

THE LOST PEARL OF THE MOJAVE – EPISODE 10 RUNNIN' WITH THE DEVIL 1964-1973



EXT. ROUTE 66 – AMBOY, CA – MIDNIGHT (1966)

A long stretch of Route 66 lies in eerie silence beneath the moonlit Mojave sky. Neon from Roy's Motel & Café flickers, casting a ghostly glow over the cracked pavement. A low rumble echoes in the distance—not from the highway, but from the tracks. A Santa Fe freight train barrels westward, its massive diesel engine howling as it eats up the rails, running parallel to the road.

LLOYD'S '55 CHEVY

A black '55 Chevy Bel Air idles at the roadside, chrome glinting under the neon haze. Behind the wheel, LLOYD SMITH (20), with a military haircut cocky and fearless, grips the wheel. His right-hand

taps the shifter, his left wrapped around the wheel like he was born with it in his palm. Outside the window, the roaring freight engine appears—looming like a steel monster, its engineer leaning slightly forward, watching. LLOYD grins. Eyes locked ahead. Hands steady.

LLOYD

(to himself,
smirking) Alright,
big boy... let's
dance.

His foot stomps the clutch. He guns the souped-up 327, the car rocking with raw torque. The train horn BLARES. LLOYD dumps the clutch.

THE RACE BEGINS

Tires SHRIEK. The Chevy launches forward, its headlights cutting through the desert night. The train charges ahead, steel wheels screaming churning through the tracks, gaining distance fast. LLOYD grips the shifter—first gear, second, third. His eyes flick to the train beside him. At first, the locomotive pulls ahead—its sheer weight an advantage—but LLOYD's Chevy starts clawing back lost ground.

THE CROSSING AHEAD

In the distance ahead, red lights flash—the railroad crossing. But this isn't just any crossing. The

tracks meet Route 66 at a severe skew. The road curves slightly before cutting across the rails at a dangerous angle. The warning bells CLANG. The freight train isn't stopping. LLOYD's foot hovers over the gas pedal—a split-second decision.

THE FINAL STRETCH

The train's diesel engine ROARS. Steam hisses from the wheels. The iron beast is nearly at the crossing. LLOYD punches it. The Chevy fishtails slightly but finds traction, launching forward. The railroad crossing arms drop—too late. LLOYD sees nothing but headlights, red signals, and steel. He grips the wheel, jaw clenched—committed.

THE CROSSING

LLOYD's Chevy flies into the skewed crossing— The car bounces hard as it hits the uneven pavement, rear tires briefly lifting. The train SCREAMS past, barely a breath behind the Chevy. For a split second—the entire world is white-hot steel and roaring thunder. Then— The Chevy clears the tracks. LLOYD's hands fight the wheel as the rear end kicks sideways on the shoulder gravel. He countersteers, snapping the car straight—and then he's gone, tearing off into the desert night.

BACK AT ROY'S MOTEL

From the parking lot, a group of grease monkeys and Route 66 travelers watch, stunned. A young couple lean against a brand new bright red 66 Chevelle

Convertible.

YOUNG WOMAN

(grinning, shaking
his head) Damn fool
really did it.

YOUNG MAN

(laughing, exhaling
smoke) Kid's got a
death wish. I
wonder if this
thing could beat a
train.

**EXT. UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA – CAMPUS LAWN
– DAY (1964)**

SCREEN OVERLAY: "Two Years Earlier 1964"

The **USC campus** bustles with students, but one group
stands apart—a circle of long-haired young men and
women, **protest signs raised**. At the center, **FLOYD
SMITH (19), shaggy-haired, wire-rim glasses**, stands
atop a bench, a **draft card held between two fingers**.

FLOYD

(raising his voice)
This war is a
machine, and we are
its fuel!

A small crowd cheers. Cameras flash. FLOYD strikes a

match. The **flames lick the edges of his draft card.**
In seconds, it curls into ashes, floating away on
the warm Los Angeles breeze.

MATCH CUT TO:

EXT. CAM RANH AIR FORCE BASE – VIETNAM – DAY (1964)
The airfield is alive with **the deafening roar of jet engines** and **the whining chop of helicopter rotors.**
LLOYD SMITH (18) moves between aircraft, his hands
stained with grease, his **flight mechanic's uniform streaked with oil.** He wipes his forehead, squinting
against the Vietnamese sun as a **pair of F-100 Super Sabres scream overhead.**

AIR FORCE CREW CHIEF

(grinning, nudging
LLOYD) Bet you
wishin' you were
flyin' 'em instead
of fixin' 'em?

LLOYD

(smirking,
tightening a
wrench) Ain't no
shame in keepin'
'em in the air. But
yeah... I'd rather be
in that cockpit.

He gives the **bolt one final crank**, then **steps back,**
admiring his work on the F-100's exposed engine.

