

**THE LOST PEARL OF THE MOJAVE – EPISODE 9  
WINDS OF CHANGE 1954-1963**



**INT. SANTA FE RAILWAY HEADQUARTERS – CHICAGO – DAY  
(1954)**

The hustle of telegraph operators and the clatter of typewriters fill the grand Santa Fe Railway executive offices in Chicago. Inside a large wood-paneled office, FRED G. GURLEY, President of the Santa Fe Railway, leans back in his leather chair, pressing the receiver of a rotary phone tightly to his ear.

**FRED G. GURLEY**  
(gruff,  
incredulous) Smith  
did WHAT?

**INTERCUT WITH: INT. OASIS PALMS STATION (LIVE  
FEED) (1954)**

A Santa Fe Depot Agent seated at a desk, sweat on his brow, sees the switch indicator lamp on the wall illuminate red, he picks up binoculars to see the El Capitan on the hill in the distance being routed onto Lefty's Folly. The telegraph clicks rapidly beside him as he nervously holds the receiver to his ear.

**FIELD OPERATOR**

(stammering, into  
phone) He re-routed  
the El Capitan,  
sir... onto his  
elevated track.

**BACK TO GURLEY – SANTA FE OFFICE**

Gurley stands abruptly, gripping the phone tightly, his expression darkening.

**FRED G. GURLEY**

(furious, barking  
orders) Who  
authorized this?

The room goes still—executives, secretaries, and railway planners pause, watching as Gurley's face hardens. A nervous railway executive, standing nearby, clears his throat.

**RAILWAY EXECUTIVE**

(measured) No one,  
sir. This was all  
Smith's doing.

A beat of stunned silence. Then, from the receiver, a distant roar of a cheering crowd—the sound of Oasis Palms celebrating. Gurley's jaw tightens. He turns toward the window, looking out over the Chicago skyline, his mind calculating. He inhales sharply, exhaling a long stream of smoke before speaking coldly into the phone.

**FRED G. GURLEY**

(calm but steely)  
Enjoy the spectacle  
while it lasts.

A long pause—then, the shift.

**FRED G. GURLEY**

(dark, calculating)  
I swear whatever it  
takes, I'm shutting  
them down.

The railway executive's face pales.

**RAILWAY EXECUTIVE**

(hesitant) Sir, is  
that necessary?  
Oasis Palms has

been a stop on our  
Local for years,  
they are shipping  
whisky barrels and  
crates weekly.

**FRED G. GURLEY**  
(final, resolute)  
We've indulged  
Smith's schemes  
long enough.

The executives exchange uneasy glances, but no one speaks. Gurley leans forward, tapping the ashes from his cigar into an ornate ashtray, his eyes fixed on the future—a future without Oasis Palms on the Santa Fe map. The faint sound of the cheering crowd over the receiver fades into static.

FADE TO BLACK.

**EXT. OASIS PALMS – TOWN SQUARE – DAY (1954)**

OVERLAY: “Earlier that day”

The sun blazes down on the desert town, but no one seems to notice. Hundreds of onlookers—tourists, locals, business owners, and newspaper reporters—pack the town square, their eyes fixed on the elevated railway that towers above Main Street. MOLLY SMITH holds the hands of their twin sons, now 10 years old. The boys shift excitedly, craning their necks toward the tracks above. CURTIS and MARY SMITH stand rigid, their faces a mix of nervous confidence and

proud determination.

A distant horn blast

**MATCH CUT TO: EXT. OASIS PALMS – TRAIN STATION – DAY  
(1954)**

LEFTY SMITH climbs the ladder as the Engineer extends a hand to give Lefty a cab ride on the SANTA FE EL CAPITAN.

A loud hiss of steam, a second horn blast

**MATCH CUT TO: EXT. OASIS PALMS – TOWN SQUARE – DAY  
(1954)**

A gleaming silver Warbonnet painted diesel locomotive, leads the streamlined passenger train leaving the station from Oasis Palms.

This is it. The moment of truth.

The crowd erupts into cheers and whistles, but then...

**MATCH CUT TO: INT. EL CAPITAN – CAB – DAY (1954)**

The ENGINEER smiles as they climb the grade to leave town. But he notices a young worker standing at the ready to pull the lever and activate the switch.

**ENGINEER**

(shaking his head)  
Smith! Santa Fe's  
gonna have your  
hide for this

stunt!

**MATCH CUT TO:EXT. OASIS PALMS – TOWN SQUARE – DAY  
(1954)**

A hush falls over the town as the train switches onto the elevated railway and emerges from behind the Flamingo Motel.

**ANGLE ON THE SUPPORT STRUCTURE**

The steel beams groan, the wooden trestles tremble ever so slightly as the El Capitan's weight settles onto Lefty's Folly.

**ONLOOKERS (WHISPERING, HOLDING THEIR BREATH)**

**RANCHER**

(murmuring) If that  
thing comes down,  
it'll take half the  
town with it.

**TOURIST**

(gripping her  
husband's arm) Can  
it really hold?

Even CURTIS SMITH, standing at the front of the crowd, watches with a skeptical squint, as if bracing for disaster.

## **ON THE TRACKS ABOVE**

The El Capitan inches forward, swaying slightly, the support beams flexing under the tremendous weight. For a moment, it looks like— A metallic creak. A loud snap. The front wheels of the locomotive dip slightly— A collective gasp from the crowd— But then— The train steadies. The structure holds. The El Capitan rolls smoothly around the curve of the elevated railway, gliding past the town in a slow, triumphant arc.

## **THE CROWD ERUPTS INTO CHEERS.**

Molly grins, letting out a breath she didn't realize she was holding. The twins jump up and down, hollering. Even Curtis shakes his head, chuckling in reluctant admiration.

## **MATCH CUT TO: INT. EL CAPITAN — CAB — DAY (1954)**

Lefty lets out a deep, victorious sigh, sticking his head out the side window, lifting his hat and waving toward the crowd.

### **ENGINEER**

(grinning, shouting  
over the noise)

Well, I'll be  
damned, Smith! You  
might just be crazy  
enough to make this  
work!

**MATCH CUT TO:EXT. OASIS PALMS – TOWN SQUARE – DAY  
(1954)**

The press snaps photos, capturing the moment Oasis Palms becomes a legitimate tourist attraction. Lefty smiles to himself, watching as the El Capitan completes its loop and disappears into the horizon. Today, Lefty's Folly became Lefty's Triumph. But back in Chicago, the decision has already been set in motion. Oasis Palms doesn't know it yet– But its days as a Santa Fe stop are numbered.

FADE TO BLACK.

