GLIMPSES
by
Lewis Shiner

Based on his novel

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EXT. UNDERWATER--DAY

There is no sound. The water is so clear that it seems like we're floating above a rocky terrain--though it's actually a coral reef off Cozumel. Two SCUBA DIVERS slowly rise from the deep water below, moving at the same rate as the clouds of bubbles coming from their regulators. As they move toward the surface, it becomes increasingly obvious that something is wrong. TOM CRANE, the dive master, is towing the unconscious body of JACK SHACKLEFORD by his life vest.

What we're watching is a video being made by another diver. That diver has realized that there's trouble and is now swimming hard toward Tom and Jack. The CAMERA begins to wobble. As the three divers converge, the CAMERA swerves wildly, but for one moment we get a clear shot of Jack's face. He's unconscious, maybe dead. Then nothing but blue water.

Pull back to reveal:

INT. RAY'S LIVING ROOM--NIGHT

What we've been seeing is on videotape. RAY SHACKLEFORD, Jack's son, is slumped on the couch of his home in Austin, Texas. He has the remote loosely in one hand, watching intently, a couple of empty beer cans on the coffee table in front of him. Ray is in his forties, a few pounds overweight. He looks like he hasn't been sleeping well. The room is dark except for the glow of the TV. Ray points the remote at the screen and begins to rewind the tape.

RAY (v.o.)

Once upon a time there was going to be a Beatles album called Get Back. Paul had the idea he could turn things around, get back to the kind of material they'd played in the Kaiserkeller in Hamburg. Hamburg must have seemed like another century to them, looking back.

Ray stops the rewind and watches again. A young woman, LORI, is visible on the deck of a boat, along with Tom, Jack, and some others. She's around 40, slim and athletic, in a crop top T-shirt and shorts. Ray freezes the videotape on a frame where Lori is in the foreground.
INT. HALLWAY IN RAY’S HOUSE--NIGHT

Ray slowly climbs the stairs toward his upstairs workshop.

RAY (v.o.)
The Get Back sessions never worked out. Phil Spector overproduced the resulting tapes and turned them into the Let It Be album. Even when the original masters turned up years later, the magic was missing.

INT. RAY’S WORKSHOP--NIGHT

The workshop is the upstairs part of his house, with a workbench along one wall that holds various pieces of electronic equipment—oscilloscope, computer, soldering gun. There's a big poster of Jimi Hendrix pinned to the wall, along with various circuit diagrams and business cards. The stereo is PLAYING "Long and Winding Road" from Let It Be.

Ray is working on a stereo, soldering gun in hand.

RAY (v.o.)
I don't remember the first time I heard "Long and Winding Road," but I remember the time that stuck—I was driving back to Texas after dropping out of college, hoping for another chance with my ex-girlfriend.

Ray puts down the soldering gun, just listening to the music now.

RAY (v.o.)
The Beatles couldn't get it together for Get Back, and I didn't get back with my girlfriend.

CLOSE ON RAY.

RAY (v.o.)
But it didn't have to be that way.

Slowly, but very obviously, the music begins to change while we hold on Ray. It speeds up, the violins drop out, the guitar part becomes more complex. Ray is caught up in the music, his eyes close, and a dreamy smile starts to spread across his face.
A LONGER SHOT as Ray suddenly realizes what he's hearing. With a wrenching sound, the song goes back to the way it's always been.

Ray is completely drained by what he's just done. He starts to get up, staggers, grabs his workbench with one hand and his head with the other.

INT. HALLWAY IN RAY'S HOUSE--NIGHT

Ray carefully descends the stairs, gripping the bannister with white knuckles. He's shaking.

INT. RAY'S BEDROOM--NIGHT

Ray flops across his unmade bed, still completely dressed, and passes out.

EXT. RAY'S FRONT YARD--DAY

Ray, hair damp from the shower, in fresh clothes, picks the paper off the lawn. The sun is high in the sky--he's clearly slept in.

RAY (v.o.)
So my father is dead and my wife has moved out. My college girlfriend is married somewhere with two kids.

He looks up at the window of his workshop.

RAY (v.o.)
But there's this other lost thing, this Beatles song, and maybe I can have that back.

INT. RAY'S WORKSHOP--DAY

Ray sets out the things he needs like a surgical nurse: fresh cassette tape into the deck, fast forward a bit, then rewind to get the tension right; remote control sitting on the couch; phone unplugged. He sits, holding the remote loosely in his right hand, closes his eyes.

CLOSE ON RAY.

After a couple of seconds he slowly raises the remote and presses PLAY, starting the recorder.
We hear the CLICK of the recorder starting, the quiet hiss of the tape against the heads.

Then, after another few seconds, Paul McCartney's VOICE, counting off the song.

LATER

Ray is sprawled across the couch, passed out. Loud HISS from the stereo.

INT. RAY'S KITCHEN--DAY

It's late afternoon, now. Ray is washing dishes at the sink. He looks from the kitchen toward the stairs. Back to the dishes. Back to the stairs.

RAY (v.o.)
It has occurred to me, of course, that I'm losing my mind.

INT. RAY'S WORKSHOP--DAY

He's coming up the stairs. He walks over to the stereo, rewinds the cassette. He still hasn't listened to it, doesn't know what's on there. It finishes rewinding. Pause. He braces himself for the possibility that there's nothing there.

RAY (v.o.)
The thing is, if there's something wrong with me, I'm not sure I want it to get better.

He presses PLAY. McCartney's VOICE counts off the song again, followed by the first few bars of MUSIC. Ray slumps forward, his head touching the shelf, eyes closed in gratitude and relief.

INT. RAY'S LIVING ROOM--NIGHT

Ray is reading the Austin CHRONICLE, the local arts weekly. An ad catches his eye.

CLOSE on the ad: "Together again/The legendary Chevettes/Featuring Dave Middleton/Continental Club/1315 S. Congress Ave./Saturday Nov 17"
INT. CONTINENTAL CLUB--NIGHT

The club is small and crowded, and a four-piece band is on the stage--two guitars, bass, and drums. All the members are in their forties, about the same age as Ray. We particularly notice the bass player, DAVE MIDDLETON. They are playing "In My Life" by the Beatles, fast and loud. It's a remarkable performance. These men have played together, off and on, for close to thirty years. Their voices and instruments blend seamlessly, and there is a joy and transcendence in their playing that the audience can clearly feel.

Ray is leaning against one wall, apart from the crowd, listening with a fierce intensity, listening the way a man dying of thirst would look at a glass of water just out of his reach.

The song finishes and the band says their thank yous. Ray approaches the stage, cupping his hands to be heard.

RAY
Dave!

Dave is packing up his bass, winding up his patch cords. He does a double-take at the sight of Ray.

DAVE
Ray? Ray Shackleford?

EXT. CONTINENTAL CLUB--NIGHT

Ray and Dave sit outside the club, watching cars roar by on South Congress St. It's early winter and chilly. They're each drinking a beer, and the rest of the six pack sits between them.

RAY
I remember you guys playing the Senior Prom. I can't believe you're still together.

DAVE
Together again. I took a decade or two off so I could have my fifteen minutes of fame.

RAY
I'm the proud owner of both Dave Middleton albums. They were great.
DAVE

Thanks.

This is obviously a painful subject. Dave has to look away when he talks about it.

DAVE (cont'd)

It was the best time of my life. I had everything I ever wanted. And then one day the record company wasn't there any more and that was the end.

RAY

I thought you were still living in L.A., though.

DAVE

I am. I fly back a couple of times a year to play with these guys. I've got a small label out there, Carnival Dog Records?

RAY

I know. I've got some of those Glimpses compilations. They're great.

Dave shrugs. It's not the same as playing.

DAVE

So what about you? You used to play a little, didn't you?

RAY

Nothing ever came of it. I had some corporate jobs doing electronics stuff, then I started my own stereo repair business a few years ago.

Ray peels off another beer and takes a big slug. Dave eyes him curiously. Other than being a bit red about the eyes, Ray doesn't really show any effect from the alcohol.

DAVE

You okay?

RAY

It's been a bit of rough month. My wife and I split up and then my father died.
DAVE
Yow.

RAY
Yeah. Are you in town for a while?

DAVE
I've got a flight out tomorrow morning.

Ray takes a cassette out of his pocket.

RAY
When you get back home, I want you to listen to something.

DAVE
I thought you said you didn't play any more.

RAY
It's not me. It's...well, I'd rather you just listened to it.

DAVE
We're strictly a reissue label, we don't--

RAY
It's not like that. Just listen to it, and call me. Okay?

DAVE
(puzzled)
Whatever you say.

EXT. LAX--DAY
A plane landing.

INT. RENTAL CAR COUNTER AT LAX--DAY
Ray is signing the papers for a rent car.

EXT. THE 10 FREEWAY, WESTBOUND--DAY
Ray is driving toward Santa Monica, marvelling at the weather, left arm hanging out the open window.
INT. AN OFFICE IN L.A.--DAY

Ray stands at a reception desk in a small waiting room. The RECEPTIONIST is speaking into the intercom.

RECEPTIONIST
Dave? There's a Ray Shackleford here for you.

DAVE (INTERCOM)
Send him back.

INT. DAVE'S OFFICE--DAY

Dave is sitting at his desk, marking up proofs of a CD booklet. Palm trees out the window, liquid sunshine. As Ray enters, Dave gets up and reaches across the desk to shake his hand.

DAVE
So what was it you couldn't tell me over the phone?

RAY
You first. Tell me what you heard on that tape.

DAVE
Something that can't possibly exist. A completely different version of "Long and Winding Road," performed by the Beatles, in the studio, with overdubs. With George Martin producing, even, if I recognized the voice at the end.

RAY
You did.

DAVE
Martin never worked on the Get Back sessions.

RAY
No.

DAVE
If that tape is a fake, it's the best I ever heard.
RAY
It's not a fake.

DAVE
Where in God's name did it come from?

RAY
We'll get to that.

DAVE
Is there more?

RAY
There could be.

DAVE
Where? How? Tell me.

RAY
You do your remastering here, right?

DAVE
Yeah.

RAY
Then I'll show you.

INT. MIXING LAB--DAY

It's a small, dimly lit room, full of expensive audio equipment--turntable, reel-to-reel tape deck, mixing console, speakers, etc. The chair is patched with duct tape, the carpet is stained and threadbare, the equipment is sitting on carts from K-Mart. Ray sits in front of something that looks like an entire rack-mount stereo, an awestruck expression on his face as he gently runs a hand over it.

RAY
It's a Sony 1630.

DAVE
Yep. Stores digital audio on a three-quarter inch video tape cassette.

(beat)
So what's supposed to happen, here?

RAY
Can you put a cassette in the machine for me?
Dave picks up a cassette, checks the label, shrugs, and inserts it.

DAVE
Now what?

RAY
Start recording.

Dave looks at him curiously, but does what Ray says.

Ray closes his eyes, takes a breath. He's laying everything out in his head. He nods, and Dave starts the machine. A second or two later the SONG begins coming out of the monitors.

Dave's expression shifts from total incredulity to something like rapture as the music fills the room.

INT. DAVE'S LIVING ROOM--NIGHT

The remains of takeout food clutter the coffee table, and a row of empty beer cans stands next to Ray. He's a little hammered from the beer, but mostly he's exhausted from what summoning up the song cost him.

DAVE
And it just, what? Happened?

RAY
Like I said, things have been rough for a while. I've been thinking about the past a lot. Maybe too much. About how things could have been different. Lots of things. The Beatles, for instance. If they'd gone back to Abbey Road studios to do the Get Back sessions, if they'd let George Martin produce. And there it was. Coming out of my speakers.

DAVE
If I hadn't seen you do it I never would have believed it.

RAY
When my father died, he was on a dive trip to Cozumel. He was out of air, and he just started swimming down.

(MORE)
RAY (cont'd)
The dive master caught him at a hundred feet and turned him around, but by the time they got him to the surface, he was dead.

DAVE
Jesus.

RAY
It's like, I can't have my marriage back. I can't have five minutes to talk to my father and find out if he really did commit suicide, find out what was in his head, find out if...if he was even thinking about me. There comes a point where there's just too much loss. Where you just can't take it any more. Where you need another chance.

Dave gets up and starts to pace.

DAVE
You know there's nothing we can legally do with that tape. EMI would bury us in lawsuits.

RAY
Nothing...legally.

DAVE
Right.

RAY
You're talking bootleg.

DAVE
I'm just talking. But if there was somebody who had the equipment and the expertise to put that together, it wouldn't be worth it for just one song.

RAY
You can see what that one song took out of me. A whole album...

DAVE
We could take it easy. One song at a time. You could stay here, rest up in between. From the way you were talking, it doesn't sound like you have much of a life happening in Austin right now.
Ray looks away, then shakes his head.

DAVE (cont'd)
The Beatles might not even be the place to start. Just think of the possibilities, the lost albums. The second Derek and the Dominoes, Bob Dylan and Johnny Cash, Buffalo Springfield's Stampede, the Doors' Celebration of the Lizard...

RAY
And you'd put it out on CD?

DAVE
Quietly, by word of mouth, to collectors. Get the original album art, if there was any, do it right. Everybody has CD recorders these days, so we couldn't charge a fortune--they'd just bootleg our bootleg.

RAY
I don't think this is about money.

DAVE
No. This is about--what did you say? Another chance. For music that could have changed things.

That phrase seems to have triggered something, and Dave gets lost in thought.

RAY
Dave?

DAVE
I've got it. I know what we have to do.

INT. DAVE'S CAR--DAY

It's the next morning. Ray looks a bit hung over as Dave drives them high up in Beverly Hills, to a cul-de-sac at the end of Laurel Way, looking out over the city.

RAY (v.o.)
Summer of 1966. Pet Sounds is just out.

(MORE)
RAY (cont'd)
It has the Beach Boys' name on it, but really it's a Brian Wilson solo album, with him writing all the music, producing, arranging, even singing most of the parts. It's big in England, and it's a cult item over here, but it doesn't go through the roof like the Beatles' Revolver. So Brian wants to create something so spectacular that even the Beatles can't top it.

Dave pulls up in front of Brian's former house.

EXT. BRIAN WILSON'S FORMER HOUSE--DAY

Dave and Ray get out of the car.

DAVE
This is where Brian was living. You've heard the stories. He had a piano in a sandbox so he could feel the sand between his toes while he wrote. He had a sultan's tent in the dining room. He was taking heroic quantities of hash and LSD.

CLOSE ON DAVE

DAVE (cont'd)
And he was making an album called Smile.

INT. DAVE'S CAR--DAY

A little later. Dave and Ray are on Sunset Blvd., heading west toward the ocean.

RAY
I don't know. The Beach Boys? "Be True to Your School" and concerts on the White House lawn?

DAVE
Let me make it really simple for you. Everything you hate about the Beach Boys is Mike Love. He runs the touring band and he's a Republican and he thinks songs should be about cars and surfing and girls.

(MORE)
DAVE (cont'd)
Brian stopped touring in 1964 and quit having anybody but studio musicians play the instruments on the records.

RAY
So everything I like about the Beach Boys...

DAVE
...like "Good Vibrations" and the falsetto part on "Don't Worry Baby"...

RAY
...you're saying that's all Brian.

DAVE
That's right. And Smile was going to be his masterpiece. There was all this stuff in his head, ideas and music and sounds, and every sound had intense emotions tied up in it.

RAY
Like the train and the barking dogs at the end of "Caroline No."

DAVE
Exactly. Smile was going to have sound effects and recurring themes and comic interludes. All harnessed to the single purpose of making people happy.

RAY
I saw something in the paper about it. Didn't Brian finally perform it live?

DAVE
I was there. It was amazing. Grown men wept. But it wasn't the real Smile. Without the sound effects and the intensity of emotion he had back then, it's only a shadow. The concerts made people more curious than ever to hear what the album could have been.
EXT. 119TH STREET IN HAWTHORNE--DAY

This is a bleak neighborhood near LAX, small bungalows from the 40s and 50s with plywood over the doors and windows, covered with graffiti, mostly abandoned. Dave's car rolls past.

