

THE MAGIC CITY

Pilot Episode

by

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THE MAGIC CITY

TEASER

Underwater. Shifting shades of blue. A middle-aged MAN, eyes wide open in death, suddenly FILLS SCREEN. WIDER - Dozens of dead men sway upright in the gentle current. The corpses are tied to the bumpers of big-finned, '50s Cadillacs parked on the quarry floor: an underwater forest of swaying bodies.

INT. MIRAMAR HOTEL/MIAMI BEACH - NIGHT

IKE EVANS bolts upright from his nightmare. He wipes his sweaty forehead, getting his bearings in the dark. Ike looks around his familiar Miramar Hotel owner's suite, down at his ex-showgirl wife, VERA, sleeping nude beside him. Something glitters beneath Vera's arm. Ike slips a sequined dog collar from beneath her. Vera rustles in her dream.

Ike quietly gets up and, holding the dog collar, peers under their bed. Nothing. He puts on his monogrammed Miramar Hotel robe and walks into the dark living-room, glancing around for the dog. He steps through the curtains and out onto the penthouse balcony.

EXT. IKE'S SUITE/BALCONY - DAWN

The black ocean thuds against the beach twelve stories below. Ike inhales the salt and jasmine-scented Miami air. He lights up a Cuban cigar. A pink stripe blushes the horizon. A new day. The last day of 1958.

[SUPER ON SCREEN: **December 31, 1958 - MIAMI BEACH, FLORIDA**]

Ike sighs a cloud of cigar smoke and, leaning over, sees a shape floating in the lit swimming pool.

IKE
(grabbing the balcony
phone)
Victor? There's a goddamn palm
frond floating in the--
(looking closer)
Oh, Jesus.

INT. MIRAMAR HOTEL/LOBBY - DAWN

Ike crosses the vast marble hotel lobby cradling Vera's dead, wet, POODLE. [A glittery banner, stretched across the lobby, reads: SWING WITH SINATRA - MIRAMAR NEW YEAR'S EVE!]

VICTOR VALIENTE, Miramar General Manager, runs from behind the front desk, chasing after his boss.

VICTOR
 (over his shoulder to
 FLORENCE, the night
 manager)
 Call Danny! Now!... Mister Ike!
 Wait!

Victor sprints after Ike. Florence grabs the phone.

INT. MIRAMAR HOTEL ROOM/DANNY EVANS' SUITE - DAWN

DANNY EVANS, 21 and Ike's youngest son, sleeps soundly on a bed littered with scribbled legal pads and law school books. The phone startles him awake.

DANNY
 (listening)
 ...Be right down.

Danny rolls out of bed, throwing on his clothes.

EXT. MIRAMAR HOTEL/MIAMI BEACH - DAWN

Ike blows out through the double glass doors into a madhouse: hundreds of striking, sign-carrying HOTEL WORKERS, chanting and picketing on the Miramar sidewalk. Ike, still carrying Vera's limp poodle, shoves past a uniformed Miami Beach COP and steps in front of a hulking STRIKER.

IKE
 Tell Mike Strauss I wanna see him.
 Wolfies. Ten am.

The big Union Guy nods, looks down at the dead dog in Ike's arms.

IKE (CONT'D)
 And tell him Fluffy says "hi"!

Ike tosses the dead poodle at the huge man. The goon catches it as Ike smashes him in the face. Blood sprays from the big guy's nose. Other STRIKERS charge Ike who leaps like a dervish into the pile. Victor, Danny and a few COPS yank Ike from the fight, dragging him towards his hotel.

Ike, Danny and Victor stand on the top step, looking down at the melee. Ike straightens his clothes, smooths back his hair -- composes himself. He takes out a wad of crisp bills and snaps off a few twenties, handing the cash to Victor.

IKE (CONT'D)

Get Vee another white poodle. Now.
Before she wakes up.

Victor starts for the entrance.

IKE (CONT'D)

Vic!
(tossing Fluffy's collar)
Make sure it's a girl dog.
(to Danny)
Where's Stevie?

DANNY

Sleeping? You check his--

IKE

Find your idiot brother. The
Teamsters won't cross the picket
line to deliver my booze. It's
goddamn New Years Eve! I got
fifteen hundred thirsty people
comin' to see Sinatra tonight. Get
Stevie!

Danny nods and runs back into the hotel. Ike stands on the top step, surveying the wild street scene. He turns back into the Miramar.

INT. MIRAMAR HOTEL LOBBY - DAWN

Ike strides into his building. He stops, turns and walks back to the front entrance. Ike kneels beside a stainless steel nozzle protruding from the pink marble wall.

IKE

(to Bellhop)
You. New guy.

The young BELLHOP rushes over.

IKE (CONT'D)

What's your name?

BELLHOP

Ray. Ray. Marcus.

IKE
Ray-Ray, put your hand here. Right here.

Ray puts his palm in front of the hole.

IKE (CONT'D)
What do you feel?

RAY
Feel?... Nothing.

IKE
Exactly.
(standing)
Perfumed air is supposed to blow out of this nozzle 24 hours a day.

RAY
Perfumed? What's it smell like?

IKE
Like... the ocean... and new money.
Get Cecil the engineer. Okay?

RAY
Absolutely.

IKE
You ever wonder why we keep it so cold in here?

RAY
No sir.

IKE
It's a goddamn meat locker, right?
(leaning closer to Ray)
So the ladies can wear their furs.
That's our job, Ray-Ray, we sell the dream.

RAY
Yes sir... Sir? It's, it's just Ray.

Ike turns, heads across the lobby.

IKE
(over his shoulder)
Not any more.

EXT. INDIAN CREEK DRIVE - DAWN

STEVIE EVANS (26), careens an aqua T-Bird convertible down Indian Creek Drive. Stevie, eyes at half-mast, smokes a KOOL, works the power-steering with his index finger. Johnny Otis' "Willie and The Hand Jive" blasts from the T-Bird stereo. A tousled BLONDE BEAUTY lifts her head from Stevie's lap, looks up at him.

BLONDE
Stevie, slow down.

STEVIE
I will if you will.

Stevie smiles, gently presses down on her head, guiding her back below the dash. "Willie and the Hand Jive" chugs on. Stevie leans back, driving fast. His eyes close.

BAM!!! The T-Bird crashes through the guardrail, soars high into the air and splashes into Indian Creek. "Hand Jive" blares as the car bobs for a beat, then nose-dives beneath the black water.

Stevie and the Blonde sputter to the surface unhurt.

BLONDE
(spinning in frantic
circles)
My car! I lost my car!!

STEVIE
It's not lost...

Stevie strokes to shore.

STEVIE (CONT'D)
...It's just holdin' it's breath.

BLONDE
What?! Stevie... Stevie!!!

EXT. LUMMUS PARK BEACH - MORNING

Ike leans against the coral sea wall watching THIRTY OLD JEWISH MEN, sitting in folding chairs on the lawn, play their balalaikas (mandolins). Their delicate Russian melody drifts over the Ocean Drive traffic and the waves hitting the beach behind them.

The song ends and a few scattered people, including Ike, clap. An EIGHTY-THREE YEAR-OLD MAN, one of the musicians, sees Ike and waves his balalaika. The old man wears a stained, white skipper's cap.

This is ARTHUR EVANS, Ike's father. Arthur has the pronounced shakes of fully-developed Parkinson's disease.

Ike crosses to his father but before he can help, a curvy Cuban "NURSE" swoops in and lifts Arthur from his chair. Arthur leers at the nurse's bountiful and exposed cleavage.

ARTHUR

That Inez got some rack on her.

INEZ

Hush, Arturo.

IKE

Yeah. It's lovely.

The trio (Inez and Arthur arm-in-arm) slowly make their way across the grass towards Arthur's black Chrysler Imperial parked on the curb.

IKE (CONT'D)

Sounded pretty good out there, Pop.
"Tumbalalaika". Mom used to sing
that to me--

ARTHUR

You know, Inez gives me a shower
every morning.

Ike sighs, he's heard this before. Many times.

ARTHUR (CONT'D)

Sits me on a stool in the shower.
Soaps me up everywhere...

ARTHUR

Even my privates.

IKE

Even my privates.

ARTHUR (CONT'D)

Listen smart ass.

IKE

You look really clean, Pop.

ARTHUR

Heard you're having dog problems,
big shot.

IKE

Good news travels fast.

ARTHUR

Still got a few friends.

They reach the sidewalk. Inez casually hooks Arthur's belt to the parking meter while she fishes for the car keys in her purse. Arthur dangles from the parking meter, barely standing on on his tip-toes. Ike looks over, concerned.

IKE
Dad? Hey, Inez?

INEZ
(waving Ike off)
Is okay. He likes it.

Arthur, dangling from the meter, squints up at Ike.