**EXT. A&W ROOTBEER STAND – AFTERNOON (1956)**

SCREEN OVERLAY: "Two Years Later – 1956"

The iconic pink neon Flamingo Motel sign buzzes softly in the warm desert air, glowing above a line of classic cars parked outside. A Santa Fe passenger train rumbles past in the distance, the sleek cars reflecting the golden sun. At the counter of the A&W, the OWNER stands proudly, arms crossed, watching FLOYD and LLOYD, now 12, unloading crates of soda bottles from the back of their fathers gleaming cherry-red Chevrolet pickup truck with a sign on the door "Lefty's Lightning Fast Service".

**FLOYD**

(grinning,  
struggling with a  
crate) You sure  
people drink this  
much root beer?



**LLOYD**

(smirking,  
adjusting his grip)  
It's the desert,  
dummy. You think  
they're going to  
drink cactus juice?

Lefty chuckles, ruffling Floyd's hair as they set  
the crates down near the A&W stand.

**OWNER**

(proudly) You boys  
keep up with this,  
your Dad might just  
let you run this  
town someday.

**EXT. HOTROD DINER – CONTINUOUS (1956)**

Across the road, the Hot Rod Diner is packed with  
families and weekend travelers. A line of gleaming  
hot rods and custom-built roadsters from a local car  
club fills the parking lot. Inside, MOLLY  
SMITH—apron tied neatly around her waist—moves  
between tables, topping off steaming cups of coffee,  
laughing with customers, and serving up towering  
milkshakes. She pauses at the counter, where a group  
of teenagers in leather jackets huddle around the  
jukebox, flipping through records.

**MOLLY**

(teasing, hands on her hips) I swear, if y'all spent as much time working as you do staring at that thing, you'd be able to afford your own hot rods.

**TEENAGER #1**

(grinning, dropping a coin in the jukebox) Work's for old folks, Mrs. Smith. We're here to have fun.

The jukebox kicks to life, spinning Elvis Presley's 'Jailhouse Rock,' filling the diner with infectious energy. Molly shakes her head with a laugh, stepping outside just as Lefty and the boys cross the street toward her.

**EXT. MAIN STREET – CONTINUOUS (1956)**

The family walks together, passing the bustling A&W stand, where kids sip frosty root beer floats under striped umbrellas. A newlywed couple in a pastel pink Cadillac rolls past, white streamers flapping in the wind—fresh from the Graceland Wedding Chapel on the hill, the quickie wedding venue Lefty deftly converted from the old Church of Christ. In the distance, the Oasis Palms Theater marquee lights up,

advertising 'Some Like It Hot' starring Marilyn Monroe.

FADE TO BLACK.

**EXT. OASIS PALMS STATION – DAY – 1957**

A gleaming restored **steam locomotive** sits at the platform, polished to a shine, trimmed in brass and crimson. The sign reads: "**OASIS PALMS SCENIC RAILROAD.**" Tourists in **sun hats and Aloha shirts** climb aboard with excitement—families, honeymooners, and photographers with Kodak Brownies. A CONDUCTOR swings his lantern and calls out:

**CONDUCTOR**

All aboard for the  
Scenic Route!

The whistle blows. The train chuffs forward, wheels turning as it leaves the station behind with the Barco Caves straight ahead.

**INT. BARCO CAVE – CONTINUOUS**

The train enters the shadowed mouth of the **Barco Cave**, lanterns flickering on the walls. Inside, old mining tracks meet the main line in a massive chamber. Tourists press to the windows as the **Barco Mine** appears, fully restored as a 1950s attraction—actors in miner costumes pose for photos, kids pan for gold in a staged sluice. A sign reads: "**EST. 1853 – BARCO MINE**"

The train curves past the **Barco Distillery**. Smoke puffs from the stack, and men in suspenders roll barrels onto the loading dock. Workers load crates stenciled "**BARCO RYE**" with shipping documents attached, marked "Los Angeles", "New York", Paris into a rail cars.

#### **EXT. MAIN STREET – CONTINUOUS**

The train emerges from the cave and **crosses Main Street**. Cars honk as it passes, children wave. On the corner, the **Oasis Palms Theater** marquee reads: "**NOW PLAYING: Gunfight at the O.K. Corral Starring Burt Lancaster and Kirk Douglas**"

#### **EXT. HOTEL DISTRICT – CONTINUOUS**

The train loops behind the **Hotel California**, **The Scooters Saloon**, and the **Oasis Theater**, catching glimpses of teenagers playing basketball outside on the corner between the saloon and the theater.

The train a small Porter is pulling a coal car, an ore cart, two open air passenger cars, and a red caboose. It climbs slowly, rattling up the ridge behind the town, it crosses the tressel over the road and continues up the grade.

To the left, a **wedding chapel** perches on the bluff, white and windswept. Behind it, the **family graveyard**, lined with wrought iron and hand-carved stones, passes quietly by.

#### **EXT. BACKSIDE OF TOWN – CONTINUOUS**

The train curves behind the **Flamingo Motel**, its pink neon flamingo blinking against the desert sun. Tourists point and wave at the pool below, where couples sip drinks and lounge under striped umbrellas.

#### **EXT. ELEVATED LOOP – CONTINUOUS**

The train glides out onto an **elevated steel trestle** circling the edge of town. Below, the rooftops of Oasis Palms glint in the sun.

Beyond: **a vast panoramic vista**—endless desert stretching west and south, painted in shades of ochre and gold. The mountains shimmer in the distance. The wind carries the faint scent of creosote and old dreams.

Tourists fall quiet, gazing out. Cameras click. The engine chugs on.

#### **EXT. LEFTY'S MOBIL SERVICE STATION – LATE AFTERNOON (1959)**

The sound of wrenches clanking and engines rumbling fills the open service bays of Lefty's Mobil, where the smell of motor oil and gasoline lingers in the warm desert air. Under the flickering glow of a Mobil Pegasus sign, FLOYD SMITH (15) leans over the open hood of a '57 Chevy Bel Air, wiping grease from his hands onto his work pants. An older mechanic, JIM OVERMAN, watches approvingly, nodding as Floyd tightens a bolt.

**JIM**

(grinning,  
impressed) You got  
a good feel for  
this, kid. Ever  
think about racing  
sports cars?

**FLOYD**

(grinning, focused  
on the engine) What  
do you know about  
sports cars?

**JIM**

I learned about  
going fast in the  
Air Force, just  
like your Pops.  
Only I was turning  
wrenches on F-86  
Sabres at March Air  
Base.

**FLOYD (INTRIGUED, LOOKING UP)**

Fighter jets? So  
how'd you end up on  
the ground?

**JIM (SMIRKING, REMINISCING)**

When I got out, I  
spent a couple of  
years wrenching

over at Riverside  
Raceway—back when  
they were still  
figuring out that  
road course. That's  
where I met your  
Dad. He was fast  
but reckless. Your  
Mom put a stop to  
that.

**FLOYD (GRINNING, EYES LIGHTING UP)**

You were at  
Riverside? You ever  
see Carroll Shelby  
run?"

