

THE LOST PEARL OF THE MOJAVE – EPISODE 6

MEDICINAL WHISKY 1917-1941



FADE IN:

EXT. SCOOTER'S SALOON – 1919 – NIGHT

OVERLAY: "OASIS PALMS 1919"

The neon "Scooter's Saloon" sign flickers against the darkness. The street is eerily silent—until the distant rumble of engines breaks the calm. Headlights slash through the dust as a convoy of black FBI vehicles roars down the main street, tires screeching to a halt.

INT. SCOOTER'S SALOON – NIGHT

The place is humming. Locals packed at the bar. A fiddle plays from a corner stage. The crowd is

loose, laughing – passing flasks and toasting full pints of beer. **SCOOTER (57)** is standing behind the bar cleaning a beer mug. **CURTIS SMITH (44)** is standing at the register tallying the receipts.

Suddenly, the swinging saloon doors BURST OPEN. Two **FEDERAL AGENTS** in trench coats and fedoras step in, flanked by LOCAL DEPUTIES. The room falls silent.

LEAD AGENT

This is a federal
raid. Everyone step
away from the bar.
Bartender – hands
where we can see
'em.

Curtis raises his palms slowly, nods at Scooter to comply. One agent moves to the shelves – cases of Scooter's Old No. 5 Rye – and starts yanking bottles down. Another agent grabs an axe from his belt.

CRASH. A bottle shatters on the floor. Then another. Then a whole case. The agent moves with fury, slinging glass and liquor into the sawdust. The other agent heads behind the bar and CHOPS into a beer barrel. Golden foam erupts and splashes across the floor.

CURTIS

(low) Jesus. That's
a year's worth of
aging gone in
thirty seconds.

SCOOTER

(tight) Two years,
if you count the
mash. That rye was
just starting to
sing.

The patrons are ushered out. One man grumbles – he's
thrown against a table and cuffed. The fiddle player
slips out the back, silent as a ghost.

LEAD AGENT

(to Curtis and
Scooter) You boys
listening? If we
come back and this
place is still
pouring liquor –
we're not busting
bottles next time.
We're taking you
both to jail.

He leans in, nose to nose with Scooter.

LEAD AGENT (CONT'D)

You want to make
moonshine? Do it in
hell.

He spits on the floor and turns. The agents walk
out, boots crunching on broken glass. Outside,

engines rev as the black government cars roll away into the desert night. Curtis watches the wreckage. Whiskey pools around his boots. He kneels, picks up a soaked label – barely legible: “Old No. 5.”

CURTIS

I hope Mary is
right or we are in
big trouble.

SCOOTER

(after a beat) She
better be right. Or
I’m going to end up
selling this stuff
out of the trunk of
my damn car.

They both stare at the mess – the smell of rye thick in the air, lantern light dancing on the broken glass. Somewhere outside, a coyote howls.

SMASH TO BLACK.

EXT. FIELD HOSPITAL FRANCE – 1917 – DAY (FLASHBACK)

A makeshift field hospital stands amid a war-torn French landscape. Smoke curls from distant artillery fire as wounded soldiers are hurriedly tended to under canvas tents.

OVERLAY: “Two years earlier France 1917”

INT. FIELD HOSPITAL TENT – 1917 – DAY

Dim light filters through the canvas. Amid the organized chaos of medics and the moans of pain, CURTIS SMITH (mid-40s, rugged yet gentle) lies on a cot with a bandaged shoulder and a fresh battle wound. Despite the pain, his face shows quiet determination.

DR. MARY LEFÈVRE (38-years old, striking beauty, poised and compassionate), a French doctor with quiet strength, leans over him, her gentle hands carefully cleaning the wound. Her whispered instructions blend with the ambient clamor of the tent.

MARY

(softly, in ENGLISH
with a FRENCH
accent) Hold still,
Monsieur. This
might sting a bit...
but it will help.

Curtis winces as Mary applies a sterile dressing. Their eyes meet—hers warm and kind, his filled with resilience.

CURTIS

(weakly, with a
small smile) Thank
you doctor, the way
you say it makes it
sound like this
pain is worth

enduring.

Mary pauses, her hand steady. A brief silence lingers, punctuated by the distant thunder of artillery.

MARY

In war, sometimes
the smallest
kindnesses mean the
most... It isn't the
pain itself, but
the healing that
follows.

CURTIS

Mam, you're not
just healing
wounds, you're
giving us hope.

Mary offers a gentle, knowing smile but looks worried as she finishes her work.

CURTIS

(CONT'D, softly)
What's wrong?

MARY

(sad, reflective) I
wish I had hope.
This war... has taken

my family and
stripped France of
its future. I am
alone here and our
people were forced
to take sides and
are pitted against
each other. France
was once a
paradise, but his
war has made it a
wasteland. Curtis
realizing he has
fallen in love,
takes a chance and
earnestly asks Mary
to return home with
him.