INT. DAVE'S CAR--SAME

Dave, driving, points to the Century Freeway, which cuts through the neighborhood.

DAVE
The freeway goes right through the house where Brian grew up. Obviously the character of the neighborhood has changed a bit.

An SUV with tinted glass cruises by, playing rap--the beats sound like howitzers.

RAY
The character of the world has changed.

DAVE
Look in the console, will you? I've got a CD in there of one of the Smile bootlegs. This is all pirated from the acetates Brian used to make at the studio after each day's work. It's like the shadow of the tip of the iceberg.

Ray rummages around, comes up with the CD, pops it in the deck.

DAVE (cont'd)
Back in the early sixties, when Brian first started writing, there were still orange groves all over around here. In the spring the smell of the blossoms was overpowering. Disneyland was still new and there was this crazy place called Pacific Ocean Park just down the coast from the Santa Monica Pier.

Ray is eating up every word Dave says, and is reacting to it all a little too intensely.
RAY
I wish I could have seen it.

Dave reaches over and turns up the car stereo.

DAVE
Hey, relax. Smile.

EXT. A STREET IN WHITTIER--DAY

Dave and Ray get out of the car in front of a store with the words OUTASITE BOOKS painted over the windows in psychedelic letters. Ray looks at Dave dubiously.

INT. OUTASITE BOOKS--CONTINUOUS

Ray and Dave enter. Behind the counter is the owner, MIKE AUTREY, same age as Dave and Ray. He's wearing a tie-dyed T-shirt and ripped jeans, but his hair is neatly trimmed. The store is decorated in concert posters from the sixties; there are bookshelves down the middle of the store and record bins on the wall opposite the counter, filled with vinyl LPs only--no CDs here. Some obscure sixties album--Clear Light, for instance, or Crabby Appleton--is playing on the stereo.

DAVE
Mike, this is my friend Ray. We're looking for anything you've got on the Beach Boys.

MIKE
Sure, man, I got the David Leaf book, I got some fan magazines, I got a first pressing of Stack O' Tracks.

RAY
(amazed)
So everything in here is from the sixties, is that the deal?

MIKE
That's right. It's like time travel, as soon as you step in the door.

In fact the place is very sad, in a funny, L.A. sort of way, and Mike seems like he's been shipwrecked here.

MIKE (cont'd)
You working on something with Dave?
DAVE
Very hush hush, Mike. I'll tell you when I can.

MIKE
That's cool, man.

DAVE
(to Ray)
Mike's got a theory as to what happened to the sixties.

MIKE
Time is just another dimension, right? So if you could just step back a little you could see it all laid out in front of you at once.

RAY
Okay.

MIKE
So it's like all through the 70s and 80s and 90s, everybody talked so much about it and made such a big deal about it and put, like, all these reverse expectations on it, until all the life got sucked right out of it.

RAY
I don't get you.

MIKE
It's like, if you're there in 1968, the future is sucking all your dreams and energy and power away. Next thing you know, instead of dropping acid and getting high, you're shooting up and getting down. (shrugs) Hey, it's just a theory.

EXT. OUTASITE BOOKS--DAY

Ray and Dave walk back to the car, Ray carrying a paper grocery bag from Safeway full of books and records.

DAVE
I'm not sure what it is, exactly, but there's a lesson there.
INT. DAVE'S HOUSE--NIGHT

Ray has set himself up in Dave's den with the books they just bought. The STEREO IS PLAYING the song "Love and Mercy" from Brian Wilson's 1988 solo album. Ray is reading David Leaf's book on the Beach Boys. Dave, just home from work, taps on the door frame to get Ray's attention, and nods toward the stereo.

DAVE
Great song.

RAY
A little recent for our purposes, I know. But like Brian said, the child is father of the man.

This last comes out both bitter and sad, and Dave picks up on it.

DAVE
What's up?

RAY
I've been reading about Brian's father. I guess it's flipping me out a little bit.

DAVE
He used to knock Brian around or something, right?

RAY
That was part of it. He kept trying to control the band--and run Brian down. In the end he sold off the rights to all of Brian's music.

DAVE
I'm guessing this is striking a chord, so to speak.

RAY
Yeah. The last conversation I ever had with my father, he was trying to lecture me about electronics.

DAVE
And your mother stuck with him?
RAY
I used to write letters to Santa
asking for my parents to get
divorced. But she always took his
side, and since he's been dead
she's turned him into a saint.
Makes it hard to be around her.

The song is over. Ray gets up to turn the stereo off.

RAY (cont'd)
Your folks had money, right?

DAVE
Oil money. Dad wanted me in the
business. He went belly up a
couple of years before I did. He
kept on telling me I'd wasted my
life, but it didn't quite have the
authority it might have.

RAY
Brian never got out from under his
old man. By the time he died, it
was too late. Brian had given up
on Smile and taken to bed.

DAVE
Maybe he just needed a father
figure. Somebody like you.

RAY
Me? A father figure? The thought
of having kids always terrified me.

DAVE
Look at your role model. But I
remember your father from high
school, and you're not like him.

RAY
I've spent my whole life in the
pursuit of that. But sometimes I
look in the mirror and see him and
it makes me want to...

Ray runs one hand over his cheeks.

RAY (cont'd)
...acquire a few well-placed scars.

Dave looks at him. Ray obviously already has the scars,
they're just not on his face.
INT. DAVE'S LIVING ROOM--NIGHT

Ray is alone in the living room, reading and listening to the Beach Boy's released version of "Heroes and Villains." This is the centerpiece of the Smile album--if he gets this the rest will follow.

He puts the book down, goes over to the stereo, and braces himself for another attempt to find the lost album.

We PULL BACK to reveal Dave standing silently in the hall, watching.

Ray grips the edges of the stereo cabinet and leans forward, closing his eyes.

Nothing changes.

Dave, worried, says nothing, just turns away and goes back to his bedroom.

EXT. A RESTAURANT IN MARINA DEL REY--DAY

Dave and Ray sit at an outdoor table, looking at the water, drinking beer.

RAY
This is where Brian's brother drowned, isn't it?

DAVE

They sit in silence for a beat or two.

RAY
I could do that Beatles song because I could visualize circumstances where it could have happened. And I'm just not getting there this time.

A WAITRESS, pretty, 20s, has come up on Ray's blind side and is standing by for a chance to take their order.

RAY (cont'd)
It's like Smile was never meant to be.
WAITRESS  
(smilng)  
You sound like some giant insect  
movie from the fifties. "General,  
there are some things man was not  
meant to know."

Ray turns to her, initially startled, then relaxes and smiles  
back at her.

WAITRESS (cont'd)  
You guys ready for another round?

DAVE  
I'm okay, but my friend here is  
always thirsty. Actress?

WAITRESS  
Musician. You look familiar,  
somehow.

DAVE  
People always think that.

WAITRESS  
You guys are talking about Smile,  
right? My guitar player is like,  
totally obsessed with that record.

RAY  
I'm getting that way. It's like  
some kind of Elizabethan tragedy or  
something. The band is Brian's  
family and the band, in the person  
of Mike Love, hates the record. So  
Brian has to choose between his  
music and his family. And if he  
was the kind of guy who could blow  
off his family, he wouldn't be the  
guy that could make a record like  
Smile.

Ray chugs his beer and shakes his head.

RAY (cont'd)  
Yeah, I guess I better have another  
one of these.

WAITRESS  
Sure.  
(beat)  
Good luck with whatever it is  
you're doing.
RAY
Thanks.

The waitress leaves and Dave watches her go.

DAVE
I think she likes you.

RAY
Yeah, right.
(beat)
Maybe I should pack it in and go back to Texas.

DAVE
They say Brian kept working on Smile for years, even after everybody else gave up. So there must have been a part of him that wanted it for himself.

RAY
But he was the only one. Everybody else thought he was crazy.

DAVE
Not everybody.

RAY
What do you mean?

DAVE
There's you and me.

EXT. GRIFFITH PLANETARIUM--DAY
Ray stands outside, looking down on the city.

EXT. WHISKEY A GO GO--DAY
Ray cruises by slowly on Sunset Boulevard in his rent car, checking it out.

EXT. HUNTINGTON BEACH PIER--DAY
Ray stands out on the pier as the sun sets, drinking a beer, watching the surfers.
INT. DAVE'S HOUSE--NIGHT

It's very late, and Dave is already in bed. Ray sets aside a book he's been reading on Pacific Ocean Park and puts on the videotape of his father, which he's brought from Austin.

He fast forwards through the tape, stopping here and there. We see parts of the video that we haven't seen before, including more shots of his father on the deck of the dive boat with Tom and Lori.

He skips past that and we see the death scene, again--the two figures rising up from the depths in a cloud of bubbles.

EXT. DAVE'S HOUSE--DAWN

Ray quietly exits via the front door. He is obviously in bad shape--haunted, sleepless, obsessed. He's carrying an audio cassette tape in one hand. He gets in the rent car and starts it up.

EXT. BEVERLY HILLS--DAY

He's playing Volume One of the Carnival Dog Glimpses series, and we're hearing the title tune, a weird, mostly instrumental piece by the Yardbirds as we see Ray driving aimlessly through Beverly Hills.

EXT. LAUREL WAY--DAY

Ray's car slowly pulls into the cul-de-sac at the top of Laurel way and slowly inches to the curb until he's parked across from Brian Wilson's old house.

The music is building to a climax. Ray gets out of the car in a sort of fugue state, the stereo blaring. He stumbles into the street, blind, hopelessly confused as to where, or even when he is. He begins to fall and...

CLOSE ON RAY

His face registers astonishment and, at the same time, recognition.
EXT. BRIAN'S HOUSE--NIGHT

It's the same neighborhood as before, but night, and things are subtly different. For one thing, the doors of Brian's garage are open, and we can see a Stingray, an XKE, and a Rolls, all 60s vintage. They have black license plates with orange letters--60s license plates.

Ray walks slowly up to the house. He's stunned at first, but by the time he gets to the door he's clearly decided to take this as far as it will go. He knocks on the door and DAVID ANDERLE, early 30s, handsome, dark hair, opens it.

DAVID

Yes?

RAY

(in wonder)

You're David Anderle, aren't you?

DAVID

Do I know you?

Ray offers his hand and David reflexively takes it.

RAY

Ray Shackleford, RCA records. I hear you talked Brian into doing "Good Vibrations" himself instead of selling it off.

DAVID

Where did you hear that?

RAY

It's my job to keep my ear to the ground. Is Brian here?

DAVID

I was just leaving, but...sure. He's out back in the pool.

EXT. BRIAN'S SWIMMING POOL--NIGHT

Ray and David emerge from the house. It's cool enough outside that steam is rising from the heated pool where BRIAN WILSON, still in his late twenties, just starting to really put on weight, is at play. Also in the pool are VAN DYKE PARKS, the young, almost elfin Smile lyricist, his wife DURRIE, and Brian's sister-in-law, DIANE ROVELL. Brian's wife MARILYN sits looking on from a lounge chair.
DAVID
This is Ray, from RCA. (pointing to each) Brian, Marilyn, Marilyn's sister Diane, Van Dyke and Durrie Parks.

BRIAN
Hey, Ray, from RCA. Why don't you put a suit on and play?

RAY
Thanks.

BRIAN
David, could you...?

DAVID
Yeah, but then I'm gone for sure. I don't want you guys talking business while I'm not here, promise?

BRIAN
I promise.

INT. BRIAN'S HOUSE--NIGHT

Just inside the sliding glass doors from the pool, David points to a changing room.

DAVID
There's suits and towels in there. Nice meeting you, Ray, but I have to go.

RAY
Okay. Thanks.

David hesitates.

DAVID
Brian is...

In 1966 it's just not possible for him to say that Brian is fragile and vulnerable. He gives up.

DAVID (cont'd)
Just be careful with him, okay?
A COUPLE OF MINUTES LATER

Ray emerges from the changing room, wearing a bathing suit. Alone in the house now, he stares at the chintz curtains and plaid furniture in wonder. He picks up a copy of Time.

RAY
(whispers)
I'm really here. It's December of 1966, and I am really here.

EXT. BRIAN'S SWIMMING POOL--NIGHT

As Ray comes back outside, Brian is clowning with an inflatable plastic horse, which he dwarfs. There is much SPLASHING and LAUGHTER. Ray climbs in the pool, clearly not wanting to make a big splash (literally or figuratively), but then, overwhelmed by the joy of the moment, bends over, lips just touching the surface of the water, and makes a sort of trumpeting, squealing NOISE.

BRIAN
Wow, man, how did you do that?

RAY
It's just something my old man used to do.

BRIAN
Do it again!

Ray does, with Brian watching him intently, and then Brian repeats the SOUND.

BRIAN (cont'd)
(very serious)
Okay, Van Dyke, you do this.

Brian begins clapping his hands in rhythm, scooping a little water as he does it, so there's a SPLASH with the CLAP.

VAN DYKE
Please, Brian, not another production.

BRIAN
You'll love it. Just try it.

Van Dyke reluctantly does as he's told. Brian begins to move his hands like a conductor.
BRIAN (cont'd)
Slower. Like waves slapping a
pier. Durrie--

Durrie gives him a look that tells him it's not a good idea
even to ask.

BRIAN (cont'd)
Never mind. Diane, just kind of
thump the wall of the pool with the
side of your fist every couple of
seconds.

DIANE
What, like this?

BRIAN
Perfect. Okay, Ray, do your thing.

Ray makes his NOISE again, and Brian comes in with a similar
NOISE, in a higher key.

RAY
Jesus Christ, that sounds like...

Ray suddenly realizes that Songs of the Humpback Whale is
years away.

RAY (cont'd)
Have you ever heard whales singing?

DURRIE
Singing whales?

BRIAN
Whales! That's it! It's perfect,
man, we can get whale noises for
the water thing in the "Elements."

VAN DYKE
Brian, you're crazy.

BRIAN
If everybody was crazy...

VAN DYKE, MARILYN, DIANE
(in unison, with gentle
irony)
...then maybe we'd have world
peace.
It's three o'clock, Brian. I've got to get home.

Don't you want some more hash? Mare, go get some hash for these people.

Let them go, Brian. (beat) Let us all go.

What about you, Ray from RCA? Are you tired?

Ray is sitting on the floor, wrapped in a towel, chilled but enchanted. Brian stands in front of an old-fashioned Wurlitzer jukebox, with the colored bubbles around the sides, oblivious to his wet swimsuit dripping on the carpet.

Listen to this.

He punches some buttons and a SONG from Smile plays. It's an acetate recording, a cheap demo disk cut at the end of a studio session. Brian SINGS along for a bit while he hunts up a pipe and a ball of hash wrapped in foil, then sits cross-legged across from Ray.

So, is RCA interested in Smile?

(uncomfortable) David said we weren't supposed to talk business.

So we don't tell David.

Brian offers Ray the pipe, but Ray declines with a wave--just being there with Brian is better than any hash. But deceiving him is making Ray deeply ashamed.

Brian, I--
BRIAN
(feeling the hash)
What?

RAY
I'm not from RCA. But I can help you just the same.

Brian fights to focus, feeling hurt and a little afraid.

BRIAN
What are you saying, man?

RAY
You don't know me, but I know you. I would never do anything to hurt you. You have to trust me.

BRIAN
(paranoid)
What do you mean you know me?

RAY
Mike Love hasn't heard any of the new stuff, has he?

BRIAN
No, the guys just got back from London.

RAY
When he hears it he's going to freak.

BRIAN
Yeah, probably. He hated Pet Sounds. He thought "Good Vibrations" was "avant garde crap."

RAY
Every time you try something new, every time you hear a new sound in your head, everybody thinks you're crazy. Nothing against Van Dyke, but it happened in the swimming pool tonight. You're moving so fast now, nobody in the world can keep up. If you're not careful, they're going to drag you down. You've got, what, fifteen or twenty songs already started?
BRIAN
Something like that.