ARTHUR
What do you need?

IKE
I was wondering, I thought maybe you'd could put a word in with Al Strauss. He's retired but Mikey listens to--

ARTHUR
Putz.

IKE
What?

Inez unhooks the old man and slides him into the passenger seat.

ARTHUR
The union's nothing. Your only problem is you got some hungry partners.

IKE
Christ! How many times----

ARTHUR
You think they're happy with crumbs? Those goniffs? They're big eaters, Isaac, hungry boys.

IKE
Don't start this crap again Pop. Don't. There are no partners. The Miramar's mine.

Arthur studies his son, shrugs...

ARTHUR
Well. There is one good thing...

Inez comes around and shuts the door. Arthur says something unheard behind the glass window.

IKE

What?

Arthur rolls down the window, leans out. The Chrysler pulls away.

ARTHUR

(out the window)

I never liked that faggy dog.

Ike watches the gleaming black Chrysler cruise north up Ocean Drive, a world of worry etched on his face.

END OF TEASER

ACT ONE

EXT. WOLFIES' DELICATESSEN - SOUTH BEACH - MORNING

"HOLY JOE", a scrawny, middle-aged, street-preacher dressed in a white short-sleeved shirt, narrow black tie and baggy, soiled dress pants, blocks the Wolfies' entrance, waving a New Testament bible at the mostly Jewish patrons.

HOLY JOE

Repent, pagans! Christ killers! The
New Year is upon us! Find your way
to the Lord! Fear Satan! Repent
before it's too late!"

A tiny OLD LADY shoves Holy Joe from the front door.

OLD LADY

Meshugener!

INT. WOLFIES DELICATESSEN - MORNING

MOVE through the locals, tourists and all-nighters who fill the deli to a rear booth. MIKE STRAUSS a short, stocky Hotel Workers Union lawyer and Ike share the red leather banquette.

Mike wolfs down his pickled herring.

IKE

...You're nuts. Never happened.

MIKE

(shaking his head)
We stood on the seawall behind Al
Capone's house on Palm Island with
a case of his champagne--

IKE

(waving him off)
Crazy.

MIKE

--And you got the bright idea to
throw every single bottle against
the rocks.

IKE

Why? Why would I do that?

MIKE

To see 'em explode. You blew up a
case of 1929 Dom Perignon!

IKE

Yeah. Well. They went off like bombs... Hey. I was ten.

MIKE

You always loved trouble.

IKE

No more. Too expensive....
(sipping his coffee)
Mikey, you gotta pull your guys.

MIKE

First of all, they're not "my guys", I'm just an underpaid Union lawyer, and two, do the right thing Ike -- benefits, minimum wage... unionize. Come on. It's almost 1959. The future's with us.

IKE

My people are happy. You know that. They don't want it. I pay 'em better than any hotel on the Beach. I'm not the problem.

MIKE

You're the biggest. You go. The whole strip'll go.

IKE

Hey. I will go. We had two goddamn hurricanes this fall which cost me the High Holidays. I blew Christmas thanks to you. I have to make good on Frank's New year's run or it's over.... You shut me down and then what?

MIKE

Maybe the next guy runs an open shop. I'm sorry Ike. I am.

Mike shoves away his plate and slaps a five dollar bill on the table.

MIKE (CONT'D)

Who you like in the Orange Bowl?

IKE

Syracuse.

MIKE
Two TD underdog? Oklahoma's a
machine.

IKE
(shrugs)
Syracuse has the Zimmerman kid at
quarterback. Gotta back the Yid.

MIKE
No chance.

IKE
Tell it to Goliath.

Ike grabs Mike's arm.

IKE (CONT'D)
Mike, this could get ugly. This
will get ugly.

Mike smiles, stands.

MIKE
Not from me, pal. We strike. We
picket. We negotiate. We don't
drown dogs.

Mike slaps Ike affectionately on the shoulder...

MIKE (CONT'D)
Give Vera a squeeze for me.

...and leaves.

Ike sits in the booth and sips his coffee, watches his old
friend walk onto Collins Avenue.

INT. MIRAMAR HOTEL/OWNER'S SUITE/FRONT DOOR

Stevie, smoking a Kool, knocks at Ike's front door. Nothing.
He rings the bell.

VERA (O.S.)
(from inside)
Yes?

STEVIE
It's me. My dad there?

VERA (O.S.)
Come on in.

Stevie enters the suite. Vera stands in a floor-length, beaded, skin-tight gown. At forty-two, still a total heartbreaker. A SEAMSTRESS kneels, pinning one side of her gown tighter.

VERA (CONT'D)
Unfortunately, this is supposed to fit like second skin. Killing me.

Stevie nods.

VERA (CONT'D)
What do you think?

STEVIE
Fine. Looks good.

VERA
You think he'll like it?

STEVIE
Safe bet. He here?

Vera stares at herself in the marble-ized wall mirror.

VERA
At Wolfie's. Some breakfast meeting.

STEVIE
(heading for the door)
He calls let him know I'm down in the Atlantis.

VERA
(turning to Stevie)
Stevie?

He stops.

VERA (CONT'D)
Is everything all right? You know with the strike. And tonight?

STEVIE
What's he say?

VERA
He says yes.

STEVIE
Then it is.

Stevie leaves. Vera stares after him.

SEAMSTRESS

Now, take a deep breath.

Vera does.

INT. TWELFTH FLOOR HALLWAY - DAY

Stevie shuts the door behind him. He jabs the elevator button and, watching the floor lights ascend, lights up another Kool.

INT. MIRAMAR HOTEL/HALLWAY - DAY

MERCEDES VALIENTE, Victor Valiente's pretty, 17 year-old Jewban (Jewish-Cuban) daughter and a part-time Miramar housekeeper, wheels her cleaning cart down the hallway. The elevator doors open. Danny Evans looks up and seeing Mercedes, jams his hand between the closing elevator doors. He steps out into the hallway. Mercedes turns, sees Danny but continues pushing the cart to the next room.

MERCEDES

(knocking on the door)

Housekeeping?

No answer. She uses her pass key and enters. Danny follows her into the hotel room.

DANNY

Hey.

MERCEDES

(stripping the bed)

Hey.

Danny helps her strip the sheets.

DANNY

You're in a great mood.

MERCEDES

I have to work tonight.

DANNY

On New Years? Sinatra's playing down--

MERCEDES

(shoving the dirty sheets
into her cart)

Hey! One of us owns this place. And one of us is a maid.

DANNY

You're a maid like I'm a cabana
boy. Your Dad-

Mercedes tosses Danny the toilet brush

MERCEDES

Works for your Dad.

Danny drops the brush onto the bed.

DANNY

I'll see you later.

He leaves. Mercedes sighs, sits on the bed, chin in her
hands. The door flings open. Mercedes leaps to her feet.
Danny blows back in.

DANNY (CONT'D)

Be my date tonight?

MERCEDES

Your date? Like date, date?

DANNY

Yeah. No. I don't know. Come with
me. Whatever you wanna call that.
What's the big deal? We're friends.
Friends go do things.

MERCEDES

Right.

DANNY

Right?

MERCEDES

Yeah. Absolutely.
(waving the toilet brush)
I can't go anyhow. I told you--

DANNY

I'll get Stevie to change your
shift.

Mercedes blinks at him.

DANNY (CONT'D)

What?

MERCEDES

I don't have anything to wear.

DANNY
See you at eight.

Danny leaves.

INT. MIRAMAR HALLWAY

Danny stands outside her room. He hears Mercedes loose a delighted squeal and, lovesick, leans his forehead against the door. Danny smiles and heads down the hallway towards the elevators.

EXT. MIRAMAR HOTEL/MIAMI BEACH - DAY

Ike eases his black '58 Lincoln Mark II through the mob of strikers. They bang on his pristine hood, slap placards on the doors. A striker hurls a gob of spit on the windshield. A nightmare. Ike pulls into the covered hotel carport. MONTY the aging, hipster valet rushes over to get his door.

MONTY
Mr. E. Sorry about the mob.

IKE
(in motion)
What mob? Have it washed okay
Monty?

MONTY
Done, Boss.

INT. MIRAMAR HOTEL/LOBBY

A few HOTEL GUESTS nervously eye the chaos outside. Ike motions to Victor behind the front desk.

IKE
(quietly to Victor)
Get Bonnie. Have her do something
at the cabanas. Bikini contest.
Fashion show. Some damn thing. Give
'em free champagne and
screwdrivers. I don't want anyone
in the lobby. Nobody sees this.

VICTOR
You got it.

IKE
Stevie?

Victor nods towards the Atlantis Lounge.

INT. ATLANTIS LOUNGE

Shifting blue from the pool window behind the bar bathes Stevie and the lounge. Stevie stands behind the bar, sipping what appears to be grapefruit juice, lost in thought.

