

# **Intent and Purpose**

An opera/musical

Music, story and libretto  
by  
Jack Ballard

## CHARACTERS

MICKEY (Tenor) - A great guy with a sense of humor and a very misplaced misconception that he is the worlds greatest rapper. He IS amazing in his lyrics and as a programmer, but he just doesn't have the "juice" to convey the persona for rap, nor do his lyrics really have the right feel when he performs it. His colleague like him a lot, but are not averse to giving him a bad time. He is the Our Town Narrator/Conscience/God figure of the piece. Unfazed by anything.

DENISE (Alto) - An amazing violinist and string contractor. She has a body that would do a centerfold justice and an attitude that equally says "hands off!". Except to Eric. She loves heavy metal and sings in a band when she can. There is a chink in her armor though, if only the others can find it. She is a contractor for a string quartet for the studio. She starts significantly but fades as a character as Alison "takes over."

CLARA (Soprano) - The wholesome girlnextdoor who is absolutely gorgeous under her slightly overweight/dowdy appearance, but her integrity, work ethic and character work against that. No one notices her until the longer they work with her. Why is she in this dead end job?

SONNY (Baritone) - Overly (?) passionate about the job and has a tendency to miss details about the business in light of the mission. Which, of course, CLARA cleans up after him all the time. Do-all pop string player: bass, guitar, mandolin, dobro, you name it. Goto guy.

ERIC (Tenor) - Church musician and all around naïve nice guy. He has his head on straight but his naivete plays to the others as immature. Plays all styles on keyboards, love jazz but everyone only knows him as a rocker for his great work on B3. Initially in love with Denise for all her quirks, he sees her as much more complicated under the shell, until Alison shows up.

FRANCIS (High Tenor) – Mephistopheles figure, financier. Outside guy. Turns out the studio is a laundering endeavor AND a way for him to pursue a dream. Not a pro, but decent voice and well produced, does some notable work.

ALISON (Wide range, mostly light/coloratura soprano) – A diamond in the rough: one perspective thinks she's an innocent like Eric but another says she has seen the world and knows a few things. Sings any style expertly

PENNY– (Alto/mezzo) – Sings rock/folk/country, in the vein of Bonnie Raitt. Young, with a street-wise attitude. "Tats" and the occasional piercing obscures her culture, which is still your hard-rockin', partying singer. Her "sessions" comment on the plot at hand.

JAMES (Baritone) – Do-all guitarist, any style. Limited singing parts.

Wannabes:

JANE (Alto) – Country singer wannabe, but not good at it.

KYLE (soprano/tenor) – Classical singer wannabe. Actor must have a great voice, and an ear that allows a ¼-tone sharp throughout aria

PETE (n/a) – Rapper wannabe.

Other Parts:  
FIREMEN/FBI AGENTS (2-3, Baritone)

OPTIONAL: Session Drummer, Session strings (Denise on 1<sup>st</sup> violin, plus three others: 2<sup>nd</sup> violin, viola and Cello), Optional orchestra as needed/wanted/available

## Setting:

The setting is a do-all recording studio stuck in between the glory days of analog and large budgets, and the modern reality of digital. All of the styles are stereotypically antagonistic of each other, but each realizes that each needs the other for survival in this volatile industry. There is also tension in deciding where to go from commercial to "art."

## Set and Tech

There is a single set. It is done almost like Hollywood Squares, in a two story block. Beginning upper left, clockwise, is the lounge. It is typical, with a vending machine and the inevitable coffee machine and popcorn. In the middle, connected to it, is the control room for studio A. Mickey lives there programming and writing, even while stuff goes on in the isobooth. Next is the isobooth for studio A. It is a little project studio for songwriting. Contains an array of guitars and drums in the corner. To the lower right is the studio B. this is the classical room and vocal room. In the middle is SONNY's office. It has a door to a hallway behind it which is outside the audiences view, that connects to studio B. The last room, lower left and connected to the top by a stairwell, is the reception area. It has the typical office accouterments, with the potted plants and the disk releases framed on the back wall.



There should be at least one projector that reflects Clara's and Mickey's screens, possibly Sonny's. This is ideal, although the opera may be performed without any overt technology, just implied. Mickey's work on the computer may be mimed, actual or "taped" as needed.

Tracks – One advantage to the opera is that any combination may be performed without compromising the believability or experience of the performance. All tracks, as provided/rented, are within the believability of an actual recording studio. The audience does not need to know which tracks are “live” and which are the recorded “back” tracks. The production may range from the actors doing nothing beyond singing the arias, with tracks allowing them to “sync” instrumental performances pre-recorded, to all of the actors (ideally) singing all the recitatives and arias, and playing their instruments “live.” Thus, combinations may be:

For example, as a musical, all lines outside the actual arias are spoken, out of rhythm, with no accompaniment except as desired.

<b>FORMAT</b>	<b>Actors (dialogue)</b>	<b>Actors (Recit under music)</b>	<b>Actors (arias)</b>	<b>Actors miming lead instruments</b>	<b>Actors performing all instruments</b>	<b>Back tracks</b>
<b>Opera</b>		<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>		<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>
<b>Opera</b>		<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>		<b>X</b>
<b>Musical</b>	<b>X</b>		<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>		<b>X</b>
<b>Musical</b>	<b>X</b>		<b>X</b>		<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>

The number or ratio of live instrument parts to backtracks can be adjusted track by track, depending upon the talent of the cast, crew and wishes of the director and producer.

# SCENE 1

ERIC is fooling around on the piano in Iso A (LOW LIGHTING). SONNY is in office pretending to work. After doodling a little with his mouse, he slaps it down and fools around the office until he can't stand it anymore and leaves. He enters the reception area. CLARA sits in the receptionist's chair, pretending to be busy, but we see current computer game. As he walks in, she hurriedly closes the window, revealing a spreadsheet of contacts.

SONNY  
Hi Clara! Solitaire again?

Clara slumps, exaggeratedly. Sonny smiles: he doesn't blame her. She smiles back.

CLARA  
That is so 1990!

SONNY  
(Turning serious)  
Nothing?

CLARA  
Not even on the radar.

SONNY  
I'm sorry.  
I didn't want to say it like this.  
We have nothing, nothing in the bank.  
Just enough to pay this month.  
Then, nothing, no paycheck, just my...

CLARA  
Thanks?

SONNY  
Yeah.

CLARA  
It is what it is, I can see.  
I'll try something else, checking out The Sites.  
I can only make so much coffee.  
And going over the accounting won't put things right.

SONNY  
Especially when all the numbers are zeros  
At least upon the income side.  
You do that. No time to lose.  
Try to finish up this work tonight.

(Sonny goes upstairs. There's nothing to do so he's just killing time. He passes through the lounge and into the project control room. Mickeys leaning back, eyes closed, chewing on a granola bar and listening to some tunes. Suddenly aware of Sonny, who has been watching him, he jumps and falls over. Sonny laughs, pulling him back up.)

SONNY

Soooo, how're are your ideas coming?

MICKEY

Fine, I suppose. I've got some new songs.

SONNY

That's not quite what I meant

MICKEY

Got it bossman, just the way you sent.  
But these little ditties were just as it went down.  
I'm thinking that as jingles, they might work out in ways  
That will make those market firms be freer with their pay.

SONNY

(patting him on the shoulder)  
All we can get, all we can get.

LIGHTS UP on Isobooth B, where Denise is diligently working on a Bach partita, to the accompaniment of Eric's work in the studio below. JAMES is tuning his guitar, silently, into a tuner.

After a few phrases, Denise gets a little annoyed at being constricted and blends right into a bluegrass solo, a la Mark O'Connor. She's casual, dressed in sweats, certainly not like the uptight typical classical violinist. She pauses.

SONNY

(nodding)  
Denise. James.  
Got a session today?

DENISE

(Turning. )  
No. Helping Mickey out, later on the clock.  
But the quintet's got ideas for an eclectic project  
You know, market ourselves. Classical to rock.  
I wanted to talk to you about booking it.

SONNY

(Brightening)  
Great! By the hour or by the block?

DENISE

We were hoping for some trade off time?

SONNY

Honey, it doesn't pay the debt.  
As much as I'd like to, I really can't.  
I mean, look at Mickey and the rest.  
Even Eric only stays so he can put it towards a future prospect,  
Getting his own demo, showing all his chops and music aspects  
He's the one to make it  
When he gets the chance, then you can bet that he won't hesitate to take it.

DENISE

Please?

Any strings your clients need  
will be recorded and done for free

Any money we would make  
Would go into the cookie bake.

No strings attached, I promise you!

JAMES

Cute.

DENISE

(blowing him a sarcastic kiss)

No. You are.

JAMES

You ain't no rapper, that's for sure!

SONNY

(Reluctantly)

Okay, I guess.

DENISE

You're the best.

SONNY

(Turning aside, and exiting out the control room door. To himself.)

I suppose we might as well do something in there.

Better than letting everything stay idle.

Why do these people stick around in here?

Denise goes down the stairs to see Eric, while Sonny goes back and down, into his office. In Control and IsoB, Mickey and James are working on a track. James has an acoustic, working on a pop-Latin track

MICKEY

(into CR mic)

Okay, James, are we ready to give it a run?

JAMES

Gottit, sir!

James begins working through some grooves

Eric starts playing some picks, that coincidentally lock into what James is doing upstairs. Denise enters through the door. Eric stops and turns around.

DENISE

Hey babe.

ERIC

You make me a bit uncomfortable when you call me that.

DENISE

I don't mean anything by it.

But I wouldn't mind going out for a drink.  
Sometime.

ERIC  
Yeah. Sometime.

DENISE  
Just one time,  
okay?

ERIC  
As friends,  
No strings attached.

DENISE  
Yeah, whatever you say.

Eric plays a cute little jazz lick, over the top of James' riffs. Denise just sort of hangs around.

DENISE  
Got some good news for a change  
Sonny finally let the Quartet play.

ERIC  
("forgive and forget")  
What's the gimmick? What'd you give up?  
No way he does anything if it ain't gonna bring a buck.

DENISE  
Nothing much.  
We give time for any gig  
In return for time in the place  
And trusting in our fans and marketing luck.

ERIC  
And who is going to produce it, Denise?

DENISE  
(her hand on his shoulder, from which he politely shrinks away. She raised her hand off.)  
I was hoping you might think about it.  
(Eric turns, with raised eyebrows)  
For a ten, uh, twenty percent piece

ERIC  
(sighs)  
Oh, very well.  
Got nothing better to do.  
I'll do it for the twenty,  
And no more, as a favor to you.

DENISE  
I would kiss you, if I didn't offend you.

ERIC  
Gesture taken, a peck on the cheek



DENISE  
Some day. Sometime.

Eric starts improvising fills on a light jazz ballad, in response to the upstairs groove. Nice feel, with a slight triplet groove. Denise, trying to reign back her unconscious sexuality, leans on the piano, listening.

DENISE  
Is there something wrong?

ERIC  
No, there isn't, why?

DENISE  
'Cause I don't know how to read you.  
There's nothing that can please you  
And I don't know if it's you or if it's me that is the cause.

ERIC  
And if there's something wrong?

DENISE  
I didn't say it.

ERIC  
You're questioning to lead me  
Or saying lines to feed me  
Can't we keep on playing as we're saying even if there was.

DENISE  
So maybe, you think we could?

ERIC  
Could what?

DENISE  
You know. Go out sometime.

ERIC  
Yeah. Sure. Sometime.

(Upstairs, Mickey cues the talkback mic. LIGHTS UP TO LOW in IsoB.)