RAY
Pick a dozen and finish them. Before you let Mike and the others hear any of it.

BRIAN
I can't do that, man. Carl has to sing "Wonderful." I need Dennis's harmonies. Besides, I can't go around Mike. He's family. They all are.

RAY
If you wait for them, you're going to lose it.

BRIAN
How do you know that?

RAY
For the sake of argument, let's say I was from the future. Let's say I know everything that's going to happen to you.

Brian is very childlike, very willing to believe. He's also very stoned. Ray is scaring him, but he can't walk away.

BRIAN
Tell me.

RAY
You play the tapes for them. Mike hates it. He says, "You're blowing it, Brian. Don't fuck with the formula. Stick to cars and girls." He wants Van Dyke to explain his lyrics, and Van Dyke quits. Capitol hates it too. You start new songs and don't finish them. You think if you get everything perfect, everybody will have to like it. Suddenly it's June and there's a new Beatles album. It's called Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band.

BRIAN
You're joking.
RAY
It's got songs that run together and recurring themes and sound effects. It's not as good as Smile, but it is really good, and it takes the world by storm. It's acknowledged as rock's first masterpiece. It takes the heart right out of you and you never finish Smile. Never.

BRIAN
This is too weird. You couldn't be making this up.

Brian starts wandering around the room.

BRIAN (cont'd)
Fucking hell. Sgt. what?

RAY
Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band.

Brian sits again, closes his eyes, and is quiet for a long time. Finally:

BRIAN
Are you hungry at all? I am, like, totally starved.

INT. KITCHEN IN BRIAN'S HOUSE--NIGHT

BRIAN and RAY sit at the kitchen table, Ray looking at an empty dish that's obviously had chocolate ice cream in it. Brian is finishing off the last of the carton. Brian speaks without looking up, instinctively sparing Ray's possible embarrassment at being homeless.

BRIAN
If you need a place to stay, we've got plenty of room here.

RAY
That would be great. Thanks.

Brian puts the dishes and the empty carton in the sink.

BRIAN
Let's take a look.
INT. GUEST BEDROOM IN BRIAN'S HOUSE--NIGHT

BRIAN turns on a light by the bed and pats the pillows.

    BRIAN
This okay? There's a bathroom in there, I think there's even a spare toothbrush.

    RAY
It's perfect. Thanks.

Brian starts to leave.

    RAY (cont'd)
Think about what I said, okay? About Smile? The world needs that record.

    BRIAN
Then we'd have world peace, right? I'll think about it. Night, Ray.

    RAY
Good night.

After Brian leaves, Ray stands at the window and looks out at the lights of L.A.

    RAY
Thank you. Whoever. Thank you for this.

INT. HALLWAY IN BRIAN'S HOUSE--DAY

It's the next morning. Ray comes down to breakfast and stops outside the kitchen when he hears voices.

    MARILYN (O.S.)
...fact is, no one knows anything about this guy. I called RCA this morning, and there is no Ray Shackleford that works there.

    BRIAN (O.S.)
I like him.

    DAVID (O.S.)
You can't just trust everyone that comes along and tells you what you want to hear.
BRIAN (O.S.)
I have a good feeling about him.
Listen, you're about his size, could you maybe bring over some old clothes? I think he needs them and he's embarrassed to ask.

Ray goes back to the stairs and carefully makes a little noise to let them know he's coming.

INT. BRIAN'S KITCHEN--CONTINUOUS

Sitting around in various places in the kitchen are Marilyn, Diane, David, and Brian. There's an empty stool near Brian at the counter. On the counter is a box of Trix cereal and an open carton of milk. Brian is still eating breakfast, though everybody else is finished. Everybody is self-consciously quiet as Ray walks in.

BRIAN
Morning, Ray. Want some breakfast? Mare, why don't you make Ray some breakfast?

RAY
No, thanks, really, I'll just have some cereal.

Ray sits next to Brian and pours himself a bowl of cereal. Marilyn brings him a glass of orange juice. She has an amused look on her face that says she knows Ray is running some kind of scam.

BRIAN
So. What does anybody want to do today?

Nobody rises to the bait. Eventually Ray breaks the silence.

RAY
Do you feel like maybe going to the studio?

BRIAN
No, man, it's a gray day. I can't work on a gray day.

In an exaggerated, theatrical gesture, Brian holds up one finger.

BRIAN (cont'd)
Wait! I know! We could go to...
Everybody but Ray seems to cringe.

BRIAN (cont'd)
...Pacific Ocean Park!

Silence. Everyone is staring at their coffee cups, at the floor, out the window.

BRIAN
Maybe me and Ray'll go.

MARILYN
Fine, Brian. You do that.

INT. BRIAN'S ROLLS-ROYCE--DAY

A CHAUFFEUR is driving and Brian and Ray are in the back. A top-40 radio station PLAYS quietly in the background. They are driving out Sunset toward the ocean. Even as late as 1966 there are still stretches of open country visible through the windows.

BRIAN
If you're from the future, who's going to win the Super Bowl?

RAY
Sorry. I was never that into sports.

BRIAN
You're not convincing me, here. What about "Good Vibrations"? Does it ever make it to number one?

RAY
December tenth. (beat) That was my wife's birthday.

BRIAN
Was? What happened?

RAY
I don't know. What ever happens? We lost the things that seemed important in the beginning. And the things that seemed important in the end weren't the things we did with each other.

BRIAN
How long were you guys together?
RAY
Together eleven years, married for ten.

BRIAN
Wow. I've only known Marilyn four years, and it seems like forever sometimes. It's like...I can't say it. I really admire guys like Van Dyke, that are so articulate. It's like the years, they don't really mean anything. Only the emotions. Maybe there isn't anything else in the whole universe but emotions. Like what's real is how we feel about something, not the thing itself.

RAY
We don't have to do this. We could go to the studio and we could do some work.

BRIAN
It's too cloudy to work. Maybe tonight.

RAY
It's all so fragile. The smallest thing can just...

BRIAN
Relax. Smile.

This is what Dave said to him earlier. Ray struggles for a second trying to remember why the words sound familiar.

DJ (RADIO)
Here's something from last year by the Kinks.

The radio PLAYS "Something Better Beginning."

BRIAN
Just listen.

The song is about the singer dancing with a girl he just met and wondering what's ahead--heartache, or the start of something big.

BRIAN (cont'd)
It's the whole world, see? It's like we're just waking up.

(MORE)
BRIAN (cont’d)
New music, new ideas. It's going to be incredible. But you've seen it, right? You know where it's all headed.

RAY
It's going to be big. The next three or four years are going to be so intense, some people will never get over them.

EXT. ENTRANCE TO PACIFIC OCEAN PARK—DAY

It's a cheesy amusement park that used to occupy a pier in Santa Monica, very 1950s, with everything curved or triangular or kidney-shaped—the ticket booth is inside a sort of abstract starfish. The magic is somewhat diminished by the fact that the plastic is pitted and cloudy from the salt air and the stucco is starting to crack.

The Rolls is pulling away. Brian is already at the ticket window as Ray stands for a second, staring.

BRIAN
Come on!

EXT. THE MIDWAY AT P.O.P.—DAY

Brian leaves a concession stand with a hot dog and a coke and runs to catch up to Ray, who's wandering around as if in a dream. The park is almost deserted but Brian doesn't care. He's in heaven.

BRIAN
You've got to ride Mr. Dolphin with me.

EXT. MR. DOLPHIN—DAY

It's a 90-foot high tower with enclosed cars on the ends of rotating arms that spin out over the park. Ray and Brian flash by—Brian childishly happy, Ray looking sick.

EXT. THE MIDWAY—DAY

Ray is sitting on a bench, leaning forward, nauseated. Brian sits next to him, hands clasped between his legs, guilty and upset.
BRIAN
Why didn't you tell me?

RAY
I hadn't tried to do anything like that in years. I didn't think it would be that bad. I'm really sorry.

BRIAN
(kindly)
It's doesn't matter.

RAY
Yeah, it does. I've ruined your day.

BRIAN
That's not true. Your father used to yell at you for getting sick, I bet.

RAY
At least twice, when I was really little, I threw up down the back of his neck while he was driving. Just stood up on the back seat and up it came.

Brian is startled into laughter.

RAY (cont'd)
It's like I got all my revenge when I was too young to enjoy it.

Ray is deadpan, making Brian laugh even harder.

BRIAN
(wiping his eyes)
Do you guys get along okay now?

RAY
Sure. He's dead. That makes everything easier.

Brian is no longer sure whether he should laugh or not.

BRIAN
You shouldn't talk that way, man. He was your father.
RAY
Come on, Brian. Everybody knows
your father treats you like shit.

Ray's gone too far. Brian gets up abruptly and goes to stand
looking out at the ocean. After a few seconds Ray stands
next to him.

RAY (cont'd)
Sorry.

BRIAN
Marilyn and I want to have kids. I
guess you already know whether we
do or not, don't you?

He gives Ray a chance to answer, but Ray is impassive.

BRIAN (cont'd)
I just don't know what kind of
father I'd be. I feel like the
cards are stacked against me.

RAY
You don't have to be like your
father.

Brian is suddenly ignoring Ray.

BRIAN
Listen! Hear that?

Seagulls, flying near the pier, are SQUALLING.

BRIAN (cont'd)
All the emotion in that sound. It
sounds so lonely all by itself, you
don't have to put any words to it.
That's what I'm trying to do, don't
you see?

EXT. ANOTHER PART OF THE MIDWAY--DAY

Brian and Ray are walking together.

BRIAN
What about bumper cars? Could you
handle bumper cars?

RAY
Sure. As long as I'm driving, I'm
okay.
They get in line, waiting for the ride in progress to end.

BRIAN
(sheepish)
David is pushing me really hard to play the tapes for the guys.

RAY
When?

BRIAN
Tonight.

Ray realizes he can't stop the inevitable.

RAY
Then do it. It's got to happen sometime.

BRIAN
(grateful)
Really?

RAY
Just don't expect too much, okay?

INT. LIVING ROOM IN BRIAN'S HOUSE--NIGHT

Everyone is gathered around a massive Spanish table, big enough to seat 20. From the Beach Boys there are MIKE LOVE, AL JARDINE, BRUCE JOHNSTON, and Brian's brother CARL; VAN DYKE and DURRIE PARKS are a bit to themselves at one end, with DAVID ANDERLE. There are headphone jacks built into the table, and each of the guests has his or her own headphones. RAY is sitting across the table from Mike Love, wearing clean clothes that David Anderle brought him.

Brian is standing at a smaller table nearby, with a reel-to-reel tape recorder, poised to play the quarter-inch studio masters. He keeps nervously touching the tape deck, or straightening the small pile of tape boxes next to it.

BRIAN
Okay, well, I guess we should start...

Brian's brother DENNIS, longhaired, barefoot, unshaven, walks in like he owns the place.

DENNIS
Hey, Bri. What's happening?
MIKE
What's the matter, Dennis, lose your watch?

DENNIS
Fuck you, Mike. (to Brian) Is this the new record?

He nods politely to Ray.

DENNIS (cont'd)
Hi.

He sits down and puts on his headphones, pointedly ignoring the tension.

DENNIS (cont'd)
What are we waiting for? Let's hear the goddamned thing.

Brian clears his throat and rolls the tape, then puts on his own headphones and sits next to Ray. The SONG is "Surf's Up," a slow, haunting melody. Dennis is clearly enjoying it, but after only a few seconds Mike starts shaking his head and writing on a napkin in front of him. Brian is watching him anxiously, and when Mike makes a disgusted noise, Brian jumps up and switches off the recorder.

MIKE
What is this shit? It's crazy. Why can't you write songs like you used to?

BRIAN
Cars and girls and surfing.

MIKE
What's wrong with that? It's what people want to hear. You're going to blow it, Brian. Don't fuck with the formula.

BRIAN
I like these lyrics.

MIKE
"Colonnaded ruins domino"? Those are the lyrics you like?

VAN DYKE
Columnated.

Mike turns on him.
MIKE
What the hell kind of word is "columnated"? Would you care to explain this song to me?

VAN DYKE
I don't know what the songs are about. They're about whatever you feel when you listen to them.

Brian nods agreement.

MIKE
What I feel is a headache. How am I supposed to sing this in front of an audience? This is gibberish, and it's going to destroy the group.

Van Dyke stands up.

VAN DYKE
I have no excuse, sir.

He looks at Brian, who is frozen in confusion and embarrassment and cannot meet his eyes. Ever polite, Van Dyke holds Durrie's chair for her as she gets up and they leave together.

DENNIS
I think it's fucking brilliant, Bri. No shit.

MIKE
Another species heard from. (to Brian) Have you played any of this garbage for Capitol? I guarantee they won't like it any better than I do. You're cooped up here all day with your dope and your weird ideas, while I'm out there, night after night, with the kids who actually buy our records. The kids who like to hear about cars and surfing and girls and good times. Haven't you got anything for them?

BRIAN
I guess not.

MIKE
You guess not.
DENNIS
Hey Mike? Fuck you, man.

Dennis gives Mike the finger with both hands. Mike comes out of his chair and Dennis charges to meet him. Al Jardine and Bruce Johnston grab Mike and pull him away just as Dennis throws a drunken punch at him that misses by a couple of feet. Mike shakes the others off, and stomps out; Al and Bruce follow. Dennis collapses into another chair and lights a joint. Carl, still seated, watches with wide, frightened eyes.

DAVID
Maybe we should try this another night.

EXT. BRIAN'S SWIMMING POOL--NIGHT

Ray and Brian are in the pool alone.

BRIAN
It was all just like you said. Like, word for word. I'm really scared now. You're from the future, right? In the future there is no Smile album, because of all the shit that went down tonight.

RAY
Basically, yes.

BRIAN
So what you want is for me to change the future, which has to mean that you don't like it the way it is. But if I change the future, then what happens? Anything could happen. Nuclear war. The end of the world.

RAY
You have to take that chance.

BRIAN
Even if it breaks up the band?

RAY
They can go on without you, use outside songwriters. Carl can produce.
Brian, clowning, falls face forward in the water and floats there, not moving.

RAY
Brian?

He's starting to freak. He grabs Brian's arm and shouts:

RAY (cont'd)
Brian!

Brian raises his head and shakes the water out of his hair.

BRIAN
Easy, man, I was just fooling.

RAY
It's...my father drowned. That's how he died.

BRIAN
Hey, man, I'm really sorry.

RAY
Forget it. It's not your fault. It's not anybody's fault.
(beat)
That's not true. It's our fathers' faults. That whole scene upstairs tonight was about your father, not the Beach Boys.

Brian looks at him without comprehension.

RAY (cont'd)
Your father convinced you that nothing you do will ever be good enough. So when Mike tells you Smile is no good, you believe him. And you can't leave the band because that would be like walking out on your father. You have to believe in your own talent.

BRIAN
What, that whole "Brian is a genius" thing? You can't imagine how hard that is to live up to.

(MORE)
BRIAN (cont'd)
You start asking yourself, 
everything that you do, is this up 
to snuff? Is this genius-level 
work here? I don't know if I can 
handle that.

RAY
(not believing he's saying 
it)
Cut the shit, Brian. Come on, 
let's get dressed. We can go for a 
ride while I tell you about the 
future.

INT. BRIAN'S XKE--NIGHT

They're on Mulholland Drive, up in the hills. Brian is 
driving. It's virtually undeveloped at this time, and the 
view of the city is spectacular—but it also seems very 
distant. Ray stares straight ahead, speaking without affect.

RAY
They'll close POP inside two years, but they won't have the money to 
knock it down. Winos and junkies 
will move in and the place will 
become a public eyesore.

In my time, everybody considers Pet 
Sounds your masterpiece, because 
after that the Beach Boys went to 
hell. They kept touring, and they 
had the occasional decent song, but 
no more masterpieces, not ever, 
because you gave up.

