?

Marvin rises. He's shaky. He opens his arms to embrace his brother and sisters. Tears well in his eyes.

MARVIN

Let's pray now, for love and understanding.

Curtis joins in the emotional huddle.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. BEACH, HAWAII - DAY

(Hawaii, 1980). Marvin is a lone figure, swimming and walking in the surf.

I/E. JEEP ALONG COAST ROAD

Marvin rides in front. He's with a couple of members of his band and a vivacious, female reporter. The guys wear 'Marvin Loves Hawaii' T-shirts.

FEMALE REPORTER

You settled your divorce with a record.

MARVIN

I should have made a quickie party album. Freedom, end of story. But I got to thinking, hey what a concept. The break-up of our marriage. It took forever. Became a double album.

LAUGHTER.

MARVIN (cont'd)

The critics and fans panned it. But I hope they'll like the new one. I have to pay the taxman now. Until then I'm in exile.

INT. RECORDING STUDIO, HAWAII - DAY

Control-room. Marvin is with Smokey and Stevie Wonder. Marvin's "Love Party" PLAYS. A finger-popping sound-engineer works the board.

MARVIN

Motown have stopped paying the bills.

SMOKEY

They're with you man. They love what they hear. But they don't appreciate the delay. They think you're dickin' around again.

Marvin shrugs, distracted. He gestures to the monitor speakers. MUSIC FADES UP.

MARVIN'S RECORDED VOICE

Oh you got to understand darling, the world is not for long. There's only time for singing and praying, and having a love party...

MARVIN

The world is not for long.

STEVIE

That's heavy, man.

MARVIN

It's a concept. Love explosion before we all blow up. It'll happen. Only takes a faulty computer chip to raise the alarm.

STEVIE

Missile attack, counter attack.

SMOKEY

M-A-D, mutually assured destruction.

An assistant leans in and signals to Marvin.

ASSISTANT

Phone call from London. A Mr Kruger.

Marvin gestures that he won't take it.

MARVIN  
 (confides)  
 European tour. Going to have to  
 delay.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. 'EUROPEAN SHOWS' MONTAGE - NIGHT

Marvin, in dark suit and beanie hat, SINGS "I Want You".

KRUGER (V.O.)  
 (genteel, mid-European)  
 You will open at the Royal Albert  
 Hall, then Montreaux, Stockholm,  
 Amsterdam, Geneva and back to  
 England.

Sexy dancers encircle Marvin as WOMEN IN AUDIENCE SCREAM. BRIEF  
 SEQUENCE OF MARVIN ON DIFFERENT STAGES, IN DIFFERENT OUTFITS.

Marvin climaxes a show by falling to his knees in surrender.

MARVIN V.O. AS NARRATOR  
 Crazy, playing Mister Love Man to  
 survive.

INT. HOTEL SUITE, LONDON - DAY/NIGHT

Dusk. View out through open balcony window, of Piccadilly  
 lights.

Coffee table. A passport and photos of Jan (one with Nona and new  
 baby Bubba) are scattered by a phone.

LATER

Dim, smokey light. Party people are sprawled about. Marvin is  
 stretched out on the floor amid cushions. Eyes closed, wasted.  
 "Love Me Now Or Love Me Later" PLAYS.

A record album sleeve lies on a coffee table, amid champagne  
 glasses, reefer butts and an open ivory box with traces of  
 cocaine.

The album cover shows two Marvins in the clouds, facing off  
 above world conflict below. One Marvin is an angel, the other a  
 devil. It's titled "In Our Lifetime".

INT. 'ANGEL/DEVIL' FANTASY - NIGHT

A boxing ring under a starry sky. Angel Marvin squares off  
 against Devil Marvin. He's dressed in a white robe, white doves  
 flutter around him. Devil Marvin has horns and a dark cape. A  
 snake writhes around his shoulders.

Angel Marvin raises an arm.

ANGEL MARVIN

Bless you.

DEVIL MARVIN

Aw, get on down and party.

ANGEL

Salvation. That's where it's at.

DEVIL

Make it funky, preacher's boy.  
Learn to love temptation.

ANGEL

A sure joyride to ruin.

He dodges Devil Marvin. They tangle. They break off.

