THE BEST LITTLE WHOREHOUSE IN TEXAS

Revised Final Draft Screenplay

by

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OPENING TITLE CARDS

After the Universal logo, we open on a slow pan across a turn-of-the-century dressing table. We see old photographs showing a small group of whores with their madam, MISS WULLA JEAN, and the Sheriff of the small town of Gilbert, SHERIFF JACK ROY WALLACE. There are also mementos on the dressing table: a watch, reading glasses, a jeweled hand mirror, a hair brush, etc. We play the "Production Company", the "Miller-Milkis-Boyett Presents" and the "Film By" credits over these things and then push in on an antique stereopticon with the double photo image of a small, newly built, two-story Victorian house situated on a wooded hill in the East Texas countryside.

The two images optically move together to form one image. They become live action and the NARRATOR begins as we push in on the house where a horse and wagon is pulling up to the porch.

NARRATOR

It was the nicest little whorehouse you ever saw. It lay about a mile outside the city limits.

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EXT. CHICKEN RANCH - DAY - 1910

Sheriff Jack Roy Wallace and Miss Wulla Jean pose with the girls on the front porch of the house as a photographer takes their picture with an old flash-powder camera.

NARRATOR

Sheriff Jack Roy Wallace picked it out for Miss Wulla Jean and her girls in 1910 when they moved there from over the hardware store on Main Street.

We pan down through the leaves of a tree to reveal two girls working in a little garden by the side of the house. It has the appearance of a turn-of-the-century ladies college as the other girls cut flowers, sit around the grape arbor and sun-dry their long hair.

(NOTE: We can bleed in the color slowly beginning with black and white, then sepia, then full color during the 1940's.)
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NARRATOR

(singing)
Oh, the little house lay in a
Green Texas glade
Where the trees were as coolin'
As fresh lemonade
Soft summer wind
Had a trace of perfume
And a fan was turnin'
In every room.

INT. CHICKEN RANCH - DAY - 1900

We see the old ceiling fans turning, followed by several
shots through the fans of the girls making love under the
sheets, squeaking mattress shots, bouncing bedsprings, with
a chamber pot under the bed.

CHORUS
Twenty fans were turnin'
They were turnin'
Twenty fans were turnin'
In every room
Fevers were a-burnin'
They were burnin'
And they had to have
A way to cool down.

INT. CHICKEN RANCH - NIGHT - 1914

Miss Wulla Jean stands at the front door welcoming customers
entering the house. We see the keys of a pianola start
playing ragtime as the girls and customers break into a
turn-of-the-century-style dance.

NARRATOR
Miss Wulla Jean had a strict set of
rules but she liked her ladies, as
she called them, to treat her
customers real good.

The dancing continues, as Miss Wulla Jean makes sure her
girls are behaving in a ladylike way.

NARRATOR
She put a pianola in the parlor to
sorta help break the ice. A feller
could ask a girl to dance or if he
held back a little, she'd ask him.
And pretty soon they'd get a little
business going -- two dollars worth.

The dance ends with a couple upstairs falling into bed.
EXT. CHICKEN RANCH - NIGHT - 1914
Doughboys are coming and going.

NARRATOR
By the First World War, it was one of the better-known pleasure palaces in all Texas.

INT. CHICKEN RANCH KITCHEN - DAY - 1914
A girl takes a cookie sheet from the kitchen oven and walks out to the garden.

NARRATOR
And as the girls baked cookies....

EXT. CHICKEN RANCH GARDEN - DAY - 1914
The girl passes by other girls knitting socks, packing cookies, writing letters and wrapping bandages for the Red Cross.

NARRATOR
...and knitted socks for the guys at the front, the soldiers there bragged of the little house back home.

MALE CHORUS
(singing)
It had nice watermelons
All covered with vines
And a vegetable garden
A few slender pines
White painted fence
With the roses in bloom
And a fan was turnin'
In every room.

INT. A ROOM IN THE CHICKEN RANCH - NIGHT - 1918
A girl is washing a DOUGHBOY'S privates in a hand basin.

NARRATOR
Miss Wulla Jean insisted that each girl check her customer real good for the clap and wash him off with soap and warm water. Some of the fellas claimed that was the best part.

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DOUGHBOY

Ooooweeeee!
The Doughboy takes off his hat and throws it off screen right.

INT. CHICKEN RANCH PARLOR - DAY - 1920

The hat (now a straw boater) lands on a hat tree standing in the parlor. The Doughboy (now with longer hair) is welcomed by Wulla Jean at the front door.

INT. CHICKEN RANCH PARLOR - NIGHT - 1920

We pull back from a new phonograph to reveal couples dancing around it -- letter-sweatered college boys and bow-tied businessmen.

NARRATOR

When the war ended, Miss Wulla Jean celebrated with a new phonograph in the parlor.

The girls Charleston with their customers and we intercut with the bouncing beds upstairs.

INT. AN UPSTAIRS ROOM IN THE CHICKEN RANCH - DAY - 1920

A half-dressed couple ends the dance by kicking the door closed. The music fades out and a plaintive harmonica takes over. We pan to an open window and see the dilapidated grape arbor, while wind and dust blow across the landscape.

NARRATOR

But prosperity blew away like a dust storm and in came the Hoover Depression.

EXT. CHICKEN RANCH - DAY - 1930'S

Extreme long shot of the little house looking very bleak. A hot, dusty wind is blowing as an old, broken-down car makes its way down the long drive away from the house.

INT. A ROOM IN THE CHICKEN RANCH - DAY - 1930'S

A GIRL shuts the window, closing out the blowing wind. She turns to a young farmer, who is carrying a gunny sack.

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GIRL
Now, I'm sorry, honey. I gotta have my three dollars first.
Miss Wulla Jean don't allow no honeyfuggin' 'til I pay my rent.

The farmer picks up the sack and reaches inside.

NARRATOR
It wasn't always easy to come up with three dollars, especially during the hard times.

The farmer pulls a chicken out of the bag and holds it up proudly for barter. The Girl sighs:

GIRL
Well, you just keep that in the bag and I'll take it out back soon as we're finished.

INT. CHICKEN RANCH PARLOR - NIGHT - 1930'S

We see some girls accepting payment from three farmers with chickens on their laps.

NARRATOR
And so the girls began accepting poultry in trade -- one bird, one lay....

EXT. CHICKEN RANCH - DAY - 1930'S

The girls are feeding the chickens and as we pull back we see they have built a temporary pen full of several hundred birds.

NARRATOR
And that's how the place got its name -- The Chicken Ranch!

INT. CHICKEN RANCH PARLOR - NIGHT - 1940'S

The camera pulls back from the new jukebox where couples are jitterbugging around it to a big band sound.

Miss Wulla Jean nails up a wartime portrait of F.D.R. in the hallway.

A bugle calls and upstairs a young customer jumps out of bed.

The girls and their guests, now dressed in World War II uniforms, dance down the steps and out the front door.
INT. CHICKEN RANCH KITCHEN - DAY - 1940'S

In a replay of the 1914 cookie-baking sequence, a girl takes a cookie sheet from the oven and walks outside.

EXT. CHICKEN RANCH GARDEN - DAY - 1940'S

Out in the victory garden, the girls, thirty years later, are still doing their patriotic bit for the boys at the front. One of the girls, sealing a letter with a lipstick kiss, turns off-screen at the sound of an approaching car.

EXT. CHICKEN RANCH - DAY - 1950'S

Fifties-style music accompanies the arrival of a convertible full of crew cut college boys. They pull up to the porch as a young black woman called JEWEL waves them a welcome.

INT. CHICKEN RANCH - DAY - 1950'S

Jewel takes the boys' money and they file through the front door joining other customers dancing rock and roll in the parlor. Miss Wulla Jean is replacing Truman's picture with Eisenhower's.

INT. A ROOM IN THE CHICKEN RANCH - NIGHT - 1950'S

Three guys, careful to keep their ducktail hairdo's neatly combed, dance with their girls and somersault them into bed.

INT. CHICKEN RANCH - DAY - 1960'S

Jewel passes a portrait of Kennedy as she walks over to Sheriff Jack Roy and his deputies leaving with two low-life characters they have just arrested. Miss Wulla Jean congratulates him, while in the parlor customers dance to the jukebox.

INT. CHICKEN RANCH - DAY - 1960'S

Jewel and Miss Wulla Jean are at the "Presidential Wall" taking down the picture of L.B.J. Miss Wulla Jean ages from standing with a cane to sitting in a wheelchair while we see cuts of Jewel putting up Nixon and taking him down, putting up Ford and taking him down, and then finally, at Miss Wulla Jean's insistance, putting up L.B.J. to be nailed to the wall and left there permanently.

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NARRATOR
For over three generations the little house went about its business while the town prospered, and those folks that couldn't approve of the Chicken Ranch at least decided it fell under the principle of peaceful coexistence.

Miss Wulla Jean nods with satisfaction at her favorite Texas president, puts down her stereopticon on the hall table and Jewel wheels her away. We push in on the stereopticon and see it contains the old sepia shot of the little house taken so many long years ago.

NARRATOR
Course, if you grew up anywhere in Texas, you knew at an early age that they were selling something out there other than poultry.

EXT. CHICKEN RANCH - DAY - PRESENT

The helicopter shot. As we swoop across the countryside and up toward the little house on the hill, the music becomes wilder and picks up speed. Two cars, a farmer's pickup and an Army jeep are flying up the old dirt road to the front of the house.

CHORUS
Twenty fans were turnin'
They were turnin'
Twenty fans were turnin'
In every room
Fevers were a-burnin'
They were burnin'
And they had to have
A way to cool down.

INT. CHICKEN RANCH - DAY - PRESENT

The customers come in the door and, grabbing the girls, do the Texas Twist dance through the house.

CHORUS
Twenty fans were hummin'
They were hummin'
Twenty fans were hummin'
In every room
Customers were comin'
They were comin'
And they had to have
A way to cool down.
EXT. CHICKEN RANCH - NIGHT - PRESENT

Customers and girls dance in the open back courtyard, while upstairs fans are turning at a faster speed and the beds are bouncing to their rhythm.

CHORUS
Twenty fans were turnin'
They were turnin'
Twenty fans were turnin'
In every room.
Fevers were a-burnin'
They were burnin'
And they had to have
A way to cool down.

EXT. CHICKEN RANCH - SUNRISE - PRESENT

The satisfied customers are leaving, getting into the collegiate Volkswagons and executive Pontiacs.

JEWEL
Y'all come back now, hear?

The customers respond to Jewel's cry as if asked for an encore, and so...they turn and run into the house, nearly knocking Jewel over in the process.

INT. CHICKEN RANCH - VARIOUS ROOMS - NIGHT - PRESENT

The music doubles in tempo and so do the fans. A montage of fun filled sexual shenanigans, cutting from the dancing in the parlor to the bouncing beds upstairs.

CHORUS
Twenty fans were turnin'
They were turnin'
Twenty fans were turnin'
In every room.
Fevers were a-burnin'
They were burnin'
And they had to have
A way to cool down.

Twenty fans were hummin'
They were hummin'
Twenty fans were hummin'
In every room.
Customers were comin'
They were comin'
And they had to have
A way to cool down.
INT. A ROOM IN THE CHICKEN RANCH - DAWN

A cowboy, still wearing his hat in bed, is ecstatically coming to a climax.

EXT. A ROOM IN THE CHICKEN RANCH - DAWN

His shadow is silhouetted on the window shade and we hear his excited Voice.

VOICE
I'm comin'!! I'm comin'!! Thank you. Thank you, Jesus.

We pan off the window up to the metal rooster weather vane on the roof and as the morning sun breaks across the horizon, the names of our stars flash across the screen....

Burt Reynolds...
Dolly Parton...
The Best Little Whorehouse in Texas!

EXT. MISCELLANEOUS SHOTS OF TEXAS - DAY

The rest of the Main Title Credits play over beautiful vistas of the East Texas countryside while the orchestra gives a zippy taste of some of the songs to come.

EXT. GILBERT COURTHOUSE - DAY

We pan down from the sky, past the Texas flag and take a full shot of the Gilbert town square.

NARRATOR
When Sheriff Jack Roy Wallace retired, about ten years ago now, Deputy Ed Earl Dodd was elected to the job. Everybody likes Ed Earl....

EXT. POINDEXTER'S USED CAR LOT - DAY

The mayor, RUFUS P. POINDEXTER, is showing a car to a potential customer while the customer's wife kicks the tires.

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NARRATOR
The mayor, Rufus P. Poindexter, leans on him to keep the town running peacefully....

INT. GILBERT GAZETTE OFFICES - DAY

EDSEL MACKEY is pulling the proof pages off the presses.

NARRATOR
Edsel Mackey, the editor of the Gilbert Gazette, has supported Ed Earl in every campaign....

INT. DULCIE MAE'S CAFE - DAY

DULCIE MAE, a not unattractive widow in her early forties, is supervising the breakfast.

NARRATOR
And over at the cafe, the owner, Miss Dulcie Mae...well she is kind of prejudiced cause everyone knows she's been stuck on Ed Earl for years, ever since her husband passed away. She has a fine son, Billy, and....

Dulcie Mae is pouring coffee and she looks off at someone shouting in the town square. The customers look off, too.

NARRATOR
Hmmm...What's that commotion out there?

EXT. GILBERT COURTHOUSE - DAY

THREE NESTERS playing dominoes in the gazebo turn their heads and look off as a hysterical MODENE ENNIS, sporting a tight new permanent hairdo, runs across the street and up the steps of the courthouse.

MODENE
Dammit! Dammit!

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NARRATOR

Oh, it's that town troublemaker,
Modene Ennis, heading up to
Ed Earl's office to give him a hard
time again.

INT. SHERIFF'S OFFICE - DAY

Modene dashes down the corridor, screaming.

MODENE

Ed Earl! Ed Earl!

She walks through the swinging door, past a startled
RITA CROWELL, Ed Earl's gray-haired secretary.

MODENE

Morning, Rita.

DEPUTY FRED WILKINS is coming out of Ed Earl's office. He
is swept back inside by the force of Modene's entrance.

MODENE

Morning, Deputy Fred.

She plants herself in front of the sheriff's desk, where
ED EARL, leaning back in his chair, is whittling chains from
a block of wood. Behind his desk hang portraits of all nine
County Sheriffs ending with Jack Roy Wallace and Ed Earl
Dodd.

MODENE

Ed Earl, now listen up. You've got
yourself a problem.

Ed Earl looks up and tips his hat back on his head.

ED EARL

Morning, Miss Modene.

MODENE

It just ain't right for Tucker
Faylin to keep on doing this. I've
talked to him. I've talked to
you. There is a law in this
county, Sheriff, and it's up to you
to see that it's carried out.

Ed Earl stands up and grabs his gun and holster.

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ED EARL
I'll take care of it.

DEPUTY FRED
Do you want me to bring the rifle?

ED EARL
Put it down, Fred. I've handled this situation before.

EXT. BEAUTY SHOP - DAY

A mule is standing in front of Miss Modene's car, with his behind sitting on the highly-polished hood. A few townspeople have gathered around to look at the bizarre sight.

Ed Earl, with his guns strapped on, looking like he's going out to meet Billy the Kid, walks across the street from the Courthouse. Behind him are Rita and Deputy Fred; while Miss Modene, keeping up beside him, continues to babble.

MODENE
I came out of the beauty shop and there he was, standing right in front of my car. I tried to back up, but I couldn't, so I went forward slowly, figuring that he'd move, but he just buckled up his back legs and sat right down on my hood.

The group stops as Modene points at her predicament. Ed Earl is not fazed at all. He walks up to the mule and addresses him, man to man.

ED EARL
Mornin', mule. I'm Sheriff Ed Earl Dodd and I've got a request here for you to, pardon the expression, move your ass.

INT. BARBER SHOP - DAY

MANSEL, the barber, is giving C.J. VERNON, the insurance salesman, his morning shave. C.J. looks out the window.

C.J.
What's going on out there?

CONTINUED
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MANSEL
Ed Earl's talking to that jackass again.

C.J.
You mean the mule or Miss Modene?

They both laugh and settle back.

EXT. BEAUTY SHOP - DAY

Ed Earl continues addressing the mule.

ED EARL
I'm sorry you're taking it this way. I don't want to lose my temper because, as folks will tell you, that can be real trouble.

MODENE
Sheriff, you got to get him off there. Where's Tucker Faylin?

DEPUTY FRED
Why don't you give him a tug?

ED EARL
Shut up, Fred. Now, listen, mule. I don't want to get physical with you. I want to be real polite. So, I'm asking you for the last time...Move!

The mule stares back at him and is singularly unimpressed. Ed Earl gives up.

ED EARL
Okay. If that's your decision.

He takes a cheroot from his breast pocket and puts it in his mouth. He strikes a match on his belt buckle and lights the cigar. Modene is very agitated at Ed Earl's calm and his lack of progress.

MODENE
What are you going to do, Sheriff? I'm expected back home.

Ed Earl walks out of frame. A quick cut of the mule's tail being lifted off the hood. The mule looks over his shoulder to see what's happening.

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MODENE
Sheriff, are you listening to me?

LOUISE MAPLES, an elderly lady of the town and a staunch supporter of Ed Earl, butts in.

LOUISE
Hush, Modene. The Sheriff knows what he's doing.

MODENE
Don't hush me, Louise. I've spent fifteen dollars on this permanent and I'm so upset it's beginning to lose its shape.

The sudden loud whinny of the mule startles them both. Deputy Fred and Rita back up in fright.

INT. BARBER SHOP - DAY

Mansel and C.J. look out the window.

INT. GAZEBO - DAY

The three nesters look up from their game.

EXT. GILBERT TOWN SQUARE - DAY

A long shot of the mule as it gallops wildly across the town square.

INT. DULCIE MAE'S CAFE - DAY

Dulcie Mae glances up from the counter as Ed Earl enters and sits down.

DULCIE MAE
Morning, Ed Earl.

ED EARL
Morning, Dulcie.

She begins to pour him a cup of coffee.

