

THE RELUCTANT COWBOY

A Musical For Stage and Screen



www.tomhascallcole.com/cowboy.html

TOM COLE

ALL SONGS IN THE MUSICAL IN ORDER OF
APPEARANCE:

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This screenplay was written between 2010 and 2012.

"THE RELUCTANT COWBOY"

by

Tom Cole

SUPER: "NEW YORK CITY, DECEMBER 1980."

FADE IN

INT. NEW YORK CITY APARTMENT -- NIGHT

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 the pan 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 asleep 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

run 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...

We hear 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 stands 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. We see an ambulance from a view above the city, winding its way through the streets finally to reach the hospital.

CRIBBAGE (V.O.)

When every leaf
Is gone from every tree
And there's a yellow sun
In an empty sky
There'll be a time for grief
And a tear in every eye
Don't you see
Sad times are comin'?

These dreams and city lights
May grow brighter ere they fade
Then in a sudden wind

Simply blow away
There'll be a cold hard rain
On a sunny day
Don't you see
Sad times are comin'?

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 me by name
Don't you see, sad times are
coming?

INT. PASSENGER JET -- NIGHT

We hear the muffled, whistling sound of jet engines.

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 face seems big and blatantly expressive,

good humored, and plastered on it is not a perpetual smile but what might be called a perpetual laugh.

Cribbage wears 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 stands 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'm 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 turns 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 unopened 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 an usually 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 -- NIGHT

There is something about a shooting on TV, but Cribbage switches it off. Pokey runs 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.

INSERT -- THE DOG SITTER'S 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 the key on its 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 -- MORNING

Cribbage reads the newspaper article about the shooting at his kitchen 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. 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 stands 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 blares 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 we see Cribbage in a Hollywood western cowboy outfit plucking a string bass. He sings 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 plays.

THE TV

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

STANDAGE

Best of luck on Laredo, Sylvester.

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 sits 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
mind if you very gradually move
away from the theme, 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 --
DAY

Cribbage shuts the door behind him. He has
a sour but determined look on his face.

INT. THEATER STAGE -- NIGHT

SYLVESTER T. CRIBBAGE walks toward the
audience picking a guitar and singing. He
in reality walks 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 walks 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
curtsyng frantically in apology.

As corny as it comes, but the crowd ate it up. One night was to be different, though.

INT. THEATER BACKSTAGE -- NIGHT

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 do it.

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

No you won't. Go.

INT. THEATER STAGE -- NIGHT

CRIBBAGE AND THE CAST sing "Good-bye Trail
Mates." Michael and another actor are in the
horse suit They dance 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
Make a solemn pledge so true
After that, if you feel blue
You've still got something left to do
(Just sing this.)
Yippee kie yie Yippee kie oh kie ay
Yippee kie ay yippee kie oh ooooo!
Yippee kie yie Yippee kie oh kie ay
That's all you really have to do

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 the bulging

back end of the horse suit containing Michael pulls the front of the horse backward.

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 -- NIGHT

Cribbage sits backstage in a chair writing on a clipboard. The heading on top of the page reads "Colossal Idea!" 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. Stage hands strike the set and others just walk 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? Sheer 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 shake.

CRIBBAGE (V.O.)

Changing that scene was good for Amanda too. She was too pretty and too good a singer 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 -- NIGHT

A cowboy stands next to a fence and performs the spoken part of a song with a swing guitar accompaniment from the orchestra pit. He has a lariat and motions 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. THEATER STAGE -- NIGHT

We see a set with winter scenery. We see patches of snow and leafless trees all around. Amanda sits on a stone in front of the trees.

CRIBBAGE (V.O.)

The show was a songwriter's dream
--and nightmare -- both because of
all the tunes I had to come up
with. But it was fun to write
perky ones like "Pokey Laredo" and
even ones that were slightly over
gush.

AMANDA

(singing)

When the trees hear winter's song
For summertime they long
Though the winter through they
sleep
A promise true they keep...

Amanda stands to sing the chorus and ending.

Don't you even sigh
When all the leaves just die?
Oh, even a slumbering heart like
you must feel lonely...