EXT. MAKESHIFT RACE TRACK – CAM RANH BASE – NIGHT

A **makeshift dirt track**, carved out behind the barracks, lit by a few scattered floodlights. Dust kicks up as **two Air Force jeeps barrel around a bend**, engines snarling. **LLOYD grips the wheel of a stripped-down military jeep, foot buried in the gas.** His opponent, a cocky **staff sergeant**, fights to keep pace.

STAFF SERGEANT

(shouting over the engine noise) You drive like you got a damn death wish, Smith!

LLOYD

(grinning, shifting gears) Ain't wishin' for nothin'—just know how to go fast.

The two jeeps **roar toward a sharp curve**. The staff sergeant **taps the brakes**. LLOYD doesn't. He **drifts through the turn, wheels spitting dirt**, barely missing a stack of oil drums. The **staff sergeant fishtails, losing ground**. LLOYD punches it, engine howling, crossing the finish line first.

EXT. BARRACKS – LATER THAT NIGHT

LLOYD leans against a sandbag wall, **cigarette**

dangling from his lips, watching the **starlit sky.**

AIRMAN

(plopping down
beside him) You
ever think about
goin' career?

LLOYD

(exhaling smoke,
shaking his head)
Nah. War ain't my
thing. Soon as my
time's up, I'm
headin' home.

The **distant hum of an approaching chopper echoes through the night.** LLOYD watches it descend, silhouetted against the moon, and he **thinks of his father, flying P-38s over Europe.** A slow smirk tugs at his lips.

LLOYD

(softly, to
himself) Gonna
build somethin'
faster anyway.

FADE TO BLACK.

INT. FAST EDDIES POOL HALL – DUSK (1964)

A dimly lit, smoke-filled back office. The scent of aging whiskey and stale cigars lingers in the air. LEFTY SMITH sits behind a battered wooden desk, a bottle of rye and two glasses in front of him. Across from him, MARSHALL CAIFANO leans back in his chair, cool and unreadable. By the door, his bodyguard VIC stands motionless, a silent wall of muscle. Caifano picks up the whiskey bottle, inspecting the label like a man considering a purchase he already owns.

CAIFANO

Lefty, you and I,
we go back a little
ways now. And I
ain't the kind of
guy to forget a
favor.

Lefty shifts uncomfortably, his fingers tapping against the desk.

LEFTY

I figured this was
coming.

CAIFANO

I'd like to become
your best customer.

He sets the bottle down gently, but the weight of his words lands heavy.

CAIFANO

I'll distribute
your whiskey to all
my friends in Las
Vegas. But I need a
good price.

Lefty slides a price sheet across the desk.

LEFTY

I can give you our
best price, the 10-
case rate on
anything you buy.

Caifano glances at the sheet, then flicks it back
with disinterest.

CAIFANO

10? Thats thinking
way too small, we
take 50... a month.
Add I'm going to
need another 25%
off that price.
After all, I'm
going to be your
best customer,
right?

Lefty grips the edge of his desk. His jaw tightens.

LEFTY

That price is damn
near giving it
away. I got other
buyers—

CAIFANO

Don't worry. You'll
make it up on
volume. We are
going to be real
good friends.

Caifano takes a slow sip of his drink, his eyes
locked on Lefty. The silence between them is thick.

CAIFANO

Back when things
got messy, I didn't
have to help you.
But I did. Now it's
your turn to help
me.

Vic shifts his weight near the door. A subtle
reminder of what refusal means.

LEFTY

(sighs) Fine.
You'll get the
whiskey. We will do
10 cases a month at

your price. But
that's it. No more
favours.

CAIFANO

(grins) Sure,
Lefty. No more
favours. I'll have a
truck pick up my
first order
tomorrow, we'll
start with 50 cases
and of course,
you'll give us 90
day terms.

Lefty closes his eyes, exhaling through his nose.
He realizes he is now in business with Caifano—and
there is no turning back.

Caifano rises, straightening his suit. As he passes,
he claps a hand on Lefty's shoulder—firm, like a
friend, but lingering just long enough to remind him
who holds the power.

CAIFANO

You made the right
call.

He strides to the door, Vic following without a
word. Lefty stares at the bottle of rye. He pours
himself a drink, lifts it to his lips—hesitates—then
downs it in one gulp.

INT. DRAFT BOARD OFFICE – LOS ANGELES – DAY (1966)

A **government-issued clock** ticks loudly in the sterile office. **Military officers** in stiff uniforms study FLOYD, who lounges in a chair—barefoot, wearing a fringed vest and beads. His pupils are **blown wide**, a telltale sign of his altered state.

DRAFT OFFICER

(clearing throat)
Full name?

FLOYD

(grinning, spacey)
FLOYD Smith. Son of
Lt. Louis Smith.
Hero pilot maybe
you've heard of
him?

The officer glares. FLOYD flips his form upside down, pretending to read it.

DRAFT OFFICER

(irritated) Do you
have any conditions
that would make you
unfit for military
service?

