

**THE LOST PEARL OF THE MOJAVE – EPISODE 7  
LIGHTNING IN A BOTTLE 1941-1949**



**FADE IN:**

**EXT. NORTH AFRICAN DESERT SKY – 1943 – DAY**

**SCREEN OVERLAY: “NORTH AFRICA 1943”**

A blistering sun glares over the golden sands. A lone P-38 Lightning streaks across the sky, engines roaring, trailing black smoke from its right engine. A young lieutenant pilot Inside the cockpit, LOUIS “LEFTY” SMITH grips the stick, sweat beading on his forehead.

**INT. P-38 LIGHTNING COCKPIT – 1943 – DAY**

**LEFTY**

Come on, baby... stay

with me.

The altimeter ticks downward—he's losing altitude. A burst of tracer fire rips past his wing. Lefty jerks the stick, the P-38 rolling hard right.

**LEFTY**

Damn it! Where are  
you?!

He cranes his neck, spotting a Messerschmitt Bf 109 banking in behind him, its guns lighting up.

**MATCH CUT TO: EXT. NAZI ENCAMPMENT – NORTH AFRICAN  
DESERT – 1943 – DAY**

On the ground, a squad of Nazi soldiers stands outside a camouflaged tent, scanning the sky. The distant growl of air combat makes them shield their eyes and look up.

**NAZI SOLDIER #1**

Amerikanischer  
Jäger! (American  
fighter!)

The P-38 Lightning roars overhead, its twin-boom silhouette unmistakable against the desert sun. Below, the soldiers scramble as the aircraft suddenly dives toward them.

**INT. P-38 LIGHTNING COCKPIT – 1943 – DAY (CONT.)**

**LEFTY**

If I'm going down,  
I'm taking you  
Kraut bastards with  
me.

Lefty yanks the trigger—the nose guns erupt,  
spitting fire at the encampment below.

FADE TO BLACK:

**EXT. CADIZ, CA – 1941 – DAY**

SCREEN OVERLAY: "2 Years earlier CADIZ, CA 1941"

A blistering sun beats down on the arid landscape. Curtis Smith stands before a group of railroad executives, military officers, and shadowy land speculators, pointing to a large map spread across a makeshift wooden table. The Santa Fe mainline cuts across the land, its tracks stretching toward the horizon.

In the background, the Barco Plateau and Oasis Palms shimmer in the heat waves. A worn whistle-stop sign reading "SANTA FE Cadiz, CA" stands by the railroad crossing, barely noticed by the gathering.

**CURTIS**

Gentlemen, this is  
where the Desert  
Training Center

should be. Cadiz  
has everything the  
military  
needs—endless open  
land, rail access,  
and most  
importantly... water.

Murmurs ripple through the small crowd. Some nod in agreement, while others exchange uneasy glances.

### **MYSTERIOUS LAND SPECULATOR**

I disagree, this  
land is not an  
ideal location for  
desert training it  
is not big enough.  
Patton has already  
surveyed a spot  
with 18,000 acres  
and he's ready to  
set up a camp in  
Desert Center just  
100 miles south of  
here.

### **RAILROAD EXECUTIVE**

We agree with Mr.  
Smith this would be  
an ideal place for  
your camp. Rt 66 is  
just over the  
ridge, there is

infrastructure up  
on the hill in  
Oasis Palms and the  
Santa Fe can carry  
in all the  
equipment and  
troops the U.S.  
Army needs.

Glancing at the land speculator, the railroad executive gives him a suspicious glare.

**RAILROAD EXECUTIVE (CONT.)**

I'm not sure what  
your interest in  
our land is but we  
are the only ones  
who can make an  
offer this good.

**MYSTERIOUS LAND SPECULATOR**

Don't be so sure  
about that.  
Patton's land is  
right off of the  
Southern Pacific  
mainline in the  
lower Mojave . And  
the Southern  
Pacific is  
committed to  
carrying the  
equipment and

troops the Army  
needs. And while I  
don't speak  
officially for the  
Southern Pacific, I  
have been assured  
they will do it for  
less than Santa Fe  
is offering.

Curtis locks eyes with the speaker, a tall, shadowy man in a tailored suit, standing slightly apart from the rest. There's an edge to his voice—something more than just business interests at play.

**EXT. DESERT CENTER GENERAL PATTON'S CAMP – 1942 –  
DAY**

SCREEN OVERLAY: "CAMP YOUNG DESERT CENTER, CA 1942"

A military jeep kicks up a dust cloud as it rolls to a stop. General George S. Patton steps out, his sharp gaze surveying the vast, empty stretch of desert. There is a sign "Desert Training Center – Camp Young".

**PATTON**

This is looking  
good. If I didn't  
know better I'd  
swear we were in  
North Africa.

His officers glance at one another. One clears his throat, hesitant.