MICKEY  
Okay, I got levels;  
Ready to go?

JAMES  
Yeah, I think so

MICKEY  
You got the intro  
And I'll get to bass.  
And let's record the whole track sick  
If we have to, we'll replace.  
Okay, we're running click.

ERIC  
(in IsoA)  
Okay, so check this out.

(He starts playing with the two in IsoB)

DENISE  
Sometime.  
(Into the song, Eric is oblivious)

*Some day, sometime  
That can mean forever, 'cause you say it's so  
Some may, some time  
Somehow have the talent there that makes you go.*

*Sometime, some day.  
I can see us going out to see a show  
Some wine, some play  
We could have the greatest time, if you say'd so*

*It seems so much better in the story lines  
Things were lined up clearer and were more defined  
We're meant to be together, at least that's what's in my mind  
I just need the way to make you see me,  
Make us be "we,"  
Or you can fake it to me  
so I pretend it's so.*

*Sometime, some day.  
I'm doing everything I can, and still be me.  
Some day. Sometime.  
I'm running out of options and I'm almost done.*

*It seems so much better in the story lines  
Things were lined up clearer and were more defined  
We're meant to be together, at least that's what's in my mind  
I just need the way to make you see me,  
make us be "we,"  
Or you can fake it to me  
so I pretend it's so.*

*Sometime. Some way.  
I wish I had the ways to make you see me.  
Sublime, workday  
I'm with you and I guess I'm happy, but I want more, hon,  
I need more done.  
I want us  
To be  
One*

ERIC  
(Finishing the song and oblivious)  
There.  
What did you think?  
It's just an idea that I'm trying to...!

What was that you were saying?

DENISE

Oh.

Nothing.

Just thanks for being willing  
To be part of this new projecting  
And you know that we can't do this thing without your help.

ERIC

Not a problem.

DENISE

Yeah.

(She exits outwardly buoyant. Eric starts noodling, taking over from gig in IsoB as they end.)

MICKEY

(clicking talkback to James)

Okay! That'll do.

It'll give me something to write with  
How about you?

JAMES

Works for me just fine.

MICKEY

Time to lay down a lead guitar.  
We'll start from the top, just laying down a simple line.

James picks up electric guitar and starts tuning, oddly in sync over the next dialog with Eric as he stops writing and starts noodling. The two are working together.

Denise, upon reaching the reception area, dumps on Clara.

DENISE

I've tried everything that you told me to.  
If I worked here any more, I'd be living with him!  
I practically am, with all the time here, too!  
What's the matter with the man, is he gay?

CLARA

No, be assured that he isn't that way.

DENISE

Then what's the problem?  
Aren't I kind?  
Aren't I talented  
Aren't I ....well, *nice*?

CLARA

Don't worry. It takes time.

DENISE

I don't have the patience.

(She exists and runs up to the LOUNGE.)

CLARA  
(to herself)  
You're doing just fine.  
I just wish I were.

MICKEY  
(to James in the Control Room B)  
'kay, are you ready?  
Here's the click.

JAMES  
I'm ready, any time.  
Waiting on you, Mick.

(The drum clicks 6 beats and locks into a groove. Mickey begins a bass line. After a bit, *a la* "All Blues," Eric plays the third part of the trio on the piano. "THERE IS PASSION". Lighting emphasizes each character.)

CLARA  
*Why do I do this?  
I know I'm spending hours  
It goes beyond the time I spent,  
The work doesn't end  
Why do I live here  
The thrill begins to sour  
It doesn't even pay the rent  
I'm pushing up flowers*

SONNY  
*How can I make it?  
How do I pay my creditors?  
I know there is priority,  
How can a man see?  
How can there ever  
Be a place I'm free  
From all the tangled webs I weave  
Escaping from my predators?*

MICKEY  
*The inspiration burns inside me  
Something deep turns beside me  
It's not the glory  
It's not the verse  
Its not aesthetics,  
The artist's curse.*

ERIC  
*There is passion, there is fire,  
There's a message; I'm the crier  
There's a future, loose the flyer  
Where is her journey,  
Her route that I'm learning  
The ending I can see, but is there someone out there?*

DENISE

*Is there something out there,  
Please let me know you're out there!  
I can't believe the music is the end of all ends!  
This music that I can do,  
The talent given few,  
It's vision born anew and so to whom can it be sent?*

[CHORUS]

*The passion and the fire  
The image, my desire  
To make the vision part of something everyone can see!  
My passion and my fire  
My hope is giving to the others what only I can see.  
So that they too can be  
A part of something way beyond "me."*

ERIC

*Some may speak of Freud  
And others speak of Darwin, Marx  
I can speak of Kierkegaard  
Who hits it on the marks.*

MICKEY

*The people here don't even know  
It goes way beyond themselves  
And way beyond the things as they think they hear it  
A vision from beyond is something grand, it's something huge  
And music is the only way for bringing out its spirit.*

DENISE

*Is there something out there,  
Please give a shout there!  
I can't believe that music is the end?  
This music that I do  
Its talent given few  
But vision born anew  
To whom can it be sent?*

CLARA

*(interjection)  
So I know what I know  
And it's good for me  
To be seen as a servant  
Who can be one of these  
But I see  
Something out there loves me  
That goes way beyond  
Destiny  
Has in store all along.*

[ALL]

*Is there something out there,  
Please give a shout there!  
I can't believe that music is the end?  
This music that I do*

*Its talent given few  
But vision born anew  
To whom can it be sent?*

*The passion and the fire  
The image, my desire  
To make the vision part of something everyone can see!  
My passion and my fire  
My hope is giving to the others what only I can see.  
So that they too can be  
A part of something way beyond the "me."*

JAMES  
(bridge)  
*I love the music  
I love the fire  
Wherein lies the passion  
And therein lies desire  
Paying me for something that I'm loving  
That's not work!  
But don't tell the boss that!  
Just is one of my perks!*

[ALL]  
*The passion and the fire  
The image, my desire  
To make the vision part of something everyone can see!  
My passion and my fire  
My hope is giving to the others what only I can see.  
So that they too can be  
A part of something way beyond the "me."*

Song ends, lights dim.

MICKEY  
(to James, as lights fade)  
Cool.  
I knew I could count on you.

JAMES  
De nada.

Lights FTB.

## SCENE 2

Lights up. Things are bustling. Eric's jamming on the piano. It's a good morning. DENISE comes in, dressed in tight leather a la "Trinity" from The Matrix. Clara in her wisdom raises her eyebrows.

DENISE  
(defensively)  
What?

CLARA  
That's not the way.

DENISE  
To do what?

(She rushes past Clara before she can say anything and Sonny's office into Iso A. Eric catches sight of her and the music abruptly stops.)

ERIC  
(sprechstimme)  
Oh. My. God.

He catches himself and, embarrassed, turns back to the piano, jamming furiously. DENISE smiles. She's won this battle at least and she knows he's not gay.

FRANCIS comes sauntering in, with ALISON on his arm. He's a good-looking man, 90% solid, but there's something not quite right. He's dressed like *los ricos* of the Pacific Southwest: khakis, polo shirt, all name brands, etc. It's hard not to like him on the surface. Alison is a knockout, been around once or twice, but is more a defensive naiveté than a hardened streetwalker guardedness.

FRANCIS  
Hey, everybody, ain't it a grand day?

CLARA  
(coldly)  
Mr. D'Auberge.

FRANCIS  
Francis, Clara.

CLARA  
I say what I mean, I mean what I say.  
(pause)  
With all due respect

SONNY  
(rising from the chair in his office and rushing out to the reception)  
Welcome, Welcome, someone I didn't expect  
Isn't it an excellent morning?

MICKEY  
(sotto voce)

You might have given us some sort of warning.

SONNY

Hey, everybody, come in here!  
Francis brought a friend of his;  
Someone with real talent that he wants to promote  
He thinks she can make it big  
And he wants us to be in on the end.

FRANCIS

Old time's sake, of course.  
Anything for an old friend.

Mickey takes over from Eric, as Eric cadences and gets up. He goes into the reception area with Denise right behind.

FRANCES

This is Alison here.

Time stops: Eric is struck as is Alison by him and time stops, like the meeting at the dance in Westside Story. Denise sees her hopes come crashing down in that one concentrated moment. She is suddenly very self-conscious of her outfit.

CLARA, ERIC, JAMES AND SONNY

(ad lib on the same motif)

Glad to meet you.  
Good to meet you.  
Welcome.

(Start song groove.)

FRANCIS

Alison is one who sings.  
Wait, I know what you're thinking.  
She's the real thing.  
Got a talent and got grace  
And she's got a body... I mean, looks to keep the pace

(Alison gives him a dirty look. Francis recovers.)

She's more than just a pretty face  
I think she's quite the catch.  
If someone takes her under wing,  
She sure can go a long way, ace.

She's here to cut a demo  
I'll be glad to cut a check.  
But if she works out well enough,  
I think you'd like her back.  
She reads and sings in any style  
And she has an ear to match.

SONNY

Welcome, Alison.  
Glad to have you. Have a seat.



What were you thinking you might sing?  
Something classic,  
Something opera.  
Are you into pop, rock, folk, jazz or beat?  
We have a couple people here  
Who can do anything you need.  
Originals, songs, a music cover.  
And these gifted guys can read  
From seeing lyrics on a chart  
Keyboard background, guitar lead  
Drumming from the number system  
Or by ear from a recorded feed.

FRANCIS

(laughing)

Boy, I must've hit the right chord!  
I haven't seen you this excited  
Ever since your band had toured  
And the call from Grammy lit you up  
Seriously, you must have been really bored!  
Give the girl a break, hey?

SONNY

(embarrassed but unapologetic)

C'mon, it's nice with someone you bring in.  
And I'm not that desperate for the business, okay?

FRANCIS

Yeah, sure.

But if this works out, I may have more connections  
And the cash flow may just give your vision more direction.

ALISON

(really classy)

Hey, no problem, Sonny  
Can I call you that?

FRANCIS

And don't worry 'bout the bill, you know?

I've got it covered here, and so

You can help this girl out

And I'll leave it up to you.

For this demo thing I want from her

I'll donate five grand

However you can fit it,

Just make a good demand.

I'll see my way out.

You're the expert and I've got some business at hand.

Francis leaves, among farewells: some honest, some not.

SONNY

Okay, Denise, can you take her  
Up to the clients lounge, and make her  
Feel at home

Where is Mickey?  
He should be here, doggone that guy!

CLARA  
He has no use for Francis...

SONNY  
Yeah, I know, but why?  
He's my main arranger  
And...  
Well, just take her up there  
And introduce him to the stranger.

Denise is not pleased but does as she's told. They go up the stairs. James, Sonny and CLARA mime chatting as Eric goes back to the piano and takes up where Mickey has left off. He begins the intro to "Who Are You?" The following is mimed under music: Mickey stretches exotically, and the door opens. Denise motions him back, and they introduce each other. Alison hands him a folder and he mimes looking through them. Alison left in his capable hands, Denise leaves unnoticed and passes through the control room and into the IsoA where she's left her violin. She picks it up, angry, depressed, devastated and close to tears all at once. But her outlet is her music.

Violin plays lines over Eric's piano. *Molto espressivo*, with passion so subdued, it loses none of its wistfulness.

ERIC  
(moved)  
*For the first time I saw you  
I could see the world revolve  
I saw the world in joy.*

Violin interlude. Alison and Mickey continue to interact. Violin falters and stops.