IKE
You look like hell.

Stevie watches his father cross the empty lounge.

STEVIE
You know what Lenny Bruce always says, "You only live once and sometimes not even then."

Ike leans over the bar and takes the drink from Stevie, wincing at the vodka.

IKE
Who the hell is Lenny Bruce?
(handing Stevie the glass)
Starting New Years a little early?

STEVIE
How'd it go with Mike Strauss?

IKE
We're on our own.

STEVIE
Son of a bitch.

Ike sits on a bar stool facing Stevie and the glowing blue pool windows.

IKE
I always hated New Years. Even as a kid. Always seemed like the tourists were having the only good time. Couldn't compete with that.

Stevie nods.

IKE (CONT'D)
I had my nose to the glass.

Ike stares into the shifting blue, remembering, snaps back, focusing again on his son.

IKE (CONT'D)
No more. Not tonight. Not in my joint. You know who's upstairs in my goddamn hotel?

STEVIE
Mr. Frank Sinatra.

IKE
Damn right. Francis Albert Sinatra.
In my presidential suite. And
tonight he's gonna step out onto my
stage in my hotel and ring in my
goddamn New Year.

STEVIE
That sounds like fun.

Ike grabs Stevie's drink and tosses it back.

IKE
Sounds like a helluva lot of fun.

Ike hops off the stool, Stevie right behind him.

INT. MIRAMAR MEEZANINE - SHOP LEVEL - DAY

Stevie and Ike stride down the Miramar arcade row past gift shops, the ice-skating rink, bowling alley.

STEVIE
...So basically you got a warehouse
full of booze sitting in Ft.
Lauderdale and no way to get it in
here.

IKE
Not until now.

STEVIE
Where you gonna find guys that
crazy?

They reach GRADY "CADILLAC" JAMES' shoe shine stand. Grady, a former light-heavy weight champ, reads the paper on his stool. The celebrity wall behind him is covered with photos of movie stars, athletes, world leaders -- all inscribed to Grady.

IKE
Not crazy. Hungry... Champ!

GRADY
Thunder and Lightnin'.

IKE
Grady, tell junior here what you
told me.

GRADY

Some of my boys, you know, boxers
at the Sir John -- if I ask 'em,
they'll drive for y'all.

STEVIE

It could get messy.

GRADY

You pay cash, these fellas'll park
your whiskey in the lobby.

Ike turns to Stevie.

IKE

What you waiting for?

Stevie smiles.

STEVIE

Let's go Champ.

Grady climbs down from his shoeshine stand and hangs a
"closed" sign on his "Wall Of Fame". He and Stevie head back
down the arcade towards the elevators.

IKE

Hey! The Miramar doesn't hire
dopers or felons.

STEVIE

Do my best.

Ike starts after them, stops and heads down the arcade to a
shop called "Sea Breeze Fine Lingerie". The shop window is
filled with silk, satin, frilly things. Ike enters the shop.

INT. SEA BREEZE LINGEREIE - DAY

No customers. Ike walks up to the glass display case. A MAN
growls on the phone in the back room.

MAN (OS)

(on phone)

...Your call, kid. The card room?
Yeah, right off the lobby but we
got a thousand dollah limit on dat
game...

IKE

Mel? It's Ike.

MEL (OS)

Back here.

Ike steps through the display cases filled with corsets and slips into the back room.

MEL JAFFE

sits in the cramped storeroom, Racing Form in his lap and cigar jammed in his mouth, phone to his ear. Mel is a solid block, a torpedo with a face like a fist. Mel Jaffee is the last man on earth to sell lingerie.

A bulletin board covered with the scrawled names of today's Gulfstream Race Track horses and Flagler greyhounds hangs behind Mel. Three fuzzy TV screens play three different football bowl games. Several telephones sit silently on a desk next to empty legal pads. A typical bookie spread.

MEL (CONT'D)

(on phone)

...But if you got the juice you say, there's the cabana game tonight... Cabana One, next to the ice machine... All night. That game's no limit... Fine. You let me know.

Mel hangs up.

MEL (CONT'D)

If dat momser's got two nickels to rub together, I'm a Rockette. Hey. Ike. I'm dyin' here. It's like a morgue. I had to let Iggy go. Dead. No action. And it's the season for christsake! I got ponies, dogs, jai-lai -- I got bubkas!

IKE

What do you want me to do, Melvin?

MEL

(rolls his eyes)

You know what you gotta do. Talk to our friend. Hey. You gotta cut the head off this thing. You can't ax Francis Albert to walk tru dat circus tonight. Somebody's gonna get hurt... I heard dey killed Vera's pup. Come on now, that's just wrong.

Ike nods, studying the thug.

IKE
Yeah. They did.

Ike stands.

IKE (CONT'D)
So where is he?

MEL
Now you're thinkin'. He just got home from his honeymoon.

IKE
Honeymoon? Ben divorced Doris?

MEL
Kind of. She died in childbirth.

IKE
I didn't even know she was pregnant. Jesus. Didn't Ben's first wife die in childbirth too?

MEL
Yeah, what're the odds? This new kid's a real beauty. Legs to here. Like Cyd Charisse. Benny's smilin'. Now's the time to get him. Good luck, Kid.

IKE
Thanks.

Ike leaves the back room. The phone rings.

MEL (O.S.)
Sea Breeze Linger-- Hey, Fat Tony!
Fatboy, you in or you out?...

Ike leaves the empty lingerie store.

INT. MIRAMAR HOTEL/LOBBY

Ike crosses the lobby to the hotel's Trevi dining room. An angry COUPLE storms out.

MAN
...And they charge more than the Fontainebleau!

WOMAN
Get me out of here, now!

Ike steps into the enormous dining room.

INT. TREVI ROOM - DAY

Dozens of angry GUESTS stand at their tables complaining loudly. Vera carries a plate of eggs to a furious diner with one hand, while cradling "Fluffy" in the other. Danny pours water for guests. There are no busboys or wait staff anywhere.

IKE
(to himself)
And what fresh hell is this?

Ike weaves through the tables to Vera.

GUEST 1
(to Vera)
These eggs are ice cold!

GUEST 2
(to Vera)
It's a goddamn fruit salad! How
could it take 40 minutes?

VERA
(to Ike)
Do something!

Ike rushes towards the kitchen, blows through the double doors.

INT. TREVI KITCHEN - DAY

Twenty-five WAITERS, WAITRESSES, COOKS and BUS BOYS huddle around a transistor radio. A SPANISH ANNOUNCER'S VOICE fills the room.

IKE
Oye! People! What the hell?

Victor, the hotel GM, turns, ashen from the radio.

VICTOR
Batista has run away.

Ike absorbs the news.

VICTOR (CONT'D)
Tonight Che will be in Havana.

IKE
(quietly)
We, we could use some help out
there.

VICTOR

You understand, Mister Ike? You
understand? Cuba is Castro's now.

Ike nods and turns back towards the dining room. Victor
watches him leave, returns to the radio, still blaring the
news.

END OF ACT 1

ACT TWO

EXT. SIR JOHN HOTEL - OVERTOWN - DAY

A FEW BLACK MEN hang outside the two-story hotel. A sidewalk stand sells hot peanuts, burgers and ribs. Stevie's red Corvette shines at the hotel curb.

INT. SIR JOHN HOTEL - OVERTOWN

Stevie and Grady James walk through the dimly-lit lobby. FANS, GUESTS stop Grady every few steps for an autograph or a word. Stevie follows the champ into the back room.

INT. SIR JOHN HOTEL - BACK ROOM

Two huge Black BOXERS pound each other in a make-shift ring. A crowd of MEN shout, wager, arms draped over the ropes. SEVERAL YOUNG BLACK BOXERS in street clothes drift over to greet Grady.

GRADY

(to Stevie)

Go look around Junior. Gimme five minutes with the fellas.

Stevie nods and heads back to the lobby.

INT. SIR JOHN HOTEL - OVERTOWN

Stevie sits in a worn velvet chair, takes out a Kool and lights up. A woman's voice, singing the ballad "Tenderly", curls into the lobby. Stevie gets up and follows the music through the doors marked "Knight Beat Club" down a dark stair and into the small, empty club.

INT. KNIGHT BEAT CLUB

Stevie lets his eyes adjust to the darkness. ELLA FITZGERALD, the Queen herself, sits on a stool rehearsing "Tenderly" with her pianist. Stevie moves to the bar and grabs a stool, watching perfection at work. Ella sings.

CLOSE - A WOMAN'S MANICURED HAND

wraps around Stevie's, cupping his cigarette.

WIDER - STEVIE

turns.