**MILITARY OFFICER**

The camp is ready  
Sir. But there is  
still the question  
about Cadiz. The  
Santa Fe is asking.  
They have water and  
nearby  
infrastructure in  
Oasis Palms that  
would be popular  
with the men. What  
should we tell  
them?

Patton shakes his head.

**PATTON**

Tell them our  
troops do not need  
comfort. These men  
need to be made  
into warriors. And  
warriors are made  
in hell.

**INT. OASIS PALMS HOTEL CALIFORNIA – OFFICE – 1942 –  
DAY**

Curtis Smith and two Santa Fe railroad executives are discussing the loss of the army base to Desert Center.

**RAILROAD EXECUTIVE #1**

Patton's not going to budge.

**CURTIS**

But they are building a half-dozen more desert camps and they aren't building much infrastructure down there.

**RAILROAD EXECUTIVE #1**

Yes, Patton just wants tents, tanks, and scorpions.

**CURTIS**

What if we could get them to build a base up here? If not Cadiz how about in Goffs? It's on your mainline, it's on Route 66 and they could even put in buildings and an airstrip there.



**RAILROAD EXECUTIVE #1**

I don't know,  
Patton had no  
interest in Cadiz,  
how do you propose  
convincing him  
Goffs is any  
better?

Having an epiphany, the second railroad executive  
speaks up.

**RAILROAD EXECUTIVE #2**

I might have a  
solution. Maybe we  
don't have to  
convince Patton. I  
went to boarding  
school with HAP  
ARNOLD. He might be  
able to help.

**RAILROAD EXECUTIVE #1**

Hap Arnold? Who is  
that?

**RAILROAD EXECUTIVE #2**

Everyone else calls  
him General Arnold.  
He's Chief of the  
Army Air Forces  
now. We went to  
prep school

together.

Seeing that his associate and Smith have a separate agreement, the executive acknowledges Smith's ulterior motives.

**RAILROAD EXECUTIVE #1**

And naturally, the officers and enlisted men at this base will be right next door –eager to spend their paychecks in Oasis Palms.

**CURTIS**

Naturally.

FADE TO BLACK.

INT. RAF BASE – ENGLAND – 1942 – DAY

SCREEN OVERLAY: "Shropshire, England 1942"

A light drizzle falls over a bustling Royal Air Force base. Pilots and ground crew move with precision as P-38 Lightnings sit lined up on the wet tarmac. Inside the officers' club, laughter and music drift over the clinking of glasses.

At the center of attention stands LT. LOUIS "LEFTY" SMITH, his flight jacket slung over his shoulder, a confident smirk plastered across his face. A group

of RAF and American pilots surround him, hanging on his every word.

**LEFTY**

So there I am,  
20,000 feet over  
the Channel,  
outnumbered three-  
to-one. But you  
know what I say?

**RAF PILOT**

Let me guess,  
something reckless?

**LEFTY**

I say, "Meine  
Damen, let's see  
which of you has  
the guts to take on  
a proper American  
pilot!"

Laughter erupts. Lefty grins, basking in the attention, while a nearby British flight sergeant shakes his head.

**FLIGHT SARGENT (HEAVY ENGLISH ACCENT)**

Oh, Lefty, you  
Yanks and your tall  
tales.

## **LEFTY**

Lefty? Oh, come  
now, Sergeant. You  
know I fire my guns  
with both hands.

Lefty grins, feigning finger-guns. He fires both  
guns, twirls them, and holsters them at his hips  
like a cowboy. The crowd chuckles, but an RAF Pilot,  
clearly amused, leans in, twisting the knife.

## **RAF PILOT**

Don't flatter  
yourself, mate.  
Nobody calls you  
Lefty for your  
shooting. He's just  
being polite...  
'Left-tenant.'

A fresh round of laughter, this time at Lefty's  
expense. He tilts his head, pretending to take  
offense, then dramatically tips an imaginary hat.

## **LEFTY**

Well, if that's how  
I got it, I'll wear  
it with pride.  
Lefty Smith has his  
guns loaded!

Just then, a COMMANDING OFFICER steps in, his voice cutting through the conversation.

**COMMANDING OFFICER**

Enough  
storytelling,  
Smith. Operation  
Torch starts  
tomorrow at dawn. I  
expect you to be  
sober enough to  
find your plane.

Lefty salutes with a cheeky grin.

**LEFTY**

Sir, I could fly  
circles around the  
Luftwaffe  
blindfolded.

**COMMANDING OFFICER**

Good. because  
tomorrow you might  
have to.

**INT. WASHINGTON D.C. WAR DEPARTMENT OFFICE – 1942 –  
DAY**

SCREEN OVERLAY: "Washington DC"

A high-ceilinged office lined with maps and military

reports. General Henry "Hap" Arnold, head of the Army Air Forces, leans back in his chair, listening as a Santa Fe Railroad Executive stands before him.