DENISE  
*For the last time I saw him  
I could see my life dissolve  
I saw all my planning be destroyed  
In that one blink of an eye  
All my plans were upside down.  
You turned your head;  
I saw you.  
And the light that was in your eyes...*

*...was something I always wanted, but could never do.*

Piano interlude. Violin is subdued.

MICKEY  
(to Alison)  
Thank you for the charts.  
They show a nice variety, of sorts.  
Pretty good for a demo, if a bit short.  
I do have some in the music hoard,  
if you don't mind my giving you ideas?

ALISON  
(distracted)

Of course not.

He leaves and she is left by herself in the lounge, and sings:

ALISON

*For the first time I saw you  
I could see the world revolve  
I saw all creation dance with joy  
In the twinkling of an eye  
My whole world was upside down*

ERIC

*You turned your head and saw me  
And the light that was in your eyes  
captured me.*

[ALISON and ERIC]

*For the first time I saw you  
I could see the world revolve  
I saw all creation dance with joy  
In the twinkling of an eye  
My whole life was upside down*

ALISON and DENISE

*Who are you?*

ERIC

*Where are you going?*

ALISON and ERIC

*Are you here alone, with someone,  
Or here alone as one.*

ALISON and DENISE

*I knew you?  
Where are you now?*

ERIC

*We have come together, longing to say*

There is a pause as all three wonder what to say.

ERIC

*But I can't speak!*

DENISE

*You have come together,  
But I'm longing to stay*

[ALL THREE]

*And say a first goodbye to you*

[INSTRUMENTAL OUTRO, then...]

DENISE

(breaking down)  
*And say a last goodbye to you*

## SCENE 3

(no break)

LIGHTS FADE on studios and lounge. UP on Reception, where Mickey is collecting some charts out of a filing cabinet.

SONNY  
(to CLARA)

So.  
What do you think?

CLARA  
It could come to something.  
A promising amount.  
But I don't trust that Francis.  
He's too slick on my account.

SONNY  
Aw, nothing wrong with Francis!  
He and I go way, way back.  
He sang lead with my band  
When we were still on track  
To make it in the music scene  
You know, we got three...

MICKEY  
(to the side, still looking at the charts)  
I know. Grammy nominations  
And didn't win smack.

SONNY  
(ignoring him)  
He's lucky in the market  
His accounts are in the black  
And he still likes the music  
Wants to be part of the act.  
Okay, so he's a leader with the ladies.  
And that's a creepy sort of fact.  
But I think that way down deep,  
He's one of those select.

MICKEY  
Dreamer.  
Nice of you to have his back.

CLARA  
(breaking rhyme/rhythm)  
Well.

I personally think he's, well, *cracked*

SONNY

Cute.

CLARA

I thought so.

But he's the devil, I could swear.

Someone you should be aware.

(BEAT)

What do you think about this Alison?

Is she as good as he says?

SONNY

One thing Francis certainly is

He's got an eye for winning ways.

He can pick him out a winning horse

When the odds are 12 to 1

But he's smart enough to put his dough

On the perfect breed

Guaranteed

Proven deed

CLARA

Based on greed!

SONNY

He can pick a winning one!

CLARA

What about you?

What do *you* think?

SONNY

Hmmm.

Nothing to count on.

I hope she's money, though.

MICKEY

(turning and engaging actively)

Is that all you care about?

SONNY

Well, she'd better be about the dough,

It's the only thing that pays my rent.

MICKEY

What? Have you lost it?

Have you lost the reason for this place?

SONNY

No.

Yes!

I don't know!

I suppose it's so.

But if it fails, it's a major loss of face.

CLARA  
Face?!

MICKEY  
Face?

SONNY  
Yes! Face!  
(recovering)

I was someone once, a person with a name  
But only if you read the jacket, would you ever think of fame  
I made my money, did the time. How'd you think I paid for it?  
But there are others out there who would know, and know I came to... this

MICKEY  
Ego!  
The ego of the dude!  
Our time is past, man, give it up.  
There are no screaming girls, no limos, and no pools  
The Vegas scene ain't here no more  
You're nothing like a deluded, brooding, moody, bloody fool!

(As frustrated as he is, Mickey takes a moment to settle down)

[INSTRUMENTAL]

MICKEY  
(pointing up to the lounge, at Alison)  
But here we are with gold in hand  
The girl's got talent, she don't need no band.  
She's the passion, *she's* the money,  
She may not be the thing you want,  
But you can be a part of *her*, Sonny!  
She know what she's here for  
And you can be damn sure  
It ain't for dough, ain't for show  
It ain't for the pickin's of the sickened and the dickens of the lot.  
Beauty's on the outside,  
But the quality's on the in  
Here for the right reasons, like long ago when we were hot  
She wants to make her music, man, the music that we played  
Here for the artist, that we started, well, full-hearted on the spot.

SONNY  
It's what it takes so I can fight

MICKEY  
Go beyond it, you know I'm right!

SONNY  
I'm thinking of the money that supports the art!

MICKEY

As long as it's the art, first, from the start!

(recitative; *rubato*)

She reminds of the thing I saw in the African south  
Saw with my own eyes, not by word of mouth  
Black figures, dark figures, covered in their dirt  
Digging for the wealth of others, not knowing their own worth.

(song intro)

*Places where the men sweat  
Deep underground. The pieces fly.  
Thrown apart when tool and rock met  
With the boss man standing by  
With their owners standing by*

*Washing through the filthy stream  
Value works the value there  
Geologic time unraveled  
With the labor's salty fare  
With their blood, a millionaire.*

*Piece of rock, harder than adamant  
Filthy lucre, literal way  
Piece of man, stronger than levant  
Filthy mettle, hands in clay  
Hands are mired in mineral clay*

SONNY

*Something comes beneath, fired by a holy God  
Born beneath the bedrock, born beneath the sod  
Grinding pressure on it, grinding at it, sawed  
A diamond underneath it, pure and chaste, not flawed*

[CHORUS]

*A diamond in the rough  
Clear water from the sky  
Pristine from the mountains  
Next to gold, is purified  
Things that smother inner self  
Make the brave ones cry  
Making only diamond coal  
It takes God to purify*

MICKEY

*She is the one exception,  
Chosen to succeed  
She may not seem like nothing now,  
But there for those who see.  
It's up to us to bring it out.  
No! It's mostly up to me.  
I can see what needs to come,  
I can see what she will need.*

*Something grows inside her, fired by a holy God  
Born beneath her visage, born amidst the music fraud*

*Not wanting the temporal things, ignoring the applause  
A diamond underneath it, pure and chaste, not flawed*

SONNY and MICKEY

*A diamond in the rough  
Clear water from the sky  
Pristine from the mountains  
Next to gold, is purified  
Things that smother inner self  
Make the brave ones cry  
Creating only diamond coals  
It takes God to purify*

MICKEY

(seeing the potential)

*Carving,  
Molding  
Shaping  
Folding*

SONNY

(still ever pragmatic)

*Forming,  
Breaking  
Bending  
Making*

MICKEY

(Back at him)

*Loving  
Healing  
Mending  
Feeling*

[SONNY, hardening, in his face]

*Practicing  
Learning  
Performing*

(Pauses)

*Earning*

[Sonny glares at Mickey, who narrows his eyes back. BLACKOUT]



# SCENE 4

Same time, lounge. Eric continues .

ALISON

It seems that my life goes on.  
I had no idea where the road would lead.

Don't count me one of them, because,  
When I thought the time was ripe,  
I went where they said I should.  
I could imagine all the hype:  
I live here and I know.  
I am no one Fate could bribe  
I stand a lone tableau.

[TEMPO]

*I know that most girls think I'm blessed  
Men see my face, talk to my chest  
There's something more they haven't guessed  
I wish they'd see the precious gem.  
Neither one knows of my worth  
I've talent, brains and guts from birth  
Not like some glitzy bubble-headed flirts  
In their eyes, I'm a cursed femme*

[PC]

*But when I think my deck is stacked  
Something comes to change the act.*

[CHORUS]

*Of all the suitors that I know  
Many men would be my beaux  
Parade me 'round the social show  
Their music has been dissonance  
All the places I can go  
I understand and live, although  
My hope is lost unless I grow  
Through the eyes of innocence.*

*Amid the clutter and the noise  
Even midst the artist scene.  
I love recording, my performance  
Creating music, in between  
My day job's on the outside  
Creating in the night  
I am prepared for any ride  
At least, I think, I might.*

*The music and the boys  
I hope on things that yet might be  
They look on girls as social toys*

*But this one? This one's new and sight unseen  
He's in the background  
And he's quite the artist  
Even humble, so I've found.  
I found the tree, in spite of forest*

[PC]

*When you're so sure things are set  
Life throws something you don't expect*

[CHORUS]

*Of all the suitors that I know  
Many men would be my beaux  
Parade me 'round the social show  
Their music would be dissonance  
All the places I can find  
That percolate inside my mind  
I have a hope: I see he's blind  
Because he's caught in innocence.*

*Of all the suitors that I knew  
Few of them would have a clue  
But this one, now, is someone new  
His music could be consonant  
All the places where I be,  
I admit: I want to see  
Or hide myself, as if I could be  
Happy in my innocence.*

# SCENE 5

Afternoon. James is working on licks in IsoB, Mickey is programming (or is he just playing on his iPhone?). Alison is lying on the couch in the Lounge with Eric, who is writing a tune on his laptop. It is rather warm. No one feels like doing anything much. Sonny is in the office, doing the stereotypical tennis-ball-against-the-wall time waster. Clara's cell phone rings.

CLARA

Brer Rabbit. How may I direct your call?  
(brightening)  
One moment, sir, yessir

She presses the mute button and yells behind her, excitedly.

CLARA

Sonny! *Sonny!*  
Get your butt in gear  
Get on the ball! Come *here!*

Sonny jumps up and rushes to the reception area.

CLARA

That guy you called, the one last fall.  
The artist with the film!

SONNY

Yeah, yeah, I know the guy.  
He wants a classical score.  
Last week he stopped by  
If he likes it, there could be more!

(picking up the phone)

Yes sir, glad to hear you.

(BEAT – James fills)

You liked the spec?

(BEAT – James fills)

Yes, he's the one to go to.

(BEAT – James fills)

Sure, or maybe Mick

(BEAT – James fills)

If we have to, we'll redo.

(BEAT – James fills)

A slot tonight, I think, I'll check.

(music interlude as he pretends to check)

There is a gig, but we'll make do

(BEAT – James fills)

We've got strings; I'll check with Eric

(BEAT – James fills)

This afternoon, we'll run it through.

(BEAT – James fills)

No, I've seen it. It's an excellent flick.  
Well put together and I think it's sick  
These guys are good at making things click  
There is no question they can turn it 'round quick  
(BEAT – James fills, a classic jazz tag)  
Bye. Good doing business with you.

He sets the cell down and pauses. Then he turns to Clara

SONNY and CLARA  
(together)  
Yes!

# SCENE 6

Late night studio. Sonny's calling the shots, with Mickey and Alison over his shoulder. Denise is on the violin in IsoB, while Eric is in IsoA. The multimedia screen shows the Control screen, which has the window of a movie running with audio software (PT, Logic, whatever).

SONNY

Okay, Eric, I'll give you click.  
Can you see the screen okay?

ERIC

Yeah, it's cool, all programmed in.  
The click'll keep me clocked on time.  
Denise, your part is just the scratch.  
Any improv or ideas are fine.

DENISE

Got it, thanks.  
You have some good thoughts here.  
I'll see what I can do,  
But don't be surprised if I just listen in  
And get ideas from you.