As for the rest of the world, 
there's this sort of sexually 
contagious cancer called AIDS. 
It's reached epidemic proportions 
in Southeast Asia and Africa, and 
it's 100 percent fatal. That was 
the last straw for free love. All 
the rest of the stuff that seemed 
like a good idea in the sixties, 
like feeding the world and loving 
your brothers and sisters, has gone 
out the window because it's too 
expensive.

Brian has been getting increasingly upset, and driving more 
and more slowly. Finally he pulls over to the side of the 
road and stops. Ray is still not looking at him.
RAY (cont'd)
There's a hole in the ozone layer that lets in ultraviolet radiation. You can't lie in the sun anymore without getting skin cancer. Tankers are spilling oil all over the world's beaches anyway, and nobody stops them because we don't want to give up our cars. Which create so much pollution that the carbon dioxide is holding in heat and turning the planet into a giant greenhouse. The polar ice caps are melting--

BRIAN
Stop it!

Ray finally looks at him. Brian is crying, for real, the tears running down his face.

BRIAN (cont'd)
Why are you doing this to me? What do you want?

RAY
The album, Brian. I want you to finish the album.

INT. GUEST BEDROOM IN BRIAN'S HOUSE--DAY
Ray sits up in bed. Someone is knocking insistently on the door.

RAY
Come in?

Brian opens the door. He's smiling, full of nervous energy, showing no signs that the night before ever happened.

BRIAN
Wake up, sleepyhead! Diane has the studio booked, the musicians are on the way.

RAY
Am I dreaming?

BRIAN
I don't know, Ray. Are you?
INT. WESTERN STUDIOS, SUNSET BLVD--DAY

The hall outside studio 3. Diane Rovell is waiting as Ray and Brian walk up.

DIANE
Everybody's here.

She picks a loose thread off Brian's shirt, a wifely, almost motherly gesture, and opens the door for him.

INT. STUDIO 3, CONTINUOUS

The Wrecking Crew is set up in a windowless room that's too small for them: HAL BLAINE on drums, CAROL KAYE on bass, TOMMY TEDESCO on electric guitar, GLEN CAMPBELL on acoustic, LEON RUSSELL on piano, and two or three horn players.

BRIAN
Afternoon, ladies and gentlemen.

There's a CHORUS of "Hi, Brian"s from the group--they are all excited to be there, and they all love Brian and love the challenge of his music. Brian puts on a pair of reading glasses, though he's working completely from memory, with no score.

BRIAN
Okay, let's get to work.

INT. STUDIO 3, LATER

The room is filling with cigarette smoke. People have their sleeves rolled up, are sweating a little, have shifted their folding chairs into more comfortable positions. Brian is standing at the piano, playing the parts for everyone. He is the opposite of the Brian we saw at the meeting with the Beach Boys: confident, in charge, enjoying himself.

BRIAN
Tommy, listen again. It's like this.

Brian plays a figure on the piano.

TOMMY TEDESCO
Brian, that sounds like shit.
BRIAN
(laughing)
Trust me. Okay, from the top.

Brian conducts and the band PLAYS a new Smile track. The musicians are focused and playing hard—it's complex, difficult music—all but Hal Blaine, who has a cigarette hanging out of his mouth, and though he plays with surgical precision, is making funny faces the whole time.

The take breaks down after a minute or so.

TOMMY
Did you hear that?

BRIAN
Perfect.

TOMMY
Brian, you're crazy.

BRIAN
Wait for the overdubs. Okay, once again...

INT. STUDIO 3, LATER STILL

Hal is packing up his drums, Glen Campbell is gone, a few of the others are sitting around, exhausted, drinking Cokes. Tommy is wiping the strings of his guitar. Brian signals to the engineer in the booth and we hear the PLAYBACK. The two guitar parts now make an inevitable whole. Brian SINGS a line or two along with the tape.

BRIAN
See? See?

Tommy throws up his hands, grinning. Meanwhile, across the room, Ray is shaking hands with Hal, a bit starstruck.

RAY
Can I give you a hand?

HAL
Certainly, young man. Applause and money always welcome.

He hands Ray a couple of drum cases.
EXT. SANTA MONICA--NIGHT

Brian and Ray are sprawled in the grass in a small patch of park along Ocean Avenue. The PLAYBACK from the session continues in the background. There are a few KIDS around—the boys have short hair, and they're wearing button down shirts and jeans, but one or two might have on a vest or silly hat. One of the girls has long, blonde, ironed hair.

RAY
It's really going to happen, isn't it?

BRIAN
The album? Yeah. It was kind of floundering for a while there, but I'm back on track.

RAY
It's going to be a great album, Brian. Maybe it'll even...

BRIAN
...give us world peace?

Ray doesn't answer. He's in the grip of powerful emotions: hope, fear, regret.

BRIAN (cont'd)
Ray? You doing okay, man?

RAY
(choked up)
Sure.

BRIAN
I was thinking. Are you tired? Because maybe we could get a burger and go back to the studio, maybe do some vocals. I'm really in the mood to work.

INT. STUDIO 3--NIGHT

The PLAYBACK continues in the background as Brian, in a darkened studio, puts down the VOCAL track, which we now hear as part of the mix.
EXT. BEVERLY HILLS YARD--NIGHT

As the PLAYBACK, now with multitracked vocals, continues, Ray holds a microphone, connected to a backpack field recorder, up to a gurgling fountain in the yard of some mansion. Ray turns to see two amused POLICEMEN who have come up behind him, obviously wanting an explanation.

INT. STUDIO 3--NIGHT?  DAY?  WHO KNOWS?

The PLAYBACK continues, adding horns and percussion. Ray and Brian and Hal Blaine sprawl in folding chairs in the studio, exhausted, laughing.

INT. BRIAN'S GARAGE--DAY

The PLAYBACK continues, adding sound effects. Ray, with his field recorder again, records a playing card rattling in the spokes of a bicycle, which we HEAR on the soundtrack.

INT. STUDIO 3--LATE NIGHT

The PLAYBACK slowly fades. Brian works at a mixing console while Ray sleeps on the studio floor.

INT. WESTERN STUDIOS--DAY

Ray, David Anderle, Diane Rovell, and Carl Wilson are sitting in the hall outside the studio, waiting for Brian to finish the final mix of Smile.

DAVID
I was starting to believe this day would never come. Now I have to figure out how I'm going to pitch this thing to Capitol.

RAY
Tell them this. Say, "You may not sell a million units of this today. But you will. And you'll still be selling it twenty, thirty, forty years from now."

The door to the studio opens and Brian sticks his head out.

BRIAN
It's done.
INT. STUDIO 3--DAY

There are four folding chairs in the middle of the room, facing the booth, and nothing else. Ray, David, Diane, and Carl sit down. Brian looks at Ray and points a finger at him, as if to tell him that he's the one that made this happen. Then he gives a thumbs-up and goes into the booth.

ANGLE ON RAY

The lights dim. We slowly close on RAY as the MUSIC begins. His initial pleasure turns to sadness as he realizes that he's done what he came to do, and there's nothing to hold him there any longer. The music begins to distort and echo as the image of Ray's face slowly fades into a long helicopter shot over clear, blue-green water.

INT. MAIN CABIN OF AIRPLANE--DAY

The water is what Ray is seeing out the window from his passenger seat. He looks very bad: deep circles under his eyes, pasty skin. He's lost a lot of weight, and though he's not skinny yet, he's substantially thinner than he was in the first scene.

FLIGHT ATTENDANT (INTERCOM)

We're making our final descent into Cozumel. Please make sure your seat belts are fastened and your seats and tray tables are in the locked and upright position.

Ray shivers, and reaches up to shut the AC valve over his head.

EXT. COZUMEL AIRPORT--DAY

Ray emerges from the airport in blinding sunlight and looks around. Tom, the divemaster, gets up from where he was sitting on the hood of a slightly battered car with a magnetic sign that says COZUMEL DIVE SURFARI on the side. Lori is several yards away, leaning against another car, arms folded, wearing sunglasses and a loose, short sleeved man's shirt, looking out toward the street. It's not obvious at first that she has anything to do with Tom.

TOM

Ray Shackleford?
RAY
(shaking his hand)
Hey. You must be Tom.

TOM
I want you to know how sorry I am about your father. I wish to hell there was something, anything, we could have done...

RAY
I know all that. I'm not down here to make trouble.

Lori pushes off the car and confronts Ray.

LORI
Then why the hell are you down here? If you don't mind my asking?

RAY
Sorry?

TOM
This is Lori. My...assistant.

LORI
His partner.

Lori gives Tom an annoyed look and shakes Ray's hand stiffly.

TOM
She's worried about lawsuits.

RAY
I've got no complaint with you guys. I'll put it in writing if you like. I've got some personal stuff to work through, that's all.

Tom stows Ray's luggage in the trunk.

LORI
I'll get in back.

As Lori climbs in, her shirt droops forward, giving Ray an unexpected glimpse of one bare breast. The contrast between her sexuality and her aggression clearly throws him off balance.

TOM
You coming?
INT. TOM'S CAR--DAY

TOM
Long flight?

RAY
No, it was fine.

TOM
You look a little tired.

RAY
I just got out of the hospital.

TOM
Nothing serious, I hope. Sorry. I'm being nosy.

RAY
No, that's okay. I got really sick, out of nowhere. I was unconscious in a rent car by the side of the road for two days before somebody found me.

Lori has been ignoring Ray, but this last speech catches her attention.

TOM
Jesus.

RAY
I'm okay. Still a little dehydrated is all.

TOM
You going to be able to dive?

RAY
Maybe. Mostly I just needed to be here. Get it all in my head. You know?

Lori looks out the window again.

TOM
Sure. Whatever you need.
INT. RAY'S CABIN AT THE DIVE SHOP--DAY

It's a small, cinderblock room with a double bed, a closet, and a bathroom with a drain in the middle of the floor. Ray is finishing unpacking, setting a small stack of CDs next to his Diskman. One of them is homemade, with the word SMiLE written across the face with a black marker. Ray stands gripping the edge of the table as a wave of dizziness comes over him.

EXT. THE DIVE SHOP--DAY

Ray exits his cabin. On the sand behind the dive shop are several weathered metal tables and folding chairs, as well as a hut outfitted as a bar.

He walks across the sand to where Tom and Lori are sitting with the other guests: DR. STEVE LANG, a psychiatrist in his fifties; ALLYSON, an overdeveloped teenage girl; PAM and RICHARD, Ken and Barbie-esque airline employees.

   TOM
   There he is. How about a beer?

   RAY
   Sure.

Tom gets up to fetch him one as Ray sits down. Ray looks at the colorful label on the bottle of mineral water that Lori's drinking.

   RAY (cont'd)
   On second thought, could I have one of those?

Tom shrugs and goes into the hut.

   RAY (cont'd)
   (to Lori)
   That stuff any good?

   LORI
   I'm an alcoholic.

   RAY
   Oh.

   LORI
   I've been sober two years. It doesn't taste like much of anything.
An awkward silence. Tom comes back with the mineral water.

TOM
You must have a lot of questions.

RAY
Not really. That other guy...

TOM
Adkisson.

RAY
Yeah. He sent me a copy of the videotape. So I know the circumstances. I just don't know what they add up to.

TOM
I don't know what happened with your father. It was the end of a regular drift dive and we were out of air. All of a sudden he just starts swimming down. He didn't look panicked or confused. I caught him at ninety feet, and he turned around and gave me the okay sign. But he seemed to just give out on the way up. By the time we got to the surface he was dead.

LORI
His mask was full of vomit.

TOM
Lori, for Christ's sake.

LORI
When Tom gave him mouth-to-mouth, he got your father's vomit all over his face.

DR. STEVE
(to Lori)
Why do you have this compulsion for ugly truths? Is it a substitute for your addiction to alcohol?

TOM
Will you both just shut up?
DR. STEVE
(to Ray)
You and your father, were you close?

RAY
(impulsively)
No, I hated his guts, actually. I just never got to tell him that.

LORI
Hah! Sorry. I wasn't expecting that.

She takes her sunglasses off to rub the bridge of her nose. Ray's eyes lock with hers.

TOM
It's dinner time. Anybody want to eat?

Lori puts the glasses back on and the moment is over.

LORI
Why not?

EXT. THE DIVE BOAT, AT SEA--DAY

It's the next day. Tom, Ray, Dr. Steve, Allyson, Pam, and Richard are on the boat, with HECTOR, the young Mexican boat driver. Everybody is getting into their dive gear. Tom and Ray are at the stern of the boat, looking into the water.

TOM
This is about where we went in the day your father died. Are you sure you want to do this?

RAY
I need to do this.

EXT. UNDERWATER--DAY

Looking up at the knife-edge of the boat slicing the surface. Explosions of bubbles as the divers enter the water.

Ray's POV looking at the deep, blue water and the reef underneath it, the divers at different depths like skydivers.
RAY (v.o.)
Dave was at the hospital when I woke up. It was the same world I'd left--there was no Smile in it. Not yet.

LATER

Tom is obviously keeping a very close watch on Ray. He taps him on the shoulder and points to a beautiful spotted ray as it swims past.

RAY (v.o.)
But I had the whole thing in my head. I took two weeks to get my strength back, and then I put it on tape in five days.

LATER STILL

The divers in a long line, swimming over a stretch of dead coral.

RAY (v.o.)
Dave offered to send me to the tropical beach of my choice to recuperate. That made me think of Cozumel.

EVEN LATER STILL

Tom beckons Ray to the edge of a drop-off. The wall of coral, nearly vertical, disappears into seemingly infinite depths. Tom points over the edge. Ray, somber, nods, and floats for a long moment, looking down.

RAY (v.o.)
It was time to face my father.

EXT. THE DIVE BOAT--DAY

Everybody is back on board, stowing tanks, getting beer out of the ice chest. Ray stands looking over the side. Tom walks up to him, drying his hair with a towel.

TOM
You okay?
RAY
I guess I was expecting some kind of epiphany or something.

TOM
I don't think you get those by going out looking for them.

RAY
You're probably right.

TOM
Listen, a bunch of us are going down to the local disco tonight. Pretty corny, but it's what passes for a good time around here.

RAY
I'm pretty beat. I better pass.

TOM
Okay.

He starts to walk away, then turns back, a sympathetic look on his face.

TOM (cont'd)
Nobody should ever have to go through losing a parent. But if we live long enough, it happens to us all.

EXT. A BEACH NEAR THE DIVE SHOP--DAY

A long shot of Ray, showered and changed, as he stands looking out to sea. The sun is just above the horizon. It's as beautiful as a postcard, but it also feels as lonely as the surface of the moon.

EXT. THE DIVE SHOP--DAY

The sunset is turning everything red. On his way back to his room, Ray sees Lori sitting on a lawn chair in front of the dive shop, reading a Harlequin romance and listening to COUNTRY MUSIC on a jam box--King's Record Shop by Rosanne Cash. They nod to each other. Ray walks past her, then stops.

RAY
Did I say something to piss you off?

(MORE)
RAY (cont'd)
I guess I should leave it alone, but I don't understand why you dislike me so much.

LORI
I don't dislike you at all.

RAY
I guess I have to believe you. You have this thing about the truth, right?

LORI
(sighs)
I think you're attractive and everything, but you're married. It's obvious you came down here looking for trouble. I just don't want to be the trouble you find.

Ray looks at his hand, sees the wedding ring still there. He takes it off and throws it as far as he can out to sea.

LORI (cont'd)
How are you going to explain that to your wife?

RAY
We're separated. I should have done that a long time ago. How come you're not in town with the others?

LORI
I got to see everybody drunk last night. Your friend Dave called here this afternoon, by the way. He wanted to make sure you were okay.

RAY
What did you tell him?

LORI
I said the jury was still out. You want a drink?

RAY
Yeah. But I guess I'll have some of that mineral water instead.
EXT. THE DIVE SHOP--NIGHT

The sun is just down, and Ray and Lori are sitting at one of the tables behind the dive shop. The jam box is still PLAYING.

RAY
So is that Rosanne Cash?

LORI
I'm impressed. I wouldn't have figured you for a country music fan.