FLOYD

(serious, leaning
in) Absolutely.

Concussion. Got it
when I was ten—fell
off my motorcycle.
Ever since, I've
had... **visions.**

The officer scribbles something down, unimpressed.

DRAFT OFFICER
(dry) And how does
that affect your
ability to serve?

FLOYD
(leaning back,
grinning)
Sometimes, I see
sounds, man.

Silence. The officers exchange glances.

DRAFT OFFICER
(flat) You see
sounds?

FLOYD
(nodding
enthusiastically)
Yeah. And my hands
don't always do
what I tell 'em to.
(flails arms

playing a crazy
guitar) See? Total
liability.

The officer sighs, rubbing his temples.

CUT TO:

INT. DRAFT BOARD OFFICE – MINUTES LATER

A thick government stamp **SLAMS DOWN** onto his file.
"4-F – UNFIT FOR SERVICE" FLOYD **strolls out** of the
office, tossing a peace sign to a waiting room full
of nervous young men.

FLOYD

(grinning) See you
on the flip side,
boys.

EXT. CALIFORNIA HIGHWAY – NIGHT (1967)

A convoy of **high-performance muscle cars** streaks
across the open desert highway, headlights piercing
the night. The roar of **big-block engines** echoes
through the vast, empty landscape.

At the front of the pack, **LLOYD SMITH** grips the
wheel of his **BLACK 55 Chevy**, his signature **cowboy
hat** tilted low over his brow. The needle on the
speedometer climbs—90... 100... 110 mph.

A **competitor in a '64 GT0** pulls up alongside him,

revving his engine in challenge. LLOYD grins, the thrill of competition sparking in his eyes.

LLOYD

(to himself)
Alright, let's see
what you got.

He **downshifts**, stomping the accelerator. The Cobra surges forward, kicking up a plume of desert dust as LLOYD **leaves the GT0 behind**.

CUT TO:

EXT. OASIS PALMS – FINISH LINE – LATER

The racers arrive at **Oasis Palms**, a cloud of dust billowing behind them. The neon sign of **Lefty's Garage** flickers in the night, welcoming them to their desert sanctuary.

Molly Smith's Hot Rod Diner glows from across the street, the scent of sizzling burgers and fresh coffee cutting through the dry desert air. Inside, a crowd of grease-streaked racers and spectators swap stories over plates of food.

LLOYD pulls into the garage lot, tires skidding slightly as he comes to a stop. He steps out, adjusting his cowboy hat with a cocky grin as the other racers pull in behind him.

RACER

Damn, LLOYD, you
ran off and left us

in the dust!

LLOYD

Car's only as good
as the man behind
the wheel.

Laughter and cheers erupt as the racers start inspecting each other's cars, some popping hoods, others making quick adjustments with **Lefty's tools**. Over at the diner, **Molly Smith** shakes her head as she watches the racers roll in, already setting plates on the counter for the incoming crowd.

EXT. JOSHUA TREE – DESERT COMMUNE – DUSK (1967)

The **desert stretches for miles**, a **dreamscape of weathered boulders and twisted Joshua trees**. A **makeshift commune of tents and VW buses** sits nestled against the rocks, smoke drifting from small campfires. FLOYD **walks barefoot**, a **guitar slung over his shoulder**, nodding to a group of **musicians lounging in the sand**.

GRAM

(tuning guitar)
Hey, new guy. You
play?

FLOYD

(grinning) A
little. Mostly
listen.

He sits, taking in the scene—the **desert sky painted with purples and golds**, the **sound of guitars drifting into the night**. LLOYD is **halfway across the world, fixing planes**. FLOYD is **here, finding his own kind of freedom**.

EXT. BARCO DISTILLERY – LOADING DOCK – EARLY MORNING (1967)

A **STEP VAN** idles near the loading dock, its rear doors swung open. **CAIFANO'S MEN**—a trio of rough-looking enforcers—load **wooden crates of whiskey** into the back of the truck.

BARCO DISTILLERY EMPLOYEES—a handful of workers in dusty work shirts—stand at a distance, watching in silence. Their faces are tight with unease. **VIC**, Caifano's hulking bodyguard, stands near the truck, arms crossed, his presence alone enough to keep everyone in check. The last crate is loaded. One of the enforcers **slaps the side of the van**.

CAIFANO'S MAN

All set.

The **rear doors slam shut**. The van pulls away, kicking up dust as it disappears down the road. The workers exchange uncertain glances before shuffling back to their duties.

CUT TO:

INT. BARCO DISTILLERY – OFFICE – LATER

The **distillery office** is cluttered with stacks of invoices and order forms. A dusty **ceiling fan** spins lazily, doing little to cut through the heat. The air is thick with frustration.

BUTCH MADOLE, the distillery's weary manager, sits at his desk, rubbing his temples. Across from him, head distiller **TED METCALF**, flips through the latest financial reports, his face tightening with each page.