CURTIS

(earnestly) I'd
like to show you a
paradise in the
desert—a place
where the water
still brings life...
and love. Come home
to America with me
and we can build a
life—and a
family—together.

MARY

(whispering, almost

in awe) Oh, Curtis?
(beat) yes.

The camera slowly pulls back, leaving the intimate scene in the tent as the harsh reality of war recedes, replaced by a budding hope and a love that defies the surrounding darkness.

INT. SCOOTER'S SALOON – 1919 – NIGHT

Curtis Smith 44 years old sits at the bar with his Father's business partner Scooter 57 years old, who has seen better days. The saloon, once the heart of Oasis Palms, now feels hollow. The piano in the corner is silent, and only a few scattered patrons nurse their drinks under dim, flickering gaslights. Dust settles on the once-polished bar, and the scent of stale whiskey lingers.

CURTIS

Scooter, we're in
trouble. This
prohibition is
choking us. The
trains are empty
the Resort guests
have moved on to
Palm Springs. We're
going to have to
shut down the
distillery
completely, because
if they find out
your still

producing they will
destroy the whole
place.

SCOOTER

Damn shame, that
distillery is been
my life, and its
kept this town
running for 20
years since the
mine closed.

Scooter takes a slow sip from his glass, the weight of the words sinking in. He sets it down and looks around at the near-empty room. The walls, once alive with laughter and music, now seem to close in on them.

SCOOTER

You remember when
we had guests lined
up outside, waiting
for a seat at the
bar? When the train
pulled in, and
businessmen,
actors, and high-
rollers walked
through those
doors?

Curtis nods, his fingers tracing the rim of his own

untouched glass. He doesn't need to be reminded. He remembers the town bustling. Now, with the liquor hiding and no one to drink it. The only sound is the occasional shuffle of the bartender wiping down already-clean glasses.

CURTIS

I've spent every night trying to figure a way out of this mess. But without the distillery... without the revenue, Oasis Palms is dying.

SCOOTER

The damn government says liquor's illegal, but you know what? Folks still want it. And if they can't get it here, they'll go to Mexico or drink bathtub gin—and that shiet is making people go crazy.

Curtis sighs, rubbing his temples. He knows Scooter is right. He also knows that operating outside the law isn't an option—not if he wants to keep Oasis

Palms alive for the long run.

CURTIS

We need to figure
out something that
won't have federal
agents knocking
down our doors.

Scooter scoffs, running a hand through his thinning hair.

SCOOTER

You find a legal
way to sell whiskey
in the middle of
Prohibition, you
let me know.

Curtis leans back, staring up at the wooden beams above them, deep in thought. There has to be a way. He just doesn't know what it is yet.

INT. HOTEL CALIFORNIA LOBBY – EVENING (1919)

CURTIS and MARY stand before the front desk of the once-grand Hotel California. Mary is very pregnant. The tension between them is thick, unspoken words pressing in. The lobby, though still elegant, feels hollow—its glory fading under the weight of uncertainty.

CURTIS

Prohibition's
killing us. Without
liquor sales, we
won't last another
year.

MARY

My medical license
is good here in
California. We
could move to Los
Angeles—I could
open a private
practice.

CURTIS

I don't want to
leave the desert.
This is our home,
Mary. We're going
to raise our child
here. This is our
paradise.

MARY

Your brother Jack
is in L.A. His law
practice is
thriving. With his
connections, we
could start over.
Raise or child in

the city. Maybe
Jack gets married,
maybe he or she
grows up with
cousins.

CURTIS

I'm not sure Jack's
the marrying kind.
And this... this is
our home.

Mary exhales, her eyes sweeping the lobby. A few guests linger, murmuring softly. She turns to leave—but stops. Seated nearby, a well-dressed guest holds up a Chicago newspaper. The back page faces her. In bold print: **“WALGREENS OPENS ITS 500TH STORE.”**

Mary stares at the headline. Her brow tightens. An idea, or maybe a warning, flickers behind her eyes.

FADE TO BLACK.

**INT. HOTEL CALIFORNIA MANAGER'S OFFICE – NIGHT
(1920)**

The study is dimly lit by a single desk lamp. The soft ticking of a clock underscores the late hour. Mary sits at the mahogany desk, breast-feeding her infant son, surrounded by stacks of open books and scattered papers. Her brow is furrowed in concentration as she meticulously reviews the *National Prohibition Act* and related legal

documents. The Chicago newspaper, its bold headline still visible, sits to the side of the desk.

MARY

(murmuring to
herself) There must
be something we're
missing...

She reaches for a worn law book, flipping pages with increasing urgency. Her eyes scan the text, and then—suddenly—she stops. Her breath catches as she reads aloud.