**RAILROAD EXECUTIVE**

Hap, I wouldn't waste your time if I didn't think this was important. Goffs is a prime location—not just for logistics off Route 66, but there is space for you to build.

**HAP ARNOLD**

And you want me to convince Patton to build a base there?

**RAILROAD EXECUTIVE**

Not just for the Army. For your Air Forces, too. You could build an airstrip and training facilities. An airbase would give you a foot-hold in Patton's empire in the desert. I know

the Air Force is  
trying to get out  
from under the  
shadow of the Army,  
this is a great  
place for you  
start.

Arnold exhales, studying a map of California and the Desert Training Center. His eyes drift over Goffs location and he sees a sidenote scrawled with Oasis Palms and the name Curtis Smith.

**HAP ARNOLD**

Smith? Who is this  
Curtis Smith?

The railroad executive shifts into a patriotic mode and then pushes a brochure from the Oasis Palms Hot Springs Resort onto the desk

**RAILROAD EXECUTIVE**

Curtis Smith. Oh,  
his family's  
military legacy  
goes back to  
Philadelphia—same  
as yours.

His great-  
grandfather was a  
respected naval

officer who served  
on the Ticonderoga.  
His Uncle left  
California to fight  
for the Union and  
gave his life at  
Gettysburg. He was  
Army and fought the  
Germans in the  
Great War. and his  
son is assigned to  
the 12th Air Force  
stationed in  
England. They are a  
local family with  
the right  
connections in  
Washington and  
California and have  
been partners with  
the Santa Fe since  
the beginning. They  
will give your base  
and your officers  
all the local  
support you need.

Arnold leans forward, looking through the brochure,  
thoughtfully.

### **HAP ARNOLD**

One thing is for  
sure, Philadelphia  
boys know how to



get things done.

Arnold picks up a secure phone line, dialing a direct Army channel.

**HAP ARNOLD**

Get Patton on the  
line.

**INT. DESERT CENTER – GENERAL PATTON’S OFFICE – DAY**

Inside a dusty field tent, a military phone rings. Patton, seated behind a makeshift desk covered in training maps, picks up.

**PATTON**

Patton.

**HAP ARNOLD (O.S.)**

George, I hear  
you're building a  
fine tankers'  
paradise out there  
in the desert.

**PATTON**

Damn right. We're  
forging warriors.

**HAP ARNOLD (O.S.)**

That's why I need

you to sign off on  
Goffs.

**PATTON**

Goffs? What the  
hell do you want  
with Goffs?

**HAP ARNOLD (O.S.)**

I need a spot to  
land my planes and  
I like Goffs.

Patton exhales sharply, shaking his head with a  
smirk.

**PATTON**

You son of a bitch.  
Fine. But don't let  
your flyboys get in  
my way.

**GEN. HAP ARNOLD (O.S.)**

Wouldn't dream of  
it, George.

FADE TO BLACK.

**INT. DESERT CENTER GENERAL PATTON'S OFFICE – DAY  
(1942)**

In a tent, serving as a military field office, an

OFFICER and his CLERK present papers to General Patton for his signature.

**MILITARY OFFICER**

Sir, I need your signature on this and they'll get started on the other bases.

Patton spots Goffs on the list with a lot more than an airstrip.

**PATTON**

What? What the hell is Arnold building up in Goff's?

Flipping the pages on his clipboard the clerk, after seeing the list raises his brow and hesitates to read the list. He looks at the officer who speaks up. The officer clears his throat and begins reading cautiously.

**OFFICER**

A hospital, an airstrip, several administrative buildings...

He pauses again summoning additional resolve as Patton gives him a thousand-yard stare.

**OFFICER (CONT.)**

uhm... warehouse  
buildings, a few  
sheds, a rifle  
range, and ten  
ammunition igloos.

**PATTON (MOCKINGLY)**  
Ammunition igloos?  
Is that all?

**OFFICER**  
Yes, sir.

**PATTON (GRUFF)**  
Fine, we'll build  
Arnold his base in  
Goffs. Then you can  
put all the damn  
pencil-pushers and  
bureaucrats up  
there where it's  
nice and cozy.

Patton waives the paperwork in the air as he thrusts  
it into the clerk's chest.

**PATTON (CONT.)**  
This is proof of  
the fact that the  
Air Force will  
never stand on its  
own two feet.

FADE TO BLACK.

**EXT. OASIS PALMS – MAIN STREET – DAY (1943)**

SCREEN OVERLAY: “1943”

The once sleepy desert town now hums with life. Soldiers in uniform walk down the main street, mingling with local workers and townspeople. The theater marquee proclaims “CASABLANCA – starring Humphry Bogart”. A newly rechristened diner, the “Victory Café,” has a line of servicemen waiting outside. Inside, waitresses hustle between booths, carrying plates of steaming hot food.

