

"THE RELUCTANT COWBOY"

by

Tom Cole

SUPER: "NEW YORK CITY, DECEMBER
1980."

FADE IN

INT. NEW YORK CITY APARTMENT

POKEY CRIBBAGE, a Chihuahua-terrier mix, lies on the 1950s motif davenport fast asleep. The football game on the TV roars scratchily. Outside, a siren wails and flashes of red and blue cut through the window to dance across the walls. They keep dancing. Pokey awakens. He makes a low-pitched, quiet howl. He gets up, his hair raised a bit in simple irritation, and walks to his drinking pan in the kitchen. He stands over it a moment and laps unenthusiastically once, twice -- missing the water entirely the second time. He howls again, and there is a trace of a growl in the sound. The sirens die away in time, and Pokey returns to the davenport and is soon sleeping again. The TV blares on. The lights on the wall flash brighter. They dance on the wall and on the sleeping dog. The TV screen is now nearly all green with the expanse of Astroturf. Football players are running across the field. From the TV comes the voice of HORACE GOLDING.

GOLDING (V.O.)

There are some things more important than a football game. News from New York City. James McKay composer and former leader of the Storm Kings shot in the back and dead on arrival at ...

There is the sound of muttering from the TV, and a pause of several seconds.

GOLDING (V.O.)

What?

The voice pauses again and then comes back.

GOLDING

(V.O.)

I stand corrected. McKay's condition is not known.....and I am told now that he has been critically... but I will say nothing more.

There is still another pause.

GOLDING (V.O.)

Idiots. God damn it! Get me the facts first -- the facts. Fools.

EXT. NEW YORK CITY STREET -- NIGHT -- MINUTES EARLIER

A young man is standing on the sidewalk in front of the Shawnee, an imposing, multi-story apartment building. He thumbs through a book, holding it up to the light of a streetlamp. A car approaches and the figure of JAMES MCKAY emerges and starts toward the apartment building. The young man raises a .38. Three shots are heard and a fourth only after the shooter has put the muzzle of the .38 in his mouth and pulled the trigger. The book flies into the air and

lands on the sidewalk in the light of the streetlamp. The book is open. Its title page is visible, and it reads, "In Our Time." A breeze stirs and blows the title page to one side, and then for a while an invisible hand leafs through the book lying on the sidewalk.

EXT. NEW YORK CITY SKYLINE -- NIGHT

The song "Sad Times Are Coming" sung by SYLVESTER T. CRIBBAGE begins to play with a violin/organ introduction followed by Cribbage's voice. An ambulance is seen from a view above the city, winding its way through the streets finally to reach the hospital.

CRIBBAGE (VS.)

When every leaf
Is gone from every tree...

INT. PASSENGER JET

The muffled, whistling sound of jet engines is heard.

SYLVESTER T. CRIBBAGE, New York Native, actor and musician, is seated in the aisle seat of the Boeing 727. Next to him, at the window, sits another man, EDWARD WENTWORTH. The seat between them is empty. Wentworth is obviously Cribbage's senior. His hair is mostly gray and he is dressed conservatively. Cribbage is youthful, but mid-fortyish. His hair is uniformly dark brown and it stands high, combed as it is into something like a pompadour. Cribbage is thin, yet his face is big and blatantly expressive, good humored, and plastered on it is not a perpetual smile

but what might be called a perpetual laugh. Cribbage is wearing a suit with a vest and has on a bolo tie with a long-horned steer as the slide. The bolo tips are silver bullets. A female flight attendant is standing in the aisle with the beverage cart.

FLIGHT ATTENDANT

(to Cribbage)

Would you like something to drink?

CRIBBAGE

(to Wentworth in a Brooklyn accent)

Sir. You first.

WENTWORTH

Thank you. I'll have a bourbon on the rocks, please -- a double.

Wentworth leans over to speak to Cribbage

WENTWORTH

Always get a double. You won't have to wait for your next drink, and the attendant won't be bothered twice.

CRIBBAGE

Great idea!

He looks at the flight attendant.

CRIBBAGE

A bloody Mary. Make it a double!

Cribbage winks at Wentworth.

The flight attendant serves the older man a plastic glass with ice and two one-ounce bottles of bourbon. She pours the bloody Mary mix from a 12-ounce can over the ice in another cup for Cribbage and puts it on his tray along with two bottles of vodka. The older man begins to fix his drink. He takes the cap off of one of the bourbons. Cribbage sticks out his hand.

CRIBBAGE

Sylvester T. Cribbage!

Wentworth shakes Cribbage's hand.

WENTWORTH

Edward Wentworth. I'm a
Catholic priest.

Cribbage blanches.

CRIBBAGE

Well, I was raised Catholic
myself.

He pulls a tiny chain from under his shirt revealing the St. Christopher medallion.

CRIBBAGE

My traveling companion, Sir.
But you don't have to warn me
you're a priest, Father. I
wouldn't have embarrassed
you. I talk to everyone the
same: man, woman, grocery

store clerk, cop on the beat,
Indian chief, even priest.
Tell the truth, Father. Were
you really afraid I was going
to say something just awful?

He digs the man playfully in the ribs with his elbow.

CRIBBAGE

You know. Heh, heh -- just
guy to guy?

WENTWORTH

Well, I...

CRIBBAGE

You'll never see the best in
people if you expect the
worst, Father. Seek and ye
shall find and all that.

WENTWORTH

...Well, of course I
always...

CRIBBAGE

If you're uncomfortable going
plain clothes, wear the
collar, Father, though I take
a dim view of any priest who
would wear it just to put us
all on notice. Don't you
think it's time you started
believing in the basic
goodness of people?

Cribbage leans over putting the big laughing face close to Wentworth's.

CRIBBAGE

What you need, Father, is a little faith!

Cribbage cheerfully uncaps both vodkas, pours them into his cup, and tosses them down. The flight attendant is turning from the seats opposite where she has just served another passenger. Cribbage gently grasps her sleeve and tugs.

CRIBBAGE

Father Wentworth has advised that I order a double bloody Mary.

FLIGHT ATTENDANT

I just served you a double bloody Mary not one minute ago.

CRIBBAGE

Er, he asked me to. He says it saves time.

FLIGHT ATTENDANT

I think not, sir.

CRIBBAGE

It's all right.

He points to the priest's remaining uncapped bottle.

CRIBBAGE

We have an extra anyway.

He leans toward Wentworth.

CRIBBAGE

So much for your advice.

EXT. STEPS LEADING TO CRIBBAGE'S FRONT DOOR -- NIGHT

Cribbage walks up the steps to his apartment as the cab he has arrived in disappears down the street. There are a large number of people on the street. He sees flashing red and blue lights and hears some singing down the street. Cribbage takes his apartment key from his pocket. The key is attached to a long, rather heavy chain. He turns the key in the lock and goes in.

INT. CRIBBAGE'S APARTMENT

There is something about a shooting on TV, but Cribbage switches it off. Pokey is running in circles in excitement. Cribbage picks him up and the two hug and kiss until Pokey has calmed down. He puts the dog on the couch and picks up the note from THE FEMALE DOG SITTER on the coffee table. He reads her note.

THE FEMALE DOG SITTER (V.O.)

"Pokey was very happy today. Lots of tummy rubs! And a good walk. Gave him his meds and we played "Snappy Dog" in the living room. Your TV was on when I came in. I didn't know if you wanted it on or off, so I left it that way. Looking forward to seeing Pokey again soon. He's a sweetheart!"

Cribbage looks at the note and rolls his eyes. He takes the dog leash from the coffee table. Pokey barks and runs in circles.

CRIBBAGE

A quick pee, Pokey. Then
we're hitting the sack.

EXT. STREET OUTSIDE CRIBBAGE'S APARTMENT -- NIGHT

Cribbage steps out of his doorway with Pokey. He locks the door behind him with a key on a long, dangling chain and goes down the steps. Cribbage walks Pokey down the street in the opposite direction of the lights and singing.

INT. CRIBBAGE'S APARTMENT -- DAY

Cribbage is reading the newspaper article about the shooting at his breakfast table.

CRIBBAGE (VS.)

They said that one more shot
anywhere and it would have
spelled curtains for McKay.
The world was almost one
Storm King down. And the
best composer in the band at
that. There were a lot of
big, famous names around with
big, fat, swollen heads most
of them. But they'd secretly
trade all the talent they had
to be able to knock off hits
like James McKay. Or like he
used to. I wondered what

he'd say if I asked him to help me out. I knew he'd be in the Diamond Point Studios sooner or later.

INT. MCKAY'S HOSPITAL ROOM -- DAY

McKay is in the bed, his arm in a cast. McKay is fortyish and has shoulder length brown hair. The TV is on in the background. A remote control has its cable going through the rail on the side of the bed. Horace Golding is standing at McKay's bedside. Golding is a tall man better than 20 years older than McKay.

MCKAY

Forget about it, Horace. Exaggerated reports of my death and all. It's really kind of funny.

GOLDING

I won't stay any longer, James. I'm glad you're doing better. Take care.

MCKAY

You too, Horace.

Golding leaves and McKay turns the TV up. Now it is blaring with an announcer's voice. There are shots of the neon sign outside a Broadway theater with the word "LAREDO!"

THE TV

Brooklyn's own SYLVESTER T. CRIBBAGE is breaking some box office records with his quirky western stage production, Laredo! Cribbage stars in his own brainchild as Pokey Laredo, a goofy but tuneful buckaroo with a song in his heart and a laugh up his sleeve.

The TV scene shifts to the stage where Cribbage is seen in a Hollywood western cowboy outfit plucking a string bass. He is singing his song "The Flip Side of Love."

MCKAY

There are two sides to love,
it's true. Side A is sweet;
Side B is blue...

THE TV

KNYC reporter KATHERINE
STANDAGE caught up with
Cribbage back stage
yesterday.

Cribbage appears on the screen standing next to Standage. He is still in wardrobe with his neck kerchief neatly knotted and his hat in hand. The music continues in the background.

STANDAGE

Well, Pokey, you've been
driving cattle up West 42nd

Street three nights a week
for more than a year now.

CRIBBAGE

(In his usual Brooklyn accent.)

I have. Stopping only to
graze at the Carnegie Deli.

STANDAGE

Tell me about the show.

CRIBBAGE

Well, what we don't have in
storyline we make up for in
toe-tapping tunes and one-
liners. And we have a cast
that would make Rodgers and
Hammerstein jealous.

STANDAGE

Now, you're the one who
writes all the tunes.

CRIBBAGE

Right. No covers. If you
want to hear "Cool Water" for
the millionth time, Laredo!
will disappoint you.

STANDAGE

What will we hear?

CRIBBAGE

You'll hear new material
every three or four shows. I
said we didn't have much in

the way of a storyline. But because of that, we can swap songs and skits in and out so the show stays fresh.

STANDAGE

The show changes that often?

CRIBBAGE

Morphs. It morphs! A month from now you can come back and see it again.

STANDAGE

That's good for repeat business, but doesn't it make a lot of work for you?

CRIBBAGE

(Still in a Brooklyn accent)

Yes, but it's my show, and ma'am, I aim to run herd on it. Hey! Want to see me lose 30 IQ points in three seconds?

STANDAGE

Sure.

CRIBBAGE

One, Two, Three!

On three, he sets the cowboy hat on his head.

STANDAGE

You strike me as a somewhat
reluctant cowboy, Sylvester.

CRIBBAGE

Well, I'm from Brooklyn, for
cryin' out loud.

The last line of the music is
heard.

THE TV

Don't make me sing that
lonesome song on the flip
side of love.

STANDAGE

Best
on Laredo, Sylvester.

of luck

CRIBBAGE

Thank you kindly.

STANDAGE

This is Katherine Standage
KNYC News with Sylvester
Cribbage

CRIBBAGE

Sylvester TEE Cribbage!

STANDAGE

Sylvester TEE Cribbage
running herd...

CRIBBAGE

(in a thick New York accent)
Running hoyd!

STANDAGE

...Sylvester TEE Cribbage
running hoyd at the Bluebird
Theater.

McKay switches off the TV.

MCKAY

Bloody hell!

INT. GEORGE HEINEMANN'S OFFICE -- DAY

Cribbage is sitting in a chair in front of GEORGE HEINEMANN, who is at his desk.

