A Face in the Crowd

By Budd Schulberg
OLD MAN (to Sheriff:
Somebody's looking for you.

SHERIFF:
Miss Jeffries!

MARCIA:
Morning, Sheriff.

SHERIFF:
We've got what you want; we always
get a good haul on the 4th of July.

MARCIA:
Good. Come on, let’s go.

MAN:
Here she comes, Bill.

SHERIFF:
Come in, and see what we've got.

MARCIA:
Wait, I forgot my tape recorder.

SHERIFF:
Boys, this is Miss Marcia Jeffries.

MARCIA:
How do you do?

SHERIFF:

1

By

Her uncle owns the radio station
in town, KGRK.
She's been doing a program,
maybe you've heard it...
"A Face in the Crowd". A mighty nice
program it is, too.
I know this is a little unusual...
but this morning she's going
to do her program from here.
Miss Jeffries, the jail of Tawny
Hawk County is at your disposal.

**MARCIA:**
It’s very simple; you just talk into this microphone in a natural voice.
We'll just chat back and forth.
This is completely informal...
so if anybody wants to sing a song
or tell an anecdote...
a funny story...

**SHERIFF:**
Let me see. Beanie,
last time you were here...
I heard you sing something.

2

**BEANIE:**
I ain't got my teeth with me
this time.

**MARCIA:**
This is Radio KGRK, the voice
of North East Arkansas...
bringing you its morning feature,
"A Face in the Crowd".
Whose face?
It could be yours.
Or yours. People are fascinating
wherever you find them.
This is Marcia Jeffries,
looking for more faces...
this time from the county jail.
Say something. (She holds the microphone up to Beanie)

**BEANIE:**
Don't worry, Ma,
everything's fine.
Nicest jail I've been in
in this part of the country.

**SHERIFF:**
Hey, you, you can do something.
MAN IN CELL:
I got black skin,
but I ain't no minstrel.

SHERIFF:
I'm sorry, Miss Jeffries,
they're just an ordinary bunch.
Where's the drunk from last night
with the guitar? What's his name?

DEPUTY:
Rhodes. That's him lying there...

SHERIFF:
Go and wake him up.

BEANIE:
Watch him, he's mean.

DEPUTY:
Miss Jeffries, we'll wake him up.
Hey, wake up!

MARCIA:
Morning, Mr. Rhodes,
I'm from Radio...

LONESOME:
Get away! Get away!

DEPUTY:
The sheriff's here.

LONESOME:
I don't care if the president
is here.
If a man can't get a little
decent sleep in jail...

Who are you?

MARCIA:
I'd like to introduce you
to our radio audience.

LONESOME:
Radio?

MARCIA:
Join me in a little chat...

LONESOME:
Wait a minute!
Quit racing your motor.
What do I get out of it?
I mean, Me, myself, and I.

MARCIA:
Sheriff?

SHERIFF:
What’s he in here for?

DEPUTY:
A week, drunk and disorderly.

SHERIFF:
If you'll co-operate, I might let you out in the morning.

BEANIE:
Me too, I'm his manager.

LONESOME:
The boys say you don't keep your word any too good.

SHERIFF:
You keep your end of the bargain, I'll keep mine.

LONESOME:
Well, okay.

It’s a deal, tomorrow morning. I'll sing you a song.

MARCIA:
I went to Sarah Lawrence College,
I majored in music.
I learned that real American
music comes from the bottom up.
When Gershwin played at the New York
it was black tie music...
but the real beginning of it
was in folks that never owned a tie.
I just bumped into a fella you
never heard of, Rhodes.
What’s your first name?

**LONESOME:**
Jack, or Mack,
what’s the difference?

**MARCIA:**
Calls himself "Lonesome Rhodes".

**LONESOME:**
Lonesome?
Don't be rushing me,
cut that thing off a minute.
Give me a chance to lubricate
my Adam's apple. (He takes a swig from the bottle in his guitar case)
Nothing like a little medicine
to put you in the mood.
Ain't mamma a beauty?
A guitar beats a woman
any time! I never have seen a woman
I could trust like this old guitar.
I love my mamma guitar.
She's always waiting for me
to pick her up and hold her.
Never asks me for money or goes
cheating around when I ain't looking.
If she gets a little sour, I just
give her a little twist like so...
and we're right back
in tune together.

**PRISONERS:**
Hey, Lonesome,
sing "Rye Whiskey".
Lonesome.

"Hallelujah, I'm a Bum."

LONESOME:

She can see that plain enough.
Whenever a bunch of fellas like us...
outcasts, hobos, nobodies,
gentlemen loafers...
one time or all time losers,
call us what you want to...
Whenever we get together,
we tell funny stories...
me and Beanie
and the rest of these...
hand-to-mouth tumbleweed boys like you see in here.
If whisky don't get us,
then women must...
and it looks like...
I'm never gonna cease...
my wandering.
But, deep down,
when we get ready...
to tuck our heads under our wings
and go to sleep...
we ain't kidding ourselves.
We're so low-down lonely...
the fella we couldn't stand
the sight of this morning...
tonight, when the guards
do us a light... and plunge us into darkness...
why that same fella seems like
our nearest, dearest buddy.
(He sings the next three lines.)
Ten thousand miles
away from home.
And I don't even know my name.
But I ain't crying.
No, I ain't crying, because I'm gonna be a free man in the morning.
You hear that, fellas?
A free man!
The sheriff's gonna open up
his cage...
and I'm gonna be as free
as a bird in the morning.
Hey, maybe I can try putting
a couple of rhymes together...

SHERIFF:
Sing something dependable
like "Home on the Range".

LONESOME:
I ain't gonna sing no
"Home on the Range".
No, sir, not if it means
I rot in here another month.
I'm gonna sing
what I'm gonna be...
a free man in the morning.
Oh, good night, moon.
Moon, you just fade,
fade, fade away.
Oh, good night, moon.
Moon, you just fade away.
And hurry on, Mr. Sun...
bring on the new day.
Oh, bring on the sheriff...
with his great big old key.
Yeah!
Bring on old Big Jeff,
the sheriff of Pickett, Arkansas...
with his big old fat key.
To open up this nasty,
filthy jailhouse...
and make a free man of me.
You got any objections to
being a free man in the morning?

PRISONER:
No, sir, I ain't.
LONESOME (sings):
Gonna be a free man
in the morning...
free man in the morning...
free man in the morning...
or know the reason...
All right, I'm ready.

MARCIA:
Thank you, Lonesome Rhodes,
that was just fine.

LONESOME:
You mean to tell me you
8
had that going all the time?

MARCIA:
I'm a sneaky type.

LONESOME:
Well, lock me up...

(Cut to:
shoe
shine boy are listening to Marcia’s tape of Lonesome. They all laugh.)
J.B. (to shoe shine boy):
You like him?

Shoe shine boy:
Yes, sir.

J. B.:
By golly, I think you've got yourself
quite a fella there, quite a fella.

MARCIA :
I'd sure like to use him on
our Early Bird Show from 7 to 8.
Would you let me, Uncle J. B?

J. B.:
Hello? Get me the jail, Gladys.
GLADYS (on phone):
The jail?
J. B.:
That's right, the sheriff.
(to Marcia) Or should I say, our future mayor?
That boy may be bashful, Marcia,
but he's pretty sweet on you.

MARCIA:
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The only thing I'm interested in...
is running the best radio program
in North East Arkansas.

J. B.:
Hello, Big Jeff?

SHERIFF:
Rhodes?

J. B.:
Yes.

SHERIFF:
That's the thing, J. B... I was only holding him
on a drunk and disorderly.

J. B.:
You've no idea which way
he was headed?

SHERIFF:
There's only two ways out of town,
and I can hardly see him going west,
because he come from jail in West Pickett.
He'll be on the east road.

MARCIA:
Let's go after him.

(Cut to:
on
the road up ahead.)

MARCIA:
There he is.
(calling from car window)
Hey! Morning!
Hi!
We've been looking for you.

LONESOME:
Yeah? What for?

MARCIA:
This is my uncle, Mr. Jeffries,
who owns our radio station.
(Lonesome leans in through the passenger-side window.)

J.B.:
Well, how's it feel to be
a free man in the morning?
(Lonesome turns his head and spits in disgust)

J.B.:
Where you headed now?

LONESOME:
Port St Joe, Florida.

J. B.:
That's a long walk.
What's down there?

LONESOME:
Oh, plenty of water and
plenty of fishing bridges...
and snapper boats,
and tarpon rolls...
(While he says this, he is leaning into the car, looking intently at
Marcia, only a few inches from her face. She looks down, closes the
sides of her dress collar together.)

J. B.:
You know, I've always wanted
to catch me a tarpon.

LONESOME:
What’s to stop you?

J. B.:
I can't afford it.
I've got a radio station,
newspaper, printing business...
I'm president of the Kiwanis...
I can't afford it.

LONESOME:
Come on, Beanie.

MARCIA:
11
Wait! We want to talk to you...

LONESOME:
Listen, I ain't got but four or five days
to make it to St. Joe.
Unless I steal somebody's car.

J.B.:
Wait a minute, we've got a job
for you.
Every morning on our station,
7 to 8 .

LONESOME:
I don't want no job.

J.B.:
Why not?

LONESOME:
Too much like work, man.

MARCIA:
Do you have any money?

LONESOME:
Mamma will always get me a meal.
I can sleep in a jail.