INT. PRACTICE ROOM -- DAY

THE BUCKIN' BRONX jam. 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 is with the group and sings. 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...

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.

INT. NEWS BRIEFING ROOM -- DAY

McKay sits at a table with a microphone in front of him. His left arm is in a cast. Next to him is Kelly Shawnson, a TV announcer. He also has a microphone.

SHAWNSON

Tough road for you lately, James.

MCKAY

Yeah, but I'm getting myself
rightside up again.

SHAWNSON

How do you mean?

MCKAY

Well, it's impossible to get shot
without being totally freaked out.
It's only natural.

SHAWNSON

Fame has its drawbacks.

MCKAY

In the end you have to trust in
your luck -- in the way I expect
race car drivers must do -- never
really expecting to get killed.

SHAWNSON

I once heard you say you thought
there were people who would do you
in if they thought they could get
away with it.

MCKAY

I did say that. Nothing's changed.
I knew I had fans and enemies too,
but I never expected someone from
the former group to come gunning
for me.

SHAWNSON

One of the fans.

MCKAY

Yeah.

SHAWNSON

So what are your plans now?

MCKAY

I've got a second shot at life, so I feel I should make something like new year's resolutions -- in fact a whole string of them. I'm still working at coming up with a list.

SHAWNSON

Some activism.

MCKAY

I'm sure.

SHAWNSON

How about composing?

MCKAY

Well, I'll always do that.

SHAWNSON

Together with anyone in particular from the Storm Kings?

MCKAY

Now you've done it.

SHAWNSON

You knew I had to ask.

MCKAY

Well, you never know, sir. You never know.

EXT. SIDEWALK IN FRONT OF THE DOOR OF THE
OFFICES OF DIAMOND POINT STUDIOS -- DAY

Cribbage walks 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 -- DAY

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 can
talk.

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 -- DAY

Cribbage walks 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 -- DAY

Cribbage types on a manual typewriter at his desk. He wears wire-framed reading glasses. Cribbage is an expert typist.

INSERT -- THE PAPER IN THE TYPEWRITER

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 stands in front of an organ. There are earphones on the top of the organ. A console is nearby.

Musicians leave 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 and he sings.

MCKAY

(Singing)

Just today at work
Something set me to thinking
And I wanted to go home
And maybe fix myself a drink...

MONTAGE - MCKAY'S LIFE

- The Storm Kings play on stage.
- The Storm Kings are in the studio.
- The Storm Kings goof off together.

-- McKay composes with his Storm Kings
songwriting partner.

-- MCKAY is in a peace march.

-- McKay is with his wife and son.

-- His son walks 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...

BACK TO SCENE

McKay sings 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
Just today at work something set
me to thinking
And I wanted to go home and cry

BLACK SCREEN

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

We hear a ringing telephone. VALERIE MCKAY
answers.

VALERIE

(Groggily)
Hello.

MCKAY (V.0.)

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, when you were hurt, I
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 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 lies 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 stands 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.

EXT. THE COMPASS ROSE DINER -- DAY

McKay and Cribbage are on the sidewalk in front of a diner. The sign on the diner says, "COMPASS ROSE DINER, NORTH, SOUTH, EAST, WEST." There is a large compass rose on the wall with a rose motif.

INT. THE COMPASS ROSE DINER -- DAY

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 knew that.

MCKAY

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

CRIBBAGE

Country/western. Never the twain shall meet. Different themes. Ah, but western players play swing half of the time.

MCKAY

Thirties and forties swing,
chunk! chunk! guitar players a la
Freddy Green. I know a little:
Cindy Walker tunes played by Bob
Wills. I like it, but I don't play
any of it.

CRIBBAGE

You need the chance to. You could
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

I've got a hunch you're up to
something. Getting some
resistance to change, are you?
Producers leaning hard on you?

CRIBBAGE

You hunch well, pal.

MCKAY

It's in your eyes. I'm fond of
mischief. Tittlated I am.

CRIBBAGE

And you haven't even 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

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 sits on the piano seat his back to the piano. He holds an archtop guitar. McKay sits next to him in a 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

Go.