MARY

“Under the National
Prohibition Act,
the prescription of
medicinal alcohol
is permitted by
licensed
physicians...”

Her eyes widen as the realization hits her. Heart pounding, she grabs a pen and hastily jots down notes. The camera pans to a close-up of the book's text, highlighting phrases like “medicinal alcohol,” “physician prescriptions,” and “licensed pharmacies.”

MARY

(excitedly) Curtis!

Curtis, come
quickly!

Footsteps echo down the hallway. Moments later, Curtis appears in the doorway, his expression a mix of concern and curiosity. Mary stands to meet him, clutching the newspaper and legal documents.

CURTIS

Mary, what's going
on? It's late.

MARY

(breathless with
excitement) It's
right here!
According to the
National
Prohibition Act, we
can legally
prescribe and sell
medicinal whiskey.
My medical license
is valid in
California. If I
establish a
legitimate practice
here, I can obtain
a license to
dispense alcohol
for medicinal
purposes.

Curtis takes the book from her, scanning the highlighted sections. His expression shifts from skepticism to intrigue as the weight of her discovery settles in.

CURTIS

Are you sure about this? Can we make it work?

MARY

(nodding) Yes. We'll need to follow the regulations carefully. I will set up a proper doctor's office and maintain meticulous records. Every prescription must comply with the law. The Distillery can start Bottling in Bond. (grinning) You just need to turn Scooter's into a Pharmacy.

CURTIS

I'll call Jack, if it can be done, he

can make it happen.

Curtis places his hands on Mary's shoulders, admiration and gratitude evident in his gaze. They share a moment of renewed hope, the weight of their recent struggles lifting slightly as they embrace this newfound opportunity.

FADE TO BLACK.

INT. OASIS PALMS TOWN CHAPEL – 1920 – DAY

The small wooden chapel is filled with devout townsfolk, mostly older women and a few stern-faced men. At the front stands MRS. WINIFRED ASHWORTH (60s)—a severe-looking woman with an iron spine, piercing eyes, and an air of self-righteous authority. She wears a black lace bonnet and clutches a well-worn Bible.

MRS. ASHWORTH (VOICE TREMBLING WITH INDIGNATION)

It is an outrage!
First, they bring
sin to our doorstep
with their
distillery still
operating in the
caves and the
saloon is still
selling alcohol
they have hidden
rooms in the hotel
and pool hall—now
they dare to

disguise it as
medicine!

Murmurs of discontent ripple through the
congregation.

MRS. ASHWORTH

They can call it
whatever they want.
But we know the
truth. Liquor is
the Devil's drink!
And I will not
stand idly by while
our town is turned
into another Sodom!

The murmurs turn into fervent nods. One man,
REVEREND DANIELS, a thin, nervous-looking preacher,
clears his throat.

REVEREND DANIELS

Mrs. Ashworth, what
do you propose?

MRS. ASHWORTH

We go to my
nephew—State
Senator Lionel
Ashworth. He has
influence in
Sacramento. If they

try to file for a
license, he can see
to it that it is
denied.

Gasps and nods of agreement.

MRS. ASHWORTH (TIGHT SMILE)

We will fight this
corruption with
every legal tool
God has given us.

The congregation erupts into murmured prayers and
whispered schemes.

INT. HOTEL CALIFORNIA – LOBBY – NIGHT (1920)

SCREEN OVERLAY: "6 Months Later"

Curtis Smith, now a sharp-minded businessman, stands
behind the counter. A STYLISH COUPLE approaches
nervously.

STYLISH MAN

I hear the doctor's
office is open.

CURTIS

Oh no sir, I'm not
the doctor. My
wife, Dr. Mary

Smith, would be
glad to assist you
and your wife.

Curtis nods toward a door behind the desk. As he does, he shares a warm, knowing smile with Mary, who steps forward confidently. Their glance speaks volumes about their partnership both in business and in life.

MARY

Yes, please step
inside and let's
talk about your
condition.

MALIKA (V.O.)

Prohibition was
man's law. Like his
grandfather, Curtis
knew laws were
written to allow
men to interpret
their meaning.

**INT. DOWNTOWN HOTEL CALIFORNIA – DOCTOR'S OFFICE –
1920 – NIGHT**

The dimly lit room features a small examination table, medical books, and a locked cabinet of bottles labeled 'MEDICINAL USE ONLY'.

MARY

You seem anxious.
Are you feeling any
stress lately?

The man nods.

MARY

And you as well?

The woman nods. Mary scribbles on a prescription
pad.

MARY (CONT'D)

Take this to the
Market across the
street they have a
pharmacy counter
where you can have
your prescription
filled for a full
bottle of Medicine.
Or you can visit
the new pharmacy
next door for a
single dose of
medicine as needed.

She hands him the slip. The couple nods and smiles.

FADE TO BLACK.