MARCIA:
Come on, try it for a day.
How about if you had a plane ticket?
You can put it in your pocket...
if you ever want to go,
you just go.

LONESOME:
Well...
Okay. I'll try it for one day.

J.B.:
I'll turn around. (He does)
Let's go.

J.B.:
Take him to the hotel
12
and get him a room.
And you better clean him up
a bit.

LONESOME:
See you around, Beanie. (Beanie shrugs)

J.B.:
Get in the back. (Lonesome climbs into the front next to Marcia)
(Cut to Lonesome’s room in the motel. Marcia is unpacking while
Lonesome is splashing in the sink and singing in the bathroom)

MARCIA:
Would you mind closing the door?

LONESOME:
My goodness, ain't we fussy!

MARCIA:
clothes in Lonesome’s suitcase)
This wardrobe you got, I think
I better send it to the laundry for you.

LONESOME:
I'll wash it myself. That way I can
cut out any time I feel like it. (He pulls out a bottle of whiskey)
MARCIA:
So early in the morning?

LONESOME:
How would you like to sorta
get acquainted early in the morning?

MARCIA:
We really do have to hurry.

LONESOME:
I bet you never sat on bed
with a man before.

MARCIA:
13
Really!
Look, I'll meet you downstairs.
(Cut to the radio station, where Lonesome is on the air)

LONESOME:
Ladies,
or I guess I should say, girls...
the boss lady of this here program just shoved
a piece of paper at me...
says I ain't got
but three more minutes.
That’s what I've got
against working...
it’s tangled up
with the word "hurry".
Back in my little old town of Riddle,
we had a cousin named Harry...
they all called him Hurry 'cause
he was always running someplace.
Till one day he fell down a flight
of steps and broke his fool neck. (He laughs)
We put a sign on his grave
that said...
"He was in such a hurry,
he couldn't wait to get here."
Shucks, I was just getting ready to add on
a verse about being a free woman.
I bet a lot of you dream of that...
with all them breakfast dishes
piling up in the sink...
and cranky husbands
to get off to work.
Ain't it a shame how they
get on about everything...
(Crosscut to an older couple eating breakfast, listening to Lonesome’s show; as he says the next line, the man looks up to see his wife glaring at him)
because they ain't got the gumption
to take it out on their boss?
MAN TO HIS GLARING WIFE:
Well, good-bye, dear,
I'm late for work.

LONESOME:
I hate to talk against
my own kind but I never have seen
a man yet who could appreciate
how hard you women has to work.
They think running water over a dish
is all there is to it.
They never see you clean the grease
out of the sink...
or wiping out of the oven
the gravy...
or the apple juice that sizzles over
the side of the dish onto your grill.
OLD LADY CLEANING HER OVEN:
Now how would he know that?

MARCIA:
in the radio office.)
Listen to this.
"Dear Lonesome, though I never
set eyes on you..."
(to J.B. as he comes in. Female fans are crowded outside the office door)
Listen. "I know you must be
saintly looking.
Only a saint could understand the
burdens of a housewife like you do."
Morning, Bob (to a man who enters)
They all say the same. They love his voice, they love his guitar, they love his ideas. They should know some of them.

J.B.:
You're not fooling me, you're proud of him. Let’s work in my office.

MARCIA:
Well, listen, there hasn't been mail like this since you started the station.
(They go into J.B.’s office, where Lonesome is asleep in J.B.’s chair with his feet up on J.B.’s desk.)

J.B.:
Hello.

MARCIA:
Shh!

J.B.:
Oh, hello, Wayne. Huh? Oh, so you like the fella? Okay, I guess we can put you down for three one-minute spots. Thanks for calling. Bye. Advertisers actually calling to buy time. Looks like this station will make a little money yet.

MARCIA:
Go easy on the advertising. I don't think he wants to stay.

J.B.:
Marcia, you found him, it’s your job to get him to …
(Lonesome, who has been feigning sleep, chuckles)
Dissolve to Lonesome and Marcia in a bar, later)

LONESOME:
That’s the time, honey.
Whenever you see
this well running dry...
you just come over here and prime her again.

WAITRESS:
That’s right, Lonesome. (She gives him the eye as she walks away and he stares back at her)

MARCIA:
I'm afraid that’s going
to be your name.

LONESOME:
My real intimate friends
call me Larry.
You call me Larry, huh?

MARCIA:
That’s a good chaser.
16
Did you always drink like that?

LONESOME:
Not always. Back in Riddle
they was pretty strict.
They didn't allow us to touch hard liquor
till we was 10 or 11.

MARCIA:
Now, is there really a town
called Riddle?

LONESOME:
To tell you the truth it’s just
sort of a what do you call it...

MARCIA:
Composite?

LONESOME:
Compost heap is more like it.

MARCIA:
Where are you from?

**LONESOME:**
From all over. Any town you mention for 500 miles,
I bet I lived in a day or two.

**MARCIA:**
What did your father do?

**LONESOME:**
He was a spieler
with a two-bit con.
"Now, if each of you hand me
your $1 bills...
I'm gonna favor you
with a five dollar gift."

**MARCIA:**
17
Sort of loved him, didn't you?

**LONESOME:**
Ran off and left us when I was
knee high to a beer barrel.

**MARCIA:**
You mother had to take care of you?

**LONESOME:**
Never mind about her.

**MARCIA :**
What about those aunts and uncles
you talk about?

**LONESOME:**
Uncles?
I wish I had a nickel for every time I
fell asleep waiting for my old lady.
When I'd wake up she'd say,
"Shh, Your uncle's sleeping".
I'd say "Uncle Lou?"
She'd say, "No, this is
your Uncle Mike, or Uncle Moe".
Seemed like there wasn't a town in Arkansas or Missouri I didn't have an uncle in. Yes, ma'am. My old lady sure was generous about taking in relatives.

MARCIA:
Yet you grew up
so happy-go-lucky.
(Lonesome laughs uproariously, and nearby the Sheriff turns around to look.)

MARCIA:
You put your whole self
into that laugh, don’t you?

LONESOME:
Marcia, I put my whole self
into everything I do.

SHERIFF:
You mean you turned down my invite
to go out with this tramp?
18
(He knocks Lonesome’s foot off the table.)

LONESOME:
You wanta fight?
(Lonesome and Sheriff fight)

MARCIA:
No! Stop it! Stop it!
(Radio station)

LONESOME:
MMMMMMMMMM! Thanks for the pies, gals.
You're going to spoil me.
Well, I reckon I've sung at you
enough for one morning.
Maybe I'll wind up with a joke. Let’s see...
Yeah, I got one. Sheriff Big Jeff Bess.
You say that ain't no joke?
(Cut to an old lady listening to the radio, who laughs)
The fact he's running for mayor strikes me as kind of funny.
You know, back in my little town, Riddle...
the way we elect fellas
to office is...
we try to figure which fella can
best be spared from useful labor.
Like, you take
the village half-wit...
Now, in most places, he's going
to be put on town relief...
but in Riddle, as an economy measure,
we make him the dog catcher.
But, now,
this sheriff of yours...
I don't say
nothing against him...
but if you've any mutts
you want rid of...
why don't you take them to his place
to see if he can handle the job?
(Cut to a man whittling)

MAN TO HIS DOG:
Here, Whitey!
Here, Whitey!
19
(Cut to yard outside the jail, crowded with people and barking dogs. Sheriff comes out of the door to look. Marcia and Lonesome drive up, and Lonesome leans out the driver side window and guffaws.)

LONESOME:
Hey, look at that fool!

MARCIA:
How does it feel?

LONESOME:
How does what feel?

MARCIA:
Just saying whatever comes in your head
and being able to sway people?

LONESOME:
Yeah, I guess I can.
Yeah, I guess I can.

(Cut to John Cameron Swayze on the air)

**SWAYZE:**
And now, an amusing example of grass roots democracy in action. It seems there's a small town radio personality... called "Lonesome Rhodes" out in Arkansas... who literally sent a mayoralty candidate to the dogs.

(Outside LARRY’S MOTEL ROOM – Marcia and Abe Steiner)

**MARCIA** (knocking on Larry’s door):
Larry? Larry?

**LONESOME** (to disheveled waitress who hastily grabs trayful of dishes)
Listen, Just plough out through and keep Going. Leave the rest to me. 20
(He says the next line louder, for Marcia’s benefit.)

Thanks for bringing up my breakfast, Florine.

**MARCIA:**
This is Mr. Steiner,
He’s come all the way from Memphis to see you.

**STEINER:**
Mr. Rhodes. I'm one of the oldest theatrical agents in the mid south. 
(Larry lies down on the bed in his underwear and picks up a magazine)
I book a lot of acts for the Grand Old Opera. I discovered Hank Snow, and Webb Pierce... and the first morning I heard you, I said to myself...

"Abe Steiner, that man's got power."

Not just catchy songs and funny stories, power. How would you like to come to Memphis, son?
LONESOME:
Memphis?

STEINER:
You put me in mind of Will Rogers when he first came to Memphis. I can make you a star, boy, if you put yourself in my hands.

LONESOME:
Shucks, mister, I'm just a country boy. I'm not even sure I want to stay in this danged old radio business.

STEINER:
I'm not one of these hard pressure fellas. But, do you mind if I call you again?

LONESOME:
No. (They shake hands)
21
STEINER (Leaving)
Miss Jeffries.

MARCIA:
Grand Old Opera, that's the big time.