DULCIE MAE
I heard all that noise out there. How did you get that animal to move?

ED EARL
Well, Dulcie Mae, the way to handle an animal is like my daddy used to tell me. He used to say....

CONTINUED
CONTINUED

There's a crash from the kitchen and the COOK comes running in.

COOK
You won't believe what I saw.

DULCIE MAE

What's that?

COOK
I just saw a mule run by my window blowing cigar smoke out of his ass.

Dulcie Mae looks at Ed Earl. He picks up his coffee.

ED EARL
That's what my daddy told me.

Dulcie Mae laughs.

EXT. CHICKEN RANCH - NIGHT

The sun goes down over a long shot of the Chicken Ranch.

NARRATOR
Just about the time Ed Earl took over his job as Sheriff, Miss Wulla Jean passed away.

INT. CHICKEN RANCH PARLOR - NIGHT

Jewel, now more mature, is greeting customers at the front door and taking their money. Miss Wulla Jean's black crepe draped portrait hangs on the wall and couples are still dancing to the old jukebox in the front parlor.

NARRATOR
She bequeathed her place in her will to her favorite working girl, Mona Stangley, who, you might say, had worked her way up from the bottom....

INT. CHICKEN RANCH - UPSTAIRS - NIGHT

The door opens and, from a low angle, we see a glamorous pair of legs walk along the corridor.

NARRATOR
No one knew much about her, where she came from or why, but they did know she ran the same tight ship and carried on the same tradition of quality.
INT. CHICKEN RANCH - DOWNSTAIRS - NIGHT

We follow the woman until she turns at the top landing. Customers at the front door turn their heads and look up. MONA STANGLLEY, gloriously gowned, smiles a welcome and begins walking down the stairs.

MONA
(singing)
It's just a little old
Bitty pissant country place
Ain't nothin' much to see
No drinking allowed
We get a nice quiet crowd
Plain as it can be.

It's just a piddly squattin' ole
Time country place
Ain't nothin' too high-toned
Jes' lots of good will
And maybe one small thrill
But there's nothing dirty goin' on!

GIRLS AND BOYS
Nothin' dirty goin' on.

Miss Mona walks into the parlor.

MONA
We get simple farmers
Local businessmen
Congress folks from Austin
Young boys lookin' for sin
Now we used to get a lot of roughnecks
When the oil boom was high
But payday'd get a little rowdy
Thank God the field run dry.

MONA AND THE GIRLS
It's just a little bitty pissant
Country place
Nothin' much to see
No drinkin' allowed
We get a nice quiet crowd
Plain as it can be.

It's just a piddly squattin'
Old time country place
Nothin' too high-toned
Jes' lots of good will
And maybe one small thrill
But there's nothin' dirty goin' on!

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MONA
I don't hire no married girls
They're not on the ball
'Cause they got homes and husbands
They're not stable at all
'Cause they don't understand a thing
About a proper business day
Now what's the point of
Openin' up the store
If you give the goods away?
It's just a little bitty pissant
Country place
Nothin' much to see
No drinkin' allowed
We get a nice quiet crowd
Plain as it can be.

A girl in the back nudges a guy to keep his hip flask hidden in his jacket.

MONA AND JEWEL
It's just a piddly squattin'
Old time country place
Nothin' too high-toned
Jes' lots of good will
And maybe one small thrill
But there's nothin' dirty goin' on!

INT. CHICKEN RANCH DINING ROOM - DAY

All the girls, in their nighties and bathrobes, are down for breakfast, seated at the big table. The Cook has a helper, but Jewel is in charge of serving.

MONA
Keep your language clean, girls
Keep your bedrooms neat
Don't hang around the town cafe
Or say 'hi' on the street.

Mind your P's and Q's
And manners
And you don't need no other tools
'Cause every girl who lives here knows
My special no-no rules.

CONTINUED
JEWEL
Yeah, every girl who lives here knows
Miss Mona's no-no rules.

MONA
Ruby Rae, start 'em.

RUBY RAE
Beds are not to be wallowed in
That's the kind of thing
That big fat lazy hogs do.

MONA
And it don't make money. Beatrice....

BEATRICE
And I won't tolerate no tyin'
Up my telephone with other
People's business.

MONA
Eloise, honey....

ELOISE
And please don't show us
No tattoos, no hearts and flowers
On your thigh.

MONA
It's downright tacky.

GINGER, DURLA AND ANGEL
Brands belong on cattle
And that ain't what we're
Sellin' at Miss Mona's.

MONA
Do you catch my drift?
I pay the food and the rent
And the utilities
You keep your mind on your work
Responsibilities
Don't let your mouth overload your
Capabilities
And we can get along...Dawn....

DAWN
Any bad habits you come in with
Get rid of right now.
CONTINUED - 2

MONA

Taddy Jo....

TADDY JO

I can't stand no chewin' gum
It looks just like a cow.

MONA

Linda Lou....

LINDA LOU

Anyone takin' sick leave
Oughta be real sure they're sick.

MONA

And every time you hear that bell....

Jewel rings the bell prominently displayed in the hall at
the bottom of the stairs.

MONA AND GIRLS

Better get here double quick!

EXT. CHICKEN RANCH GARDEN - DAY

It's the afternoon free time and while the girls lounge
around outside in their day wear, Miss Mona continues
singing.

MONA

And as for pimps, pimps are somethin'
You don't need to get your daily
Business done
Are you listenin' good?
So keep those leeches and bloodsuckers
Off the back road
I know how to use a gun
No one messes with my girls.

One girl practices the flute, another ballet, another yoga,
while another girl is sitting on the wooden swing reading a
book "How To Make Money In Real Estate".

MONA

And any questions you might have
About the way I run this place
Don't gripe and whine
Behind my back
Just tell me face-to-face
I'm open-minded
Say it all.
Then go upstairs and pack
The door's thata way.
INT. CHICKEN RANCH - UPSTAIRS - NIGHT

The girls start coming out of their rooms and begin dancing downstairs.

GIRLS
She pays the food and the rent and the Utilities
We keep our mind on our work Responsibilities
Don't let your mouth overload your Capabilities.

INT. CHICKEN RANCH - TV PARLOR - NIGHT

Mona pushes the sliding doors aside and steps out to greet a group of conventioneers.

MONA
And we can get along.
(talking)
Howdy, boys. Welcome to the Chicken Ranch.

MEN
Hello...
Howdy, Miss Mona...
Nice to see you....

MONA
Come on over here, I'd like you to meet my girls.

INT. CHICKEN RANCH - DOWNSTAIRS - NIGHT

The music changes as the girls vamp down the stairs in a slow line, draped across the banister.

GIRLS
It's just a little bitty pissant
Country place
Nothin' much to see
No drinkin' allowed
We get a nice quiet crowd
Plain as it can be.
CONTINUED

GIRLS (Cont'd)
It's just a piddly squattin' old time
Country place
Nothin' too high-toned
Jes' lots of good will
And maybe one small thrill
But there's nothin' dirty goin' on.

Suddenly the place is full of customers who pair off with the girls and begin dancing.

MONA, GIRLS, AND BOYS
It's just a little bitty pissant
Country place
Nothin' much to see
No drinkin' allowed
We get a nice quiet crowd
Plain as it can be.

It's just a piddly squattin' old time
Country place
Nothin' too high-toned.

The girls begin taking their customers up the stairs as the tempo doubles.

MONA AND GIRLS
Jes' lots of good will
And maybe one small thrill.

JEWEL AND BOYS
Jes' lots of good will
And maybe one small thrill.

MONA, GIRLS AND BOYS
Jes' lots of good will
And maybe one small thrill.

MONA
But there's nothin' dirty goin' on.

INT. CHICKEN RANCH - UPSTAIRS - NIGHT

The girls come running up the stairs and take their guests inside their rooms.

GIRLS AND BOYS
Nothin' dirty goin' on!

All doors slam.
EXT. CHICKEN RANCH - SUNRISE

A rooster standing on a fence post crows to greet the rising sun. Last night's guests come straggling out, feeling spent but happy. The girls yawn and stretch and wave good-bye from the porch or the upstairs windows. Everybody looks very contented.

NARRATOR
And so the Chicken Ranch continued to live in peace with the town and the folks there took secret pride in the oldest established, permanently operating, non-floating whorehouse in Texas...that is, until about a year ago last Thanksgiving.

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD - DAY

In a cloud of dust, Ed Earl speeds his sheriff's car down a country road.

INT. SHERIFF'S CAR - DAY

Ed Earl looks very agitated as if he were chasing a criminal. He glances at his watch and steps on the gas.

INT. SHERIFF'S OUTER OFFICE - DAY

Rita, seated at her desk, has finished writing out a receipt.

RITA
I can't tell you how thrilled we are with this contribution, Miss Mona. Here's your receipt.

She hands the receipt to Mona, who is standing at the counter in front of her.

MONA
Thank you, Rita.

RITA
Those kids will be so excited. And the Mayor, too. Why, the town council will probably vote you another plaque.

CONTINUED
Mona

I hope not, Rita. I've got a closet full of them now.

Dulcie Mae steps in from the corridor and stops when she sees Mona.

Rita

Hello, Dulcie Mae. You know Miss Mona.

Dulcie Mae

Yes, of course. We've met. Mornin'.

Mona

How are you?

Rita

Isn't this wonderful. Miss Mona has capped the goal for the Little League Fund Campaign.

Dulcie Mae

How nice. On behalf of my son and his teammates, I'd like to thank you.

Mona

Tell them I'll be well repaid when they take the championship this year. Good-bye, Rita.

Mona starts for the door.

Rita

I'm sorry the Sheriff wasn't here to thank you. He drove over to Meritsville. He'll be gone all afternoon.

Mona

Well, tell him I said hi.

(by Dulcie)

'Bye.

Dulcie Mae

'Bye.

Rita

'Bye.

Mona leaves.
EXT. A COUNTRY ROAD - DAY
Ed Earl continues racing across the countryside.

EXT. GILBERT TOWN SQUARE - DAY
Mona is getting into her car as Deputy Fred drives up.

DEPUTY FRED
Hello, Miss Mona. Nice to see you.

MONA
Hello, Deputy Fred. You keeping an eye on my place at night?

DEPUTY FRED
Sure are. The Sheriff's real particular about the security out there.

MONA
Well, some night when you're not on duty you drop on by. I'm sure the girls would like to show their appreciation.

DEPUTY FRED
Oh, Miss Mona, shucks. You know I'm a married man.

MONA
Now, Fred, you think the cows don't appreciate the time off when the bull goes on over to the next pasture?

DEPUTY FRED
(blushing)
Oh, Miss Mona.

Mona laughs and drives out of town.

EXT. A COUNTRY ROAD - DAY
A closeup of Ed Earl as he continues driving.

EXT. A COUNTRY ROAD - DAY
His Sheriff's car speeds past camera.
EXT. ED EARL'S HOUSE - DAY

Ed Earl turns his car off the highway and drives up to the front porch of a house. He gets out.

INT. ED EARL'S LIVING ROOM - DAY

Ed Earl strides across the living room to the bedroom, sees a jacket flung over a chair, fingers it for a moment, smiles to himself, then flings open the bedroom door.

INT. ED EARL'S BEDROOM - DAY

Ed Earl stops in the doorway and his face falls at what he sees.

ED EARL

Dammit!

We cut and see a figure lying in bed in the darkened room. The lights turn on. Mona is lying in his bed with a sheet pulled up coyly to her chin. She smiles at him.

MONA

What's the matter?

ED EARL

You've gotten into bed already.

MONA

So?

ED EARL

I've told you a hundred times, watching you undress is the best part.

MONA

The best part?

ED EARL

Well, maybe not the best part, but certainly in the top two.

MONA

Well then, Ed Earl....

She throws off the sheet and we see that she's lying in bed fully clothed. Ed Earl laughs.

CONTINUED
CONTINUED

ED EARL
I'm glad I was late.

MONA
Me too.

He starts toward the bed, but she bounces out and picks up a package from her tote bag.

MONA
Now, just hold it for a second. I've got a surprise for you. I picked up a package this morning from the post office. It's the latest thing from Frederick's of Hollywood.

She holds up a black shorty negligee. He isn't very impressed.

ED EARL
Not much to it.

MONA
I think I can fill it out.

She goes into the bathroom. He laughs and shouts after her.

ED EARL
I'll bet you can.

He quickly undoes his tie and takes off his shirt.

ED EARL
I swear to God, Mona, there ain't a woman in the world that can get me as excited as you can.

MONA (v.o.)
Even after all these years we been meeting like this?

ED EARL
Every year with you, darlin', is like a minute of sheer happiness.

MONA (v.o.)
That's very sweet, Ed Earl.

ED EARL
Well, you bring out the romantic in me.

CONTINUED
He undoes his belt and drops his pants. He looks up as Mona appears in the doorway. She looks stunning in her black negligee.

ED EARL
Woweee! That was quick.

MONA
I've had a lot of practice getting in and out of my clothes. What do you think?

She models it for him.

ED EARL
Hot damn, Mona, it makes me feel real sexy.

MONA
You don't look very sexy.

ED EARL
(taken aback)
What do you mean? I look like I always look.

MONA
That's the problem. It's those damn boxer shorts. I can't stand the look of those droopy white drawers.

ED EARL
These? What's the matter with them? I always wear boxer shorts. I've worn them for years.

MONA
They look it.

ED EARL
This is a brand new pair. And what do you mean I don't look sexy? People have always said I look sexy. They say I have a sexy quality.

MONA
You do, but those boxer shorts don't. Now, look here. This is what I ordered expressly for you.
She takes a pair of black jockey shorts from her tote bag. He shuffles over to her with his pants still around his boots and takes a look at them.

ED EARL
Looks like a Japanese sling shot.

MONA
It's a pair of jockey shorts with little silver snaps on the side.

ED EARL
I'm not getting into those. They'd kill me.

MONA
They cost me twenty dollars, plus postage, Ed Earl, and I want you to wear them.

ED EARL
Twenty dollars for that little thing? You got screwed.

MONA
Come on, Ed Earl.

ED EARL
I'm not putting them on.

MONA
If they look half as good as I think they will, you won't have to keep them on for long.

ED EARL
Mona, I'm not going to wear that thing. They're ridiculous. They're embarrassing.

MONA
They're sexy.

ED EARL
I said 'no' and that's the end of it.

MONA
Okay, then I'm getting dressed.

ED EARL
Okay, I'll put them on.
CONTINUED - 4

He grabs them and, still shuffling, makes his way into the bathroom.

ED EARL
(muttering)
Damn. They'll be like putting two bowling balls in a marble sack.

Mona laughs and takes the phone off the hook. She goes to a closet and brings out a pillow.

MONA
I saw Dulcie Mae in town today.

Ed Earl talks from the bathroom.

ED EARL (v.o.)
Oh, yeah?

MONA
I expect you're going out to her place for Thanksgiving dinner?

ED EARL (v.o.)
Don't I always?

MONA
Well, you better start checking that turkey, 'cause there's a hook inside that's gonna land you right over at the wedding chapel.

ED EARL (v.o.)
Not me, Mona. I don't believe in that stuff. It don't work out.

MONA
Amen to that.

Ed Earl sticks his head out around the door.

ED EARL
Ready?

MONA
I'm always ready.
Like a flash, Ed Earl runs out of the bathroom across the room, jumps into bed and pulls the sheet up to his chin. Mona laughs.

    MONA
    Oh, Ed Earl. Is that it?

    ED EARL
    Yeah. How was it?

    MONA
    But I hardly saw them.

    ED EARL
    That's too bad, because I ain't going to parade around this room like some damn model.

    MONA
    Come on, Ed Earl. Do it for me.

    No.

    ED EARL
    I just want to take a look at them.

    No.

Mona lifts up the bottom of the sheet.

    MONA
    Come on, just a little peek.

    No.

ED EARL

She puts her hand under the sheet. Ed Earl jumps up.

    MONA
    Mona!

Mona withdraws her hand and holds up the shorts in triumph.

CONTINUED
MONA
That's what the little silver snaps are for.

ED EARL
(laughing)
Come on over here and let me put a lip-lock on you. Ooops! Wait! I've gotta brush my teeth.

He grabs the bedspread, wraps it around himself and hobbles into the bathroom. Mona laughs.

MONA
Oh, Ed Earl, I like a lot of things, but these afternoons with you have got to top the list.

ED EARL
Sing it to me, honey.

MONA
(singing)
I like fancy frilly things
High-heeled shoes and diamond rings
Ragtime bands and western swing
And sneakin' around with you.

ED EARL
(singing)
I like beer and rodeos
Detective books and dominoes
Football games and Cheerios
And sneakin' around with you.

TOGETHER
Sneakin' around with you
Goin' a round or two
Doin' what lovers do
Whenever we're sneaking around.

MONA
I like lots of cash on hand
And dirty jokes about the Fuller Brush Man.

ED EARL
I like stuff I understand
Like sneakin' around with you.
MONA
I like a thrill that has no strings.

ED EARL
Friendship that don't ever change.

MONA
And laughter from the joy of things.

TOGETHER
And sneakin' around with you
We're just sneakin' around
We're not chained and bound
Sharin' the ups and downs
Of lovers sneakin' around.

MONA
Oh, I like drive-in picture shows
Kissin' long and lovin' slow.

ED EARL
The secret places lovers go
Whenever they're sneakin' around
I like the crazy things we try.

MONA
And the sexy things we fantasize.

ED EARL
And makin' out in broad daylight.

TOGETHER
Sneakin' around with you
Sneakin' around with you
Keepin' it all brand new
Gettin' the best of you
Whenever we're sneakin' around.

ED EARL
Sneakin' around that's all.

MONA
I'm gonna lay down the law.

TOGETHER
Watchin' the rise and fall
Of lovers sneakin' around.

CONTINUED
CONTINUED - 8

ED EARL
We're just sneakin' around.

TOGETHER
We're just sneakin'....

The song ends with them sitting on the edge of the bed just about to kiss. But this kiss is interrupted by a sudden loud knocking.