INT. HOTEL CALIFORNIA DOCTOR'S OFFICE – DAY (1920)

The shelves are lined with glass Whisky bottles with official seals over the top and labels "Bottled in Bond For Medicinal Use Only." The door SLAMS open. Mary startles as Mrs. Ashworth strides in, flanked by two other church ladies. Mrs. Ashworth mispronounces Dr. Smith's name

MRS. ASHWORTH

Dr. Lee-favor-
Smith, I presume?

MARY (TURNING, STRAIGHTENING)

Ah, yes? And you
are?

MRS. ASHWORTH

Mrs. Winifred
Ashworth. You
Smiths think you
can do anything you
want up here on
this mountain, but
we are not going to
sit idle while you
destroy families. I
speak for the
righteous people of
this county, and we
will not allow this
charade.

MARY (CONFUSED)

Charade?

MRS. ASHWORTH (SCOWLING)

I know what you and
Curtis are up to.
Selling whiskey
under the guise of
medicine? It is
immoral and
illegal!

Mary folds her arms, standing her ground.

MARY (SMOOTHLY)

Mrs. Ashworth, it's
quite legal. Under
the National
Prohibition Act,
licensed physicians
may prescribe
medicinal alcohol.
My credentials
allow me to do
exactly that.

Mrs. Ashworth's lips press into a thin, disapproving
line.

MRS. ASHWORTH

That may be so, but
you and your
illegal distillery

will never get
permitted, not over
my dead body. I've
sent a letter to my
nephew, Senator
Ashworth in
Sacramento, he will
see to it that this
so-called license
of yours is revoked
before a single
bottle leaves this
building.

MARY (HOLDING FIRM)

If you have an
issue with the law,
Mrs. Ashworth, I
suggest you take it
up with the state
legislature. Until
then, I will
practice medicine
within the confines
of the law.

Mrs. Ashworth leans in, voice dropping to a venomous
whisper.

MRS. ASHWORTH

You may have the
law on your side
today, Dr. Smith,

but God is on mine.

She spins on her heel and marches out, her entourage trailing behind her. Mary exhales, but her resolve hardens.

**INT. HOTEL CALIFORNIA MANAGER'S OFFICE – 1920 –
NIGHT**

Curtis paces as Mary relays the confrontation.

CURTIS (SCOFFS)

Ashworth. I
should've guessed.
That woman's been
trying to meddle in
our town business
for years. We are
the ones that built
that church and we
brought in Rev
Daniels thinking he
would serve the
people who need
help and leave the
others alone. And
then she showed up
trying to reform
the entire town.
She should just go
back to Barstow and
leave us alone.

MARY (SOBERLY)

She's not just a
busybody, Curtis.
If her nephew gets
involved, he could
block our license
at the state level.

Curtis stops pacing, thinking hard.

CURTIS

Then we need
insurance. Someone
who can counter her
influence.

MARY (NODS)

I'll send a
telegram to Dr.
Halloway in San
Francisco. He's got
connections in the
medical board.
Maybe he can help.

Curtis grins.

CURTIS

And I'll ask Uncle
Jack to reach out
to his friends in
Sacramento, his

circle of friends
have some powerful
political allies...
that like
whiskey-medicinal,
of course.

They exchange determined looks.

FADE TO BLACK.

MONTAGE – TRANSFORMING OASIS PALMS – 1920

The hotel lobby is renovated, a doctor's office is added where the manager's office used to be. Scooter's Saloon is rebranded as "Scooter's Pharmacy", and a "Pharmacy" sign is installed over the soda fountain in the Oasis Market.

EXT. OASIS PALMS DOWNTOWN – 1925 – EVENING

SCREEN OVERLAY: "Five Years Later 1925"

The small downtown hums with energy, neon signs casting a vibrant glow on the streets below. Oasis Palms' nightlife thrives under a loose interpretation of Prohibition laws. An elaborate theater marquee flickers, advertising the latest Hollywood film, while a saloon disguised as a "Pharmacy" buzzes with activity.

Dominating the street, a grand multi-story brick hotel, just off the main square, stands proudly. A large awning extends over the sidewalk, offering shelter to guests arriving in luxury automobiles.

Through its tall windows, passersby catch glimpses of an opulent Art Deco lobby—polished floors, crystal chandeliers, and well-dressed guests enjoying cocktails in the lounge. Next door, a well-lit barbershop caters to gentlemen in suits, one reclining for a close shave while another adjusts his tie in the mirror. Above the shop, a glowing sign marks the entrance to a lively second-floor pool hall, where finely dressed patrons ascend the stairs.

In the center of the square, a Civil War hero statue stands tall above a lighted fountain. Across the street, there are two more brick buildings the OASIS MARKET with a soda fountain visible from the street and SMITH'S HARDWARE store with drygoods and tools on display out front. Both businesses are humming with activity.