A raven-haired, Ava Gardner, BEAUTY stands behind the bar. She slowly lifts Stevie's hand, her eyes fixed on Ella, and using his cigarette, lights the one between her red lips.

She gently sets Stevie's hand back on the counter and pats it, never taking her eyes off Ella.

Stevie somehow pulls his eyes from her and turns, watching the music. The Beauty leans across the bar, onto her elbows, her bare shoulders grazing Stevie's. Stevie, for the first time in his life, has been hit by the lightning bolt.

Ella finishes the gorgeous ballad. The Beauty applauds. Stevie follows suit. Ella squints towards the bar and curtsies to the applause.

ELLA

That work for you, doll?

BEAUTY

Not bad, Miss Ella. For a first pass.

Ella laughs, waves her off, turns to her pianist, huddling over his notes.

Stevie spins on his stool to face the beauty.

STEVIE

I'm Stevie. Stevie Evans.

BEAUTY

(after a beat)

Lily.

Lily takes a drag off her cigarette, exhales.

LILY

So, what's a rich white boy doing in Overtown on New Years Eve day?

STEVIE

Waiting for the ball to drop.

LILY

And has it?

Stevie can only stare at her. She holds his gaze. He gulps. She slowly leans towards him.

LILY (CONT'D)

Four, three, two, one.

Lily kisses him deeply on the mouth.

LILY (CONT'D)
 (whispering against his
 lips)
 Happy new year.

Lily sweeps from the club, disappearing up the stairs. Stevie stays frozen, suddenly snaps to and chases after her.

INT. SIR JOHN HOTEL/LOBBY - DAY

Stevie bounds right into Grady and a half a dozen hulking BOXERS.

STEVIE
 (looking around for Lily)
 You see a really, really pretty
 white girl come through here?

GRADY
 Not since Elizabeth Taylor was
 doggin' Nat King Cole.

The guys crack up. Grady throws an arm around Stevie.

GRADY (CONT'D)
 Forget the girl, Junior. You just
 tell us where and when. The cavalry
 has arrived!

Stevie smiles at the good news, craning around for a glimpse of Lily.

EXT. MIRAMAR HOTEL/MIAMI BEACH

FROM ABOVE - HUNDREDS OF STRIKERS block the sidewalk in front of the hotel. WTVJ news trucks, the Miami Herald, shoot the mob.

GIRL (OS)
 I hate Paul Anka!

VERA (O.S.)
 Why, honey?

GIRL (OS)
 Cause he's fat!

VERA (O.S.)
 That's so mean. And it's not nice
 to hate.

INT. MIRAMAR HOTEL/OWNER'S SUITE - AFTERNOON

Ike stands at the picture window staring down at the madness. LAUREN, Ike and Vera's 12 year old daughter, rushes up from behind, grabbing Ike's arm.

LAUREN
Daddy. I want Frankie Avalon!

IKE
Hey, who doesn't?

Lauren yanks Ike around to face her.

LAUREN
Jodi Segal had Frankie Avalon for her Bat Mitzvah!

Vera comes to the window, glances down at the strikers.

VERA
Lauren honey, let's leave Daddy alone. He's thinking.

LAUREN
Forget it! Just forget the whole thing! I hate you!! I don't even want a damn Bat Mitzvah!

Lauren runs in tears from the room.

IKE
What did you just say?!
(to Vera)
She just curse?
(screaming after Lauren)
You'll be lucky if you get Pupi Campo, you brat!

VERA
Come on honey. She's just anxious.

IKE
She's anxious?

VERA
They pick up on our stress.

Ike returns his gaze down to the angry mob blocking his hotel. Vera hugs him from behind. She rests her cheek against his.

VERA (CONT'D)
We're gonna be okay.

IKE
 You might have to go back to the
 Aqua Follies.

Vera smiles.

VERA
 Anything to get me back into that
 bikini... Ike. Listen. Maybe it's
 time, maybe Ben could--

IKE
 (turns to face Vera)
 Doris is dead.

VERA
 What?! When? What happened?!

IKE
 I've heard things for years. Crazy
 stories. Rumors. Guys talk.

VERA
 Ike?

Ike pauses, deciding how or even whether to continue.
 Finally...

FLASHBACK BEGINS:

EXT. BEN DIAMOND'S NORTH BAY ROAD MANSION - NIGHT

The mansion's lit, second story window. Shadows move inside.
 A woman's piercing, awful scream.

IKE (V.O.)
 ... He's done it before.

VERA (V.O.)
 Done what?

INT. BEN'S NORTH BAY ROAD MANSION - NIGHT

DORIS DIAMOND, Ben's blonde, beautiful wife, thrashes, tied
 by restraints to her bed. Her white sheets are blood-
 splattered.

IKE (V.O.)
 Killed his wife.

A DOCTOR and NURSE hover over Doris. BEN DIAMOND, a deeply-
 tanned, tight little mob boss, stands in the doorway calmly
 sipping his Cutty Sark.

IKE (V.O.)
 ...They get pregnant, these girls.
 Ben gets them pregnant, and he
 forces them to have abortions...
 And then... he watches.

DORIS arches her back in pain, wailing. Her hands clench into white fists.

BEN'S eyes shine as he watches his wife's agony.

IKE (V.O.)
 He stays in the bedroom and watches
 the Doctor operate on them. Ben
 likes to see the girls hurt. He
 gets off on it.

PUSH IN - BEN

sucks on an ice cube from his drink, riveted by the horrible tableaux.

IKE (V.O.)
 Sometimes they die there.

END OF FLASHBACK

INT. IKE'S SUITE - AFTERNOON

Vera stands, hands to her mouth. Ike takes her in his arms.

VERA
 My God.

IKE
 I'll get us through this. I will. I
 always have, right? Hey, six years
 ago this was all just sand and
 mosquitoes. Now it's the Miramar. I
 did that. You believe in me, Vee?

Vera nods. Ike hugs her tight.

VERA
 Til the end.

IKE
 We'll survive. But we stay away
 from Ben Diamond.

Ike kisses his wife, looks her in the eye.

IKE (CONT'D)
 You okay?

Vera nods, looks away.

IKE (CONT'D)
What? Honey. I promise,
everything's gonna be--

VERA
It's not that. It's nothing. You've
got enough. We'll talk about it
later.

IKE
Vera.

VERA
Ike.

IKE
What? What the hell is it?

VERA
(sighs)
Stevie.

IKE
Jesus.

VERA
See? Just forget it. I don't want--

IKE
What'd he do now?... Vee?

VERA
He came by before. This morning.
Looking for you. I can't explain
it. It's... He's -- I see him with
everyone else. I see his way. With
them. That "Stevie" thing. So
charming. Like you. But that's not
who I get. I get a different guy.
It's stupid.

IKE
(for the hundredth time)
Stevie loved his mother. He knew
her the longest. When she died--

VERA
I know. I know it all. Jesus Ike.
Fifteen years! You and I've been
together almost fifteen years.

IKE
If he was rude or disrespectful--

VERA
He wasn't rude. He was cold. He is
cold. To me.

IKE
I'll handle it.

VERA
No! No. Don't. I can. I will. It's
between him and me.

IKE
I'm sorry for this. You don't
deserve it.

Ike looks at her tenderly, leans forward and kisses her.

VERA
I'm being a baby. With everything
going on. I'm fine.

IKE
(checking his watch)
Damn. I gotta meet Faye. We're
doing the seating for the show
tonight. You good?

VERA
(nods)
What about lunch?

IKE
I'll grab something. Who do you
want at our table tonight?

VERA
Uhm. Cary Grant and Peter
Lawford... And Jack Kennedy!

Ike grabs his blazer.

IKE
You got Georgie Jessel.

VERA
Asshole.

IKE

Beauty.
 (kissing the tip of her
 nose)
 I love you.

Ike heads for the door. "Fluffy" blocks the door, snarling up at him with bared teeth.

VERA

She's acting so weird. Hiding under
 the bed. Won't come when I call
 her.

IKE

They pick up on our stress.

Ike carefully steps over the dog and exits. Vera walks over to the window, gazing down at the street-chaos below. She sighs.

EXT. MIRAMAR CABANAS/POOL LEVEL - AFTERNOON

Ike passes sexy dance instructor BONNIE BELL with her class of leering middle-aged husbands. A cha-cha blares. Bonnie (wearing skin-tight clam-diggers and a tiny blouse tied below her bust) moves one of her students around the sunny patio in a clumsy cha-cha.

IKE

Looking good Bon'. You seen Stevie?

BONNIE

(to the class)
 One-two, cha-cha-cha!
 (to Stevie)
 On the beach.

IKE

Thanks.

Ike circles the olympic-size pool and heads to the beach.

EXT. MIRAMAR BEACH - AFTERNOON

Ike trudges across the hot sand towards the water. Holy Joe walks through the beach crowd, preaching, handing out flyers.