EXT. ED EARL'S HOUSE - DAY

Deputy Fred is knocking at the front door.

DEPUTY FRED
Sheriff. Sheriff.

INT. ED EARL'S BEDROOM - DAY

Ed Earl and Mona haven't moved. They listen.

ED EARL
It's Deputy Fred. What the hell does he want?

MONA
I don't know. I think you better go find out.

ED EARL
Okay. Hold that position. I'll be right back.

He leaves her sitting on the bed.

EXT. ED EARL'S HOUSE - DAY

Deputy Fred is continuing to knock on the door.

DEPUTY FRED
Sheriff! It's me, Deputy Fred.

The door opens and Ed Earl stands in the doorway, wearing nothing but the bedspread.

ED EARL
This better be important.
CONTINUED

DEPUTY FRED
Well, I think it is. I saw your car from the highway and I figured your phone must be out because what are you wearing that for?

ED EARL
I'm taking a shower.

DEPUTY FRED
Oh. I always take mine in the morning. I read in the Reader's Digest about....

ED EARL
I don't care. What the hell do you want?

DEPUTY FRED
It's the Mayor. He's real anxious to speak to you. Rita's been calling all over the county for you. He wants a meeting right away.

ED EARL
Can't it wait?

DEPUTY FRED
You mean until after you take a shower?

ED EARL
Go radio them that I'll be back when I get there. Nothing's that important it can't wait until this afternoon.

INT. ED EARL'S LIVING ROOM - DAY

Ed Earl shuts the door and walks back into the bedroom.

INT. ED EARL'S BEDROOM - DAY

Ed Earl enters, looks around and sees Mona's negligee folded neatly by the side of the bed. He picks it up for a minute, then hears a car start off outside. He throws down the negligee and starts for the front door.

INT. ED EARL'S LIVING ROOM - DAY

Ed Earl crosses the living room and opens the front door.
EXT. ED EARL'S FRONT PORCH - DAY

Ed Earl steps out on the porch and looks. In the driveway, Deputy Fred is talking to Mona. She drives off and he waves good-bye. Chuckling to himself, Deputy Fred walks over to the porch.

DEPUTY FRED
Ain't that funny. All this time, Miss Mona was at the back, knocking on the screen door. She said she's in a hurry but just dropped by to give you this.

He hands Ed Earl the pair of black jockey shorts with the little silver snaps. Ed Earl takes it and holds it up, shaking his head. Deputy Fred explains.

DEPUTY FRED
It's a Japanese slingshot.

Ed Earl shoots him a look, then turns and goes back inside.

INT. SHERIFF'S INNER OFFICE - DAY

The Mayor and C.J. have been anxiously waiting for the Sheriff. Ed Earl enters, followed by Deputy Fred, and makes his way over to his desk.

ED EARL
Okay, Rufus, what's on your mind?

MAYOR
Something that could have serious implications to the health of this town. Tell 'im, C.J., just like you told me.

C.J.
Well, Sheriff, I have a friend who works at a TV station in Houston and he's tipped me off that Melvin P. Thorpe is planning to do an expose on the Chicken Ranch.

ED EARL
Who?

MAYOR
Melvin P. Thorpe. He's that crazy consumer advocate. Has that report on the late night news.

DEPUTY FRED

CONTINUED
Well, I don't think he can say anything about the Chicken Ranch on TV. It's supposed to be a family medium.

But he's a sensationalist, Ed Earl. He shows up with his TV camera anytime a consumer has a complaint. He's a menace to the business community.

He's the fella who put the peanuts back in the chocolate bar.

What?

He made the makers of the Peanut Delight candy bar admit they put less peanuts in each bar than they advertise and got them to change their ways.

Sounds like a pretty tough customer.

He has a lot of influence out there.

And if he starts bringing his cameras out to the Chicken Ranch....

Calm down, Rufus. Let me make a few phone calls. I've got a little influence out there myself.

The MANAGER of KPTZ, Channel 4, is talking to Ed Earl on the phone.

It's no use talking to me, Sheriff. Melvin P. Thorpe is now the biggest attraction at this station. High ratings, lots of letters. He doesn't listen to anybody. Hell, he wants to go national. He wants to be watchdog for the whole U.S. of A.
INT. SHERIFF CHAPMAN'S OFFICE - HOUSTON - DAY

SHERIFF CHAPMAN of Houston, a friend of Ed Earl's, is talking to him on the phone.

SHERIFF CHAPMAN
I'd like to help you, Ed Earl, but just like you don't want to mess with the Chicken Ranch, I don't want to ruffle the feathers of this bird. He's getting to be a regular Texas attraction.

INT. SENATOR'S OFFICE - AUSTIN - DAY

SENATOR CHARLES WINGWOOD, an undistinguished blowhard legislator, is on the phone with Ed Earl.

SENATOR
Now wait a minute, Ed Earl. I'd tread easy on this one. Those TV boys can be mighty powerful -- and mighty useful, if you get my meaning.

The SENATOR'S AIDE interrupts.

AIDE
Senator, a quorum call.

SENATOR
Sorry, I've got to go. Damn food stamps again. But let me give you a word of advice from one elected official to another -- be careful of the box.

INT. SHERIFF'S INNER OFFICE - DAY

Ed Earl hangs up in disgust.

ED EARL
What the hell's going on? This Melvin P. Thorpe character has everybody bamboozled. Deputy Fred, you hold down the fort.

MAYOR
Where you goin'?

ED EARL
I'm driving up to Houston to take care of that little peckerwood myself.

Ed Earl grabs his hat and stalks out.
EXT. CHICKEN RANCH - DAY

Mona drives up to the Chicken Ranch and parks her car around back.

INT. CHICKEN RANCH - DAY

Mona comes in the back door and walks through the kitchen. Jewel stops her at the bottom of the stairs.

JEWEL

Hi, Miss Mona.

MONA

Hello, Jewel. How'd everything go this afternoon?

JEWEL

It's been quiet. A couple Army boys from Fort Hood. And right now the Coca-Cola man is making a delivery upstairs. Oh, and there's a girl wants to see you in the parlor.

MONA

We ain't hiring.

JEWEL

That's what I told her, but she is persistent. I think you should see her.

MONA

Okay.

INT. CHICKEN RANCH PARLOR - DAY

Mona walks into the parlor. A young straggly haired country girl with a cardboard suitcase stands up as she enters and gives Mona a very pretty, somewhat nervous smile. We get to know her later as SHY.

SHY

Hello. Miss Mona?

MONA

That's right.

SHY

My name's Anna Merle Seltzer.

CONTINUED
CONTINUED

MONA
Well, sit down, Anna Merle.

They sit.

SHY
I want a job here.

MONA
I'm kinda choosy about who lives in my house. Who told you about it?

SHY
Well, I met a girl in Galveston....

MONA
Ever have a run-in with the law?

SHY
No, ma'am. And I don't want to. That's why I'd like to work in a respectable place.

MONA
How much experience have you had?

SHY
You mean professional?

MONA
For money, honey.

SHY
About a year.

MONA
On the streets?

SHY
No, ma'am.

MONA
For a pimp?

SHY
No, ma'am.

MONA
Motel, hotel, telephone, van?

CONTINUED
I, uh...I....

Shy trails off. She is obviously lying. Mona drops the businesswoman manner and speaks softly.

Mona
What are you doin' here, honey?

Shy is near tears. She shakes her head.

Mona
I think maybe you better just head on back home.

Shy
I'm broke.

Mona
Well, I could lend you fifty dollars. Course you'd have to pay me back someday.

Shy
It ain't that, ma'am. I got nowheres to go home to.

Mona
Boyfriend treat you bad?

Shy
No, ma'am.

Mona
Folks run you off?

Shy
No, but I ain't never goin' back there.

She glares straight at Mona and we see a toughness for the first time.

Mona
Did your daddy get sweet on you, honey?

Shy lowers her eyes. She can't answer, but we know it's true.
MONA
Well, that ain't the first time it's happened to a girl, it ain't gonna be the last. Maybe I can get you a job downtown at the five and dime.

SHY
No. I don't want no sales job! I done thought about this. I'm gonna stay right here...I mean, if you'll let me.

MONA
Ordinarily I put girls like you on the next Greyhound, but a smile don't cost nothin' and you came in with one. Ain't nothin' worse for business than girls sittin' around the parlor with long faces.

SHY
Can I stay, then?

MONA
Well, I'm gonna try you out for a while.

(shouting out)
Jewel...come on in here.

(to Shy)
We've got to get you some new clothes and do something about that hair. I'll have one of the girls take you to a beauty shop tomorrow. There are three in town and I like to rotate my business among them. They appreciate that and treat us real nice....

Shy suddenly embraces Mona and sobs uncontrollably. Mona is at first surprised, then holds her and tries to comfort her.

MONA
Come on, now, honey. You're gonna mess up my outfit.

But Shy is like a puppy that's been saved from the pound. She keeps crying and Mona finds herself being very moved.

MONA
Oh, Lord, girl. You got me on the edge of crying. And I've done retired from it. Come on, now. Get a hold on. You'll be fine.
Jewel enters and stands in the doorway. Shy stops crying and Mona wipes away Shy's tears.

SHY
I'm sorry, Miss Mona.

MONA
That's all right, honey. I know how you feel.
(singing)
Bein' born was the worst and the first
Mistake I ever made
The doctor didn't spank me
He just slapped me in the face
And the cup of love was always quenchin'
Someone else's thirst
Leaving me to swallow
The bitter taste of hurt.

'Cause I was raised an orphan
Never wanted as a kid
Until the year I turned thirteen
Then everybody did
Strangers passed me back and forth
Men just took me as they pleased
And others had a Cinderella slave
To cook and clean and weave.

Though the deck is stacked against you
Win or lose you have to play
The hand that life has dealt you
And it's a gamble either way.

On a dusty road at fifteen
In a yellow cotton dress
With the desert sun like an angry dragon
Breathin' down my neck
And the dry cracked plains that made me think
Of a prehistoric time
Should I fear what lay before me
Less than what I'd left behind.

A fifteen year old girl don't have
No trouble hitchin' rides
But sometimes when you're ridin' free
You'll pay the highest price
On back roads, and in backseats
And in cheap highway motels
But what's a few more strangers
In a life of nothin' else.

CONTINUED
MONA (Cont'd)

(singing)
Though the deck is stacked against you
Win or lose you have to play
The hand that life has dealt you
And it's a gamble either way.

Sixteen found me cryin'
Underneath a scarlet light
On the doorstep of a stranger
On a cold and rainy night
When I walked into the parlor here
The pieces seemed to fit
I was good at pleasin' strangers
So I made the most of it.

Either way it's all a gamble
So view the stakes and know the odds
Lay your cards upon the table
Do your dealin' from the top.

Though the deck is stacked against you
Win or lose you have to play
The hand that life has dealt you
And it's a gamble either way

(spoken)
Yeah, it's a gamble either way.

Jewel, who has been listening through the song, glances over at Mona. A look of recognition passes between them. Shy looks up at Jewel.

SHY
Miss Mona's gonna let me stay.

JEWEL
That's wonderful, child, but after talking to you this afternoon it don't surprise me none.

Mona smiles at Jewel and walks out to the hallway to beckon to the girls passing by.

MONA
Girls, come on in here.

Ginger and Ruby Rae enter. Mona introduces them to Shy.

MONA
Girls, this is Anna Merle Seltzer. Goodness, that's a mouthful. We've got to do something about that. Even at our reduced rates, that name's a tough sell.

CONTINUED
SHY
Well, I was thinking of changing it to Dawn.

MONA
Hmmm. I already got me a Dawn. I'm just gonna call you Shy 'til I can think of something better. This is Ginger and Ruby Rae.

GINGER
Howdy.

RUBY RAE
Hello, honey.

MONA
Take Shy upstairs and show her around. She'll be boarding with us for a while.

SHY
Thanks, Miss Mona.

GINGER
Well, that's good news. We can sure use the help with all them college boys coming over here Thanksgiving night.

SHY
College boys?

MONA
Yeah. The winning seniors from the Texas Aggie/Texas University football game get treated to a night here on Thanksgiving.

JEWEL
By their Alumni Association.

RUBY RAE
It's a tradition. Been going on for years.

MONA
You see, honey, the Chicken Ranch is a Texas institution and I aim to keep it that way.

EXT. HOUSTON - DUSK
We pan down from a helicopter shot of the Houston skyline and zero into the building that houses Channel 4.
INT. TV STATION - NIGHT

Ed Earl is following a Page down the aisle of the TV studio backstage. The Page shows him Melvin's dressing room and exits. Ed Earl knocks on the door.

MELVIN (v.o)

Come in.

Ed Earl enters.

INT. MELVIN'S DRESSING ROOM - NIGHT

MELVIN P. THORPE is sitting in his white T-shirt and American flag boxer shorts while he puts the finishing touches to the straightening of his silver-haired wig. Ed Earl is a little surprised.

ED EARL

Mister Thorpe?

Melvin looks up in the mirror, sees him and jumps up with a smile.

MELVIN

I know you.

ED EARL

You do?

MELVIN

Aren't you Sheriff Ed Earl Dodd from over in Lanville County?

ED EARL

That's right, how did you....

MELVIN

Well, this is surely my pleasure... (shaking hands enthusiastically)

My honor. What brings you up here to Houston? Please, sit down. (waves to the couch)

Anywhere over there. I'm just getting dressed. I've got the show tonight and I'm running a bit behind time.

Ed Earl sits on the couch and Melvin returns to dressing.

CONTINUED
During the following dialogue, Ed Earl watches him put on his corset, jock pad, shoulder pads, red, white and blue suit and tie, pearl-handled revolvers in silver-studded holsters, handcuffs and white cowboy boots.

ED EARL
Well, it's the show I want to talk to you about, Mister Thorpe.

MELVIN
Melvin.

ED EARL
Melvin....

MELVIN
You watch the show, Ed?

ED EARL
Well, I....

MELVIN
Last week was the best rating we ever had. The City Planning Commissioner driving a city car while he was on vacation! We broke a thirty share. And it's affecting my pieces on the late night news. Up! Up! Up! They love my little report.

ED EARL
I've heard you're very popular.

MELVIN
The power of television -- of public exposure -- is so great it scares me. I swear I could get the Mayor's own children to throw rocks at him. Which show did you like best?

ED EARL
(after a beat)
Well, I...I thought the peanuts in the chocolate bar....

MELVIN
One of my favorites! Three score means sixty, like the Bible says. So, if it says sixty nuts on the
MELVIN (Cont'd)
wrapper, I want to count sixty nuts inside. Right?...And I'm talking whole nuts, not half nuts or nut bits or nut chips. We're talking a full nut!

ED EARL
I can see that.

MELVIN
Thank God we still live in a society where anything that's phony or dishonest can't stand the light of day.

He puts on his shirt over his padded shoulders and gets one pad caught. Ed Earl points it out.

ED EARL
Your pad there....

MELVIN
Oh, thanks...Yes, most corporations involved in false advertising will just laugh at a fifty dollar fine, but if you show up with a TV camera and give 'em bad publicity, they shape up faster than goose shit through a tin horn.

ED EARL
It's that bad publicity that I want to talk to you about. Sometimes it can hurt people. Like this report I hear you're planning on the Chicken Ranch. That place has been operating peacefully for a long time. Hell, I wouldn't be surprised if your granddaddy took your daddy out there to learn about the birds and the bees.

MELVIN
I'm from New Jersey.

ED EARL
Oh.

MELVIN
I moved to Houston six years ago.

CONTINUED
ED EARL
The point I want to make is every schoolboy in the state knows about it, most politicians have slept there, and the town, the Mayor and the folks who elected me want to keep things the way they are.

MELVIN
What is your interest in this whorehouse, Sheriff?

ED EARL
Well, my deputies patrol out there, stop fights before they start. The girls' police records are checked, so are their health cards. And as for getting information that helps us solve crimes, why the Chicken Ranch is a better intelligence-gathering operation than all those FBI flyers they keep mailing me.

MELVIN
You know, Sheriff, it just struck me. We're in the same profession.

ED EARL
What's that?

MELVIN
Law enforcement. I'm out there fighting for the rights of the public just like you. We're both of us protecting the people -- you in the old way; me in the new.

ED EARL
The new?

MELVIN
Television! I'm the electronic bounty hunter. I use a camera; you use a gun.

Ed Earl is not impressed with this comparison. He begins talking tough.

ED EARL
Melvin, all I want to say is you'd be doing everybody a big favor if

CONTINUED
you'd drop this whole thing. The girls perform a wanted service and right or wrong....

MELVIN
Right or wrong don't interest me.
I'm no moralizer. I leave all that
to the preacher.

Ed Earl is a bit taken back by this admission and a little confused.

ED EARL
Really? Well, I'm glad to hear that. The Mayor was feeling that you'd stir up a lot of unnecessary publicity.

MELVIN
Unnecessary publicity! He's got me all wrong. I'm not one of those sensation mongers out for their own egos.

He finishes dressing and stands looking at himself in front of the mirror.

MELVIN
What do you think?

ED EARL
(pause)
It's... different.

MELVIN
I designed it myself. No, you tell your Mayor he's got nothing to fear from me on that score.

ED EARL
Really? Well, he'll be happy to hear that.

MELVIN
I'm a lawman. That's my interest.
The law! Right, pardner.

He grabs Ed Earl's hand and shakes it. Ed Earl has still not gotten a clear bead on this eccentric character, but figures he's got what he came for.

CONTINUED
Right.

Come on, we've got to get out of here. That's my cue.

They hurry down the hall to the studio's stage.

Listen, I'd like to do an interview with you.

Well, I don't think I'm the type.

Nonsense. You are exactly what the public wants to see. Trust me. Look, we'll talk about it after the show. I want you to be my guest. This is the sponsor's booth. Just sit in there and make yourself comfortable. Bourbon, beer, anything you want.

Thanks.

Not at all. I admire you, Sheriff. You're my kind of cowboy. See ya.