**JIM (NODDING, AMUSED)**

Oh yeah. Saw him  
wheel an Aston  
Martin like it was  
born for that  
track. Hell, he won  
Le Mans this year.  
But I'll tell ya,  
that man ain't just  
a driver—he's like  
your Dad he's got  
bigger plans.

From the next bay over, LLOYD SMITH (15) lounges on  
an overturned oil drum, unimpressed, flipping  
through a tattered copy of Jack Kerouac's On the

Road. More interested in the open highway than the engines that power it.

**FLOYD (CURIOUS, WIPING HIS HANDS)**

What do you mean?

**JIM (LEANING IN, LOWERING HIS VOICE)**

Word around the pits is Shelby's been scheming up a new car. Something American that'll beat the Ferraris at their own game.

**FLOYD (GRINNING, EXCITED)**

No kidding? What's he building?

**JIM (SHRUGGING, SMIRKING)**

Dunno. But if I were you, I'd keep an eye on that guy. He's got more ideas than Ford's got factories.

**LLOYD**

(dry, uninterested)  
Yeah, great. Real noble pursuit—turning



left real fast.

**JIM (CHUCKLING, SHAKING HIS HEAD)**

Not at Riverside,  
kid. You gotta turn  
left and right.  
Keeps things  
interesting.

Floyd shoots a glare at his brother, wiping his  
hands with an old rag.

**FLOYD**

(mocking, smirking)  
And what, sittin'  
around readin'  
fancy words all day  
is gonna get you  
somewhere?

**LLOYD**

(shrugging,  
flipping a page) It  
might. Could be  
worse than  
breathing in motor  
oil for the rest of  
my life.

Just then, LEFTY SMITH steps out of the station  
office, catching the tail end of the argument. He  
tucks a receipt book into his jacket, watching his

boys with an amused expression.

**LEFTY**

(grinning, shaking his head) You two at it again?

**LLOYD**

(seizing the opportunity) Dad, I was thinking... maybe I could skip closing up tonight and catch the new movie over at the theater?

Floyd laughs, shaking his head as he slides under the car to check the transmission.

**FLOYD**

(grinning, teasing) Yeah, Dad, Lloyd needs to expand his mind. The guy's a real deep thinker, y'know.

**LEFTY**

(raising an eyebrow, playing along) Oh yeah? And

what's on the big  
screen that's gonna  
enlighten you so  
much?

**LLOYD**

(earnest, leaning  
forward) It's 'Some  
Like It Hot.' It's  
got Jack Lemmon and  
Tony Curtis—it's  
supposed to be one  
of the best  
comedies ever made!

Lefty chuckles, looking over at MOLLY, who's just  
arrived from the Diner, shaking her head at the  
sight of her grease-covered son and her other,  
bushy-haired bohemian arguing in the garage.

**LEFTY**

Isn't that blonde  
girl, whats her  
name? Marilyn  
Monroe in that one  
too?

**MOLLY**

(smirking, wiping  
her hands on her  
apron) You better

be careful, Lefty.  
If you let this one  
sneak off to the  
movies now, next  
thing you know,  
he'll be writing  
poems and strumming  
a guitar in a  
coffee house.

Lloyd leans back on the oil drum, smirking.

**LLOYD**

(shrugging,  
playful) Might  
happen, Ma.

**LEFTY**

(mock-serious,  
nodding) If he can  
make a living doing  
it, I'm all for it.  
But there's a  
reason they are  
called "Starving  
Artists."

Lloyd groans, throwing up his hands.

**LLOYD**

(grumbling,  
standing up) So

what, Floyd gets to  
play mechanic and I  
gotta stay here  
sweeping floors?

**LEFTY**

(grinning, folding  
his arms) That's  
right. Maybe if you  
spent half as much  
time working as you  
do reading, I'd be  
putting your name  
on the sign out  
front too.

Floyd laughs, tossing a greasy rag at Lloyd, who  
dodges it just in time.

**MOLLY**

(smiling, stepping  
in) Tell you what,  
Lloyd. You close up  
properly, and I'll  
make sure you get  
to the late  
showing. Deal?

**LLOYD**

(grinning,  
relieved) Deal!

He grabs a broom and starts sweeping up—dramatically, as if he's performing hard labor. Lefty watches his boys for a moment, then turns to Molly, his voice softer now.

**LEFTY**

(satisfied,  
murmuring) It's all  
working, Molly. We  
did it. They are  
good boys, they  
just need to find  
their own way in  
this world.

Molly leans against him, watching Floyd disappear back under the car and Lloyd sweep with exaggerated effort.

**MOLLY**

(smiling,  
whispering) Smith  
boys, they all have  
Big Ideas.

A Santa Fe train whistles in the distance, blending into the sound of wrenches turning, the low rumble of hot rods, and the neon glow of Oasis Palms coming alive for another night.

FADE TO BLACK.

**EXT. ATOMIC JACKALOPE – NIGHT (1959)**

A flickering neon sign buzzes in the night, illuminating the dusty roadside: **"UNCLE BILL'S ATOMIC JACKALOPE SPACE STATION & CURIOSITY SHOPPE"**.

Inside the ramshackle trailer, the walls are lined with strange rocks, alien-looking artifacts, and Route 66 souvenirs. At the center, encased in glass, sits the **Atomic Jackalope**—its twisted silhouette flickering in the dim light, eerily resembling a rabbit frozen mid-leap. A desert anomaly, or so **Uncle Bill** claims. A petrified rock, discovered near the lava fields of Amboy Crater, its charred surface and warped shape, he insists, are the result of ancient cosmic radiation.

At a makeshift table outside, **UNCLE BILL** (60s, bearded, wearing a cosmic-print vest and a tinfoil hat) leans back in a lawn chair, a shortwave radio crackling beside him. He watches the night sky, bottle of "homemade" sarsaparilla in hand. A small television crew bustles around him, adjusting lights and camera angles. Nearby, a TV monitor flickers to life, showing **Edward R. Murrow**, seated in a New York studio, as he introduces the segment.

**INT. CBS STUDIO — NEW YORK — NIGHT**

**EDWARD R. MURROW**, suit crisp, cigarette in hand, leans slightly forward, his signature calm authority filling the screen.

**MURROW**

(smooth, measured)  
Tonight, we take  
you to the Mojave

Desert, where a man  
claims to have  
uncovered  
something... out of  
this world.

A pause, a faint smile.

**MURROW**

(continuing) Some  
say the desert  
holds mystic  
powers. Mr. Bill,  
have you ever  
witnessed anything...  
unexplained?

**EXT. OASIS PALMS – NIGHT**

The camera shifts, now focused on Uncle Bill, framed  
by the neon glow of his shop sign.

**UNCLE BILL**

(interrupting,  
grinning) Call me  
Uncle Bill. Or just  
UBN. Short for  
Uncle Bill Nebula.