DEVIL

You're the Love Man. Don't get hung  
up on scruples.

He starts in again. Angel Marvin ducks away. He wipes his brow.  
He swigs Kool-Aid.

ANGEL

Get thee behind me.

DEVIL

That's your Poppa talkin'. Look  
what happened to him and his high  
ideals.

ANGEL

You sure get around.

Devil Marvin transforms into a Devil Woman. Pouting, seductive.

ANGEL (cont'd)

Bitch.

Angel Marvin tries to evade, but Devil Woman slips in close.  
Angel Marvin lets Devil Woman embrace him. His white robe  
falls, revealing him naked but for a loin cloth. Embarrassed,  
he pushes Devil Woman away.

He transforms into Gay Senior. The Devil Woman dances around  
him, tempting and teasing. Gay Senior, confused, SINGS HOT  
GOSPEL. He gains a priestly robe.

Devil Woman comes under the spell of the music. She transforms  
into beautiful young Jan in diaphanous robe.

Gay Senior is entranced by her innocent beauty. STILL SINGING,  
he advances toward her. Her robe slips away. Gay Senior,  
briefly tempted, slumps at her feet.

He transforms back into Angel Marvin, who rises and CONTINUES  
THE GOSPEL SINGING, BUT MORE FUNKY.

His white robe changes to a slinky lounge robe. He begins to bump and grind with Angel Jan. CAMERA CLOSES IN TIGHT ON MARVIN.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. HOTEL SUITE, LONDON - NIGHT

Marvin is still on the floor, eyes closed.

MARVIN  
(murmurs)  
Oh babe.

A pair of hands suddenly grip his face.

MARVIN (cont'd)  
Huh?... Wha... Who's that?

FREDDY (O.S.)  
(Flemish accent)  
Marvin, you look terrible. Wake up.  
I help you.

Marvin's eyes flicker open. Stocky FREDDY COUSEART (45) stares down at him.

FREDDY (cont'd)  
I've been a fan for years. Let me  
take you out of zis shit.

EXT. SEALINK FERRY, APPROACHING OSTEND - DAY

(Ostend, Belgium, 1981). Overcast. SOUNDS OF SEAGULLS & SHIP'S HORN. Marvin stands at the bow with Freddy, braced against the wind. They gaze out to the distant harbour. They breathe the invigorating air.

FREDDY (V.O.)  
I worked with a lot of guys. I  
worked with Muhammad Ali.

MARVIN (V.O.)  
(impressed)  
Yeah?

EXT. OSTEND HARBOUR

Busy harbour, with promenade, cafes and bars.

EXT. FREDDY'S HOUSE

A terraced house overlooking the harbour.

INT. KITCHEN

Cosy. Marvin, Freddy and his two young daughters play a frantic game of 'Slapjack'. LAUGHTER. The girls wear Marvin's wool beanie hats. Freddy's dignified, no-nonsense wife LILLIANE (35) tries to clear the table for a meal.

LILLIANE  
Stupid game. Crazy.

Marvin sneaks over to the stove to sample the cooking. Lilliane shoos him away.

LILLIANE (cont'd)  
You sit down, Marvin. You wait.

Marvin pouts like a kid. Lilliane GIGGLES.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

Marvin and Freddy are alone. COOL JAZZ PLAYS IN B/G. They drink schnapps. Freddy jots figures on paper. Marvin pulls out a reefer. Freddy snatches it away.

FREDDY  
I thought we have a deal.

Marvin sighs. Freddy delivers a lightning combination of fake punches. Marvin tries to block him. Freddy slips a jab into Marvin's stomach. LAUGHTER.

FREDDY (cont'd)  
You got to toughen up.

He crumples the reefer. Marvin is torn between anger and respect. He shrugs. Freddy continues with his calculations. He drops his pen on the paper. He shakes his head a little.

FREDDY (cont'd)  
Don't matter which way I figure it,  
adds up to a nightmare. You better  
off here for sure.

MARVIN  
(wary)  
No kidding?

FREDDY  
I better find you an apartment, and  
a piano. But no crazy nightlife, no  
drugs etcetera. Is only the natural  
kicks here.

MARVIN V.O. AS NARRATOR  
Have to hand it to Freddy. He sure  
straightened me out.