HOLY JOE

(to Ike)
 You are going to hell!

IKE

Tell me somethin' I don't know.

Holy Joe moves down the beach. Ike squints out to sea. Stevie swims parallel to the shore about twenty yards out, stroking like an athlete. Ike walks to Stevie's towel and clothes, takes out a handkerchief, lays it on the sand and sits down. Ike watches his son swim.

Stevie finishes his swim and runs out of the water to Ike.

STEVIE
(panting from exertion)
Everything all right?

IKE
Yeah. Why?

STEVIE
Why? You on the beach?

IKE
You called Judi Silver for me?

STEVIE
Yep. She's ours. I'm gonna see her
at four.

IKE
Good.

Ike pats the sand beside him. Stevie sits on his towel. They stare out to sea. Ike gestures to the row of bathing-suited grandmothers clinging to the safety line strung out into the ocean.

IKE (CONT'D)
A necklace of bubbies.

Stevie smiles.

STEVIE
That's what mom called them.

IKE
Yep.

Stevie digs through his clothes, finds and lights up a Kool.

STEVIE
When you met mom, saw her for the
first time, did you, was it like
that thing? Like in the movies? I
mean, did you know -- bang -- she
was the one?

IKE

No... That came after. It did come,
she was the love of my life, but
not like that. Not that way.

(looking at Stevie)

That only happened with Vera.

Stevie listens.

IKE (CONT'D)

I saw Vera sitting at a bus stop,
up near Pumpernicks. I was driving
home, stopped at a red light. I
don't know why but for some reason
I looked over and there she was.
She looked at me and... I lost my
breath. I actually forgot how to
breathe. But, you know, the light
changed, people started honking so
I drove on. Drove right around the
block. By the time I got back
around she was gone.

STEVIE

What'd you do?

IKE

I followed the goddamn K bus to
Flagler Street. Took an hour but
she finally got off. That was it.

Stevie stares at his father, understanding.

IKE (CONT'D)

You know that feeling?

Stevie nods.

STEVIE

Yeah. Finally.

Ike pats his son on the leg.

IKE

Congratulations...

Ike stands.

IKE (CONT'D)

...You poor son of a bitch. Call me
before you leave the warehouse.

STEVIE

Will do.

Ike slogs back through the sand towards his hotel. Stevie watches him a moment, then turns back to the necklace of bubbies bobbing out in the jade ocean.

END OF ACT TWO

ACT THREE

EXT. MIRAMAR HOTEL/MIAMI BEACH - AFTERNOON

A taxi filled with TOURISTS inches up the curb. The strikers wave it away. Monty, the valet, charges out to clear a lane but he's swallowed up by the mob. The cab turns around and flees.

INT. MIRAMAR HOTEL EXECUTIVE OFFICE - AFTERNOON

Ike stands in his stockinged feet staring down at a large seating chart spread across his office carpet. His secretary, FAYE, kneels over the chart, magic marker in hand.

FAYE

You can't have the McGuire sisters sitting all together.

IKE

Fine. Split 'em up. Here. Put Phyllis between Danny Kaye and Jack Carter.

Florence, the front office clerk walks in and hands Ike a note. Ike reads it.

IKE (CONT'D)

Lose Jack Kennedy and the Lawfords.

FAYE

Why? They'll love sitting with Kim Novack.

IKE

And lose Kim Novack too.

FAYE

What? That's a great table--

IKE

They cancelled. We're bleeding here. The strike's on all the news. They're killing me.

A knock at the door. Ike looks up to see big JILLY RIZZO, Frank Sinatra's right hand man, looming in the doorway. Ike slips on his loafers and hustles over.

IKE (CONT'D)

Jilly! How's everything going upstairs. Frank's suite okay?

JILLY

Yeah. We're good. He's nappin'.
Late night.

IKE

This town during the season.

JILLY

It was those goddamned pickets
outside. Goin' at it all night
long. They was screamin' "A-VA GAR-
DNER!, A-VA GAR-DNER!" Over an'
over. I thought Frank was gonna
throw the TV set on 'em.

IKE

That, I'm sorry, I'm taking care of
that. No problem. That'll be gone.

Jilly steps over to the seating chart.

JILLY

Here's the drill. Onstage? No
flowers, no perfume, a Jack and
water on the piano. Shecky does a
tight fifteen to open and not a
second more. Stick all the blondes
up front and keep the air on high.
He likes it cold.

IKE

Done.

JILLY

Send up somethin' light for dinner.
Spaghetti marinara no meat. Like
six o'clock. I'll have somebody
drop off our list in an hour.

Jilly looks up from the seating chart to Ike.

JILLY (CONT'D)

We okay tonight?

IKE

Okay? We are magic. Pure--

JILLY

He sees any empties, one empty
seat, he walks'. Square business,
Ike. The man is gone. And you are
done.

IKE
 Empties? I just turned away Gene
 Barry and Tony Quinn. No room. Tell
 him we are SRO.

JILLY
 That I will.

Jilly leaves. Ike takes a deep breath. He throws on his
 blazer and heads out the door.

IKE
 I'll be back in an hour.

Faye looks down at the half-empty seating chart.

EXT. UPPER CABANA LEVEL - DAY

Stevie walks down the row of cabanas with burly Barry "Cuda"
 Lansman.

CUDA
 They're sweet kids. From Savannah,
 Mobile. Peaches... Come on.

Barry stops, knocks on a cabana door. The Everly Brothers'
 "All I Have To Do Is Dream" oozes from inside. Girls giggle.
 A twenty-year old HEARTBREAKER wrapped in a Miramar beach
 towel, opens the door.

GIRL
 Barry. Can we get some more
 champagne and--

GIRL 2 (O.S.)
 (from inside)
 Cold champagne.

GIRL
 Cold champagne. And Virginia needs
 a sewing kit.

CUDA
 Babe. Yours. All yours. This is
 Stevie Evans. Your host for
 tonight.

GIRL
 (purring at Stevie)
 The host with the most. Come on in
 Shug. Say hi to the girls.
 (opening the door)
 Everybody indecent? We got company.

Stevie smiles at her and they enter.

INT. CABANA - DAY

Stevie steps into a harem of a dozen SOUTHERN BEAUTIES in various stages of undress -- a hooker locker room. Perfume and hairspray hangs in the air. Girls preen in front of make-up mirrors, slip on silk stockings, lounge on the chaise, slow dance with each other to the Everlys.

STEVIE

Ladies. Welcome to the Miramar.

GIRLS

(wild lines)

Hey lover... Mister Man... Thank y'all...

STEVIE

You ready to meet the richest, best looking and most famous guys in the world?! You ready for millionaires and movie stars?!

The girls scream.

STEVIE (CONT'D)

You ladies are beauty. You are sex. You are every man's dream. You are the Miramar Hotel's gift to 1959! Make me proud, girls. Make me rich!

The girls scream as Stevie exits.

EXT. CABANA ROW - AFTERNOON

Stevie shuts the door behind him.

CUDA

The Bear Bryant of hookers.

They continue down the row of cabanas. Cuda knock on another door a few cabanas down. The door opens a crack, checks Cuda, then opens to let them in.

INT. CABANA - AFTERNOON

No music. No conversation. The click of cards and chips. Muttered poker commands and curses. Thick cigarette smoke clouds the cabana. A shaded overhead light shines down on the green felt poker table. A FEW PLAYERS focus on their cards mid-game. A cash pot pyramids in the middle. The players barely glance up at Stevie from their hands. Mel Jaffee strolls over.

STEVIE

Mel.

MEL

Kid.

STEVIE

You got everything?

MEL

Everything but players. Your Pop handle that tsuris out front?

STEVIE

He's workin' on it.

MEL

Better work harder. And faster. This? Right here? Not good.

STEVIE

He'll get it done.

Stevie leaves with Cuda.

EXT. NORTH BAY ROAD - AFTERNOON

Ike sits in his car looking at the gated estate. He tosses his cigarette and drives to the front gate. Ike pushes the intercom.

MAN'S VOICE (OS)

(on intercom)

Yeah.

IKE

It's Ike.

The gate swings open. Ike drives slowly down the long driveway to the low-slung, modern mansion. Ike parks. A stylish (but lethal) mobster, "DANDY" PHIL HAAS washes a black, 1959 Cadillac Eldorado Biarritz convertible with a sudsy bucket.

IKE (CONT'D)

Phil. New car?

DANDY PHIL

New girl. New car. You know the drill.

IKE

She's a beauty.

DANDY PHIL
Yeah. And a bitch... The
raisinette's out back on the deck.

Ike heads around the house. TWO HUGE DOBERMANS spring from
nowhere, snarling and frothing. One bites it's own tongue.