HEINEMANN

Sylvester, I'm hearing
everywhere that you plan to
change the theme of Laredo,
though with that title I
don't know how you intend to
do it.

CRIBBAGE

The show has always morphed.

HEINEMANN

It hasn't suddenly changed
into a cockroach.

CRIBBAGE

Why shouldn't it?

HEINEMANN

It's bad business.

CRIBBAGE

Bad business.

HEINEMANN

Of course. When Middle aged Mom and Pop Midwest travel to Manhattan, they never miss your show. They buy tickets because of the cowboy theme. They listen to country music at home.

CRIBBAGE

If they'll listen to country, they'll listen to anything.

HEINEMANN

You mean they'll listen to anything country.

CRIBBAGE

No, I mean they'll listen to anything. And the music isn't country anyway; it's western.

HEINEMANN

That fact is lost on your audience. They fancy themselves trail drivers,

Sylvester. They come to see the hats. I don't want you to stagnate, but a sudden change will kill us at the box office.

CRIBBAGE

I've got a New York following too, you know.

HEINEMANN

Well, local fan clubs don't pay the bills.

CRIBBAGE

I'll die of ennui.

HEINEMANN

See you later, Buckaroo.

INT. DOOR TO GEORGE HEINEMANN'S OFFICE

Cribbage has his back to the door as he shuts it behind him. He has a sour but determined look on his face.

INT. THEATER STAGE

SYLVESTER T. CRIBBAGE walks toward the audience picking a guitar and singing. He is in reality walking in place as the props on either side of him, intensely two-dimensional cut-outs of cacti, boulders, brush, and the occasional longhorn cow, move past him on oval carousels. On either side of the stage are plywood cliffs painted red and burnt sienna like alternating layers of vertical sandstone and sloping

shale. All of the scenery is far from realistic, but that is part of the show's look as a hokey frolic, and the moving props give the impression that he is walking down a canyon.

CRIBBAGE

(Singing)

Dreams and reality seem an
awful lot alike to me.
And dreams are the only thing
that keep me going
Just dreams and the sound of
my guitar!

CRIBBAGE (V.O.)

All of the tunes were mine.
The show closed with "Good-
bye Trail Mates," not my best
work, but it didn't have to
be. I never even tried to
outdo Dale Evans in a fare-
thee-well, and this was the
only one of my own that I
had, and since I didn't do
any covers, that was that.
The same song closed the
first record album, which was
making me a very modest
income.

CRIBBAGE

(Singing the last line)
Just dreams and the sound of
my guitar!

The song ends with a six-note E add9 chord, the first, second, and sixth strings open.

CRIBBAGE (V.O.)

When the cast took stage for the finale, a prosaic horse -- two people in a suit -- curtsied along with the actors, and then turned backwards and bowed with its proverbial south end facing the audience. I always booted the horse's behind and the horse turned around all apologies curtsying frantically in apology. As corny as it comes, but the crowd ate it up. One night was to be different, though.

INT. THEATER BACKSTAGE

MICHAEL ROSENBERG runs up to Cribbage in a panic.

MICHAEL

(shouting)

Mr. Cribbage! Mr. Cribbage!

CRIBBAGE

What?

MICHAEL

AMANDA can't go on.

CRIBBAGE

What do you mean she can't go
on?

MICHAEL

She's hurling, Mr. Cribbage.

CRIBBAGE

Well put someone else in the horse suit. What am I, your personal valet? Christ.

MICHAEL

Who?

CRIBBAGE

You.

MICHAEL

I'm claustrophobic, Mr. Cribbage.

CRIBBAGE

Amanda has the back of the horse. You were born for the role.

MICHAEL

I'll suffocate in there. Really, Mr. Cribbage.

CRIBBAGE

I doubt that.

INT. THEATER STAGE

CRIBBAGE AND THE CAST are singing "Good-bye Trail Mates." Michael and another actor are in the horse suit dancing slowly about as the song ends.

CRIBBAGE AND THE CAST

It's time to say good-bye to
all my trail mates on the
ride
And it's time to recollect
and brush a tear or two
aside...

CRIBBAGE (V.O.)

The song ended, but by that time, Michael was in a claustrophobic panic.

Michael, in the back part of the horse suit, falls to the stage floor. THE FRONT OF THE HORSE attempts to curtsy but is being pulled backward by the bulging back end of the horse suit containing Michael.

THE FRONT OF THE HORSE
(sounding like a stage whisper)
Get up!

There is a gasp and a tearing sound as the back of the horse is ripped open, and Michael exits running.

MICHAEL

(In a New York accent)
Aaaaaaagh! I'm dying in
there!

Cribbage stands center stage, an uncomfortable smile frozen on his face, but there is an explosive laugh from the audience, and Cribbage's eyes widen. He smiles to the audience as though it had all been part of the act.

INT. THEATER BACKSTAGE

Cribbage is sitting backstage in a chair writing on a clipboard. AMANDA SMITH walks up to Cribbage. She's a pretty brunette but she looks disheveled and sick.

AMANDA

I'm really sorry Mr.
Cribbage. I got so sick!

CRIBBAGE

Don't worry, sweetie. It's
all for the best. Believe
me. Go home and get better,
sugar pop.

Amanda leaves. There are people striking the set and others just walking around.

CRIBBAGE (V.O.)

Serendipity. The crowd loved Michael's little disaster so much that I made it a regular part of the show. I had Velcro sewed into the back of the horse suit. Every night, Michael would tear himself out of the horse, and when he did, the audience always cracked up. Who can figure? Sadism?

INT. THEATER STAGE -- NIGHT

Michael tears himself out of the horse suit in a panic and runs screaming stage right. The audience laughs.

INT. BACK STAGE -- NIGHT

Michael's face is wide-eyed and he is sweaty and out of breath. He hears the crowd's laughter and turns to look back on stage as if staring back into a nightmare. He sits in a folding metal chair, picks up a towel and wipes the sweat off his face. His hands are shaking.

CRIBBAGE (V.O.)

Changing that scene was good for Amanda too. She was too pretty to hide in the suit anyway, so I got her a little background singing part with the other girls and everyone was happy. Well, not Michael too much.

INT. THEATER STAGE

A cowboy is standing next to a fence doing the spoken part of a song with a swing guitar accompaniment from the orchestra pit. He has a lariat and is motioning with it as he speaks. On the fence three cowgirls are seated. Two are blond and the other is Amanda.

COWBOY

(talking to the music)

A cowpoke town folk round
here know
Can rope and brand but does
it slow
He rides in the saddle
rocking to and fro
And he's everybody's favorite
cowboy

AMANDA AND TWO OTHER FEMALE SINGERS

(Singing)

Pokey, Pokey Laredo!

At drawing fast he just ain't
 worth a dime
 Pokey, Pokey Laredo!
 They call him Pokey 'cause he
 likes to take his time.

COWBOY

(talking to the music)
 There was a gunfight once and
 Pokey won
 'Cause it took him so long to
 draw his gun
 The other fella died from
 standing in the sun
 He's everybody's favorite
 cowboy

AMANDA AND TWO OTHER FEMALE SINGERS

(Singing)

Pokey, Pokey Laredo!
 At drawing fast he just ain't worth a dime
 Pokey, Pokey Laredo!
 The girls all love him 'cause he likes to take his
 time.

INT. PRACTICE ROOM -- DAY

THE BUCKIN' BRONX are jamming. The band members are dressed in ordinary street clothes. The band consists of two guitarists, a bass, a keyboard player and a DRUMMER. The words "BUCKIN' BRONX" are stenciled on the bass drum. Above the words is the brand name of the drums, "LUDWIG." Cribbage has joined the group and is singing. He has a guitar. The song is "Tell Someone Your Dreams." There is a TV in the room and it is on.

CRIBBAGE (V.O.)

Three nights a week I had the Buckin' Bronx in the orchestra pit playing. And I jammed with them once or twice a week too. The practice sessions were a testing ground for new material. We played all kinds of stuff. And I'd occasionally go over to one of their regular gigs on 47th Street and sit in for a few tunes.

CRIBBAGE

(singing)

Dreams are the only thing 'kept me going so far.
Just dreams and the sound of my guitar.
Tell someone your dreams and they'll know who you
are.
Just from your dreams and the sound of your
guitar.
Tell someone your dreams and they'll know who you
are.
Just from your dreams. Your dreams, your dreams
and the sound of your guitar.

The song ends with a screaming 6 add 9 chord.

DRUMMER

Woo! Old Storm Kings ending!

The TV can be heard now.

CRIBBAGE

Speaking of which.

Cribbage unplugs his guitar and walks to the TV. He turns up the sound.

THE TV

After a long stay in Manhattan's Westside Hospital, James McKay is traveling home to the Shawnee, where a deranged fan shot the former Storm Kings leader and self-proclaimed peacenik after an evening recording session. McKay's arm is still in a cast having been broken by the barrage of bullets that nearly killed him, but the cast will be off soon, and he will regain full use of the arm, doctors say. No word on his plans.

Cribbage stares at the screen.

EXT. SIDEWALK LEADING TO THE DOOR OF THE OFFICES OF
DIAMOND POINT STUDIOS -- DAY

Cribbage is walking Pokey on a leash. When they arrive at the door, Cribbage picks Pokey up, gathers the leash, and pushes open the door.

INT. OFFICES OF DIAMOND POINT STUDIOS

A RECEPTIONIST is at her desk inside.

RECEPTIONIST

Good morning, Mr. Cribbage.
How are you today?

CRIBBAGE

Great!

RECEPTIONIST

And how are you, Pokey?

Cribbage grasps Pokey's jaw and moves the dog's muzzle, pretending that the dog is talking.

CRIBBAGE

I'm great too!

Cribbage giggles. He walks with pokey through another door and into the hallway beyond.

INT. HALLWAYS AND OFFICES OF DIAMOND POINT STUDIOS

Cribbage is walking through the hallways and offices carrying Pokey. Cribbage sees James McKay talking with two other men. One is THE STUDIO DIRECTOR. McKay's right arm is in a cast.

MCKAY

Just so long as we have that studio for the whole two weeks.

THE STUDIO DIRECTOR

Yes, it's already scheduled. No problem. We're both gonna be there anyway in case you need something. And to get you a safe ride home.

MCKAY

Sounds great. See you then.

The two men leave and Cribbage walks up to McKay

CRIBBAGE

James McKay! Sylvester T. Cribbage!

He sticks out his hand and McKay shakes it.

MCKAY

What's the big, gold-embroidered T stand for, Mr. Cribbage?

CRIBBAGE

(to McKay and then to Pokey)
Terrific! What else? Oh, sorry; Terrier. That's right!

Cribbage laughs at his own bad joke unapologetically and then looks back to McKay.

CRIBBAGE

You know, James. I have that big show Laredo in town. I assume you've at least heard of it.

McKay just looks at him.

CRIBBAGE

Well, it provides a musical opportunity of sorts. You see, my worst nightmare is to wake up singing my very own "Good-bye Trail Mates" for the ten thousandth time when I could occasionally be doing some fresh material.

MCKAY

So?

CRIBBAGE

So I've got plenty to work with, but I lack a collaborator.

MCKAY

Now you're describing my worst nightmare. Take it up with my booking agent. The same goes for your little dog, too.

McKay walks off as if Cribbage ceased to exist.

CRIBBAGE

(to

Pokey)

Pay no attention to him. I'll bet he doesn't even have a booking agent.

INT. CRIBBAGE'S APARTMENT

Cribbage is typing at his desk wearing wire-framed reading glasses. He is an expert typist. He types the words "THE RELUCTANT COWBOY, A MEMOIR" at the top of the page. He continues typing fast.

CRIBBAGE (V.O.)

People have always said I had a lot of audacity. And

asking James McKay to be my collaborator the first time we ever met was pretty bold even for me. Just the same, one listen to his last record convinced me that he might need me more than I needed him. Convincing him was the problem.

INT. STUDIO -- NIGHT

McKay is in the studio, his left arm in a cast. He is standing in front of an organ. There are earphones on the top of the organ. A console is nearby. Musicians are leaving the room. Two men remain with McKay. One is THE STUDIO DIRECTOR.