LONESOME:
It never hurt none to play hard to get. You ought to know about that.

MARCIA:
You don't seem to be pining for lack of company.

LONESOME:
I get extra hungry in the morning. You cold fish respectable girls.
Inside you crave the same things
as the rest of them.
Tell Old Lonesome the truth.

MARCIA:
You're on in eight minutes.
(Cut to radio station; Lonesome on the air with his guitar; fan blowing; fans look in through the windows)

LONESOME:
WOOO WEEE – It’s so hot this morning,
the creek just give up.
I mean it was bone dry.
So the young ones figure
they ain't got no place to swim.
But my boss...
old J.B. Jeffries,
he's got a fine swimming pool...
right here in town.
So why don't you kids
go to his place for a ducking?
J. B will be proud
to have you.

LONESOME:
(Poolside with Marcia at J.B.’s house)
22
Can you hear them?
Can you hear them, splashing?
That’s your curly-headed
little darlings, enjoying...
J.B. Jeffries' kind of hospitality.
J.B.’s HOUSEKEEPER:
Mr. Rhodes, telephone.

MARCIA:
SHHH -- He's on the air.
(She answers the phone call. To Lonesome:)
It’s the Memphis TV Station,
he says Mr. Steiner told him about you.

LONESOME:
Well, shucks, I can talk
to him right here on the air.
All these folks out here are my friends,
I ain't got nothing to hide from you.
(into phone)
Hello there, partner.
What's that? You want me to come on TV in
Memphis? With this kisser of mine?
All I got to say is
you're a brave man.
$500 a week, huh?
Confederate?

MARCIA:
$500 a week!
LONESOME (to Marcia)
SHH -- We can do better than that.
Partner, leaving Pickett is like
leaving my own flesh and blood kin.
Now, if I've got to take leave
of these good folks...
I'd rather try it gratis, for nothing
for a couple of weeks...
and if you ain't satisfied,
or if I get homesick for Arkansas...
why, back I come and
nobody gets hurt.

23
But, now if we find we get along...
you make it - oh --
a thousand dollars a week...
Yeah, you get the idea.
And transportation for yours truly
and my little Girl Friday...
not to mention Monday, Tuesday,
Wednesday, Thursday, Marcia Jeffries.
(AT THE TRAIN STATION)
Little Old lady (Marcia kisses her):
I'm glad you're going with him,
take care of him.

MARCIA:
I'll sure try.
J.B. (pointedly):
Take good care of yourself. (Marcia looks at him seriously)
CONDUCTOR:
Board!

LONESOME:
Marcia!
(He comes to get her)
Come on, honey.
We'll be late, come on.
The train will leave.
Come on.

CONDUCTOR:
Board!

LONESOME:

crowd):
Bye!
Bye, Lucy! So long, Luther!
You write to me, now.
I'll be thinking of you.

(to Marcia):
Am I glad to shake that dump!
24
(Marcia is shocked)
I was only kidding, honey...
you should know me better
than to believe everything I say.
(yells to fans) Bye! Bye!
Good-bye and God bless
you good people!
Crowd cheers and band plays "Auld Lang Syne" as train pulls away. We see Lonesome leaning out, looking forward)

CUT TO:

LONESOME:
If I'd known you'd put lipstick
on me, I'd have never come.

MARCIA:
Oh, stop complaining,
you look beautiful.
Lonesome, this is Mel Miller. The station's assigned him as your writer.

LONESOME:
Writer?
You're gonna have an easy job. Boy, 'cause I don't do much reading.

MEL:
I’ll just block out the continuity for you.

LONESOME:
What are you, eastern college?

MEL:
No, as a matter of fact, I went to school over in Nashville.
I was Vanderbilt '44.

LONESOME:
OK, Vanderbilt '44.

DIRECTOR:
Mr. Rhodes, we're ready for you now.
MAKE-UP MAN (as Lonesome wipes off make up)
25
Hey, what are you doing to that make-up?
DIRECTOR, to Lonesome on stage:
Now listen, foot up here like this, and relax
(Marcia and Mel head for seats in the audience)

MAN IN BOOTH:
Ten seconds, ready on one,
stand by two...

DIRECTOR:
Just be natural, easy and relax, real country.
Now, when that red light is on, that camera is on you.
Now, put this in your mouth. (A PIECE OF HAY)
(He steps behind camera. to camera man) I think that straw's gonna be a nice touch.
ANNOUNCER:
Here he is, a newcomer
to Memphis Television...
but sure to become an old friend.
"A Face in the Crowd",
starring that Arkansas traveler...
Lonesome Rhodes.

LONESOME:
What do you want?
(into camera)
Howdy.
You know, I never have seen myself
on one of these things before. (looks in monitor)
So if I start to admire myself
on this... uh,
What do you call it?

DIRECTOR:
Monitor.

LONESOME:
Yeah, monitor. Show the folks
what I'm talking about, will you? (turns the camera around)

The director said
all I had to do was...
He said I had to act like
I was looking straight at you...
But what he forgot to say was there'd be
a great big old red eye looking straight at me.
You know, it does look
kind of familiar, though...
It reminds me of my Uncle Abernathy
after a night of drinking...
that fine old five star
corn liquor.
He put a star on the bottle
for every day it aged.
(Director motions to Lonesome to play his guitar, and he starts
to strum and sings)
"If the ocean was moonshine
and I was a duck..."
I'd dive..." (He stops)
I got too hot a fire in my boiler
to sing this morning.
(Backstage, Abe Steiner looks concerned)
What’s the matter with you
big city fellas anyhow?
Don't you ever go to bed
around here?
Last night, I settled down
for my 12-hour nap in the hotel...
and moly hoses, what a honking...
and lights a-flashing and
gals a-giggling on the street!
So I called down to the desk on this telephone, like
they've got in every room.
"What's going on here?" I says to the clerk.
"It ain't New Year's Eve,
by any chance?"
"No," he says...
"It’s just ten o'clock at night
in Memphis".
So I pulled back on my duds and went
out to take a look-see at what all the commotion was.
Hey, Mr. Cameraman,
move that redeye a little closer.

MAN IN BOOTH:
He's only been on two minutes and he’s already telling us what to do.

LONESOME:
I want to talk face to face
with them friends of mine out there.
27
Which one of these holes
do I look in?
One thing I could see right off
about a big city...
there's a whole lot of people
in trouble out there.
You don't see it much in the daytime
when everyone's hustling and bustling around...
rushing from where they is
to where they ain't...
but it’s at night, you know,
late at night...
around four o'clock in the morning
is what I call "the dividing line".
All you've got left
is folks in trouble.
But I want to tell you good people something that
happened to me this morning, just before the sun was ready to come up.
I'm going to tell it to you, and see if
it don't happen to you the same way it happened to me.
And if it don't move your hearts the way I thin it will,
you're just a bunch of
big city pickle hearts.
I'll pack up my one shirt and
the Bible my daddy gave me...
and my cigar box guitar...
and I'll just get me
on home to Riddle.
(He goes back stage)

MARCIA:
He's telling the truth about the one shirt,
but I have yet to see the Bible.

MEL:
When he talks about walking the night,
I couldn't write it that well.

LONESOME:
Come out here.
Don't be scared of this,
at least no more than I am.
(He leads out a nervous black woman)

MEL:
Hey, a colored woman.
In Memphis, that takes nerve.

MARCIA:
I told you, he's his own man.

LONESOME:
You just tell folks
the same thing you told me.
WOMAN:
You see, it’s my house...

LONESOME:
It burnt down.
She's got seven young ones, and no insurance...

BLACK VIEWER:
Helen, look who they're having
on television, now. It’s about time.

LONESOME:
She just walked around and around, because
she didn't have no place else to go.

WOMAN:
I didn't know a single
living soul in Memphis.

LONESOME:
Are you kidding?
What’re you gonna bet you've got 20,000
friends out there?
And each one’s willing to prove it to you
by sending half a buck...
so you can get on back to Millington and build a decent house
for them brats of yours.
Now, please, nobody send in no
more than for bits, cause
you might not be able to spare it.
(Cut to a lady in a bar who laughs and dumps out her purse)
(on the TV)
Miz Cooley, maybe you think --
CUT TO men playing poker, one says)
Every pot over $10, let’s
cut in half for that house of hers.

LONESOME:
29
And they're gonna be looking out for you,
ain't you, folks?
CUT back to black viewer’s house – the whole family has gathered to
watch now.
CUT TO Lonesome’s hotel room, next morning, where he is asleep. Knock on door.

LONESOME:
Yeah, door’s open, com’ on in.
Marcia and Abe Steiner rush in

MARCIA:
Lonesome! You should see how the money is pouring in!

STEINER:
Young man, you’ve graduated from sustaining -- you've got a client!

LONESOME:
What in the ever-lovin’ world is that?

STEINER:
It’s a mattress company, that means you get your thousand dollars a week.

MARCIA:
Get his shirt. Stand still, you slob.