SONNY

Okay, then, here we go.  
Running click, and... here's the video.

The screen starts showing a burn-window and rough cut of the film, which is a short, based on an artist's animation concept (see addendum for film script). Eric, riveted on the screen and into the backtrax, begins to play. Denise "improvises" to Eric's accompaniment. MUSIC: *Tardes de Segovia*.

It is poignant and profound, reminiscent of Morricone's *Cinema Paradiso*. Mickey and Alison look at each other, equally moved by the music.

MICKEY

It's the best he's ever done.

ALISON

(turning red)  
Never heard it before.

SONNY

He had a concept and didn't like it.  
Wrote it today; it's what I hired him for.

ALISON

(aside)  
No.  
He didn't write it for you.  
(pause)  
But for me.

They settle down to listen to the music, which continues until the repeat.

Sonny's got his eyes closed and Alison and Mickey don't notice smoke starting to billow from beneath the rack bay behind. The room fills and finally Sonny sees it. He gropes for the extinguisher, which doesn't work. They're starting to cough now. Sonny tries the talkback, but the racks' fuses trip, killing the board and all the gear.

Sonny runs downstairs to the reception area, while Mickey pulls the door to IsoB open. Eric continues to play, thinking he has a good track going.

MICKEY  
Denise, fire!  
Don't worry, it's a bust for now!

(she grabs her case)

No time for that.  
Gotta get out!

She recognizes that the violin is the "important" thing and rushes out with both bow and instrument. They rush out, and down the stairs. Mickey is last practically pushing Alison and Denise down, stops halfway and heads back up.

SONNY  
(to Clara)  
911!  
Call 911!  
There's (cough) a fire in Control B  
Get the others out!

Sonny runs into the office and grabs some office stuff. Mickey grabs the hard drives, and with one in each hand, runs down the stairs. Eric is oblivious and is building through the climax. Through the smoke, the movie continues, again recalling the scene in *Cinema*. IsoA is still smoke-free but the rest of the place is filling up. Clara stands up, frantically pushing the buttons on the phone. .

CLARA  
(answering)  
We have a fire.  
Nine-six-zero-two-four  
Allendale Trace  
Brer Rabbit Sound Studios  
Two-story brownhouse by the bagel place.

She runs into the office. Sonny slams the laptop closed and follows her out. No one gets Eric and he is in the zone. People start coughing as smoke starts to billow downstairs.

SONNY  
(shouting out the main door)  
In here, in here.

MICKEY  
(overriding him)  
It's in the control booth, up those stairs!

FIREMAN #1  
Got it! Stand back and head out the door.

Better safe than give us the visitor's tour.

FIREMAN #2 herds everyone out

ALISON

(panicked)

Where's Eric? Anybody seen Eric?

Is he in IsoA or moved to IsoB?

FIREMAN #2

Okay, there you go.

A lot of smoke but we'll see what's up there.

Did you check to see?

They realize that he is still in there. Firemen break into A and grab Eric. He is coughing now, as he hits the final poignant chord, ending the scene on a tense, but sad and quiet note as he turns and rushes out the door just before FTB.

# SCENE 7

The studio is somber. There is some fire damage in the control booth and some in the lounge when the door was left open. It is less than it could be, but more than it should. The next parts are stark and a *cappella*, reflecting the despair that the characters are feeling. Everyone is wandering through, picking at parts. These conversations overlap in places, providing a harmony of sorts.

SONNY

I guess that's that.

ALISON

What about the client?

SONNY

He still likes the temp  
But is worried we're not compliant  
He's given us a window of about two weeks.  
If we can turn the project 'round  
He will still sign the check.

MICKEY

What about the damaged board?  
Data's all okay, I guess  
Mics are working, cords a mess  
I'm worried that the smoke has damaged outboard gear and all the rest.

SONNY

Fire it up and let's see then.  
Piano's good and other gear?

ERIC

Last I checked, they're good to go.  
I'll check to see that there's no wear.

SONNY

Good, we've got to know.  
I have my laptop but it's not as good.  
Though the software on it is same below.  
On something this important, acoustic and slow  
I really don't want to leave it to that.  
Meet back here in fifteen flat.

Everyone gets busy, checking things. Eric plays around on the piano. Clara and Mickey boot up the machines. Clara's computer is okay, but the studio isn't booting up properly. Mickey also finds that his analog preamps were the source of the fire. Without the preamps, any live recordings will sound like they're done in a college student's basement. Mick signals James, who stops and follows him. They meet downstairs.

SONNY

And?

DENISE

Piano's fine, Eric's there.  
Everything stinks of smoking plastic.



JAMES

Drums and amps in "B" are, too.  
It seems to me things aren't so drastic.

MICKEY

Studio computer isn't booting up right  
But the worst thing going, is the preamps.  
I think they started the fire and they are fried.

SONNY

(slumping)  
Oh great.

ALISON

What's that mean?

MICKEY

It means no good tracking.  
Rock bands and pop groups, okay.  
With the sounds of those, there's noise enough  
You can let it slide at the end of day.  
But for a video and that kind of stuff.  
With quiet, acoustic sounds in play  
Will sound like garbage on gear that sucks.  
No way we can do this film and still turn out okay.

SONNY

How much?

MICKEY

(shrugging)  
More than five, less than ten

DENISE

Ten what?

SONNY

Thousand. Dollars, not yen.  
Clara, insurance?

CLARA

Our deductible is at least that much.  
To save on bills, we opted for catastrophic.  
We would have to lose the whole studio and still pay such.

SONNY

Okay.  
Okay.  
(beat)  
Okay.

I have somewhere I can go.  
An investor is the best way.

JAMES

With a guaranteed gig that we know

What would the banker say?

SONNY

Maybe on a personal note  
But all the processing for days.  
I'm stretched more than you know.  
In order to sign the checks to make your pay  
I'm overextended floating this boat.

(BEAT)

I'm the owner, there is no vote.  
I'm sorry, but the old way  
And everything that it denotes  
It's vanished, nada, it's gone, passe

(BEAT)

I'm calling Francis, see what he says.

His employees look at each other.

CLARA

I don't trust him.

DENISE

Nor do I

ERIC

There's something...

MICKEY

I know...something about the guy.

SONNY

Aw, he's alright, and he's got the dough.  
(turning on them)  
You got better that I don't know?

They don't meet his gaze. They don't have any better ideas and he knows it.

SONNY

Fine, then, I'm making the call.  
Mickey, start the cleanup, get the quotes.  
The rest of you do what you can, whatever it denotes.

They begin working, cleaning things out. This entails getting the furniture out of the control room. Mickey goes to the room and begins dismantling the racks, setting each on the counter. Eric plays through all of this, solo piano stuff; without the gear we don't have full production and the music should play this out.

## SCENE 8

Next day. Mickey and the others are still putzing in the studios. Mickey goes down to reception. James starts jamming on the guitar, *muy caliente*. Eric is tuning the piano. Each time he hits a key, it's like the roll of the harpsichord in a traditional baroque recitative.

MICKEY

(to Clara)

Well, that's it. All cleaned out.  
Nothing else I can do without the money.  
It either that or do without.  
Much as I don't like Francis, it all depends on him.  
On him, and on Sonny.

CLARA

I know what you mean. It's not Sonny I doubt.  
There's something about Francis that strikes me funny.  
There's more to him than just a talent scout.  
I can't place it but he's got way too much money.

Sonny ENTERS with Francis, who of course has a girl with him. She's not hanging off him, and we see that his style of girl is the independent or even feisty kind.

SONNY

(rather forced enthusiasm)

Hi Clara! Can you get everyone?  
Francis, you two have a seat  
I'd like everyone here to meet you two  
And celebrate when all is said and done.

Clara does so as they sit on the sofas. As people come in, James plays the background.

SONNY

Where's James?

MICKEY

He's in the middle of testing the guitars.  
Smoke didn't make it into Isobooth B  
So I suspect he's in love with the gear that he's got.  
We won't see him for the next hour.

SONNY

Ha, ha, ha, Agreed.

Anyway, Francis is looking to foot the bill.  
At least long enough if, when and until  
We get the clients coming in, and we will!  
All he wants is a piece of the till  
Which is only fair, considering still  
That business would fail as things went downhill.  
But you've all been faithful and by God's will  
You'll see a check for your considerable skill.

FRANCIS  
Cute.

SONNY  
I thought so.

Anyway, that's all I wanted.

Mickey and Eric head upstairs to the lounge, Alison tagging along. Denise to IsoA.

MICKEY  
Although we can't record  
We can still do some idea stuff.  
Alison, you check this out.  
We can work at least on your job.

Down in the reception area, Francis and Sonny are looking at the contract. Suddenly, Sonny reacts.

SONNY  
Hey! What the...?  
This stuff really sucks!  
This is nothing like what we talked about.  
What are you trying to pull?

FRANCIS  
Hey, it's nothing, just the standard thing  
I know you aren't a fool,  
But look, you've got nothing on your side to bring!

They continue to argue, in mime, as focus goes to Eric, who listens to downstairs.

ERIC  
Does he know what he's doing?

MICKEY  
I don't know, he don't know who he is  
There's something about the man  
That makes me cringe down deep  
I don't know what thing it shows

ERIC  
He seems like an okay peep

MICKEY  
  
If gold can look deceiving  
And silver has its tarnish  
The bad I understand  
Is deep within a man  
And shows beneath HIS varnish!

ERIC  
Cute

MICKEY

I thought so.

Let's get to work.

Alison, give a listen.

We're writing a song for your project.

ERIC

Let us know if there's anything missing.

Mickey starts to lock in to James with finger percussion on the drum triggers, and there's a good groove going on. Eric is on the keyboard in the control room. Groove is rather like a cross between Afro-Cuban and Santana.

MICKEY

*Like a prophet of doom*

*Ishmael of Melville's croon*

*He foretold destruction's seeds were sown in Ahab's heart*

*Like the prophet of sorrow*

*Who, though filled with horror,*

*Told that treaties not be made with foreign parts*

*Like Jeremiah ben Israel*

*Saw a future that was way too real*

*A future sick but growing from the start*

*Like the stick that shakes*

*Like a staff that breaks*

*As you lean upon it, leaning with your soul*

*As it moves and quivers*

*As it finally severs*

*And it pierces through you, making your blood flow*

(PC)

*A treaty 'tween the nations*

*Seems like the best vocation*

*When you think there's nothing else to lose.*

[ALL]

*The devil is your friend*

*The devil is your brother*

*The angels may be singing*

*But you think that you know better*

*God is smiling down*

*But Him, you'd rather smother*

*Afraid to drown, you won't back down*

*Your hope is in another one!*

FRANCIS

(downstairs)

C'mon man, it's nothing more

Than a fifty share in the grocery store

There isn't any guarantee

That your profit isn't going to be

As lucrative as you'd made it out before.

SONNY

(away from Francis, debating with himself)

If I don't get the funding soon  
This place will go to ruin  
And all the good intentions will depart  
The limit is all borrowed  
Its note is due tomorrow  
And its value looking weaker on the chart  
It's not profits that I feel  
But the mission doesn't seem as real  
When the money isn't right behind the art.

FRANCIS

We'd be partners, dude, though it's hard to believe  
I'm not sucking you into some big conspiracy  
Something bigger, something grand  
Something in the market it demands  
I've got the money, and the agency  
And resources that I can command!