MCKAY

I'm going to listen to what we've done so far so I'll be ready for tomorrow.

THE STUDIO DIRECTOR

Okay. I think we're going down to the office for a while. Take your time and come on down when you're through. Then we'll get you home.

McKay is alone. He puts on the earphones and takes a step toward the console. He laughs and sees his reflection laughing in the glass between himself and the control room. But when he stops, it is as though the reflection does not. It keeps on laughing. His face in the glass changes as the reflection brays in bravado revealing itself as brainless, selfish, contemptible. McKay looks horrified by what he sees.

He closes his eyes. He steps back to the organ. His right hand touches the keyboard and falls into a three-note F chord. A song comes to him all at once: Part A, Bridge, and lyrics. And he sings.

MCKAY

Just today at work
 Something set me to thinking
 And I wanted to go home
 And maybe fix myself a drink
 Today while I was working
 Something came right out of nowhere
 And, oh, I just wanted to go home
 Hide it away we just hide it away
 Cold is this heart of mine
 Hide it away we just hide it away
 And let the years blow by

MONTAGE: The Storm Kings are playing on stage. The Storm Kings are in the studio. The Storm Kings are goofing off together. McKay is composing with his Storm Kings songwriting partner. A peace march is seen. McKay is with his wife and son. His son is walking into the distance.

MCKAY (O.S.)

You can turn your head away
 From your thoughts and all your fears
 Never to be free from any word or deed, my
 friend
 For your shoulder on the door
 Just grows weak against the years
 And what is done
 Is coming back again

Hide it away we just hide it away
 Cold is this heart of mine
 Hide it away
 We just hide it away
 And let the years blow by
 Don't you believe you can read what's in their
 eyes
 Behind the windows of every soul lies a sea of
 tears
 Yesterday at work something set me to thinking
 Of something that I hid away for years

The collage ends and McKay is seen singing the last verse.

MCKAY

You can run from the truth
 and be running from a lie
 But you can't run from yourself
 no matter how you try
 Yesterday at work something set me to thinking
 And I wanted to go home and cry

BLACK SCREEN

SUPER: "MANCHESTER, UNITED KINGDOM. 2:00 AM."

A ringing telephone. VALERIE MCKAY answers.

VALERIE

(Groggily)

Hello.

MCKAY (V.O.)

Val.

FADE IN

Valerie snaps on the lamp on the headboard of her bed where she has just awoken. Her eyes are almost closed.

VALERIE
(immediate recognition)
James.

MCKAY (V.0.)
I wanted to talk to you.

VALERIE
"Do you know what time it is here?"

MCKAY (V.0.)
No. I assume some ungodly hour. Sorry; thoughtless. It's just like me, which is actually what I'm calling about.

VALERIE
What do you mean?

MCKAY (V.0.)
Squaring accounts.

VALERIE
Oh, James, it's much too late for that.

MCKAY (V.0.)
Is it?

VALERIE

Of course, it is.

MCKAY (V.0.)

I was hoping you were an idealist of sorts. One who says its never too late. I've been an idealist in words only, I think.

VALERIE

It's never too late to make an overture, I suppose.

MCKAY (V.0.)

I'm making one. It's all I can do.

VALERIE

It's nice of you. But it doesn't change anything. If you want me to say all that happened never mattered...

MCKAY (V.0.)

It's not that. I want to make amends.

VALERIE

Well, that's what's too late, isn't it?

MCKAY (V.0.)

I know. So, since I can't change the past, I want to say I'm sorry. I've become introspective. Suddenly. Belatedly.

VALERIE

Introspection is a great gift.

MCKAY (V.0.)

And the lack of it a great failing.

VALERIE

Yes.

MCKAY (V.0.)

Thanks for not hanging up on me.

VALERIE

I wouldn't do that, James.

MCKAY (V.0.)

I guess you could say I hung up on you and Danny a long time ago.

VALERIE

You could. And I forgave you a long time ago. No guilt, James.

MCKAY (V.0.)

How is Danny doing?

VALERIE

He's doing fine. There have been rough times, but there is some forgiveness there too.

MCKAY (V.0.)

Thanks, Val.

VALERIE

James, back when you were hurt, a part of me wanted to call you.

MCKAY (V.0.)

Maybe we can talk sometime again.

VALERIE

That would be nice, James.
Good-bye.

Valerie hangs up the phone.

INT. CRIBBAGE'S BEDROOM — EARLY IN THE MORNING

Cribbage is in bed asleep. Strains of "The Flip Side of Love" can be heard. The doorbell rings. It rings again. Cribbage stirs, rolls over. The sound of the song decreases in volume. He sits up, and shakes his head as the music fades, comes back a little louder, and then disappears altogether. Pokey is lying next to him and wakes up.

The dog barks, jumps off of the bed, and runs for the door. Cribbage gets up out of bed and starts for the door wearing cowboy decorated pajamas. He grabs a robe from a closet and puts it on.

CRIBBAGE

Let's see who the hell it
could be, Pokey.

Cribbage opens the door. James McKay is standing at the top of the cement stairs leading up from the street. He has a friendly smile on his face. Cribbage leans back as if reading a book without his glasses.

MCKAY

I was wondering when you
wanted to get together.

CRIBBAGE

(beat)

How about now?

MCKAY

That's good for me.

CRIBBAGE

Come in. Let me get dressed.
Have you eaten? Quiet Pokey.

INT. THE COMPASS ROSE DINER — DAY

McKay and Cribbage are on the sidewalk in front of a downtown eatery. The sign on the place says, "COMPASS ROSE DINER, NORTH, SOUTH, EAST, WEST." There is a

large compass rose on the wall with a rose motif. They go inside and walk to an empty table. It is fairly busy with customers who seem especially busy to pretend that they don't notice who has come in. Cribbage and MCKAY walk through the diner to an empty table. It is fairly busy with customers who seem especially busy to pretend that they don't notice who has come in. The two men sit. A bus boy comes by and gives them each a menu.

CRIBBAGE

You look at those country guys -- you know, the hat bands. They actually believe in the hats as dumb as that may sound. And they've just got to wear 'em, even when they're not working.

MCKAY

You don't wear yours at home?

CRIBBAGE

I'm from Brooklyn for Christ's sake.

MCKAY

You wear one on stage.

CRIBBAGE

Well of course, but it's just a prop as well as a joke. The cowboys are make believe. The costume goes with the music. Like gladiator costumes go with heavy metal.

MCKAY

You know, they're not real
gladiators.

CRIBBAGE

I'm hep.

MCKAY

Well, tell me about this
country/western musical of
yours.

CRIBBAGE

Everyone says country/western
but never the twain shall
meet. The themes differ, of
course, but more importantly,
western players play swing
half of the time and the
country boys just don't.

MCKAY

I know the western tradition.
Thirties and forties swing,
chunk! chunk! guitar players
a la Freddy Green, Cindy
Walker tunes played by Bob
Wills. I admire it, but I
don't play much of it.

CRIBBAGE

I'll give you the chance to.
You'll morph along with the
show. But I need some help
on the current stuff first --

at least long enough to fill
out the next record album.

MCKAY

Getting some resistance to
change, are you? Producers
leaning hard on you? Or do
they know your plans?

CRIBBAGE

You haven't seen the show.

MCKAY

No.

CRIBBAGE

Well, tickets are hard to
get, but I think I can find
you one.

The waitress LORELEI ENGEL comes to the table. She is
blond and a striking beauty.

LORELEI

I'm Lorelei, and I won't
pretend I don't know who you
are, James.

MCKAY

(to Cribbage)

It's okay. It's worse when
they pretend not to know.

LORELEI

How's your arm?

MCKAY

The cast comes off tomorrow,
thank you.

He sticks out his good hand and Lorelei shakes it.

CRIBBAGE

Are you pretending you don't
know who I am?

LORELEI

No, I'm not.

MCKAY

(to Cribbage)

She isn't even going to ask.

Cribbage points to the menu.

CRIBBAGE

I'll have the Western if
that's any clue.

LORELEI

Will you have hash browns...

A waitress shouts out to Lorelei.

WAITRESS (O.S.)

He always has it the same
way, Lorelei. The cooks all
know.

Lorelei looks in the direction of the waitress's
voice.

LORELEI

Thank you.

She looks at McKay.

LORELEI

How about you , James?

MCKAY

I'll hazard the same.

Lorelei leaves to put in the order.

CRIBBAGE

(looking in the direction Lorelei has gone)
She's new here.

MCKAY

She shouldn't be here at all.
She should be in a red dress
sitting on a grand piano
somewhere singing "Miss Otis
Regrets."

CRIBBAGE

Lorelei, you know, was a
German siren.

McKay

Then she can sing. Hey,
there's something you could
do. Hire her and change the
name of the play from Laredo
to Lorelei.

CRIBBAGE

(beat)

That isn't as bad an idea as
it sounds.

INT. CRIBBAGE'S APARTMENT --DAY

Cribbage is sitting at the
piano, but he is holding a
square-shouldered dreadnaught
guitar. McKay is sitting
next to him in an easy chair.

CRIBBAGE

Recycling is the name of the
game in a stage musical. Your
audience has time to remember
only a few melodies and
themes, so whenever you can,
you give them the familiar.

MCKAY

I think you need to tell me
now why that isn't a bore.

CRIBBAGE

Was it a bore for you to
create a great chorus and
repeat it two or even three
times in a song? That's a
mini musical.

MCKAY

You make an interesting
point.

CRIBBAGE

Creatively it's been a challenge for me. And you're often as happy with your remakes as your originals. How hard can you bend that song before it's no longer familiar? Huh? Is it even a remake if you take the talking guitar bit from one song and sing it as the melody in another with different words? It's like anything else. You get what you put into it.

MCKAY

Fair enough.

Cribbage strums a D chord on the guitar.

CRIBBAGE

Listen to that. Why does every hack guitar player from Maine to Albuquerque play in D?

MCKAY

Playing variations around that little D shape has been the basis for about ten thousand great songs.

CRIBBAGE

I'm hep. But is also the trademark of the 60-year-old country singer who has that hokey Nashville accent and that big, pre-emphysemic cigarette voice.

MCKAY

How does the cosmos self destruct when someone plays in D?

CRIBBAGE

It's the voicing that does that, James.

He plays another D on the guitar.

CRIBBAGE

I can hear the lame sound of a vanilla D a block away.

MCKAY

And it isn't pleasing to your ear "Hokey" is it? Like the nasty old Nashville accent? The way you talk sounds funny to me too. Beware of elitism, Sir Cribbage.

CRIBBAGE

I don't think enough of myself to be accused of that. But I do think it's hokey to

have a required accent. It gets stale. Fast.

MCKAY

So everyone in Laredo talks and sings al natural?

CRIBBAGE

Well, Pokey Laredo -- that's me -- sounds more like Bugs Bunny than James Arness.

MCKAY

Well, he's a New York rabbit.

CRIBBAGE

The other actors and singers tend to do the accent. Sadly. Lay it on pretty thick too but the audience expects it. But it's not Nashville; It's generic, backwoods bumpkin talk.

MCKAY

All the same to me -- just like what key you play in.

CRIBBAGE

Well, let's stay out of D at least.

MCKAY

How about drop D?

Cribbage turns the tuning peg on the sixth string and lowers it from E to D. Then he strums the D chord again.

CRIBBAGE

Listen to that drone. Great for writing a tune for bag pipes.

MCKAY

You're irreverent.

CRIBBAGE

You can hear that tuning three blocks away.

MCKAY

I've written in drop D.

CRIBBAGE

You have. I think once. Your instincts are good. Write another that way and it will sound just the same. There's a reason the guitar is tuned the way it is. I like to play real guitar.

MCKAY

Real guitar? You're so full of shit!

CRIBBAGE

No, no! It's like the arrangement of the keys on a typewriter. There are ways

to design the keys to make typing as easy as playing hack guitar tuned to open G. Only the same arms with the same frequently used letters would get stuck together all the time.

Cribbage puts his two index fingers out and crosses them.

CRIBBAGE

It's the exact same thing.

MCKAY

You've got the whole fucking world figured out, haven't you?

CRIBBAGE

I have to admit that lately things are beginning to make fairly good sense to me.

MCKAY

Are you sure you aren't just crazy?