DANDY PHIL (CONT'D)
Schnell! Schnell!

The dogs drop into submission.

DANDY PHIL (CONT'D)
Kraut bitch dogs. Ben's got 'em
trained in German. Sorry, kid.

IKE
No problem.

Ike carefully steps around the twin killers. Their eyes
follow him.

EXT. BEN DIAMOND MANSION BACK YARD - AFTERNOON

A wide, manicured lawn spills down to Biscayne Bay. Ike walks
past the sky-blue swimming pool. A woman swims laps
underwater, her long body rippling beneath the water. Ike
stares down at her. She reaches the end, exploding to the
surface, splashing a wave over Ike's loafers. The swimmer is
Lily! The love of Stevie Evans life.

LILY
Sorry. Soaked your shoes.

IKE
Cooled me off. Ike Evans.

LILY
(reaching up a wet hand)
Lily Augustine... Diamond.

IKE
Pleasure, Mrs. Diamond. Hope to
see you tonight at our Sinatra
show.

LILY
(smiles)
Mr. Evans? Of course. From the
Miramar... Absolutely. Wouldn't
miss it.

Lily waves and back-turns into another lap.

Ike watches her.

BEN (O.S.)
 (loudly)
 Put your eyes back in your head.

Ben Diamond lies all oiled and shiny on a chaise. The chaise sits on a circular, redwood deck built into the lawn. Ben takes off his yellow plastic sun goggles, reaches over and hits a remote. The deck turns like a lazy-susan. Ben squints up, searching for the perfect sun spot. He stops the lazy-susan and reclines. Ben is the color of fine wood.

BEN (CONT'D)
 Sit down. Catch a few rays. You
 look like a ghost.

Ike walks onto the deck and sits on the next chaise. Ben slips the sun shades on and lies back like a basking reptile.

BEN (CONT'D)
 She's got great lungs.

IKE
 Sorry?

BEN
 Lily. She swam up in Weeki Watchi.
 Danced underwater without breathing
 for four, five minutes at a pop.
 Then she'd suck on a hose for air
 and do it some more. Girl can suck
 on that hose.

IKE
 Hmm.

BEN
 You got a pool with a window over
 at your joint, right? Maybe you
 should get some mermaids? Do a
 show.

Lily gets out of the pool and walks across the deck to her towel. She is death in a bikini.

BEN (CONT'D)
 Shotzi needs a walk.

Lily slathers herself in Coppertone, oiling her long, pin-up's legs.

BEN (CONT'D)
 You hear me?

LILY
I'm sorry. Are you talking to me?

BEN
Don't be sorry. Just walk the damn
dog.

LILY
Well, can't Phil--

Ben sits up takes off his sun goggles and glares at her. Lily gets up from her chaise and heads into the house.

BEN
(lying back down)
Treat 'em mean, keep 'em keen.

Ike watches Lily's perfect body stride into the house.

IKE
I'm, I was sorry to hear about
Doris.

BEN
Yeah. I'm still in mourning...
Remember the day you, me and Do
went out to the 'Glades, out to
your quarry together?

Ike nods.

BEN (CONT'D)
Smart girl, that Doris. She looked
into that hole you were digging out
all that coral--

IKE
Limestone.

BEN
Limestone, right, for the hotel
lobby and she asked you how deep
the water was. And you said,
"bottomless".

IKE
(repeating to himself)
Bottomless.

BEN
Parked a lotta cars down there...
That Doris never missed a trick,
huh?

Ike takes a deep breath, exhales.

BEN (CONT'D)
Limestone. Coral. Marble. You spent
a lot on that place of yours.
What's your monthly nut over there?
Whatta you owe?

IKE
You know what I owe.

BEN
Come. How much?

IKE
Sixty-five thousand.

BEN
A month? Every month?
(whistles)
You come up with that?

IKE
Yep.

BEN
How about this month?

Ike sits, sweating in the sun.

BEN (CONT'D)
How about now? You got sixty-five
g's on you now? It's the end of the
month. I hear you got some union
problems, Isaac. Lotta pressure.
That place is your dream. Be a sin
to lose your dream.

IKE
I'm not gonna lose anything.

Ben reaches over and picks up a pitcher of water and pours it
over his sweaty belly.

BEN
I think you might still be
dreaming, Ike.

IKE
What do you want?

BEN
You came to me. What do you want?

IKE

I want the strike over. I want everything back to normal. I need your help tonight.

BEN

Why come to me? I'm not in the union?

IKE

Right. What'll it take? What do you want?

BEN

The rest.

IKE

No.

BEN

What did you say?

IKE

No. The Miramar is--

BEN

Mine!

Ben smashes the glass pitcher on the deck, whips up into a sitting position and jabs a finger into Ike's face. A shard of flying glass slashes Ike's cheek. Ike brushes the blood, smearing it across his face.

BEN (CONT'D)

Mine!

IKE

Fine. Take it. But without me. Take it without me. You know what the Miramar is worth without me running it?

Ike stands.

IKE (CONT'D)

It's a pile of silverware and towels and sand. You'd get half what you put in. Take it. Choke on it.

Ike turns to leave.

BEN

Hey. Hey! Come here. Come here.
(handing Ike a face towel)
Here.

Ike takes it, holds it to his cut.

BEN (CONT'D)

Jesus. You are very, very high
strung these days.

Ike stares at him.

BEN (CONT'D)

Hear me? I'm serious. You gotta
relax.

Ike watches the gangster.

BEN (CONT'D)

Go home. Kiss that pretty shiksa
wife. Have a drink. I'll see you
tonight.

Ike turns, starts to leave.

BEN (CONT'D)

Hey Isaac. You ever hear the story
about the frog and the scorpion?

IKE

No.

BEN

The scorpion begs the frog to carry
it across the river. The frog says,
"No. If I carry you, you'll sting
me to death." The scorpion says,
"Come on Froggy. I sting you, we
both drown." So the frog lets the
scorpion hop on. Halfway across the
river, the scorpion whips his
stinger into the frog's ass. As the
frog is sinking and they're both
gonna drown, the frog says to the
scorpion, "But why?" You know what
the scorpion says?

Ike shakes his head.

BEN (CONT'D)

"It's in my nature"... In the end,
Ike, we are who we are.

Ben lies back down. Ike watches him for a beat and heads across the lawn.

BEN (CONT'D)

I want more. Ike.

Ike turns to Ben, who lies on his chaise wearing the sunglasses.

BEN (CONT'D)

That's what I always want... more.
Think about that as we swim across
the river together.

Ike lies on his back, catching the day's last sun.

EXT. BEN DIAMOND MANSION - FRONT DRIVEWAY - AFTERNOON

Ike trudges to his car. Lily stands, smoking a cigarette in her bikini and heels, holding a small dachshund on a leash. The dog pisses on the spotless whitewall of Ben's gleaming Cadillac Biarritz.

Lily smiles at Ike. Ike smiles back, gets into his car and motors down the gravel driveway. Lily exhales a cloud of smoke.

END OF ACT THREE

ACT FOUR

INT. ATLANTIS LOUNGE - AFTERNOON

A blousy, aging pro, MYRNNA, sits on a bar stool nursing a kir royale. Stevie and "Cuda" enter, walking to the far end of the bar.

STEVIE

...How 'bout weed?

CUDA

Raul and Heppy brought in a few lids. I can get more.

STEVIE

The Cops cool?

CUDA

Everybody's paid or afraid. I hired the usual off-duty motor cycle guys for show. You still expectin' a crowd? Even with the crazies out there?

STEVIE

Ike says we're good. We're good.

A Joey Heatherton-sexy, platinum blonde, JUDI SILVER, sighs into the bar. Myrnna looks over with a sneer.

MYRNNA

Look what the cash dragged in.

JUDI

Granny.

STEVIE

Judi. Babe.

MYRNNA

(imitating)
"Judi. Babe."

STEVIE

(walking to Judi)
I don't care what you pay Cuda for that stool, Myrnna. Behave or your workin' at Fun Fair.

Myrna grumbles into her kir.

Stevie greets the ice-beautiful Judi with a long embrace.

STEVIE (CONT'D)
(admiring her)
Miss Silver, you kill me.

JUDI
Prove it lover.

STEVIE
"Never ride the working stock", Ike
Evans. Cuda get Miss Silver a very
dry, very cold gin martini with two
pearl onions.

JUDI
He remembers.

Stevie helps Judi onto a bar stool, sits beside her. He leans close, nearly whispering to her.

STEVIE
I'll need you for the night.

JUDI
I've been waiting my whole life to
hear that from you.

Cuda slides the frosty drink to Judi. She takes a sip.

JUDI (CONT'D)
Hi, ho Silver and away!

Stevie laughs, leans over and kisses her cheek. He palms a roll of twenties into Judi's hand.