**INT. VICTORY CAFÉ – DAY (1943)**

A waitress, MOLLY (early-20s, sharp but kind-hearted), refills coffee cups while chatting with a group of young trainees from Goffs.

**MOLLY**

Careful, boys,  
drink too much of  
that Army coffee  
and you’ll be awake  
till next week.

**YOUNG SOLDIER**

One thing is for  
sure, I know I’ll  
be awake tonight  
for the dance. How  
about you join me

at the USO after  
work?

**MOLLY**

Sorry, I promised  
my heart to a local  
boy. He's coming  
home after you boys  
finish your work.

Laughter ripples through the café, a lively hum of conversation filling the air. At the counter, Curtis Smith sits with a Santa Fe Railroad executive, both observing the town's bustling energy. Behind the counter, HATTIE MAE JOHNSON, the warm and sharp-eyed middle-aged diner manager, pours them fresh coffee with practiced ease.

**RAILROAD EXECUTIVE**

You were right,  
Curtis. This place  
is booming. OASIS  
PALMS hasn't seen  
this much business  
since the first  
rail spike went in.

**CURTIS**

And it'll keep  
growing. Goff's  
isn't just a  
training base—it's  
becoming a desert

town that will  
survive for  
generations. Goffs  
may be the key to  
our future.

HATTIE sets down the coffee pot with a knowing  
glance at CURTIS.

**HATTIE**

Mmm-hmm. Future's  
one thing, but some  
folks still got  
their hearts stuck  
in the past.

She nods toward the window, where MOLLY is staring  
out the window looking up into the desert the sky.

**HATTIE (SOFTLY, BUT FIRM)**

That girl is still  
waiting on that boy  
of yours, Curtis.  
Every day she looks  
out that window,  
watching the sky  
like he might just  
fly out of the  
clouds.

"CURTIS follows her gaze, his expression unreadable.  
With resolve.

**CURTIS**

Louis made her a  
promise. He will  
come back.

HATTIE shakes her head, refilling their cups.

**HATTIE**

Mmm-hmm. And we all  
know war don't  
always keep its  
promises.

A brief silence lingers between them, the weight of her words settling in. Molly stands still eyes fixed on the horizon, waiting.

**EXT. OASIS PALMS TRAIN STATION – DAY (1943)**

The aging Santa Fe Midnight Limited locomotive rolls into the station, the aging cars are now loaded with supplies, fresh troops, and eager workers. A sign near the platform reads: "Welcome to OASIS PALMS – Support Our Boys!"

As the train hisses to a stop, an Air Force officer disembarks and Curtis shakes his hand, pointing toward a construction site where Scooter's Saloon is being converted to an Officers Club. As the train pulls away, young soldiers peer out the windows at the lush vegetation of the oasis in the middle of the desert.



**CURTIS**

These boys are in  
the desert to  
train, but after  
this War is over a  
lot of them will  
make a home in  
California.

**OFFICER**

You think this  
town's got a future  
after the war?

**CURTIS**

I know it does.  
Just like I know my  
boy Louis will  
return home, safe,  
to see it again.

**MALIKA (V.O.)**

Even in the darkest  
days, the sun  
shines bright in  
the desert.

FADE TO BLACK.

**MATCH CUT TO: EXT. OASIS PALMS TRAIN STATION – DAY  
(1945)**

OVERLAY: "Two Years Later – 1945"

A gleaming silver Santa Fe passenger train, its Warbonnet-painted diesel locomotive shining in the desert sun, thunders into the station. Brakes squeal as it slows to a halt. Soldiers lean out of windows, eyes scanning the eager crowd gathered below. A banner flutters in the breeze, stretched between two poles: "WELCOME TO OASIS PALMS – WELCOME HOME BOYS!"

The train doors clank open. Soldiers spill onto the platform, met with cheers, hugs, and handshakes. Then—stepping down onto the platform—is LEFTY SMITH. His uniform is crisp, his Air Force wings pinned proudly to his chest. He takes a deep breath, the warm desert air filling his lungs. Near the platform, CURTIS, MARY, MOLLY, and HATTIE wait. The moment they see him, their faces light up.

**MOLLY**

Louis!

She bolts forward, throwing herself into his arms. Lefty laughs, spinning her once before setting her down.

**LEFTY (GRINNING)**

Easy, kid—I just got my land legs back.

CURTIS steps up, offering a handshake. Lefty ignores it, pulling him into a firm embrace instead.

**CURTIS (SOFTLY)**

Welcome home, son.

MARY, wiping away a tear, gently cups his face before pulling him into a hug.

**MARY**

You look good,  
Louis.

**LEFTY (SMIRKING)**

Well, war keeps you  
in shape. But I  
could use a real  
meal—one without  
powdered eggs.

Molly steps closer, her fingers lightly grazing his hand. Their chests almost touch.