CRIBBAGE

Not enough to be noticed.

MCKAY

I disagree. You don't even think it's crazy to ask me to sit right down and write you a little western tune.

CRIBBAGE

It isn't unless you can't. By
the way, B flat would be a
very nice key to try it in.

INT. MCKAY'S APARTMENT

McKay sits at the window composing with an Ovation acoustic guitar. It's pouring outside, and the window is streaked with rain. He plays a "vanilla D" and sings a short western song he has written, "When the Rain Falls in the Valley."

MCKAY (singing)

When I see the rain fall in the valley.
Do you see it too?
When the rain falls in the valley
I always think of you
When I feel the wind blow down the canyon
Do you feel it too?
When the wind blows down the canyon
I always think of you
Life goes on
Nothing lasts for long
You look away once and it's gone
When I see the sun set on the water
Do you see it too?
When the sun sets on the water
Can't help but think of you

INT. CRIBBAGE'S APARTMENT

Cribbage is typing at his desk.

CRIBBAGE (V.O.)

Well, of course, he went right ahead and wrote it in dumbbell D. But I had to admit that I liked it. Short, sweet, tearful. And the title alone put it into the western genre. He knew that instinctively I guess. All he had to do was put the word "valley" in the song and people would think "Red River Valley, the West, cowboys, and saying adieu to your sweet little filly.

INT. THEATER STAGE -- DAY

Cribbage is on the stage directing stage hands to arrange giant plywood gravestones with epitaphs. McKay is there but isn't helping with any of the work.

One epitaph reads, "He called Bill Smith a Liar," another "Here Lies Lester Moore, four slugs from a forty-four, no Les, No More." Cribbage becomes impatient and starts moving some of them into position himself. He grabs one that says, "Ann Parker, Aged 111, the Good Die Young." A worker behind him has one that reads, "Jake Jenkins, Nevermore to Be"

CRIBBAGE (V.O.)

I wanted something to sing that would give the people time to read the funny epitaphs.

Cribbage takes time to put down the work and look at McKay.

CRIBBAGE

What do you think?

MCKAY

Nice. I'm going to look around. I'll find you when I'm done.

CRIBBAGE

Good enough.

McKay leaves. Cribbage continues giving directions to the stage hands.

INT. CRIBBAGE'S APARTMENT -- DAY

Cribbage and McKay come in the door. Cribbage is cheerfully singing and dancing

CRIBBAGE

And when the working day is done
I ain't gonna hang around here
I wanna go home and blow the foam off a great
big, frosty mug of beer!

Cribbage opens the refrigerator and takes out a bottle of beer. It's an off brand called COTTONWOOD BREWERY PALE ALE. He sings some more as he takes the magnet bottle opener off of the door of the refrigerator. He pops off the cap with the opener, throws the bottle cap in the trash bag under the sink, and takes a swig. Then he starts singing again.

CRIBBAGE

When I've got troubles,
you'll always hear me say,
"Help's just a beer away!"

Cribbage lifts the beer bottle up to McKay.

CRIBBAGE

Want one?

MCKAY

No way. I can't drink.

CRIBBAGE

Can't.

MCKAY

You've read the stories. A
mean Mr. Hyde, I can be.
Can't remember the night
before, so I wake up
horrified at what I'm going
to be told I've done.

CRIBBAGE

Don't mind if I have one, do you, Mean Mr. Peace Love
Brother?

MCKAY

Not at all.

Cribbage takes a swig of the beer and starts singing
and dancing again. McKay is not amused, but lets
Cribbage finish.

CRIBBAGE

Early in the mornin' when
you've had lots of sleep,
that's when the coffee's
sweet! And when you've been
working and you have yourself
a brew. That's when your
dreams come true.

MCKAY

Do you fucking wake up
singing?

CRIBBAGE

I wake up hearing music.

MCKAY

Your clock radio.

CRIBBAGE

No. Music that isn't there.

MCKAY

You mean in your head.

CRIBBAGE

No, it's outside my head.

MCKAY

It's outside?

CRIBBAGE

Yes, definitely outside.

MCKAY

If it's outside and it isn't there, doesn't it mean you're crazy?

CRIBBAGE

I don't think so. You see, as a boy I used to listen to the air -- this was before the Storm Kings and transistor radios and I didn't like Elvis, so there wasn't much for me to listen to that I did like. Ah, except Satchmo. I'd listen to the air and hear "Loveless Love" or "Hello Dolly." I could make the background noise in a room sound like anything.

MCKAY

When the TV went off the air, did you hear voices in the white noise?

CRIBBAGE

Actually I didn't. And I can't even hear the music now. Well, I can, but it isn't voluntary.

MCKAY

The hearing of voices is an indication of serious mental illness.

CRIBBAGE

Well, I often wake up to it,
especially if I've had too
many of these hoppy beers.

MCKAY

Hops are hallucinogenic?

CRIBBAGE

They are to me.

MCKAY

You're a queer buggerer. And
bloody full of yourself.

CRIBBAGE

I'm not bragging that I can
create anything from what I
hear, James. It's all stuff
I've already listened to a
hundred times. In fact it's
just annoying now. Like
having a song stuck in your
head when you're trying to
sleep.

Cribbage starts to sing again, eyes wide with feigned
misery.

CRIBBAGE

(Singing loudly)

Silence is golden, golden!

MCKAY

Oh, thanks.

CRIBBAGE

Now you can stay up late and
create!

MCKAY

Create what?

CRIBBAGE

Well, I'll tell you.

Cribbage guzzles the beer, opens the refrigerator, and
grabs another. He pops off the top with the opener,
throws the bottle cap and the empty in the trash bag
under the sink. He takes a long draught.

CRIBBAGE

You saw the new set.

MCKAY

A bunch of funny epitaphs.

CRIBBAGE

Yeah, the jokes stolen lock
stock and barrel from Boot
Hill. Real belly busters
too.

MCKAY

You want a song to go with a
bunch of fucking gravestones?

CRIBBAGE

Exactly. It will give the
people something to listen to
while they think about the
jokes.

MCKAY

I need something to think
about while I listen to you
talk.

CRIBBAGE

Are you game or not?

MCKAY

I'll have a go at it. But
here's an observation: the
show would be a lot better
without your ridiculous
plywood marble orchard.

INT. THEATER STAGE -- DAY

Cribbage and the stage hands are taking down the
plywood gravestones and putting up a movie screen.

CRIBBAGE (V.O.)

When I heard the song, I knew
I had to get rid of the
gravestones and silly
epitaphs. The song didn't
fit the set. McKay had
written me another vanilla D
tune, but it was a fairly
serious song.

INT. THEATER STAGE -- NIGHT

Cribbage is on the stage sitting on a stool singing.
He is playing "Nevermore to Be" on a J-200 Gibson
jumbo guitar out of a D shape. Behind him are screens

with a slide show of late 1800s photographs of people young and old and scenes of the prairie frontier.

CRIBBAGE

When the leaves turn gray in
September and the winter is
riding on the breeze...

EXT. CENTRAL PARK -- DAY

Cribbage is walking Pokey on his leash. Pokey's back arches and Cribbage is seen to grimace slightly. He reaches into his pants pocket and extracts a plastic bag. He is next seen walking and twirling the bag, which is partly full. He goes to a trash can and drops the bag into it.

CRIBBAGE (V.O.)

McKay took my advice about
recycling existing material.
He stole my own talking
guitar riff off of "Down the
Canyon" nearly note for note
and laid it over the song so
I didn't even have to learn a
new part. But I decided to
have one of the Buckin' Bronx
pick it out on his telecaster
in the orchestra pit while I
just strummed away with a D
shape.

EXT. RESIDENTIAL STREET IN THE CITY -- DAY
The music continues in the background. A plump, MIDDLE-AGED WOMAN walking her poodle passes Cribbage, who is walking Pokey.

CRIBBAGE
(smiling sweetly)
Hello, Mrs. McGreggor.

MIDDLE-AGED WOMAN
Good afternoon, Sylvester.

After she passes, Cribbage rolls his eyes and sticks out his tongue.

Cribbage continues walking Pokey on his leash.

CRIBBAGE (V.O.)
(singing)
They say the western sky goes
on forever, but there's no
sky wider than a person's
eyes.

CRIBBAGE (V.O.)
It struck me as a real
western too. No swing in it,
but we would get to that
later.

CRIBBAGE (V.O.)
When word got around that McKay was composing tunes for me, people couldn't understand it. But I knew exactly why McKay threw in with me. You can't create without any context and he didn't have any. I had a living, breathing show. Who cared if there were

cowboys in it? McKay realized he was going nowhere -- grinding out crap only to get shot for his trouble.

EXT. DIFFERENT AREA OF RESIDENTIAL STREET IN THE CITY
-- DAY

The music continues in the background. Cribbage is still walking Pokey on his leash.

CRIBBAGE (V.O.)

I never offered to pay McKay for doing this piecework. It would never have crossed my mind to figure out what the hourly wage of a guy like that would be.

EXT. DIFFERENT AREA OF RESIDENTIAL STREET IN THE CITY
-- DAY

The music continues in the background. Cribbage is still walking Pokey on his leash.

CRIBBAGE (V.O.)

We never talked about money. He could pick up royalties from the records, of course, and get some chicken feed from sheet music. But he was already worth a quarter of a billion dollars, so I didn't feel guilty. McKay was where he needed to be and he knew it. I was doing the guy a favor by not charging him.

CRIBBAGE (V.O.)

(singing the last line of the song)
Think of all the people
nevermore to be.

Pokey's back arches and Cribbage is seen again to grimace slightly. He reaches into his pants pocket but is out of plastic bags. He slaps his hip pockets and shirt pockets somewhat frantically. Then, furtively, he looks left and right and then behind himself.

CRIBBAGE

(giving a quick tug to Pokey's leash)
Let's cheese it, buddy.

Cribbage and Pokey hurry away from the scene of the crime.

INT. DOCTOR'S OFFICE -- DAY

Cribbage is sitting on the receiving room cot. The DOCTOR is standing in front of him.

CRIBBAGE

I just don't want anything
that will interfere with my
monomania. It's what makes me
who I am.

DOCTOR

Oh, there are some drugs that
will do just that, but I
usually refer a patient to a
specialist before I
prescribe any of those.

CRIBBAGE

Do you think I need a
specialist?

DOCTOR

I'm not sure, frankly. I
think we can start with my
humble level of expertise
until we can see where we
are. Your symptoms on the
face of them are quite
serious, but if you were as
troubled as your symptoms
suggest, you'd be under
expert care already. There's
no way you'd be as successful
and productive as you are if
there were anything seriously
wrong with you. When was this
last ..er.. vision of yours?

CRIBBAGE

One month ago. Two years
since the one before that.

DOCTOR

And it's when you wake up --
right?-- when you see someone
there?

CRIBBAGE

Yes.

DOCTOR

Hear them too?

CRIBBAGE

Yup.

DOCTOR

Well, auditory hallucination is easy for the mind to do. For it to conjure up a talking apparition is another thing. But I'm guessing it's something not so serious. Lots of people just wake up dreaming. It could be nothing more than that. Let's try a medication that's good at getting rid of what you call a feeling of . . .

CRIBBAGE

(interrupting)

Unreality. I'll bet it's one of the side effects of what you're going to prescribe.

DOCTOR

Oh, it is. That's called paradoxical effect when the drug gives you more of the problem you've got. But don't worry; that's unlikely. Let's make an easy positive move and treat this unreality issue first.

CRIBBAGE

Let's.

DOCTOR

(writing on a pad)

The correct dose will be printed out for you. You can take one more pill if you have a problem but never more than one more than what's prescribed daily. Okay?

CRIBBAGE

Okay.

INT. CRIBBAGE'S APARTMENT

Cribbage is sitting on the piano stool, his back to the keyboard, and he is holding and playing a guitar. McKay is sitting next to him in a chair. He is also playing a guitar, an Ovation acoustic. They are playing in swing style Gershwin's "I've got Rhythm." The song has them both playing a chord every beat with the rhythm chop on the second and fourth beats.

They finish the song.

MCKAY

That's so much fun.

CRIBBAGE

I've got a poppy little number worked out. It seems as though it should lead to another song, but what that could be I don't know.