SONNY

(away from Francis)

In spite of my mistakes,  
It's still the money that it takes  
To finish up a project to its goal  
But I will fight forever  
And sign a deal with whomever  
Even if I have to make the innocent blood flow

The way of the world can be  
Pragmatic and the one thing seen  
When there's only one thing you can choose.

ALL

*The devil is his best friend  
The devil is his brother  
The angels may be singing  
But his hope is in another one.*

SONNY

(toward Francis)

*And though I shrink from you  
There's nothing I can do  
I'm stuck between the rock  
And the deep.blue.sea*

[FRANCIS]

Oh sign it, damn it!  
(Instrumental beat)  
It's okay, you'll be fine  
It's what you need, er, wanted, so sign  
Signature here  
right there  
On that line.

(Sonny signs)

[FRANCIS, aside]

And now that I own you.  
You're mine.

(to Sonny)

Partners now, we put 'er there! (holds out his hand)

ALL

(chanting ominously, perc only)

*El Diablo, es su amigo*

*El diablo, es su hermano*

*Y los angeles cantamos*

*Pero 'speranza es en otro*

SONNY

*And when I die, you get my soul?*

*I don't think so. It's not my role*

*You don't own me,*

*Lock nor stock nor barrell!*

ALL

*The devil is his friend*

*The devil is his brother*

*The angels they are singing*

*But his hope is in another*

ALL

*The devil is his friend*

*The devil is his brother*

*The angels they are singing*

*But his hope is in another*

SONNY

(wearily)

*Just.*

*Call.*

*Me.*

*Faust!*

LIGHTS FTB.

# SCENE 9

The following are vignettes within a single scene, made possible with good lightning and stage management.

Lights up on the reception and IsoA. Eric is working on a song in IsoA with just little snippets as he writes: a measure at a time. In the reception area, lights come up on Mickey and Sonny. Janet is sitting down on the sofa with an excited yet hopeful look on her face.

MICKEY

So, Franky says you want to cut a project?

JANET

(With a semi-fake hick accent)

Oh, yes sir.

Got some songs,

Got some talent,

leastwise what he says.

SONNY

Okay, let's listen to a little bit.

MICKEY

Do you have some lyric sheets?

She hands them over. And starts strumming. Lights down on IsoA and Eric who fades (start with fills over her groove, then sporadically as he starts writing his ideas down. Eventually he goes totally to writing as her song progresses; when it ends, he begins again as if working through the pieces he's writing)

All the songs are in G, same progression, same strum, same tempo, same style. Throughout the rest, Sonny, Mickey and Clara are dying, it hurts their musical sensibilities so badly. They show it and mime to each other when Janet is "in the moment" with her eyes closed, but become attentive and appreciative every time she opens her eyes.

JANET

(humorously exaggerated country)

*Last night you was a-drinking,*

*My booze up by the score*

*I just had got me something*

*From that Walmart store*

*Oh darling, darling, darling*

*how can you be so mean.*

*You, with your twelve inch biceps*

*And yer tight blue jeans.*

*On the day that you left me*

*You done walked right out that door*

*You said some mighty evil things,*

*You called me a big, fat wh....*

MICKEY



(interrupting, as James and Eric take over. DENISE adds bits here and there, some licks in a bluegrass style as if practicing)

Ooohokay...what's this other song here?

JANET

Oh that? I call it "Honey, my dear".  
It's a real fire-raisin' sumgun  
Can't even dance to it, it's so fast  
But a good one for the band to show their stuff.

(Same strum, same tempo if *slightly* faster)

*I know you call me sweetie,  
I know you say "my dear"  
You know I ain't no fatty  
So get yer hands off my beer*

*Those fingers belong nowhere  
Least of all my beer  
If you got to put them somewhere  
Just slap them onto my re...*

CLARA

(Pretending to answer the phone and very loudly)  
Bree Rabbit Recording can I help you? *Please?*

Janet is starting to get annoyed at not finishing her song.

SONNY

I'm sorry for the phone call  
Um...very, very good..  
I thought you muted the cell phone, Clara?  
I really wish you would!  
(He winks)

CLARA

Yes sir, right away sir, sorry, Mr Dahl.

MICKEY

(picking up the cue and shuffling through the lyrics)  
How about ballads? Do you have any ballads?

JANET

(Brightening)  
Yes. I. Do!

This one is a real, slow-dance kind of thing  
Popular when I've played the chart.  
One guy once brought out his diamond ring!  
A real romantic piece of art

MICKEY

(*sotto voce*)  
Cute.

CLARA  
(*sotto voce*. Without missing a beat)  
I thought so...

MICKEY  
I'll bet.

SONNY  
(Startled, turning to Clara)  
Huh?

JANET  
(Same strum, same tempo, same tune...so the moment passes )

*I remember looking at you  
In the deep moonlight  
We was fishing for catfish  
In the night so bright*

*The beauty of the water  
The catching of the bass  
I knew what you were after  
When you grabbed me by the a....*

SONNY  
(Loudly)  
Whoa, will you look at the time!  
The next client on my books, I think is coming by.  
Mickey will you take her up the stairs  
and help her with her tunes.  
(just to Mickey)  
Look. Just try.

Lights FTB on reception and up on IsoA. Eric is at the piano, working with a vocalist on some random Broadway type tune. To make a contrast the dialogue is a *cappella*. His client is either a tenor or soprano.

ERIC  
Francis brought you in?

KYLE  
Yes. He thought you could help me, I think  
He's glad to fund the CD.  
That's the chart: just a classical part.  
Composed by Mitchell, I think, and pretty easy, you can see.

Eric plays through the introduction, which ends on an obvious dominant. Nothing from Kyle. He plays the chord again. Nothing. He starts from the beginning and plays to the dominant. Finally, Kyle squeaks out the first note: it's not even on pitch.

KYLE  
I'm so sorry: I'm nervous!  
I've never been in a studio before.

ERIC

(been through it before)  
Don't worry about it.  
Don't get a twist in your drawers.  
It takes some getting used to.  
Okay: Easy key, easy four.  
Don't think about it: just *do*.

He plays through the intro again and waits on the dominant. Kyle belts out a note. Completely off. Eric plays the key, then louder and louder as Kyle tries to get there (recalling the old Lucille Ball schtick). She/he finally gets it and they're off to the races.

KYLE  
*In In In liii liii*  
*In the moonlight of a thousand dreams I seek thee.*  
*In the sunlight of a thousand lives we dream love's dream*  
*As we live our lives In spite of strife*  
*we can learn to love again*  
*And you, my love I follow thusly once*  
*And then we love above the ocean of the night*

Kyle has a decent voice, decent time, now s/he's singing the right notes. One problem: s/he's a quarter-tone sharp the *entire* way. This will take an excellent musician with an excellent ear to bring it off. Eric is obviously suffering, although as Kyle is in the crook of the piano facing an imaginary audience s/he doesn't notice. They finish and Eric's stinger is:

ERIC  
Okay...  
Okay...  
Okay, I think we can fix... er, work with that in the mix.

As the lights BO, we hear a vaudevillian drum fill as if to punctuate that, but before we can assess that, the lights come up on Control and IsoB, where the drums continue. It's Mickey in the Control Room, playing finger drums on the keyboard. We see Peter in IsoB concentrating furiously, eyes closed, one hand pressed to one ear of his headphone like it's a lifeline. He's rocking back and forth to an imaginary beat. He is a rapper wannabe.

MICKEY  
Okay, can you hear that?

PETER  
Yeah, man, I can dig it.

MICKEY  
(to himself)  
You can *dig* it?  
Oh. Brother.  
(on talkback)  
Okay, we'll give it a shot.

He hits the button on the computer and we have a short intro: it is very basic hip-hop: nothing important or produced, just enough to provide a click and some sort of atmosphere. Peter starts grooving on it and begins to rap the most cliché tangle of words in some sort of rhythm, which just gets worse as he goes on.

PETER  
*Yo yo, my peeps.*

*It gives me the creeps.  
Puttin' on the DJ and don't wanna say who keeps.  
The rhythm got me goin' don' know where you going  
And I wanna keep from knowin'  
Alla my gangsta-lovin' bleeps.  
So I be sittin' here 'n' rappin'  
Gotta keep my lips from flappin'  
On a d' words from the center of the hood  
Doin' my rhymes only cuz a I could  
Can't see the forest for the wood  
Only sittin' even though I stood.*

Before he reaches the end, he totally messed up the rhythm and falls apart. Mickey hits the spacebar and the percussion stops. (This will happen between the next five interchanges *ad lib* in places of the above rap. He *never* quite gets it.)

MICKEY

Okay, okay, okay. Let's try that again.

He begins again, Peter begins again. This time he just gets off, rapping to his own internal rhythm without regard for the drumbeats.

MICKEY

Peter.

Peter!

*PETER!*

(as Peter stops)

Sounds to me as if you're off a little.  
Can you hear okay?

PETER

I didn't hear it: where'd you say?

MICKEY

It was somewhere in the middle.  
I can turn it up a ways.

PETER

No, no, I'm good. Let's try again.

MICKEY

Okay, dude, here we go then.

This time he doesn't get through the first line.

MICKEY

Starting...now.

Mickey starts again. Peter falters on the second line.

MICKEY

Try it again.

They start again and Peter gets halfway and turns with a "sh..." away from the mic so we aren't quite sure of his word.

MICKEY  
(interrupting)  
One more time.

This time he makes it to the end, and bumps the mic on the last phrase: he is so elated. Mickey hits the keyboard to stop and starts banging his head on the console.

PETER  
Yo man, I hear like some kick drum banging away.  
Is that part of the drum groove?  
I can dig it if y'all think it's cool!

(He begins to rap from the beginning to the rhythm of Mickey banging his head, ignoring Mickey, and goes through: this time without a hitch. Problem is, they're not recording and...

MICKEY  
(still banging his head)  
Make it stop.  
Make it stop.  
Make it stop.  
Make it stop.

AUDIO and LIGHTS fade to black...

# SCENE 10

Lights come up. Alison is working [mime, ad lib.] in Studio B with DENISE and QUARTET. Denise is professional to the nth degree and is competently directing. Mickey and Eric are in Studio A, working on loops and laying down tracks. There should be some gray area as far as whether his commentary is a narration for the opera or an actual rap. Eric is running the loops. The screen should show him actively working on it. The following dialogue takes place every time Eric auditions the loop he is editing. Mickey is in IsoA behind the mic, writing some corrections to a draft of lyrics.

Clara leaves her desk with a laptop and walks into Sonny's office.

CLARA  
Okay, here's the good news.

SONNY  
We have good news?

CLARA  
(putting the laptop onto his desk, facing him)

Three marketers like our portfolio  
They like the new sound demo  
They like our versatility and the prices  
As we stated in the memo.

SONNY  
(nodding)  
Cool.  
Double the guys' salary

CLARA  
(smiles)  
They work on commission  
As you well know.  
They're trading time in  
When they're not working on a mission.

SONNY  
(smiling)  
Would you like commission, too?  
That would at least give you something  
More than minimum wage, cuz you  
Can't live on what I give you.

CLARA  
I may not be as good as they  
But I do love being part.  
I may not care for the desk that much  
But I sure do love my art.

SONNY  
I know. And thank God.

(pause)

I like having you around.

ERIC shows up in the office. Awkward pause as he looks from one to the other.

ERIC

'Scuse me? Sorry to interrupt.  
Clara, I need the new harddrive  
The one that we just ordered  
Do you know if it arrived?

CLARA

(breaking)

Um.

Um.

Yes. Yes it did.  
I'll get it for you.

ERIC

Thanks.