He leaves and Ed Earl, not too sure of himself and thinking he needs a drink, goes into the booth and sits down. He begins lighting a cheroot.

The DOGETTES, Melvin's chorus of four male and four female singers, have already begun their opening introduction.

(singing)
Watchdog will get you
If you don't watch out
Watchdog sees and watchdog knows

CONTINUED
DOGETTES (Cont'd)
Watchdog keeps us on our toes
Watchdog assures you
That the law's the law
No exceptions to the rule
Watchdog ain't no fool.

A flustered stage manager is giving signals to Melvin and the cameras.

DOGETTES
Watchdog protects you
He's out on the prowl
Guards and checks the best he can
Watchdog is a fighting man
Watchdog will throw his
Beam of light around
If some folks don't tow the line
Watchdog's light will shine.

A DOGETTE
(speaking)
And now, The Watchdog Man himself.
The eyes and ears of Texas, Melvin P. Thorpe!

Melvin steps out on the stage and stands before a great map of Texas. The Dogettes cheer and the audience wildly applauds as an "Applause" sign flashes.

MELVIN
Thank you, fellow Texans, and welcome to the Watchdog Report with yours truly Melvin P. Thorpe keeping an eye on what's going on in this beautiful state of ours.

DOGETTES
(singing)
Shine, Shine, Shine
Shine, Shine, Shine
Shine, Shine, Shine.

MELVIN
This week's spotlight will shine on the shameful situation that has been allowed to exist for close to a hundred years. I'm talking about the Chicken Ranch, my friends. The proprietor of this innocent-looking ranch house is a woman known only

CONTINUED
MELVIN (Cont'd)
as 'Miss Mona' and the man who
turns his back on her illegal
operation is Sheriff Ed Earl Dodd.

Ed Earl, sitting behind the glass, stares in open-mouthed
horror at the mention of his name.

MELVIN
(continuing)
Did I say 'illegal'? Yes, I did!
Now, I know this is TV, so I'll try
to be as delicate as I can, but,
Isn't this the age of tellin' it
like it is?

DOGETTES
Amen! Amen! Hallelujah!

MELVIN
Well, then let's get this thing out
in the open! Here goes, and may God
forgive me!

(pause)
Texas...has a whorehouse in it!

DOGETTES
(singing)
Lord have mercy on our souls!

MELVIN
(singing)
Texas has a whorehouse in it!

DOGETTES
(singing)
Lord have mercy on our souls!

MELVIN
I'll expose the facts
Although it fills me with disgust.
Please excuse the filthy, dark details
And carnal lust.

DOGETTES
Filthy, dark details and carnal lust!

MELVIN
Dancin' goin' on inside it
Don't you see they've gone plumb wild
I inquired no one denied it
Now I think I'm getting riled

CONTINUED
MELVIN (Cont'd)

Bodies close together
Arms and legs all rearranged
And the Sheriff does not close it down
That's very strange!

Melvin points over to the sponsor's booth as the audience, in unison, turns to look at Ed Earl.

AUDIENCE

(singing)
Does not close it down
That's very strange!

INT. TV STATION SPONSOR'S BOOTH - NIGHT

Ed Earl is taken aback at the sudden attention. He looks out at the audience and then up at the monitors where the show is being broadcast across Texas.

MONTAGE - NIGHT - TV MONITORS

We go to quick cuts of TV sets throughout the studio.

INT. HOMES AROUND HOUSTON - NIGHT - MONTAGE

Quick cuts of families watching TV. A series of heads turning. A family at the dinner table staring at the TV with their forks halfway to their mouths. A father puts down his newspaper. A grandmother chokes. A grandfather chuckles. A mother claps her hands over her daughter's ears.

MELVIN (v.o.)
Mean-eyed, juiced up, brilliantined honky-tonk cowboys!

DOGETTES (v.o.)

Oh, no!

INT. OLD FOLKS' HOME - NIGHT - TV SETS

Old folks stop rocking. Hearing aids are turned up. Domino games stop.

MELVIN (v.o.)
Mixin' with green-eyed, thin-lipped hard-as-nails, peroxide blondes!
INT. HOSPITAL - NIGHT - TV SETS

A nurse drops a glass of medicine. A patient bites his spoon. An intern lets go a trolley.

DOGETTES (v.o.)

Oh, no!

INT. GAS STATION - NIGHT - TV SET

A holdup man and his victim stop in midrobbery to look at the TV set.

MELVIN (v.o.)

Not to mention some types that you'd never guess would venture near....

INT. DEPARTMENT STORE MALL - NIGHT

Customers stare in surprise at a TV display while a salesman runs a credit card machine over his hand.

MELVIN (v.o.)

Actin' all depraved and loose and wild.

INT. SENATOR'S LIMOUSINE - NIGHT - TV SET

Senator Charles Wingwood has stopped pouring himself a highball and stares wide-eyed at the broadcast on the TV set in the backseat of his limousine.

MELVIN (v.o.)

Ninety miles from here.
(speaking)
Here they are, our own Melvin P. Thorpe Singers!

INT. TV STATION STAGE - NIGHT

The men singers touch their fingertips to their hat brims; the girl singers half curtsy and smile broad, vacant smiles.

DOGETTES

(singing)

Texas has a whorehouse in it!
INT. DULCIE MAE'S KITCHEN - NIGHT - TV SET

We see Dulcie Mae watching the show in her kitchen as she prepares dinner. Her twelve-year-old son, BILLY, is sitting at the table also watching.

MELVIN (v.o.)
(singing)
I'll not let this scandal fade!

INT. GILBERT GAZETTE OFFICE - NIGHT - TV SET

Edsel, the editor, is seated at his desk and can't believe what he's seeing.

DOGETTES (v.o.)
Texas has a whorehouse in it!

EDSEL
I'll be damned!

INT. MAYOR'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT - TV SET

The Mayor watches from his living room chair. He chokes.

MAYOR
Doreen. Doreen! Run git my heart pills! Hurry!

INT. STUDY - NIGHT - TV SET

A little guy, in his underwear, watches from a big chair.

MELVIN (v.o.)
I'll uproot and I'll crusade!
I can smell corruption
And I'll fight it to the top!
Loveless copulation goin' oooonnnnn.
And it must stop!

INT. CHICKEN RANCH PARLOR - NIGHT - TV SET

The girls are watching it in the parlor. All are startled and happy to be on TV.

GINGER
Oh, my goodness. They're talking about us!
INT. TV STATION STAGE - NIGHT

DOGETTES
Loveless copulation, stop that copulation!
Loveless copulation, stop that copulation!

INT. A HOUSTON BAR - NIGHT

An ex-boxer BARTENDER is staring with his few customers at the show on the small TV.

BARTENDER
Loveless copulation?

He picks up the phone.

TELEPHONE MONTAGE

All over the state, people are grabbing for their phones... farmers, cowboys, oil riggers, maids, cooks, school teachers.

Switchboards are a mass of activity as people in little vignettes sing to their neighbors.

DOGETTES (v.o.)
Texas has a whorehouse in it
Lord have mercy on our souls
Texas has a whorehouse in it
Lord have mercy on our souls
Watchdog smells corruption and
He'll fight it to the top
Loveless copulation goin' on
Goin' on, goin' on, goin' on....

We pull back from the little vignettes to see them form a map of Texas which dissolves into the smiling face of Melvin.

INT. TV STUDIO STAGE - NIGHT

MELVIN
Don't touch that dial neighbors.
I'll be back with new and revealing information on this and other cases.
Watchdog never sleeps!

CONTINUED
CONTINUED

The Dogettes end the song while the audience joins in singing and swaying and the "applause" signs are now flashing "Amen" and "Hallelujah."

DOGETTES AND AUDIENCE
(singing in counterpoint)
And it must stop
Watchdog's gonna get you
He's gonna shine his light on you
Watchdog's gonna get you
Gonna shine his light on you.

On the last beat, we pan over to the glass booth and push in on Ed Earl's empty chair.

INT. CHICKEN RANCH - DINING ROOM - DAY

Mona is pouring Ed Earl a cup of coffee as he tells her the problems caused by Melvin's TV show last night.

ED EARL
That man is crazier than a peach orchard sow. Announcing it straight out, right there on TV!

MONA
So you've been saying.

ED EARL
It's got everybody talking. Not because it's news to anyone over the age of three months, but because they are hearing it in their own damn living rooms. Sung...sung to music!

MONA
Did he actually call my name?

ED EARL
Not only that. The son-of-a-bitch called mine. Television! You know, we ain't caught a Peeping Tom in Lanville County in twenty-two years because all the Peeping Toms are home watching television.

CONTINUED
MONA
Well, Ed Earl, seems like ever since I can remember, folks have been ready to jump on me for one reason or another.
(hugs him)
We can beat it. We'll just sit tight 'til it all blows over. Besides I trust you. You're my protector.

ED EARL
You know that man wears a sock in his underwear?

MONA
A sock?

ED EARL
Yup. All rolled up like a Jimmy Dean sausage.

Mona laughs.

MONA
He's probably planning to run for office and is looking to get the Jesus bunch on his side. He's typical of all those crusading fanatics. They rise up talking hot and heavy, confusing crime with committing a sin, but they die down soon enough and everything goes back to normal.

ED EARL
I suppose you're right.

MONA
Ain't I always? Now I suggest that tonight you and I hop over the county line, find a little beer hall and see if we can't forget all this fuss.

ED EARL
That's the best idea I heard all day.

He stands up and is about to take her in his arms when we hear the sound of a honking horn outside. They stop.

MONA
I wonder who that is?
EXT. CHICKEN RANCH - DAY

Deputy Fred pulls up in his car, stops and comes running up the steps. The girls on the swing begin to tease him.

GINGER
Well, howdy Deputy Fred. How's your tallywhacker hanging?

BEATRICE
Oh, quit embarrassing him. Anytime you want to lock me up honey, it's okay by me.

Deputy Fred blushes and goes inside.

INT. CHICKEN RANCH PARLOR - DAY

Ed Earl comes out of the dining room and meets Deputy Fred in the hall. He glares at him.

DEPUTY FRED
Howdy, Sheriff.

ED EARL
This better be important.

DEPUTY FRED
Well, I think it is. That Melvin P. Thorpe is setting up his television show on the courthouse steps.

What?

DEPUTY FRED
He's getting pictures for his report on the late news tonight. He's got a whole posse of TV cameramen and reporters. You better come look.

ED EARL
Well, I'll be a... Right in the middle of town!

DEPUTY FRED
Un-huh. Right outside your office.

EXT. CHICKEN RANCH - DAY

Ed Earl comes racing outside, followed by Deputy Fred. Mona follows them both.

CONTINUED
CONTINUED

ED EARL
I can't believe that sucker.

DEPUTY FRED
You know, he's even brought his own singers.

Ed Earl gets in his car. Mona rushes over to him.

MONA
Now, Ed Earl. Don't do anything you'll be sorry for. You watch that temper of yours.

ED EARL
Don't worry about that, Mona. Just leave that little shithead to me.

Ed Earl drives off. The girls on the porch cheer him on.

TADDY JO
Go get 'im, Sheriff.

BEATRICE
Come on, Deputy Fred.

Deputy Fred follows. The girls laugh, but Mona watches them with a worried look on her face.

EXT. GILBERT TOWN SQUARE - DAY

Melvin's Watchdog Chorus is singing a reprise of "Texas Has A Whorehouse In It" in the courthouse gazebo. The crowd, including Dulcie Mae, looks on with amusement.

The three old Nesters are playing dominoes. One looks up across the fountain.

FIRST NESTER
Look at that fella in them trick britches.

SECOND NESTER
It's too late in the year for the circus, ain't it?

THIRD NESTER
It's them TV folks, looks like to me.

They grunt, go back to playing dominoes and never look up again.
EXT. COURTHOUSE - DAY

Melvin has a last minute touch-up on his makeup, slaps away his assistant, signals to the cameraman and begins his report.

MELVIN
Howdy again, good neighbors! This is the ol' Watchdog, Melvin P. Thorpe, shining the spotlight on Gilbert -- the little town with the big shame. We're here at the Lanville County Courthouse to ask the local people how they feel about the infamous bordello running wide open in their American hometown.

He walks up to the gazebo where the Dogettes are assembled and addresses the crowd.

MELVIN
Good people! Good people of Gilbert! May I have your attention! I would like to speak to you about a matter of great importance and concern.

EDSEL
Let's hear it, Melvin. Lay it on us.

MANS EL
Yeah, we can't hardly wait.

MELVIN
I'm talking about nothing less than your community's moral health. I'm talking to you about official blindness, official corruption, official malfeasance.

LOUISE MAPLES
What's that mean?

MODENE ENNIS
I don't know. I'm just waiting for Ed Earl to get here. He's gonna kick that boy's ass.

EXT. A COUNTRY ROAD - DAY

Ed Earl is driving like a crazy man down the road, causing Deputy Fred behind him to be smothered in a cloud of dust.
EXT. GILBERT COURTHOUSE - DAY

The Dogettes are playing "Texas Has A Whorehouse In It" under Melvin's speech.

MELVIN
It's no big secret! You know what's going on in this town. And what's going on is evil, immoral, brazen, and against the law.
(singing)
Oh... Texas Has A Whorehouse In It.

DOGETTES
Lord have mercy on our souls!

MELVIN
Texas has a whorehouse in it!

DOGETTES
Lord have mercy on our souls!

MELVIN
Sin is runnin' rampant
Like before the fall of Rome.

DOGETTES
Oooh, ooooh,
Aaah, aaaaah.

MELVIN
Someone is permittin'
You know what.

Ed Earl careens into the town square and screeches to a halt. He gets out. The Mayor, sensing danger, comes over to calm him.

MAYOR
Now, Sheriff, keep a grip on yourself. Don't start blowing your stack.

ED EARL
Quit whimpering, Rufus.

He walks over to the gazebo. Melvin stops the singing.

MELVIN
And here comes the man himself. Would you care to give me an interview now, Sheriff?

ED EARL
I'm giving you thirty seconds, you fancified fart, to get you and your singing chorus the hell out of town.

CONTINUED
MAYOR
Now, wait a minute, Ed Earl.

ED EARL
Pack up them damn cameras and get
this stuff off my street. You're
blocking traffic.

MELVIN
The only traffic we're blocking is
that headed out for the Chicken
Ranch, right, Sheriff?

A hushed crowd. Ed Earl cannot believe what he has heard.
He pushes his hat brim up with a thumb and deliberately
stalks up the steps. Standing six inches from Melvin, he
looks him up and down, his gaze lingering on the outlandish,
three-color cowboy boots on Melvin's feet.

ED EARL
Little buddy, you got two tickets
up to now. Parading without a
license and insulting me. Now, you
either get this halloween carnival
cut of here, or I'm gonna lock up
your ass 'til your baby's grown.

MELVIN
We're perfectly within the law,
Sheriff. As a newsman, I've got
First Amendment protection. The
public has a right to know what's
going on out there, and what kind
of payoff you're accepting to
protect that notorious house of ill
repute.

There is a low moan from the crowd. The locals know that
the Sheriff has a low threshold for insults. Ed Earl begins
slowly.

ED EARL
First thing. First thing is,
you're standing in Lanville
County. Which, by my figurin', is
about a hundred miles west of that
stinkhole you call Houston. So I
can't see it's any of your business
what goes on out here.

CONTINUED
Melvin signals the cameraman to get a better angle on the Sheriff. The soundman follows with a directional mike, pointing it directly at Ed Earl.

ED EARL
Number two, number two is you ain't an officer of the law and I am. So don't go telling me what my goddamn job is or, I'll whip your butt 'til it looks like stripes on a barber pole.

The local people, according to their respective dispositions and allegiances, cheer or react in a shocked manner. Billy and his friends are delighted.

BILLY
Git 'im, Sheriff.

MODENE ENNIS
(shortling)
He may be mean, but he's ours!

ED EARL
Three! No sawed-off little pecker is gunna accuse me of takin' a bribe and live to tell it, 'cause I wear the badge in this goddamn county. So you listen good, you over-padded, televisin' turd, if I ever see you or any one of your other bastards in this town again, I'll knock you so flat you'll have to roll down your socks to shit.

EDSEL
That's tellin' him, Sheriff.

DULCIE MAE
(laughing)
Oh, my goodness!

Ed Earl gets out his gun and points it at Melvin.

ED EARL
Now, get out of here, you goddamn wig-wearin' citified son-of-a-bitch!

He fires his pistol into the air. Women scream, dogs bark and everyone starts to scatter. The cameraman trips over the camera and Melvin, in his hurry to flee, falls backward into CONTINUED
CONTINUED - 3

the fountain and almost loses his wig. Ed Earl keeps shooting. The townspeople run for cover, but look on happily as Melvin and the TV crew hop in their two trucks and drive away. Ed Earl puts his gun back in the holster and mutters proudly to himself.

ED EARL
So long, pardner.

He looks around -- the crowd comes out from hiding and gives him a wild ovation. Billy is thrilled and points Ed Earl out to his friends.

BILLY
He's my friend. He's coming over to my house to watch the Aggie game.

Ed Earl is accepting the adulation of the crowd. He gets into his car. Dulcie Mae comes over.

DULCIE MAE
You were wonderful, Ed Earl.

ED EARL
Thanks, Dulcie.

DULCIE MAE
We've finished serving lunch, but I did save you a piece of meatloaf. It's your favorite.

ED EARL
Well, no thank you. I have an official report to make about all this and I've got to go up to the Chicken Ranch and talk to Miss Mona.

DULCIE MAE
Oh, of course.

ED EARL
Catch you later.

Ed Earl drives off to the cheers of the citizens. We push in on Dulcie Mae's face. She knows he's going out to celebrate with Mona and that he is in love with her.

INT. A TEXAS ROADSIDE BAR AND DANCE HALL - NIGHT

A fiddler is on the bandstand leading the band in a hoedown while the customers dance around the floor. Everyone is having a foot-stomping good time.

CONTINUED
CONTINUED
Mona and Ed Earl enter. She is in a simple dress and he is not in his uniform. They are in great high spirits and go over to the bar to order beer.