BUTCH

(grim) We're
bleeding out, Ted.
These numbers don't
lie.

TED

(mutters) Dammit, I
know.

Ted tosses a report onto the desk.

BUTCH

Caifano's taking
almost all of our
production at a
price that barely
covers costs.

Meanwhile, our good
customers are drying up
because we can't supply
them.

Butch exhales sharply, leaning back in his chair.

BUTCH (CONT.)

What's Lefty say?

TED

(dryly) He's
putting his wife's
money in every
month just to keep
us afloat.

Jim shakes his head, pushing himself up from his chair. He paces, hands on his hips. Raymond nods, flipping the report closed.

BUTCH

If this keeps up,
we won't last six
months.

Butch stares out the office window, watching the dust settle from the van's departure. His jaw tightens.

**INT. PALM SPRINGS DRIVE-IN – BACKSTAGE AREA – DUSK
(1969)**

A sea of **tie-dye, denim, and dust** swirls under the fading California sun. The **Palm Springs Pop Festival** pulses with raw energy—**psychedelic rock blaring**, a haze of smoke thick in the air, and a **mosaic of**

hippies swaying in euphoric bliss.

FLOYD, mid-20s, shaggy-haired and sun-kissed, moves through the **makeshift backstage area**, dodging roadies, groupies, and musicians tuning guitars. His patched bell-bottoms and **fringed leather vest** make him blend effortlessly into the scene.

GRAM PARSONS, dressed in a **rhinestone-studded Nudie suit**, strums an acoustic guitar as he sits on a wooden crate, laughing with a few **musicians from the Flying Burrito Brothers**. He waves FLOYD over.

GRAM

FLOYD, my man! Glad
you made it. We're
about to load in.
You ready to do
some real work?

FLOYD pats the rolled-up **bandana in his back pocket**, a makeshift tool belt for his new, temporary **roadie duties**. Gram hands FLOYD a beer, motioning toward the **crowd beyond the stage**.

GRAM

You ever see so
many free spirits
in one place?

FLOYD takes a **deep breath**, inhaling the **mix of sage, sweat, and pot smoke**. Gram smirks, clinking bottles with him. A **ruckus near the entrance** catches FLOYD's

attention.

A **tall, wiry figure with wild silver hair**, dressed in **flowing white robes**, moves through the festival like **a prophet in his element**. **TIMOTHY LEARY**.

The crowd **parts around him**, mesmerized. Some reach out, hoping for a touch, a blessing, a whispered truth.

FLOYD watches as Leary **soaks in the adulation**, arms outstretched, spinning in slow circles. The man is a **walking sermon**, his **followers clinging to every movement**.

A wicked **grin creeps** across FLOYD's face as he looks up at the **marquee sign** of the Palm Springs Drive-In. The giant letters read: **PALM SPRINGS POP FESTIVAL**

FLOYD

Man, they really
missed an
opportunity here...

Gram follows his gaze, then **laughs**, shaking his head.

GRAM

Oh no. You got that
look again.

FLOYD **grabs a ladder** from behind the stage and **hoists it over his shoulder**.

FLOYD

Hold my beer.

GRAM

Shit, man—don't get
yourself arrested
before Burrito Bros
even hit the stage.

FLOYD **grins** and strides toward the marquee, weaving
through the crowd.

CUT TO:

**EXT. PALM SPRINGS DRIVE-IN – MARQUEE SIGN – MOMENTS
LATER**

FLOYD **scales the ladder with ease**, one hand gripping
the rungs, the other **swiping letters from the sign**.
The **crowd begins to notice**, murmuring, pointing,
cheering.

HIPPIE DUDE

What's he doin'?

HIPPIE GIRL

(reverent)
Something
beautiful, man.

Leary himself steps forward, peering up at FLOYD
with amused curiosity.

The last letter clicks into place. The marquee now reads:**PALM SPRINGS POT FESTIVAL**

A cheer erupts from the onlookers. **Laughter, applause, howls of approval.**

FLOYD **descends the ladder** with a flourish, landing with a **mock bow**. The crowd eats it up.

LEARY

You, my friend, are
a man who sees the
world as it should
be.

FLOYD **extends a hand**, grinning.

FLOYD

Figured it needed a
slight correction.

Leary clasps FLOYD's hand in both of his, studying him as if reading his very soul.

LEARY

Come. We must talk.
Expand. Explore.
Ride the wave.

He gestures toward a **circle of flower children**, already gathered on a **patchwork of blankets**, waiting for their next cosmic revelation.

Gram watches from the side, **shaking his head** with a smirk.

FLOYD takes a final look at his **handiwork on the marquee**, then **grins, abandons Gram, and follows Leary into the swirling, psychedelic night.**

FADE TO BLACK.