STEINER:
Here, get your hand in here.
(At the TV STUDIO, Lonesome on the air)

LONESOME:
Here it comes. (a wheelbarrow full of coins is brought in - cut to a big, admiring audience oohing and whistling)
That sure is prettier music than a cigar box guitar.
30
There’s eighteen thousand five hundred...
and forty-one...
(Mel is there, grinning)
of these things so far, and we ain't hardly started.
(audience applauds)
Miz. Tooley says thank you...
you good people.
(Cut to her back stage with her kids)
You folks are building a house.
Ain't nothing you can't do when you
let the best side of you take over.
Oh, I see the old clock-watcher
going this way.
He wants me to make sure
I leave time for the commercial.
You didn't know I had a sponsor,
did you?
Neither did I till I woke up
this morning.
(pointing to large photo of Luffler)
He's a good looking scoundrel,
ain't he?
(Audience laughs)
(Lonesome leans toward poster of Luffler)
What?
Yeah, I've got the commercial
on me somewhere. Let's see...
(goes through paper notes in his pockets, and reads them, Intercut
with audience reaction)
Johnny Longshot's tip
for the Daily Double...
No. No, that ain't it.
"Lonesome...
darling, you ain't forgetting
your little Arkansas Annie...?"
No, that surely ain't it.
This is it, this is it.
(reading awkwardly)
31
Friends "comma" why not invest
in sleep insurance "question mark".
That is what you will be doing
when you buy your...
Luffler Easy-Rest
mattress "period".
(Cut to Luffler watching, shocked, in his office - secretaries watching
through window into his office giggle)
It comes in six tasty flavors...
Well, that's about enough
 commercials.
Personally, when I'm dog-tired,
I can sleep on the floor.
One of the best night’s sleep
I ever had was in a box car.
They say that a firm mattress
is better for your spine...
but now, if you’re gonna follow that all the way, ain't it
better to just go ahead and sleep on the floor?
(Steiner back stage grimaces)
But if you softies insist
on sleeping on a bed...
I reckon you can do worse
than a Luffler Easy-Rest.

End of commercial.

Maybe also the end
of Lonesome Rhodes. (He laughs his big laugh)

(CUT TO an outdoor restaurant, where Steiner is talking to Marcia and
to Lonesome, who is signing an autograph)

STEINER:
Seriously, I was on the phone
with Mr. Luffler for half an hour.
I'm sure he's seen us
and hasn't even looked around. (cut to Luffler at another table with
lawyer types)
He says he's got a loophole
in his contract...
and if you kid his commercial once
more, he's going to walk right through it.
(As Marcia and Lonesome walk out, they pass Joey De Palma)

JOEY:
Hey, hiya, Lonesome.
(Joey grabs Lonesome.)

32
Oh, hey, hey. Hey! Boy, I almost forgot.
I got you a month’s food ticket at the White Owl for the plug
you gave this morning.

LONESOME:
Yeah?

JOEY:
Yeah, I guess you didn't know
I do a little shlockmeistering on the side.
MARCIA:
Shlockmeistering!

JOEY:
Yeah, all you gotta do is slip in a remark about these
Products one in a while and they pay you in kind.
A case of beer, free drinks
at the Yellow Rose Cafe, all that jazz...
I tell you, boy, it mounts up.

MARCIA:
Isn't that illegal? Stealing time
from regular sponsors?

JOEY:
Illegal?
Honey, nothing's illegal
if they don't catch you.
(Lonesome and Joey laugh.)

LONESOME:
See you around, Joey.

JOEY:
Okay, see you around, Lonesome.

MARCIA:
Who was that?

LONESOME:
That’s Joey De Palma, Luffler's office boy.

MARCIA:
33
He won't be an office boy long.

(TV STUDIO:
Luffler’s portrait)

LONESOME:
Mr. Luffler told me he don’t like me to talk nasty about his mattress.
Shucks, I said you could get a good
night’s sleep on one of them...
if you're real tired.

(laughter from audience, which is even bigger than last time)

There I go again.

I just can't seem to get my mouth around some of them

things they want me to say.

But, I'll try.

(Audience claps and cheers. Lonesome reads from a page he is handed.)

And now, a message of importance.

(He looks disgusted and drops the paper)

Now, you good people ain't so dumb

you don't know what's important.

The atom bomb's important,

things like that.

A Luffler mattress

won't break your back...

but it sure ain't no

world-shaking message.

(Backstage, Marcia laughs, but Mel looks serious)

Just in case you won't be seeing me

again... Fellas, come on.

Here's a little song

to remember me by.

Give me an "E"...

(sings)

Well, good-bye, Mr. Luffler,

and thanks for the ride...

I'd like to have your money,

but I'd rather have my pride.

On this corny old commercial

we just cannot agree...

34

so you can tear up my contract...

make a free man of me!

Going to be...

(audience calls out the phrase "free man" each time he sings it)

a free man in the morning...

a free man in the morning...

a free man in the morning...

Or know the reason why.

(Cut to Luffler in his office, watching. He presses the intercom)

SECRETARY:

Yes, Mr. Luffler.
LUFFLER:
Get me my lawyer.

(CUT TO:
MARCIA’S
hotel room. He bangs once on the door)

MARCIA:
Yeah -- Who is it?

LONESOME:
It’s me, Lonesome.
Larry.
Uh, I thought I’d say good-bye.

MARCIA:
Just a minute. (gets her robe)

LONESOME:
I just wanted to say
I'm gonna hit the road.

MARCIA:
Where to?

LONESOME:
What’s the difference?
For Mr. Luffler.
He wants to fire me unless I promise to
show him my scripts in advance. Psssh!
35
There ain't no script,
I'm just me. It WAS me.

MARCIA:
Stay. Even after what you
did for Mrs Tooley?

LONESOME:
No, I'm not my brother's keeper.

MARCIA:
You are and you don't know it.
LONESOME:
No, I don't kowtow to
no mattress company.
See you in jail, sometime.
We shook them up a little bit.
Had a run for our money. (He walks away.)

MARCIA:
Larry.
You come here. (He does, and she grabs his shirt and kisses him. He
drops the suitcase and grabs her.

LONESOME:
Did I call you a cold fish,
Marcia?
Marcia...
it's short for marshmallow.
My marshmallow. (they kiss in the doorway)
BELLOBOY (to a couple he's leading past them to their
room)
This way, please.
(The woman looks back and Marcia and Lonesome go into her room.)
CUT to street outside Luffler's office - people with picket signs -
WE'LL SLEEP ON THE FLOOR WITH LONESOME, yelling, police trying to keep
order. Joey is watching out the window, with a big grin on his face

SECRETARY:
Joey, the boss wants you.
36

JOEY:
That's terrible.
(Joey goes into Luffler's office)
LUFFLER'S ASSISTANT:
Mr. Luffler, since you hired
Lonesome Rhodes...
up to and including yesterday,
our sales have increased 55 °/°.

LUFFLER:
I smell smoke.
(He is being burned in effigy on the sidewalk below his office window.)
LUFFLER'S ASSISTANT:
I know he's hurt your feelings, but
as a merchandise man I must say...

LUFFLER :
You’ve made your point
LUFFLER’S ASSISTANT:
that a 55 º/º jump in sales
is quite a painkiller.

LUFFLER:
I'll think it over.

JOEY:
You called for me, Mr. Luffler?

LUFFLER:
Yes. (calling after advisers)
I can always get him back!
(Gives Joey some papers)
Those are for the credit department.

JOEY:
Yes, sir.

LUFFLER:
37
Joey...
You're a smart lad.
Do you think I acted hasty
in the firing?

JOEY:
If it were my product, I wouldn't let anyone ridicule it.

SECRETARY:
Mr. Luffler...

LUFFLER:
Now what?

SECRETARY:
Your wife on one.
Yes, dear?
Would you mind
your own business dear?
and would you tell the Ladies' Garden
Club to mind its own business?

(Joey goes to outer office)

JOEY:
(gives the papers to a woman) Credit department. (to Luffler’s secretary) Get me Browning, Schlegel and McNally in New York. Don't worry, it’s kosher, Mr. Luffler gave me a message for them.

SECRETARY:
Do you know the number?

JOEY:
It’s the biggest ad agency
in New York.
Browning, Schlegel and McNally.
Try Information.

(Cut to switchboard in New York City)

38

RECEPTIONIST:
Browning, Schlegel and McNally.
Long distance from Memphis?
Just a moment.
A Mr. Joseph De Palma, from Memphis.
He represents Lonesome Rhodes.

(Cut to TV executive’s office)

TV EXECUTIVE:
It’s a crazy business we're in.
This is about some joker called
Lonesome Rhodes on a local Memphis...
(He looks at papers)
Hey, he topped both CBS and NBC
down there.

(into phone) Hello. Mr. De Palma?

JOEY:
Hello, I just thought I oughta
let you know that Lonesome Rhodes
is being flooded with offers. Uh huh – yeah. 
If you happen to be interested, 
five o'clock is our deadline. Uh huh. 
Right. 
I'll call you back at five.

**TV EXECUTIVE:**
Five. Well, pleasure, baby.

**SECRETARY:**
I caught that show on my vacation. 
He's a living doll.

**TV EXECUTIVE:**
Well, Could be.
(Cut to Luffler’s office)
**JOEY** (to Luffler’s secretary)
EBD and O, in New York City.
(CUT TO the hotel in Memphis, as Mel comes whistling down the hall)

**MEL:**
Marcia. 
39
Marcia?
Marcia, you told me to pick you up 
in time for the show.
(Mel sees Lonesome’s suitcase on the floor outside her door. Joey comes 
rushing down the hall)

**JOEY:**
Oh, hey, hey, have you seen Lonesome?

**MEL:**
You may find him in there.

**JOEY:**
Where? here? (bangs on door) 
(going to Marcia’s door) 
Oh, you mean in here?

**MEL:**
Wait a minute, sir, I wouldn't barge in there 
if I were you.
JOEY:
I'm not you.
Hey, hey, Lonesome!
Lonesome, boy, hey!