EXT. 'EXERCISING' MONTAGE, OSTEND COASTLINE - DAY

Track-suited Marvin jogs and cycles along the promenade, the bleak beaches and coast roads.

FREDDY (V.O.)  
You gonna make a break from Motown?  
Find a new company?

MARVIN (V.O.)  
You said it baby. I need a fresh  
start.

INT. GYMNASIUM - DAY

Modest interior. The harbour is visible through open doors. Marvin works out on a punchbag. Locals watch with interest.

MARVIN (V.O.)  
Boom, boom, boom, I've been knocked  
down a few times but I keep gettin'  
up... I'm working. I'm working an'  
I'm clicking. That's where heart  
comes in. That's the meaning of  
heart. To be scared witless and  
still work. Boom, boom.

Freddy arrives.

FREDDY  
You comin' on good.

MARVIN  
(gasps)  
Man, I'm smokin'. Ready for all-  
comers.

LAUGHTER. Marvin grins. A final FLURRY OF PUNCHES.

FREDDY  
You speak to Motown?

Marvin feigns to keel over.

EXT. OSTEND AIRPORT - DAY

An aeroplane touches down.

INT. FREDDY'S CAR, HIGHWAY

Freddy drives, smiling broadly. Marvin sits beside him.

MARVIN  
Still can't believe it. I'm free!

He turns to the passenger in back. It's Harvey.

MARVIN (cont'd)  
How'd he take it?

HARVEY (V.O.)  
Berry's fine. He'll tear up the contract, long as the price is right.

MARVIN  
Hey, tell him no hard feelings. I love him. We'll smoke a peace pipe.

Harvey grins broadly.

MARVIN (cont'd)  
We'll bring the band over. I got some ideas for material.

HARVEY  
That's what I wanted to hear.

MARVIN  
But first I have to warm up.

INT. CASINO THEATRE - NIGHT

Show. Low-key setting. The band features GORDON BANKS on guitar, ODELL BROWN on keyboards and DONI HAGAN on drums. THEY PLAY INTRO TO "Wholly Holy". Marvin wears a dark suit.

MARVIN  
This little show is by way of a thank you to some special friends and well-wishers, and to all the nice people of Ostend...

Freddy's daughters shyly approach and present flowers. Freddy and Lilliane look on, thrilled to bits. Harvey is with them, smiling.

MARVIN (cont'd)  
Well thank you darlings, thank you. Give me a sugar.

He bends so the girls can kiss him. AUDIENCE SIGHS AND APPLAUDS. Frankie grins from backstage.

MARVIN (cont'd)  
I wish my wife and kids were here. My mother, my sisters. My father, who I love very much.

Marvin glances at Frankie. He gazes heavenwards and passionately SINGS "Wholly Holy".

INT. STUDIO KATY, OHAINE, BELGIUM - DAY

Spacious facility. Harvey is at the desk with the sound engineer.

Freddy, Frankie and the band listen to a PLAYBACK of "Midnight Lady". The mood is upbeat, relaxed. Marvin is stretched out on a sofa with a reefer. Freddy, a little intimidated by the situation, can only wave the smoke away.

MARVIN  
 (sings to playback)  
 Midnight lady, sexy dancer, hot and  
 hardy, love to party...

Marvin SINGS SOFTLY, WORKING OUT A HARMONY.

EXT. STUDIO & ENVIRONS

The studio is set at the edge of undulating hills. MUSIC FADES ON GALLOPING DRUMS.

JOURNALIST (V.O.)  
 Marvin, dis is de famous Waterloo,  
 where Napoleon had his last stand.

MARVIN (V.O.)  
 Yeah, amazing...  
 (heavy sigh)  
 This is maybe my last stand. Still  
 so much to face back home. I can't  
 really concentrate on the future  
 'til I got a new contract and  
 serious money to pay everyone off.  
 On top of that I have another  
 marriage falling apart. Can't say  
 I'm not to blame...

EXT. CONTROL ROOM

Marvin RECORDS "'Til Tomorrow" with handheld mike.

MARVIN  
 (sings)  
 Baby please girl don't go. You know  
 I still love you so. Honey if you  
 leave me, I'll go crazy, I'll still  
 care...