A doorman in a sharp uniform tips his hat and welcomes the STYLISH COUPLE as they step out of their automobile and enter the lobby of the HOTEL CALIFORNIA.

INT. FAST EDDIES POOLHALL (NOW A CASINO) – NIGHT

Inside a dim, smoky second-floor casino, the muted clack of chips and the spin of one-armed bandits set a clandestine rhythm. A neon sign that reads "Fast Eddies" flickers against baroque wallpaper.

Dim lantern light flickers over a small group of men huddled around a poker table, their faces shadowed by the brim of their hats. Curtis leans against the bar, sipping whiskey while DEALER JIM, a grizzled

old card shark, shuffles a deck. Coins, pocket watches, and crumpled bills litter the table.

A young miner, sweating under his cap, pushes a small leather pouch forward.

YOUNG MINER

All I got left—gold
dust. You in or
out?

The man across from him, BILL GORDON, a rancher with a mean streak, sneers and tosses down his own bet.

BILL GORDON

Call. Let's see
what you got.

The miner flips over his cards—a straight flush. The room erupts with whistles and groans.

DEALER JIM

Well, I'll be
damned. Kid's got
the devil's luck
tonight.

Curtis grins, stepping forward.

CURTIS

Gentlemen, let's
keep it friendly—no

sore losers.

BILL GORDON (GRITTING TEETH)

Ain't no sore
loser. Just seems
mighty funny how
this kid rolls in
and cleans house.

The tension thickens. Curtis watches carefully as Bill Gordon reaches for his belt, but before anything happens, the front door SLAMS open. MRS. WINIFRED ASHWORTH strides in, flanked by SHERIFF HOLBROOK (50s)—a rugged lawman with a weary patience for local squabbles.

MRS. ASHWORTH (RIGHTEOUS FURY)

I knew it! A den of
sin—gambling,
whiskey, and
deceit! You might
put up a sign that
says “Pool Hall,”
but this—this is a
disgrace!

She gestures wildly at the poker table. The players freeze, looking toward Curtis.

CURTIS (CALMLY)

Now, now, Mrs.
Ashworth, this is

just a friendly
game between
gentlemen. No harm
done.

MRS. ASHWORTH (SNAPPING)

It's illegal, Mr.
Curtis! And as of
this moment, I am
pressing charges.

Curtis glances at Sheriff Holbrook, who sighs
complacently and adjusts his belt.

SHERIFF HOLBROOK

Technically, this
ain't wrong, Mrs
Ashford. State law
says banked games
are illegal, and
this sure looks
like one to me.

Curtis smirks.

Ashworth gestures to the row of slot machines along
the wall as the patrons are frozen watching the
intervention unfold.

MRS. ASHWORTH (SEETHING)

It is immoral! What
about those one-
armed badits? And I

guarantee you, my
nephew will make
sure that the law
is enforced.

Curtis and the Sheriff exchange a look—both knowing
that a state crackdown could mean real trouble.

CURTIS

No mam. Those are
games of skill and
they don't pay
money they only pay
credits for more
play. This is all
perfectly legal
under state law.

SHERIFF HOLBROOK (TO CURTIS, WARNING)

You best be
careful.
Sacramento's
already talking
about closing these
"gray areas." Might
not be legal much
longer.

MRS. ASHWORTH (SMUGLY)

And when that day
comes, this whole
establishment will
crumble like the

house of sin it is.

She turns on her heel and marches out. Curtis watches her go, his expression darkening.

CURTIS (MUTTERING)

That woman won't be
happy till she's
burned this whole
town to the ground.

FADE TO BLACK.

EXT. OASIS PALMS – 1925 – NIGHT

The street outside Scooter's Pharmacy is alive with the hum of late-night revelers. Neon signs flicker in the warm desert air, casting an eerie glow on the faces of the patrons spilling onto the sidewalk. Inside, the energy is palpable—laughter, music, and the clinking of glasses fill the saloon-turned-pharmacy. But the atmosphere takes a sharp turn as the sudden screech of tires pierces the night.

FBI agents spill from their black sedans, their coats billowing as they move with precision. Their polished badges flash under the streetlights. The crowd outside freezes, and the once-bustling room inside falls eerily silent. Patrons quickly push their glasses aside, feigning innocence.

The lead agent, a hard-eyed man with a no-nonsense demeanor, strides through the doorway, flanked by uniformed officers.

FBI LEAD AGENT

(sternly) This
establishment is
under investigation
for illegal
gambling and
alcohol sales.
Hands where we can
see them.

Curtis and Mary step forward, calm but unwavering. Mary clutches a stack of paperwork, her knuckles white against the paper. Curtis squares his shoulders, his voice steady.

CURTIS

Everything we're
doing is legal.