He plays the guitar and sings.

CRIBBAGE

Sometimes it seems that the world's just the kind
 it should be.
 And lately it seems that the sun just shines on me
 When I look into the mirror
 I don't see the sadness I used to see
 Since I met you I'm so glad to be me!
 Oh, yeah! Oh, yeah! Oh, yeah! Oh, yeah!

MCKAY

Yeah! Yeah! Yeah! Sounds
 familiar. And you're right
 about it being poppy. In
 fact, I can still hear the
 sound of bubble gum popping.
 You're having trouble
 inspiring me, Mr. Cribbage.

CRIBBAGE

Inspiration comes from
 within.

MCKAY

Don't get preachy.

CRIBBAGE

I'm just telling you like it
 is. Some British kid in
 India teaches you basic folk
 picking and you found
 inspiration enough to give
 him a lesson in what could be
 done with it.

MCKAY

What song?

CRIBBAGE

The one about your mom.

MCKAY

You've been reading all the popular fiction about me.

CRIBBAGE

Who hasn't? Great stories. Did you really get the hook for "Tonight Only" off of a theater ticket?

MCKAY

Yeah, but I think I work differently now.

CRIBBAGE

Well, I know you do. Your problem is you shouldn't.

Cribbage turns to the piano.

CRIBBAGE

You didn't need the other guys in the Storm Kings to come up with a better bridge on that last so-called hit of yours. Pokey could have helped.

Pokey looks up eagerly from his place on the carpet.

Cribbage balances the guitar in his lap plays a major 7th with both hands on the piano and sings mockingly with saccharin sweetness.

Pokey lies back down somewhat dejectedly.

CRIBBAGE

You're beautiful!

Cribbage turns back to look at McKay.

CRIBBAGE

You get stuck for inspiration and resort to a big sugar-frosted major seventh. Your fans will develop pop pellagra feasting on a diet of corn like that.

MCKAY

You say I'm slipping.

CRIBBAGE

No, James. You're resting on your lapels.

Cribbage looks at his watch and gets up.

CRIBBAGE

Show time. Hey, could you do me a favor and feed Pokey? Here's the key. Er...if you could get a chance to walk him. He'll pee on the carpet eventually if you don't. The leash is on the piano.

He hands McKay the key with the long chain.

CRIBBAGE

Go ahead and keep this one.
I've got a spare.

MCKAY

Is it okay to leave my guitar
here? I don't want to be
lugging it back and forth.

CRIBBAGE

Sure. Don't forget to lock
up. Thanks. Bye.

Cribbage leaves. McKay gets up and walks to the kitchen. He opens the refrigerator. There is a can of dog food whose label reads, "HAPPY TAILS DOG FOOD." Next to it is a bottle of beer. McKay picks the bottle up. The label on the bottle reads, "COTTONWOOD BREWERY PALE ALE, RIVERSIDE, CALIFORNIA."

INT. CRIBBAGE'S APARTMENT

Cribbage is typing at his desk.

CRIBBAGE (V.O.)

Well, wasn't that something
else? I ask him to write a
little tune to follow "Oh,
Yeah!" And my song turns into
a 10-second intro for his
smash folk hit "Down by the
Riverside."

INT. THEATER STAGE

Cribbage is center stage on a stool playing a guitar and singing. The spotlight is on him.

CRIBBAGE

Oh, yeah! Oh, yeah! Oh, yeah!

Oh, yeah!

Cribbage switches from strumming and begins standard folk picking of the guitar which leads to the McKay composition. He is an expert at picking the guitar.

CRIBBAGE

There's a place
Down by the riverside
Down by the river
Down by the riverside
A place I know
Down by the riverside
Down by the river
Down by the riverside
Where the snowy white down
From the cottonwood trees
Is floatin' all around
In the summer breeze
You can see it up high in the air
How I wish that I were there.

Stage lights shine on Amanda and another female singer. They are seated near Cribbage and sing "oo" in harmony to back him up.

CRIBBAGE

And you can sit
and watch the water go by

Down by the river
Down by the riverside
And when the night falls
Down by the riverside
Sometimes the water seems
A hundred miles wide
And hours fly
Days go by
Seasons start and end
Years ride away on the wind
And we may never meet again

But maybe I'll see you
Down by the riverside
Down by the river
Down by the riverside

And we could talk
Down by the riverside
Down by the river
Down by the riverside

I know a cut-off bank there
Where you can dangle your feet
While the hot burning sand
And the summer heat
Make you thirsty as the water is sweet
I wish that we could meet
Down by the riverside

INT. CRIBBAGE'S APARTMENT -- DAY

The orchestral part of the song consisting of only the music and "oos" from the back-up singers is heard in the background. Cribbage is typing. The heading on the page reads: "THE RELUCTANT COWBOY, A MEMOIR."

CRIBBAGE (V.O.)

What did a guy from
Manchester know about
cottonwood trees anyway -- or
a guy from Brooklyn for that
matter? He got it off the
beer bottle. Brewed in
Riverside, CA no less. I was
getting a lot more than I
bargained for here, but I
couldn't gripe about that.
Well, I was tempted to when
one of my songs wound up on
the B side of the single.

INSERT -- THE 45 SINGLE

Cribbage picks up a 45 single labeled "Down by the
Riverside JAMES MCKAY." He flips it over to reveal the
title of the flip side. "The Flip Side of Love
SYLVESTER T. CRIBBAGE."

INT. THEATER STAGE

Cribbage and the back-up singers finish the song.

CRIBBAGE

That water rolls along.
Nobody can pretend
That it's ever to return
When it's gone around the
bend.
Still I hope beyond hope, my
friend, One day we'll meet
again
Down by the riverside.

Down by the riverside.
Down by the riverside.

INT. CRIBBAGE'S LIVING ROOM -- DAY

McKay and Cribbage are in the living room.

MCKAY

You're taking my advice?
You're changing Laredo to
Lorelei? After that diner
doll?

CRIBBAGE

Why not? We get a blondie in
a red dress who can really
sing, deck the cast out in
tuxedos, and we're off and
running. I've got a million
ideas. It's how I created
Laredo.

MCKAY

You'll need a song.

CRIBBAGE

Oh, I'm on it my friend. I
might need some help though.

MCKAY

What's the name of the song?

CRIBBAGE

Lorelei! What else?

MCKAY

Lorelei. Just don't get any ideas about my girl, Cribbage.

CRIBBAGE

Never crossed my mind.

MCKAY

You've never even been married?

CRIBBAGE

Nope.

MCKAY

How come?

CRIBBAGE

Well, I've had some bad luck that really seems like good luck now. And at the moment I don't need the distraction.

MCKAY

I'll bet that Amanda distracts you.

CRIBBAGE

Oh, it's not that I'm without libido, James. It's just that it's not worth it. To be blunt...

He puts a cupped hand by the side of his mouth.

CRIBBAGE

(whispering)

...every time I get what I
want, I want 'em to get!

MCKAY

Well, I've met some damnable
fools in my time, but you're
fucking daft. A goddamned
fool. When was the last time
you had to ask someone to
get? Love is what it's about.
Love.

CRIBBAGE

Oh, yeah? Love? Then when was
the last time you saw your
son?

MCKAY

(beat)

Touché. Well, I did call you
a fool to your face.

CRIBBAGE

A goddamed one.

MCKAY

(beat)

Sorry.

There's a short silence in the room.

MCKAY

Why don't you show me what
you've got of that song?

CRIBBAGE

I need another day or two.
But look at this.

He hands McKay a sheet of paper on which are the two names LAREDO! and LORELEI, the former just above the latter.

INSERT -- THE SHEET OF PAPER

CRIBBAGE

It's for the neon sign on the Bluebird Theater. See how both names match up and share letters? Only a few characters are different. We'll have those change blinking on and off Laredo! to Lorelei. A simple effect.

MCKAY

You know what you could do with the "i" in Lorelei...

EXT. THE BLUEBIRD THEATER -- NIGHT

The neon billing sign shows the letters flashing back and forth from LAREDO! to LORELEI!. The "i" in Lorelei begins to spin. A duplicate "i" is left on the sign, and then the spinning "i" becomes the exclamation point in "LORELEI!"

INT. CRIBBAGE'S BEDROOM -- NIGHT

Cribbage stirs in his bed. He awakes suddenly.

CRIBBAGE

What? Who's there?

MCKAY (O.S.)

Nobody but us famous rock
stars.

Cribbage turns on the light on his night stand.

McKay is sitting in the bedroom chair dressed entirely
in white.

CRIBBAGE

I shouldn't have given you
the key. What the hell are
you doing here?

MCKAY

I didn't need the key,
Sylvester.

CRIBBAGE

Well, I sure as hell didn't
leave the door unlocked.

MCKAY

You have no idea what it's
like to be murdered.

CRIBBAGE

But you weren't.

MCKAY

Actually, I was.

McKay disappears.

CRIBBAGE

(very loudly)

Shit!

Pokey lifts his head from the foot of the bed. Cribbage sits up in bed, pulls open the nightstand drawer, and removes a pill bottle. He opens it and takes one of the pills out. He puts it in his mouth and swallows it. He chases it with a gulp from a half-full bottle of beer taken from the stand. He then guzzles the rest of the bottle.

He stops a moment appearing to be considering something. Then he gets up and goes down the short hallway, snapping on the light to the living room.

McKay's Ovation guitar is there. Cribbage picks it up, holds it a moment, and puts it on the couch. The strings brushing against the couch fabric make a quiet ringing sound. Cribbage walks back to the hall and snaps off the living room light. He turns the corner into his bedroom.

For a moment all that is seen is the dimly lighted hallway and the glow of the light from Cribbage's bedroom. Then the light goes out.

EXT. NEW YORK CITY STREET

Lorelei Engel is walking down the street, and James McKay catches up with her. When he does, they stop to talk.

MCKAY

I was wondering if you could sing.

LORELEI

What?

MCKAY

I was wondering if you could sing.

LORELEI

Why?

MCKAY

Well, if you can, there's a part I think you could audition for.

LORELEI

Why would you think of me especially?

MCKAY

Because I believe in serendipity. You see, the character who sings is named Lorelei.

LORELEI

And how did that come to be?

MCKAY

Easy. Sylvester and I named her after you.

LORELEI

How is that serendipitous?

MCKAY

What?

LORELEI

And why in the world would you do that?

MCKAY

Well, you know.

LORELEI

Ah, I see. And now you're making a pass.

MCKAY

No, no!

LORELEI

I make a policy of never mixing with the rich and famous, James.

MCKAY

Why not?

LORELEI

I'm not that kind of girl.

MCKAY

I didn't think you were.

LORELEI

You hoped I was.

MCKAY

You think I'm that kind of
guy?

LORELEI

You all are.

MCKAY

I detect some bitterness
there. You've got an ex,
haven't you?

LORELEI

Yeah, and I've got two kids
too that I have to share with
the bastard.

MCKAY

Oh, bad scene. So?

LORELEI

So -- what?

MCKAY

Can you sing?

LORELEI

Not a note. Look. Maybe I'll see you at the diner. I won't be serving you though. I'm climbing the corporate ladder. Assistant manager. Starting tomorrow.

MCKAY

Congratulations. Then I'll see you later. I was just hoping you were waiting tables to keep yourself afloat while you looked for singing gigs.

LORELEI

I'm sorry you're disappointed.

MCKAY

I am actually a little, but I'm glad we got to talk.

LORELEI

(smiling)

Well, bye.

Lorelei walks off. McKay watches smiling for a while and then sighs, turns, and goes on his way.

INT. CRIBBAGE'S KITCHEN -- DAY

Pokey has his head in the cabinet below the kitchen sink and is pulling trash from the bag inside.

CRIBBAGE (O.S.)

Oh, you naughty dog!

Pokey, caught red-handed, slinks from the cabinet and cowers.

CRIBBAGE

Oh, No, no! Good dog. Good dog! I'm sorry! Did you think I liked the trash more than you?

He picks up a now happy Pokey and kisses him. He puts Pokey back on the kitchen floor.

CRIBBAGE

Why would I be mad at you?
What is that stuff there?
Something I was saving? Was it my special trash? Listen, I'm putting you in charge of the refuse department. From now on, that trash is yours. Go get it!