He gazes through the control-room window, through his reflection, to a dark, empty studio space beyond.

I/E. TAXI ALONG A BOULEVARD, PARIS - DAY

Marvin, Freddy and Lilliane are in the taxi. The Eiffel Tower is in B/G. Freddy clutches a briefcase.

FREDDIE  
 You sure you got the tape?

MARVIN  
 I've got it... Lilliane, you really  
 think it's a hit?

LILLIANE  
Gonna be a hit, Marvin.

INT. LOBBY, CBS EUROPE HQ

Marvin and Freddie stride into the imposing lobby, and on to the lifts.

MARVIN  
I have to find a washroom.

He retreats. Freddy looks concerned.

EXT. BOULEVARD

Fading light. Marvin sits on a bench with Lilliane. He fiddles with a cassette tape uncertainly.

LILLIANE  
Is good. Is good.

MARVIN  
Could be better.

LILLIANE  
That gonna be a hit for sure.

Freddy paces anxiously, glancing at his watch.

FREDDY  
He's the Vice President, Marvin.  
Flew over specially.

Marvin shrugs. He embraces Freddy and Lilliane. They start walking.

INT. LOBBY & LIFT, CBS EUROPE HQ

Marvin and Freddy wait for a lift as office workers leave.

FREDDY  
You have to be positive.

MARVIN  
I feel like a fake. I think...

FREDDY  
You think too much.

MARVIN  
It used to be family. For twenty years Motown was family. Whatever the aggravation I was sitting pretty. I was on the inside.

They enter a lift.

MARVIN (cont'd)

I knew the moves. If they didn't like my jive I'd bitch and threaten to walk out. But now I am out, stark naked. Hustling my goodies.

FREDDY

You got to look ahead Marvin. It's what you wanted. Destiny.

MARVIN

What if the guy stiffes it? We're talkin' humiliation.

FREDDY

He'll love it.

MARVIN

What does he know?

FREDDY

Marvin, you been a jerk all day so please, please, for de sake of de deal...

INT. RECEPTION

They step out of the lift. They approach the reception. It's deserted except for a security guard and cleaning staff.

Suave CBS VP LARKIN ARNOLD (35) bustles down a corridor, putting on his overcoat. He's accompanied by a secretary, carrying his briefcase. They approach the reception.

LARKIN

That's it, dammit. No show no deal. I'm out of here.

He recognizes Marvin.

LARKIN (cont'd)

Hey Marvin, my friend...

(sharp)

What the hell are you doing messing with my schedule?

Marvin holds his head high.

MARVIN

Man, are we cussing or discussing?

Larkin chuckles indulgently.

LARKIN

Depends what you've got.

Marvin flourishes the cassette, like it's really something.

MARVIN

I got some healing.

LARKIN

Oh yeah?

FREDDY

(huge grin)

For sure.

JUMP CUT TO:

INT. 'SEXUAL HEALING' VIDEO RECORDING - NIGHT

Marvin PERFORMS "Sexual Healing" to cameras. He dances just a little, in fancy white suit, acting the sophisticated love man.

EXT. AEROPLANE - NIGHT

The plane is in mid-flight. Marvin is slumped, staring out, pensive. "Sexual Healing" CONTINUES OVER.

MARVIN V.O. AS NARRATOR

(warm)

Freddy and Lilliane were right...

(flat)

But I was in no mood to  
celebrate...

EXT. HOSPITAL, LOS ANGELES - NIGHT

A limo pulls up. Marvin gets out, looking anxious.

INT. CORRIDOR

He's accompanied onward by a nurse. Another nurse recognizes him. She swoons. Two female visitors rush him.

VISITORS

Oh my God. Marvin!... Heal me  
Marvin!

Marvin strides on.

INT. PRIVATE ROOM

Mom sits up in bed, hooked to monitors and an IV drip. Frankie, Jeanne and Sweetsie are gathered round. Marvin hurries in.

MARVIN

Momma, Momma...

He tenderly embraces and kisses her.

MARVIN (cont'd)

You pulled through OK?

MOM

My darlin', I'm as fine as can be  
be expected.

Marvin hugs the others.

MARVIN

I got here fast as I could. Where's  
father?

SWEETSIE

Never came. Not even for the  
operation.