SONNY

Uh Clara?

(she turns, looking very fetching to us).

Um.

Show Eric the market firms  
Eric, see if you can put together  
Something more specific  
To the direction they are going.  
Time to sink the hook!

She and Eric leave. Sonny looks after them wanting to say more to keep Clara in his office. Eric takes a small box Clara hands to him and heads back upstairs.

SONNY

Clara sits down and begins busy work. The SCREEN shows her going from busy work to solitaire, to Facebook and back, just killing time. Eric takes over at the computer upstairs and works on the loops again. He plays a section and sits back.

ERIC

Works for me.

With maybe a little tweak.

What do you think?

We can get the demo out within a week?

MICKEY

Just a matter of picking the tunes  
That we've already got work done on.

Eric does some computer magic and listens again.

ERIC  
Better yet.

(Pause)

You wanna bet  
That guy'll get  
That woman yet?

MICKEY  
You mean bossman

Eric tweaks again with the loops. The song is almost done, we see on the screen.

ERIC  
There we go.  
We can show  
The market knows  
What direction we are going when we put our minds to it.

MICKEY  
(rapping to a break in the backtracks)  
He's got a thing  
And you know the dude'll sing  
For the bling  
As long's he gets the fling  
With the girl who needs a ring.

ERIC  
Cute.

MICKEY  
I thought so.

ERIC  
(groove continues)  
Ready to lay down your lines?

MICKEY  
That would be fine.

He goes into IsoA and puts the headphones on during the song intro. The mic's all set and he begins to rap. Eric points at him that he's "rolling tape." We see the recording on the screen.

MICKEY  
*Ah, l'amour, the powerful thing  
Makin' her talk, and makin' him sing  
Working at it up and down and through  
Beyond the things that we're used to.  
He's on one side, she on the other  
She is the sister, he's playing the brother.  
If the closest worker sees only contempt,  
Then far away, far away, and even farther yet  
We got to drive them together now or at least attempt.  
He don't see the deal going down*



*She can't see the talk of town  
Neither sees the other one  
But living close enough for the other one to bother one.  
Blind are they, mind is fey, inclined to 'bey their own lives  
Their own persons  
And are miles from the parson in his shiny black coat.  
And it ain't true love until she notice him  
He propose to her and sign that marriage promissory note.  
But  
Can they be who they be  
and can't they see that the sum of the parts  
Goes way beyond the two of them til  
they each are beating it all within one heart  
Can they see they can't be  
Each one, and teach one they're separate and whole  
With the one heart, the one mind, the one body, spirit, soul.  
Gotta give it up, gotta give it up, gotta give up yourself  
Gotta live it up, gotta listen up, gotta stiffen resolve  
Goin' to her, goin' to him, gonna tell 'em how you gonna really feel it  
Ought to do it, sought to duet, nought but gonna, gotta, ought to deal it.  
'Come on, come on, come on, and don't wait.  
Come on, come on, come on, come on (LIGHTS and AUDIO fade on IsoB)*

[SONG INTRO]

(KEYBOARD comes in from ConA, added to the bass and the drums, then STRINGS from IsoB.)

[CLARA]

*Can we be?  
Can you see who I am inside?  
Just a slave to behave and have nothing else to show  
And I know,  
You are high and I sigh that you notice me  
Can't you see that I've waited so long  
I am here, you are there, and don't look at me.  
I am here and still, yet you have eyes that cannot see  
You take no  
Notice that you know I even look at you  
Time, it has taken so long  
  
Reach out to me, please reach out, oh please  
Reach out for I cannot*

*He has seen me, and has noted my place  
And he has lifted me beyond its confines.  
I had no thought to go, to go higher above  
But I can see beyond not lowly, but blessed  
For he has seen, he has seen me and Look!  
He says, "beloved" and tells me I am his own  
I hear, "lady" I'm his,  
And the lovely life now  
I know that my new life begins*

*As I know I can show  
What it's worth to me  
To be seen in a team of two people who can see  
Who can be,*

*I can want but I can't somehow make it work  
It is love that I've wanted this strong*

*Reach out to me, please reach out, oh please  
Reach out for I cannot*

SONNY

*I see her*

*Can't be sure, she's a servant girl  
It is why she is shy, tho' I try, we do not meet  
We don't greet.*

*Tho' she makes her mistakes, I can't see them  
One of worth I must bring back to me*

SONNY

*Reach out to her,  
And let her know she's loved.  
She can be the one I share my life!*

*Lady, I know you know, too!  
That you are mine for now,  
Now and forever  
My dear, you can know me now  
You're my beloved you're higher  
And I can see It was there all the time, and  
Lady, no longer called a no one!  
But one who hoped that my eyes could but  
see you  
You saw and you hoped that  
I could want you  
Lovely are you now  
And my life begins*

CLARE

*Reach out to me, please reach out, oh  
please  
Reach out for I cannot*

*He has seen me, and has noted my  
place  
And he has lifted me beyond its confines.  
I had no thought to go, to go higher  
above  
But I can see beyond not lowly, but  
blessed  
For he has seen, he has seen me and  
Look!  
He says, "beloved" and tells me I am his  
own  
I hear, "lady" I'm his,  
And the lovely life now  
I know that my new life begins*

[ALISON, from IsoA]

*Quia respexit  
humilitatem humilitatem ancil lae suae;  
Quia respexit humilitatem  
humilitatem an cillae suae;*

(Lights fade on Mickey as he continues to mix and fades the drum tracks out. The strings continue playing, with Alison over the top.)

# SCENE 12

LIGHTS UP on Mickey in IsoB. He is setting up the mics for the next gig and whistles while he works. A new artist is coming in, unheard but again, financed by Francis. LIGHTS UP on IsoA, where Eric and Alison, of course, are together, but working on a project: strictly professional. A track is going in Control, where James is listening with headphones and working on putting a clean guitar track on. We, of course, can hear it, although the characters cannot. It is a medium up country/folk song, something between Nickel Creek and Taylor Swift.

ERIC

Are you sticking around today?

ALISON

(cooly)

I don't know. That's for you to say!

ERIC

I could use your help with this new chick.

ALISON

Doing what? BGVs? Vocal training?  
Another Francis special? Or one of *your* picks?

ERIC

You know better than that.  
It's yet another Francis stunt.  
He signed her up and brought her in  
And paid the business: cash up front.  
Somehow he thinks there's money made  
With one of these acts he sends to us.  
But I've been list'ning and I've seen  
And there's no one knowing in the trade  
Who'll give these... *wannabes*  
The Time of day.  
Much less paid,  
If you want my say,  
I'd wish that most of them would  
Just. Go. A- way!

ALISON

Bad, eh?

ERIC

Let's just say, it's been a challenge  
An experience  
A blessing  
And a curse.

ALISON

Same thing, second verse.

ERIC

You have no idea.  
It's a little bit louder and a lot, lot worse.

ALISON  
Cute.

ERIC  
I thought so.  
It's all about the money, honey  
The artist and the lover's deepest curse.

PENNY comes walking into reception as the LIGHTS come up. She is a bit over the top, twenty-something, but looking like a teenager with a whiny tone and somewhat slutty dressing over a very immature body. She and Clara mime for a bit, ad lib, then Clara points her up the stairs. She hangs around the lounge, making herself at home, as James wraps up the song. Eric starts working at the same song, but kind of working through BGVs with Alison. This is intertwined with the following dialogue.

JAMES  
(upstairs)  
Okay, Mick that's a good track.

MICKEY  
(finishing up with the mic setup in IsoB)  
Gotcha, and my thanks.  
We can pick from these.  
(he walks into Control)  
Can you lay a second line?  
Maybe echo one more time.

He goes into the lounge while James cranks up the tracks again. He and Penny mime greetings. They enter into Control while James is doing the track.

ERIC  
(IsoA)  
*Ere the water of the seas*

ALISON  
(joining him, learning the part)  
*Ere the waters of the seas*

ERIC AND ALISON  
*Close upon the wounded part  
Leaving me upon my knees  
And tear away my stony heart.*

ERIC  
Cool. That will work.  
Can you do more accent in the words?  
A bit more twang and a lot more perk.

ALISON  
(exaggerating)  
Y'all come back now, y'hear?]

I'll get your drunk dog back and yo' mama outta prison.

They laugh as the track finishes upstairs. Penny goes into IsoB, all ready, and full of piss and vinegar, ready to take the world on. She puts on phones and assumes the position in front of the mic. We have no idea what to expect. Mickey's ready to go. A cappella, to exaggerate the starkness without the music and the tension everyone feels with this particular client:

MICKEY  
(pressing talkback on console)  
Hey Eric, you ready down there?

ERIC  
When you are.

MICKEY  
'kay, send Alison up to me.  
We may need some, say, "TLC"  
From a pro, who knows how it goes.  
*Capice?*

ERIC  
Gottit. What we starting with?

MICKEY  
The ballad. The one in minor.  
We'll see how she does with that.

Mickey starts the track, and it is a story line ballad. The story is as follows, as Penny unconsciously narrates Sonny's story with Frances. They take the lines.

PENNY  
*Twas in the year called fifty-eight  
The workers, they was cryin'  
Livin' off the rich man's hand  
The factory was dyin'*

*Then the banker bought the land  
And saved the union labor  
But cutting off the right hand, man  
Can leave a bitter flavor*

*Ride, ride, riding through the night to bitter end.*

Francis comes in, in a hurry. He gives a perfunctory greeting to Clara and goes into Sonny's office, as LIGHTS come up on that room. MUSIC continues and Penny mimes singing into the mic, except when noted.

FRANCIS  
You got the girl?

SONNY  
Yeah, she's upstairs singing.

FRANCIS  
Got hopes for this one, sure.  
She's fresh, she's young and knows the score.

I can make her into something now.  
Make her into something more.

SONNY

Just like the other ones, right?  
Gonna turn her into a music whore?  
You're nothing but a music pimp  
Selling out art for the dollar store.

FRANCIS

(turning on him)

You have no idea what you're complaining about  
You're sure in the business now  
If you don't like it you can get your ass the hell out!

They cool off for a second as the music interludes.

SONNY

Okay.

Sorry.

FRANCIS

Me too.

(BEAT)

No, she's got something

SONNY

(infinite patience)

Like Alison, you think?

FRANCIS

No, Alison's too independent  
She's also much too good  
I'm kind of sorry she went farther than the pop neighborhood.  
Glad you could use her, but she's not for this old cod.  
I need someone fresh  
Understood?

PENNY

*Ride, ride, riding through the night of bitter end.*

*In nineteen fifty-nine  
The sale was complete  
Bossman cut the jobs in half  
More people on the street*

SONNY

Are we partners here or what?  
I think I need a say

FRANCIS

(mollifying)

Hey, hey, hey, now, friend.

I'm doing the best I know.

I'm an expert!

PENNY

*Ride, ride, riding through the night of bitter end.*

SONNY

This scam you're running has to end.

We both know it's a show.

This girl you've got upstairs

Ain't got nowhere to go

I suspect the image made

Is slutty, shocking at the best.

Some sort of marketing aid

That won't stand the test, short of blest, shows off chest and covers little of the rest.

She doesn't stand a chance.

(Music does whole notes, a break in the rhythm.)

FRANCIS

(out of time, a la recitative)

Who are *you* to be talking like this?

Who ran this place into the ground?

You may have been the greatest band musician in the world,

But you know nothing of the industry and how to make it work.

(Music starts to groove again.)

FRANCIS

(reasoning)

I've got money, I've got the time.