RAY
I'm not, particularly.

LORI
I like country music. It's music for grownups. Having to get up and go in to a job you hate every day, or living with somebody who treats you like you don't matter, or watching your kids grow up and move away.

RAY
You don't have any kids, though, do you?

Lori shakes her head.

RAY (cont'd)
And as jobs go, yours doesn't seem too bad.

LORI
(hastily)
So what do you listen to?

Ray looks at her for a second to show that he knows she's derailing the conversation. Then he looks away for another second while he decides if he wants to do this.

RAY
I'll show you.

A MINUTE LATER

Ray comes back from his room with the Smile CD. Lori's taken Rosanne off and Ray puts Smile on.
It starts with some SOUND EFFECTS, then PLAYS the long version of "Heroes and Villains."

LORI
Oh, the Beach Boys. I used to really like them.

RAY
How long have you and Tom been together?

LORI
I met him in Greece, nine years ago. I was between jobs, on a Eurail Pass, and he had a sailboat. It was like one of my novels—the sun-drenched islands, the photogenic couple, him teaching me to dive and sail.

RAY
I'm incredibly jealous.

LORI
Unfortunately nobody pays you to sail around and drink retsina all day. Tom heard about this dive shop for sale—I had some savings, he sold the boat, and here we are.

RAY
Listening to country music and reading romances.

LORI
I'm a victim of my culture. No matter how many degrees a woman has, she's nothing without a Grand Passion.

RAY
What if I told you I felt the same way?

LORI
Only not about your wife, right? Obviously not about your wife.

RAY
I thought I did. But it was like getting caught in an undertow. You're swimming as hard as you can and the shore just keeps getting farther away.
LORI
But that doesn't mean it can't happen.

Ray sees something in her eyes.

RAY
No. It doesn't mean that.

Suddenly Lori notices what's happening on the stereo.

LORI
This is different. Isn't it?

Ray nods. Lori laughs at the strangeness of the music.

LORI (cont'd)
What is it?

RAY
It's kind of a long story. This is a side project of mine, finding master tapes, rescuing lost albums.

LORI
Ah. We're perfect for each other, then, aren't we? You're a Rescuer and I'm a Victim.

EXT. THE DIVE SHOP--NIGHT

Much, much later. The boom box is now PLAYING John Hiatt's Slow Turning. Ray and Lori are laughing.

LORI
My god, how late is it?

RAY
Late.

They suddenly notice VOICES from the road. Lori abruptly turns the volume all the way off and stops the boom box as she gets to her feet.

LORI (cold)
I have to go in. I don't want to, but there it is.

RAY
That's twice.
LORI
What?

RAY
Twice you've said something about Tom. If you do it again I'll have to ask.

LORI
And if you ask, I'll have to tell you, right? Being compulsively honest as I am. So I should make up my mind whether I want to tell you, and you should decide if you really want to hear it.

RAY
I've got no place to go.

LORI
Do you mean it? No, I couldn't possibly...

RAY
What?

LORI
Ask you to wait. Tom'll be asleep in half an hour and I can come back.

RAY
I'll wait.

As he says this, he reaches out to touch Lori's hand, which is still resting on the table. She jerks it away.

LORI
Sorry. I was flirting, and I shouldn't have. If I come back, it's just to talk, okay?

RAY
You're thinking that you were right. That I am looking for trouble.

LORI
I never doubted it.
EXT. THE ROAD BEHIND THE DIVE SHOP--NIGHT

It's a few minutes later. Ray wanders around in the moonlight, stops to pick up a rock and throw it into the underbrush. He's smiling.

EXT. THE DIVE SHOP--NIGHT

Later. Ray is back in his chair, eyes closed, maybe asleep. He looks up and Lori is there. She's obviously washed her face, but there's something else different about her, a kind of distance.

LORI
Where were we?

She sits down across from him again.

RAY
You were going to tell me everything.

LORI
I was going to think about it. And I think I'd rather not spoil this wonderful night.

RAY
Then tell me about the first boy you ever kissed.

LORI
You're flirting again.

RAY
But I'm not touching. So I'm within the rules.

LORI
(beat)
Dougie Potter. Third grade.

INT. RAY'S ROOM--DAY

Ray is sleeping. There's a KNOCK at the door and Tom's voice.

TOM (O.S.)
It's eight o'clock. You diving today?
RAY
Uh...maybe this afternoon?

TOM (O.S.)
It's an all-day trip. Take it or leave it.

RAY
I'll pass, thanks.

TOM (O.S.)
Later, guy.

Ray turns over and is instantly asleep again.

EXT. DOWNTOWN COZUMEL--DAY

Narrow streets, low, modern buildings, lots of tourists, lots of tourist shops with the same hammocks, onyx chess sets, and T-shirts. Ray is strolling down the sidewalk, taking it all in, when the Dive Surfari car rolls up next to him, Lori at the wheel.

LORI
I wondered if I might run into you here.

Ray leans in the passenger window.

RAY
Did you get any sleep at all?

LORI
I'm not complaining. Got any plans for lunch?

RAY
I'm going to live dangerously here and tell you I'm free without checking my calendar.

LORI
The tropics seem to be loosening you right up. How about a picnic?

EXT. A BEACH--DAY

It's a deserted, rocky beach at the east end of the island. Lori and Ray are sitting cross-legged in the sand on opposite sides of a red checked table cloth holding a wicker hamper and the remains of a meal.
The ever-present jam box sits on a nearby rock, PLAYING "Could You Be Loved" by Bob Marley and the Wailers.

RAY
I have no idea what we're doing here.

LORI
Eating lunch.

RAY
I want to touch you. I want to dance with you to Rosanne Cash. (beat) I want to make love to you.

LORI
Ah, sex. Sex is more difficult.

RAY
Sex is easy. Everybody does it.

Lori turns sideways, hugs her knees, breaking the comfortable mood.

RAY (cont'd)
I'm sorry. That was tactless.

LORI
It's not you, it's me. I don't have orgasms easily, that's part of it.

RAY
I'm almost getting used to having conversations like this with you. Not easily, or not at all?

LORI
I can come. With a lot of patience and tenderness.

RAY
Which you don't get from Tom.

LORI
Not in a long time. There's sex. Tom comes. Every 48 hours—you could set your watch. You're getting tired of this, right? The truth all the time?

RAY
Is that what...last night...
LORI
Yes. I had to excuse myself to
perform my duties.

Ray takes a couple of seconds to chew on that one.

RAY
You said that was only part of it.

LORI
Are you sure you want to hear the
rest? My grandfather molested me,
from the time I was three or four
until I was eleven and old enough
to keep away from him. My mother
was a drunk and let it happen
because it kept him off of her.
Lots of us had tough childhoods. I
decided I wasn't going to spend the
rest of my life crying about it.

Lori opens up her posture a little, looks at Ray, not without
sympathy.

LORI (cont'd)
I think maybe you're still crying
about yours.

RAY
I can't compete. I just had
parents that didn't give a damn
about me.

LORI
And there's not ever enough love to
make up for that, is there?
Believe me, I know. But like my
grandpa used to say, if you want
something done right you have to do
it yourself.
(beat)
Of course he may have gone a little
far with it.

RAY
Jesus, Lori.

LORI
I warned you. I'm damaged goods,
Ray. You should run away as fast
as you can.
RAY
We're both damaged. If I told you how much, you wouldn't believe me.

LORI
Does this have anything to do with that Beach Boys CD you played me?

RAY
How did you know that?

LORI
I think it was that phony line about "side projects."

RAY
What I told you was the truth. I find lost albums. The thing is, I find them in my head. And once I can hear them in my head, I can make them come out of a stereo so other people can hear them too.

LORI
Don't show me. I'll take your word for it.

RAY
It gets weirder. I couldn't visualize Smile, and I ended up having this...episode. It felt like I was in 1966, with Brian Wilson, helping him finish Smile. I can't say it wasn't all a hallucination. But when I got out of the hospital, I had the whole album in my head.

LORI
So that's how you ended up in the rent car for two days.

RAY
It took a lot out of me.

LORI
Being a Rescuer usually does. It can kill you if you don't watch out.

RAY
You're taking this awfully calmly.
LORI
If it felt real to you, it was real.

RAY
You sound like Brian. Feelings are all that's real.

LORI
He's right.

Lori lies back in the sand. The WAILERS PLAY on the stereo.

LORI (cont'd)
I wonder sometimes why people can't just be happy. Not when your grandfather is molesting you or your father is knocking you around, but the rest of the time. Why can't you be like this? Just...happy?

INT. A RESTAURANT--NIGHT
Sitting around a table at a restaurant in downtown Cozumel are Tom, who is sitting close to Lori, Dr. Steve, Allyson, and Ray. Lori is basically looking at her plate, definitely not happy, and Ray is clearly uncomfortable.

ALLYSON
I thought I would be so scared. I mean, like, sharks! You know? But they didn't give a shit for me at all. It was like watching a hurricane or a forest fire.

DR. STEVE
Me, I'm afraid of hurricanes and forest fires.

TOM
(to Ray)
We're going to hit the south end tomorrow. I'd hate to think of you going back Stateside without getting in another dive.

It's two hints in one--quit hanging around the dive shop with my girlfriend, and start thinking about going home.

RAY
Sure. Sounds good.
TOM
(to Lori)
If Ray's coming, we'll have a full house. I'll need you on the boat.

Lori nods without looking up. Ray is trying to meet her eyes without success.

DR. STEVE
(to Ray)
So, made any progress?

RAY
What?

DR. STEVE
On this father business. It's highly symbolic, you know, to lose your father to the Abyss. It's a potent symbol, like the crossroads—where the physical and spiritual worlds cross. I think of Nietzsche's line about the Abyss staring back to you. Jung had something about it also, which I can't bring to mind.

ALLYSON
Oh my god. Nietzsche and Jung. I think the poor guy just needs to get laid.

EXT. THE DIVE SHOP--NIGHT

Ray sits where he was sitting the night before, but Lori isn't there. He looks at his watch, sighs, gets up and walks toward his room.

EXT. THE DIVE BOAT, AT SEA--DAY

Ray is sitting near the stern, Hector standing nearby. Ray is watching Lori as she helps sort through the dive gear with Allyson. Tom is driving the boat; Dr. Steve, Pam, and Richard are also on deck.

HECTOR
I seen where you looking, man. You shouldn't do that. Tom is a very jealous guy.
RAY
I'm not sure I care that much what happens to me right now.

HECTOR
You're not the one has to, como se dice, pick up the check, you know?

RAY
What are you saying?

Hector glances at Lori, then smacks his right fist into the cupped palm of his left hand.

HECTOR
It's very fucked up, man.

LATER

It's clouded up, though it doesn't look rainy. Ray is in his tank, mask, and fins at the stern of the boat. He steps over the side.

EXT. UNDERWATER--CONTINUOUS

Tom, Ray, Dr. Steve, Allyson, Pam, and Richard are in the water. Something is clearly wrong with Ray, however. He starts to shiver almost immediately, rubbing his arms like he's cold.

Tom begins to herd everyone into a widely spaced group, drifting along the reef in the strong current.

RAY (v.o.)
It was the one question that kept haunting me.

LATER

While the others are swimming around, pointing at fish or coral, Ray is turned inward, barely moving, depressed. Compared to the previous dive, the clouds make this one seem gray and ominous.

Tom can clearly tell that something is bugging Ray. He swims over and checks on him, somewhat insistently.
RAY (v.o.)
What was he thinking when he went over the edge? What was in his head?

STILL LATER

It's the end of the dive. Everyone is hovering in the shallows. Dr. Steve shows Tom his air gauge. Tom nods and Dr. Steve and Allyson head for the surface.

RAY (v.o.)
The answer turned out to be--

Richard pulls Tom away to look at something. Ray flips his reserve lever on his tank. He's supposed to immediately go to the surface now, but instead he slowly swims to the edge of the dropoff. Very slowly he goes over the edge. He begins to swim downward, picking up speed.

RAY (v.o.)
--nothing at all.

As he goes deeper, the color leeches out of everything. The water becomes a deeper blue and the coral turns a dark, purplish brown. After a few seconds, he closes his eyes and stretches out his arms toward the abyss.

Suddenly a hand grabs one of his fins, stopping him short. He looks back, confused. Tom looms over him, grabs the straps of his tank and shakes him.

They swim up. Ray is out of air. He touches his mouthpiece with two fingers to indicate that his tank is empty. Tom stares at him, as if trying to make up his mind. Ray takes the mouthpiece out and shows Tom that no bubbles are coming out of it, then throws it over his shoulder. Tom grudgingly passes Ray his mouthpiece. Ray takes one breath, then gives it back, pushes Tom away, and swims for the surface.

EXT. THE DIVE BOAT--DAY

Ray comes up the ladder and walks over to an empty seat, shucking his tank as he walks. As Tom comes up the ladder onto the boat, Ray goes through the post-dive ritual of removing the regulator and blowing the connection dry with air from the tank--only there's no air left. His hands are shaking so badly that the regulator falls to the deck with a thump. Dr. Steve and Lori both turn at the sound, but Tom pointedly ignores him.
Lori, seeing something is wrong, walks over to hand him a towel.

LORI
(quietly)
What's wrong? What happened down there?

Ray doesn't answer. In the background Pam and Richard look at each other--everybody knows something's happened.

EXT. THE DIVE SHOP--DAY

The dock in front of the shop. The boat is tied up and everyone is walking off, still subdued and looking at each other for clues.

Ray hoes off his equipment and starts toward his room. Tom is following, almost on top of him, and as Ray opens the door of his room, Tom shoves him inside, hard.

INT. RAY'S ROOM--CONTINUOUS

Ray hits the wall and turns to face Tom, who crowds him.

TOM
(enraged)
Another ten feet and we'd both be dead. What the fuck were you thinking?

Ray can only shrug. Tom slaps the wall next to Ray's head, and Ray doesn't react, just stares back at him.

TOM (cont'd)
I don't put up with this shit on my tours. I want you out of here, on a plane, tomorrow morning.

RAY
(nodding)
Yeah, okay.

TOM
And when you get back to the States, find yourself some help. Because you are one screwed up son of a bitch.

Tom slams the door on his way out.
INT. RAY'S ROOM--NIGHT

Ray is lying in the dark, hands behind his head. He looks at the clock: almost midnight. He turns on the light, gets his suitcase out of the closet, starts to pack his things.

A KNOCK at the door. Ray opens it. It's Lori.

LORI
Can I come in?

Ray still isn't speaking. He steps out of her way as she enters and closes the door.

LORI (cont'd)
I had to wait for Tom to pass out before I could come see you...are you not going to tell me what happened today?

RAY
I tried to kill myself. Apparently.

LORI
You mean, like your father?

RAY
That's what it looked like.

LORI
You sound like you weren't even there.

RAY
In a way, I wasn't. It doesn't matter. It's over. I'm leaving tomorrow morning.

LORI
(softly)
No...

RAY
Come with me.

LORI
If only it was that easy.

RAY
It is that easy. You don't belong with him. You know that.
LORI
I know. But if you make that decision for me, then I'm just trading Tom for you.

RAY
Is that such a bad trade?

LORI
It would mean I hadn't really changed. I have to do this myself, in my own time.

She opens the door, looks both ways.

LORI (cont'd)
Come outside. Walk with me.

EXT. A BEACH--NIGHT

Lori and Ray have walked a good ways from the dive shop along a deserted beach. They're walking side by side, but not touching.

RAY
I don't know how I'm going to get on that plane.

LORI
The last two days have been sweet and romantic and wonderful. But don't try to make them into more than that.

RAY
They were more than that, and you know it.

LORI
We should turn back.

She turns and starts to walk back toward the dive shop. Ray stands, watching her, but doesn't follow. After a dozen steps, Lori looks back.

LORI (cont'd)
Are you coming?

RAY
You don't want me to go back to Texas any more than I do.
LORI
So?

RAY
So can't you at least admit it?