FRANKIE

He's in Washington, fixing up the  
house to sell.

Marvin stares in disbelief.

MOM

(wistful)

It's just his way of coping.

A LITTLE LATER

Marvin sits with the others around Mom's bed.

MARVIN

I don't want him back home.

JEANNE

It's his home, thanks to you.

MARVIN

Then we find another home.

MOM

Now, now, my child. I know you mean  
well, but don't take up so.

Frankie places a reassuring hand on Marvin's knee.

FRANKIE

Besides, the bible says the son  
cannot judge the father.

Marvin lets his head drop. His hands raise up and shake in mock  
worship.

MARVIN

Hallelujah.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. HOTEL LOUNGE - DAY

Marvin is interviewed by an unseen reporter. Nona (5) sits  
affectionately with him. Marvin has faraway eyes.

REPORTER (O.S.)

How does it feel to be back on top?

MARVIN

I don't know where that is. Never did actually. I'm awfully afraid of getting there. I don't know where one can go after that...

He glances across the lounge. Jan approaches with baby BUBBA in her arms. She sits at a distance, waiting with cool gaze.

A figure waits in the shadows, pacing with jerky gait. Leroy.

EXT. LIMO AT HOTEL

Jan, stern-faced, leaves with Nona and Bubba in a limo.

INT. HOTEL LOUNGE

Leroy confronts Marvin.

LEROY

Remember your party pals on the yacht? They're into you big time.

Marvin looks dismayed.

MARVIN

Aw c'mon, it was just talk that night.

LEROY

You talked a deal. They acted on it. Big bucks. Twenty percent of the equity, in your name.

MARVIN

So they can cut me out. What's the problem?

LEROY

It's a matter of principle. If they let you off the hook, they look like a bunch of fairies.

MARVIN

I don't have the dough.

LEROY

You're number one for chrissakes.

MARVIN

Think that means anything?

Leroy shapes to leave.

LEROY  
 My best advice? Find the money  
 fast.

He drops a small white package in Marvin's lap.

LEROY (cont'd)  
 Here, for old time's sake.

INT. THE FORUM - DAY

Prelude to an All-Star basketball game. A FUNKY DRUM BEAT KICKS IN. Marvin PASSIONATELY SINGS the "Star-Spangled Banner" in front of TV cameras on the court.

Players and fans are deeply moved. WILD APPLAUSE BEGINS. Marvin bows in gracious acknowledgment. He turns to leave the court.

MARVIN  
 (murmurs)  
 I'm done.

INT. KITCHEN, GAY FAMILY HOME, GRAMERCY PLACE

Mom and Sweetsie proudly watch Marvin on TV. A PHONE RINGS. Sweetsie steps away to answer it. She stares out at the street, dismayed.

SWEETSIE  
 Momma...

EXT. FRONT GATES

Gay Senior approaches from a taxi, clutching his attache case. The driver follows with a suitcase.

INT. DRESSING ROOM, THE FORUM

Marvin unwinds with Frankie, Dave and Junior. A couple of NBA officials shake his hand.

1ST OFFICIAL  
 Man, that was spcial.

MARVIN  
 Well, thank you kindly.

2ND OFFICIAL  
 Game's about to start, Marvin. We  
 got seats for you all.

The officials hurry out. Leroy bustles in, accompanied by two loud-suited thugs.

LEROY  
 Hi Marvin, let's talk. Alone.

Marvin glares defiance. Frankie and Dave step forward.

FRANKIE  
You guys better state your  
business.

Leroy signals to his thugs. They show menace. Marvin rushes to protect Junior. Frankie and Dave shape to fight. The thugs point guns.

LEROY  
OK, take it easy.

MARVIN  
(to the others)  
Better go watch the game. I'll only  
be a minute.

DAVE  
But Marv...

MARVIN  
Please, go.

Frankie and Dave take Junior and reluctantly leave. Leroy SLAMS THE DOOR SHUT. He turns on Marvin.

LEROY  
You've got twenty four hours to  
raise the cash.

MARVIN  
Or what?

Leroy looks bleak.

MARVIN (cont'd)  
You'd be doing me a favor.

Leroy CACKLES. The thugs CACKLE.