LONESOME:
Yeah, yeah, who is it?

JOEY:
It's destiny, that's who it is. It's your destiny!

LONESOME:
What the - what the ...
40

JOEY:
sight)
Honey child, I sold your show.
(He kisses Loesome’s face repeatedly)

LONESOME:
To who?

JOEY:
To the big time.
Ever hear of Browning, Scnagel and McNally?
No, You wouldn't know it.
THE advertising company.
Boy, I got them bidding against
the Cutler Agency, MCA...

LONESOME:
MC who?

JOEY:
... and anout a dozen others you won't know.
Now look...
BSNM wants you for the Vita Jex Hour
Eight o'clock, coast to coast.
I told them we'd let them know
at 1700 hours.
Boy, I tell you,
we're on to New York.
LONESOME:
We are?

JOEY:
They asked me if you had a New York
agent. Would you like to meet your New York agent? (extends his hand)

LONESOME:
HA!
A bum out of jail in Pickett,
Arkansas...
and a Memphis office boy! Hey! (starts to sing:
(He sings)
I’m a roving gambler,
Ramble all around,
Whenever I see a deck of cards,
I lay my money down!

JOEY:
41
Go, baby!
(They dance and caper)
Yes, sir! Go, daddy-o!
Hey, will you sign this?
Will you sign this?

LONESOME:
Oh, yes, I’ll sign. (He does. Fade to black)

(CUT TO:

MACEY:
Now, in the last quarter, gentlemen,
and Miss Valerie...
we have spent over $300,000
of General Haynesworth's money...
to make this country
Vitajex conscious.
And all we've succeeded in doing...
Next chart, please...
is dropping from 10 /º of the market
to 7 /º. Now I, uh ...

DR. WILEY:
Mr. Macey, I'm late for the dog food meeting. Can I say my say and go?

MACEY:
Yes, doctor.

DR. WILEY:
I've gone over this product pretty carefully in the lab. Vitajex has a few grains of aspirin... a little sugar, that might give you some energy... but, frankly, General or no General... We have nothing to sell.

MACEY:
Strike that from the transcript, Miss Murray. 42
You know General Haynesworth always reads the product group reports.

DR. WILEY:
I can't help it. I was hired as a research chemist.

MACEY:
Dr. Wiley, there's nothing wrong with Vitajex, is there?

DR. WILEY:
It won't kill you, if that's what you mean. (laughter from those present, except Macey) I'd say it's relatively harmless, like a lot of the old patent medicine...

MACEY:
Thank you, Doctor. Now, let's get this train back on the tracks. With all due respect to our estimable television department...
(They bow, but one TV exec says to the other two sotto voce:

**TV EXECUTIVE:**
He hates our guts.

**MACEY:**
and it’s sudden enthusiasm for Lonesome Rhodes...
I think we need a – a dignified sell.
I'd like a 15-minute participation
on the Ed Murrow show.
(The TV execs look knowingly at each other)

**SECRETARY:**
Mr. Rhodes is here, sir.

**MACEY:**
Jim, boy, don't you think...
I mean, it’s irregular.

**TV EXECUTIVE:**
43
Well, I just thought if you and the boys
got a look at him, Mace,
you'd see why the TV shop
is sold on him.
JOEY (entering)
Gentlemen, Lonesome Rhodes.

**LONESOME:**
Hi, folks.
Howdy.
I've come to sell these kidney pills
or whatever the heck they are.
Hey, what’s the matter?
You got no spittoons around here?

**MACEY:**
Denise, would you bring
the gentleman a spittoon?
(The secretaries look at each other and roll their eyes.)

**LONESOME:**
Now, what’s your particular
problem, Mr. Fuzzy Lip?
TV EXECUTIVE:
Sit down, Mr. Rhodes.
You may as well know...
Vitajex is the sick sister in
the International Drug family.
They're even getting ready
to put out a smaller pill...

MACEY:
Jim, before we make
any hasty decisions, I’d recommend...

DR. WILEY:
:
Sh --- sh--

LONESOME:
spills some into his hand)
Look at these poor little
white pills you're trying to peddle.

They're kind of pale,
got no charge to them.
I got an idea.
Let’s make them yellow.
The color of sunshine
and energy.
Gives a fella that get up and go
that puts him in solid with the ladies.
Yeah, like this ...
“If you want to be bright-eyed
and bushy-tailed...
just gobble up a handful of Vitajex
and your battery's charged. Watch.
(He tosses one in the air and catches it in his mouth)
Ahhhh--- HA HA!
Wooo wee, I am ready!
(He slams his hand on Macey’s desk)
I mean, I am in the mood! My personality undergoes
a startling change.

SECRETARY:
I got your spittoon...
LONESOME:
Ah - HA! (he chases this young woman to the door)
Ooooh -- I'm going to get you,
you little redheaded filly! (He turns and chases the stenographer out of the office)
That’s what Vitajex does to me and
I haven't even swallowed them yet.
You college geniuses want
dignity on your program.
(everyone laughs, except Macey, who looks nervous)
Back where I come from,
a fella looks too dignified...
we figure he's looking to steal your watch!
I'll move your merchandise!

MACEY:
45
He’s not exactly General Haynesworth’s ...

LONESOME:
SH! SH! (ad libs) Peace! Peace! (Sings) O vitajex, what you doing to me? (Joey produces beat) O Vitajex, what you doing to me! You fill me full of ecstasy!
(A MONTAGE OF COMMERCIALS set to this tune)
Oh, Vitajex,
what are you doing to me?
Oh, Vitajex,
what are you doing to me?
You fill me full of ecstasy!
Oh, Vitajex,
what are you doing to me?
Oh...
Vitajex...
Vitajex,
what are you doing to me?
Vitajex,
what are you doing to me?
You fill me full of ooooh! and ecstasy!
Vitajex puts a gleam in your eye.
Vitajex puts a gleam in your eye.
46
Keep your eye on that rating.
Do it again.
Vitajex puts a gleam in your eye.
Fills you full of...

DR. WILEY (in his white coat on a commercial):
And each pill contains 97 units...
of energy-giving endrocaaine.

(Extreme Close-up of Lonesome’s mouth giving his big laugh)
STUDIO AUDIENCE (chanting in unison):
Vitajex, jex, jex
makes you go, go, go!

ANNOUNCER #1:
Keep your eye on that rating.

LONESOME:
That’s why Vitajex
gives you that get up and go.

ANNOUNCER #2 (voice-over of an animated commercial)
Do you have trouble with your girl? Does she look elsewhere?
Here's how Vitajex solved his problem.
Vitajex!
It fills me full of ecstasy!

LONESOME (in commercial)
See what I mean?

HAYNESWORTH:
This is General Haynesworth.

I've just seen Lonesome Whats-his-name on the television, and I like him.

SEXY BLONDE IN bed in COMMERCIAL:
Why don't you take Vitajex... like Lonesome Rhodes does?

ANNOUNCER #2 VOICE-OVER:
She's talking about the new large economy size.

SEXY BLONDE IN COMMERCIAL
I bought my boyfriend a ten year supply.

ANNOUNCER:
Now, the soft sell.
Keep your eye on the ratings.
Vitajex, Vitajex, Vitajex.
Vitajex, what are you doing to me?

ANNOUNCER:
Now, the hard sell.
Vitajex...
Poolside at the General’s enormous estate (Long Island?)

MACEY:
General, I'm willing
to put myself on record.
I say he's a risk, uncooperative
and unpredictable.
Why, we've spent tens of thousands of dollars
to find out the key words...
like "bracing" and "zestful".
and Rhodes has the audacity to tear us
to shreds right in front of the audience.

HAYNESWORTH:
48
Thirty-nine point eight!
LONESOME (from terrace)
Hey, General, where the heck are you?
MACEY (checks his watch)
If you'll forgive us,
we have to get back to town.

LONESOME:
Why, hello, girls!
(comes down the steps with Joey and Marcia)
How's Princeton
and old eight for the stump?
(He laughs)
(Macey leaves in a hurry without a word)
Afraid I'm making these Madison Avenue
fellas unhappy.

HAYNESWORTH:
I'm not in the business
to make those fellows happy...
I’m in the business of putting the public in
the frame of mind to buy Vitajex.
JOEY:
Exactly.

HAYNESWORTH:
(to his wife, seated at a patio table) Excuse us, dear.
MRS. HAYNESWORTH:
Of course. (She goes up to the house)

HAYNESWORTH:
Poor Mace, he's already had one heart attack...
and I'm afraid you're winding him up to another one.

JOEY:
Well, General, that's his hard luck.
(Lonesome settles onto a chaise, and Haynesworth calls out to Senator Fuller who has arrived by sea plane and is coming up the dock.)

HAYNESWORTH:
Hello, Senator!
Did you have a fine flight?

FULLER:
Splendid! Splendid. I'll join you when I get freshened up a bit.

HAYNESWORTH:
That's my guest, Senator Fuller. That's the sort of man I'd like to see him in the White House.

MARCIA:
Don't they call him "the Last of the Isolationists"?

HAYNESWORTH:
Oh, maybe, in some of those left-wing New York papers.
Rhodes, I want you to get to know people like that.
I'd like to take you under my wing and educate you.
LONESOME:
Shucks, general,
I'm just a country boy.
(Joey moves close to both of them, grinning.)