The agent smirks, unimpressed, and gestures for his men to begin searching the premises. Officers push past Curtis, opening cabinets, pulling bottles from behind the counter, sniffing the contents. A young agent inspects a row of carefully labeled prescription bottles.

FBI AGENT #2

Sir, they're all
labeled for
medicinal use.
Prescribed and
logged.

Mary takes a step forward, her voice unwavering.

MARY

You've been here
before and you know
licensed physicians
are permitted to
prescribe medicinal
alcohol. I am a
licensed physician.
My records are in
order, and every
prescription is
accounted for.

She extends a thick ledger to the lead agent, who
hesitates before taking it. He flips through the
pages, his eyes narrowing as he scans the meticulous
records. Silence thickens the air as tension builds.

FBI LEAD AGENT

(grudgingly) It
appears to be in
order. But where
are the slot
machines?

The tension in the room slowly dissipates. The
agents exchange looks, some clearly disappointed at
the lack of evidence for a takedown. The lead agent
exhales sharply, snapping the ledger shut.

FBI LEAD AGENT

For now. But I'm
taking a case as

“evidence”.

He hands the ledger back to Mary, nods curtly to his men, and turns to leave. An officer picks up a case of Scooter Rye and the officers file out, and the sound of boots against the wooden floor echoes as they disappear into the night. The saloon-turned-pharmacy exhales collectively, tension giving way to murmured relief.

MARY

I'm just glad they
didn't visit the
pool hall. The slot
machines would be
the least of our
problems.

Curtis places a protective hand on Mary's back as they watch the agents retreat. He turns to her, his eyes full of gratitude. Mary exhales, finally allowing herself a small, victorious smile. Around them, business slowly resumes, a few patrons daring to raise their glasses once more. A train whistle echoes in the distance.

MALIKA (V.O.)

In the desert you
do what it takes to
survive. Survival
is the only way to
defend an oasis.

FADE TO BLACK.

EXT. OASIS PALMS TOWN SQUARE – 1925 – NIGHT

The FBI agents slam their car doors shut. Engines rumble to life, and headlights cut through the darkness as their black sedans roll away from Scooter's Pharmacy. Inside, Curtis and Mary remain framed in the window, their tense silhouettes bathed in the glow of the streetlamps. Their expressions are unreadable, but the weight of the night lingers.

As the FBI cars pass down the street, the camera follows, gliding past the brand new brightly lit **OASIS THEATER**. The marquee flickers, illuminating the damp pavement: "The Gold Rush – Starring Charlie Chaplain." A line of moviegoers in fine evening wear file through the gilded doors, their laughter and chatter spilling onto the street.

The camera continues its sweeping motion, drifting back past Scooter's Pharmacy again, lingering just long enough to catch Curtis, his silhouette swallowed by the darkness inside.

It glides further, up the street to the grand facade of the Hotel California, where affluent patrons arrive in chauffeured cars, stepping onto the sidewalk. A doorman tips his hat as guests disappear into the lobby's golden glow.

The camera then pans right and upward, revealing the neon sign of Fast Eddie's Pool Hall, buzzing softly in the night. The sign flickers once, casting a jagged shadow across the sidewalk before stabilizing. The camera focuses on a second-story window. A warm haze of cigar smoke and laughter leaks through the green-tinted glass.

CUT TO INT. FAST EDDIE'S POOL HALL – 1925 – NIGHT

A pair of dice tumble across a green-felt craps table, landing with a dramatic pause. A voice, smooth and theatrical, chuckles softly. The camera shifts upward, revealing a man standing at the head of the table, flanked by two stunning women in evening gowns. His trademark mustache twitches into a smirk. The twinkle in his eye confirms what we already know.

Charlie Chaplin rolls the dice again. A cascade of cheers and groans fills the room as the game continues. The camera lingers, taking in the scene—Chaplin, basking in his element, seemingly untouched by the troubles brewing in the streets below.

FADE TO BLACK.

EXT. DESERT RAILWAY – 1925

A sleek, black steam locomotive with a distinctive Warbonnet paint scheme—the Midnight Limited—roars along the desert tracks. The train's satin black Pullman cars gleam under the moonlight, bold yellow lettering and glossy black, yellow, and red stripes catching the eye. The silver-painted roofs shimmer, reflecting the Mojave moonlight at night.

MALIKA (V.O.)

The railroad, once
an enemy became an
ally. Every night
the railroad would
deliver its gold to

the oasis on the
iron horse they
called the
"Midnight Limited".

INT. MIDNIGHT LIMITED CLUB CAR – 1925 – NIGHT

A sumptuous dining area exudes elegance. Well-dressed passengers share laughter over a gourmet dinner. In the rear-facing observation car, guests gaze out the windows at the desert's starry expanse. A passenger holds a folded copy of the Los Angeles Herald newspaper.

PASSENGER #1

I read it right in
the Herald they
called it "The
Rolling Midnight
Party in the
Desert."