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? And 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 and
hackneyed. 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, the
audience expects it. But it's not
Nashville; it's generic, backwoods
bumpkin talk. No farther west than
Ohio.

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

Well, 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 -- LATE AFTERNOON

McKay sits at the window composing with an Ovation acoustic guitar. Rain pours outside, and the window is streaked with rain.

He strums a "vanilla D" and sings a short western song, "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 -- DAY

Cribbage types 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. CRIBBAGE'S APARTMENT -- DAY -- LATER

CRIBBAGE (V.O.)

A couple of days later I used his bit for inspiration. Stole the title to use as my first line and wrote my own bitter, melancholy western love song. I even wrote it in D. You can never have enough songs.

Cribbage sits on a chair. There are papers around him on the couch and piano. He reads off of one sheet of paper on the arm of the couch as he plays and sings.

CRIBBAGE

When the rain falls in the valley
There's nothing but rain to see
Cause when you went away to Lowly
Canyon
You went without a word to me...

INT. THEATER STAGE -- DAY

Cribbage directs stage hands to arrange giant plywood gravestones with epitaphs. McKay is there but doesn't help 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, Never More 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 cheerfully sings and dances.

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 whose label reads "COTTONWOOD BREWERY PALE ALE."

Cribbage 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 people singing 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

(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 take down the plywood gravestones and put 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 sits on a stool singing. He plays "Never More 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

We hear the music continue in the background.

Cribbage walks Pokey on his leash. Pokey's back arches and Cribbage grimaces slightly. He reaches into his pants pocket and extracts a plastic bag.

We then see Cribbage walk, 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
-- CONTINUOUS

The music continues in the background. A plump, MIDDLE-AGED WOMAN walks her poodle and passes Cribbage, who walks 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 -- CONTINUOUS

The music continues in the background. Cribbage walks 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 -- CONTINUOUS

The music continues in the background.
Cribbage walks 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 never more
to be!

Pokey's back arches and Cribbage again
grimaces 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 sits on the receiving room cot. The DOCTOR stands 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 should start by figuring out 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 ... vision of yours?

CRIBBAGE

One month ago. Two months 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 still
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

Unreality.

DOCTOR

Let's make an easy positive move
and treat the unreality issue
first. It could make all the
difference.

CRIBBAGE

Let's hope so.

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 -- DAY

Cribbage sits on the piano bench, his back to the keyboard and plays an archtop guitar. McKay sits next to him in a chair. He also has a guitar, an Ovation acoustic, but he doesn't play it. Cribbage strums the archtop in the fast, sure strokes of swing style. The song is Gershwin's "I've got Rhythm." The song has him play a chord every beat with the rhythm chop on the second and fourth beats. Cribbage whistles the melody as he plays.

He finishes the song.

MCKAY

That looks like 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

It's poppy all right. And,
frankly doesn't provide much
inspiration.

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. That's your problem.

Cribbage swings his legs around the bench to face 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

(singing)

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? And...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. Here's the key to the apartment.

MCKAY

(smiling but not too pleased)

Okay.

Cribbage 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

(to Pokey)

Well, I've hit rock bottom. A
gopher for some loopy vaquero from
Brooklyn. C'mon, Pokey!

McKay gets up and walks to the kitchen.
Pokey follows eagerly. McKay 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 -- DAY

Cribbage types at his desk wearing his
reading glasses.

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 -- NIGHT

Cribbage is center stage on a stool. He
plays a guitar and sings. 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 --
CONTINUOUS

We hear the orchestral part of the song consisting of only the music and "oos" from the back-up singers. Cribbage types. The heading on the page reads: "THE RELUCTANT COWBOY, A MEMOIR."

INSERT -- THE HEADING ON THE PAGE

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 -- NIGHT -- CONTINUOUS
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 sit and talk.

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 a woman 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 goddamned 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 APARTMENT -- DAY

Mckay and Cribbage sit in chairs facing each other and practice guitar.