HAYNESWORTH:
Young man, never forget
Will Rogers.
He was just a gum chewing
rope twirling cowboy...
butil he got to where he was
telling off presidents and kings.

JOEY:
General, my thinking is the second
section of the same train.

HAYNESWORTH:
50
I've always gone in for
long range planning.
Right now, Lonesome
is merely popular, oh, very popular...
but Lonesome Rhodes could be
made into an influence.
A wielder of opinion,
an institution...
positively sacred to his country,
like the Washington Monument.
(He looks at Marcia)
I suspect your idealistic young lady
disagrees with me...
but my study of history
has convinced me...
that in every strong society
from the Egyptians on...
the mass had to be guided
with a strong hand...
by a responsible elite.
Let us not forget that in TV
we have the greatest instrument...
for mass persuasion
in the history of the world.
JOEY:
General, I don't mean
to flatter you, sir...

HAYNESWORTH:
What? Oh, yes. Well, let's
have a go at it, shall we?
(Calls loudly to house)
Roger, Roger! (An assistant with a notepas rushes down the steps)
Are you jotting this down?
First, I'll see if I can sell Henry
on the idea of a "Life" cover.
Remind me to call him for lunch.
(MONTAGE OF THE BUILD-UP OF LONESOME’S FAME: Lonesome on the cover of
LIFE Magazine; LOOK Magazine; a truck with a poster advertising a
Journal American feature on "The Happiest Years of My Life - Lonesome’s
Own Story of His Mom and Pop")
OLD LADY (holding an orchid, to Lonesome)
I proudly dedicate to you...
the latest hybrid iris
of our horticultural laboratory.
The "Unus floratorum"
51
We girls call it
"The Lonesome Rhodes" iris.
LONESOME (at battleship launching)
I christen thee
the "USS Rhodes". (people cheer)
(dedication of mountain)

POLITICIAN:
And so, on behalf of our
great commonwealth...
I'm proud to dedicate
one of nature's wonders...
henceforth and forever
to be known as...
"Mount Rhodes".
ANNOUNCER (This is Your Life kind of show)
And now, Lonesome,
back in those difficult days...
you had a pal.
We flew him to New York tonight...
to help recall the struggle
and joys of times gone by.
Because, Lonesome Rhodes,
you lived it!

**BEANIE:**
Hey, Lonesome!

**LONESOME:**
Beanie!
You old scoundrel,
where have you been?
Here, go out and get yourself
some good looking clothes. (counts out money in Beanie’s hand) You been
looking ugly about as long as I can stand it.
LONESOME (on a telethon)
White Plains, New York,
thank you, thank you!
(very hoarse)
Yeah, Hey, listen to this...
“The boys in our ward
at the Veterans' hospital...
just got together
and donated $9.75.”

You ask me how I can keep going
17 hours without sleep?
Man, this is better than sleep!
(to boy in wheelchair holding a big Vitajex sign; monitor nest to him
shows a close-up of Lonesome’s face)
Didn't I tell you, kid?
Didn't I tell you?
**BOY IN WHEELCHAIR:**
Do you still want me
to hold this sign?
(cut to New York City, the Sherry Towers Hotel)

**HOTEL MANAGER:**
As general manager of
the Sherry Towers...
it’s my honor to present you
with a gold key...
to the two top floors of
New York's finest hotel.
(Joey, standing next to Lonesome, grabs it at the same time Lonesome does. They laugh, and Joey gestures to a huge photo of the hotel tower.)

JOEY:
To the very top!
You can't get much higher.

(CUT TO:
MARCIA (answering phone)
Hello.
Larry?
What time is it?

LONESOME:
Marcia, you -- you've got to come over.
I never should've let Joey sell me the idea of a penthouse over the offices.
Twenty-five rooms to be alone in.
I feel like a shipwrecked fella on an island.

MARCIA:
Larry, I know that island; it's populated with friendly girls.

LONESOME:
Marcia, honey, do you believe me, when I say it's a matter of life and death?
(to drunken girl being led out of the apartment)
Call me soon, doll.

MARCIA:
Larry?

LONESOME:
If you don't come,
I'll dive off the balcony into the park,
and I'm ten blocks from the lake.
(LATER, Marcia arrives in Lonesome's penthouse. He is out on the balcony.)
Marcia, come out here.
(Marcia sees the evidence that he has had a female visitor)
I had a girl up here tonight.
I get restless.
I lied to you. When it’s over
I'm lonelier than I was before.
Marcia, will you come out here a minute?
(pointing to cityscape)
Look at all them TV aerials
sticking up like branches down there.
There's a whole forest of them
from here to San Diego.
All waiting to hear
what I have to say.

MARCIA:
Is that what you woke me up for
in the middle of the night?

LONESOME:
Marcia, What I'm trying to say is all them
millions of people believing it...
doing what I tell them to...
scares me.
Marcia, the General and all them big-shots
trying to educate me.
54

MARCIA:
Educate, or use you?

LONESOME:
That’s it, see, the General says
the country needs me.
I'm supposed to be an influence.
That’s mighty tall grass, Marcia.
We're getting in deep, Marcia.
A thousand times deeper than we ever dreamed
when we started out in Arkansas.
(He puts on his farmer hat)
I know I act on the set like I just ate the
western hemisphere for breakfast.
But, down here in the boiler room,
I know I need advice.
And not the kind I get from Joey,
or the Madison Avenue high domes...
who say “gesundheit” before I even pucker up to sneeze.
No, I know when I come
to the top of a mountain...
I need you.
Because you level with me.
You're my lifeline to truth, and well...
mARRY ME, Marcia.
Will you?
That’s what I called you
over here for.
(indicates dead plants in planters)
Can't keep anything alive up here.
Dust in this city kills everything.

**MARCIA:**
Larry.
Don't play with me.
Don't hurt me.
Don't hurt me.
(Fade to black)
(NEXT MORNING, Marcia is eating breakfast from a tray in the living
room of Lonesome’s penthouse. The television is on. Beanie enters.)

**BEANIE:**
Marcia, there's a lady to see you.

**MARCIA:**
A lady?
55

**BEANIE:**
I guess so, She's got a dress on.

**MARCIA:**
I don't want to see anybody up here.

**BEANIE:**
OK, I'll tell her to pick it up and move it out.
(The lady walks in anyway. Beanie tries unsuccessfully to intercept
her.)
I'm sorry, ma'am...

**MARCIA:**
Are you the...
MRS. RHODES:
I am Mrs. Rhodes.

MARCIA:
Are you related to Mr. Rhodes?

MRS. RHODES:
Mm-hmmm.

MARCIA:
But, you're not his mother?

MRS. RHODES:
His wife.

MARCIA:
All right, Beanie.

MRS. RHODES:
Isn't he something?
You mind if I mute this brass a little? (She turns down the TV volume)
(Marcia self-consciously buttons up her dress jacket)
You're Lonesome's new tootsie, huh?

“I'm through with it.
I must say I think Mr. Rhodes might have done me
the courtesy of telling me himself.

MRS. RHODES:
Mr. Rhodes don't do no courtesies to nobody.
I could write a book about him.

MARCIA:
Is that the purpose of your visit to collect some more material?

MRS. RHODES:
Oh, I came to collect,
but it ain't material.
Unless you get Larry to pay me three grand a month...
not only will I not divorce him...
but I'll make it plenty hot for the both of you.
I already got some feelers from Confidential magazine.

MARCIA:
I'm not engaged to your husband.

MRS. RHODES:
Larry thinks he has to take a bite out of every broad he comes across.
Then he calls them a tramp, drops them...
all sort of psycho-something or other, you know?
I caught him red-handed with my best girlfriend.
He broke my jaw.

MARCIA:
Seems to be working quite effectively now.

Mrs. Rhodes:
MM hmm
MARCIA (stands up)
Mrs. Rhodes, if you'll excuse me,
I'm very busy this morning.

MRS. RHODES:
Well, tell Larry, three Gs a month,
and he's yours.

CHORUS ON TV:
An old fashioned marriage...
is my favorite marriage.

MRS. RHODES:
It's a sincere type song.
Should be a big hit. (Exits)

CHORUS ON TV:
An old fashioned kiss
needs a silvery...

MARCIA:
Oh, shut up!
JOEY (leading Haynesworth and others into the penthouse)
These are the Backward Barons - they're rehearsing our new theme song.

HAYNESWORTH:
Very catchy.
58

JOEY:
Lonesome just wrote it.

MARCIA:
Actually, two fellas over there wrote it.
Of course, their names aren't on it.
(Lonesome runs over and turns on the applause machine)

JOEY:
General, General,
we wanted to show you this.
Lonesome designed it himself.
The Reaction Machine.
You just push these little levers,
it can laugh.
Lonesmoie demonstrates various kinds of reaction sounds on machine.

Giggle.

"Ah".

**BEANIE:**

Ain't that a booger, General?

**HAYNESWORTH:**

Most ingenious.

**JOEY:**

We're thinking of putting them on the market.

“The Lonesome Rhodes Automatic Reactor.”

**MARCIA:**

Mechanical laughter, mechanical applause, what are we coming to?

**JOEY:**

We're coming to a bigger model, that’s what we’re coming to.

**HAYNESWORTH:**

I'm sorry to end this, it’s most interesting...

but I've got a date at my club, lunch with Senator Fuller. (Exits)

**JOEY** (to Marcia)

What’s the matter with you today?