Pokey looks up, uncertain.

CRIBBAGE

Go and get it!

Pokey grabs the trash bag and shakes his head. Trash goes flying. Cribbage smiles.

There is a knock on the door. Cribbage walks to the living room and sees that McKay has let himself in.

The TV is on in the living room and McKay is distracted by it.

On the TV is a group of rodeo cowboys, hats in hand, heads bowed in prayer, some of them even kneeling in the rodeo arena. American flags are seen.

MCKAY

I didn't know cowboys were such little altar boys.

CRIBBAGE

They're not really calling on the Almighty. They're just stirring the waters.

MCKAY

What do you mean?

CRIBBAGE

To see if any objectors float to the top. There's a difference between piety and sanctimony.

MCKAY

You judge them rather harshly.

One of the kneeling cowboys on the screen with eyes lowered in prayer looks up furtively at the crowd. His eyes shift once from right to left.

CRIBBAGE

Well, they're only fooling themselves. They don't fool me. Just my personal opinion.

MCKAY

Which are you -- pious or sanctimonious?

CRIBBAGE

Let's nope not sanctimonious at least. I'm afraid to say what I think I am. Just because you say you're something doesn't mean you are.

MCKAY

You're talking about me.

CRIBBAGE

(beat)

You're not as dumb as you look. But you're okay. At least you get it, so I have faith in you.

MCKAY

I have lots of similarly enthusiastic worshipers.

Cribbage turns off the TV and picks up his guitar. He puts the strap around his shoulder so he can play standing.

CRIBBAGE

Well, here's what I've got.
An intro and the A part. But
the song is crying out for
the perfect bridge, which is
your department, Mr. McKay.
Listen.

CRIBBAGE

(playing and singing the intro)

I'm giving up these lonely days
forever
Though people say I'm gonna wind
up blue
Though we've spent some time
together I still sigh
Over that girl I want to love me
Her name is Lorelei!

Cribbage plays a swing walk-up and then a walk-down, a
chord for each beat, to get to the main part of the
song.

CRIBBAGE

(playing and singing Part A)

Lorelei, people always warn
me not to try
They say you'll never be true
Everybody tells me that I'm
just another guy
And I will never make you
love me
It's just my turn to cry...

Cribbage stops playing.

CRIBBAGE

See what I mean?

MCKAY

I think I know where you can go with that.

CRIBBAGE

(wrinkling his forehead and singing softly as he plays)

Everybody tells me that I'm just another guy
And I will never make you love me
It's just my turn to cry...

INT. STAGE – NIGHT

Taking over where Cribbage has just left off, the full orchestral version of McKay's bridge is heard. Cribbage is in the center of the stage dressed in a tuxedo, playing a string bass, and singing. The music is loud, upbeat, and rollicking.

CRIBBAGE

(singing)

But there's a part of this
town I know you've never
seen. And there's a part of
your heart you don't even
know is there! Let me show
you where! Oh, Lorelei I
know that I, I, I! could make
you love me if you only let

me try. You know it always amazes me how you can get up and sing with the band. How you can still look just like an angel -- with a drink in your hand!

Actors in tuxedos appear with a blond beauty in a red dress on a piano. They are pushing the piano on its coasters towards Cribbage.

CRIBBAGE

(singing)

People say, "Look out, boy. She'll make a doormat outta you!
She could serve me my heart on a platter;
I wouldn't care!
How can I bear to feel the way I do and never even give it a try? Oh, I've just got to make you love me Lorelei!

The final chords to the song are played on a guitar from the orchestra pit. They are a walk-up that ends with an Ab6th. Cribbage sings the last line and turns from his bass. The piano is now within easy reach. He puts his hand out and plays three beats containing two notes, one unchanging, the other ascending to form the classic two-note Count Base jazz ending. He reaches to the left on the piano and plays a single low Ab to end the song.

He smiles at the girl on the piano.

INT. CRIBBAGE'S APARTMENT

Cribbage sits at his desk. He has written out the melody of "Lorelei!" on a sheet of musical staff paper and is writing the chords above the staff to match the lyrics written below it. Pokey is curled up on the easy chair next to him.

CRIBBAGE (V.O.)

I was stuck for a bridge and all McKay did was throw everything into the key of E by hitting an unexpected F#7th Suspended fourth.

Cribbage sings the lyrics as he scribbles F#7sus4 over the first word of the bridge, "There's," "B7th" over the word "town," "E" over the word "never" and "C#min" over the word "seen." At the end of the line, he writes "F#min" and "B9th"

CRIBBAGE

(singing as he reads what he has written)
There's a part of this town I know
you've never seen.

Cribbage sings the lyrics as he scribbles F#7sus4 over the word "part." and B7 after the word "heart."

CRIBBAGE (singing)

And there's a part of your
heart. You don't even know..

CRIBBAGE (V.O.)

He just strums a Bb7sus4 and an Eb9 to take him back to A flat.

Cribbage sings the song and writes "Bb7sus4" over the word "there," holding the note as he sings long enough to finish writing the chord name. He continues singing and writes Eb9 over the words "Let me" and Ab6 over the word "where."

CRIBBAGE (V.O.)

(singing)

...is there! Let me show you
where!

He holds up the sheet and looks at it.

CRIBBAGE (V.O.)

Well, I asked for a bridge
and I got one. Only it ran
away with the whole song. I
called it the Siamese
fighting fish bridge because
it was pretty and could swim
in circles forever. I didn't
even need to go back to what
I had written. Humbling but
exactly what I asked for.

INT. GEORGE HEINEMANN'S LIVING ROOM — NIGHT

Heinemann is sitting on the couch watching TV.
KATHERINE STANDAGE is doing a story on Cribbage.

STANDAGE

Sagebrush city slicker
Sylvester T. Cribbage, who
has brought his version of
Dodge City to Broadway, has
some plans to transform his

hit musical into something
more East Coast -- and you
won't believe who he's
teaming up with....

A clip from the show with the song "Lorelei!" is
shown. The TV shifts to a picture of McKay and
Cribbage goofing off together.

STANDAGE

Fairly reliable rumor has it
that McKay himself will help
in the musical
transformation.

Heinemann picks up the phone and dials a number.

HEINEMANN

Oh, Sylvester. I have a bone
to pick with you.

INT. BARRY MULLEN TV TALK SHOW SET

BARRY MULLEN is standing center stage.

BARRY MULLEN

. . . so get ready to welcome
my guests animal trainer
Orsen Hughes, the beautiful
Janet Clayton, and the ever
irreverent Sylvester T.
Cribbage!

EXT. NEW YORK CITY STREET IN FRONT OF GEORGE
HEINEMANN'S APARTMENT BUILDING. -- DAY

Never More to Be Instrumental plays in the background

Cribbage is waiting for him in a sedan. Heinemann comes out of his building and opens the car door.

INT. CRIBBAGE'S SEDAN -- DAY

Cribbage has an envelope in the gaudy shirt pocket of his cowboy shirt. It reads, "AVIS RENT A CAR."

Heinemann picks the cowboy hat off of the passenger seat and hands it to Cribbage, who puts it on the dash. Cribbage starts driving and the hat slides off into Heinemann's lap. Heinemann hands the hat back to Cribbage, who puts it on his head.

EXT. HIGHWAY -- DAY

Cribbage's car comes out of the Holland Tunnel.

INT. CRIBBAGE'S SEDAN -- DAY

Cribbage is still wearing the cowboy hat and driving.

CRIBBAGE

I hate these little public appearances. They take up so much time.

HEINEMANN

Just try your best to be polite this time. And try not to say anything too wacky.

Cribbage looks in his rear view mirror. He sees police cars and flashing red and blue lights.

CRIBBAGE

Have you robbed a bank recently?

Heinemann turns and looks through the rear window.

EXT. SIDE OF THE HIGHWAY -- DAY

The sound of Cribbage and Heinemann's wind knocked out them is heard as they are thrown to the ground by police. Cribbage looks up and is struck in the face by a POLICEMAN.

POLICEMAN

Stay down, you son of a
bitch!

INT. BARRY MULLEN TV TALK SHOW SET

Cribbage is center stage with the cowboy outfit on. He's doing a stand-up act and has a black eye.

CRIBBAGE

...I hate that!

A drum roll is heard. The audience laughs.

CRIBBAGE

You know what else I hate?
Getting beat up by the Jersey
City fuzz. The other day I
was driving down the road
dressed as I am today.
Minding my own business. I

come out of the Holland Tunnel and see about ten black and whites yowling like a clowder of cats behind me. Little did I know some clown from Wyoming wearing a Stetson had just held up the First Federal. Next thing I know, I'm pulled out of my car and two cops are taking turns trying to strangle me while the rest are beating me over the head with whatever they got handy. Flashlights. Nightsticks. Chunks of cement they find along the road. It was awful. I have to admit they did apologize. They said, "We're very sorry, Mr. Cribbage, but we don't get many cowpokes driving out of the Tunnel. I said, "Word gets out how you treat them, and you're not likely to get many more!"

A drum roll is heard. Laughter is heard from the audience along with some good-natured groans and a couple of playful boos at the overdone joke.

CRIBBAGE

But most of all, I hate going to the dentist. The other day I was at the dentist's and he started drilling into my mouth. I said, "What are

you drilling for -- oil? He
said, "No, your wallet!"

A drum roll is heard. The audience laughs.

CRIBBAGE

Thank you very much ladies
and gentlemen!

INT. STAGE -- NIGHT

The stage is dark except for where Cribbage stands in
the spotlight wearing a tuxedo.

CRIBBAGE

An angel of angels. Svelte,
mysterious, a temptress --
but no tramp! Lorelei, a
German siren.

A loud German siren is heard, and Cribbage waves it to
silence with mock furor and impatience.

CRIBBAGE

Not that kind of siren!

INT. BACKSTAGE -- NIGHT -- MOMENTS LATER

Cribbage comes from the stage in his tuxedo. He walks
quickly toward the dressing rooms and then stops.

McKay is backstage and walks up.

CRIBBAGE

This is harder than I
thought. I can't change in
time to get back.

MCKAY

(smiling happily)

Oh, nice, nice planning!
You've got to go out and play
cowpoke in a tux? This is
great!

CRIBBAGE

(shouting)

A hat someone!

A stage hand runs up with a black cowboy hat and
Cribbage puts it on.

MCKAY

Well, that'll have to do.

A MUSICIAN walks up. He is a rather disheveled, hippy
type.

MUSICIAN

Here's the sheet music with
my corrections for you to
proof, Mr. Cribbage.

CRIBBAGE

No time, buddy.

MCKAY

I'll take it.

The musician hands the sheets to McKay.

Cribbage gives a mock expression of determination and pulls the hat down sideways over one eye. He feigns licking his thumb and then makes a slow swipe with it across the front brim. Then he heads for the stage.

McKay looks at the sheet music. The musician is reading over his shoulder.

INSERT -- THE SHEET MUSIC

MCKAY (O.S.)
(reading from the sheet)
Lorelei! Words and Music by
Sylvester T. Cribbage and
James McKay.

MUSICIAN
You got second billing.

MCKAY
(looking at the music)
Well, I'm growing.

MUSICIAN
Growing?

MCKAY
I'm morphing!

INT. BARRY MULLEN TV TALK SHOW SET

Cribbage is seated next to the host, BARRY MULLEN.

MULLEN

That mugging by the cops
really happened?

CRIBBAGE

True story! True story!

MULLEN

That's a nice shiner. Any
plans to take action?

CRIBBAGE

Are you kidding? What for?
The bread? I'm making a
fortune on my western record
album.

He looks at the audience and rolls his eyes.

CRIBBAGE

Besides, the cops did me a
favor. You see, my producer,
Georgie Heinemann was in the
car and they worked him over
pretty good too. They had us
face down hogtied on the
ground and our mouths propped
open with a couple of sticks.
Georgie spits out his stick
and says, "Sylvester, I'm
gonna take this as a sign.
You've got my permission to
get rid of that ridiculous
hat."

The audience laughs.

MULLEN

You've still got it on.

CRIBBAGE

Yeah, but understand that
it's a slow process. I think
you have to get weaned off of
these things.

Cribbage turns to the audience.