Murrow chuckles faintly, amused but composed.



**MURROW**

(on TV, humoring  
him) Alright, Uncle  
Bill. Tell us—what  
makes this  
town—Oasis Palms—so  
special?

Uncle Bill leans forward, his weathered face bathed  
in neon glow.

**UNCLE BILL**

(on TV, serious  
now) The stars  
above... and the  
10,000-year-old  
water below.

A beat. He tilts his head slightly, eyes drifting  
past the caves. Out beyond the rocky outcroppings,  
strange lights flicker on the horizon. The camera  
crew follows his gaze—but sees nothing. Uncle Bill  
smirks, then takes another slow sip of his  
sarsaparilla.

**INT. CBS STUDIO — NEW YORK — NIGHT**

Murrow exhales a slow stream of smoke, flicking his  
ash into a tray.

**MURROW**

(half to himself,  
amused yet

intrigued) I guess  
the California  
desert holds many  
secrets. More with  
Uncle Bill after  
this...

The screen fades, transitioning into a commercial.

FADE TO BLACK.

**EXT. BEVERLY HILLS – OFFICE BUILDING – NIGHT (1959)**

A glossy black Cadillac idles outside a sleek, mid-century modern office tower. The red glow of the Capital Records beacon pulses in the distance, casting reflections against the glass skyline of Hollywood. Inside, a penthouse suite is draped in wealth—floor-to-ceiling windows, abstract modern art, and minimalist décor, each piece curated for power, not comfort.

At the center of it all, **DON MCDONELL** (50s, slick, calculating) lounges in a high-backed leather chair, whiskey in one hand, cigarette smoldering in the other. His eyes flicker toward the TV, where **Uncle Bill** rants about the desert's mystic powers on *Person to Person*. Pinned behind him, a real estate map of Southern California is littered with red circles—marking large parcels for sale. One name stands out: **CADIZ, MOJAVE DESERT.**

The door opens. **SALLY**—young, shapely, a secretary who knows when to tread carefully—enters, handing McDonnell a thick manila folder.

**SALLY**

(clipped,  
efficient) Here you  
are, Mr.  
McDonnell—the  
latest U.S.  
Geological Survey  
and the Bureau of  
Reclamation's  
reports on San  
Bernardino County.

She hesitates, watching him carefully.

**SALLY**

(gently,  
professional) Will  
there be anything  
else tonight? It's  
getting late.

McDonnell ignores her, flipping open the folder. He inhales slowly, eyes scanning the pages. Then, a smirk.

**MCDONELL**

(half to himself,  
amused) Well, would  
you look at that,  
Sally... The water  
isn't just under  
that little Oasis  
town.

He rises from his chair, and strides toward the map on the wall, whiskey glass in hand.

**MCDONELL**

(low, measured)  
There's an aquifer  
that runs all along  
this valley... Look—  
(tapping points on  
the map)  
Amboy... Cadiz... the  
Barco Plateau...  
Danby... Fenner.  
Almost all the way  
to Goffs.

McDonnell pauses, thinking. A cold certainty settles over his expression. He flips a page in the folder, scanning property deeds—until he lands on one name.

**MCDONELL**

(smirking,  
murmuring) Looks  
like Mr. Smith's...  
little magic  
kingdom might be  
sitting right on  
top of the last  
untapped goldmine  
in California.

McDonnell steps closer to the map, tracing a slow path from the desert to Los Angeles.

In a few years,  
this water will be  
worth more than  
oil. LA is growing  
fast, and when the  
water from Owens  
Valley feeding the  
city finally runs  
dry, they'll pay  
whatever price we  
set to keep the  
taps running.

Sally glances at him, unsure whether to be pleased  
or nervous.

**SALLY**

(carefully,  
measured) Do you  
think he'll sell?

McDonnell grins, shaking his head.

**MCDONELL**

(darkly amused) "He  
doesn't have to."  
(tapping Cadiz on  
the map) That dirt  
patch for sale in  
Cadiz? It's right  
next door.

McDonnell picks up the phone, dials smoothly.

**MCDONELL**

(low, calculated) I  
need you to start  
buying up parcels  
near Cadiz—quietly.  
Yes, Cadiz in the  
Mojave. Just do it.

A pause. Then, without looking at her—

**MCDONELL**

(casual, offhanded)  
And Sally, just one  
more thing before  
you go. Get Benny  
Kaplan on the  
phone. He's got  
some railroad  
connections.

Sally hesitates.

**SALLY**

(uncertain,  
cautious) Are you  
sure, Mr.  
McDonnell? It's  
late in Chicago.

McDonnell pauses, eyes narrowing—a flicker of

irritation. But he composes himself.

**MCDONELL**

(smooth, firm)  
Trust me, he's  
still awake. His  
office is at the  
Columbia Tavern on  
Clark Street. He'll  
be there.

Sally nods, exiting the room. McDonnell leans back in his chair, tapping the cigarette against an ashtray. A low smirk plays at his lips.

FADE TO BLACK.

**EXT. UNCLE BILL'S CURIOSITY SHOPPE – DAY (1961)**

SCREEN OVERLAY: "Two Years Later – 1961"

A sleek black Cadillac emerges on the horizon, its polished chrome gleaming under the relentless sun. The Cadillac slows down in front of the cluttered roadside shop, like a predator sizing up its prey. Uncle Bill—weathered, sunbaked, and sipping lukewarm sarsaparilla—leans against the wooden porch rail. His eyes follow the black car, squinting against the sun's glare. Through the partially rolled-down window, a shadowed figure watches. A moment of stillness. Then the Cadillac speeds up to cross the railroad tracks kicking up a thin veil of dust and mystery.

Uncle Bill takes a long, thoughtful sip, then

mutters under his breath.

**UNCLE BILL (LOW, KNOWING)**

Some folks come  
lookin' for  
secrets... others  
just wanna own 'em.

**EXT. OASIS PALMS –LEFTY'S MOBIL SERVICE – DAY (1961)**

After crossing the tracks, The Cadillac rolls past the Mobil station, its whitewall tires crunching over sunbaked asphalt. LEFTY SMITH (late 40s, rugged, always watching) stands under the Mobil canopy, a grease rag in one hand, gaze locked on the passing car. By the open service bay, JIM OVERMAN, a seasoned mechanic, steps out, wiping oil from his hands. He follows Lefty's stare, catching the glint of chrome as the car turns.

**JIM OVERMAN (NOTICING LEFTY'S STARE)**

Been seein' a lotta  
suits in town  
lately.

**LEFTY (TIGHT, MUTTERING)**

And not the tourist  
kind.

The Cadillac turns right onto Main Street. A long beat. The wind kicks up a swirl of dust, settling as the Cadillac fades from sight in the heat coming off



the road.