(He runs after Haynesworth)

General, I wish you had time to see our whole operation, the various departments...

**LONESOME:**

Marcia, you're wound tighter than a clock, this morning.

What’s the matter?

**MARCIA:**

Next time you propose, you might consider getting unmarried first.

**LONESOME:**
Listen, Beanie told me;  
It ain't as bad as you think.  
I got a divorce, a couple  
of years ago in Mexico.  
But the judge got indicted for fraud  
so my ex claimed...

ASSISTANT:  
Here are the latest ratings, Mr. Rhodes.

LONESOME:  
Whooo --- Hallelujah!  
Rhodes, 41.4 . .  
Opposition, 19.5 .  
That other fella's gonna be  
jumping out of windows.  
(to Marcia again)  
So, like I say, the ex claimed  
the divorce was a fraud too...  
I've got a good lawyer  
working it out in Juarez.  
He said If I come down there, he'll  
get it off my back in 24 hours.

MARCIA:  
Don't play with me.  
I'm not one of your girls.  
60

LONESOME:  
On a stack of Bibles, Marcia.  
Saturday I'm going to be in Pickett  
judging the drum majorette contest.  
I'll go straight  
from there to Mexico.  
Next time you hear from me,  
it’ll be from Juarez, believe me.  
(Dissolve to the writers’ room – writers using Lonesome photo as a dart board. Marcia enters)  
MEL (to another writer, reading over his shoulder)  
That is dreadful, just dreadful...  
MARCIA (reading sign on the door)  
"We also take in laundry."  
That’s a new one.
MEL:
Welcome to the black hole of Calcutta.

MARCIA:
This is one place they didn't show the General.

MEL:
Naturally, here are the lepers of the great TV industry... men without faces. Why, they even slide our checks under the door to pretend we're not here.

OTHER WRITERS:
Ha, ha, ha!

MARCIA:
But think of the satisfaction of being a small cog... in the great wheel of humanity "Lonesome Rhodes".

WRITERS:
61
Ha, ha, ha!

MEL:
Sounds like she's coming over to our side.

MARCIA:
Ha, ha, ha!
Why don't you quit?

MEL:
Why don't you quit?

MARCIA:
Because I'm deeply involved with him.

MEL:
Spoken like a lady.

**MARCIA:**
Got his introduction ready?

**MEL:**
Home town boy, not only making good, but making everybody.

**MARCIA:**
For a mild man, you sound vicious.

**MEL:**
Didn't you know? All mild men are vicious. They hate themselves for being mild and hate the windy extroverts whose violence... seems to have a strange attraction for nice girls who should know better.

(We hear an announcer’s voice)

**ANNOUNCER:**
Today, "A Face in the Crowd" takes you on a sentimental journey... 62 as Lonesome Rhodes, your old Arkansas traveler, goes home... to the typical dirt road cotton-picking town of Pickett. (ANNOUNCER’S VOICE READs THE REST - high angle shot of field) Where America's favorite country cousin got his humble start... he now returns to the simple folk who saw and loved him first. The latest face in the crowd, the lucky, talented girl... whom he will select from hundreds of contestants... as Miss Arkansas Drum Majorette of 1957. And here's the man you've been waiting for...
LONESOME:
Look at them.
Look at them!
Ain't that the most?
I mean the most!
Cornfed gals,
country people.
the heart of America,
the salt of the earth.
(The marching band forms the letters “WE LOVE and the baton twirlers "LR")
Hey, Beanie, L.R.!
"We love L.R."
BATON TWIRLERS IN UNISON:
Hi, Lonesome!

LONESOME:
Hi, you all!
(The girls mob him, screaming)

(CUT TO:

MEL:
It’s dangerous.

MARCIA :
63
What, baton twirling?

MEL:
No, power.
You've got to be a saint to stand
the power that box gives you.

LONESOME:
particularly caught by Betty Lou.)
Oh, it’s wonderful!
J.B. (as Betty Lou goes by gazing up at Lonesome)
She's only seventeen.

LONESOME:
She looks like a very sweet child.

J.B.:
Friends...
Friends...
Friends...
my heart is too full...
to say anything more...
than welcome back
to Pickett.
A great artist...
a great humanitarian...
a great American.
Our very own
Lonesome Rhodes.

LONESOME:
Friends...
fellow Arkansasians,
fellow Americans...
I know I should start off
with a funny story...
about them kinfolk of mine in Riddle...
but I just feel too humble
this afternoon...
as I look out on this fine
representative body...
of wholesome young
American womanhood.
You know I've been a fan
of baton twirling from way back.

64
I think it’s a honest to God
American art form.
Here's a little number I just recorded
for the Golden Oak Label.
I thought you kids might enjoy
twirling to it.
Here she goes,
"Mamma Guitar"!
Oh, yeah.
Our first contestant will be...
Miss Suzanne McKinley
of Beagelstown...
let's have a real doozie, Suzie!
(We watch her routine, and others’, here, while Lonesome’s new song
plays over the loudspeaker.)
And now, Miss Linda Bruce
from Ganderstown.
Go, girl, go!
From the town of Snakebite...
Miss Peggy May Hardy.
Let’s see you twirl it
and swirl it, Peggy May!
I give you
Miss Mary Jane Johnson...
from the neighboring village
of Pocahontas.
And now,
Miss Betty Lou Fleckum.
(Betty Lou does her routine; Lonesome watched closely. Joey watches
Lonesome watching Betty Lou.)
And I say, that the winner...
by unanimous decision
and that’s me...
is little Miss Betty Lou Fleckum!
Miss Arkansas Drum Majorette...of 19 and 57!

BETTY LOU:
I'm so excited... I'm so...
I'm sorry.
You're my idol, honest.
I pasted your picture
on the ceiling over my bed...
so you're the first thing I see
when I wake up in the morning.

LONESOME:
Well, bless your heart.
65
(DISSOLVE TO bar in New York City frequented by TV people Macey enters
and greets Mike Wallace. Macey goes on and greets Faye Emerson and
Bennett Cerf at the bar.)

FAYE:
Mace, good show.

MACEY:
Yes, I think it had size.
Hi, Burl. Virginia (to Burl Ives and Virginia Graham at a table nearby.
They return the greeting.)
Betty PURVIS:
Mace, that baton bit
was the living end.

MACEY:
Thanks.
As Lonesome said,
it’s an, uh, American art form.
(to bartender) A glass of water, Joe.
(to Marcia, seated down the bar)
Oh, peach of a show, Miss Jeffries.
MARCIA (sitting at the bar with Mel)
Thank you.

MACEY:
Should boost the ratings.

MARCIA:
Poor Macey.

MEL:
He lives on a diet of nitroglycerine
and Trundex ratings.
Call it a Bible, but it’s really
a death warrant with decimal points.

MESSENGER:
Here you are, sir.
66

MAN:
Thanks.

MESSENGER:
Miss J, this just came for you.

MARCIA:
One thing about being in this place
It’s just like being in the office.

MEL:
Not quite. Joe, two more, please,
and this time would you just...
let the vermouth blow a kiss
at the gin?

MARCIA:
Our barefoot boy won't be flying in	onight. He's hopping over to Juarez.
"Get Arthur Godfrey to fill in,
Tell him I'll do the same for him someday.
Counting on you to hold the fort."
This shoulder's getting a permanent
callus from holding that fort.

MEL:
What's in Juarez?

MARCIA:
Bars...
lawyers, quick marriages...
quick divorces.

MEL:
Then this is it?
You're blushing.

MARCIA:
It's these sixty to one martinis.

MEL:
I suppose I should be a gentleman
and wish you all the happiness.
I think I'll just be a cad and hope
he chokes on a Vitajex pill.
(She kisses him on the cheek, and then looks away)
67
FADE to Black
Fade in on the airport: an airplane arriving, with a big crowd waiting,
restrained by police.
MEL (to Marcia, wistfully)
You look nice.
Cut to Betty Lou hanging out of the plane’s cockpit window, waving to
the crowd. Stairs taken to plane door. Crowd breaks loose, girls
screaming)
MARCIA (excited, runs with the crowd)
Larry!
(A line of policemen restrains the screaming girls. Joey emerges from the plane first.)

**MAN:**
Looks like he’s gone to all the regional sponsors.

**JOEY:**
It’s for the bride.
This is great stuff.

(Only Mel is left behind by the crowd. Clamoring girls waving autograph books; Betty Loy emerges from the plane door in a sombrero carrying two Chihuahuas, followed by Lonesome)

**MARCIA** (to policeman, fighting crowd)
Officer, I'm his fiancée.

**MAN:**
You said he what?

**OTHER MAN:**
Sure did.

**LONESOME:**
This little lady has just done me the honor of becoming Mrs. Lonesome Rhodes.
We do’d it in Juarez.

(Marcia looks around, stunned and confused, then turns and fights her way back through the crowd of cheering girls)

(Reporters shove and push to get close to Betty Lou)

68

Easy, fellas, I just got her.

(Lonesome searches the crowd, looking for Marcia? Marcia rushes without a word past Mel, who briefly follows her, then stops.)