Dissolve To

INT. AT THE TABLE - NIGHT

By the beers on the table we see the time has passed. The band is taking a break and we segue into a record playing on the jukebox. Mona, sitting at the table by herself, looks around as Ed Earl comes up to her.

Mona
Well, listen to that, it's my favorite Bob Wills song.

Ed Earl
I know. Why do you think I put it on?

He offers her his hand. She smiles and takes it. They walk out to the dance floor and begin to dance as we hear Bob Wills sing "Faded Love."

Bob Wills (v.o.)
(singing)
As I look at the letters
That you wrote to me
It's you that I'm thinkin' of.

As I read the lines
That to me were so sweet
I remember our faded love.

Mona joins in singing with the record.

Mona
I'll miss you darling
More and more every day
As heaven would miss the stars above.

With every heartbeat
I will think of you
I remember our faded love.

As they dance around the floor we:

Dissolve To

EXT. A COUNTRY ROAD - NIGHT

Ed Earl drives by in his truck with Mona snuggled up beside him.
INT. ED EARL'S TRUCK - NIGHT

Mona looks up at Ed Earl and smiles contentedly.

EXT. THE LAKE - NIGHT

We pull back from the campfire that Ed Earl has built by the shore to reveal he and Mona lying up against a log and looking up at the heavens. They are quietly enjoying the peace of the moment. Mona sighs.

MONA
Look at them stars. Ain't nothin' prettier than a Texas sky.

ED EARL
Ain't that the truth.

MONA
Hey! Did you see that shooting star?

ED EARL
Mmmmm.

MONA
Do you think that might have been a spaceship? Do you believe in that sort of thing?

ED EARL
Oh, sure. There's all kinds of strange things happening. I seen some pictures once of those little guys from outer space. They're about two feet high, have bald heads, tiny little legs and they got no peckers.

MONA
Well, then, I ain't interested and neither would any of my girls. You know, when I was little I used to dream about flying saucers coming down to get me and take me off to heaven. You know, like the angels. 'And I looked and behold a whirlwind came out of the north...and out of the midst of the fire came the likeness of four living creatures.'

ED EARL
Oh, yeah. What are you talking about?

MONA
That's from Ezekiel. Haven't you ever heard of Ezekiel in the Bible?

CONTINUED
Sure, I've heard of the Bible. But the only Ezekiel I ever heard of is Ezekiel Peebles in the eighth grade. I busted his jaw once.

MONA
That was very Christian of you, Ed Earl.

ED EARL
Well, we were all Baptists in my family.

MONA
I never stayed with any one family long enough to become anything in particular. But I read the Bible and I do know about Jesus.

ED EARL
I think Jesus was a nice person. Must have been a good speaker.

MONA
You know, I knew a woman once who told me she had a vision of Jesus. He came right down and sat on the end of her bed one night. I believed her. I feel that could happen to me.

ED EARL
Well, if Jesus comes into your place honey, all hell's gonna break loose.

MONA
(laughing)
I guess you got a point, Ed Earl. But you know, Jesus was very good to Mary Magdalene and she was a fallen woman. Isn't that amazing. She was perhaps his best friend.

ED EARL
You mean Mary Magdalene was Jesus' girlfriend?

MONA
Well, not the way you're thinking. But Jesus did like to have a good time. People seem to forget that. You know, he went to a wedding once
and they ran out of wine. So you know what he did? He turned some water into wine.

ED EARL
Sounds like a man who knewed how to party.

MONA
Now, don't be sacrilegious, Ed Earl.

ED EARL
Oh, he knows I was kidding. He forgives me.

MONA
Yeah...I know he does. Ain't it funny. God can forgive you, but people can't. Why is that?

ED EARL
Because most people ain't too God-like, honey.

MONA
I know. I know.

A pause as they look at the sky. Ed Earl begins to chuckle.

ED EARL
That Melvin P. Thorpe is a sorry son-of-a-bitch.

MONA
(laughing)
Well, you sure sent him packing. I'm proud of you.

ED EARL
You think he's really running for office?

MONA
Why?

ED EARL
Well, I haven't told this to anyone yet, but I'm thinking of running for the legislature myself.

MONA
You serious, Ed Earl?
Yeah, I'm serious. I've got my sights aimed higher than being a sheriff all my life. Besides, I think I could do some good. A lot of people don't think an honest man can be elected, but I don't believe that. This is a great country and we've still got it in us.

Mona
Well, you've got my vote. I might even go register.

Ed Earl
I'd be a good politician, Mona. And you know why? Because I'd tell the truth. Nobody does that anymore and, by God, I'm going to give it a shot.

Mona
I didn't know you had dreams that big, Ed Earl.

Ed Earl
Well, it's one dream I believe I could pull off. People like me. It's natural to like me. You know, people like you, too. You'd be surprised if you took a poll around town.

Mona
Really?

Ed Earl
I hear it all the time. You're a well-liked lady.

Mona
Well, I always believed if you see somebody without a smile, give them yours.

Ed Earl
I like that. Do you think I could borrow that slogan when I run for the legislature...'I always believed if you see somebody without a smile, give them yours.'...I could put that on my card.

Continued
MONA
Oh, Ed Earl. I guess I'm just not a person who believes in dreams. I believe in reality. Dreams have never gotten me anywhere.

ED EARL
But how about when you were a kid. You must have wanted to be something.

MONA
Promise you won't laugh?

Sure.

MONA
I used to think I wanted to be a dancer. I wanted to be a ballerina. One of the first things I can remember was a little ballerina on top of a music box. I would just watch her for hours dancing round and round.

ED EARL
Well, I don't think it's too late for you to be a ballerina.

MONA
Oh, hell, Ed Earl. I'm so top-heavy, I have a hard enough time balancing these now without getting up on my toes.

ED EARL
Mona, you're wonderful.

MONA
Thank you...you know, I don't see anyone except you, Ed Earl. Not anymore. You can't say the same, can you.

ED EARL
I don't go to bed with anyone else.

MONA
You don't?

ED EARL
Not for three years now. You didn't know that, did you?
MONA

No, I didn't.

ED EARL

Well, I figure there's nothing better after you've had the best.

MONA

I like that. If I ever run for the legislature, I'm gonna put that on my card.

They laugh. They kiss. They kiss again and fall into a passionate and loving embrace.

INT. MAYOR'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

The Mayor is watching television.

ANNouncer

Next up, Melvin P. Thorpe continues his expose on the Chicken Ranch with a violent demonstration in the Gilbert town square.

The Mayor reacts to seeing the announcement on television.

MAYOR

Great God from Goldsborough! Doreen. Doreen! Run git my heart pills!

INT. ED EARL'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

In the darkened room the phone is ringing. It rings three or four times. A hand comes out from under the blankets, turns on the overhead light and answers the phone. It is Ed Earl. He sticks his head out from under the blankets.

ED EARL

Yes. Yes?

INT. MAYOR'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

The Mayor is on the telephone.

MAYOR

Ed Earl, you better turn on Channel 4. That Melvin P. Thorpe idiot has got you on TV again.
INT. ED EARL'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Ed Earl turns to Mona.

ED EARL
Honey, turn on the television. Channel 4. The Mayor says that Melvin P. Thorpe is spewing off at the mouth again.

Mona reaches for the remote control for the TV on the night table.

ED EARL
Calm down, Rufus, it can't be as bad as all that.

Mona turns on the television and we see Melvin seated at the news desk giving his version of what happened in the Gilbert town square.

MELVIN
What happened to me, as an individual, is not important. But what Sheriff Dodd did to a constitutionally licensed newsman and a good tax-paying American citizen is important! It calls up old dark versions of Mussolini's Brown Shirts and the Nazi terrors. I think the film speaks for itself.

On the television screen we see an edited version of Ed Earl's speech:

ED EARL
No sawed-off little bleep is gunna accuse me of takin' a bribe and live to tell it...
(fires gun)
...'cause I wear the badge in this bleep county. So you listen good, you bleep-bleep, bleep-bleep...
(fires gun, same shot)
...if I ever see you or any one of you other bleep in this town again, I'll knock you so flat you'll have to bleep-bleep, bleep-bleep, bleep-bleep!
(fires gun, same shot)

Ed Earl and Mona watch in open-mouthed horror.

CONTINUED
CONTINUED

MELVIN (v.o.)
Is this the kind of man we want running our law enforcement? Is this the kind of foul-mouthed example we want to set for our children?

Mona sadly shakes her head.

MONA
Ed Earl, that man has made a fool of you.

Ed Earl, in shock, absently hangs up the phone.

INT. SHERIFF'S OUTER OFFICE - DAY

The Mayor, Edsel and C.J. Vernon are pacing around Ed Earl's outer office. The two phones are ringing and Rita has her hands full. Deputy Fred waits. The Mayor takes out his watch.

MAYOR
I've had calls from four preachers, six deacons and the presidents of two garden clubs.

RITA
(hanging up)
The phones have been ringing just like that all morning.

MAYOR
Don't know why I let people talk me into serving as the Mayor of this incorporated sand trap anyway.
(looking at his watch)
What the heck is keeping him?

RITA
He'll be along.

DEPUTY FRED
My wife couldn't believe what she saw last night. They bleeped him out, but she read his lips on every 'hell', 'goddamn' and 'shit'.

EDSEL
Did you hear some folks are getting up a petition to close the Chicken Ranch?

CONTINUED
C.J.
All we wanted to do was keep it quiet. Now, thanks to Ed Earl, it's getting to be the hottest thing on the air since The Gong Show.

Ed Earl enters and stops at Rita's desk for his messages.

RITA
Mornin', Sheriff. Here's your calls.

ED EARL
Mornin', Rita. Mornin', fellers. I guess you're waiting to talk to me.

MAYOR
We sure are. You don't know the trouble you've stirred up with this Chicken Ranch business.

They follow Ed Earl into his office.

INT. SHERIFF'S INNER OFFICE - DAY

C.J.
Dammit, Ed Earl, if you aren't a pluperfect fool.

ED EARL
Maybe so. I've got calls here from a dozen shocked citizens telling me we've got a whorehouse operating in this county...for about a hundred and fifty years!

MAYOR
Ed Earl, you can set up speed traps to catch the tourists, you can look the other way when the wrong kid swipes a car to go joyriding, hell, you can even allow Miss Mona to run her place out there. But the one thing you can't get away with is broadcastin' gutter talk on TV!

ED EARL
How was I supposed to know they were taking pictures?
C.J.
What did you figure the cameras were for?

ED EARL
You know, I'm getting just a little sick of all this bad mouthin'. Hell, the Chicken Ranch don't give me half as much trouble as those all night stag parties out at the Legionnaires Hall.

C.J.
(embarrassed)
That ain't fair, ding it!

MAYOR
There's only one thing to do and that's close the place down before we all go to hell in a handbasket.

ED EARL
Close it down! Oh, you were all willing to go along with Miss Mona when things were running good because she brought business to the town and made civic contributions. But now that she's in trouble, you're all about to turn tail and run like rats from a burning barn.

EDSEL
That's just it, Ed Earl. But who's going to put out the fire?

MAYOR
Look, if you won't close her down, at least tell her to lay low for a couple of months.

C.J.
Just until the heat wears off.

MAYOR
Give it two months. What's two months?

ED EARL
Dammit, Rufus. I don't want anybody telling me how to do my job. I'm still the law here and I'll make up my own mind about what's gotta be done!
INT. CHICKEN RANCH - MONA'S BEDROOM - DAY

Ed Earl is talking to Mona.

ED EARL
Two months. What's two months?

MONA
Shut down for two months! That's a hell of a lot of overhead to pay out when a company's cash is not coming in. What am I supposed to tell my girls?

ED EARL
Maybe it won't be two months. The holidays are coming up. Maybe in a couple of weeks it will have all blown over and you can start letting your regular customers in the back door.

MONA
You know, I warned you before you left yesterday about losing your temper...shouting and carrying on.

ED EARL
Last night you said you were proud of me.

MONA
Last night I wasn't on the eleven o'clock news!

ED EARL
I didn't know they were going to make me out to look like an idiot. I don't understand this electronic bullshit. How was I supposed to handle it?

MONA
That's your job. That's what you're paid for.

ED EARL
I know what my job is. I know I can have this whole place shut down in a New York minute. But all I'm asking for is a little cooperation from you so we can get through this difficult situation with as little trouble as possible.

CONTINUED
OKAY. OKAY. I'LL SHUT DOWN.

YOU PROMISE?

WHAT DO YOU WANT, A WRITTEN CONTRACT? I GIVE YOU MY WORD.

I'M REALLY SORRY THIS HAD TO HAPPEN.

DON'T FEEL SORRY FOR ME. I STARTED OUT POOR AND WORKED MY WAY UP TO OUTCAST.

MONA, I HATE THIS, DAMMIT, I REALLY DO. I DON'T WANT THIS TO HURT OUR RELATIONSHIP, BUT I REALLY BELIEVE THIS IS THE BEST ANSWER. IF YOU'LL JUST TRUST ME.

Mona is quite moved with his honest expression of emotion. She turns, smiles, and gives him a kiss.

OH, YOU BIG COWBOY, I DO TRUST YOU. AIN'T I ALWAYS?

She gives him a hug. He kisses her lightly on the cheek and, with a flourish, puts on his hat. He turns and opens the door.

INT. CHICKEN RANCH - STAIRCASE - DAY

Ed Earl is coming down the stairs just as Jewel, carrying a pile of sheets, is coming up.

WELL, IF IT AIN'T THE CELEBRATED CURSING SHERIFF OF LANVILLE COUNTY. HOW ARE YOU SHERIFF?

FINE. HOW ARE YOU, PORKY?

(LAUGHING)

NOW, SHERIFF, I BEEN REAL GOOD ALL WEEK. I DROPPED SIX POUNDS.
CONTINUED

ED EARL
What did you do, lose a finger?

Ed Earl continues down the stairs and out the door. Jewel, laughing, walks up to Mona.

MONA
I've just promised the Sheriff to shut the place down for two months.

JEWEL
What? How can you promise that? What about the football game celebration tomorrow night?

MONA
Oh, I forgot.

JEWEL
It's the Thanksgiving game, Miss Mona. That's real special.

MONA
Yes, I know. Well, okay. But we'll be closed for all regulars. Do you think that'll be all right?

JEWEL
I'm sure it will, honey. That party's a tradition.

EXT. FOOTBALL STADIUM - DAY - HIGH SHOT FROM HELICOPTER

The traditional Thanksgiving Day rivalry between the Texas Aggies and the Texas Longhorns is in full swing.

INT. BROADCAST BOOTH - DAY

The ANNOUNCER, looking down over the field, is talking into the microphone.

ANNOUNCER
Well folks, this game has turned into a real stem-winder. The Texas Aggies, favored to lock up the Southwest Conference and waltz into the Cotton Bowl in Dallas for a happy New Year, are fighting for their football lives.
EXT. FOOTBALL FIELD - DAY

On the field, we see regular football action as the Announcer's voice continues.

ANNOUNCER (v.o.)
The Longhorns are playing tough defensive ball, making this traditional Thanksgiving Day classic one for the record books.

INT. DULCIE MAE'S LIVING ROOM - DAY

Ed Earl and Billy are watching the game on the television in the living room. Thanksgiving decorations are on the mantle. In the kitchen, Dulcie Mae takes the turkey out of the oven. She looks over at her son sitting happily with Ed Earl on the couch.

BILLY
Come on, Aggies, plow those Longhorns!

Ed Earl laughs and pops a beer.

INT. CHICKEN RANCH - MAIN ROOM - DAY

Some of the girls are putting up the decorations while the TV with the football game plays in the parlor. Out in the hall, Angel is on the phone.

ANGEL
Well, I sure do hope Mummy will be home for Christmas, punkin'. Now you have a good Thanksgiving and put Grandma back on...Mummy loves you, baby....

Jewel walks by with double sets of colored crepe paper ribbons and holds them up for the girls in the main room.

JEWEL
We'll string up the white first and then see who wins before we add the orange or maroon.

CONTINUED
CONTINUED

GINGER
I cain't stand it if them Aggies win.

DAWN
What do you mean?

GINGER
They're such animals. Always yelling and jumping about and saying 'Yee-haaw!'

ELOISE
I like that.

RUBY RAE
We had two Aggies here last year. They went upstairs to shoot craps -- and blew a hole in the toilet.

The girls all laugh, but Shy is a little backward.

SHY
Really? What did Miss Mona say?

JEWEL
She's putting you on, darlin'.

RUBY RAE
The hell I am. Those boys are dumb.

GINGER
Dumb ain't the word. You hear about the time the Aggie coach went up to the quarterback and asked him, 'Do you think you can pass this ball?' 'Hell, yes,' said the Aggie quarterback.

GINGER AND RUBY RAE
(laughing together)
If I can swallow it.

The girls all join in laughing and now Shy sees that they are making Aggie jokes. She smiles. Ginger looks over at the television set.

GINGER
Come on, Longhorns! Hold that line!
ANNOUNCER
What a finish we've got here, folks. The Aggies are out of the huddle, twenty short ticks of the clock from oblivion. The underdog Longhorns lead twelve to seven, with the Aggies in business on the thirty-five yard line.

EXT. FOOTBALL FIELD - DAY
We see the play as it is described.

ANNOUNCER (v.o.)
Bubba Shrake takes the snap and drops back to pass. He's got good protection...he's looking deep. Shrake throws over the middle. (shouts)
Sliney's got it at the five! He's hit and he's short of the goal line. He's stopped short! And he calls time! Time out on the field with three seconds left.

INT. TV STATION - DAY
Two ENGINEERS are watching the game on monitors.

FIRST ENGINEER
I'll bet those boys are creaming in their pants. You know that whichever team wins gets a celebration dinner tonight at the Chicken Ranch.

SECOND ENGINEER
Yeah. Course, it don't matter what the scoreboard says, the real winner of today's game is gonna be Miss Mona.