LEROY  
Hey, lighten up. My clients are  
full of surprises.

MARVIN  
Like what?

LEROY  
Like if you can't pay now they'll  
collect your investment long term.  
They'll manage you.

MARVIN  
Crazy.

INT. GAY FAMILY HOME

Foot of the stairs. Mom wrings her hands in despair.

MOM  
Oh Lord, oh Lord...

INT. GAY SENIOR'S ROOM

Gay Senior is at his desk, checking mail. The DOOR BURSTS OPEN, causing a priestly robe to fall from its hook on the door.

Marvin stomps in. His father ignores him.

MARVIN  
Why didn't you see Mom at the hospital?

GAY SENIOR  
(murmurs)  
Get out.

Marvin's fists clench. But his father's icy look of disdain keeps him in check.

MARVIN  
She was critical.

He steps closer. Gay Senior clutches a paper-knife.

GAY SENIOR  
You even touch me...

Marvin looks desolate.

INT. AUTO ALONG SUNSET BLVD

Curtis drives. Marvin is with him.

CURTIS  
With settlements still to be made it puts you at least a million short, excluding me.

MARVIN  
Guess I'll have to hit the road.

CURTIS  
You're too late. You should've kicked in on the success of the record.

Marvin is deflated.

CURTIS (cont'd)  
Maybe you should call Freddy. Go back to Europe. Freshen up and record again.

MARVIN  
You think so?

CURTIS

You're with the wrong kind of people here. Bad actors.

Marvin pulls a face.

CURTIS (cont'd)

Go see Freddy. I can hold things up a while.

MARVIN

(murmurs)

Seems like running away.

I/E. TOUR MONTAGE - DAY/NIGHT

WASHED OUT IMAGERY, WITH DISTORTED FUNKY MUSIC OVER. On stage Marvin wears a magnificent, white admiral-style uniform with cloak. He acknowledges wild applause.

INTERCUT impassioned women in the audience, as funky dancers help Marvin strip down to a spangled velvet jockstrap. He falls to his knees in submission.

MARVIN V.O. AS NARRATOR

I was desperate. Went on the road, making a spectacle of myself for the publicity. Trying to keep from going under.

DRESSING ROOM. Marvin consumes cocaine, surrounded by hustlers and hangers-on. He looks a mess.

MARVIN V.O. AS NARRATOR (cont'd)

Always someone setting up the next show. Always someone handling the money. Always someone whispering in my ear, feeding my paranoia.

BACKSTAGE. A goon with a machine-gun guards the dressing-room door. Frankie and Dave confront him.

GOON

He's getting threats.

FRANKIE

I'm his brother. You've got to let me see him.

GOON

Not now, pal.

DAVE

Hey Marv!

He tries to push through but the machine-gun pokes into his stomach.

DISSOLVE TO:

I/E. GAY FAMILY HOME - DAY

Marvin peeks out of an upper window, like a fugitive.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. LOUNGE

Curtailed half-light. Marvin, Frankie and Dave watch "Baseball Bloopers" on TV. Frankie toys with a football. Marvin, in bathrobe, looks haggard, rumpled, spent. He eats ice-cream from a large tub.

FRANKIE

Who, Marv? Who is out to get you?

MARVIN

Oh, I've courted trouble many times. Bound to be a bullet with my name on.

Frankie and Dave look exasperated.

DAVE

That's crazy talk. Those leeches have been at you, messing with your mind. Keeping you off-balance to control you.

FRANKIE

You were their meal ticket.

Mom enters with a pitcher of lemonade and glasses.

MOM

Go play ball in the park, Marvin. It'll do you good.

MARVIN

Aw Mom.

He gently kisses her hand.

FRANKIE

C'mon Marv. Move your butt.

EXT. FRONT GATES

Frankie and Dave exit the gates with the football, dejected. A tricky young hustler approaches.

HUSTLER

You guys buyin'?

FRANKIE

Get outa here.

HUSTLER  
(hollers)  
Hey Marv.

DAVE  
Gimme that shit.

He forces a small package out of the hustler's grip. He chucks it down a storm-drain. Frankie muscles the hustler away.

FRANKIE  
And don't come back.

INT. CORRIDOR

Marvin is still in bathrobe. There's something in his hand, wrapped in a cloth.