**MOLLY (SOFT, CONFIDENT)**

If you haven't  
noticed... I'm not a  
kid anymore.

A beat. Lefty studies her, something unspoken passing between them.

**MOLLY (TEASING)**

And you better come  
by the diner  
tomorrow—I saved

you a seat.

Lefty glances at Hattie, half-expecting disapproval. But she just watches knowingly, arms crossed.

He relaxes, finally letting the moment sink in. The desert sun, the familiar faces, the buildings of home. He exhales—a mix of relief and nostalgia.

**LEFTY (SOFT SMILE)**

You know what? That sounds damn good.

**INT. VICTORY CAFÉ – NEXT MORNING (1945)**

The Victory Café hums with morning chatter, the smell of fresh coffee and sizzling bacon filling the air. Sunlight streams through the window, casting a golden glow over the small-town diner. At the counter, Lefty digs into a plate of bacon and eggs, fresh off the griddle. Across from him, Molly leans in, watching him with curiosity as she pours him another cup of coffee.

**MOLLY (HOPEFUL, BUT CURIOUS)**

So, now that you're home... what's next, Louis?

Lefty wipes his mouth, setting down his fork. He leans back slightly, a spark of excitement in his eyes.

**LEFTY**

I'm going to rebuild the old filling station at the end of Main Street. I'm going to build a brand new white block building. It'll have clean bathrooms, modern pumps, and a real service garage. It will be a show piece. Molly raises an eyebrow, smirking.

**MOLLY (TEASING)**

A filling station? Sounds nice, but what's so special about a gas station?

Lefty grins, that infectious, confident smile of his taking over his face. He leans in slightly, lowering his voice just enough to draw her in.

**LEFTY (SMIRKING)**

Don't you worry. When folks get an eyeful of what I've

got planned,  
they're gonna be  
driving in from  
miles around just  
to see it. Molly  
tilts her head,  
intrigued.

**MOLLY (CHALLENGING, BUT AMUSED)**

Oh yeah? And what  
exactly do you have  
planned that's so  
special, mister big  
ideas? Lefty taps  
his temple,  
winking.

**LEFTY (GRINNING)**

Now that... that is a  
surprise.

Lefty takes a slow sip of coffee, soaking in the moment, already envisioning the future he's about to build. Molly is amused, but intrigued.

The diner is buzzing with life, jukebox tunes drifting through the air. The smell of grilled burgers and fresh coffee fills the room. Molly 25 years old, in a waitress outfit, stands by the counter, watching Lefty outside, talking with some travelers near his gas station. His confidence, his charm—it's all on display. Across the counter, the proprietor HATTIE MAE JOHNSON, a middle-aged classic beauty in simple clothing wipes down a

coffee cup, watching Molly with knowing eyes.

**HATTIE**

Girl, you have been  
looking at that boy  
like he has hung  
the moon.

Molly snaps out of her trance, blushing slightly as she pours herself a cup of coffee.

**MOLLY**

Maybe he did.

Hattie chuckles, shaking her head.

**HATTIE**

Mmm-hmm. And what  
brought on this  
sudden realization?

Molly leans on the counter, gaze drifting back to Lefty.

**MOLLY**

Look around,  
Hattie. Everything  
he's done— he's a  
war hero with a  
successful  
business. He's

building something  
here, not just for  
himself, but for  
all of us. For me.

She hesitates, then exhales, finally saying what's  
been in her heart.

**MOLLY**

I know he loves me.  
He just won't  
commit.

Hattie folds her arms, giving her a knowing smile.

**HATTIE**

Well, baby, men  
like Lefty ain't  
always good with  
words. But you  
don't need no love  
letter to see  
what's plain as  
day.

She nods toward the neon-lit street, where Lefty  
stands proudly in front of his garage, chatting with  
tourists.

**HATTIE**

That boy's been  
buildin' more than



just a town. He's  
been buildin' a  
future—one with you  
in it.

Molly bites her lip, processing it all.

**MOLLY**

Then why hasn't he  
asked me?

Hattie smirks, leaning in slightly.

**HATTIE**

'Cause, sugar, he  
don't know he's  
supposed to.

Molly blinks, confused.

**MOLLY**

What do you mean?

Hattie chuckles, patting Molly's hand.

**HATTIE**

Men like Lefty?  
They ain't afraid  
of big ideas, hard  
work, or even war.  
But love?

Commitment? That  
scares 'em silly.  
He's waitin' for a  
sign—something to  
tell him it's time  
to step up.

Molly furrows her brow.

**MOLLY**

And what kind of  
sign is he looking  
for?

Hattie winks, picking up a coffee pot and walking  
toward the tables.

**HATTIE**

You, baby. You  
gotta let him know  
you're ready to be  
his girl for good.

Molly watches Lefty through the window again. The  
wheels start turning in her head.