They laugh. We pan off the Engineers and see that Melvin has overheard their conversation. He looks up at the monitor and smiles with gleeful expectation.

ANNOUNCER
Just three seconds left on the scoreboard clock. The Aggies trailing twelve to seven on the five-yard line, needing a touchdown to win.
EXT. FOOTBALL FIELD - DAY

We see the action described by the Announcer.

ANNOUNCER (V.O.):
The Aggies come out of the huddle
up to the line. Charlie Wilson
split right out wide. Sliney in
the slot.

(growing
excitement)
Shrae takes the snap, throws to
Cartwright, who swings wide to the
right: He's trapped behind the
line, he's gonna throw deep in
the endzone and... Sliney's got
it. The Aggies win it. The Aggies
win it thirteen to twelve!

Bedlam reigns. The crowd is pouring onto the field. The
Aggie band is playing and marching in celebration.
Players run to the locker room.

INT. DULCIE MAE'S LIVING ROOM - DAY

DULCIE MAE
Billy is jumping up and down on the sofa with delight, while
Ed Earl laughs and claps his hands.

INT. THE CHICKEN RANCH - MAIN ROOM - DAY

GINGER enters and looks at the girls. The celebration is
playing on the television.

GINGER
Who won?
ED EARL
WIC WON?
Beatrice holds up the Texas A & M pennants they are
beginning to hang on the walls.

GINGER
The Aggies.

BEATRICE
The Aggies.

GINGER
Oh, shit!

Beatrice looks over at Ginger and, as if on cue, the other
girls join in:

GIRLS
Yeehaaw!
INT. FOOTBALL LOCKER ROOM - DAY

The Aggies come down into the locker room, all breathless and excited.

AGGIES

Yeeehaaaw!

Senator Wingwood and the alumni welcome them.

SENATOR

Boys! Boys! That was the greatest victory since General Eisenhower won! You make me glad to be an Aggie. I swear, I could break down and cry like a baby, I'm so flushed with pride....

One of the Aggies is tossing bottles of Lone Star Beer to his teammates as they enter. He tosses one to the Senator.

AGGIE #1

Have a Lone Star on us, Senator.

SENATOR

Now, you boys know senators don't drink! It ain't good for the Baptist vote.

He pops it open and it sprays across the room. One of the Aggies does a few bars of a foot-stompin' cleat dance. The others cheer for him. A lot of "yee-haw's."

AGGIE #2

Hey, Senator, you ain't forgot you was gonna take us to the Chicken Ranch, have you?

SENATOR

(leering)

I always keep my campaign promises!

Cheers from the team.

SENATOR

Yes sir, the Chicken Ranch is a fine institution and I'm proud to have it in my district. And to hell with what Melvin P. Thorpe says. So let's get a move on and we'll see you boys at Miss Mona's.

He and his party exit.

CONTINUED
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The Aggies all cheer and the true celebration starts. They are pulling off their pads and uniforms. Various angles of the different players like LEROY SLINEY, the young wide receiver, and BARNEY SCRUGGS, the ox-like defensive lineman. They begin to sing.

AGGIES
(singing)
We're gonna whomp
And stomp
And whoop it up tonight
Those little gals won't never ever
Be the same.

They're gonna love it when we whomp
And stomp
And whoop it up all right
It's even better than an Aggie Football game.

BARNEY
(dumbly)
Better than a football game?

INT. SHOWERS - DAY

Various angles of the Aggies showering.

AGGIES
And then we're gonna show them all
A thing or two
We're gonna demonstrate
Just what
A champion can do
Yee-Haw!

We're gonna play 'em out and
Lay 'em out tonight
They won't have never seen nobody
Quite like me -- huh.

INT. LOCKER ROOM - DAY

The Aggies come out of the showers and, snapping their towels and horsing around, go to their lockers to begin getting dressed.

AGGIES
We're gonna wham and bam and
Thank you ma'am tonight
I swear I don't know how they'll
Stand such ecstasy -- huh
Right between the goalpost.

CONTINUED
They put on their blue jeans and cowboy boots and sing.

**AGGIES**
We been deprived so long
But now we're gettin' some
I bet the girls are countin' up
The minutes 'til we come.

An Aggie pops up from behind a locker.

**AGGIE #3**
They ain't the only ones.

Peach-fuzzed, clear-voiced Leroy Sliney pushes a laundry cart down the middle of the locker room.

**LEROY**
Seventy-five miles until we get to heaven.

**AGGIES**
Seventy-five miles until our Plans are laid
Seventy-five miles until we get to The Chicken Ranch
Where history And Aggie boys Get made.

The boys spin the cart around and begin the big dance number.

After a spectacular series of acrobatics and clogging, the Aggies, now fully dressed with shirts and hats, charge out of the front door.

**EXT. A ROAD - DAY**

From a helicopter we see the Aggie bus driving down a country road. We push in just as Leroy sticks his head out a window.

**LEROY**
Twenty-two miles until we get To heaven.

Other Aggies stick their heads out.

**AGGIES**
Twenty-two miles until our Plans are laid Twenty-two miles until we get To the Chicken Ranch.
EXT. AGGIE BUS - DAY

The whole team, with their hats in their hands, joyfully sticks their heads out the windows.

AGGIES

Where history
And Aggie boys
Get made.

The rear tire blows out and the truck careens to a halt by the side of the road.

INT. CHICKEN RANCH - UPSTAIRS ROOM - DUSK

Jewel is distributing some of the ball gowns to the girls. Shy picks one up and is admiring it, but Ginger is very bored with the idea.

GINGER
Do we have to wear these ball gowns again?

JEWEL
Yes, you do, and I don't want to hear any bitchin' about it. Miss Mona tries to create something special for these boys -- it's like a graduation dance.

EXT. ROAD - DUSK

Silhouetted against the setting sun, the Aggies are packed, stacked and hanging all over a small pickup truck driven by a somewhat confused old farmer. Leroy is holding onto the roof with one hand and sings excitedly.

LEROY
One more mile until we get To heaven.

AGGIES
One more mile until our Plans are laid.

EXT. CHICKEN RANCH - DUSK

The pickup truck drives up the hill to the front gate.

CONTINUED
CONTINUED

AGGIES
One more mile until we get
To the Chicken Ranch
Where history
And Aggie boys
Get made.

Leaping and jumping off the pickup truck, the Aggies dance
up to the front porch and knock on the Chicken Ranch door.

INT. CHICKEN RANCH - DUSK

Jewel opens the door and welcomes them. They enter politely,
hats in hand. Senator Wingwood has already arrived and he
greets them when suddenly all heads turn to Miss Mona as she
makes one of her grand entrances down the stairs.

SENATOR
(to Mona)
Howdy, ma'am. I'm Senator Wingwood
of the 19th District and Aggie
Class of '49. Mighty proud to
meetcha.

MONA
Meet me? Come on, Charlie. How's
Mary Margaret and the kids?

The Aggies all laugh and the Senator is momentarily
embarrassed.

SENATOR
Hell, Miss Mona. I didn't think
you'd remember.

MONA
You remember to bring the check?

SENATOR
I got it right here.

He produces it from his coat pocket and hands it to her.

MONA
It's a business doing pleasure with
you, Senator.

She rings the bell.

MONA
Come on, boys. We've got a surprise
for you.

She leads everyone out to the back.
INT. CHICKEN RANCH COURTYARD - NIGHT

Miss Mona enters with the Aggies as the girls are coming down the backstairs or waiting beneath the colored lanterns strung out over the punch bowl. They are all wearing their ball gowns and look slightly reminiscent of a high school prom. The Aggies break into whistles and catcalls and begin pairing off for an encore of the Aggie dance. Leroy spots Shy and he pairs up with her. Mona signals Ginger to take the Senator off her hands.

The high point of the number comes when the girls snap off their ball gowns (held in place by Velcro) and appear in their latest Frederick's of Hollywood underwear.

AGGIES

Yeeeeehaaaaw!

The stomping becomes frenetic and the dance ends with the couples facing off inside or upstairs looking for a bedroom. The Senator goes with Ginger. Leroy goes off with Shy. Mona looks over at Jewel, gives her a look that says "Well, that's that," and turns off the party lights.

EXT. DULCIE MAE'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Ed Earl is leaving after having Thanksgiving dinner with Dulcie Mae.

DULCIE MAE

Thank you for spending time with Billy. He really idolizes you.

ED EARL

Yeah, I know. He's a great kid. And you're a great cook.

DULCIE MAE

Yeah, I know.

They laugh.

DULCIE MAE

I hope everything works out with this Melvin P. Thorpe business. I know it's been worrying you.

ED EARL

It'll all blow over soon.

DULCIE MAE

Of course it will. After all, the Chicken Ranch has been there for years. And Miss Mona...well, she does a lot of good in town.

CONTINUED
Yes. She does.

(pause)

Well, it's late.

(kisses her on the cheek)

Thank you, Dulcie. You're real sweet and you're real special to me.

DULCIE MAE

Thank you, Ed Earl.

ED EARL

Good night, honey.

He hops in his car and drives home.

EXT. GILBERT TOWN SQUARE - NIGHT

Deputy Fred is making his rounds, walking across the deserted town square. A TV van goes by. He stops and looks. A car follows. He looks again. Melvin P. Thorpe in the Watchdog van drives by. The Deputy scratches his head and thinks about that for a moment.

INT. CHICKEN RANCH - MONA'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Mona is in her bedroom going over her accounts. She opens her ledgers and sits at her desk.

INT. A ROOM IN THE CHICKEN RANCH - NIGHT

Leroy is contentedly smoking a cigarette. We pan over at Shy looking at him demurely from the pillow.

INT. CHICKEN RANCH - TV PARLOR - NIGHT

Jewel has her feet up watching an old movie on television. The house is very quiet.

INT. ED EARL'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Ed Earl, in his boxer shorts, is brushing his teeth getting ready for bed. There is a knock at the front door. He goes to answer it.

INT. ED EARL'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Ed Earl crosses the living room, turning on the lights as he goes. He opens the door. It's Deputy Fred.

CONTINUED
DEPUTY FRED
Good evening, Sheriff.

ED EARL
This better be important.

DEPUTY FRED
Well, I think it is. I was making my rounds in town when I just saw that Melvin P. Thorpe drive through with some other fellers on their way to the Chicken Ranch.

ED EARL
Well, he's going to be real disappointed. There's nothing going on up there. Miss Mona's shut down for two months on my orders.

DEPUTY FRED
No, she ain't, Sheriff. Hell...
(laughs)
I saw those Aggie boys up there tonight celebrating to beat the band.

ED EARL
Huh? Huh...Holy shit!

EXT. CHICKEN RANCH - NIGHT
Everyone has gone to bed. The lights are low. We pan down from Mona at her desk in her bedroom to shadows creeping along the Chicken Ranch wall. It is Melvin and his crew of cameramen and reporters (eight in all). They reach the lattice door to the backyard and, with a pair of chain cutters, cut the lock. Melvin turns to the camera, signals to switch it on and addresses his audience.

MELVIN
Now we're going to take you into the whorehouse itself.

EXT. CHICKEN RANCH - BACK COURTYARD - NIGHT
Melvin and his crew creep along the back porch and sneak inside.

INT. CHICKEN RANCH - NIGHT
They pass the parlor where Jewel has fallen asleep in front of a television station that has gone off the air. Melvin

CONTINUED
CONTINUED

positions his men near the light switches, then stands by
the bell and gives the signal.

MELVIN
Okay, everybody up!

The bell clangs, all the lights in the house turn on and
with a charging yell, Melvin and his crew go running up the
stairs and through the whorehouse. Jewel wakes up and falls
off her chair.

INT. CHICKEN RANCH - MONA'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Mona looks up and reacts to the noise.

INT. CHICKEN RANCH - VARIOUS ROOMS - NIGHT

The still photographers throw open the doors and burst in,
snapping pictures with flash cameras of couples in bed.
Girls scream, boys jump out of bed and start putting on
their clothes, knocking over tables and water bowls as they
do so.

INT. CHICKEN RANCH - ANOTHER ROOM - NIGHT

Melvin bursts into a room, followed by his cameraman. He
turns to address his television audience while the startled
customer in bed looks around.

MELVIN
Now we're going to talk to some of
the girls and their customers.

INT. CHICKEN RANCH - STAIRS - NIGHT

The place is in pandemonium. Boys and girls are running
everywhere, screaming and shouting "raid." Mona comes out
of her room and sees Jewel coming up the stairs.

MONA
What's going on?

JEWEL
It's that Melvin P. Thorpe sucker
and his TV reporters.

Mona runs back into her room while Jewel grabs a still photog-
grapher who is running by her and starts belting him in the
mouth. One of his friends comes to his assistance and Jewel
karate chops him over the bannister.
162 INT. CHICKEN RANCH - MONA'S BEDROOM - NIGHT
Mona dials the Sheriff's office to bring assistance.

163 INT. CHICKEN RANCH UPSTAIRS - NIGHT
A montage of shots. An Aggie gets out from under a bed asking, "What's up?" Another Aggie leaves his girl, saying "Wait until next year" and rushes off. We see a foursome in bed surprised by a photographer, while in another room a boy and girl are so stoned out on a joint that they look around and mutter "Far out!"

164 INT. CHICKEN RANCH - MONA'S BEDROOM - NIGHT
Mona is getting no response from her phone call. She hangs up in disgust.

165 INT. CHICKEN RANCH - ANOTHER ROOM - NIGHT
Melvin bursts in on the Senator, who, with a highball in his hand, is being doused in baby powder by a blonde. Melvin sticks a microphone in front of the startled Senator's face.

    MELVIN
    Senator, the eyes of Texas are upon you.

The Senator looks stupidly about in the haloed light of the powder-filled air. He sees the television camera and jumps out of bed and runs into a closet, slamming the door behind him. Melvin laughs.

    MELVIN
    I think we've got enough. Let's get out of here.

He and his crew run off down the stairs.

166 INT. CHICKEN RANCH - MONA'S BEDROOM - NIGHT
Mona takes down a rifle from her wall and goes out to the landing.

167 EXT. CHICKEN RANCH - NIGHT
Football players are running out of the house and jumping into the Aggie bus. With his siren wailing, Ed Earl and Deputy Fred are driving up to the Chicken Ranch. Melvin and

CONTINUED
his crew are hopping into their vans and the car. Ed Earl drives up in a cloud of dust and parks. He gets out and looks at the scrambling Aggies. Mona appears at the front door with her rifle. Just then, Melvin drives from behind the bus and speeds off towards the front gate. He passes by Ed Earl and laughs as he snaps a picture. We push in on Ed Earl. He shakes his head with anger.

ED EARL

Holy, shit.

INT. CHICKEN RANCH - MONA'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Ed Earl and Mona are in the midst of a furious argument.

ED EARL
You promised me, dammit! You gave me your word and I took it. I'm the law. I could have....

MONA
The law! A gang of crazies break into my house, invading my privacy, taking pictures. Just tell me what the law is going to do about that! I'll tell you. Nothing.

ED EARL
They wouldn't have any reason to be here if you'd done what you said you'd do. I trusted you. That's what hurts. I trusted you!

MONA
Don't talk to me about trust. I trusted you to protect me. So I made a mistake tonight, okay!

ED EARL
If that's your idea of apologizing....

MONA
I ain't apologizing. I'm a businesswoman paying out double taxes and I expect a little security for my money. Where were you? Where were your deputies?
ED EARL
I was at home because I thought....

MONA
When Sheriff Jack Roy Wallace was running things, this could never have happened. But you, you just can't handle the job!

ED EARL
Goddamit, Mona, you're getting me mad!

MONA
That's right, cuss and shout just like on TV. You're still a kid playing at being a cowboy. You're never going to grow up. You use me as your mistress, you use that damn Dulcie Mae in town as your on-call wife, you even use her son so you can play weekend daddy. But that's all it is, Ed Earl, playing. And that's all you are, a kid playing at being a man.

Ed Earl grabs his hat and turns in the doorway.

ED EARL
I don't have to listen to this crap. Just remember, I'm wearing the badge and the only reason your doors stay open is because of me.

MONA
Don't threaten me. I'm telling the truth and you know it. Your big dreams of going to the legislature, that's all they are...dreams. 'Cause you'll always be what you are right now -- a chicken-shit sheriff in a chicken-shit town.

ED EARL
Maybe so, but that's a damn sight better than being a whore!

As soon as he said it, Ed Earl wishes he hadn't. Mona turns to him. Tears are welling up in her eyes.

Ed Earl slams his fist against the dressing table and breaks the glass. He turns around and storms out. Mona watches and listens as he goes down the stairs and out the front door. She falls down on the bed and sobs uncontrollably.
EXT. TEXAS LANDSCAPE - SUNRISE

In the early morning light we discover Ed Earl, unshaven and remorseful, having stayed up all night strolling by the riverbank, alone with his thoughts.

After a series of shots, he begins to sing.

ED EARL
Sometimes I get crazy
As fools are known to do
Lose my head in spite of
Everything I stand to lose
What is it in a man
That makes him act like
Such a fool
I swear I never knew
But always needed to.

Stubborn pride is just the way of stallions
I suppose
Even love can't change
The things I want to change the most
And it's pride that's got me standin'
When I should be on my knees
Making apologies
But it's so damn hard for me.

Oh, but now and again
I wish I'd a been a poet
So I could know the perfect lines
To say
Have some great romantic way
To show it
Be the hero ridin' up
To save the day.

And I'd go ridin' high
Like a knight in shining armor
Just sweep her up and race into the sun
But I don't have no magic ways
To charm her
No, it's lonely in the fields
Where stallions run.

And I'd like to say I love you
But those words just don't come
Words like that are no match
For the kind that rule my tongue
But I can only hope she knows
I love her anyway
No matter what I say
Oh, but I never say.

CONTINUED
ED EARL (Cont'd)

Oh, now and again
I wish I'd been a poet
So I could know the perfect lines
To say
And have some great romantic way
To show it
Be the hero that rides up
To save the day.