CRIBBAGE

My tricks are really kid's stuff. Basic substitutions. That kind of thing. When a tonic as a seventh takes me to the subdominate I like to play a ninth one half step above and slide it down to get a kind of steel guitar feel.

Cribbage plays a basic E chord on his guitar and then slides up to put his middle finger on the fifth string, eighth fret, where he plays an F ninth. He slides that chord down one fret to E ninth. The E ninth leads to an A major, which he strums once.

MCKAY

Play a flat five

CRIBBAGE

Where?

MCKAY

Way up the neck. Start with an A minor seventh flat five and slide it down the same way to A flat. The A flat minor seventh flat five will function as your E ninth.

It'll sound even more like a steel.

CRIBBAGE
Twelfth fret.

Cribbage plays the A minor seventh flat five chord at the twelfth fret.

MCKAY
Then down to the eleventh.

Cribbage slides the chord down one fret as he strums.

CRIBBAGE
Nice. Dumb of me not to be doing that all over the place.

MCKAY
Show me your swing stuff.

CRIBBAGE
You know all the shapes. Just put your rhythm chop on two and four.

Cribbage strums a four-note G sixth on the third fret and follows it with a rhythm chop dampening the strings. He plays the chord and rhythm chop a few times more.

MCKAY
It's the exact opposite of rock rhythm-wise.

CRIBBAGE
Or folk or country. Don't even mention Latin. But the cowboy songs tend to swing if you let

them. They don't have to be dirges.

MCKAY

Give me a generic swing progression.

CRIBBAGE

(playing the chords)

Easy. G major sixth, A flat diminished, A minor seventh, and D seventh. Try to use three strings only. And mute the fifth string most always. You don't need it half the time.

Cribbage and McKay play the pattern a few more times. McKay's guitar work is effortless and he is immediately almost as adept as Cribbage with the style.

CRIBBAGE

(strums a chord)

This is my so-called D seventh, but there's no D in it at all. It would be an A diminished in another song, but here it subs as a D. Sometimes the first thing to go in a jazz chord is the root itself.

MCKAY

That gives it an unusual voice. Cool chords. Only three notes. Less is more. That's a Freddie Green secret.

CRIBBAGE

Here, try extending that
progression like this.

Cribbage plays two beats per chord in a jazz
progression that walks up and back down.
The chords each have three notes. They are
G major sixth, A flat diminished, A minor
seventh, B flat diminished, G major with the
third in the base and then the same chords
in reverse going back down in tone to the G
major sixth. Cribbage chunks the chords
hard and then stops.

CRIBBAGE

Chunk! Chunk! Cool, huh?

MCKAY

Very. Show me again.

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 sits 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 consider something. Then he gets up and goes down the 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 we see 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 walks 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

I was smitten.

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 pulls 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.

INT. CRIBBAGE'S LIVING ROOM -- DAY --
CONTINUOUS

McKay has let himself in. The TV is on 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 testing the
waters.

MCKAY

What do you mean?

CRIBBAGE

To see if there are any objectors.
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 can fool themselves but
not 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 thick as you look.
But you're okay. At least you get
it, so I have faith in you.

MCKAY

If you want to worship me, you'll
have to take a number.

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. THEATER STAGE -- NIGHT

The full orchestral version of McKay's
bridge plays. Cribbage is in the center of
the stage dressed in a tuxedo. He plays a
string bass and sings. 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'd
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 push 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
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 -- DAY

Cribbage sits at his desk. He has written out the melody of "Lorelei!" on a sheet of musical staff paper and writes 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 sharp eleventh.

INSERT -- THE MUSICAL STAFF PAPER.

Cribbage sings the lyrics as he scribbles F#11th 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#11th over the word "part." and B7 over the word "heart."

CRIBBAGE

(singing)

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

CRIBBAGE (V.O.)

He just strums another eleventh, a
B flat, to take him back to A
flat.

Cribbage sings the song and writes "Bb11th"
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)

You don't even know 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 sits on the couch watching TV.
KATHERINE STANDAGE does 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...

We see a clip from the show with the song "Lorelei!" 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.