INT. FAST EDDIE'S POOL HALL – OFFICE – NIGHT (1969)

A single overhead light hums, casting harsh shadows across the cramped, cluttered office. The air is thick with the scent of stale cigars and old whiskey. **LEFTY SMITH** sits behind a desk covered in **unpaid bills and financial reports**, staring at them like a man losing a fight he didn't know he was in.

MOLLY SMITH stands across from him, arms crossed, her brow furrowed in frustration. A worn-out ledger sits open in front of her, the numbers grim.

MOLLY

(firm) Lefty, we're
bleeding money.

Lefty exhales, rubbing his temples before reaching for a half-finished glass of whiskey.

LEFTY

I know, Molly. You
think I don't see
it?

MOLLY

Then do something
about it! We bet
everything on your
railroad, and one
attraction can't
cut it. People are
going to Disney and
Knotts where they
have entire parks
full of rides.

She flips through the ledger, jabbing a finger at
the pages.

MOLLY

Look at
this—tourist
dollars are drying
up. Families are
going to Palm
Springs, the Salton
Sea, Lake Havasu...
anywhere but here.

Lefty leans back in his chair, his fingers drumming
against the armrest.

LEFTY

The hotel?

MOLLY

Empty most
weekends. The motel
too. A

Lefty rubs a hand over his face. He knows what's
coming next.

MOLLY

The buildings need
repairs, the
distillery's
running at a loss,
and don't even get
me started on the
Oasis—you know as
well as I do the
water level is
dropping again.

LEFTY

(quiet) I know.

MOLLY

And LLOYD's racing
buddies? They're
all broke four of
them will pile into
one room at the
Motel and then the
rooms end up
smelling like
grease and
cigarettes. Most of

them eat for free
at the Diner with
LLOYD. AND don't
even get me started
on FLOYD's musician
friends? They are
Even worse. They
check in to the
hotel, stay for
days on end and
then skip out in
the middle of the
night without
paying.

Lefty downs the rest of his whiskey in one go, then
slams the glass on the desk.

LEFTY

I can't cut off
Caifano.

Molly stiffens. She knows, but she doesn't want to
hear it.

MOLLY

(low, dangerous)
Why not?

LEFTY

(grim) Because he's
the only thing

keeping McDonnell
from drilling more
wells. You think we
have water problems
now? If McDonnell
starts pumping
water it'll cut off
the springs
completely, then
this whole place
finished.

Molly exhales sharply, shaking her head. She pinches the bridge of her nose, the weight of it all settling in.

MOLLY

So what then? We
just keep selling
whiskey to Caifano
until we're out of
business anyway?

LEFTY

(quietly) I don't
see another way.

The room falls silent. The walls feel like they're closing in.

MOLLY

(soft, but firm) My

entire trust has
gone into this town
and business is not
what it used to be.
Our entire savings
is gone. So you
need to do
something. Fast,
before we lose
everything.

She closes the ledger and walks out, leaving Lefty alone with his empty glass and the weight of a town on his shoulders.

INT. CAIFANO'S OFFICE – LAS VEGAS – NIGHT

A sleek, dimly lit office overlooking the neon glow of the Las Vegas Strip. **MARSHALL CAIFANO** sits behind an opulent mahogany desk, swirling a glass of whiskey in his hand. Across from him, **LEFTY SMITH** sits stiffly in a leather chair, his face lined with exhaustion. A half-drunk glass of whiskey sits untouched on the table in front of him.

CAIFANO

(casual) Lefty, I
gotta say, I wasn't
expecting you to
come all the way
out here. Business
good enough for a
Vegas trip?

Lefty exhales, staring at the glass, then looks up

at Caifano.

LEFTY

I'm shutting it
down, Marshall. The
distillery.

Caifano stops swirling his drink. The room falls
silent for a beat.

CAIFANO

(calm, but pointed)
Say that again?

LEFTY

(steady) At these
prices We're losing
more every month. I
just can't keep
putting money into
it.

He leans forward, rubbing his hands together, like a
man preparing to drop a weight he's carried too
long. Caifano watches him carefully, then sets his
drink down with a soft clink.

CAIFANO

What about your
guys? The workers?
You gonna put 'em
out on the street?

Lefty flinches, the weight of that truth hitting him harder than anything else.

LEFTY

(quietly) They've
been with me a long
time. Some of 'em,
damn near family.

Caifano nods, then leans back in his chair, steeping his fingers. He lets the moment sit, stretching the silence just long enough for Lefty to feel it.

CAIFANO

I tell you what.
You can sell it to
me.

Lefty stiffens. He wasn't expecting that.

LEFTY

(cautious) You
wanna buy Barco?

CAIFANO

Sure I'll keep your
boys employed and
you can focus on
the rest of the
town.

Lefty swallows, his hands gripping the arms of his

chair.

LEFTY

You'll keep it
running? Keep my
guys working?

CAIFANO

(shrugs) Why
wouldn't I? They
know the business.
And I like good
whiskey.