INT. GAY SENIOR'S ROOM

A few letters and bills lie under paperweights on the desk. They flutter in the breeze from a window. Gay Senior rests on his bed in satin shorts.

A KNOCK ON THE DOOR. It opens. Marvin steps in. His father stirs. Marvin drops the object beside him. It's heavy. The cloth unravels a little, revealing a gun.

MARVIN  
A lot of weirdos about.

He exits.

INT. CORRIDOR

Marvin disappears into a room at the far end. Gay Senior steps out from his room.

GAY SENIOR  
Devil's coming at you, son. It's inevitable.

He puffs his chest and starts to preach to the empty corridor.

GAY SENIOR (cont'd)  
I was born into violence. But I found refuge in the House Of God. In my humble way I raised a law-abiding family. Taught you right from wrong. Gave you the Bible for your guide. Laid the foundation for you to go on to greater things. To reach a bigger congregation. All I ever wanted was for you to seek your true destiny and...

Marvin steps out from his room, anticipating his father's words.

MARVIN

Sing for Jesus... well, you pushed too hard, father. I could not live in your image.

GAY SENIOR

You sold out.

Marvin points a finger.

MARVIN

What about you? What made you abandon the church?

GAY SENIOR

That's not the question.

MARVIN

Maybe it is. Maybe the church was too much about the rituals and the trappings. The politics. You missed out on Chief Apostle. You've been sore ever since.

GAY SENIOR

Shut up.

Marvin steps forward, appeasing.

MARVIN

Surely what really counts is what Jesus taught. To try to live with love and understanding. Can do that anywhere. Don't need the church of this or the church of that.

Gay Senior's eyes flare.

GAY SENIOR

You preaching to me? It's your life that's a mess.

MARVIN

At least I do the providing.

GAY SENIOR

Oh, by getting in hock to Mammon. But for how much longer? You're going belly up. Haven't a clue about business. I could have kept you on the straight and narrow. I could have looked after your accounts...

Marvin shakes his head, bemused at this new theme of attack.

GAY SENIOR (cont'd)

But no, you were too arrogant. Too conceited to seek the help of your own father.

Mom emerges from the stairs, covering her ears.

MOM  
Please, in the name of mercy...

Marvin rushes toward her.

MARVIN  
So sorry, Momma.

He helps her to her room, midway along the corridor.

MARVIN (cont'd)  
(to Gay Senior)  
Know what really gets me? You never showed love.

GAY SENIOR  
You think I don't...?

MARVIN  
Not real love. Real love is unconditional.

Gay Senior winces.

MARVIN (cont'd)  
Didn't even show respect.

He enters the room with Mom. Gay Senior stares inside.

GAY SENIOR  
Respect is pre-ordained. An obligation from son to father! About time you realized that, boy!

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

Mom finishes lettering a cake - 'Happy Birthday Marvin'. Jeanne observes. Gay Senior takes a beer from the fridge. He glances at the cake in passing. He exits.

JEANNE  
He's always been so jealous of you and Marvin.

MOM  
Jealous of our love, I suppose. Marvin is right about him, he never did love us. Not any of us. Not real love. Set himself above us.

Jeanne warily glances upward.

JEANNE  
It can't go on like this.

Mom wipes a tear.

MOM

I just live in hope that they'll  
reconcile.

Jeanne looks doubtful. She kisses Mom. She picks up her handbag and starts to leave.

JEANNE

Goodnight Momma. I'll phone  
tomorrow.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. GAY FAMILY HOME - DAY

SOUND OF CHURCH BELLS. People pass by in their Sunday best.

GAY SENIOR (O.S.)

(calls out)

Mother, where's that letter?

INT. KITCHEN, LOUNGE, HALL, STAIRCASE

Gay Senior hunts through the house.

GAY SENIOR

Got to be somewhere! You've hidden  
it, that's what it is. You're  
ganging up on me. You and that bum!

He starts up the stairs.

INT. MARVIN'S ROOM

Half-light. Marvin, in bathrobe, sits on his bed. Mom massages his shoulders. Gay Senior struts into the room.

GAY SENIOR

Where's that letter?

MOM

What letter, father?

GAY SENIOR

That insurance letter you  
photocopied.