The TV shifts to a scene deciting Cribbage in a Tuxedo singing on stage with a blonde in a red dress.

We see the neon sign changing from Laredo! to Lorelei!

Heinemann picks up the phone and dials a number.

HEINEMANN

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

INT. THEATER STAGE

A BLONDE in a red dress stands center stage and sings "The Flip Side of Love".

BLONDE

Before I met you I had someone

It wasn't very long before it all
was done
He made me sing that lonesome song
On the flip side of love...

INT. BARRY MULLEN TV TALK SHOW SET -- NIGHT

BARRY MULLEN stands 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 waits for Heinemann 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 gaudily
embroidered 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 into New Jersey.

INT. CRIBBAGE'S SEDAN -- DAY

Cribbage has on the cowboy hat as he drives.

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

What the hell is this all about?

Heinemann turns and looks through the rear window.

EXT. SIDE OF THE HIGHWAY -- DAY

We hear the loud sound of Cribbage and Heinemann's wind knocked out them 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 -- NIGHT

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

CRIBBAGE

...I hate that!

We hear a drum roll. The audience laughs.

CRIBBAGE

You know what else I hate? Getting beat up by the Jersey City cops. 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 screaming 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!"

We hear a drum roll. We hear laughter 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!"

We hear a drum roll. The audience laughs.

CRIBBAGE

Thank you very much ladies and gentlemen!

INT. THEATER 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.

We hear a loud German siren, and Cribbage waves it to silence with mock furor and impatience.

CRIBBAGE

Not that kind of siren!

INT. BACKSTAGE -- MOMENTS LATER

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

McKay 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, pal.

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 reads 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
You're growing?

MCKAY
I'm morphing!

EXT. NEW YORK CITY STREET -- DAY

SUPER: "MEMORIAL DAY NEW YORK CITY,
1981."

A Memorial Day parade bangs through the streets. There are marching bands and floats, some with military themes. The sign on one float reads, "DAY OF REMEMBRANCE."

Cribbage stands on the sidewalk among the noise and bustle as the loud parade passes.

CRIBBAGE (V.O.)

When McKay composed, people listened. It wasn't a surprise that his songs caught the public fancy, and I found out something about myself when they did. That something is that -- despite the many faults I'll admit to as well as those I won't -- I'm not the envious type. I was happy for the guy. I felt somehow I was a part of something bigger than James McKay and certainly bigger than myself.

An American flag adorned float passes with the words "THINK OF ALL THE PEOPLE." A noisy, six-piece brass band sits atop the float in front of the sign playing at the decibel level of a major train wreck. The song is "Never More to Be."

INT. BARRY MULLEN TV TALK SHOW SET -- NIGHT

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 perhaps
laying it on expecially
thick)

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

The audience laughs.

CRIBBAGE

It took courage in them days, but
dey pressed on -- westward across
them 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 Gibson round
shouldered dreadnaught 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 played right at the
nut 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 we 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."

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.

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 Practice. We see guitars, a bass, and drums. Cribbage sings "You Can't Fool Me" as he picks a guitar in a Merle Travis style. The other guitarists back him up.

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

I met you down in Laramie
You threw a bottle of beer at me
Well, 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 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
-- ONE MINUTE LATER

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 sits 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? I guess not.

Pokey looks up quizzically.

INT. THE COMPASS ROSE DINER -- MORNING

McKay sits down at a table. He is next to a
window through which rain we see rain
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

Just don't let it 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

You're not as bad a guy as your
ex-wife might believe.

MCKAY

Thanks. I think. If you need to
talk some more...

LORELEI

I really meant what I said before
about my not mixing that way.

MCKAY

I would like to see you again.

Lorelei looks at him quite sternly.

MCKAY

It's an effort for me. I don't
like to press.

LORELEI

Then don't.

Her expression softens and she relents.

LORELEI

Thanks for being so nice.

MCKAY

It's my pleasure, dear.

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

INT. THEATER STAGE -- NIGHT -- SOMETIME IN THE FUTURE

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

COLEMAN

(singing)

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 enters. 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 Can't Fool Me."