**EXT. OASIS PALMS CLIFF HANGER TRAILER PARK – NIGHT  
(1961)**

The Cliff Hanger lookout sits high above the desert, a quiet perch where wind-carved rock meets endless sky. LEFTY'S red Chevrolet pickup idles behind them, its tail lights faintly glowing, the soft rumble of its engine the only sound besides the wind. Above, the sky is scattered with a million stars, shimmering like diamonds against indigo silk. Below, Oasis Palms twinkles, its neon lights coming alive in the vast darkness, a small island of civilization in a sea of emptiness. In the far distance, just on the horizon, the black silhouette of Roy's neon sign in Amboy, a ghostly beacon against the silhouette of the desert sunset.

JIM leans against the truck bed, cigarette between his fingers, staring out at the void.

**JIM**

(musing, smoking a  
cigarette) Can you  
hear that?

LEFTY frowns, turning to him. JIM stomps out his cigarette, grinding the ember into the dust with his boot.

**JIM (CONT.)**

(low, knowing)

“Change.”

The wind shifts, rushing over the desert floor, rattling loose gravel and dry brush along the roadside. A long silence hangs between them, the weight of unseen forces pressing against the night. JIM exhales, staring into the darkness.

**JIM**

(quiet,  
speculative) You  
ever wonder what  
this town might be  
in twenty years?

LEFTY doesn't answer right away. He gazes out over Oasis Palms, but his head turns West towards the sunset his eyes drift beyond it—toward the darkness where the land stretches forever. Finally, he speaks.

**LEFTY**

(low, unsettled) I  
think about what it  
won't be.

A gust of wind howls through the canyon, whispering through the rocks like a warning. Lefty narrows his eyes at the horizon. Then— a flicker of movement. Between them and the fading glow of the sunset, something stirs in the blackness. At first, it's just a shimmer. Then, more defined—shapes of steel

rising from the desert floor. The camera pans down from the starry sky, slowly revealing—

- Floodlights glaring against the darkness.
- Massive well rigs drilling deep into the sand.
- The unmistakable movement of pipes and machinery—pumping water.

The desert is alive. The ground below Cadiz has been breached—and the water is flowing. LEFTY stares, jaw tightening. JIM lets out a slow breath, rubbing his hands together. The camera lingers on the operation below, the sound of machines filling the silence. LEFTY keeps watching, the glow of industry flickering in his darkened eyes.

FADE TO BLACK.

**EXT. OASIS PALMS — BARCO RYE DISTILLERY — CAVES — DAY (1961)**

Deep in the cool darkness of the caves, a steady drip of water echoes— but slower than it used to. A distillery worker, TED MATCALF (40s, wiry and nervous, a full grey beard reaching midway to his chest, sweat beading on his brow) lowers a wooden bucket into the ancient stone well. Finally, a dry, hollow thud. No splash. And he cranks the bucket back up. Empty. Again. Nearby, BUTCH MADOLE (50s, Barco Rye's foreman, barrel-chested) stares down into the once-reliable source of water that produced the finest whiskey west of the Mississippi.

**TED**

(muttering, uneasy)  
Ain't never seen it  
this low before.

Ted wipes his hands on his work apron, glancing toward the entrance of the cave, where sunlight filters in, reflecting off the limestone walls like liquid gold.

**BUTCH**

(grim, shaking his head) It's drying up. And if this well goes, The Barco is done.

**TED**

(resigned) Better tell Lefty.

**EXT. OASIS PALMS – OASIS SPRING – DAY**

The once-lush oasis at the edge of town no longer sparkles in the desert sun. Patches of cracked earth creep toward the water's edge. Palm fronds droop, their once-vibrant green tinged with brown. The pink wildflowers that lined the shore are withering. A group of tourists dip their hands into the water, only to glance at each other, puzzled.

**TOURIST**

(frowning, pulling

back his hand) Not  
like the postcards.  
Sure doesn't feel  
very magical to me.

Nearby, MOLLY SMITH on her afternoon walk watches with concern as the tourists leave. LEFTY arrives from the Mobil Station, dust kicking up under his boots.

**LEFTY**

What is it honey?  
We're busy at the  
garage.

**MOLLY**

(voice tight,  
anxious) Lefty... the  
water line in the  
Oasis is dropping.

**LEFTY**

(surveying the  
water, jaw  
clenched) I know.  
The well in the  
cave is drying up  
too.

Molly looks at him, the unspoken weight of their

town's future hanging between them.

**MOLLY**

(softly, worried)  
This town won't  
survive without  
water.

**LEFTY**

You don't have to  
tell me.

**MALIKA (V.O.)**

For a hundred  
years, our people  
lived on this  
mountain. But the  
desert is patient.  
(A beat) When the  
water is gone, it  
will reclaim all  
that is borrowed.

**EXT. OASIS PALMS TRAIN STATION – SANTA FE OFFICE –  
DAY (1961)**

A Santa Fe Railway representative, EDWIN PRITCHARD (60s, corporate, cold as iron rails), locks the station office door for the last time. A small group of town locals gather, murmuring. A rail worker on a ladder pries loose the wooden sign reading "Santa Fe Passenger Ticket Office." As it comes down, it

leaves behind a ghostly sun-faded outline—one last imprint of what once was. At the platform, the last Santa Fe passenger train to ever stop in Oasis Palms idles, a sleek diesel locomotive gleaming in its iconic red and silver “Warbonnet” livery. Its engine hums deeply, the rhythmic thump-thump-thump of its prime mover reverberating through the steel rails. A conductor steps onto the metal stairs, signaling with a raised hand. The air brakes release with a sharp hiss, sending a final cloud of dust spiraling into the desert sky. LEFTY SMITH pushes through the small crowd, stepping up to PRITCHARD. His jaw is tight, his eyes sharp.

**LEFTY (DEMANDING, TENSE)**

Is this some kind  
of mistake?

Pritchard, already checking his pocket watch with casual indifference, barely spares Lefty a glance.

**PRITCHARD (MATTER-OF-FACT, EMOTIONLESS)**

No mistake, Mr.  
Smith. Oasis Palms  
is no longer on the  
schedule.

He reaches into his coat, pulls out a freshly printed passenger schedule, and hands it to Lefty without ceremony. The words hit like a freight train.

**LEFTY (FRUSTRATED, STEPPING CLOSER)**

Since when? Who  
ordered this?

Pritchard lets out a breath, as if explaining something obvious to a child.

**PRITCHARD**

(dry, indifferent)  
Profitability,  
progress. No  
passengers, no  
stop. Simple math.

A sharp whistle cuts through the tension.

**CONDUCTOR (SHOUTING OVER THE NOISE)**

Final boarding!  
Last call for Oasis  
Palms!

A few last-minute travelers rush to climb aboard, their faces lost in shadow. Pritchard tucks his pocket watch back into his vest, then finally—almost leisurely—meets Lefty's eyes.