Caifano leans forward, his tone shifting just slightly, just enough to remind Lefty what kind of deal this is.

CAIFANO

Don't you worry.
I'll Expand
distribution. Cut
some costs. Make it
more... efficient.

Lefty exhales, running a hand through his hair. He knows what he's doing. He knows there's no good way out.

LEFTY

(reluctant)
Alright.

Caifano nods, then reaches into his desk, pulling out a **contract**.

CAIFANO

Smart move. I'll pay you monthly and you'll have a nice stream of income to keep your other businesses afloat while you sort things out. Let's make it official.

LEFTY

I need the money up front, not in installments.

Caifano glares back at Lefty.

CAIFANO

That's not the way this works, you came to me and I'm offering to help. You'll either take this deal and like it or you will find yourself sitting at the top of a dry hill.

He slides the papers across the desk. Lefty stares

at them for a long moment, then picks up the pen.

FADE TO BLACK.

EXT. DESERT HIGHWAY – NIGHT (1969)

The vast Mojave stretches in all directions, a ribbon of asphalt cutting through the emptiness.

Engines roar. A black '55 Chevrolet Bel Air and a yellow '32 Ford Coupe race side by side, their headlights slicing through the darkness. The Bel Air growls deep and mean, its chrome reflecting moonlight, tires screeching as it shifts gears. The '32 Coupe snarls back, light as a bullet, bouncing slightly over the uneven pavement, pushing its limits.

- They streak past an old Route 66 sign.
- Speedometers edge past 100 MPH.
- Engines howl under the strain.

The drivers—two shadowed figures behind the wheels—locked in a battle of nerve and horsepower.

INT. BLACK CHEVY BEL AIR – DRIVER'S POV

The yellow coupe drifts dangerously close. A flash of white knuckles on the wheel. A nervous glance in the rearview mirror—no turning back now. Then— a hard bump from the side. TIRES SHRIEK. The black Chevy wobbles, its rear end fishtailing. The yellow coupe edges closer—one more nudge.

EXT. DESERT HIGHWAY – NIGHT

The black Chevy's rear tire catches gravel. IT SPINS OUT. The car skids sideways, flips once—twice—three times. METAL SHRIEKS, GLASS SHATTERS. A FINAL ROLL. THE CHEVY LANDS ON ITS ROOF—FIRE ERUPTS FROM THE ENGINE BAY. The yellow coupe doesn't stop. Its taillights disappear into the night.

EXT. DESERT HIGHWAY – WRECKAGE SITE – MOMENTS LATER

The Chevy burns. Heat waves ripple through the night air. A shadowed figure steps forward from the roadside, watching. The figure picks up a cowboy hat that was thrown from the Chevy. No attempt to help. Just watching. A faint glow of a cigarette. Then, they turn and vanish into the darkness.

FADE TO BLACK.

EXT. BARCO DISTILLERY – LOADING DOCK – DAWN (1970)

SCREEN OVERLAY: One Year Later 1970

The morning sun casts long shadows over the distillery yard. **CAIFANO'S MEN** work with cold efficiency, hauling out **copper stills, barrels, and fixtures**, loading them onto the backs of waiting **flatbed trucks**. The sound of **metal scraping against metal** echoes in the dry morning air.

LEFTY SMITH, MOLLY SMITH, and the BARCO STAFF stand near the entrance, watching their livelihood be dismantled piece by piece. Faces are grim. Eyes hollow.

MOLLY

(whispers) They're
taking everything.
Can't you stop
them?

Lefty's jaw tightens as he watches.

LEFTY

We've got no choice
Molly, he owns the
business and
legally he can do
anything he wants.
We can't stop him.

CAIFANO steps out of the office, adjusting his
cufflinks like a man who just closed a good deal. He
surveys the scene with satisfaction before turning
to Lefty.

CAIFANO

It's just business,
Lefty. Nothing
personal.

Lefty exhales slowly, shaking his head.

LEFTY

(low, bitter)
Always is. As long
as you make the

payments, I guess
you can do as you
please.

Caifano smirks, then gestures toward the trucks.

CAIFANO

Gonna set up shop
in Nevada. New laws
make it easier to
run an operation
out there. Less
paperwork. Fewer
headaches. Don't
worry about your
money.

Molly glares at him, arms crossed.

MOLLY

And what about our
people? What about
their jobs?

Caifano shrugs, pulling out a **cigar** from his pocket,
rolling it between his fingers.

CAIFANO

(calm) They'll find
work. Or they
won't. That's not
my problem.

The last of the stills are secured. Caifano's men climb into the trucks, engines rumbling to life. Lefty watches as the trucks pull out of the yard, kicking up dust, leaving only an empty shell of the distillery behind. His fists clench, but there's nothing left to fight for.

MOLLY

(softly) What do we
do now?

Lefty doesn't answer. He just stares down the road, watching his past disappear into the horizon.

FADE TO BLACK.