INT. ARTHUR EVANS' SOUTH BEACH APARTMENT - AFTERNOON

Ike's father Arthur lies propped up in bed. Inez, the bombshell nurse, sits at the foot of the bed facing him. The Dorsey Brothers' "Cheek To Cheek" plays on the victrola. A few shafts of light slice through the drawn Venetian blinds.

ARTHUR
Go. Go on.

Inez starts unbuttoning her top. Arthur watches her. She begins to take off her uniform blouse.

ARTHUR (CONT'D)
Slower.

Inez slowly peels off her blouse, sits in her white bra.
Arthur nods, watching her.

INEZ

Now?

ARTHUR

Now.

FROM BEHIND - INEZ

reaches back and unsnaps her bra. She takes the bra off, setting it atop Arthur's head. Arthur gazes at her as if looking at a holy shrine. He slowly reaches both hands towards her breasts. She leans closer. He reaches forward, coughs once, grabs his chest and pitches onto the floor with a thunk. Inez leaps from the bed, topless.

INEZ

Mr. Arthur!!!

EXT. MT. SINAI HOSPITAL - MIAMI BEACH

Ike screeches up to the hospital, parks and runs inside.

INT. MT. SINAI HOSPITAL/ELEVENTH FLOOR

Ike steps out of the elevator and sees Inez in the waiting room. She jumps up, tear-stained, to greet him

INEZ

I'm so sorry. I didn't know what to do. I'm not a nurse. Ju know, I just wear the outfit. I'n a waitress down at Sebastien's. Your father make me wear this--

IKE

Inez. It's okay. It's fine. How is he?

INEZ

(wiping her eyes)
He have a heart attack. But the Doctor say, he no die. I'n so sorry!

IKE

Pull yourself together. I'll be right back.

INT. MT. SINAI - ARTHUR EVANS ROOM - DAY

Arthur lies in bed. A Nurse takes his vital signs.

IKE

Pop?

Arthur turns.

ARTHUR

(to Nurse)

My son. Honey, see this handsome fella? That's my boy.

NURSE

He's got to rest. I'll give you two a couple of minutes.

IKE

He's gonna be okay, right?

ARTHUR

If they stop poking me like a turkey.

NURSE

He's going to be just fine.

She leaves. Ike steps closer to his father.

IKE

What the hell, Pop.

ARTHUR

You see my hat? My skipper hat?

Ike looks around and finds the soiled hat atop a chair of folded clothes. Ike picks it up.

ARTHUR (CONT'D)

Put it on me.

Ike sets it atop the old man's head. Arthur reaches up and straightens it.

ARTHUR (CONT'D)

Covers my bald spot.

IKE

How're ya feeling?

ARTHUR

Other than I'm a hundred years old and have a goddamn heart attack when I see a naked girl? I'm great.

(eyeing Ike)

Better than you.

IKE

I'm fine.

Ike sits down in a chair, pulls it closer to his father's bed. The old man reaches out. Ike takes his hand.

ARTHUR

I miss your mother.

IKE

I know. Me too Pop.

ARTHUR

Fifty two years. I never went to bed without telling her I loved her. So. Another new year alone.
(wiping a tear away from his eye)
Ah. What the hell. This too shall pass. Huh?

IKE

That's what you always say.

ARTHUR

Yeah but what do I know?... I know I'm proud of you kid. Look what you did. What you built. The biggest. The best. Fontainbleau? Eden Roc? Pishers.

IKE

Pop.

ARTHUR

Hey. I'm not embarrassed. I did okay. I had a good thing. Sundries. A little sports book. But small potatoes. You, you son of a bitch, you dreamed big.

Ike averts his eyes, looks down.

ARTHUR (CONT'D)

Listen to me, Isaac. Okay? They're inside already. Don't deny it. I know what I know. They're a cancer. Very hard to cut them out. The surgery could kill you. You got one chance. Stay strong. Stay healthy. Stay alive. You can live with the cancer. Cost you a few bucks. A few sleepless nights. Your pride. But you stick around.

(MORE)

ARTHUR (CONT'D)
You hang in there. You survive. And
then. Then who knows?

Arthur pats Ike's hand, smiles.

ARTHUR (CONT'D)
It's a long ball game. My money's
on you kid.

Ike stands.

IKE
I gotta go, Pop. I'll come by first
thing tomorrow.

ARTHUR
Go. Go. I'm fine.

Ike leans over and kisses his father's forehead.

IKE
I love you Pop.

ARTHUR
I love you too, Isaac.

Ike walks to the door.

ARTHUR (CONT'D)
Ike. Send Inez in.

IKE
You sure?

ARTHUR
Hey, you only live once.

IKE
And sometimes not even then.

ARTHUR
Ha! I like that!

IKE
See you tomorrow.

Ike leaves his father.

INT. ATLANTIS LOUNGE - LATE AFTERNOON

Stevie stands behind the bar. The pool window glows blue behind him. Danny sits at the bar facing Stevie. Danny inhales a Cuban sandwich. Stevie slides a coke in front of him.

STEVIE

...Well I'm not gonna ask Victor
for you. She's your date. Be a man.
What's the worst he can do?

DANNY

Say no and punch me in the face.
She's his little girl. He's crazy
about her.

Lily suddenly swims down to the window behind Stevie. Danny
sees her. She hangs there, waving her arms to keep herself
suspended in the window. Danny blinks at the mermaid.

STEVIE

What?

Lily hangs underwater, fluttering her beautiful legs. She
points to Stevie's back, blows him a kiss.

Stevie turns around. Lily hovers in the window, smiles, leans
close and kisses the glass.

STEVIE (CONT'D)

(shouting to her)

Wait! Stay!

(to Danny)

I'll... Handle... I'll be--

Stevie bolts from the bar.

EXT. MIRAMAR POOL - AFTERNOON

Lily swims to the side as Stevie blasts up from Lounge level.
He slows, trying to be cool, walks to her.

Lily climbs from the water in one graceful move. Stevie
reaches her.

LILY

Hand me my towel?

Stevie takes the towel and drapes it over Lily's shoulders.
He pulls her closer with it.

LILY (CONT'D)

I'm gonna get you all wet.

STEVIE

I hope so.

Lily smiles. Stevie leans forward to kiss her. Lily pulls
away.

LILY
Not here.

STEVIE
Okay.

Stevie takes Lily's hand as she scoops up her cabana bag. He leads her up the stairs to the second level of cabanas. Stevie stops at the last one and, taking out his master house key, unlocks the door.

LILY
You've done this before.

Stevie looks at her for a moment.

STEVIE
Nope. Never this.

Stevie leads her inside the cabana. Sunlight shoots through the slatted door. The towel drops to her feet. They kiss. Lily sheds her bathing suit, hungrily undressing him.

STEVIE (CONT'D)
There's no rush.

Lily pulls Stevie down to the terry cloth covered chaise.

LILY
Yes... There really is.

Stevie and Lily make desperate love.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. POOL/CABANA LEVEL - LATE AFTERNOON

Danny sprints past the pool, taking the stairs two at a time.

INT. CABANA - LATE AFTERNOON

Stevie and Lily lay entwined, asleep in the dark cabana. A Miramar beach towel covers their nude bodies.

BANG! BANG! Lily bolts up terrified.

STEVIE
What?

DANNY (OS)
Cadillac called. He's up in
Lauderdale waiting for you.

Lily throws on clothes from her bag.

STEVIE
 Jesus. Ok. Call him. Be there in
 twenty-five.

Danny's silhouette peers through the slats. Stevie bangs it
 with his fist.

DANNY (O.S.)
 Ow!

STEVIE
 Beat it.

Stevie stands, tries to hold Lily as she hurriedly dresses.

STEVIE (CONT'D)
 Can I see you again?

LILY
 (buttoning her blouse)
 Yes. No. I don't know.

STEVIE
 Where do you live? I don't even
 know your last--

LILY
 (kissing him quiet)
 Shut up. You know enough.

She slips out the cabana door and is gone. Stevie touches his
 finger to where Lily kissed his lip.

INT. MIRAMAR HOTEL/OWNER'S SUITE/BEDROOM - DUSK

Ike ties and re-ties his bow-tie. Vera glides over in her
 skin-tight gown and presents her back to be zipped.

VERA
 But they say he's gonna be okay?

IKE
 (zipping her)
 This won't kill Arthur. He just has
 to change a few things. His diet.
 His nurse.

VERA
 (heading back to her
 bathroom)
 That should be interesting.

Ike follows her in, staring at her in the lit mirror.

IKE
Big Red, you are something.

Vera smiles.

VERA
You know I hate that name.

Ike leans over and kisses her neck.

Lauren runs in.

LAUREN
Ugh. Can somebody get Fluffy off my sweater she's getting it all--

IKE
Fluffy?