**PRITCHARD (COOL, DETACHED, ADJUSTING HIS CUFFLINK)**

This is progress,  
Smith. For now, as  
long as Barco Rye  
keeps filling  
freight cars, Santa



Fe will send up a  
daily run. But if  
those barrels stop  
rolling...

He pauses, lowering his voice, smirking just enough  
to make it sting.

**PRITCHARD (QUIET, DELIBERATE)**

You might find  
yourself all alone  
up here... with that  
little scenic train  
of yours.

The train whistle blows again, this time longer,  
more final. Pritchard gives a slight nod, steps onto  
the platform, and boards the train without a  
backward glance. The doors slam shut. The locomotive  
revs, its massive wheels groaning into motion.  
Slowly, the last passenger train pulls away from  
Oasis Palms, its red and silver Warbonnet flashing  
one last time in the sun before vanishing down the  
tracks.

A gust of wind sweeps the empty platform, kicking  
dust over the faded imprint of the ticket office  
sign. Lefty stands motionless, gripping the new  
timetable, his knuckles white. The station clock  
ticks—loud, deliberate, final. The train disappears  
into the desert horizon, its rumble fading into  
nothingness. Lefty turns. The small group of town  
locals—shopkeepers, ranchers, old-timers—are already  
walking away, heads down, shoulders slumped. Not a

word. Not a glance back. Lefty realizes—he's standing alone. Oasis Palms just had the first nail driven into its coffin.

**EXT. DESERT HIGHWAY — APPROACHING CADIZ — LATE AFTERNOON**

The golden sun hangs low in the sky, casting long shadows across the barren landscape. A black **1960 GMC pickup camper** rumbles down the cracked two-lane highway, dust trailing behind it like a ghost of the road's past.

**JOHN STEINBECK**, late 50s, rugged yet introspective, grips the steering wheel with one hand. His other hand absently scratches behind the ears of **CHARLEY**, his dignified old poodle, perched on the passenger seat as they pass the newly opened Roadrunner's Retreat.

**STEINBECK**

(softly, to  
Charley) Look at  
it, old boy. The  
Mojave.

He gestures outward at the sprawling, wind-scarred land, the cracked earth seemingly lifeless, yet pulsing with unseen resilience.

**STEINBECK**

(musing) "The  
beaten earth

appears defeated  
and dead, but it  
only appears so."

Charley lets out a small **huff**, shifting in his seat. A faded billboard passes the window reading Cliff Hanger Trailer Park next right.

**STEINBECK**

(smirks) I know, I  
know. I've said it  
before. But dammit,  
it deserves  
repeating.

The camper rolls past a faded Oasis Palms city limits sign, bullet holes pocking the edges. Steinbeck squints at the quiet town ahead—a few lonely buildings, a gas station, a diner, and a motel with more vacancies than guests. He slows the truck, watching a dust devil swirl across the road, dancing erratically before vanishing into nothing.

**STEINBECK**

(to himself) "The  
desert has mothered  
magic things before  
this."

He exhales, rubbing his beard, as if weighing the truth of his own words. Charley lifts his head, sniffing the air. Steinbeck chuckles.

**STEINBECK**

(grinning) You  
smell dinner, don't  
you? Well, let's  
see if this town's  
got anything worth  
stopping for.

He downshifts, guiding the pickup toward the diner,  
its neon sign buzzing weakly against the dying light  
of day.

**INT. HOTROD DINER – NIGHT**

A flickering neon sign buzzes outside, casting a dim  
red glow through the window. Inside, the Hotrod  
Diner is nearly empty—just a few dusty booths, a  
worn Formica counter, and the faint hum of an old  
ceiling fan struggling against the desert heat.

MOLLY SMITH, apron tied tight, stands at the counter  
reading a paperback book. She sighs, rubbing her  
forehead. The door creaks open, and JOHN STEINBECK  
steps inside, the bells on the handle jingling  
softly. His poodle, CHARLEY, trots in beside him,  
sniffing at the air.

**MOLLY**

(glancing up,  
forced smile) Well,  
we don't get many  
famous people  
passing through  
here anymore.

Steinbeck chuckles, removing his travel-worn cowboy hat and setting it on the counter.

**STEINBECK**

Just an old  
traveler looking  
for a good meal.

Molly grabs a coffee pot, pours a steaming cup, and slides it over. Steinbeck takes a sip, savoring it like a man who knows the worth of simple pleasures.

**MOLLY**

If you were looking  
for a booming town,  
you're about twenty  
years too late.

Steinbeck looks around—empty booths, a lone jukebox collecting dust in the corner, the road-weary silence of a place that's seen better days.

**STEINBECK**

We passed the new  
place out on the  
highway, but this  
looks more like my  
speed.

Steinbeck pauses in thought

**STEINBECK (CONT.)**

The desert has a  
way of outlasting  
the things we  
build.

Molly sighs, closing her book.

**STEINBECK**

What's got you so  
worried? You've got  
a nice little town  
here.

**MOLLY**

We put everything  
we had into this  
town, Mr.  
Steinbeck. The  
railroad, the  
motel—hell, even  
this diner. Our  
Oasis isn't what it  
used to be and the  
tourists just don't  
stop here anymore.  
They go to Palm  
Springs, the Salton  
Sea, or drive right  
past to the river  
and Lake Havasu.

**STEINBECK**

(softly) They chase  
dreams in places  
where water still  
flows.

Molly nods, glancing at the coffee pot like she's debating whether to pour herself a cup or let the exhaustion win.

**MOLLY**

Some days, I feel  
like the people in  
"The Grapes of  
Wrath".

That catches Steinbeck off guard. His brow furrows as he studies her—this woman, this town, both weathered by time and hardship.

**STEINBECK**

(gently) You feel  
like Ma Joad?

**MOLLY**

(half-smiling) More  
like Tom. Stubborn  
enough to fight,  
but smart enough to  
know when I've  
already lost.

A long beat. The diner clock ticks, marking time in

a place where time moves slower than everywhere else.

**STEINBECK**

(nodding) But Tom  
kept going, didn't  
he?

Molly exhales, then forces a smile.

**MOLLY**

(soft) Yeah. He  
did.

She refills his coffee without asking. Outside, the wind howls through the Mojave, relentless, as if testing the endurance of all who remain.

FADE TO BLACK.

**EXT. FAST EDDIE'S POOL HALL – NIGHT (1961)**

The neon sign buzzes weakly, casting a sickly red glow onto the sidewalk. Inside, the sound of clacking billiard balls and the low murmur of conversation mixes with the steady thrum of a blues record on the jukebox. But upstairs, it's a different world.