INT. CASS'S HOUSE – LAUREL CANYON – NIGHT – 1970

The house is ALIVE. A haze of cigarette smoke, incense, and something stronger lingers in the air. The dim glow of lamps and flickering candles casts long shadows over the **cluttered yet effortlessly cool** living room. Vintage rugs, Moroccan pillows, and instruments—**guitars, bongos, tambourines**—are scattered about.

A **crowd of rock royalty** lounges on the mismatched furniture—**Joni leans over an old piano, James in round glasses, strumming beside her, Bonnie with her red hair laughing with Jackson**. Harry is pouring another drink. Gram passes a joint to Don with Glen sitting with a guitar across the room. The walls feel like they could burst from the sheer weight of talent in the room.

In the center of it all, **FLOYD SMITH**, effortlessly cool, perches on the arm of a couch, passing a bottle of Scooters Rye to Cass Elliot, who throws her head back in a hearty laugh.

CASS

(grinning, nudging
FLOYD) You still
dragging people out to
that damn desert, FLOYD?

FLOYD

(smirking, taking a
swig) Somebody's
gotta show these
city kids the
stars.

Nearby, **GLEN** sits on a stool, strumming his acoustic guitar. **DON** leans against the fireplace, watching, as smoke dances about his face.

GLENN

(casually, picking
at the strings) Hey
Don, Felder gave me
this tune... and it
got me thinking
about FLOYD's
grandma's place out
in the desert.

He strums **a few bars of a slow, haunting melody**. The

room hushes slightly. People lean in. His voice is soft but magnetic.

DON

(singing, barely
above a whisper) **On
a dark desert
highway...**

The melody **hangs in the air**, ethereal, unfinished.
Glenn Frey nods along, intrigued.

GLEN

(grinning, looking
at FLOYD) Man, that
place of yours—it's
got some real
ghosts in it, huh?

FLOYD

(half-laughing, but
there's weight
behind it) More
than you know.

Cass Elliot gives FLOYD a knowing look, like she's
heard his **desert stories** one too many times.

CASS

(smirking) Don't
let him get
started. He'll have

y'all tripping
through Joshua Tree
by sunrise.

Laughter ripples through the room. **Bonnie Raitt**
raises her glass.

BONNIE

To the Mojave! And
to FLOYD—our
favorite damn
desert prophet!

A cheer erupts. **Glasses clink, voices rise**, the party swelling again, but **FLOYD stays quiet for a beat**, watching **Glen's fingers dance over the guitar strings**, watching something **take shape**—a song, an idea, a **legend in the making**. The music swells, the party surges on—more drinks, more laughter, the night stretching into eternity.

FADE OUT.

INT. CAIFANO'S OFFICE — LAS VEGAS — NIGHT

A dimly lit, smoke-filled office. **MARSHALL CAIFANO** sits behind an imposing mahogany desk, the neon glow of the Las Vegas Strip flickering through the window blinds. The faint hum of a slot machine from the casino floor below bleeds into the silence. **JACK LEMANSKY**, a wiry man with thick glasses, stands beside the desk, holding a stack of checks. He watches as Caifano methodically signs each one, his

pen scratching against the paper. Caifano pauses, flipping to a check made out to L. Smith. He stares at it for a beat, then slowly slides it back toward Lemansky—unsigned.

CAIFANO

Stop sending checks
to Smith. It's no
longer needed.

Lemansky hesitates, adjusting his glasses.

LEMANSKY

(careful) What
should I tell him
when he calls?

Caifano leans back, exhaling smoke from his cigar, his face unreadable.

CAIFANO

(flat) I don't care
what you tell him.
As far as I'm
concerned... he's
been paid in full.

He flicks his cigar into the ashtray, the embers glowing momentarily before fading into a bed of cold ash.

Caifano reaches across the desk and pulls over a

rotary phone, its cord curling like a snake. He dials a number, his expression calm, controlled.

CAIFANO

(into phone,
smooth) Don? Feel
free to resume
pumping your water.
My business with
Smith is done.

A brief pause. He listens, then smirks.

CAIFANO

I don't care if you
bleed that aquafir
dry, you can do
whatever you want
with your water.
Pleasure doing
business,
McDonnell.

He hangs up with a soft click, then settles back into his chair, taking another slow drag from his cigar.

The camera lingers on the unsigned check, still sitting on the desk—a silent death warrant for Lefty's livelihood.

FADE TO BLACK.

INT. DON'S BARBERSHOP – EVENING (1972)

SCREEN OVERLAY: Two year's later 1972

The small barbershop, once a lively hub of town gossip, now feels more like a forgotten relic. A single ceiling fan hums overhead, stirring the warm air. The scent of shaving cream lingers, but no clippers buzz, no laughter fills the room.

LUCKY sits in the barber's chair, not for a haircut, but because it's the best seat in the house. Only a couple of townsfolk—OLD UNCLE BILL and JIM—occupy the other chairs, their faces weary. The streets outside, once bustling with Route 66 travelers, are eerily empty.