LAUREN
I'm not kidding! She keeps growling at me.

VERA
(ushering her out)
She's really acting weird, honey.

IKE
(calling after them)
Lauren. If you're gonna wear skirts that short, you'd better start shaving those legs!

LAUREN (O.S.)
Dad!!!

Ike smiles and steps outside, onto the balcony. He fires up a Cohiba, gazing out at the grey ocean. Storm clouds gather over the Gulfstream. Ike's smile fades.

EXT. REVERE HOTEL/SOUTH BEACH - DUSK

Shadowy bedroom. Union lawyer Mike Strauss lies in bed, post-coital drowsy. A nude Judi Silver curls against him. BANG! The door kicks open and two THUGS blow in, pistol-whip Strauss in the face and haul him, unconscious and in his underwear, from the room. Judi clutches the sheets to herself, shaking.

EXT. MIRAMAR HOTEL/OWNER'S SUITE BALCONY - DUSK

Ike exhales a thick cloud of cigar smoke and turns from the ocean view, heading inside.

EXT. MIRAMAR HOTEL ENTRANCE - DUSK

Ike, flanked by Victor and Danny, stands at the top step of the hotel entrance, staring down at the churning mob of strikers.

HORNS HONK. Three battered Mac trucks chug through the angry crowd. The strikers surge around them, slowing the trucks to a stop feet from the covered hotel driveway.

Stevie, behind the wheel of the lead truck, throws open the door and jumps into the sea of picketers. Danny charges down to help his brother.

IKE

DANNY!!!

Ike and Victor shove into the melee throwing punches at anyone that moves. Grady and his boxers leap from the trucks, throwing combinations like pros... Ike falls to the asphalt. A steel-toed boot rises above his face. BLAM! Ray-Ray, the bell-hop, flies into the striker levelling him and saving his boss. Ike jumps up. A full-fledged riot. Cop cars swerve in, lights strobing. Suddenly a BULLHORN cuts through the battle.

MAN ON BULLHORN

IT'S OVER! IT... IS... OVER!!
STOP!!!

Strikers turn in mid-punch. The huge UNION GUY that Ike tossed a dead Fluffy at (now with blackened eyes) wields the bullhorn.

UNION GUY (ON BULLHORN)

The strike is called!
(waving a paper)
Mike Strauss has called the strike.
It... is... over!

The picketers drop their signs and begin to drift away from the entrance. Ike looks past the trucks and the dispersing mob.

UNION GUY (O.S.) (CONT'D)

(on bullhorn)
Please. Everybody. Go home. We will
be in contact with you about
further actions, if any.

ACROSS COLLINS AVENUE - Ben Diamond's shiny Cadillac Biarritz sits at the curb.

IKE stares after Ben's caddy.

The black Cadillac pulls into Collins Avenue traffic and disappears in a sea of tail-lights.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. MIRAMAR HOTEL/ TRADE WINDS BALLROOM - NIGHT

Ike, handsome in his tux, stands in the back of the jammed, festive, elegant ballroom simply enjoying the moment. Success snatched from the jaws... this time.

BEN (O.S.)
Big night.

Ike turns to the sleek, nut-brown mob boss.

BEN (CONT'D)
Don't mention it.

Ben pats Ike's arm.

BEN (CONT'D)
Enjoy.

Ben and his entourage (Dandy Phil, other THUGS and their BROADS file past into the ballroom.

IKE
Where's Lily?

BEN
(shrugs)
Powderin' her nose.

CUT TO:

INT. LIFEGUARD SHACK - NIGHT

Stevie and Lily bang like crazy.

EXT. MIRAMAR BEACH - NIGHT

The lifeguard shack rocks on it's stilts. The Miramar hotel shines like a diamond behind it.

INT. TRADE WINDS BALLROOM - NIGHT

Ike moves through the glamorous crowd, shaking hands, kissing dames til he reaches his owner's booth. Vera, Lauren, Danny and his lovely date, Mercedes, sit around the silk brocade banquette.

DANNY
Dad, you know Mercedes.

IKE
Of course. You look beautiful
honey.

MERCEDES
Thank you.

IKE
(nodding to Danny)
So what're you doin' with this
yutz?

Ike yanks Danny close, kissing his head. Danny pulls away,
smiling and blushing.

Ike sits beside Vera on the outside banquette seat, throwing
his arm around her.

IKE (CONT'D)
Where's Stevie?

VERA
He'll be here.

Ike turns to the STAGE MANAGER and nods. The house lights
dim.

VERA (CONT'D)
(kisses his cheek)
Relax. You did it.

ANNOUNCER'S VOICE
(booming)
And now, ladies and gentleman,
swingers of all ages, please
welcome to Ike Evans' world famous
Miramar Hotel for your New Year's
Eve 1959!.... From Hoboken to
Hollywood! The one, the only, the
greatest!... Mister... FRANK
SINATRA!!

"I've Got The World On A String" kicks in loud as, FROM
BEHIND and flared by the stagelights, Frank Sinatra seizes
the stage. The room goes insane.

SINATRA
(singing)
"I've got the world on a string,
sitting on a rainbow....

SINATRA'S SONG PLAYS OVER SCENES:

Lily joins Ben's table of killers. Ben stands as she slides into the banquette.

SINATRA (CONT'D)
 (singing)
 "Got the string around my finger...
 What a world, what a life
 Oohh I'm in love..."

Ben sees beach-sand clinging to the hem of Lily's gown. He leans forward and brushes it off. Lily glances back, sees the sand fall. She looks up at Ben, who smiles warmly at her. Lily takes her seat.

STEVIE enters the rear of the dark ballroom. His eyes scour the audience, finally landing on Lily and Ben. Lily sips her champagne, laughs at a joke. Ben's arm stays clamped around Lily's bare shoulder as he cranes around, searching for someone. Stevie watches from the dark.

SINATRA (CONT'D)
 (singing)
 "I've got this song that I sing,
 I can make the rain go
 anytime I move my finger..."

Stevie joins his family at the owner's booth. He hugs his father, winks at Danny and Mercedes.

Stevie leans over and kisses a stunned Vera on the cheek.

Vera beams, throws a surprised look at Ike who shrugs and smiles. Stevie sits on Vera's other side, lifts his waiting martini to his lips and enjoys Sinatra.

INT. ARTHUR EVANS SOUTH BEACH APARTMENT - NIGHT

Arthur sleeps, mouth open, in his bedroom. The TV plays Guy Lombardo's New Year's Eve. THROUGH his open bedroom door WE SEE Inez rifling through the drawers of Arthur's livingroom desk.

SINATRA
 (singing)
 "Lucky me, can't you see - I'm in
 love..."

EXT. TAMiami TRAIL/INT. CAR- NIGHT

Mike Strauss sits between the two thugs in the back seat of the car, his battered, pulpy face strobed by passing car headlights.

SINATRA
 (singing)
 "Life is a beautiful thing..."

The car fades down the dark and lonely two-lane.

SINATRA
 (singing)
 "As long as I hold the string..."

INT. MIRAMAR HOTEL/OWNER'S SUITE/BEDROOM - NIGHT

Ike lies beside Vera. Vera wears her sleep-mask.

SINATRA
 (singing)
 "I'd be a silly so and so
 If I should ever let it go...."

[Sinatra's singing fades.]

Ike stares at the ceiling. Vera lifts her sleep-mask and kisses Ike on the lips.

IKE
 What's that for?

VERA
 Thanks.

IKE
 For what?

Vera slides down her sleep-mask and rolls over.

VERA
 Fluffy had pink toe-nails.

Ike gulps.

VERA (CONT'D)
 We get rid of that monster in the morning.

Vera rolls over to sleep. Ike sighs, eyes wide open.

INT. ATLANTIS LOUNGE - LATE NIGHT

Stevie stands behind the closed bar, bathed in the underwater blues. Ike walks in.

STEVIE
 What're you doin' up?

IKE
Couldn't sleep.

Ike slips onto the bar stool. Stevie pours two brandies.

STEVIE
Me neither.

Stevie lifts his brandy in a toast.

STEVIE (CONT'D)
We made it.

IKE
We certainly did.

They drink. Ike looks at his oldest son, reaches over and tenderly rests his palm against Stevie's cheek.

IKE (CONT'D)
Your father loves you.

Stevie smiles and takes another sip of brandy. Ike's gaze drifts to the lapis swimming pool.

DISSOLVE TO:

Underwater. Shifting shades of blue. Move through an underwater forest of swaying bodies to MIKE STRAUSS -- dead, wide-eyed -- floating above a big-finned Caddy.

IKE

tosses back his brandy and stands.

IKE (CONT'D)
Happy New Year.

Ike strides from the lounge and into 1959 in the magic city.

THE END