PASSENGER #2

Not bad, leave Los
Angeles at 5, food,
drinks, beautiful
people, and in less
than three hours
you are basking in
Oasis Palms' exotic
nightlife... and its
all legal.

EXT. OASIS PALMS TOWN – 1925 – NIGHT

The train's signature whistle blows—a clear, piercing sound echoing over the plateau. The vibrant resort below is bathed in neon, a testament to Oasis Palms' irresistible allure.

INT. HOTEL CALIFORNIA LOBBY – 1925 NIGHT

A party-goer from the train is sitting next to a PRETTY WOMAN at the Lobby bar and hears the train whistle. Patrons are mingling when they are interrupted by the train whistle.

PASSENGER #1

Four hours...
already? Whatta ya
say hun? Wanna get
a room and spend
the weekend?

PRETTY WOMAN

Well sure. If you
ask me like a
gentleman. I might
even take you for a
stroll to see the
Oasis in the
moonlight.

MALIKA (V.O.) (CONT'D)

That midnight
whistle wasn't just
a signal—it was a

promise. A promise
that even under
Prohibition's
shadow, this desert
Oasis would welcome
all outsiders.

FADE IN – EXT. OASIS PALMS (1930)

OVERLAY: "FIVE YEARS LATER – 1930"

- A pair of black crepe armbands hang from the corner of a framed photo: **EMMET, JACKSON, and SUSAN SMITH** at the opening of Oasis Palms Resort. A candle burns below it.
- The Resort bar terrace once filled with laughter is empty now. Dust has settled on the tables. A faded sign reads: "Whiskey by the Springs – Closed."
- A **FORD MODEL A** rolls past the town sign. "Welcome to Oasis Palms – The Pearl of the Mojave." Behind it, a FOR SALE sign creaks in the wind.
- Inside Scooter's Saloon, crates of unused glass bottles collect cobwebs. Scooter sits at the bar, silently polishing a glass, staring off at nothing. The stillness is heavy.
- **A train whistle echoes faintly...** but the station platform is deserted. No passengers. The timetable board is blank.
- Curtis stands in the distillery warehouse, staring at aging barrels stacked floor to

ceiling. He picks up a ledger, runs his finger down rows of unpaid accounts.

- A map of the U.S. with colored pins. Curtis pulls one pin from "Chicago." Then another from "Kansas City." He drops them in a jar labeled "Closed Territories."
- Empty gas pumps at the gas station. The attendant leans against the garage wall, smoking. His overalls are stained, his eyes tired.
- A family of drifters in a jalopy pulls off the highway, begging for water. A child clutches a cracked porcelain doll. Curtis brings out a jug.
- The theater marquee with a few lights out promotes "Hell's Angels Featuring Jean Harlow". The girl in the ticket booth stares off into space from boredom.
- **Outside the saloon, tumbleweeds roll across the street. A painted advertisement for Scooter's Old No. 5 Rye fades in the sun.**

FADE OUT.

FADE IN – EXT. TRAIN STATION – 1930 – NIGHT

A dusty Midnight Limited pulls into the well-worn Oasis Palms station. Curtis and his son LOUIS SMITH, late teens in a suit and tie wait nervously on the platform eying the smattering of passengers disembarking from the evening train. A few well-dressed railroad executives disembark. Curtis

encourages Louis to stand up straight and Curtis walks over extending his hand to the group of men, his expression a mix of pride and steely resolve.

CURTIS SMITH

Gentleman! I'm
Curtis Smith.
Welcome to Oasis
Palms! The
executives remove
their hats and wipe
sweat from their
brows. Their
clothes are
wrinkled from the
3-hour ride in the
100-degree night-
time desert heat.

RAILROAD EXECUTIVE #1

Hello Mr. Smith. We
weren't expecting a
greeting party
tonight. We just
came out to see how
the operation was
running.

Curtis Smith ignoring the weariness of the travelers feigns enthusiasm as if the meeting was planned ahead of time. Curtis waves his arm towards town to show the executives the way.

CURTIS SMITH

Don't worry
gentlemen, you keep
those trains
running—and we'll
keep your
passengers
entertained!

RAILROAD EXECUTIVE #2

Well, now that's
the problem isn't
it? Since the
repeal of
Prohibition, you
lost your advantage
your little
loophole doesn't
matter anymore now,
does it?

RAILROAD EXECUTIVE #1

Passenger traffic
on the Midnight is
way down. I'm
afraid folks can
drink in Los
Angeles and gamble
legally in Las
Vegas, even with
your slot machines
and tables your
goldmine isn't what
it used to be.

Curtis turns and again tries to entice the executives to follow him off the platform and into town.

CURTIS SMITH

Follow me,
gentlemen I'll show
you around town.
Oasis Palms still
has plenty to offer
your passengers.