I've got the knowledge and the passion

And the business savvy to run this joint.

I know something about marketing and fashion

It'll make the money. That's the point.

I've got too much invested here

To listen to you whine.

It works for you, it works for me.

If you'd just let the thing alone.

Let your people do their jobs

It's up to me, um, us, to own.

SONNY

At what cost?

What do you want us to do?

FRANCIS

I knew you'd see it my way.

PENNY

*Prison time, so they say,*

*Passes by the minute  
Each will last for one long day  
As long as you are in it.*

*Some, they argue, take the time  
To look into their future.  
Others are the bitter ones  
Who don't know God's been teachin'*

*Ride, ride, riding through the night of bitter end.  
Ride, ride, riding through the night of bitter end.  
Cry, cry, crying through the tears of your regret  
Ride, ride, riding through the night of bitter end.*

Music hits a last chord.

MICKEY  
Okay, we can work with that.  
It's a good scratch track.  
Next tune, Eric?

FTB.



## SCENE XIII

PENNY comes into the reception area; she's clearly coming off a real bender. Clara's not naive and she stands and gently confronts her.

CLARA  
Good morning, Penny.

PENNY  
Go to hell.

CLARA  
(standing)  
Would you like some coffee?

PENNY  
What you trying to sell?

CLARA  
(patiently)  
Some caffeine might be good for you.  
And some vitamin I...

PENNY  
Vitamin I?

CLARA  
Ibuprofen  
Look, today might not be a good time.  
You may not be recording at your best.  
You could go home, sleep it off.  
Take the day off, get your rest.

PENNY  
Naw, I can do it in my sleep.  
Don't gotta problem with it.  
I've done these kinda gigs before  
When I've been even deeper in it.

She heads upstairs. Slowly, and painfully. LIGHTS go up on the Control

MICKEY  
(in Control)  
Hey, Penny, how's it going?

PENNY  
(cringing)  
Why are you screaming?

MICKEY  
Hey, babe, whatsa matter?  
Got some coffee in the lounge, in case you missed it.  
You got a headache, man, that's stuff's redeeming!

PENNY  
Go. To. Hell.

LIGHTS up on IsoB, where KYLE is on the drums, and James is sitting on the guitar.

MICKEY  
(annoyingly grins)  
Suit. Your. Self.  
Hahaha!  
(hits the talkback)  
Okay, guys, the writer's here.  
Run it through one time  
From the charts,, so she can hear.  
Penny, girl, sing the lines  
Just the way you sang them for me

(semi rapping, hamming it up)  
That way we can see  
If the song will ideallee  
Be what you really need  
And if we can – maybe – agree.

PENNY  
(groaning)  
Cute.

MICKEY  
I thought so.

PENNY  
(Standing behind him as he hits the talkback button88d)  
No. Really. It's. Not.  
You're a really bad rapper.

MICKEY  
(he doesn't care)  
(into talkback)  
Okay, guys, running click.

It's a slow blues, a la "Black Velvet".this is James' element and he's really making the electric cry. Like last scene, Penny is making a commentary on the drama happening downstairs. LIGHTS up on Sonny's office.

PENNY  
(singing)  
*Don't you be looking at me, you big flirt  
Ya treat me like dirt, and the injury hurt  
Can't ya dig it, you suck, you ignorant jerk  
But ya got yerself out in the stitch of time.*  
  
*You're borrowing time  
You're stealing, you swine  
And someday, they'll say, that the pay will be mine*  
  
(chorus)  
*I see it comin' down*

*Comin' down all the time, all the way  
I see it comin' down  
Comin' down hard  
Hard on ya, pard  
Ya played your last card, sun coming down at the end of the day.*

SONNY  
(looking at his laptop)  
Clara?  
Can you come in here?

LIGHTS up in reception. Clara gets up and walks back to Sonny's office (LIGHTS FTB on reception). He looks up and before she says anything.

SONNY  
I saw all my books and I got the last statement  
The bank's got me lookin'. We're out of the basement.

CLARA  
And, so what's wrong?

PENNY  
*I see it comin' down  
Comin' down all the time, all the way*

SONNY  
They don't add up.  
It's not been that long  
We'd been driven down on our dreams and our luck  
And no business sense and all of that truck  
I sold it all for a literal song.  
You can't tell me there's nothing wrong.

Look!

They look at the screen while Penny is the focus. We see the screen and we get it: there are extra digits where there shouldn't be.

PENNY  
*Comin' down hard  
Hard on ya, pard  
Ya played your last card, sun coming down at the end of the day.*

(bridge)  
*At times like these, it doesn't make sense  
You make your choices  
You listen to voices  
You take your chance  
You take your stance  
And deal with the outcome when it comes 'round*

CLARA  
What do we do?  
He knows his money  
But this stuff is funny

It's coming in, honey  
And we could be caught when the fan hits the doodoo.

SONNY  
(hesitates and trying to liven it up)  
Cute.

CLARA  
No. It's not *cute*.  
It's scary.

PENNY  
*Coming down hard*  
*Coming down hard*  
*Coming down, coming down, coming down...*  
  
*Hard.*

Cell phone rings, startling us out of the last note. Sonny just picks his up. He is stressed. MUSIC continues, an instrumental break.

SONNY  
(with guitar fills, as before)  
Yeah. Que paso?  
Hey Francis what's up?  
(long pause)  
No way!

Yes,

Yes,

Uh huh!

Great, see you then!

(turning to Clara)

You will never guess who's coming to work on some tunes.  
Warner McPhee, wants to book a project really, really soon!

PENNY  
*Coming down hard*  
*Coming down hard*  
*Coming down, coming down, coming down...*  
  
*Hard.*

(Music ENDS, with a wild trash can as Clara ponders the news. Music fades. Micky pantomimes a thumbs-up and mimes talking to Eric in the talkback mic. Band starts packing up, except Eric, who noodles on the blues in F#m.)

SONNY  
(noticing Clara)

What?

CLARA

Why doesn't he stick to acting?  
He's not even much good at that!  
He has a great promoter, deserving demotion  
He'd do better staying where he's at!

SONNY

Come on, Clare, you've got to be fair.  
That Costner guy has a great band  
This guy could be there  
If we just give him a hand.

CLARA

More on the promotion side  
Flinging out marketing wide  
It's the name that you are wanting  
His reputation for flaunting.  
Sometimes I worry about you.  
Sometimes I think that you do  
Way too much with Francis' depiction  
And your personal convictions are seeing eviction,  
And the devil is coming around to the gangster in you, too.

SONNY

I hear you.  
It's not a worry, it's not an issue.  
I hear you.  
I promise that I'll keep an eye on the situation  
I'm a little relieved  
You may not believe  
That the phone call assured me our financial gradation.  
Francis deposited Warner's deposit,  
And no expense is spared, the correction is fair  
And all we need is to make him a music sensation.

CLARA

Better said than done.  
I trust you but I don't trust that man.

SONNY

Who? Francis?

CLARA

Yeah. Him too.

MUSIC UP and OUT. LIGHTS FTB.

# SCENE XIV

All is hustle and bustle as everyone gets ready for this initial meeting. Everyone wants to see this famous actor and so the control room is full, even though it's just going to be a consultation. Musicians are set up for ideas, Eric at the keys, Mickey the computer, James at the guitar. .WARNER comes swinging in, a girl on his arm looking uncannily like Francis. Eric plays bluesy changes in whole notes, fooling around on the piano. James is in Iso B, tuning and nodding, filling between the dialogue.

WARNER

Hokay, let's get this show on the road!

MICKEY

Cool!

*(There is a silence that becomes very awkward as nobody does a thing. Warner starts getting annoyed.)*

WARNER

Well?

MICKEY

Do you have some songs for us?

A demo, some ideas a direction to go.

WARNER

Sure, I want to do a cover by Steam  
Kind of a punk version, but with Latin appeal.

Then a tune by Ladies' Steel  
And some flip side gig first done by Cream.  
I've also got ideas we can write as a team,  
Just some lyrics I think will kill them  
As long as we get a grooving feel  
Easy, pop, and not too extreme.

MICKEY

*(Unfazed and trying to prompt him)*

Great, we'll start with Steam.

Eighty-nine, ninety-two or the grunge CD?  
The first has some nice cuts, but I like three.  
The second cut is nice, with the guitar theme.

WARNER

What are you talking about?

ERIC

How about a recording or a YouTube link?

I don't know that album but I don't think...

WARNER

What do you mean you don't know that tune?

And here I thought you were professional!  
When I walked in today, it was impressional

Didn't expect my bubble burst that soon!

JAMES

It would be best, sir, that we have something to go on.  
It gives us a guideline and something to build upon.

MICKEY

I'm a little concerned that we called this session  
With the guys. A bad decision.  
They cancelled other gigs, teaching lessons,  
Wedding gigs, that kind of mission.  
We should have had a production chat  
Then we'd all know where we're at.

WARNER

(A bit mollified)

Well. I suppose.

But.

Still.

I called the gig and I paid the fee.  
It wasn't that song I was thinking of anyway.  
It was the seventh tune on the second CD  
The one entitled "Anyone to Save the Day?"

Know it?

(Even Mickey shakes his head)

Really? Oh, come!

ERIC

We could really use a sample, for  
We can pick it up and help you with ideas.

WARNER

Oh yeah, what am I paying you for?  
Well, I just want to make things clear:  
Are you pros or what?  
For all I'm paying for, what have I got?

MICKEY

(peacemaker)

What was another tune you want to try?  
We all know the Cream tunes, the whole supply.  
We can change it, play it, say it whatever you apply.  
Make it glad, play it sad enough to wanna make you cry.  
Rock them out or blues them up in a way to make you die.  
Bring out all the life in them so you can't help but fly.

(There is a huge pause, then...)

WARNER

Cute

MICKEY

I thought so.

(There is another pregnant pause.)

WARNER  
Well? Let's get on with it!

ERIC  
With what?

WARNER  
The song, you know!  
The road needs to have the traveling show!  
Play the Steel song, cmon, let's go!

MICKEY  
Um.  
Which.  
One?

WARNER  
(Raising an eyebrow)  
Well, isn't that what you do?  
You're getting paid for your skill.  
You should know what you're doing  
You're a professional crew!

JAMES  
We do need some charts. It kind of...

WARNER  
Oh, for Crissake! Not that again!  
*This* one!

(He hums some pathetic version of a tune we don't even recognize and mumbles toward a sad ending. It is silent. Eric tries to emulate what he heard; it's a basic 6-4-1-5 alternative rock pattern, so it sounds kind of close, but no one knows what tune it really is supposed to be. Warner blows up.)

WARNER  
No, no, no!  
What are you thinking, you incompetents!  
To think I'm laying all this dough. Its not worth a cent!

Eric keeps playing. Vocal audio down as Warner mimes his rant, Mickey trying to settle him down. Light UP downstairs. Clare and Sonny are staring at each other, listening to the rant upstairs.this should be an audio cross fade on the vocals, with the rhythm section's tune continuing without pause or change in level as they become an outside source.)

CLARE  
*That* doesn't sound good.

SONNY  
Who is this guy?  
I gotta stop this, I'm tired of it.

(He heads upstairs and tries to settle Warner down.In the reception room Francis enters.)



FRANCIS  
How's it going?

Clare points upstairs with her thumb.

FRANCIS  
(For the time, he realizes he's in over his head and has been all along.)  
Oh.  
No.

The music is really ramping up, and accelerating. What has started as a somber ballad has turned into a hardcore groove, with full rhythm. Francis goes charging up the stairs. Mickey is trying to explain to Warner, but he's about to lose his temper.