**INT. FAST EDDIE'S POOL HALL – UPSTAIRS BAR – NIGHT (1961)**

A cloud of cigar smoke hangs low over the dimly lit



room. LEFTY SMITH sits in a corner booth, nursing a glass of whiskey, waiting. Across from him is BENNY KAPLAN (50s, rail-thin, a Santa Fe “fixer” from Chicago, always smelling like cheap cigars and old train grease). Benny takes a drag from a filterless cigarette, then flicks a business card across the table. “Marshall Caifano” – Nevada Enterprises, Las Vegas”.

**BENNY**

(leaning in, voice low) You got problems, Smith. Lucky for you, I know people who fix problems.

Lefty flips the card over, unimpressed.

**LEFTY**

(skeptical) A casino guy.

**BENNY**

(smirking, flicking ash onto the table) He’s a businessman, just like you. Keeps things running smooth... and makes problems disappear.

Before Lefty can respond, a man in a tailored dark

suit steps out of the shadows, sliding into the booth with the quiet confidence of someone who doesn't ask permission. MARSHALL CAIFANO (50s, small, sharp-eyed, but dangerous as a rattlesnake in a silk tie) sits down, adjusting his cuffs like he's already in control of the conversation.

**CAIFANO**

(calm, cold,  
straight to  
business) Nice town  
you got here Smith,  
I hear your Father  
ran a little gaming  
operation up here  
back in the 40's.  
My friend Benny  
here says you're a  
smart guy.

**LEFTY**

(measured,  
wary) That depends  
on who you ask.

**CAIFANO**

Benny tells me  
you're in a little  
bind.

Lefty is silent his eyes looked in a steely focus. Caifano smirks slightly, but his eyes stay dead serious. CAIFANO (leaning in, voice low,

businesslike).

**CAIFANO (CONT.)**

I hear there's some  
fellas out in Cadiz  
messing with your  
water. Some L.A.  
developer types  
with deep pockets.  
I could make that  
go away for you.

A beat. Lefty glances at Benny, then at Jim Overman,  
who watches from the bar, unreadable.

**LEFTY**

(even, careful) And  
what's that gonna  
cost me?

Caifano takes a slow sip of his drink, setting the  
glass down softly like he's already closed the deal.

**CAIFANO**

(smooth,  
calculated) Let's  
just say... I do you  
a favor, you do me  
a favor down the  
road. Maybe I got a  
guy who needs a  
little whisky at a

reasonable price.

Lefty exhales through his nose. He knew this was coming. A long silence. Caifano leans back, waiting. He doesn't need to sell it. He knows Lefty has no other options. Jim gives the smallest nod from across the room—silent confirmation that this is the only way. Finally, Lefty extends his hand.

**LEFTY**

(quiet, resigned)  
Alright. Caifano  
clasps it. Firm.  
Final.

**EXT. CADIZ DRILLING SITE – NIGHT (1961)**

A convoy of blacked-out trucks rolls up the dirt road, headlights off. Jim Overman and half a dozen of Caifano's guys—Las Vegas mobsters, ex-cons, and everything in between—move like shadows through the desert, dressed in black, tools in hand. The drilling rigs groan and churn, silhouetted against the star-lit Mojave sky.

**JIM**

(whispering to the  
crew) Make it look  
like bad luck.

▪ A man kneels  
at a control

panel,  
snipping  
critical  
wires.

- Another  
loosens bolts  
on the drill  
head, ensuring  
it'll seize up  
the next time  
it runs.
- A third pours  
a fine layer  
of sand into  
the diesel  
tanks,  
guaranteeing a  
full system  
failure by  
morning.

The crew moves fast, clean. No traces left behind.  
The wind howls through the empty drilling field—as  
if the desert itself is reclaiming its stolen water.

#### **EXT. OASIS PALMS – OASIS SPRING – DAWN (1961)**

The first light of morning creeps over the horizon.  
Molly on here morning walk stands at the edge of the  
shrinking oasis, arms folded, exhausted. Then—a  
ripple. She steps forward, watching as water slowly

bubbles up again from the springbed. Her breath catches. The water is coming back.

**EXT. BARCO RYE DISTILLERY – CAVES – DAWN (1961)**

Ted Metcalf drops a bucket into the well—this time, it splashes. Butch Madole peers down, wide-eyed.

**BUTCH**

(disbelief,  
whispering) Hell of  
a thing.

**EXT. OASIS PALMS – LEFTY'S MOBIL SERVICE – MORNING (1961)**

The morning sun rises over the desert, casting golden light over the quiet streets of Oasis Palms. LEFTY leans against his truck, staring at the distant mountains. The rhythmic hum of the service station hangs in the air, but Lefty isn't listening. He's waiting. JIM walks up beside him, flipping open a matchbook, lighting a cigarette.

**JIM**

(grinning, lighting  
his own cigarette)  
Worked like a  
charm.

Lefty doesn't respond. He just watches the rising sun, letting the weight of what's coming settle on

his shoulders. In the distance, a flash of movement—MOLLY, breathless, as she rushes toward them, eyes bright with excitement.

**MOLLY**

(beaming,  
exhilarated) It's  
back! The water's  
back!

She practically stumbles into him, grabbing his arms, her face glowing with relief.

**MOLLY**

(laughing, still  
catching her  
breath) I just came  
from the Oasis!  
It's flowing  
again—stronger than  
ever!

Lefty plasters on a look of feigned surprise, nodding slowly as if processing the news and glancing at Jim hoping he will keep their secret.

**LEFTY**

(measured, casual)  
Well, that is...  
something honey.

But Molly isn't fooled. Her smile fades slightly, as

she looks at Jim and then back to Lefty her eyes narrowing as she studies his face.

**MOLLY**

(quieter now) Oh,  
Louis...

A pause. The wind rustles through the service station canopy.

**MOLLY (CONT.)**

(searching his  
face) What did you  
do?

Lefty holds her gaze for a moment—too long. A shadow passes over his expression, just enough for her to see. Jim looking down, takes a slow drag of his cigarette, exhaling, listening to the exchange but saying nothing. Lefty forces a smirk, shrugs.

**LEFTY**

(soft, almost  
convincing) Just  
good fortune,  
darlin'.

But Molly knows him too well. She doesn't say anything, just steps back, searching his face one last time. Lefty turns away, rubbing his jaw, watching the horizon. Jim flicks his cigarette to the ground, crushing it under his boot. Molly turns



and looks at Jim stern, demanding an answer.

**JIM**

(low, guilty) Yes,  
good fortune. But  
good fortune always  
comes at a price.

The desert wind picks up, swirling dust through the station lot. Lefty says nothing, just watches the rising sun. He's won—at least for now. But in the back of his mind, Caifano's words linger like an unpaid debt. "Just a little favor... down the road." And Lefty knows, one day, that favor's coming due.

FADE TO BLACK.

**EXT. LOS ANGELES — OFFICE BUILDING — NIGHT (1961)**

Don McDONNEL sits forward in his high-backed leather chair, a half-full whiskey glass on the desk, and the phone against his ear. His face twists with anger.