LORI
Why? So it can hurt even more? If you'd come along twenty years ago-- or a couple of years from now-- things could have been different. Your timing stinks, Ray.

Lori goes to him and puts one hand on his face. It's the first time they've actually touched, and it's electric. Very slowly Ray reaches for her and draws her into a kiss. It begins gently and heats up quickly. They begin to undress each other, but their eyes are locked on each other the entire time.

LATER
Ray and Lori lie in the sand, naked, holding each other for warmth.

RAY
Lori, I--

She puts her fingers on his mouth.

LORI
Don't. There are all these things we're about to say to each other and I can't bear it, I absolutely cannot stand it if it happens. In five hours you're going to be on an airplane, and nothing you say is going to change that.

INT. MAIN CABIN OF AIRPLANE--DAY

Ray, on the plane back to Texas, looks like a mental patient-- sleepless, bloodshot eyes, vacant stare.

FLIGHT ATTENDANT
Something to drink, sir?

Ray stares at her and thinks about it for a long time, then finally shakes his head and turns to look back out the window.
FLIGHT ATTENDANT
Are you all right sir?

Ray ignores her—not out of rudeness, he just hasn't heard.

INT. RAY'S HOUSE--NIGHT

Ray lies on the couch, the video of his father's death reflected in the glass in his hand. There's a bottle of mineral water on the coffee table near him.

INT. RAY'S REFRIGERATOR--DAY

From the inside of Ray's refrigerator, looking out. In the immediate foreground are five cans of beer, with food visible on the other shelves. Ray is counting them, fighting the temptation to drink one of them.

RAY
One, two, three...

INT. RAY'S WORKSHOP--NIGHT

Ray, trying to work, puts his soldering iron down in disgust, pushes back his chair, and heads downstairs.

INT. RAY'S REFRIGERATOR--NIGHT

From the inside of Ray's refrigerator, looking out. Still five cans of beer.

RAY
Three, four, five.

INT. RAY'S KITCHEN--DAY

Ray is on the phone to Dave.

RAY
Yeah, I tried a couple of times and got the machine. Which I guess is better than Tom answering.

DAVE (PHONE)
Clearly you need something to take your mind off this woman. If I send you a plane ticket, will you just trust me and use it?
RAY
A ticket to where?

DAVE (PHONE)
Seattle.

EXT. GREENWOOD MEMORIAL PARK, SEATTLE--DAY
Ray stands at Jimi Hendrix's grave, a flat perpetual care stone. His head is slightly bowed and his mood is serious. Dave stands to one side, looking at Ray, hiding a faint smile.

EXT. EXPERIENCE MUSIC PROJECT--DAY
The distinctive shape of the museum is visible in the background as Dave and Ray pull up in a rent car.

RAY
I'm beginning to sense a theme, here.

DAVE
Just trust me, okay?

INT. EXPERIENCE MUSIC PROJECT--DAY
Ray and Dave stroll through the exhibits, talking. They're in an area devoted to Jimi Hendrix.

DAVE
We are selling that Smile bootleg like crazy. In fact, I've got a royalty check for you.

He hands Ray a business-size check.

RAY
I feel weird taking this. This money should go to Brian.

DAVE
In this universe, Brian never finished the album.

Ray folds the check and puts it in his wallet.
DAVE (cont'd)
But that's not all. Last week I
got a letter, by messenger, from a
VP at Capitol. He said he knew it
was me selling Smile, and he didn't
care. That he was a shipping clerk
in 1966 and he's been waiting most
of his life for this.

RAY
(half heartedly)
That's pretty amazing.

DAVE
It's beyond amazing. For an
industry VP to put something like
that in writing? It means we were
right. This album is actually
changing people. We are changing
the world.

RAY
That's what this is about, isn't
it? You want me to do another
album.

DAVE
This isn't like Smile. This would
be easy. Hendrix would have
finished it himself except for a
stupid accident.

RAY
First Rays of the New Rising Sun.

DAVE
Talk about albums that could really
change the world. The ultimate
fusion album--rock, jazz, blues,
R&B. Healing music, unifying
music.

RAY
I can't do it, man. Smile almost
killed me.

DAVE
It's not like you'd actually have
to go back after it. It would be
like the Beatles song, you could
just sit around the studio and make
it happen.
RAY
(very quiet)
It's not that I'd have to go back.
It's that I'd want to.

DAVE
Jesus Christ.

RAY
Yeah.

DAVE
Look, I'm sorry I said anything.
Just forget about it, will you?
I'm completely serious.

Dave turns away, but Ray is still looking at the exhibit,
which talks about Jimi's father.

DAVE
Ray?

INT. RAY'S HOUSE, AUSTIN--DAY

Ray stands at the telephone, maybe trying to talk himself out
of calling. He finally picks up the receiver and dials.

LORI (PHONE)
Hello?

Ray thought he was going to get the machine again, and he's
instantly galvanized.

RAY
It's Ray.

LORI (PHONE)
John, how are you? How're the kids?

RAY
He's there, right? So you can't talk?

LORI (PHONE)
(brightly)
Of course.

RAY
First I have to know if you're okay. He didn't hurt you, did he?
(MORE)
RAY (cont’d)
Because of being out all night with me?

LORI (PHONE)
I'm fine. Really.

RAY
There's so much I need to say to you, and I can't do it with him there listening.

LORI (PHONE)  
(artificially cheerful)
That's right!

RAY
I miss you.

LORI (PHONE)
Me too.

There's a long, painful silence. Ray's face shows his frustration and helplessness.

RAY
I guess I should go.

LORI (PHONE)
That would be a good idea.

RAY
You have my number, here, right?

LORI (PHONE)
Mmm hmmm.

RAY
I love you.

LORI (PHONE)
(after a silence)
Take care of yourself.

RAY
Yeah. You too.

EXT. GATWICK AIRPORT, LONDON--DAY

A jet lands.
EXT. HOTEL RUSSEL, LONDON--DAY

Ray gets out of a taxi with a single hanging bag and goes into the hotel.

EXT. WARDOUR STREET--DAY

Ray gets out of a cab in front of a row of upscale shops and restaurants.

RAY (v.o.)
The Marquee Club used to be right there. Where the Stones and the Yardbirds and countless other bands got their start. This whole block burned down a few years ago, so there's not even an original brick remaining.

EXT. 48 MARGARET STREET--DAY

Ray stands in front of a gray office block in central London.

RAY (v.o.)
The Speakeasy was downstairs. After the show at the Marquee, everyone would come here for spaghetti and a few rum and cokes. Hendrix would likely show up and jam until dawn.

Ray tries the double glass doors, which are locked, and peers through the glass.

RAY (v.o.)
Now the stairs go the wrong direction.

EXT. LANSDOWNE CRESCENT--DAY

Ray walks down a tree-lined suburban street in the Notting Hill neighborhood. The sycamores are in full green leaf and the sun is shining. He stops in front of a white two-story house; there's a black wrought-iron staircase that descends to a flat on the basement level.

RAY (v.o.)
Jimi died because he was careless with prescription drugs.

(MORE)
RAY (cont'd)
It happened in Monika Danneman's flat, downstairs. He could just as easily have woken up with a bad hangover. Or they could have sat him up in the ambulance. It would have taken so little.

INT. RAY'S HOTEL ROOM--NIGHT
Ray pulls on a V-neck sweater and examines himself in the mirror. He could pass for a citizen of any time from now to the 1950s. He is very thin, his tan is fading, and there is something too intense about his eyes. He sits on the edge of the bed and begins to set the scene, out loud:

RAY
It's Friday, September 18, 1970. Lansdowne Crescent. White columns and potted plants on the balconies. It's gray and cool and there may be rain later. An ambulance pulls up in front of the building...

EXT. LANSDOWNE CRESCENT--DAY
...and he's there. It's the same scene we just saw, but now the trees have changed color and it's chilly and overcast. The ambulance is parked at the head of the iron stairs and two MEDICS are taking out a stretcher. Ray stands for a beat, taking it in, then he pushes his way past the attendants and rushes down the stairs.

INT. MONIKA'S APARTMENT--DAY
JIMI HENDRIX is unconscious in the bedroom, his face stained with vomit, but he is twitching and clearly still alive. Jimi's girlfriend, MONIKA, blonde, German, 20s, stands near him, wringing her hands.

MONIKA
(heavy German accent)
Are you the doctor?

RAY
I'm a friend of Jimi's. Don't worry. The ambulance is upstairs.

On cue, the medics come in with the stretcher.
RAY (to medics)
He's overdosed on Vesperax.

FIRST MEDIC
How many?

RAY
Six or seven, I think. Listen, you have to keep him sitting up in the ambulance. He could choke.

SECOND MEDIC
We know what we're about. Piss on off out of the way, we've got to bring a litter through that door.

As the medics wrestle Jimi onto the stretcher, Ray takes Monika's arm.

RAY
You should get your car.

Monika, still panicking, responds to Ray's paternal confidence and authority.

MONIKA
Yes, yes, you are right.

EXT. LANSDOWNE CRESCENT--DAY

The ambulance is pulling away as Monika squeals up to the curb in her blue sports car. Ray gets in the passenger seat.

INT. MONIKA'S CONVERTIBLE--DAY

Monika practically rides the ambulances bumper as they rush toward St. Mary Abbots Hospital in Kensington.

MONIKA
He would not wake up. I am very frightened.

RAY
It's going to be okay. As long as they keep him sitting up, he'll be fine. I promise.
EXT. ST. MARY ABBOTS HOSPITAL--DAY

A crumbling, dirty brick building. Monika parks the car and runs for the emergency entrance.

INT. ST. MARY ABBOTS HOSPITAL--DAY

Ray is leaning across a desk, talking to a NURSE. Monika frets behind him.

RAY
The ambulance just brought him in. His name is Jimi Hendrix.

NURSE
The pop star?

RAY
That's right.

NURSE
It's not drugs, is it?

RAY
Vesperax, actually.

NURSE
Oh, dear. Have a seat over there, I'll find out what I can.

AN HOUR LATER

Ray and Monika are sitting in the waiting area. The nurse from the previous scene passes by.

RAY
Is there any word yet? It's been almost an hour.

NURSE
He's coming just now.

A DOCTOR enters with a bad news look on his face. The nurse points to Ray and Monika.

DOCTOR
I'm sorry. There was nothing we could do.
RAY
(stunned)
What?

DOCTOR
Mr. Hendrix was in a head restraint in the ambulance--standard procedure in these cases--and he was unable to move to clear his throat. To be blunt, I'm afraid he choked to death.

RAY
That's not possible.

DOCTOR
I'm sorry.

As the doctor makes a sort of apologetic bow and walks away, Ray staggers to his feet.

MONIKA
Ray? What is happening?

Ray ignores her and stumbles down the hall to the men's toilet.

INT. HOSPITAL TOILET--DAY

Ray turns on the hot water and throws some on his face. As the steam rises he stares at himself in the mirror. The face that looks back at him is pale, frozen in shock and horror. The mirror steams over and...

INT. RAY'S HOTEL ROOM--NIGHT

Back in the present. Ray is sprawled out across the bed. He tries to sit up and can't make it, collapsing back on the bed with a GROAN.

EXT. RAY'S HOUSE IN AUSTIN--DAY

Ray is exhausted and rather frail-looking as he carries his suitcase up to the front door of his house.
INT. RAY'S HOUSE--DAY

The answering machine in the kitchen. In the background, Ray putters around the kitchen, putting things away, getting a glass of water.

DAVE (ON MACHINE)
...to see how it went in London. Give me a call.

The machine BEEPS.

MAN (ON MACHINE)
I'm calling about your ad in the Chronicle? My CD player skips? But only on Metalica's Kill 'Em All? Maybe you could take a look?

Ray is in the living room as the machine BEEPS again, looking at the poster of Hendrix on the wall.

SAME MAN (ON MACHINE)
Oh yeah, my name is Seth and my number is 458...458...I'll call you back.

Another BEEP. Ray is crying.

MACHINE
That was your last message.

INT. RAY'S BEDROOM--NIGHT

Ray is tossing and turning in bed. Finally he sits up, gets dressed, and leaves the room.

INT. RAY'S WORKSHOP--NIGHT

Ray enters, turns on the light, puts on a vinyl album of Hendrix's Cry of Love, the first posthumous album salvaged from the First Rays sessions.

He sits down at the workbench, lifts a shop towel to expose a disassembled amplifier. But he doesn't actually start working, he just stares at it for a couple of long seconds.

He stands up slowly. This is not the impulse that took him over the cliff in Cozumel--this is deliberate. He walks over to the couch, sits, and closes his eyes.
EXT. MARGARET STREET, LONDON--DAY

Ray stands across from the Speakeasy, wearing the same jeans, T-shirt and sport coat he had on in Austin. Needless to say, this is not the current office block, but instead the Speakeasy of 1970. He looks disoriented for only a second, then goes to a kiosk and grabs a newspaper.

RAY
September 16. I've still got two days.

KIOSK ATTENDANT
Two days for what, mate?

RAY
(joking--sort of)
To save the world.

INT. THE SPEAKEASY--DAY

Ray enters through the double doors at one end of the club. It's dark and moody, with a low ceiling and wallpaper with a heart-shaped pattern, deserted at this hour. On Ray's right as he comes in is a restaurant area, walled off, with windows looking out at the tiny stage. Ray sits in one of the booths along the far wall. In the booth next to his, though he can't see them at this point, are ERIKA HANOVER, late 30s, very sensual, and TONY SANCHEZ, sometime purveyor of drugs to the Rolling Stones. Erika is wearing jeans, T-shirt, and a jacket, none of them terribly fresh. Tony has black wavy hair and sunglasses, and dresses like a gangster.

A bored waitress wanders over.

WAITRESS
What's yours, then, love?

RAY
Lemonade, please.

As she leaves, the voices from the next booth get louder.

TONY
No, Erika. I'm not going to help you kill yourself.

ERIKA
It's my life. And it's not worth a damn to me at the moment.
Tony stands up.

    TONY
    I've got to get Mick to Paris for the Olympia on Sunday.

He kisses the top of her head.

    TONY (cont'd)
    Get some help, all right?

Ray watches him leave, then visibly screws up his courage and gets up to stand by her booth.

    RAY
    Erika Hanover?

    ERIKA
    Please go away.

    RAY
    I really admire your work.

    ERIKA
    You couldn't possibly know my work.

    RAY
    My favorite is the photo of Mick Jagger at the Hyde Park memorial concert for Brian Jones. He's covered with dying butterflies. Then there's the one of John Lennon, with Yoko reflected in his round mirrored sunglasses, she's in black, he's in white.

    ERIKA
    Most people never look to see who took the picture.

    RAY
    If I like something, I want to know who's responsible. I'm Ray.

She takes his hand.

    ERIKA
    All right, Ray, you've impressed me. You may sit down. You're not holding, by any chance?

Ray hasn't heard the expression in decades. He looks puzzled as he sits.
ERIKA (cont'd)
Have you any drugs?

RAY
Sorry, no. What was that about you killing yourself?

ERIKA
I'm a junkie, Ray. I came here hoping to score from Tony, and failing that, hoping someone else I knew might happen by.

RAY
I'm sorry.

ERIKA
You mustn't be. It's very liberating, heroin. You're just one more junkie. No one cares if you're a pop star or a photographer or on the dole. So what did you come here hoping to find, Ray?

RAY
Well, actually, I was hoping to find Jimi Hendrix.

ERIKA
Ah. Do you know Jimi?

RAY
I've never met him. But I feel like I know him.

ERIKA
Yes, he rather has that effect on people. He's a wonderful man. A true gentleman in the old-fashioned sense of the word. And a fantastic fuck, of course. Why were you looking for him?

RAY
He's in danger. I can't tell you how I know, but it's literally life and death.

ERIKA
You understand that I have to be careful. Jimi is one of God's innocents.

(MORE)
ERIKA (cont'd)
He has no discrimination with people, and he's so vulnerable.

RAY
I only want to help him.

ERIKA
I believe you do.