But I'd never be a knight
In shining armor
And as for poets
I was never one
I'm just a fool that must
Restore his honor
Oh, the winds are cold
That blow where stallions run.

I'm just a fool that must
Restore his honor
Or only walk in fields
Where stallions run.

INT. NATIONAL TV NEWS - EVENING

WALTER CRONKITE, at the anchor desk, is reporting the
Chicken Ranch story to all America.

WALTER

Legalized prostitution -- pro or
con -- is in the news again today.
We now take you to Jeff Gerald in
Gilbert, Texas.

We pan off the "No Entry" sign across the front road leading
to the Chicken Ranch up to JEFF GERALD with a microphone,
talking into the camera. Some deputies and a few sightseers
are parked in the background.

GERALD

The Chicken Ranch, the legendary
long-running bawdy house is showing
little activity after the
disclosure yesterday of the
Thanksgiving night raid. A deputy
at the front gate keeps away
onlookers and potential customers,
GERALD (Cont'd)

while up at the house, the shutters are closed and the principals not talking.

We cut to newsreel film shot earlier where we catch a glimpse of Mona behind the window curtains and Jewel shooing off reporters from the front porch. We also see a cut of Ed Earl walking from his car to his office, refusing to talk to the press.

GERALD (v.o.)
The Sheriff of Gilbert, Ed Earl Dodd, refused interviews; while in Houston the man who launched the campaign, consumer advocate Melvin P. Thorpe, held a press conference this afternoon.

We cut to filmed footage shot in Melvins's studio.

MELVIN
I have a report here that says the Chicken Ranch is involved with and under the influence of organized crime and I will be taking this report to Austin in the hope that the Governor will come out of his long silence on this issue and uphold the law.

After an establishing shot of the Austin Capitol, we cut to a press conference in Senator Wingwood's office.

GERALD (v.o.)
At the Capitol today, the Governor made no statement, but Senator Charles Wingwood, who was a principal figure in the Watchdog News raid, also held a press conference explaining his involvement.

The Senator nervously reads his prepared statement.

SENATOR
I have no independent recollection of going to the Chicken Ranch and I can only say as the most dedicated anti-communist in the state

CONTINUED
SENATOR (Cont'd)
legislature that I must have been
drugged by communists or communist
sympathizers and placed there to
harm my reputation and good name...
So I am now calling on every
freedom-loving American to call the
Governor and have this shameful
place shut down.

In the town square of Gilbert, Gerald has set up his cameras
and is about to interview some local citizens.

GERALD
Reaction across the state is split
fifty/fifty, but in the town of
Gilbert itself, the Chicken Ranch
has many supporters.

We cut to Edsel, the newspaper editor.

EDSEL
I've never seen anything bad come
from it and I've lived here all my
life. It brings in business for
the community and they pay taxes,
same as anyone else. Besides,
no one ever was forced to go up
there.

We cut to HENRY, a tough, redneck farmer.

HENRY
The Chicken Ranch? I think it's a
good idea. You take a lot of young
boys, they're going to be looking
for women. If they can't find 'em,
they'll rape 'em, and if they don't
do that, they'll run to other women
and get diseases. Those girls went
to doctors.

We cut to DORA, a sweet and proper old lady in town.

DORA
My Frank, when he was alive, used
to go up there every Saturday. I
took it as a blessing. Course it
was different then. Nowadays women
enjoy doing that sort of thing
themselves -- least that's what
I've been told.

CONTINUED
We cut to Gerald for the wrap-up. He is standing in front of the Gilbert courthouse.

GERALD
Although petitions are being circulated to 'Save the Chicken Ranch' this bumper sticker is already beginning to appear around the state:

He holds up a sticker saying "Pluck the Chicken Ranch."

GERALD
And so, as feminists line up behind the bill for the decriminalization of prostitution already in the legislature and as traditionalists and fundamentalists lobby for its defeat, the fate of the Chicken Ranch rests with the Governor, who today was again unavailable for comment. Jeff Gerald, CBS News in Gilbert, Texas.

INT. STUDY - NIGHT
The little man in the big chair watches the close of the report. He picks up a glass of water and drops in an Alka-Seltzer.

INT. CHICKEN RANCH - MONA'S BEDROOM - NIGHT
Mona has been watching the Cronkite report with Jewel. She turns it off. They both know the serious trouble they're in.

JEWEL
I hate admittin' I was wrong, Miss Mona, but with television broadcasting this from hell to breakfast, we should have done what the Sheriff said and kept this place closed.

MONA
It was my decision, Jewel. It was my fault.

CONTINUED
JEWEL
He ain't gonna be able to stop it, this time, is he?

MONA
I think he'd probably like to, but he's out of his league. He doesn't know how to fight them. He's just a good old boy that will never grow up.

JEWEL
Honey, you see everything in this profession, but one thing I ain't even seen, man or woman, is a grownup. Don't be too hard on him. He loves you.

MONA
He's never said it.

JEWEL
Some men can't say the words, honey, but that don't mean they don't feel it in their heart.

MONA
Maybe it's just as well. I set my course a long time ago and I can't be changing now.

INT. DULCIE MAE'S CAFE - NIGHT

The Mayor, Edsel, C.J. and Mansel are talking over the problems of the week. Ed Earl is seated at the counter drinking a beer with his back towards the others. Dulcie Mae is listening and watching Ed Earl as the others discuss the situation.

MAYOR
Well, I don't know what to do anymore. It seems folks got nothing to talk about but this Chicken Ranch mess. It's like a broken record: Chicken Ranch -- Chicken Ranch -- Chicken Ranch --

C.J.
This bad publicity's flat ruining business.

MAYOR
I haven't sold a car all week.

CONTINUED
MANSEL
It's ruining the town. No one's blaming you, Ed Earl. It ain't your fault. But we can't just sit around waiting to grow tits.

EDSEL
The way I see it, the Chicken Ranch served a purpose once, but everything's opened up today. Why, we've undergone a worldwide sexual revolution. Miss Mona's place is not obscene. It's just obsolete.

C.J.
She ain't got a handful of supporters left, Ed Earl. All this publicity is making folks think twice about signing that petition to keep her open.

MANSEL
Why the hell don't that station in Houston turn their cameras to the cesspool in their own backyard.

EDSEL
Or Austin. Within two blocks of the Capitol building you can get anything done to you for money that you can get in Tangiers! Tongue baths, naked massages, somebody ticklin' your ass with a feather.

C.J.
If you know that for a fact, Mr. Newspaper Editor, it's your duty to expose it.

EDSEL
C.J., I don't give a damn if folks occasionally want their asses tickled with feathers. I'd kinda like to think that's what heaven's all about.

Ed Earl finishes his beer and slams it down. He turns around and faces them.

ED EARL
Boys! I got myself a pretty good bullshit detector. And after
ED EARL (Cont'd)

listening to you I can damn sure
tell when somebody's peeing on my
boots and telling me it's a
rainstorm.

He gets up and puts on his hat.

ED EARL

This thing has gotten way out of
hand. I don't know how. It just
sort of ate me up before I knew it
was hungry. But I do know there is
one thing I can still do.

MAYOR

Close it down.

ED EARL

Nope. I'm going up to Austin and
see the Governor. Someone's got to
give him Miss Mona's side of this
situation. He sure as hell ain't
going to hear it from anyone in
this room.

MAYOR

But you can't go up to see the
Governor.

C.J.

He doesn't see anybody.

ED EARL

He'll see me.

He opens the door and steps outside. Dulcie Mae follows.

EXT. DULCIE MAE'S CAFE - NIGHT

It is chilly. Ed Earl is buttoning up his jacket.

ED EARL

I feel like a country dog in the
city. If I stand still, they screw
me. If I run, they bite me in the
ass.

She smiles in spite of herself.

DULCIE MAE

I wish there was something I could
do.
CONTINUED

ED EARL
Thanks...They all want me to close her down. Have her leave town. But how can I tell her to leave when all I want her to do is stay.

He smiles at her sadly and walks across the street to his car. She knows that's the first protestation of love he's ever made. She has tears in her eyes.

INT. DULCIE MAE'S CAFE - NIGHT

The men are still discussing Ed Earl's plan.

MAYOR
Ed Earl's a damn fool. Driving up to Austin to see the Governor. Don't he know that's hopeless.

EDSEL
Oh, he knows it's hopeless.

C.J.
Then why is he going?

EDSEL
Because that's what being a Texan is all about.

EXT. GOVERNOR'S MANSION - DAY

A group of reporters is standing outside the Governor's house waiting for him to appear. An AIDE comes out and addresses them like a herald.

AIDE
Ladies and gentlemen. His Excellency, the Governor of Texaaassss!

The Aide and entourage clap wildly as the Governor steps out the front door to accept the reception. It is the little man that we have seen earlier. The Governor beams, waves his cowboy hat and quiets the fanfare as if he were facing twelve thousand instead of a dozen.

GOVERNOR
Mah frends, I want to thank you for that sincere and heartwarming ovation.
He walks with his phalanx of aides past the reporters who clamor and call for his attention.

FEMALE REPORTER #1
Governor, what do you think of the explosive situation in the Middle East?

GOVERNOR
I was saying just this morning, at the weekly prayer breakfast in this historic Capitol, that it behooves both the Jews and the A-rabs to settle their differences in a Christian manner.

The Governor's Aide and other flaks applaud as the Governor moves towards his limousine waiting at the bottom of the steps.

MALE REPORTER #1
Governor, Governor, sir. Have you seen the evidence of the disgraceful situation at the Chicken Ranch?

EXT. GOVERNOR'S MANSION - CURBSIDE - DAY
The Governor stops at the bottom of the steps. He turns to face the reporters and clears his throat.

GOVERNOR
(singing)
Fellow Texans
I am proudly
Standing here to humbly say
I assure you
And I mean it
Now who says I don't speak
Out as plain as day?
And fellow Texans
I'm for progress
And the flag, long may it fly.

I'm a poor boy
Come to greatness
So it follows that I cannot tell
A lie!

He hops into his car and drives off.

CONTINUED
MALE REPORTER #2
What the hell did he say?

FEMALE REPORTER #1
I don't know.

MALE REPORTER #1
Same as usual... all hat and no cattle.

We pan with the Governor's limo as it takes the short ride across the park to the Capitol.

INT. LIMOUSINE - DAY
The Governor is very pleased with himself. He sits in the backseat and his feet tap out a rhythm on the car floor.

GOVERNOR
(singing)
Oooo! I love to
Dance the little
Sidestep
Now they see me,
Now they don't
I've come and gone...
And ooooo00!
I love to sweep around
A widestep
Cut a little
Swath and lead
The people on.

EXT. STATE CAPITOL STEPS - DAY
As the limousine drives up and the Governor steps out, another group of reporters is waiting for him. He gets out of the limousine and walks up the steps.

FEMALE REPORTER #2
Governor, Governor, do you plan to take action against the Chicken Ranch?

The Governor stops and turns to face the crowd.
GOVERNOR

(singing)
Now my good friends
It behooves me
To be solemn and declare
I'm for goodness
And for profit
And for living clean
And saying daily prayer.
And now my good friends
You can sleep nights
I'll continue to stand tall
You can trust me
For I promise
I shall keep a watchful
Eye upon you all.

The reporters look bewildered as the Governor disappears into the Capitol.

FEMALE REPORTER #2
Did you get any of that?

MALE REPORTER #3
I hear him talkin', but he don't come in.

INT. STATE CAPITOL CORRIDOR - DAY

The Governor looks out through the glass doors at the confused reporters and chuckles to himself.

GOVERNOR

(singing)
Oooo! I love to
Dance the little
Sidestep
Now they see me,
Now they don't
I've come and gone...
And ooooooo!
I love to sweep around
A widestep
Cut a little
Swath and lead
The people on.

Tripping the light fantastic, the Governor shuffles inside.
INT. STATE CAPITOL ROTUNDA - DAY

The Governor dances into the rotunda where Melvin Thorpe, his camera crew, and a chorus of Dogettes with Texas flags are waiting for him.

MELVIN
Governor, Melvin P. Thorpe.
Watchdog News. Why has the Chicken Ranch operation been so long ignored?

GOVERNOR
Beg pardon?

MELVIN
Is it true organized crime may be involved?

GOVERNOR
We seem to be having some acoustic problems in here.

MELVIN
And aren't you worried about possible payoffs and bribes?

GOVERNOR
Melvin, I'm sorry....

MELVIN
Enough of this pussyfooting, Governor! Just what are you prepared to do about Miss Mona and the Chicken Ranch?

Melvin looks around. The Governor has disappeared. He looks up. The Governor is standing by the railing of the first floor landing.

INT. STATE CAPITOL - FIRST FLOOR LANDING - DAY

The Governor smiles at Melvin and begins to sing:

GOVERNOR
(singing)
Now Miss Mona
I don't know her
Though I've heard the name,
Oh yes.
But of course I've
No close contact

CONTINUED
GOVERNOR (Cont'd)

(singing)
So what she is doing, I can only guess
But now Miss Mona
She's a blemish
On the face of that good town
I am taking certain steps here
(points to
his dancing
feet)
Someone, somewhere's gonna
Have to close her down!

INT. STATE CAPITOL - ROTUNDA - DAY

The reporters and even Melvin are confused.

FEMALE REPORTER #3

Is that 'yes' or a 'no'?

MALE REPORTER #3

It's the possible maybe.

INT. STATE CAPITOL - UPSTAIRS CORRIDOR - DAY

The Governor pops like a leprechaun back and forth behind
the marble pillars as he dazzles us with his footwork.

GOVERNOR

(singing)
Oooo! I love to
Dance the little
Sidestep
Now they see me
Now they don't
I've come and gone
And ooooooo!
I love to sweep around
A widestep
Cut a little
Swath and lead
The people on.

The Governor dances his final chorus, ending with a big
finish that ushers him into his office as the music ends.

INT. GOVERNOR'S OFFICE - DAY

The Governor leans against the door and with a sigh of
satisfaction wipes the sweat from his brow. He goes to his
desk as MABEL, a plump and proper lady, bursts in from his
outer office.

CONTINUED
MABEL
Governor, I have Sheriff Dodd from Gilbert waiting outside to see you. He's been here since early this morning and is very insistent.

GOVERNOR
Swearing Sheriff Dodd? The one on television? I can't....

Ed Earl enters and interrupts.

ED EARL
Governor, you've just got to listen to me... I know my coming here is way out of line but before you go closing the Chicken Ranch I want you to know the facts.

GOVERNOR
Well, I haven't made that decision yet. My aides are working....

ED EARL
The Chicken Ranch, Governor, has been in my county since before I was born. Its doors have been open to soldiers and presidents and farmers and even governors who can remember what a great institution it is.

GOVERNOR
No need to bring that up, Sheriff.

ED EARL
I'm not threatening you, Governor. You hold the whipsnare. Whatever you say I'm going to do, but think of the people out there. I've known Miss Mona for twelve years and there's no finer woman that you'll ever meet. The town likes her. She never refuses a charity -- the hospital fund, a new swimming pool. Hell, she even bought uniforms for the Little League so they wouldn't have to play in their blue jeans.
GOVERNOR
Well, I wasn't aware of her civic generosity, but the law is the law.

ED EARL
And sometimes it's got to be changed. Look, I've been fighting crime all my life, but let's not confuse crime with committing a sin. You can't legislate morality. Those girls out there have never caused any trouble. No fights. No dope. No nothing. They're healthy, tax-paying, law-abiding citizens who supply a demand and provide an economic asset to the community.

GOVERNOR
Ed Earl, you ever thought of running for office? You make that whorehouse sound like a damn non-profit recreational facility.

ED EARL
Governor, if the citizens who elected me had found it necessary to close it for any reason, I would do it. If Miss Mona and her girls were jeopardizing the health, wealth or moral scruples of the community, I would do it. If the place had even been just a piddlin' nuisance, an eyesore, or even a fire hazard, I would close it down. But there's nothing! No reason, except the cries of this muckraking sensationalist on television.

Half a dozen aides rush in.

AIDE
Here they are, Governor. What you've been waiting for.

The Governor takes the sheets of paper and scans them. He sighs and looks over to Ed Earl.
GOVERNOR

I'm sorry, Ed Earl. The Chicken Ranch loses, forty-two to thirty-seven, with twenty-one per cent undecided.

ED EARL

(confused)
What is that?

GOVERNOR

The polls! You can't ask me to go against the polls! This is what the people want.
(to his aides)
Is Melvin still outside? Maybe I can catch the television cameras before they leave.

He runs to the door and flings it open.

ED EARL

But, Governor, that's not what my people want.

The Governor stops in the doorway and turns to Ed Earl.

GOVERNOR

(decidedly)
The show's over, Sheriff. Close it down!

He runs off and his aides follow.

Ed Earl is bitterly disappointed. He turns and exits.

INT. GOVERNOR'S OUTER OFFICE - DAY

Mabel, the secretary, steps out with him. She has been impressed with his speech.

MABEL

I'm sorry, Sheriff. You're a good speaker. You could run for office here.
Ed Earl puts on his hat.

ED EARL
I was thinking about it, m'am, but
I'm just a country sheriff. I'll
never be grown up enough to be in
politics.

He tips his hat to her and walks outside.

INT. STATE CAPITOL ROTUNDA - DAY

The Governor has just congratulated Melvin on his victory. A marching band strikes up the song, Melvin is hoisted on his supporters' shoulders and is marched around the rotunda as everybody sings. The flagwaving Dogettes fall in line along with other citizens carrying signs (e.g., "Concerned Citizens for a Whore-Free Society").

CHORUS
(singing)
Melvin Thorpe has done it
Once again
He's shown his light
And now we see
Melvin Thorpe has gone through
Thick and thin
And led us all to victory.

The Governor looks down from the first floor landing and, pleased with his handling of the whole situation, he sings his song in counterpoint with the Dogettes.