**MCDONELL**

(furious, slamming  
the phone down)  
Lucy! Get KAPLAN on  
the damn phone!

The sharp crack of the receiver against the cradle echoes through the room. From the adjoining office, LUCY—a carbon copy of his last secretary, her heels clicking against the marble as she hesitates for

half a beat. She smooths her dress, then steps forward, voice clipped and efficient, but with an edge of fear.

**LUCY**

(measured,  
professional) Right  
away, Mr. McDonnell

She disappears into the other room. A moment later, her voice filters back, distant but unmistakable—

**LUCY**

(from the other  
room, controlled  
urgency) Hello? Is  
Benny Kaplan there?

McDonnell grits his teeth, taking a long drag and stubbing out his cigarette into an ornate ashtray overflowing with spent butts. A beat. The phone rings. McDonnell picks up the receiver, inhaling slow, steadying his fury.

**MCDONELL**

(steely calm,  
controlled menace)  
Benny... have you  
been making side  
deals in the  
desert?

A long pause on the other end.

**MCDONELL**

(leaning forward,  
voice tightening)

This was not what  
we discussed.

**INT. CHICAGO – COLUMBIA TAVERN – DAY (1961)**

A smoky, dimly lit bar, the kind where the furniture hasn't changed since Capone ruled these streets.

BENNY KAPLAN (50s, rail-thin, slick but weathered) leans into a grimy payphone, his pinky hooked inside the earpiece as if trying to shield himself from the conversation. Outside the rain-streaked window, the steel girders of the Chicago El train loom, casting long, jittery shadows over businessmen in suits and fedoras hurrying past. A single aging bartender polishes glasses, the place nearly empty except for a lone patron nursing a whiskey at the bar.

**BENNY**

(forced calm,  
placating) Now Mr.  
McDonnell, they  
shut down the  
passenger service...  
just like you  
asked.

A sharp pause. McDonnell's rage seeps through the

receiver—his words barely audible but unmistakable. “Pumps... Generators... Sand...” Benny’s eyes shift, calculating. He wipes his brow with a silk pocket square.

**BENNY**

(lying, slipping  
into damage  
control) Oh, Mr.  
McDonnell, I don’t  
know anything about  
that, but... I can  
make some calls.  
Let me find out for  
you. I’ll call you  
right back.

He forces a smile that no one sees. A train rumbles overhead, rattling the liquor bottles behind the bar. Benny clenches his jaw, gripping the receiver. He knows exactly what McDonnell is talking about. And if he doesn’t fix it fast, it won’t just be secrets that get buried in the desert.

FADE TO BLACK.

**INT. FLAMINGO CASINO – LAS VEGAS – BACK ROOM – NIGHT**

The haze of cigar smoke drifts lazily under the dim light, casting long, ghostly shadows against the mahogany walls. A pair of dice clatter across a nearby table, followed by the low murmur of bets being placed. At a secluded table in the back, MARSHALL CAIFANO shuffles a deck of cards with

effortless precision, his sharp eyes scanning the room without looking up. A man in a dark suit leans down, murmurs something in his ear. Without breaking rhythm, Caifano extends his hand— and the man places a phone on the table with a long cord to the wall. Caifano raises the receiver to his ear, exhaling a slow stream of smoke.

**CAIFANO**

(cool, unreadable)

“Yeah?”

**INTERCUT – MCDONELL & CAIFANO – PHONE CONVERSATION**

**INT. BEVERLY HILLS – MCDONELL’S OFFICE – NIGHT**

Don McDonnell stands at his desk, one hand on the receiver, the other swirling a glass of whiskey. Behind him, a massive window overlooks the glittering city below—a kingdom he intends to expand. His face is calm, but his tone is pure calculation.

**MCDONELL**

(measured,  
deliberate) Mr.  
Caifano... Thank you  
for taking my call.  
I made some calls  
to your friends in  
Chicago. Seems like  
your boys might

have had a little...  
job in the desert  
last night?

**INT. FLAMINGO CASINO – LAS VEGAS – BACK ROOM – NIGHT**

Caifano leans back, flicking ash from his cigar, a small smirk tugging at the corner of his mouth.

**CAIFANO**

(playing dumb,  
casual) I guess you  
hear a lot of  
things in L.A.,  
McDonnell.

**INT. BEVERLY HILLS – MCDONELL'S OFFICE – NIGHT**

McDonnell grins, slow and easy, tapping his glass against the edge of his desk.

**MCDONELL**

(smooth, confident)  
Relax, I ain't  
looking to cause  
you trouble. In  
fact, I was  
wondering if we  
could... work  
together on a  
little project.

A beat. Caifano listens, saying nothing. But

McDonnell can tell he's interested.

**INT. FLAMINGO CASINO – LAS VEGAS – BACK ROOM – NIGHT**

Caifano spins the deck of cards in his hand, waiting. Then, finally—

**CAIFANO**

(calm, testing him)  
Maybe. So what's in  
it for me?

**INT. BEVERLY HILLS – MCDONELL'S OFFICE – NIGHT**

McDonnell sets his drink down and leans forward, voice dropping to a whisper.

**MCDONELL**

(lowered voice,  
direct) I think you  
know about Barco  
Distillery in the  
desert. If you help  
me, I will squeeze  
Smith out. The  
distillery will be  
yours and you can  
supply every hotel  
in Vegas. All I  
want in return is  
to keep my land in  
Cadiz.

A pause. Then—Caifano smirks. He knows McDonnell has

an angle.

**INT. FLAMINGO CASINO – LAS VEGAS – BACK ROOM – NIGHT**

Caifano taps his cigar on the edge of an overflowing ashtray, watching the embers fall.

**CAIFANO**

(low, pleased)

Booze? That's an investment I can get behind. I'm in.

**INT. BEVERLY HILLS – MCDONELL'S OFFICE – NIGHT**

McDonnell leans back in his chair, satisfied.

**MCDONELL**

(grinning, sealing the deal) I'll make sure this pays off big. For both of us.

**INT. FLAMINGO CASINO – LAS VEGAS – BACK ROOM – NIGHT**

Caifano chuckles, swirling his glass. He knows exactly what McDonnell means, he has other plans.

**EXT. OASIS PALMS – NIGHT**



A dusty wind rattles the neon sign outside Lefty's Mobil Service. Inside, Lefty leans over the counter, flipping through a ledger, numbers tightening around him like a noose. A car slows outside. Headlights sweep across the storefront. Lefty glances up. A shadow lingers in the doorway. A familiar voice, smooth as silk but cold as steel.

**CAIFANO (OFFSCREEN, STEPPING FORWARD)**

Hello Mr. Smith I'd  
like to see that  
little distillery  
of yours. I've got  
a guy who needs a  
little whisky... at a  
reasonable price.

FADE TO BLACK.