The audience, most of whom are drunk, respond with enthusiasm. They've apparently heard it played before 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 Isham Jones' and Gus Kahn's "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 finishes his instrumental and picks and sings the last verse of the drinking song.

THE GUITARIST
I used to talk about my catch

Now, all I've got is a shouting
match
Well, 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 stands 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 to 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 the
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 snores with the vestiges of the drunken grin still on his face. We hear the door close.

INT. CHILDREN'S BEDROOM -- MORNING

Daylight streams through a window. McKay lies asleep on the bed. He's on his back.

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 sits 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.

Cribbage's reverie stops suddenly as a thought comes to his mind. He goes to the phone and quickly calls the dog sitter.

DOG SITTER (V.O.)

Hello, Maggie's Mutt Service. How can I help you?

CRIBBAGE

Maggie, you angel from heaven.
Thank God you're home.

THE DOG SITTER (V.O.)
Sylvester, darling. You sound
upset.

CRIBBAGE
I am and I need you to grab my
apartment key now and go check on
Pokey. It's an emergency. Can you
do it?

THE DOG SITTER (V.O.)
Anything for you, Sylvester.

CRIBBAGE
Wonderful. Call me on my phone the
minute you get there. I'm at the
Sheradan in Philadelphia. The
number's...

THE DOG SITTER (V.O.)
Philadelphia? Who's taking care
of little Pokey?

CRIBBAGE
Just get there and call me,
dearest. I'll explain later.
Here's the number...

Cribbage rolls his eyes.

INT. POLICE STATION INTERROGATION ROOM --
DAY

McKay sits 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 look 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 -- NIGHT

Cribbage is alone on stage, seated. He plays a guitar in the spotlight and sings.

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 end 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 and takes a deep breath. There are tears in his eyes.

INT. CRIBBAGE'S APARTMENT -- DAY

McKay sits on the sofa. Cribbage sits 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

Kind of a cop-out.

CRIBBAGE

It would be exactly that if I
hadn't tried and failed despite
myself. Like you.

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

So? Your name's James, not Jesus.

MCKAY

It's not just this. It's my whole
fucking life. I'm not a religious
man. I not sure there is such a
thing as redemption.

CRIBBAGE

Well I do. But don't look to me
for it.

MCKAY

I'm sure as hell not going to your
god for it!

CRIBBAGE

That's not what I meant. I don't
want you to. I don't want anyone
to. I only want people to believe
in their own gospel, whatever it
is.

MCKAY

I can't make amends.

CRIBBAGE

See what I mean?

MCKAY

What?

CRIBBAGE

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

SUPER: "ONE MONTH LATER."

INT. THEATER STAGE -- NIGHT

Gregg Coleman is in a tuxedo center stage.
He sings an operatic version of "Never More
to Be."

COLEMAN

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

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

COLEMAN

Think of all the people
Never more to be!

INT. BACKSTAGE -- NIGHT

CRIBBAGE

(looking toward the stage)
Oh, this is so much more on the
mark than Laredo!

He looks at the people around him. They are actors and singers and they smile 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 greets people. McKay offers his hand and the singer shakes it.

MCKAY

I really liked your take on the song. Sounded great!

COLEMAN

Well, 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

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 sings "I've dreamed
the Past Away."

MCKAY

Still green are your memories of
when we were young
And oh how I long for those days
in the sun
Sometimes it seems I've dreamed
all those memories away.
So many have gone as sleeping I lay
Almost as if I dreamed them away.

The song ends with a simple major chord that fades away.

INT. CRIBBAGE'S BEDROOM -- EARLY MORNING

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" plays in 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 me by 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 run
across the field. Cribbage stares. Several
seconds pass by. Then the words "TV'S WORST
BLUNDERS" appear on the screen.

There is a knock at the door. Pokey barks
once. Rain pours outside and Cribbage can
see through the blurry, rain streaked window
a hooded figure at the door. The figure
puts a key in the 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

Lullaby with the Stars or Nevermore to Be
Instrumental

...or Only in Dreams

...or Trail West

...or Wine on the Desert

By the Same Author

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