FADE TO BLACK.

**EXT. LEFTY'S MOBILE GAS STATION – DAY (1945)**

SCREEN OVERLAY: "6 Months later"

A gleaming brand-new white Mobil gas station stands

at the end of Main Street. Business is slow. Lefty, now a full-time businessman, leans stands next to a gas pump with a young uniformed JIM OVERMAN in a red Mobile ball cap, watching a lone car pass by without stopping.

**LEFTY**

Hmph. Guess my  
charm ain't enough  
to bring 'em in.

**JIM**

I think we need  
something to get  
them off of Route  
66. You need a  
gimick.

A thought. A plan. A smirk. Lefty's eyes drift skyward where white clouds drift by in a blue sky.

FADE TO SKY.

**EXT. ROUTE 66 – DAY – 1945 – B-ROLL MONTAGE**

Bright desert sun. A convoy of shiny, post-war American cars cruises down the two-lane blacktop of Route 66. Chrome fenders glint. Whitewall tires spin over sunbaked asphalt.

**WIDE SHOT** – A small **green-and-white painted roadside sign** passes in the foreground:

*"Oasis Palms – 2 Miles"* The cars zoom past without slowing.

**MEDIUM SHOT** – Inside a **woody station wagon**, a smiling family of five hums along. Dad wears a fedora and grips the wheel. Mom hands sandwiches to the kids in the backseat. A war medal dangles from the rearview mirror.

**AERIAL SHOT** – The road cuts across the vast Mojave like a ribbon. Small dust devils dance in the distance. No sign of Oasis Palms—just creosote and sun.

**EXT. ROY'S MOTEL & CAFÉ – AMBOY – LATER**

Cars are pulling into the gravel lot under the iconic Roy's neon sign. Kids spill out, stretching their legs. Moms shield their eyes from the sun. Dads check the tires.

A serviceman in uniform hugs his wife, just back from the war. Another man smokes by the hood of a Hudson, talking to a local with a gas-stained jumpsuit.

**CAMERA PANS** over fresh postcards, Coke bottles sweating in a cooler, a waitress setting down slices of pie inside the café window.

American optimism is everywhere—sun, chrome, and open road.

**MALIKA (V.O.)**

Just a name on a sign. A place you could only find if you were lost. What

once protected us,  
was now our foe.

**MATCH CUT TO: EXT. CAL-AERO FIELD – ONTARIO, CA –  
DAY (1945)**

A bustling aviation surplus yard sprawls across the airfield. Rows of decommissioned warplanes sit under the California sun, their engines cold, their wartime glory fading into history.

LEFTY SMITH, with his naval aviator jacket and Ray Ban Aviators, walks the rows of aircraft, running his hand along the sleek metal of a grounded P-38 Lightning. A surplus dealer, mid-50s, cigar hanging from his lips, watches with curiosity.

**SURPLUS DEALER**

You lookin' to get  
into the cargo  
business, flyboy?

**LEFTY**

Nah. Just don't  
like the thought of  
these beauties  
rotting away out  
here.

The dealer smirks, taking a puff.

**SURPLUS DEALER**

Hell, son,  
government don't  
want 'em, and most  
folks can't afford  
to keep 'em in the  
air. Scrap yard's  
got a date with 'em  
if nobody buys 'em.

Lefty eyes the P-38, a grin creeping across his  
face.

**LEFTY**

How much for this  
one?

FADE TO BLACK.

**EXT. ROUTE 66 BILLBOARD – DAY (1946)**

SCREEN OVERLAY: "6 Months later"

A massive billboard stands on the roadside. It features a Classic Post Card design reading "OASIS PALMS" with a bright silver P-38 Lightning with fuel pumps beneath its wings. Bold lettering below the postcard "LEFTY'S LIGHTNING FAST SERVICE – EXIT NOW!" A passing Greyhound bus slows down as passengers press their faces to the window, reading the sign. Further down the road, another sign teases: "DON'T MISS THE P-38 THAT WON THE WAR! 2 MILES AHEAD!"

**EXT. LEFTY'S MOBILE GAS STATION – DAY (1946)**

A P-38 Lightning, mounted as an awning, now stretches over the gas pumps, its twin booms casting a shadow over the station. A freshly painted sign on the front of the station over the service bays reads: "LEFTY'S LIGHTNING FAST SERVICE!"

A line of cars now pull off Route 66, cameras in hand, snapping photos of the spectacle.

**TOURIST**

Honey, get a  
picture of me under  
the plane!

Lefty, dressed in a clean white mechanic's jumpsuit, fills up a Chevy pickup and nods at the attendant in a red cap washing the truck's front window.

**LEFTY**

See Jim. A good  
show is half the  
battle. Persistence  
wins the war.