RAY
He's going to be at Ronnie Scott's club tonight, jamming with Eric Burdon and War. All I need is an introduction, a chance to talk to him for five minutes.

ERIKA
Let me think about it. Perhaps I'll see you there. Right now I have urgent business.

She smiles, and touches Ray's cheek, then stands up.

ERIKA (cont'd)
You seem to care so much for others, Ray. Is there anything left for you?

INT. RONNIE SCOTT'S JAZZ CLUB--NIGHT

Ray stands at the bar, constantly looking around for Erika. On stage, ERIC BURDON and WAR have just finished a song and the audience--mostly jazz types in turtlenecks and sport coats and goatees--are CHEERING and APPLAUDING.

ERIC
(thick Newcastle accent)
We'd like to bring on a good friend of ours...Mr. Jimi Hendrix.

Jimi gets up on stage and puts on his guitar. The band begins to play "Tobacco Road."

As the MUSIC plays, Ray moves through the crowd, increasingly anxious, searching for Erika.
LATER

The house lights are up now, and the club is empty except for Hendrix and his entourage, including Monika, Devon Wilson, Eric, Eric's girlfriend Alvinia Bridges, and a few others sitting down front, guarded by a very large and protective BOUNCER.

Ray, who's been standing by the bar fidgeting, walks up to the bouncer.

RAY
Listen, I just need to talk to Jimi, just for two minutes. It's desperately important.

BOUNCER
Always is, innit, mate? How about you sod off very nicely.

STILL LATER

Ray sits at the bar, head in hands, in despair.

ERIKA (O.S.)
Hello, Ray.

Ray turns to see Erika, now obviously high, but also cleaned up and dressed up, on the arm of a YOUNG MAN in facial hair and pony tail. She doesn't bother to introduce him.

ERIKA (cont'd)
Had a chance to meet Jimi, then?

RAY
No. No, I haven't.

ERIKA
Come along, then. (to the young man) I'll be right back.

She takes Ray by the arm and together they stroll past the bouncer, who nods to Erika respectfully. They approach Jimi, who is wearing a big, floppy hat and has his back to them.

ERIKA
Jimi?

Jimi turns in his chair. He's exhausted, but his face lights up at the sight of Erika.
Erika, baby, it's so good to see you.

She leans over to kiss him on the lips.

This is my friend Ray, from America. Could you spare him a couple of minutes?

Jimi offers his huge, ring-laden right hand, and Ray shakes it.

Hello, Ray. Where do you know Erika from?

Another life.

Erika laughs at that and Jimi, a little reluctantly, joins in.

What did you want to talk about, Ray?

Could we, I don't know, maybe go downstairs for a minute?

Jimi looks to Erika who first shrugs, then nods her approval.

INT. DOWNSTAIRS BAR AT RONNIE SCOTT'S--NIGHT

There's no one else there. Jimi sits backwards in a chair, and Ray leans against the bar.

This is going to sound weird however I say it. So I'm just going to come out with it.

Yeah, okay, whatever.

I know you're open to things that most people aren't. UFOs and magic and spiritual things.

(MORE)
RAY (cont'd)
So maybe you'll give me a chance to convince you that I'm from the future.

JIMI
Oh, man.

RAY
I know things I couldn't possibly know otherwise. I know you've got a court date on Friday about the UK end of the Capitol Records lawsuit, and I know you're thinking about going back to New York afterwards to get the tapes for First Rays, so you can work on them with Chas Chandler.

Jimi looks torn between curiosity and alarm.

JIMI
Did Mike Jeffery send you?

RAY
No, I swear I've got nothing to do with managers or record companies or anything like that. I want you to finish the record.

JIMI
Me too.

RAY
I know your rooms at the Cumberland are a cover and you're actually staying with Monika at 23 Lansdowne Crescent. I know you just sent Billy Cox home because of an acid freakout. I know you can't trust any of the people who are all over you because they all want something from you.

JIMI
Man, it's like, I don't know anymore, you understand? There's all these people and there's like this peace and love thing, and maybe these people really do love me, but...

RAY
And all I want is to save your life.
JIMI
(alarmed)
My life?

RAY
Tomorrow night, Thursday night, you're not going to be able to sleep, and you're going to ask Monika for some sleeping pills. She's going to give you some Vesperax. It's much stronger than anything you're used to, but when it doesn't put you out right away you take some more. Only you take too much and it kills you.

JIMI
You're really serious.

RAY
I'm totally serious.

Monika and Devon Wilson appear on the stairs with the club's bouncer.

MONIKA
That's him.

RAY
(desperate)
Just promise me. Promise you won't take more than two Vesperax. No matter what.

JIMI
Yeah, okay, whatever, man. I really have to go.

RAY
Promise.

Jimi sees something in Ray's face--kindness, perhaps, and slowly nods.

JIMI
I promise.

Jimi gets up to go back upstairs.

RAY
Can I come by Thursday night? Just to make sure?
JIMI
Sure, man, come over about twelve
or something, all right? We can
talk some more.

Everybody but Ray goes back upstairs, Jimi taking a last,
concerned look over his shoulder. Ray slumps back against
the wall of the bar and sits down.

EXT. LANSDOWNE CRESCENT--NIGHT

Thursday night, actually Friday morning, a little before
three a.m. Monika and Jimi come home late and Monika sees
Ray sitting on the iron steps leading down to the flat.

MONIKA
Jimi, that strange man is again
coming around.

Ray, who's been nodding off, gets hurriedly to his feet.
Jimi looks disappointed to see Ray. He just wants to sleep,
and now here's somebody else who wants something from him.

JIMI
I'm really sorry. There was this
thing at this rich cat's that I had
to go to.

RAY
It doesn't matter. Do you remember
what we talked about last night?

JIMI
Sleeping pills. You got some kind
of a thing about sleeping pills.
But if I don't sleep tonight I
swear I'll go out of my mind.

RAY
After you take two, if you're still
not sleepy, just give it another
five minutes, okay? I promise,
they'll knock you out. And you'll
still be alive tomorrow.

MONIKA
Is this man making threats to you?

JIMI
No, baby, it's cool, he just wants
to help me.
MONIKA
Everybody is wanting to help you.

RAY
I just want him to promise me again. That he won't take more than two of your Vesperax.

JIMI
Okay, all right, already, I promise. (laughs with no feeling)
I promise.

RAY
That's all I wanted to hear. Go ahead and get some sleep.

Ray shakes Jimi's hand and moves past him and Monika to climb the stairs. Jimi suddenly seems afraid he might have hurt Ray's feelings.

JIMI
What'd you say your name was?

RAY
Ray.

JIMI
Ray. Like in First Rays.

RAY
That's right.

JIMI
You be good to yourself, Ray, all right?

RAY
You too, Jimi.

EXT. LANSDOWNE CRESCENT--DAY

We've been here before. It's Friday morning, September 18, 1970. Ray is stationed across the street as Monika comes out of the apartment and sees him. She freezes. Ray crosses the street to her.

MONIKA
You again.

RAY
Is Jimi okay?
MONIKA
I only gave him the two pills.
Like you said.

RAY
Just check on him when you get back. Please.

MONIKA
I will check. Now please go.

A series of quick cuts: Ray squatting on the sidewalk; Ray
standing with his hands in his pockets a few steps away; Ray
leaning against a wrought iron fence.

Finally, Ray looks at his watch and sees that Hendrix is out
of danger. He makes a small gesture of triumph--eyes closed,
both fists clenched against his legs, then walks away, an
exhausted smile on his face.

INT. THE SPEAKEASY--NIGHT

Back at the Speakeasy, but now it's nighttime and crowded.
Matthews Southern Comfort are on the tiny stage and holding
court down front are Jimi, Monika, Devon, SLY STONE, MITCH
MITCHELL (Jimi's drummer), ERIC CLAPTON, and PATTIE BOYD. As
Ray enters, Jimi spots him and waves him over.

JIMI
Ray, future man, come on over here.

Ray walks over to Jimi's table and shakes his hand.

JIMI (CONT'D)
Ray. Cat that knows his drugs. I
was laying there last night,
thinking I should get up and take
some more of that shit of Monika's,
and then, whoa, it just laid...
me... out. You got to meet my
people here. You know Monika and
Devon, this is Mitch, and Sly, and
Eric. Next to Eric there is the
Queen of Sheba, yes, the Queen of
Sheba, thank you very much.

Ray nods at everyone. The band finishes and everyone
APPLAUDS. Ray is standing next to Pattie, who offers her
hand.
RAY
(to Pattie)
Actually, it's Pattie Boyd, isn't it?

PATTIE
Formerly. I expect Jimi's being discreet, as I'm still married.

ERIC
Not to me, either. Bit of a sore point, actually.

RAY
I can be discreet.

PATTIE
Then sit down, why don't you?

JIMI
Well, you know, like dig, brother, me and Mitch and Eric and Sly are going to get up and have a little fun here, if that's all right with everybody.

More APPLAUSE as the four of them join Ian Matthews and his bass player on stage.

JIMI
I'm going to do something new here, it's a little thing called "Blues for Ray" and it's for my new friend Ray here who saved my life last night, take a little bow there Ray, and it goes something like this here, y'all just follow along in the key of Z minor 15th.

Jimi starts a chord pattern and the others fall in. Ray is thrilled, proud, and at the same time sad because he knows he has only earned these few moments of belonging, and soon he will have to go.

EXT. MARGARET STREET--NIGHT

Jimi and Ray exit the club together, Ray carrying Jimi's guitar case. Eric and Pattie trail behind Monika and Devon.

MONIKA
I'll be getting the car.
JIMI
Yeah, okay, whatever.
(to Ray)
So, yeah, like I talked to Chas this afternoon and we're going to sit down with the tapes and maybe do a thing with them.

There's a FAN, kind of scruffy, head down, lurking on the sidewalk. He approaches Jimi nervously.

FAN
Excuse me, Mr. Hendrix, sir--

JIMI
(to Ray)
Just give me a minute.

Ray nods, carries the guitar case to where Eric, Pattie, and Devon are standing.

ERIC
Christ, we'll never get a taxi.

PATTIE
Shall I go and ring for one?

Eric puts his arm around her.

ERIC
Give it a minute. Something will turn up.

Ray looks back to Jimi, and then freezes. The fan has a gun.

RAY
Jimi! Look out!

Ray starts to run toward Hendrix.

Jimi is looking at the gun. Then, just as the fan FIRES, Jimi turns to look at Ray. It is the look of someone already dead.

The fan FIRES four more times, point blank, into Jimi's chest.

INT. RAY'S WORKSHOP--DAY

Ray opens his eyes. He's on the floor of his upstairs workshop, unshaven, gaunt, red-eyed.
He tries to stand up, using a chair, and takes the chair over with him when he falls.

INT. STAIRS LEADING TO WORKSHOP--CONTINUOUS

He tries to crawl downstairs to the main part of the house. He passes out halfway and slides down the stairs, landing in a heap at the bottom.

INT. RAY'S KITCHEN--CONTINUOUS

He crawls into the room, pulls himself up onto his knees using the handle of the refrigerator. He finds a carton of milk there and squints at it, trying to read the date. Can't see it. He drinks a little milk out of the carton and manages a weak smile. This isn't so bad. Then he throws the milk up all over himself and begins to shake with chills.

INT. RAY'S BATHROOM--CONTINUOUS

He crawls into the bathtub, fully dressed, and turns on the hot water. The air fills with steam.

INT. RAY'S BEDROOM--DAY

It's an hour or so later. Ray is wearing sweat pants and trying to put on a T-shirt while holding on to the edge of the dresser for dear life. He staggers over to the bed and falls across it, instantly asleep.

INT. RAY'S KITCHEN--NIGHT

Looking out from the back of the refrigerator again. The five beers are still there, but nothing else. Ray closes the refrigerator and grabs a take-out menu that a magnet is holding to the refrigerator door. He takes it and the phone into the living room and sits on the couch. He is looking at his giant Hendrix poster. The phone slides out of his hand and the menu flutters to the floor.

RAY
Jimi stops to play the slot machine on his way out of the club. By the time he gets upstairs, Monika is already there with the car. He pushes past the fan, doesn't really see him.
Ray's voice decays into little more than a croak. He picks up a glass of water from the coffee table and takes a drink.

RAY (cont'd)
He flies to New York to get the tapes. Once he's there, he decides to finish the album at Electric Lady.

He takes another drink, closes his eyes. The glass falls to the floor with a CLUNK.

RAY (cont'd)
New York. Lots of places to eat in New York.

Ray stays in the foreground, the background slowly lap dissolves to:

EXT. NEW YORK, LOWER FOURTH AVENUE--DAY

The entire feeling of the next sequence is strange, out of whack, surreal. The sun is just setting.

Ray is standing in front of the entrance to Electric Lady studios. Ray looks down at himself, a kind of dream version of himself that's not starved and dying, that's wearing jeans and a T-shirt and a sport coat. He sniffs the air, smiles with pleasure to be where he is.

Jimi and CHAS CHANDLER emerge from the underground entrance, followed by two of the studio's GUARDS, enormous black men in full motorcycle regalia. Jimi is wearing glasses (which in truth he needed, but rarely wore).

JIMI
Hey, Ray. I didn't know you were in New York.

RAY
I didn't know I was going to be here.

The guards stay by the steps, but Ray, Jimi, and Chas start to walk down Eighth Street, into the West Village.

CHAS
I best get back to the hotel. It feels like midnight to me already. I don't know how I used to manage this all the bloody time.
JIMI
Okay, well, later, Chas. So, Ray, you want to maybe get something to eat? We could maybe go up to Harlem, eat at the Palm Café, like I used to in the early days.

RAY
Do you think we could?

INT. SUBWAY CAR--DAY

They're on the "A" train. Ray's is the only white face on the train.

JIMI
So, you feel like you're getting anywhere?

RAY
What do you mean?

JIMI
You know. Trying to work out all this about your father dying and everything.

RAY
This isn't about my father. This is about First Rays of the New Rising Sun.

Jimi just looks away.

EXT. A HARLEM STREET--DAY

The sun is still just setting. Ray and Jimi stand in front of a plate glass window that says Palm Café. All around them it's 1970 in Harlem--big cars, people in leopard skin or gold lamé.

JIMI
This is where it all really started for me, you know. I lived up here in Harlem with a lady named Fayne Pridgeon and played down at the Café Wha? in the Village or on the road with Joey Dee or whatever.

RAY
I know that.
JIMI
Yeah, I guess you do. Listen, I don't really think I can eat just now. You go ahead if you like, tell 'em Jimi James said to take care of you.

RAY
No, that's okay. I guess I'm not hungry either.

JIMI
You got someplace you can go to, Ray?

RAY
I guess I hadn't really thought about it.

JIMI
Man, you better start. I got to let you go now, there's someplace I got to be.

A white panel truck without logos or identifying marks is barreling down the street toward them.

RAY
Okay. Listen, do you think I could come by the studio tomorrow, hear some of what you're doing?

JIMI
(sadly)
Just get on that A train, go back downtown, you'll be all right.

The truck is now very close. Ray realizes what's going to happen just a split second before Jimi steps off the curb into the path of the truck.

RAY
Jimi, no!

JIMI
Ray. I'm the one that's got to die when it's time for me to die.

Angle on Ray as the SCREAM of brakes drowns all other sound. Then Ray closes his eyes and steps off the curb as well.
EXT. A PARK--DAY.

Everything is very green. Tall grass waves in a gentle breeze. Ray straightens up from where he's been crouched on the side of a path. He looks ahead of him. There are trees there, and a bench. Jimi is sitting on the bench. Ray walks over and sits next to him.

RAY
Hey, Jimi.

JIMI
Hey, there, Ray.

RAY
Where are we? What is this place?

JIMI
We're dead, Ray.

RAY
Both of us?

JIMI
Afraid so, man.

RAY
Why?

JIMI
What?

RAY
Why are we dead? I tried to save you. Why wouldn't you let me?

JIMI
I had my thing, which was music, and maybe sometimes I could move people in a higher way or something. But it wasn't up to me to save the world, single-handed with just me and my guitar. Why did you think I could?