MOM

I brought it back.

Gay Senior approaches and tugs at Mom's arm.

GAY SENIOR

Well you come and find it.

Marvin jumps up.

MARVIN

Get out!

He pushes his father away. Gay Senior staggers back. He retreats in an almost mincing display of hurt dignity. He turns and wags a condemning finger.

GAY SENIOR

I warned you, son!

Marvin is provoked beyond control. He pushes his father out through the door. Mom is frozen in shock.

INT. CORRIDOR

Marvin pushes at his father. Forceful, relentless.

MARVIN

Momma's been so patient with you!  
You never deserved her!

GAY SENIOR

I warned you... don't... ever...  
touch me!

He scurries away to his room.

A LITTLE LATER

INT. MARVIN'S ROOM

Marvin and Mom are seated on the bed, reading a bible.

MARVIN & MOM

(murmuring)  
Thank you Jesus... thank you  
Lord... thank you Jesus...

CAMERA CREEPS IN CLOSE ON MARVIN. He looks up.

Gay Senior is at the door, pointing the gun at Marvin's chest.

GAY SENIOR

I warned you good.

Marvin's troubled face seems to relax. His far-away eyes are almost laughing. SOUND OF A GUN SHOT.

Marvin GASPS and recoils from the shot. He slips down.

EXT. DRIVEWAY

ANOTHER SHOT IS HEARD. ALL SOUND GOES MUTE. Mom runs out of the house. She's hysterical. She rushes out to the street. Passers-by show concern.

Gay Senior walks slowly out of the house, with no gun. He looks dazed. He sits down in the porch and waits.

INT. MARVIN'S ROOM

Frankie rushes in. He sees Marvin crumpled on the floor.

FRANKIE

Marv, oh my God... are you OK?

He cradles Marvin in his arms. He sees a chest wound. He presses his hand on it, trying to stem the flow of blood.

FRANKIE (cont'd)

The medics are coming.

Marvin gazes up at his brother, eyes flickering closed.

DISSOLVE TO BLACK:

MARVIN V.O. AS NARRATOR

That was it. My race was run.

INT. APARTMENT KITCHEN - DAY

Mom sits, wan-faced, with Frankie, Jeanne and Sweetsie.

MOM

For what your father did I never wish to see him again. But you know, in my heart, I believe Marvin wanted it to happen that way...  
(turns away, tearful)  
That's why he...

INT. GAY SENIOR'S ROOM - DAY

A dour detective gazes at the priestly robe on the door. He surveys the rest of the room. He turns to Frankie.

DETECTIVE

Marvin wanted revenge? To end it all and have his father put away?

FRANKIE

(shrugs in despair)  
And give mother her freedom.

DETECTIVE

A triple whammy, huh?

He opens the filing cabinet. CLINK OF UNSEEN BOTTLES. He lifts out a couple of bulky scrapbooks.

He flips through carefully compiled pages of news clippings. They show Marvin and his career successes, from early days with The Markees through to the Motown years, and Tammi.

Frankie is astonished to see this trove of affection and pride.

INT. COURTROOM DOCK - DAY

Gay Senior stands, forlorn.

GAY SENIOR

If I could bring Marvin back, I  
surely would. I was afraid of him.  
Thought I was going to get hurt.  
I'm real sorry for everything that  
happened. I'm sorry... I-I truly  
loved him.

TITLES

Marvin's father was charged with murder. He pleaded self-defense. A medical examination revealed a brain tumor.

He was sentenced to five years probation, to be served at a retirement home. He carried the burden of what he did for fourteen years.

Marvin's mother sued for divorce. She died of cancer just three years later.

INSERT: More scrapbook pages of clippings turn, revealing Marvin's later successes. "Dream Of A Lifetime" PLAYS OVER.

MARVIN'S RECORDED SINGING

I have tasted success  
I've been in love, more or less  
With a dream that will last me  
A lifetime  
Other dreams I have lost  
But whatever the cost  
The Parade won't pass me by  
So if the picture I paint  
Makes me a sinner or saint  
I won't try to deny it  
I may cry with the past  
But it's easier to laugh about it  
When I think of my wonderful life  
I thank God for my wonderful life

FADE OUT

(c) Jeremy John