CRIBBAGE

(Keeping his Brooklyn accent and laying it on
expecially thick)

Those stalwart pioneers
headed west across dem
plains. Each one of dem
newborn babes was weaned on a
buffalo chip.

The audience laughs.

CRIBBAGE

It took courage in dem days,
but dey pressed on --
westward across dem plains.
Using buffalo chips for their
cookin'...

Cribbage looks sideways at the audience.

CRIBBAGE

Using buffalo chips for their
eatin'!

The audience laughs.

INT. MCKAY'S APARTMENT -- NIGHT

McKay sits composing with a guitar. He strums a slow tempo

-- a CMaj6 on the eighth fret and slides to the fifth fret for an A minor. He continues with Fmaj, Bb9 and back to a four-note CMaj6, keeping the same tempo for the other chords. On the last line, he begins playing a swing guitar style with the rhythm chop on the second and fourth beats.

MCKAY

(Singing)

"Hey, Lorelei! How time just seems to pass us by.

Can't you think of something I can do?

I know you've got your job

And you mean to earn your pay

And I know you're always giving.

Maybe it's time you gave your heart away."

INT. THEATER STAGE -- CONTINUOUS

Cribbage is on stage seated with a guitar. He takes over the song just where McKay has left off but in a much louder, clearer voice and at a slightly faster tempo with a sound system and backing bass and drums.

CRIBBAGE

"Hey, Lorelei!
 Isn't it too much for you?
 You just get by.
 Can't you let me lend a hand?
 You've got to seize the moment
 Before you're old and gray.
 If it's time to start living,
 Maybe it's time you gave your heart away."

Cribbage goes to the bridge, which is a key change to G major.

CRIBBAGE

"I see your eyes and I see envious skies,
 But the way you live your life you've always got
 to hurry.
 And I see you at odds with a heart full of worry
 Cause you're always alone.
 Just like me"

On the word "me" the G chord becomes a seventh
 and functions as the dominant leading back to the
 key of C and the A part of the song.

CRIBBAGE

"Hey, Lorelei!
 Why should you do it all alone?
 Why should you try?
 Can't you see me standin' by your side?
 I know you've got your kids
 You've gotta feed them every day
 So I know just how you're driven
 But maybe it's time you gave your heart away
 Maybe it's time you gave your heart away"

The word "away" in the tagged line at the end of the song is held for as close to two measures as Cribbage can manage and the sixth has been left out so the guitar chord is a simple, clear C major. It's the end of the act, and the curtain closes to applause.

CRIBBAGE (V.O.)

I saw my chance to save poor Michael at last from life imprisonment in the horse suit. He'd been a trooper. I wrote a new line at the end of the song so the show could close with it instead of "Good-bye Trail Mates." And good riddance to bad rubbish!

INT. THEATER STAGE -- NIGHT

CRIBBAGE

I see your eyes and I see envious skies,
 But the way you live your life you've always
 got to hurry.
 And I see you at odds with a heart full of
 worry
 'Cause you're always alone.
 Just like me
 Hey, Lorelei! If you don't give your heart
 away, one day you'll look back and cry.

The curtain closes the house lights come up and the crowd stands and applauds.

CRIBBAGE (V.O.)

Ah, and then for the finale.
 No more Happy Trails stuff.
 Instead, how's about a syrupy
 lullaby? And McKay didn't
 even help me on it. Get rid
 of the cows, keep the corn.

I saved this one for the
encore

The house lights dim. The curtain opens. The stage is dark with only Cribbage in a spotlight.

CRIBBAGE

Thank you friends for
inviting me back. I think as
a fare-thee-well I just play
this old lullaby.

CRIBBAGE (V.O.)

Old, you know, like it's
already a classic. That's
how to package a song.

CRIBBAGE (singing)

Looks like the darkness in
the sky is slowly fading...

The music fades away. It's the end of the show, and the curtain closes to applause. The horns start loudly playing McKay's bridge music for the song "Lorelei!" and the curtain opens again. The performers take their bows.

INT. PRACTICE ROOM -- DAY

THE BUCKIN' BRONX practicing, guitars, bass, drums. Cribbage is singing "You Can't Fool Me" and is picking a guitar in a Merle Travis style.

CRIBBAGE

Your non-stop naggin' and
 third degree
 Are part of a plan to murder me
 I may look dumb
 But I know what you're
 thinkin'

THE BUCKIN' BRONX

You can't fool me
 You're just trying to start
 me drinkin'!

CRIBBAGE

You met me down in Laramie
 You threw a bottle of beer at me
 I may look dumb
 But I know what you're thinkin'

THE BUCKIN' BRONX

You can't fool me
 You're just trying to start
 me drinkin'!

CRIBBAGE

I used to talk about my catch
 Now, all I've got is a
 shouting match
 I may look dumb
 But I know what you're thinkin'

THE BUCKIN' BRONX

You can't fool me
 You're just trying to start me drinkin'!

The song ends in a tag.

THE BUCKIN' BRONX

You can't fool me
You're just trying to start me drinkin'!

CRIBBAGE

Well, that's a fun one. Too
country for Laredo, much less
Lorelei.

DRUMMER

I like it.

CRIBBAGE

Well, you can have it. Try
it at the Ten Gallon
Manhattan. It's a good sing-
along for those gin fizzes.
That's it boys. Tomorrow's
practice is cancelled.
Heinemann has me out of town
for three days. Promo stuff.
Hate it. See you Friday for
the show.

The BAND MEMBERS start breaking down their equipment.

BAND MEMBERS

I had fun. Thanks, Sylvester.
See you then. Thanks,
Sylvester.

INT. HALLWAY PHONE IN THE BLUEBIRD THEATER

Cribbage is on the phone.

CRIBBAGE

Hi, James. Say, I've got to go out of town and I suddenly got a swingin' idea.

MCKAY (V.O.)

What could that be?

CRIBBAGE

Well, I was thinking that if you might be popping into my apartment to compose anyway, you could do me a favor.

MCKAY (V.O.)

You want me to take care of Pokey. Yeah, okay. He and I are pals.

CRIBBAGE

Oh, thanks. That saves me dealing with the dog sitter again. I love her dearly, but she's bats. Just make yourself at home there as usual. I'll be back Thursday. Thanks zillions, Buddy.

MCKAY (V.O.)

Don't mention it. Enjoy your trip.

Cribbage hangs up the phone.

INT. CRIBBAGE'S KITCHEN TABLE -- DAY

McKay is seated at the table writing, and Pokey has his paws on his leg. Pokey jumps down and looks up.

McKay finishes writing and looks at Pokey.

MCKAY

This is for the revised
edition of my book. You were
my inspiration, Pokey.

He lifts the sheet of paper to read.

MCKAY

(in way over-the-top Scouse)

There's a certain kind of green fly
You know the ones I mean
The ones when doggie defecates
Come flyin' on the scene
They appear as if by magic
They appear as in a dream
With their emerald opalescence
And their iridescent sheen
When doggie doesn't defecate
These flies are never seen
So where do green flies come from?
From some green fly machine?
From the carcass of a rotting steer
In some dried up ravine?
Where do green flies come from?
Do they hatch from a green fly bean?
Or when doggie poops does someone somewhere
Open up a screen?
And let the green flies fly about
To on his stool convene?

I'll never know the answer
But I judge from their cuisine
That the place the green flies call their home
Is a place that's none too clean!

He puts the paper down.

MCKAY

What do you think? Suppose it
could go in Laredo?

Pokey looks up quizzically.

MCKAY

I guess not.

INT. DINER -- MORNING

McKay sits down at a table. He is next to a window
through which rain can be seen falling on the street.
The diner is not very busy.

A WAITRESS comes and gives him a menu.

WAITRESS

Would you like me to bring
you something to drink, sir,
while you decide on your
order?

MCKAY

Just coffee and, no, I
already know what I want --
the Western.

She takes out her pad.

WAITRESS

Hash browns or fries?

MCKAY

Hash browns.

The waitress writes on her pad.

WAITRESS

Whole wheat, white, or rye?

MCKAY

Rye.

WAITRESS

Eggs done how?

MCKAY

Over hard. You know, I'm curious. I wasn't asked for my choices last time.

WAITRESS

That's because Sylvester Cribbage always has his Western the same way.

MCKAY

Sylvester TEE Cribbage. I remember now.

WAITRESS

Right. I'll get your coffee.

MCKAY

(to himself)

Sheesh! She wasn't even here and she remembers. Our little breakfast must have been all the buzz around the steam cabinet.

LORELEI (O.S.)

You know, I've only seen you here once.

McKay looks up and sees Lorelei standing there.

MCKAY

Oh, hi.

LORELEI

Mind if I sit for a minute?

MCKAY

Please.

Lorelei takes a seat across from McKay.

LORELEI

I'm beginning to wish I could sing.

MCKAY

New job's rough, is it?

LORELEI

I shouldn't complain. It's what I want. You might be surprised to know that.

There's a lot to learn. I mean a lot. So that's what I want to do.

MCKAY

Good for you. I'm not surprised. Singing's for losers anyway.

LORELEI

I don't think you're a loser.

The waitress comes with the coffee. McKay puts in cream and sugar.

MCKAY

So I take it, it's the ex-hubby.

LORELEI

I guess it shows.

MCKAY

It must; I can be pretty thick.

LORELEI

Things would be so good if he weren't making trouble.

MCKAY

I'm sorry. But just ignore that jerk. Enjoy your new job and your kids.

LORELEI

James, he's not a good person. How could I have been so dumb?

MCKAY

It's always a crap shoot. You never know a person until time passes. I'm especially qualified to say that; look how long it took my wife to find out about me. I didn't make trouble. I just ran. I guess you could say that's even worse.

LORELEI

At least you can admit it.

MCKAY

You don't have to admit to doing anything wrong. Anyway, just don't let anybody give you the blues.

LORELEI

There's a lot of that going around.

Lorelei looks through the window at the rain.

LORELEI

Just look at that. Even the sky's got the blues.

She gets up.

LORELEI

Well, I've got to go boss
some folks around.

MCKAY

That's the spirit.

LORELEI

(beat)

You're not as bad a guy as
your ex-wife might believe.
Thanks for being so nice.

MCKAY

It's my pleasure, dear.

Lorelei leaves. The waitress comes with McKay's
Western.

INT. STAGE -- NIGHT

Black blues singer GREGG COLEMAN is on stage singing
the song "Even the Sky's Got the Blues."

COLEMAN

(singing)

I keep looking out the window
The whole town's soaked with rain
I know it ain't you, Baby
Only me who's feeling pain
And they say you want to see me
But I know it's gotta end
You're only gonna come back
And do the same thing again

And I'm the kind of guy
Who would never even sigh
But now I find myself staring out the window
And way up high
Seems even the sky's got the blues...

EXT. NEW YORK CITY STREET -- NIGHT

McKay stands on the sidewalk looking at the lighted sign that reads "THE TEN-GALLON MANHATTAN -- LIBATIONS, VICTUALS, AND WESTERN MUSIC"

McKay walks into the club. The band members recognize him at once and wave at him. One member quickly waves a barmaid to him and whispers to her. Then the band starts "You're Just Tryin' to Start Me Drinkin'." The audience, most of whom are drunk, respond with enthusiasm. They've apparently heard it played on a previous evening and are right on time when they sing the refrain: "You can't fool me, you're just trying to start me drinkin'"

THE GUITARIST is at it with his Travis style thumb picking and slips into a Travis Version of "I'll See You in My Dreams" to fill out the song.

The BARMAID comes to McKay's table with a drink.

BARMAID (to McKay)
It's from the band.

MCKAY
I...

Band members see from the stage that the drink has been served and smile and nod at him as they play. McKay smiles and raises the glass. He doesn't drink but puts the glass back on the table.

THE GUITARIST is back to the drinking song and picking the last verse as he sings.

THE GUITARIST

I used to talk about my catch
 Now, all I've got is a shouting match
 I may look dumb
 But I know what you're thinkin'
 You can't fool me
 You're just trying to start me drinkin'!

McKay Raises the glass to his lips.

THE BUCKIN' BRONX AND THE CROWD

You can't fool me
 You're just trying to start me drinkin'!