RAY
Because you're like me. That's what First Rays was all about. You did want to save the world. To heal all the broken places between men and women, black and white, fathers and sons.
JIMI
That is a very beautiful idea and everything, but that is what you wanted that record to be. Some things you can have, some you can't. You got to figure out which is which.

RAY
It's a little late now, isn't it? If I'm dead?

JIMI
Oh, you're dead, all right. But you're here, too, which means there must be some things you haven't let go of yet. You got this idea that somebody owes you justice or something. If you'd been born black in America, you'd have been over that a long time ago.

RAY
So what is it I can have?

JIMI
Your friend Brian's got that song, "Love and Mercy"? I'd say love and mercy was a better bet than justice, for most of us anyway.

Jimi gets up.

JIMI (cont'd)
Okay, well, I got to move along now, Ray. You understand.

RAY
No. I don't understand.

Jimi walks away, talking over his shoulder.

JIMI
Maybe give yourself some time. Get used to being dead.

Ray stands, looking after him as he walks away. Then his attention is captured by SWING MUSIC coming from the other direction: "Don't Be That Way" by Benny Goodman. He follows the music toward another clearing, then slows as he realizes what's ahead.
EXT. ANOTHER CLEARING--DAY

It's Ray's father, of course, Jack Shackleford. He looks about 50, not much older than Ray, who stands looking at him. Jack is in his bathrobe and slippers, and there's an old fashioned console hi-fi across the path from the park bench where he's sitting.

JACK
What are you doing here?

RAY
I'm dead, Pop. Just like you.

JACK
Figures. What did you do, walk in front of a truck?

RAY
Very funny.

JACK
So, did you ever amount to anything? Or were you still farting around fixing record players?

RAY
Fixing record players is not so bad.

Jack looks off into the distance, ignoring him.

RAY (cont'd)
You have to talk to me.

JACK
Have to?

RAY
When you went over the edge. Were you thinking of me at all?

JACK
Not really.

RAY
Did you ever think of me?

Jack shrugs.
RAY (cont'd)
There's things I always wanted to
tell you. Like, before you had
your heart attack, back when I was
in high school, I used to have
dreams about you dying.

This is ultimately hard for Ray, but he's working himself up
to something.

RAY (cont'd)
Usually you died in a car wreck.
But you died over and over.
  (deep breath)
The dreams made me happy. I felt
guilty for it, but they made me
happy. I liked the idea of you
dying. I liked the idea because I
hated you.
  (beat)
I never got to say that to you.

JACK
So what do you want, a medal?

RAY
I just wanted a father. I wanted
to be a kid when it was my time to
be a kid. To make a mistake once
in a while.

JACK
Oh, grow up.

Ray grabs him by the lapels of his robe and shakes him, much
the way Tom shook Ray underwater in Cozumel.

RAY
I am grown up, damn you! I've been
grown up since I was three!

JACK
  (terribly cold)
Let go.

RAY
I can't. I can't let go.

Ray falls to his knees, hands still in his father's robe.
Jack shakes him loose and goes to the hi-fi to change the
record.
The MUSIC becomes distorted as the grass begins to visibly grow around Ray. It accelerates and begins to grow up over him in super-fast motion. He's inside a tunnel of grass, falling.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM IN AUSTIN--DAY

RAY is in bed, gaunt, hooked to an IV and a cardiac monitor. He opens his eyes. He lies there for a very long time, then:

LORI (O.S.)
Ray? Ray, oh thank god.

RAY
Lori?

She sits on the edge of the bed, then carefully puts her arms around him, having to work around tubes and wires as well as take care with his fragile physical condition. Ray puts one hand on her hair, then lets the hand fall as she sits up.

LORI
You've been in a coma for a week. You had a heart attack in the ambulance that brought you here. Your heart stopped. You were dead for a minute and a half.

RAY
I remember dying. How did you--

LORI
I called Dave when I couldn't get you on the phone. He called the cops.

Ray is very weak. He nods and smiles and squeezes her hand, then his eyes close again, involuntarily.

INT. RAY'S HOSPITAL ROOM--NIGHT

Ray wakes again. It's dark except for a night light behind the bed. Lori is asleep in a chair next to him.

RAY
Lori?

LORI
I'm here.
RAY
I was afraid I dreamed you.

LORI
I'm real.

RAY
But are you here to stay?

LORI
Get stronger. We'll talk.

EXT. ST. DAVID'S HOSPITAL--DAY

Lori and Ray are walking around outside. He's wearing sweatpants, a hospital gown, and a sweater. He's weak, but has obviously come a long way from when he first woke up.

RAY
So how long do you think you can keep putting it off?

LORI
Putting what off?

Ray just looks at her, and eventually she gives up the pretence.

LORI (cont'd)
Okay, all right. Ray, I love you, but we haven't resolved anything. I don't know whether I'm going to wake up in the middle of the night and find you in a coma because you got to thinking about your father and decided to go after another lost album.

RAY
That's over.

LORI
You say that but you don't know. And I've spent the last nine years of my life chasing somebody else's dream. I don't even know what I want for myself.

RAY
You're not going back to Tom?
LORI
No. I want to travel. See some friends. I'm thinking I may go back to school, finish my Master's.

RAY
What'll you do for money?

LORI
Tom bought me out when I left.

RAY
If I tried hard enough, could I change your mind?

LORI
Probably. But I don't know what it would do to us in the long run.

RAY
Then I'll have to get by on that. Knowing I could have stopped you. And that you think there's going to be a long run. When are you leaving me?

LORI
The doctor said you'll be ready to go home Thursday. I thought you could drop me at the airport on your way.

RAY
Just say it again, will you? With no buts this time?

LORI
I love you, Ray.

INT. RAY'S HOUSE--DAY

The front door opens and Ray carefully steps inside. From the expression on his face it's obvious the place smells pretty rank. He's carrying a plant from the hospital gift shop and a plastic bag with some personal stuff in it. He sets them on the coffee table in the living room and opens a couple of windows, then looks at the mess--books, dirty clothes, plates with dried food on them.

RAY
Jesus.
He picks up some of the plates and carries them to the kitchen, tries to stack some of the Hendrix books into a pile, but the task is too daunting and he drops onto the couch, his head in his hands.

EXT. RAY'S NEIGHBORHOOD--DAY

Ray is out walking. He moves like an old man, carefully, as if something might snap at any minute.

INT. RAY'S WORKSHOP--DAY

Ray looks a little better. He's got a stereo spread out on the workbench. After a couple of seconds he has to stop and rest.

EXT. RAY'S FRONT YARD--DAY

Ray is mowing the yard, which has gone horribly to seed. He's clearly stronger and heavier than in the preceding shot. He's got his shirt off and he's getting a bit of tan back.

INT. RAY'S HOUSE--NIGHT

A DOORBELL sounds. Ray is on the phone in the kitchen.

    RAY
    Somebody's here, can you hang on?
    (beat) No, please, don't go, just let me see who it is.

Ray leaves the phone on the kitchen table and opens the front door. It's Dave, who looks sheepish. Ray, however, is really glad to see him, and shakes his hand.

    RAY
    Hey, man, come in. I'm on the phone, I'll just be a second.

    DAVE
    I should have let you know I was coming.

    RAY
    Don't be ridiculous.

He picks up the phone again.
RAY (cont'd)
It's Dave. (pause) I will.
(pause) How about if I call you
back? (pause) You can't blame me
for trying. (pause) I love you
too.

He hangs up the phone. It's clear the conversation was not
satisfying.

RAY (cont'd)
Lori says hi. You want something
to drink?

DAVE
Sure. Where is she?

Ray fixes Dave a beer, himself a club soda, while Dave looks
on.

RAY
She won't tell me. But I got a
letter a while ago with a Boston
postmark.

DAVE
No return address?

RAY
She's not going to be that obvious.
But Boston would make sense. She
told me she's in grad school.

DAVE
And there's no way you could track
her down? Hire a private detective
or something?

RAY
Before I can do that, I have to be
able to tell her that what happened
with Brian and Jimi won't ever
happen again.

INT. RAY'S LIVING ROOM--CONTINUOUS

They move back into the living room. Dave picks up an
electric guitar that's leaning against the couch.

DAVE
Yours?
RAY
They say it's never too late. In my case they could be wrong.
Anyway, I guess I'm trying to cut out the middleman.

DAVE
Speaking of...that business with First Rays. That's why I'm here.

Ray nods, acknowledging that the mood has turned serious.

DAVE (cont'd)
I should never have pushed you into going after Hendrix. Christ, I almost killed you.

RAY
I wanted it as much as you did. More.

DAVE
I wanted to say...I'm sorry.

RAY
It doesn't matter. It's over.

DAVE
Is it?

EXT. RAY'S BACK PATIO--NIGHT
Ray is sitting in a lawn chair, holding a boom box that's playing the Beatles' original "Long and Winding Road." He turns off the CD and closes his eyes.

The quiet CHIRP of crickets.

Ray frowns, concentrating. The song doesn't change. Gradually his face relaxes. He opens his eyes and smiles, not without sadness.

INT. RAY'S KITCHEN--NIGHT
Ray stares at the telephone, picks it up, puts it down. He begins to dial a number, from memory, then hangs up after a few digits. He takes a deep breath, then starts again.

TOM (PHONE)
Hello?
RAY
Tom. It's Ray Shackleford.

TOM (PHONE)
You've got balls, I'll give you that. What do you want?

RAY
I need to find Lori.

TOM (PHONE)
You think I know where she is? You think I'd tell you if I did?

RAY
I'm trying to find a friend of hers, a close friend. Someone who lives in Boston. I need a name, an address if you've got one.

TOM (PHONE)
And the reason I should tell you this is...?

RAY
Because you can. Because you have the power.

TOM (PHONE)
I've got the power, all right.

CLICK as Tom hangs up on him. Ray stands, looking at the phone in his hand for a long second, then slowly puts it down.

INT. RAY'S BEDROOM--NIGHT

Ray is asleep. The phone begins to RING. Ray turns on the light, fumbles for the phone, still half asleep.

RAY
Hello?

TOM (PHONE)
There was an envelope in the drawer of the desk.

RAY
Tom?
TOM (PHONE)
I have no idea why I'm doing this.
Barbara Butler, 207 Fenwick Avenue,
Boston 07245.

Another CLICK as he hangs up again. Ray furiously digs for pen and paper in the drawer of his nightstand.

RAY
Barbara Butler, 207 Fenwick Ave.,
Boston 07245. Barbara Butler...

EXT. FENWICK AVE., BOSTON--DAY

One of a row of brick houses in a college neighborhood. Numbers on the wall next to the door say 207. Ray is knocking on the door, just a bit too eagerly. BARBARA answers. She's the same age as Lori and Ray, maybe a bit overweight and frowsy looking.

RAY
You don't know me, but--

BARBARA
You're Ray, aren't you? She's not here.

RAY
Not here as in not in your apartment, or...?

BARBARA
Not in Boston. I'm afraid you've come a long way for nothing.

Ray's shoulders sag with disappointment.

BARBARA (cont'd)
Come on in. You might as well have a cup of coffee before you get back on the plane.

INT. BARBARA'S APARTMENT--DAY

Ray sits at the kitchen table as Barbara gets two cups, fills them with coffee, puts cream in a small pitcher, etc.

RAY
So she, what? Sends you the letters and you mail them for her?
BARBARA
Yes.

RAY
Is she really in school?

BARBARA
Yes, she's really in school.

RAY
Is there some other man?

BARBARA
No. She's in love with you.

RAY
And I'm in love with her. Did she tell you that? Do you think I would have come all this way if I wasn't in love with her?

BARBARA
There could be a lot of other reasons. Hurt feelings, for one. If you thought it was unfair for her to be hiding from you, for instance.

Touché. Ray winces.

BARBARA (cont'd)
That was cheap. I apologize.

RAY
I came here thinking that if she wasn't here I would do whatever I had to in order to get her address from you.

BARBARA
And?

RAY
And I see now that I can't ask you to betray her. I thought I would feel desperate, but instead I just feel...impatient.

BARBARA
What do you mean?
RAY
We've spent so many years without each other.

Barbara drinks her coffee and looks at Ray, obviously liking what she sees. She comes to a decision.

BARBARA
I would never tell you where Lori is. But if I left the room, and you found a letter from her sitting over there on the buffet table, would that be my fault?

Hope has punched Ray in the chest, and he can't speak. Barbara smiles and pushes herself back from the table. Ray's eyes are already on the buffet.

BARBARA
Excuse me for just one second.

She leaves, and Ray pounces on the buffet. There are half a dozen letters there, standing on edge between decorative salt and pepper shakers. Ray's hands shake as he shuffles through them. Then his face shows that he's found it.

The return address is in Austin. She's been only a few miles away from him all this time.

EXT. AUSTIN STREET--DAY

Ray is parked at the curb across from an apartment complex in his pickup. A well-used Datsun pulls up and parks across the street from him. Lori gets out.

Ray gets out of the car, and Lori looks over and sees him. She looks like she's trying to decide whether she should run for it.

LORI
Oh god.

RAY
Wait.

Ray crosses the street toward her, but she backs away. They stand about ten feet apart, on the sidewalk.

LORI
I told you I'm not ready for this.
RAY
Then why did you come back here, right under my nose? Why did you leave a trail I could follow?

LORI
Because I thought you'd do what I asked, and give me time.

Ray stares at her for a couple of seconds, wanting visibly to touch her, but not willing to force himself on her. The hope goes out of his eyes.

LORI (cont'd)
I want to be with you, Ray. But we both have to be ready for this.

RAY
Then you'll have to let me know when you are. Because I'm there.

He walks back to his truck, gets in, and drives away, leaving Lori behind, her face filled with regret.

INT. RAY'S LIVING ROOM--NIGHT
Ray has assembled a new bookshelf in his living room and is stacking Hendrix books on it. He comes across a videotape and looks at it for a second, then takes it over to the VCR. It's the tape of his father's death. He freezes the frame on a shot of Lori standing on the deck of the boat and stares longingly at it for a minute. He starts the tape again and it moves on to the death scene. The two figures start to rise out of the depths, and...

Ray ejects the tape and throws it back in the box.

RAY (v.o.)
Take a broken stereo. Maybe only one channel is working, maybe the sound cuts in and out without warning.

INT. RAY'S WORKSHOP--NIGHT
Ray is working on a stereo. It's quiet except for the SQUEAK of his chair as he shifts his weight, the slight HISS of the flux core as the solder melts on a capacitor.
RAY (v.o.)
Sometimes it seems hopeless. Then you figure out what you've taken for granted that you shouldn't have. And there's your answer. You replace the part, or resolder the joint, and suddenly...there's music.

He lifts his head, startled. There's MUSIC playing somewhere. It's Rosanne Cash singing "The Real Me."

INT. RAY'S LIVING ROOM--NIGHT
MUSIC is louder now. He crosses through the kitchen and opens the sliding glass door.

EXT. RAY'S BACK PATIO--NIGHT
Lori is on the patio, sitting in the lawn chair, with the same jam box she had in Cozumel sitting next to her.

Ray stands in the doorway looking at her, happy and relieved to see her, but still smarting from their last conversation.

RAY
You have to tell me what this means.

LORI
It means love is going to come whenever it damn well pleases and I was wrong to try and control that. It means I missed you. So I decided to have mercy on you.

RAY
(startled)
What?

LORI
Sorry. Just making a little joke. I said--

RAY
Love and mercy.

LORI
Isn't that the title of one of your friend Brian's songs?
RAY
Yes, it is.

Ray is thinking of what Jimi told him, and he's smiling.

LORI
So are you just going to stand there and look at me all night?

RAY
Would you mind terribly?

LORI
Take all the time you need.

He holds out one hand, and she takes it and stands up. She moves into his arms and they begin to dance. We slowly move upward and away, in a kind of reverse of the opening shot, until Ray and Lori disappear in the darkness.

FADE OUT