LUCKY

(shaking his head)
Drove to Amboy this morning. Saw maybe two cars the whole damn way. Roys was empty.

JIMMY

(scoffs) Hell, I was out front all day. You know how many stopped for gas? Zero. Not a soul.

UNCLE BILL

(gruffly) That new

highway's a killer.
I-40 don't need us
no more. Ain't
nobody takin' the
old road if they
don't have to.

Lefty sits by the counter, unfolding a newspaper. He
squints, reading aloud.

LEFTY

(reading) "The old
railroad alphabet
towns along Route
66 are bracing for
the shift and will
have to fight to
remain more than
just a memory."

He pauses, then smirks dryly, tapping the date
printed at the top of the page.

LEFTY

Well, ain't that
somethin'? Friday
the damn 13th.

LUCKY

(chuckling, shaking
his head) Figures.
The day our town's

luck runs out.

The words settle over the room like dust. No one speaks. They all know what it means. The town, their businesses, their way of life—it's all hanging by a thread.

LUCKY

(quietly) Ain't
much of a fight
when there's no one
left to fight for
us.

The clock on the wall ticks, each second stretching longer than the last. Outside, the neon sign of the old diner flickers weakly, as if struggling to stay lit.

JIMMY

(sighs) Well... guess
we wait and see. I
guess its just bad
luck.

No one answers. The weight of change is already here, and they all feel it.

FADE TO BLACK.

EXT. TRAIN STATION – DUSK (1972)

A desolate silence lingers over the small train station. The once-thriving hub of commerce now sits abandoned, the wooden platform weathered and splintering. A hot desert wind whistles through the empty lot, rustling old freight manifests pinned to the depot's bulletin board, their edges curling like dried leaves.

Weeds push through cracks in the wooden ties and the gravel bed between the rusted steel rails. The tracks stretch into the horizon, vanishing into the desert, leading nowhere. The rhythmic thunder of freight cars—once a familiar heartbeat of the plateau—is gone. Only the soft creak of an idle signal post remains.

Beyond the station, the distillery looms dark and lifeless. The once-bustling yard where barrels of whiskey were loaded onto waiting Santa Fe freight cars is now barren. A few abandoned wooden crates lie scattered, half-buried in the dust.

LEFTY stands near the tracks, hands in his pockets. He takes in the emptiness, the absence of movement. He kicks at a loose rock, watching it skitter across the rails and come to rest in a patch of overgrown weeds.

MOLLY

(softly, from
behind him) This
station used to be
the lifeline of
this place.

LEFTY

(quiet, bitter) Now
it's just a grave
marker.

Molly steps beside him, staring down the tracks,
where a distant heat mirage shimmers on the steel
rails. The last train has long since passed. The
plateau, once full of promise, now feels like the
edge of the world.

MOLLY

"Think they'll come
back?"

LEFTY

(beat) Nah. Not
unless someone
gives 'em a reason
to.

The sound of the wind swirls around them, filling
the silence where engines used to roar. They stand
for a moment longer, watching the sun dip below the
horizon. A lonely coyote howls in the distance.

FADE TO BLACK.

EXT. JOSHUA TREE MOTEL – AFTERNOON – 1973

The neon “Joshua Tree Inn” sign flickers against the desert night, buzzing weakly like it’s on its last leg. The warm glow spills over the dusty parking lot, where a small group of people gathers in hushed murmurs.

A gurney, draped in a white sheet, is wheeled out of a motel room. Two ambulance workers move in quiet efficiency, their faces unreadable. Flashbulbs pop—reporters already sniffing out the story.

FLOYD SMITH stands off to the side, hands in his pockets, staring at the scene. Next to him, a YOUNG WOMAN, early 20s, dressed in a faded band tee and jeans, watches solemnly.

YOUNG WOMAN

(softly) They found
him dead in his
room. Gram’s gone.

FLOYD exhales, nodding absently. He watches as the gurney disappears into the ambulance, doors shutting with a heavy THUD. The engine rumbles to life, red and blue lights flashing against the darkened motel windows.

FLOYD

(quietly, to
himself) My phone
rang late last
night... but I didn’t
pick up. I wonder
if that was him.

He shifts his gaze to the distant horizon, where Joshua trees stand like twisted ghosts under the moonlight. The emptiness of it all settles on him, heavy.

YOUNG WOMAN

What are you gonna
do?

FLOYD

(after a beat)
Everything in the
desert is dying.
Ain't nothin' here
for me. I guess

(a beat, begins
singing) "a little
bit of courage is
all we lack, so
catch me if you
can, I'm goin'
back."

She looks at him, searching his face. A long silence. The ambulance pulls out of the lot, disappearing into the night, leaving only dust in its wake. The neon sign hums, flickers—then steadies.

FADE TO BLACK.