MICKEY  
(audio fade in)  
...and sir, if you would settle down  
You'd see we have things in control  
These people have all been 'round  
They all know the show, the tableau from the get go.

FRANCIS  
*(recit.) Hold it, hold it, what's the problem here?*

(Song: Alternative rock, lots of angst. We are now fully into the song.)

*All I'm smelling is a bunch of yelling:0 I want to make it clear  
That to get it done, make it won, you got to be "One," you hear?  
All I've heard is the cussing word, and the worst thing that I fear  
Is the gig to break, for goodness sake, so let the producer steer.*

(All the musicians, except James in Studio B who keeps jamming as the riff, on cue, point to Warner.  
BREAK.)

WARNER  
*Hey, the music dudes, are rather crude,  
and don't belong on stage  
Maybe past it, won't outlast it,  
and are clearly showing age.  
No matter how you construe it, they ain't the ones to do it,  
and they ain't worth a tinker's wage.  
They don't know nothin', which is really somethin',  
I don't think they're on the page.*

(Music BREAK)

JAMES  
(sotto voce)  
If we even had a page...

(MUSIC UP)

WARNER

*I can make you, break you,  
put you on my knee  
This two bit, custom fit,  
excuse of a misfit music spree  
You're at it, in the habit  
of one that's in too deep.  
Stick to the thing making you sing,  
your music fling is in the fee*

FRANCIS

*Now hold on, hold on,  
your comments have no merit.  
I can see that you're all peed off.  
And on your sleeve you wear it.  
Show a little less belittle  
And maybe think but don't you share it.  
I know, money talks, the rest can walk  
But I've heard enough to dare it.*

*It's gone beyond recorded song,  
You've got to admit you're the one who's wrong,  
Any brains you'd see!  
What a fool you'll be  
You're just the first in a line of the worst  
Of the rich and the most famous of the wannabes.*

(music interlude, as Warner is taken aback at his brutal frankness)

FRANCIS

*Look here sir, you may be first,  
or at least something in your field  
But you don't know any valid show  
about the music deal.  
These guys are the best they stand the test  
and have the nuance and the feel  
Of anything in music, (is this confusing?),  
performing, or putting out appeal.*

(CAST)

(sotto voce, repeated)

*You're just the first in a line of the worst  
Of the rich and the most famous wannabes.*

(CAST)

(sotto voce, repeated)

*You're just the first  
in a line of the worst  
Of the rich and the  
most famous wannabes.  
You're just the first  
in a line of the worst  
Of the rich and the  
most famous wannabes.*

WARNER

(blustering)

*Earlier you talked  
about the money that walks  
Seems to me your people  
are no longer needed  
Well I'm tired of balking,  
time to be walking.  
I'll take my money  
where the buyer's headed*

(He stalks down the stairs.)

FRANCIS

(after him)

*It's gone beyond recorded song,  
You've got to admit you're the one who's wrong,  
If you'd had any brains you'd see!  
You're just the first in a line of the worst  
Of the rich and the most famous of the wannabes*

WARNER

(yelling back, sprechstimme)

You'll see my lawyer if I don't see a check!

FRANCIS

(yelling, sprechstimme)

Good...Riddance!

(Musicians are cranking at it now, and James is shredding a serious solo a la Smashing Pumpkins-meets-Clapton. They're showing they've really got the style down. B/O on last hit after trash can.)

SCENE

(Eric is vamping on Dmin7-Emin7, with a Sting/Bossa groove. It's a downer of a morning, after the big tantrum that Warner threw. It seems that things have gone quiet after a burst of the ol' salad days.)

We look on the screen and see Clare online with the bank again. Sonny is looking through the newspaper with coffee at his elbow. The spreadsheet she's plugging into shows a \$50,000 in the debtor column with the big name WARNER next to it. Clare starts as she scrolls down and sees another \$25,000 in the credit column. And a \$35k farther down. And a \$60k going out to...? She stops and sits back and looks at it. She gets up and walks over to Sonny's office.)

CLARE

I hate to be a pain.

SONNY

(brightening at the sight of her)  
What's that you're sayin'?  
You're never one to me.

CLARE

(smiles but still looks worried)  
The bank just got another check.  
Signed by Francis this time, and yet...

SONNY

(interrupting)  
Now that's the kind I like to see!

CLARE

(shaking her head)  
I'm afraid that it's not like that.  
There's no project and I smell a rat.

SONNY

Now, really, how can that be?

CLARE

Look for your self: it's on the 'sheet

(BREAK. They go into the office and Sonny looks.)

SONNY

Money's still coming in  
Direct deposit from Francis' bin  
Methinks his story's gettin' thin  
There's more behind his confident grin

CLARA

I'm wondering what's behind it  
And look at this, the numbers out beside it.  
What's the thirty grand and who's implied  
If it's what I think, he didn't try to hide it

SONNY

If its in the bank, than anyone can find it.

CLARE

Anyone?

SONNY  
Anyone

CLARE  
Look!  
FBI, SEC, Homeland guys  
(Don't blame me)  
DIA, NBC, March of Dimes  
They can see.  
A hundred letters, hundred times  
You just need a geek  
And you just need eyes.

SONNY  
I would say "cute" but it gets me scared.

CLARE  
Me too.

You've been "had."

SONNY  
But he's a friend

CLARE  
Some friend.

SONNY  
I know he's rich  
He may be lazy  
He's found a niche  
And a way to play me.  
I can't imagine  
He'd let this slide  
There's a plot he's hatchin'  
To save his pride.

(Music interlude as Clare scrolls down the bank account. She puts a checkmark by each "out" in excess of \$10,000, the limit that flags the FBI and others of a large money transfer. At the end of this, the reception room lights up dimly. Mickey's answering the door and Francis steps inside. They mime talking as the dialogue in Sonny's office continues.)

CLARE  
Twelve lines out since Warner left  
More than half a million found in all.

SONNY  
It doesn't leave us all bereft...

CLARE  
But the in and out's a major call.

SONNY and CLARE  
It's nothing less than suicide

An off-shore fortress to run and hide

SONNY

I'll bet he's got it somewhere safe

CLARE

But where's it from, if not inside?

SONNY

(snapping his fingers)

We are laundering some money!

CLARE

(picking up on it)

Where it comes from doesn't matter;  
He's way in over his head, Sonny,

SONNY

I know. The Feds knew where he stood.  
If we can figure it out, they sure as hell could  
With the Patriot Act  
And whatever the fact  
The law throws into now, they really should.  
Their "probable cause" is the flag on the bank  
So it really doesn't matter who or what thinks  
The rocket went up  
To show we're corrupt  
And sooner or later, the fan really stinks.

I just hope the studio doesn't fail.

CLARE

(tenderly)

Sonny.

It's over. A matter of time.

I just hope you can stay out of jail.

(Francis comes into the office, followed by Mickey. The studio door opens and several people in work clothes and FBI jackets come in. One is directing and points to several things. People start dismantling the gear, shutting things down: our screen on Clare's desktop goes blank. As they head up the stairs, the studio shuts down. The personnel will confront the studio people, throughout following dialog, who give in without a struggle. They are not arrested, but stand by as the gear is shut down and taken out. The only one who argues is James, whose gear is is personal property and not being under indictment, they let him be.)

FRANCIS

(before anyone can say a thing)

I am sorry, so, so sorry.

You have no idea how I feel.

CLARE

We just found it. What's the deal?

FRANCIS

I've had it. Can't do it any more

Once old Warner had his day  
I saw the writing on the door  
I've lost the reason why I play  
It isn't fun, it's just a chore  
Even money-making in its day  
Was just a way to keep the score.  
But I've lost the music, lost my way  
I'm feeling like a two-bit whore  
Where business for its own sake  
Is grubbing at the dollar store.

SONNY

So what have you done, you sold us out?  
You son of a b...

FRANCIS

(interrupting)

Not this time: I've kept you out  
I'm turning evidence for the state  
Against the mob and whoever's ore  
Kept this place afloat ...now wait! (as Sonny moves toward him)

(with hands up, defensively)

Without my help you'd be poorest of poor  
And the place would close down, sooner or late.  
You needed the money, so you can shore  
Up the business' inevitable closing date.  
You know I'm right, down in your core  
So settle down, ease it back, sedate.

Sonny backs off, melancholy and recognizing that everything Francis said was true. ERIC continues playing the piano with Alison listening, her eyes closed. Musically, as the Feds shut down various gear, the musical parts get lost until there is only Eric. They haven't even gone into that room, yet he plays on, wistfully ignorant. The others watch the process from their rooms. Alison leans on the piano and begins to sing. Clara moves to the reception room and watches, helplessly.

ALISON

(recit.)

*Who is he?  
Why here?  
Why now?*

*I've had good men in my day:  
It was better than nothing and being all alone.*

(into song)

*At least it wasn't worst, though wasn't fully blest  
I can see that the best thing said is that I've grown.  
The next was better; he still was something less  
Than what is out there better than all the things I've known.*

*Can this be something new, but not just better?  
Is it what I'm looking for, in spirit if not in letter?  
He's meant to be, meant for me: I know it's some sort of cliché.  
Found only in the fairy tales, in novels, come what may.*

(looking at Eric, who is oblivious)

***And in this life of bad and living less and seeing worse  
The best that can be said within the singing of a single verse  
I listen to the still small voice and examine all the rest.  
I guess I'll have to make a choice, and settle for the best  
I guess I'll have to make a choice, and settle for the best***

SONNY

(looking toward Clare)

*Here, I've worked with her for endless months.  
Cracked a lot of jokes, and she's helped me in the hardest times.  
Looking back, I see myself as something of a dunce.  
She knows and loves me in spite of all my crimes.*

*Money and the recognition; now I'm just a debtor  
Is she what I was looking for, can we be together?  
We've grown to be, we're meant to be much more than we say  
It's found in fairy tales, in novels, at the end of the day.*

***And in this life of bad, living less and seeing worse  
The best that can be said within the singing of a single verse  
I listen to the still small voice and examine all the rest.  
I guess I'll have to make a choice, and settle for the best  
I guess I'll have to make a choice, and settle for the best***

CLARA

(moving far left and looking back toward Sonny's office)

*The studio was never new, I never looked for better.  
I knew him as a brother, but a lover, I'd say "never."  
He's grown on me, and now I see that there's another way  
It's found in fairy tales, in novels, at the end of the day.*

***And in this life of bad and living less and seeing worse  
The best that can be said within the singing of a single verse  
I listen to the still small voice and examine all the rest.  
I guess I'll have to make a choice, and settle for the best***

ERIC

*I just kept trudging on, in spite of stormy weather  
And then you walked into my heart, regardless of the fetters  
I once was free, but only see a freedom colored grey  
I choose to bind myself to you and see the colors of the day.*

***And in this life of bad and living less and seeing worse  
The best that can be said within the singing of a single verse  
I listen to the still small voice and examine all the rest.  
I guess I'll have to make a choice, and settle for the best***

ALL

*The hope is there if we all see it;  
God's own kids if we can be it  
And though I see a twisted and a rocky, narrow road  
I have to stop myself from kicking at the goad.*



*Faith in future things are ours if we submit  
And love will give us time...*

***And in this life of bad and living less and seeing worse  
The best that can be said within the singing of a single verse  
I listen to the still small voice and examine all the rest.  
I guess I'll have to make a choice, and settle for the best  
I guess I'll have to make a choice, and will just settle for the best***

THE END