As the train departs, the railroad executives turn and get back onboard. Just before embarking the Railroad Executive waves his hand toward the aging locomotive.

RAILROAD EXECUTIVE #1

Oh no, we're not
staying. Unless you
come up with
another trick and
give people a
reason to ride our
train out here,
this old-girl is
going to be
retired.

INT. MIDNIGHT LIMITED

The executives look out the side windows as the

Midnight Limited creeps through town. The once boisterous town is now a run-down and hard on its luck. The once-glowing neon, flickers on and off and the streets are empty with only a couple of bums standing on the street corner. As the train climbs the hill, the railroad executives look out the rear of the observation car with the dusty small desert town in the distance.

RAILROAD EXECUTIVE #1

They had a good run
but this railroad
isn't a charity.

FADE TO BLACK.

INT. FAST EDDIES POOL HALL – 1941 – NIGHT

OVERLAY: "OASIS PALMS 1941"

Inside a dim, smoky pool hall, the muted clack of chips and the spin of one-armed bandits set a clandestine rhythm. A old neon sign that reads "Fast Eddies" flickers against peeling wallpaper. Curtis strides among the gamblers—construction workers, down-on-their-luck railroad passengers, and a few transient drifters—all clinging to this illicit spark of hope.

A distant echo of uniformed footsteps heightens the tension. Curtis glances toward the door, aware of the constant risk.

Curtis sits with his son, Louis who has graduated

from college and is full of restless ambition. The low hum of dice and whispered wagers provide a backdrop to their serious conversation.

CURTIS

Revenue's dropping,
Louie. With
Prohibition gone
and the Depression
biting hard, we're
getting squeezed
from all sides. And
now you are joining
the Army and going
off to fight
Hitler.

LOUIS

Dad, I'll be fine.
But don't just keep
pushing your luck.
This game is risky,
you and Mom need to
think about your
future.

CURTIS

We're not just
playing games son;
we're fighting for
survival.

EXT. OASIS PALMS DOWNTOWN – 1941 – NIGHT

A dreary, rain-slicked street under a failing neon sign reveals the toll of hard times. The once-bustling resort now shows signs of neglect: shuttered storefronts, rusting equipment, and an air of desolation.

EXT. TRAIN STATION PLATFORM – NIGHT – 1941

A cold wind sweeps through the dimly lit station. Steam hisses from the aging waiting Midnight Limited locomotive. A banner in the distance reads: "Support Our Boys – Victory in '42!"

LOUIS, dressed in his crisp Army Air Corps pilot's uniform, stands tall despite the weight of the moment. His mother, MARY, clutches his hands, eyes glistening—not just with tears, but with pride. His father, CURTIS, watches him with quiet understanding.

Nearby, MOLLY, a teenage girl on the edge of womanhood, fidgets with a delicate lace-trimmed handkerchief in her hands.

MARY (SOFT BUT STRONG)

My son... you are
going to Europe. To
fight for my home,
just as your father
did.

She lifts her chin, her voice steady despite the emotion welling in her throat.

MARY (CONT.)

You will fly over
the fields where I
once played as a
girl. And you will
help save them. I
could not be
prouder of you. But
do not be
wreakless, come
home to us.

LOUIS (GENTLY)

I'll do right by
you, Ma. By all of
us.

He glances at CURTIS, who nods.

CURTIS

You've got our name
on your wings, son.
Keep your head
clear. Come back to
us.

LOUIS grips his father's hand firmly. A lifetime of
unspoken words passes between them. MOLLY hesitates
before stepping forward, her cheeks flushed. She
holds out her handkerchief to LOUIS.

MOLLY (SHYLY)

For luck... And you
gotta promise—you
come home. For me.

LOUIS kneels slightly to her level, touched by the gesture. He takes the handkerchief and tucks it into his jacket pocket with a soft smile.

LOUIS
I promise, Molly.

The train whistle shrieks—a final call. LOUIS gives one last look at his family. Then, with a resolute nod, he steps onto the train. MARY wipes her eyes. CURTIS places a steadying hand on her shoulder. MOLLY clutches her empty hands, watching as the train pulls away, carrying LOUIS into the night—toward war, toward an uncertain future.

EXT. OASIS PALMS – WIDE SHOT – NIGHT

The camera slowly pulls back to reveal Oasis Palms—a town once vibrant, now a fading relic clinging to a tiny oasis in the vast desert. The neon lights are dim; buildings show their wear. In the distance, a lonely train whistle echoes—a reminder of a lifeline that may soon be severed.

MALIKA (V.O.)
As the world
teetered on the
edge of self-
destruction, a wind

blew that would
carry our children
far from the
desert.

The screen fades slowly to black, leaving behind the haunting image of a once-thriving paradise on the brink of collapse—and a young man, Louis, poised to seek his destiny beyond its borders.

FADE TO BLACK.