GOVERNOR
(singing)
Oooo! I love to
Dance the little
Sidestep
Now they see me
Now they don't
I've come and gone
And oooooo!
I love to sweep around
A widestep
Cut a little
Swath and lead
The people on.
INT. STATE CAPITOL STAIRCASE - DAY

Ed Earl walks down the steps to the ground floor. He looks over at the rotunda where Melvin is getting ready for a live broadcast. The Dogettes and the band are singing their last celebration chorus.

DOGETTES
Melvin Thorpe has done it
Once again
He's shown his light
And now we see
Melvin Thorpe has gone through
Thick and thin
And led us all....

INT. STATE CAPITOL ROTUNDA - DAY

Melvin is standing in front of a live camera. He's about to begin speaking when he's tapped on the shoulder. He turns around. It's Ed Earl. The Sheriff, with one hand, pulls off Melvin's wig, grabs him by the collar and with a great right punch, smacks him in the jaw. Melvin goes sailing across the polished marble floor and lands in the middle of the rotunda, spread-eagled over the Lone Star of Texas.

CHORUS
...to victory.

Ed Earl walks up to him, drops the wig on his face, steps over the inert body, and exits out the front doors while an astonished crowd stares in silence.

EXT. CHICKEN RANCH - DUSK

From the weather vane shaped like a rooster on top of the Chicken Ranch roof we look down at the Sheriff's deputies stationed at the front gate. A few gawkers and tourists with cameras park by the roadside. Deputy Fred walks over to send them away.

INT. CHICKEN RANCH PARLOR - DUSK

The girls are standing around, bored...some drying their hair, reading, practicing musical instruments or ballet. Ruby Rae comes in and goes to the window.

RUBY RAE
What's going on out there?

DURLA
Nothing much.

CONTINUED
BEATRICE
The Sheriff's deputies have been shooing off the gawkers all day.

RUBY RAE
Well, I wish the Sheriff or the Governor or somebody would make up their mind whether this place is going to be staying open or not. I got to make plans.

BEATRICE
Me too. I got to think about my future.

RUBY RAE
Honey, you're sitting on your future.

DURLA
I suppose we could always go to Vegas.

GINGER
Sugar, I've lost a step. Shreveport's more my speed right now.

ANGEL
Well, at least I'll get to spend this Christmas in Dallas with my kid.

DURLA
Then what.

ANGEL
Then, by God, I'm staying home. Join the straight life.

RUBY RAE
I heard that before.

ANGEL
No, this time I'm gonna make myself like it. Besides, I've quit twice before and they say third time's the charm.

INT. CHICKEN RANCH - MONA'S BEDROOM - NIGHT
Mona is at her desk going over her books when Shy enters.

SHY
Any word, Miss Mona?
MONA
No...My, that's a pretty outfit. You've blossomed into a real lady, Shy.

SHY
Well, I want to be like you, Miss Mona. This place is the only home I've ever had and them girls is the only family.

MONA
I know just how you feel.

The phone rings. Mona stops talking. Shy looks at the phone and excuses herself.

SHY
I'll see you later.

She closes the door behind her. Mona picks up the phone.

INT. SHERIFF'S INNER OFFICE - NIGHT

Ed Earl is standing by the side of his desk. It is obviously very difficult for him to be making this call.

Intercut the conversation.

ED EARL
Mona, this is an official call. As the Sheriff of Lanville County, it's my duty to....

MONA
(interrupts)
Get to the point, Sheriff.

ED EARL
I've got to close you down.

MONA
I see. How long do we have?

ED EARL
Well, it would be better to do it as soon as possible.

MONA
I understand.

CONTINUED
Look, Mona, about the other night. I apologize. I was angry and I lost my temper.

That's all right, Ed Earl. I think we both said things we regret.

Is there anything I can do....

No, thanks. I think you've done all you could. I'll tell my girls.

She hangs up.

Ed Earl puts down the phone. He looks around his office, picks up his hat, turns out the lights and walks out the door.

Mona comes down the stairs and walks into the main room where the girls are assembled.

Well, the news has come. I just got a call from the Sheriff. We're closed down...immediately and permanently.

Well, Las Vegas here I come.

Would you believe I'm going to miss this old place. I've gotten in the habit of having a permanent address.

Damn. I thought when the Sheriff went up to Austin to speak to the Governor we'd get a reprieve.
MONA
What did you say?

DAWN
Didn't you know about that, Miss Mona?

ELOISE
He drove up last night. The whole town's talking about the way he fought for you. Didn't he tell you that?

MONA
No, he didn't.

There are tears in her eyes. Music creeps in as we:

Dissolve to

EXT. CHICKEN RANCH - DAY

An air of sadness surrounds the little house.

INT. CHICKEN RANCH - UPSTAIRS - DAY

The girls are packing their suitcases in their various rooms and getting ready to leave.

BEATRICE
(singing)
Hey, maybe I'll dye my hair
Maybe I'll move somewhere.

ELOISE
Maybe I'll get a car
Maybe I'll drive so far
They'll all lose track.

GINGER
Me, I'll bounce right back.

CAMELLIA
Maybe I'll sleep real late.

DAWN
Maybe I'll lose some weight.

CONTINUED
CONTINUED

BEGONIA
Maybe I'll clear my junk.

INT. CHICKEN RANCH - STAIRS - DAY

Durla is walking down the stairs, followed by Mona and the other girls.

DURLA
Maybe I'll just get drunk
On apple wine.

MONA
Me, I'll be just
Fine and dandy
Lord, it's like a
Hard Candy Christmas
I'm barely getting through tomorrow
But still I won't let sorrow
Bring me way down.

INT. CHICKEN RANCH PARLOR - DAY

MONA & GIRLS
I'll be
Fine and dandy
Lord, it's like a
Hard Candy Christmas
I'm barely getting through tomorrow
But still I won't let sorrow
Bring me way down.

INT. CHICKEN RANCH - MONTAGE - DAY

During the bridge, we see a montage of some of the girls saying their farewells: one packs a last Christmas present; one puts a photo of her boyfriend in her suitcase; one looks out the window for the bus and checks her watch; one takes a last look around an empty room and turns off the fan.

INT. CHICKEN RANCH KITCHEN - DAY

Jewel is packing up some pots and pans.

JEWEL
Hey, maybe I'll learn to sew.

CONTINUED
ROSELEE
Maybe I'll just lie low.

TADDY JO
Maybe I'll hit the bars.

LINDA LOU
Maybe I'll count the stars
Until the dawn.

INT. CHICKEN RANCH COURTYARD - DAY

Four girls are walking across the empty courtyard carrying their suitcases to the main house.

RUBY RAE
Me, I will go on.

ANGEL
Maybe I'll settle down.

ZINNIA
Maybe I'll just leave town.

PETUNIA
Maybe I'll have some fun.

EXT. CHICKEN RANCH PORCH - DAY

The girls are seated in a tableau around Mona and Jewel waiting for the bus.

SHY
Maybe I'll meet someone
And make him mine.

MONA
Me, I'll be just
Fine and dandy
Lord, it's like a
Hard candy Christmas
I'm barely gettin' through tomorrow
But still I won't let sorrow
Bring me way down

CONTINUED
I'll be 
Fine and dandy 
Lord, it's like a 
Hard candy Christmas 
I'm barely gettin' through tomorrow 
But still I won't let sorrow 
Bring me way down

One girl looks up and sees the bus coming up the road. She looks back at the others. They see it, too.

I'll be 
Fine and dandy 
Lord, it's like a 
Hard candy Christmas 
I'm barely gettin' through tomorrow 
But still I won't let sorrow 
Bring me way down

EXT. CHICKEN RANCH - DAY
The bus arrives in front of the Chicken Ranch.

A TRIO OF GIRLS
I'll be fine....

DISSOLVE TO

EXT. CHICKEN RANCH - DAY
There are now less girls.

SHY AND GINGER
I'll be fine....
Shy kisses Mona and leaves.

DISSOLVE TO

EXT. CHICKEN RANCH - DAY
Now only Jewel and Mona are left. Mona waves and says half to herself.

MONA
Hey, we're gonna all be fine.

EXT. CHICKEN RANCH - DAY
A long shot of the bus pulling away from the Chicken Ranch with Mona and Jewel standing in the doorway.
EXT. CHICKEN RANCH - DAY

It is a cold winter day. The girls have gone. Jewel is securing the ropes around the jukebox in the U-Haul trailer attached to Miss Mona's car.

Ed Earl drives up in the Sheriff's car. He's in his sheepskin jacket with the collar up. Jewel is happy to see him.

JEWEL
Hey, Sheriff!

ED EARL
Mornin', Jewel.

JEWEL
I'm so pleased to see you. I knew you couldn't let me leave without a sweet good-bye for old Porky.

ED EARL
(smiles)
Good-bye, Jewel.

Ed Earl gives her a hug.

JEWEL
Good-bye, Sheriff. Did you hear that some people are planning to get the Historical Society to put a marker up out here?

ED EARL
This little house has seen some times.

JEWEL
That it has. Oh, it's a bleak day, ain't it. I sure hope you come up to the ranch to visit Miss Mona and me.

ED EARL
Maybe I'll just do that someday. Where is she?

JEWEL
Inside.

ED EARL
I see you're keeping the old juke.

CONTINUED
JEWEL

(laughing)
Oh, Sheriff, I wouldn't leave without my bell and my box.

Jewel rings the bell and laughs as Ed Earl goes inside.

INT. CHICKEN RANCH - DAY

Most of the furniture has been removed or stuck off in a corner covered with sheets. Ed Earl walks inside and looks around. The fans on the ceiling have all stopped. He turns as Mona comes down the stairs. They look at each other. They have so much to say it's very difficult to find the words. Mona forces a smile.

MONA
The place looks kinda funny, don't it. Ben Sawtuck bought all the furniture and the fixtures. I left it up to Langston downtown to sell the rest.

ED EARL
Well, I'll tell my boys to keep an eye on the place.

MONA
Thank them for me, will you? Those reporters and sightseers could have gotten out of hand if it weren't for your deputies down there at the gate.

ED EARL
Sure.

MONA
And I want to thank you, Ed Earl, for the protection you gave the girls. You did a fine job in a very difficult situation.

Ed Earl walks over to her. He pauses for a moment.

ED EARL
Mona, I swear to God I don't understand how this whole thing happened. It was all so fast. It just seems like yesterday that we....
MONA
Ed Earl, the thing to do is put all this behind you. Quick as you can.

ED EARL
I just can't figure it out.

MONA
Look, I made a lotta money, had a few laughs. I danced a bit. Now it's time to pay the fiddler, that's all.

ED EARL
Maybe if I just hadn't cussed on that damn television.

MONA
It's over, Ed Earl. Please!

She bites her lip to stop from crying. She walks to the window and looks out. Ed Earl comes and stands behind her.

ED EARL
Mona, you've known me now for a long time. You know me better than I know myself. You know how difficult it is for me to say this, but, Mona, I love you. I want to marry you.

Mona turns around into his arms.

MONA
Oh, Ed Earl, I've loved you since I was a sixteen-year-old baby and I'll keep on lovin' you 'til they bury me.

They kiss...lovingly and passionately. Mona breaks away.

MONA
But, listen to me, Ed Earl. I've thought about this for a long time now and as much as I would like for it to work, I know deep in my heart it could never be.

ED EARL
Mona, didn't you hear what I said?

She hushes him with her fingers on his lips.

CONTINUED
MONA
I did, my darlin', but it's always
going to be the way it is. You'll
always be the Sheriff -- and you
should be because you're good at
your job -- and I'll always
be...just what I am. You know it
and I know it. It just wouldn't
work.

ED EARL
But we can make it work. I don't
give a damn what people say, we've
got to give it a chance...please.
Don't leave.

MONA
(singing)
If I should stay
I would only be in your way
And so I'll go and yet I know
That I'll think of you each step of the way
And I will always love you
I will always love you.

Bitter sweet memories
I guess that's all I'll be taking with me
Good-bye, oh please don't cry
'Cause we both know that I'm not what you need
But I will always love you
I will always love you.

(talking)
And I hope life will treat you kind
And I hope that you have all that
you've ever dreamed of.

ED EARL
I wish you joy, I wish you happiness
But above all this I wish you love
I love you, and I will always love you.

Ed Earl turns and exits. Mona begins to sing, but breaks down
before the song is finished.

MONA
(singing)
I will always love you
I will always love you,
I'll always love you....

EXT. CHICKEN RANCH PORCH - DAY
Jewel comes up to the front porch and speaks softly to
Mona.

CONTINUED
Come on, honey. It's time to go.

Mona brushes away her tears and exits by Jewel, who pulls the front door shut.

EXT. CHICKEN RANCH - DAY

Jewel starts up the car and drives down the road. Mona is sadly sitting beside her.

INT. MONA'S CAR - DAY

Jewel looks into the rearview mirror and sees the Chicken Ranch receding in the background. She looks over at Mona who is lost in her own thoughts. Jewel looks out ahead and sees something that makes her smile. She glances over at Mona again, then smiles some more.

EXT. CHICKEN RANCH FRONT GATE - DAY

We pull back from the red light on top of the Sheriff's car and see Ed Earl, with his jacket off and his badge prominently pinned to his shirt, step out of the car and walk around to halt the approaching vehicle.

INT. MONA'S CAR - DAY

Mona looks forward and sees Ed Earl with his hand raised and a resolute look of authority on his face. Despite her tears, she breaks into a smile.

EXT. CHICKEN RANCH - DAY - HELICOPTER SHOT

Jewel stops the car and we pull back as Ed Earl walks over to Mona and opens her door. The Narrator begins singing and as we swing around and fly higher we see the little house all closed and shuttered sitting forlornly on top of the hill.

NARRATOR

Oh, the little house lay in a
Green Texas glade
Where the trees were as coolin'
As fresh lemonade
Soft summer wind
Had a trace of perfume
And a fan was turnin'
In every room.

CONTINUED
CHORUS
Twenty fans were turnin'
They were turnin'
Twenty fans were turnin'
In every room
Fevers were a-burnin'
They were burnin'
And they had to have
A way to cool down.

MONA'S VOICE
It was just a little old bitty
pissant country place....

FADE TO BLACK

END CREDITS

The music begins a foot-stompin' reprise of the songs as we
flash short cuts of highlights from the film. At the end of
the credits, Mona turns to camera.

MONA
Ya'll come back now, you hear?

THE END
#02139

THE BEST LITTLE WHOREHOUSE IN TEXAS

**SONGS**

1. "TWO N T FANS"  
   Narrator, Boys and Girls

2. "LITTLE PISSANT COUNTRY PLACE"  
   Dolly and The Girls

3. "SNEAKIN' AROUND"  
   Burt and Dolly

4. "GAMBLE EITHER WAY"  
   Dolly

5. "TEXAS HAS A WHOREHOUSE IN IT"  
   Melvin and Dogettes

6. "FADED LOVE"  
   Burt and Dolly

7. "AGGIE SONG"  
   Boys and Girls

8. "ED EARL'S BALLAD"  
   Burt

9. "SIDESTEP"  
   Governor

10. "HARD CANDY CHRISTMAS"  
    Dolly and The Girls

11. "I WILL ALWAYS LOVE YOU"  
    Dolly and Burt

12. "TWO N T FANS" REPRISE  
    Narrator and The Company
THE BEST LITTLE WHOREHOUSE IN TEXAS

NEW ACT BREAKDOWN

ACT ONE

1. Pre-credit sequence/"TWENTY FANS"/history of whorehouse.
2. Credits and "OVERTURE."
3. Introduce Ed Earl in town.
4. Introduce Mona/"LITTLE BITTY PISSANT COUNTRY PLACE."
5. Mona in town.
6. Ed Earl and Mona together/"SNEAKIN' AROUND."
7. Mayor gives Ed Earl the problem of Melvin. Ed Earl makes three phone calls and leaves for Houston.
8. Mona meets Shy and sings "GAMBLE EITHER WAY."
9. Ed Earl at TV station/meets Melvin/"TEXAS HAS A WHOREHOUSE IN IT."

SONGS

"TWENTY FANS"
"LITTLE BITTY PISSANT COUNTRY PLACE"
"SNEAKIN' AROUND"
"GAMBLE EITHER WAY"
"TEXAS HAS A WHOREHOUSE IN IT"
NEW ACT BREAKDOWN

ACT TWO

1. Mona calms Ed Earl at the Chicken Ranch.

2. Ed Earl confronts Melvin in the town square and sends him running.

3. Texas Bar where they sing "FADED LOVE."

4. Lake scene.

5. Mona and Ed Earl see Ed Earl make a fool of himself on TV.

6. Confrontation with the Mayor and others in Ed Earl's office.

7. Mona promises Ed Earl she'll close the Chicken Ranch.

8. Football game.

9. "AGGIE SONG" from locker room to bus on road, ending at Chicken Ranch hoedown.

10. Ed Earl leaves Dulcie Mae's.

11. Deputy sees Melvin drive past the town square.

12. Mona at the Chicken Ranch, everything quiet.


15. Mona and Ed Earl have big argument in her room.

SONGS

"FADED LOVE"
"AGGIE SONG"
THE BEST LITTLE WHOREHOUSE IN TEXAS

NEW ACT BREAKDOWN

ACT THREE

1. Ed Earl stays up all night. Sings his "BALLAD."
2. "Walter Cronkite Evening News" does wrap-up on Chicken Ranch.
3. Mona in her room.
4. Town meeting at Dulcie's Cafe/Ed Earl leaves for Austin.
5. Governor sings "SIDESTEP" at the rotunda/meets with Ed Earl/Ed Earl socks Melvin.
6. The girls bored at the Chicken Ranch.
7. Mona in her room gets phone call from Ed Earl in his office.
8. Mona tells the girls the bad news.
9. The girls pack and sing "HARD CANDY CHRISTMAS."
10. The last scene at the Chicken Ranch/Ed Earl and Mona say good-bye with "I WILL ALWAYS LOVE YOU."
11. Drive away and reprise "TWENTY FANS."

SONGS

"ED EARL'S BALLAD"
"SIDESTEP"
"HARD CANDY CHRISTMAS"
"I WILL ALWAYS LOVE YOU"
"TWENTY FANS" REPRISE