**MATCH CUT TO: EXT. LEFTY'S MOBILE GAS STATION –  
NIGHT (1946)**

The neon lights of the gas station glow under the desert stars. A jukebox plays from the Diner across the street to the station. Lefty leans back in a chair, watching as cars continue pulling in. Molly still in her waitress outfit, walks over surveying the line of customers.

**MOLLY**

I got to hand it to  
you Louis, you have  
always known how to  
turn heads.

**LEFTY**

The war's over, but  
I gotta find a new  
way to keep the  
action going.

**MOLLY**

And you think a  
plane over a gas  
station's the way  
to do it?

**LEFTY**

Damn right. I've  
got big plans for  
this little town.  
Someday people will  
be able to ride in  
the sky around this  
town, nobody  
forgets a Lefty  
Smith performance.

Lefty sweeps his hands. Tracing the outline of the  
down town in the air.

FADE TO BLACK.



**INT. HOTEL CALIFORNIA – PENTHOUSE SUITE – NIGHT  
(1946)**

A soft glow of lamplight casts warm shadows across the elegantly furnished penthouse suite. The floor-to-ceiling windows reveal a panoramic view of Oasis Palms—the same view Lefty’s scenic railroad would one day offer to visitors. LEFTY SMITH stands near the window, hands in his pockets, staring down at the twinkling neon lights below. Behind him, a half-finished drink sits untouched on the mahogany side table.

Across the room, MARY SMITH sits gracefully on a plush chaise lounge, watching her son with measured silence—the patience of a mother who knows when to wait.

**MARY**

(softly, with a knowing smile) You always loved that view. Even as a boy, you’d climb up on the roof just to see the world from a little higher.

**LEFTY**

(half-smiling, still looking out)  
Maybe I always wanted to see what’s ahead.

**MARY**

(tilting her head)  
And what do you see  
now?

Lefty exhales, turning to face her.

**LEFTY**

(frustrated, but  
determined) A town  
on the edge of  
something big. We  
just need something  
big. If I could  
just get this  
railroad built, I'd  
turn Oasis Palms  
into a destination,  
not just a pit  
stop.

Mary studies him for a moment, then leans forward slightly, her voice calm but firm.

**MARY**

Honey, you're so  
worried about money  
that you're missing  
what's most  
important.

Lefty rubs the back of his neck, tension creeping

in.

**LEFTY**

(scoffing slightly)  
And what's that?

Mary's expression softens, but there's an undeniable strength in her voice.

**MARY**

(gently, but  
pointed) Your  
heart.

A beat. Lefty meets his mother's gaze, wary now.

**LEFTY**

Ma...

**MARY**

(pressing on,  
unwavering) It's  
right in front of  
you, and you don't  
even see it.

Lefty shifts uncomfortably. He knows what she's talking about—but he's not ready to admit it.

**MARY**

(smiling knowingly)

Molly.

Lefty's jaw tightens slightly. He moves away from the window, sinking onto the arm of a chair, raking a hand through his hair.

**LEFTY**

(hesitant,  
conflicted) I just...  
I need to finish  
building this  
first. So we can  
get married, have  
everything we want...

Mary shakes her head, her voice gentler now, but still firm.

**MARY**

You think this is  
about money. But  
it's not. It's  
about building  
something together.

Lefty looks up, uncertainty flickering across his face.

**MARY**

(cont.) Money comes  
and goes, but love?  
Love doesn't wait

forever.

A long beat. Lefty glances back out the window, but this time, his expression is different. He's not just looking at the town anymore. He's thinking about Molly.

**MARY**

(soft, but firm,  
the motherly wisdom  
in full force)  
Marry her, Louis.  
Before she gets  
away. The money  
will take care of  
itself. Trust me.

Lefty exhales slowly, his eyes still on the town—but his mind, his heart, are somewhere else now. He's thinking. Deciding.

FADE OUT.

**EXT. OASIS PALMS – THE OASIS – LATE AFTERNOON (1946)**  
The desert sun hangs low, casting a golden glow over the hidden oasis. Palm trees rustle in the warm breeze, their reflections shimmering in the clear blue water. A picnic blanket is spread beneath a tall cottonwood tree, the remnants of a shared meal—a half-eaten apple, a bottle of wine, a folded napkin embroidered with the initials “M.D.” LEFTY SMITH late-20s and MOLLY DAVENPORT mid-20s, sit close, watching the rippling water. Lefty leans back

on one elbow, studying her, a quiet smile tugging at his lips.

**LEFTY**

(softly, teasing) I think this might be the only place in Oasis Palms that hasn't changed.

**MOLLY**

(smirking, tossing a pebble into the water) That's because it doesn't need to.

**LEFTY**

(grinning) I suppose that's true.

A beat. Molly rests her chin on her knees, her expression softening.

**MOLLY**

(wistful) I used to come here as a girl, and dream about what my life would be like.