INT. CRIBBAGE'S APARTMENT -- NIGHT

McKay is standing unsteadily in front of Cribbage's refrigerator with the door open. He grabs the sole bottle of Cottonwood Brewery PALE Ale inside and slams the door shut. He tries to snatch the magnetic bottle opener from the door but drops it. As he leans down to get it, he is faced with a quizzical Pokey.

MCKAY

(Menacingly)

What do you want, you
 ingrate? Take you for your
 walkies and the only time you

deign to as much as say hello
is when I've got the bloody
refrigerator door open.
Hungry, are you? You
miserable cur!

Pokey, frightened at the tone, turns and runs to the bed in the room across the hall from the kitchen. He sits up and looks nervously at McKay, who has turned his attention to the bottle and opener. McKay uncaps the beer and chugs the contents. He tosses the empty bottle on the countertop and slaps the opener back on the refrigerator door.

MCKAY

Ought to be something more
down the street.

When McKay speaks, Pokey leaves the bed and runs around a corner out of sight.

McKay pulls the apartment keys from his pocket and heads out of the kitchen through the living room.

EXT. FRONT DOOR OF CRIBBAGE'S APARTMENT -- NIGHT

McKay stands on the top of the cement stairs and fumbles with the key. It is attached to its length of sturdy, rough chain. McKay holds the door open while he inserts the key in the door lock. Drunkenly, he slams the door shut. The swinging keychain is caught tight, slammed in the door, but McKay reaches over and turns the key to lock the apartment. The chain loops over the key, holding it fast. McKay tries to remove the key, but the chain is jammed in the door, and the key will not budge.

MCKAY

Bloody hell!

He yanks at the chain and lets out a cry of pain. His fingers are cut and bleeding. McKay turns from the door, staring at his bloody hand. He takes a step forward and falls down the stairs, barking his knuckles on the rough cement sidewalk at the bottom. He stares at his smashed knuckles.

He gets up and staggers down the street. He walks until he is barely visible. He can be seen to turn a corner in the distance.

EXT. NEW YORK CITY STREET — NIGHT — FIFTEEN MINUTES LATER

McKay crosses a dark street to where he sees a storefront lighted. He stubs his toe on the curb when he reaches the other side and falls face first on the sidewalk.

He looks up to see Lorelei standing above him. She helps him to his feet.

MCKAY

I'm locked out out of
Cribbage's apartment.

LORELEI

(inhaling through her nose and grimacing)
Whew! You're more than that.

MCKAY

Yeah, I'm sick.

LORELEI

You'd get run over just
hailing a cab home in your
condition. I'm just down the
street. I'll put you up, but
only if you behave yourself.

MCKAY

Okay.

They begin walking. Lorelei steadies McKay, and he drunkenly embraces her as they walk. She pushes him away. McKay smiles with the smile of a loveable drunk. The mean drunk has gone out of him in the presence of Lorelei.

They reach her apartment and Lorelei unlocks the door.

MCKAY

Kids with a baby
sitter?

LORELEI

Yeah, their grandmother in
Connecticut. Nice break for
me, and my mom can't get
enough of them.

They go inside the apartment. McKay turns pale. He covers his mouth.

MCKAY

Oh, God, where is it?

Lorelei points to the bathroom. McKay falls to his knees in front of the toilet and vomits in the bowl. Lorelei rolls her eyes in disgust. McKay flushes the toilet and then stands and drinks from the sink faucet. He splashes water on his face.

LORELEI

This way.

She leads McKay to the children's bedroom and McKay falls onto one of the beds and rolls onto his back. Lorelei, not very lovingly, tosses a blanket over him. McKay lies on the bed looking up with a contented, drunken grin on his face.

LORELEI

I've got to be at the restaurant early, so you can have breakfast there. That's if you're through throwing up by then.

McKay doesn't answer. He is already snoring with the vestiges of the drunken grin still on his face. The door is heard to close.

INT. CHILDREN'S BEDROOM -- MORNING

Daylight is streaming through a window. McKay is lying asleep on the bed. He's on his back and doesn't appear to have changed his position during the night. There

is the sound of voices and of police radios. McKay awakes, confusion on his face. The door to the bedroom bangs open and police begin pulling McKay from the bed.

INT. CRIBBAGE'S HOTEL ROOM -- DAY

Cribbage is sitting on one of the large double beds in the fairly plush hotel room. A football game is on TV and it is interrupted suddenly by a NEWS ANNOUNCER.

NEWS ANNOUNCER

A shocker from New York City. James McKay, former Storm Kings leader and victim of violence has himself been arrested in the brutal beating of Lorelei Engel. Engel is rumored to have been the inspiration for the Broadway stage production Lorelei! Details are sketchy now, but police investigator William Marshall says there is evidence that McKay is the perpetrator and will be charged with the crime. Engel is in a coma and unable to provide any information. Her condition is listed as guarded. We will be back with more news on this breaking story as soon as it is available.

Cribbage puts his face in his hands. Then he stands and goes to the other bed where he has left his suitcase. He opens the suitcase and takes something from it. He walks to the desk by the window and sets a small candle there and lights it with a match. He puts his hand over his mouth and looks out the window.

INT. POLICE STATION INTERROGATION ROOM -- DAY

McKay is sitting on a folding metal chair with his arms on the table in front of it. He is unshaven, hung over, distraught. He puts his head on the table but

lifts it when the door opens. THE POLICE INTERROGATOR enters. He is overweight and is dressed in slacks and a wrinkled white shirt that isn't completely tucked in. He sits in the chair next to McKay.

THE POLICE INTERROGATOR
How did you injure your
hands, Mr. McKay?

MCKAY
I don't remember.

THE POLICE INTERROGATOR
Well, let's talk a little
about it and see if we can.

MCKAY
I want a lawyer.

THE POLICE INTERROGATOR
(beat)
Okay. Sit tight and I'll be
back in a minute.

INT. POLICE STATION OFFICE -- DAY

Through a two-way mirror, McKay can be seen exhausted with his head back on the table. THE POLICE INTERROGATOR and a FEMALE DETECTIVE are looking at him.

THE POLICE INTERROGATOR
Well, he ain't dumb. He's a
son of a bitch, but he ain't
dumb.

FEMALE DETECTIVE

Don't worry; he's good for
this and we'll get him for
it.

INT. THEATER STAGE

Cribbage is alone on stage, seated, playing a guitar
in the spotlight and singing.

CRIBBAGE

Hey, Mr. Heartache
Don't knock on my door
You've been around here before
Don't need you to bring me a reason to sigh
Sometimes it's a sad sad world...

INT. JAIL CELL -- DAY

McKay is curled in a ball at the edge of a bench in a
cell. A JAIL OFFICER opens the door to the cell.

JAIL OFFICER

(gruffly)

You're in the clear. She woke
up and pinned it on the ex.

MCKAY

Is she all right?

JAIL OFFICER

You're free to go.

MCKAY

Is she all right?

JAIL OFFICER
I've told you all I know.

EXT. JAIL BUILDING -- DAY

McKay stands on the sidewalk confused. He looks up to the sky.

INT. CRIBBAGE'S APARTMENT -- DAY

McKay is sitting on the sofa. Cribbage is seated on the piano bench facing him.

MCKAY
Have you ever done really
wrong?

CRIBBAGE
Oh, more than once I'm
afraid. Not so bad.

MCKAY
And how did you face
yourself?

CRIBBAGE
I said to myself, "The name's
Cribbage -- not Christ."

MCKAY
Christ himself wouldn't
forgive me.

CRIBBAGE

Er.. James, you didn't do it
--remember?

MCKAY

Don't you understand? I
didn't know I didn't do it.

CRIBBAGE

Look. Your name's James, not
Jesus.

MCKAY

It's not just this. It's my
whole fucking life. If I
hadn't been so drunk I would
have woken up. Kicked his
bloody arse.

CRIBBAGE

Christ. If you hadn't been
drunk you wouldn't have even
been there.

MCKAY

I'm a fake.

CRIBBAGE

What has that got to do with
your current crisis?

MCKAY

I can't make amends.

CRIBBAGE

You can make Peace, James.
Peace with yourself. C'mon.
It looks as though you've
been given yet another second
chance, so just thank your
lucky stars and be happy.

SUPER: "ONE MONTH LATER."

INT. THEATER STAGE

Gregg Coleman is in a tuxedo center stage singing an operatic version of "Nevermore to Be." The melody is now the talking guitar riff and the original melody is now played in the background"

COLEMAN

Folks I know are contemplatin'
'Bout a westward land that's out there waitin'
Where the boughs hang heavy beneath a perfect sky

The clouds roll white, the stars all shine
The berries are ripe and as red as wine
The water is sweet
And the whispering wind divine

But there was no tomorrow
No path that I could see
No break of dawn no destiny
And how without their sorrow
Was their joy to be?
The westward land was lost to me

When I awoke my heart was achin'
For a paradise is godforsaken
If the people there are nevermore to be
And the people there were nevermore to be

There is a pause with the music fading, and suddenly the singer almost shouts the last words.

COLEMAN

Think of all the people
Nevermore to be!

INT. BACKSTAGE

CRIBBAGE

(looking toward the stage)
Oh, that's so much more on
the mark than Laredo!

He looks at the people around him. They are actors and singers and they are smiling along with him. McKay walks up.

CRIBBAGE

(to McKay)

Well, not everything's great.
They've talked me into
putting on the cowboy duds
again and browsing around
some to-do with the bosses.
It's tonight, so I've got to
get moving. Not thrilled, but
I've gotta do it.

COLEMAN arrives from the stage and is greeting people. McKay offers his hand and the singer shakes it.

MCKAY

Pretty cool, Coleman,

COLEMAN

Well, I thank you, sir.

Coleman leaves to greet others.

MCKAY

(to Cribbage)

You know, I've possibly forty years left to get whatever it is finished. I'm thinking of making a list.

CRIBBAGE

I think it would be a good idea.

MCKAY

You know, I'm glad I fell in with you, Sylvester.

CRIBBAGE

I thought you might feel that way eventually. Oh! Before I forget. I had breakfast at the Compass Rose Diner.

MCKAY

I haven't gone back there.

CRIBBAGE

Maybe you should. They told me Lorelei will be back at

work tomorrow. Be kind of
nice to welcome her.

MCKAY

Would you come with me?

CRIBBAGE

Of course I would. Let's do
it! Seven tomorrow. Sharp.

MCKAY

I'll be over early.

INT. MCKAY'S APARTMENT -- NIGHT

McKay is at a white grand piano. He is dressed in
white. He is singing "You Can't Dream the Past Away."

MCKAY

Time flies so fast
So live for today
And dream of tomorrow
'Cause you can't dream the past away
The song ends with a simple major chord that
fades away.

INT. CRIBBAGE'S BEDROOM -- DAY

Cribbage awakes lying on the bed with his cowboy
outfit still on. Pokey is asleep at the foot of the
bed. Cribbage hears "Sad Times Are Coming" playing in
his head. The mix is amateurish and the tempo is slow
and uneven. The organ is scratchy and Cribbage's

voice is out of tune, broken, and raw. Cribbage's face seems pained by the sound of it.

CRIBBAGE (V.O.)

In dreams I see my own reality
Just to wake up to a sad old song
With the same old name and the same old pain
Just yesterday I picked up my guitar
But I couldn't sing a word
Of my own refrain
And the only thing I heard
Was someone calling out my name
Don't you see sad times are coming?

Cribbage shakes his head, gets up leaving Pokey asleep on the bed and walks groggily to the kitchen. He gets a can of coffee from the shelf and opens the top. He looks up when he hears the voice of Horace Golding on the TV in the living room. He puts down the coffee and listens.

GOLDING (V.O.)

There are some things more
important than a football
game. News from New York
City. James McKay shot in
the back and dead on arrival
at ...

Cribbage's face looks bewildered and then panicked. He rushes to the living room. The screen is nearly all green with the expanse of Astroturf. Football players are running across the field. Cribbage stares. Several seconds pass by. Then the words "TV'S WORST BLUNDERS" appear on the screen.

There door, opens it, and sticks his head in. It is
McKay.

MCKAY

Are you ready?

CRIBBAGE

Let me get my hat.

FADE TO BLACK

THE END

OUTRO MUSIC

Only in Dreams or Perhaps Nevermore to Be Instrumental