Lefty watches her, his fingers slipping into his pocket, hesitating.

**LEFTY**

(gently) And how  
does it compare?

**MOLLY**

(mock sighing)  
Well, I never  
pictured being  
stuck with a fast-  
talking, fly boy  
with big ideas.

Lefty laughs, shaking his head.

**LEFTY**

(smirking) Big  
ideas, huh?

Molly nods, grinning—but then, as she looks at him, the smile fades slightly, replaced with something deeper.

**MOLLY**

(softly) But I did  
picture love.  
Someone to build a  
life with.

Lefty takes a steady breath, sitting up now, fully facing her.

**LEFTY**

(tender, but sure)  
Then I think I fit  
the description  
just fine.

He pulls out a small velvet box, opening it to reveal a delicate gold ring with a small pearl, surrounded by tiny diamonds—his grandmother's ring. Molly gasps softly, her hand instinctively covering her mouth.

**LEFTY**

(earnest, his voice steady) Molly, I don't have a fortune. I don't have a mansion in the Hollywood Hills or a fleet of fancy cars. But I have a dream, and I want to build it with you.

A beat. The world grows quiet except for the rustling leaves and the soft ripple of water.

**LEFTY**



(cont., his voice  
barely above a  
whisper) Will you  
marry me?

Molly's eyes glisten, her breath catching. Then, with no hesitation, she throws her arms around his neck, laughing, crying—everything at once.

**MOLLY**

(whispering into  
his ear) Yes.

Lefty lets out a relieved breath, wrapping his arms tightly around her. He pulls back just enough to slip the ring onto her finger, then kisses her softly, deeply—the oasis their only witness.

FADE TO:

**MONTAGE – THE WEDDING AT THE TOWN CHURCH (1946)**

**EXT. OASIS PALMS – CHURCH LAWN – DAY**

The white wooden church sits on a grassy hill overlooking Oasis Palms, with the Oasis Palms Resort Hotel aging but standing proudly in the background. The lawn is decorated with white chairs, colorful wildflowers, and flowing fabric, transforming the space into an open-air wedding venue.

Mary Smith and Hattie Mae Johnson carefully adjust Molly's lace veil, the three women sharing a quiet, emotional moment before stepping outside. Curtis

Smith, standing tall, claps Lefty on the shoulder, giving his son a firm nod of approval. Jack Smith, watching from a distance, smiles knowingly as if seeing a future unfold exactly as it should. The shopkeepers and townsfolk—everyone is here, dressed in their finest, buzzing with joy and celebration.

#### **EXT. CHURCH LAWN – THE CEREMONY**

Lefty stands at the altar, shifting nervously until he sees Molly stepping onto the grass, arm in arm with Hattie. The crowd hushes as she walks down the aisle, her eyes locked on Lefty's. The sun bathes them in warm light as they take hands, exchanging vows filled with love and laughter.

#### **EXT. CHURCH LAWN – THE CELEBRATION**

A long dining table is set under twinkling lights, where the town gathers to toast the newlyweds. Curtis and Mary beam with pride, watching their son start his new life. Hattie wipes away a tear, stealing a glance at Jackson, who raises a silent toast to her. Lefty twirls Molly under the open sky, their laughter echoing through the night as a band plays a joyful tune. The wedding cake is cut, the glasses clink, the moon rises high over Oasis Palms. As the night winds down, Lefty and Molly step away, standing on the edge of the hill, looking down at the town they love. Molly rests her head on Lefty's shoulder.

**MOLLY**

(softly, content)

This is exactly how  
I pictured it.

**LEFTY**

(smirking,  
squeezing her hand)  
Big ideas and all?

**MOLLY**

(laughing,  
squeezing back) Big  
ideas and all. We  
can build it  
together.

The lights of Oasis Palms flicker below, but the  
future is just beginning.

**INT. DON'S BARBERSHOP – EVENING (1952)**

The weekly gathering of Oasis Palms' businessmen is  
in full swing. Curtis Smith, Don the barber, and a  
handful of other local shop owners lounge in their  
usual seats—some in the barber chairs, others  
perched on the wooden benches near the checkerboard  
table. The air is thick with cigar smoke, the scent  
of hair tonic and old leather lingering.

Hattie Mae Johnson pours coffee from a well-worn  
pot, listening with a smirk as the men gossip while  
pretending to discuss the town's latest  
developments.

The bell over the door jingles. Lefty Smith strides in, looking charged with excitement, a rolled-up blueprint under his arm.

**LEFTY**

Evening, gentlemen.  
Hope you saved a  
little room for a  
big idea.

The men glance up, half-curious, half-weary. Curtis stares with cream on his face as Don shaves him with a straight razor.

**CURTIS**

Son, last time you  
had a "big idea,"  
we ended up with an  
ice cream cone on  
top of a pool hall.

FADE TO BLACK.