(Cut back to Betty Lou surrounded by reporters, Joey very close, brushing back her hair from her face, very proprietary)

**EARL WILSON:**
Miss, miss, I'm Earl Wilson, what are your measurements?

(Betty Lou giggles and ducks in embarrassment and delight. A reporter pulls her skirt up over her knees and Lonesome jerks it back down)

**LONESOME:**
Hey, what are you trying to do?
Are you out of your mind?
Get it up there.
That’s it.

**BETTY LOU:**
Their names are Tiko and Pico.

**JOEY:**
Tiko and Pico, kids!

(DISSOLVE to TV studio, Lonesome and Betty Lou enter under an arch of batons held by baton twirlers. Betty Lou looks very nervous, but warms to it as Larry leads her out before an audience of mostly screaming young girls Joey watches from side, arms crossed, very satisfied, smug)

(Cut to Marcia in darkened apartment, watching this on TV)

**LONESOME:**
Well, here she is.
My little Arkansas sweet potato,
Betty Lou.
I ain't been so happy since the day
I fell into Grandpa's corn liquor...
and just guzzled my way
down to dry land.
I don't reckon I'll be a free man
tomorrow morning.
But if this ain't freedom...
man, it’s the next best thing.

(Betty Lou lifts her long skirt, and hooks her white cowboy boot around Lonesome’s leg. Cut to Marcia watching. Cut back to screaming, weeping girls rushing the stage and grabbing Lonesome’s legs. He laughs and pulls away.)

And now...
you want to see
what first caught my eye?
(Betty Lou flings off her cape )
And what second caught my eye?
(Betty Lou tears off the ruffled cover of her skimpy tip to reveal a spangled top )
And what keeps on...
(Betty Lou tears off her long skirt, revealing very tiny spangled shorts)
and on catching my eyes?
Ladies and gentlemen...
I give you
Mrs. Lonesome Rhodes doing her unbelievable...
double fire baton twirling dance...
to the scherzo
from the Seventh Symphony...
by Ludwig van Beethoven.
(Betty Lou runs out with fiery batons and starts her routine. Lonesome
goes off stage and fusses with the Chihuahuas in a basket. Macey is
standing nearby.)

MACEY:
Mr. Rhodes...

LONESOME:
(ignoring Macey)
Oh, Tico and Pico, I could just eat you up

MACEY:
Could I talk to you
for just a minute, please?

LONESOME:
I told you I didn't want you agency jokers
nagging around me on the program.

70

MACEY:
Mr. Rhodes, this is desperately important.
I've been with Browning, Schlegal
and McNally for 17 years...
in charge of the
International Drug account.
And the General just told me
that he's taking his business away.
Your young Mr. De Palma
has wormed his way in...

LONESOME:
Look, Macey, Joe De Palma's
doing a heck of a job for me.

MACEY:
But, you know this business,
it's cut-throat... (he sits down, sweating)
LONESOME:
Look, Macey...

MACEY:
If a rating nose-dives
or if you lose a client...
even if it isn't your fault,
the executive is the goat.
(He is gasping now, groping for his nitroglycerine. Lonesome stares
down at him coldly.)
Mr. Rhodes, if I lose this account,
I'll be fired.
I've got a son in Princeton...
Rhodes, you've seen my...
You've seen my office...
(He fumbles with the pills.)
A corner office
with four windows.
(Takes a pill, reaches out to the chihuahua in Lonesome’s hands)
Do you know how long it
takes to get a corner...?
(Macey collapses)
(CUT TO Betty Lou on stage finishing her routine. Fade to black)
(Fade in on Marcia’s apartment. Marcia on the left in her dark satin
bathrobe, across the room, Lonesome, sheepish, hat in hand)

LONESOME:
71
I was afraid to marry you,
that’s the truth.
The dirt root cotton-picking truth.

MARCIA:
Last time you said
you were afraid not to.

LONESOME:
Both were true,
you sort of overawe me.
You know more than I do... (he looks at her shelves of books)
And I can feel you being so doggone
critical all the time.
(Marcia slams the door closed.)
You and that smart aleck Mel.  
And you don't really approve of me.  
That's so, ain't it?

MARCIA:
You're getting to be all the things  
you used to harpoon.

LONESOME:
See what I mean?  
The bigger I get,  
the smaller you make me feel.  
You take Betty Lou.

MARCIA:
Larry, don't try to explain.  
Betty Lou is your public...  
all wrapped up with yellow ribbons  
into one cute little package.  
She's the logical culmination  
of the great love affair...  
between Lonesome Rhodes  
and his mass audience.

LONESOME:
Well, I wish you wasn't  
so bitter.

MARCIA:
I'm not bitter.  
72  
If I sound stridently female about  
Miss Majorette, I don't mean to be.  
I knew you'd married her  
just as a way of not marrying me.

LONESOME:
speaks gently == she begins to respond)  
Look, Marcia, I'm not forgetting  
what I owe you.  
I'll give you a healthy slice  
of our operation.  
say 10º/º of my end...  
You won't have to lift your finger
with what I'm giving you.

**MARCIA:**
Giving me? Giving me?
You're not giving me anything!
And you're not throwing me off
the train like poor Abe Steiner, either!
"Face in the Crowd"
was my idea.
The whole idea of Lonesome Rhodes
belongs to me!
I always should’ve been an equal
partner. Well, now I'm going to be!
I'm going to get
something I deserve.

**LONESOME:**
That don't sound like you.

**MARCIA:**
And I want it on paper!

**LONESOME:**
Okay. All right.
I'll tell Joey to draw up
the papers.
Look at yourself
in the mirror, Marcia.
You'll see a millionaire.
There's always Vanderbilt ’44.

**MARCIA:**
He's going back to Memphis.
He wants to forget us both.
73

**LONESOME:**
I thought he'd wait for you
till there was ice on the equator.

**MARCIA:**
That's how long he did wait.
(Lonesome leaves. After a minute, Marcia sobs. Fade to black)
(Fade in on
WALTER WINCHELL:
When newspaper people ask me, Walter, "Where do you get all that news?"
I invariably tell them I usually get it from a lot of people...
who promised someone they'd keep it a secret.
As, for example...
just what is Lonesome Rhodes going to talk to General Haynesworth about?
Oh, General!
Oh, Lonesome Rhodes! Hmmmm....

CUT TO:

ANNOUNCER:
And now, Mike Wallace interviews Senator Worthington Fuller.

MIKE WALLACE:
Senator, do you mean to tell me that you are not infected with the presidential itch?

FULLER:
Itch?

MIKE WALLACE:
Senator, is it not a fact that you have a date tomorrow night...
for what is known as Madison Avenue coaching from Lonesome Rhodes...
in General Haynesworth's private projection room?

(Dissolve TO:
speech by FULLER is being screened. Men smoking, Mrs. Fuller in back 74 seated next to Beanie, who is sound asleep. Fuller looks around nervously at the men listening to the film clip of his speech)

FULLER:
I have said, it calls for the closest scrutiny.
I am unable to persuade myself
and to believe the belief.
that the blatant squandering
of American wealth...
at home and abroad
is a road to a sound peace.
(Lonesome and Haynesworth exchange telling glances; Lonesome is
disdainful.)
Thank you all...
and good evening all.

HAYNESWORTH:
Lights!
(Scattered applause; Beanie awakens and yawns loudly.)

FULLER:
I know that’s not what the American people
want to hear...
but I think I know what’s best for them.

HAYNESWORTH:
We think so too, that’s why
everyone in this room...
wants you to be the next
President of the United States.
But your problem is getting
the voters to listen to you.
Getting them to like you
enough to listen to you.
Senator, I've got to be blunt.
Your TV appearances have been,
well, catastrophes.
Wouldn't you say, Lonesome?

LONESOME:
Beanie, did you check the ratings
for the Senator on "Face the People"?

BEANIE:
Brutal.
75
(Fuller turns to look at him)
Excuse me, 4.2
LONESOME (turning back to Haynesworth)
Go right ahead, General.

**HAYNESWORTH:**
We've got to face it, politics have entered a new stage, television. Instead of long-winded debates, the people want capsule slogans. "Time for a change." "The mess in Washington." "More bang for a buck." Punch-lines and glamour.
(to PURVIS, the newspaper publisher, who has bristled at this comment)
Yes, Mr. Purvis, even glamour.

**PURVIS:**
General Haynesworth, my papers have supported Worthington Fuller...
from the first day he ran for office, he's not a grandstander...
a backslapper or a baby-kisser.

**LONESOME:**
That’s exactly what he's got to become.
The majority in this country don't see eye to eye with him.
We've got to find 35 million buyers for the product "Worthington Fuller".

**Purvis:**
You underestimate the respect...

**LONESOME:**
Respect? Did you ever hear of anyone buying any product...
beer, hair rinse, tissue, because they respect it?
You've got to be loved, man. Loved.

**PURVIS:**
I may be old-fashioned but I think there is still a distinction...
between politics and, well, uh
the field you're in.

**LONESOME:**
Bull.

**PURVIS:**
I beg your pardon, sir?

**LONESOME:**
Sorry if I tread on your corns,
but I said "bull".
Politics is people.

**PURVIS:**
Mr. Rhodes...

**HAYNESWORTH:**
Now, now...

**LONESOME:**
Look, the General asked me to cut my rehearsal short to come down here.
But if you don't want to hear my thinking...

**FULLER :**
Do go on, Mr. Rhodes.

**PURVIS:**
I'm sorry to make a disturbance,
but...

**LONESOME:**
Senator, I'm a professional.
I look at the image on that screen
same as at a performer on my show.
And I have to say...
you'll never get over
to my audience...
not to the 65 million people...
who welcome me into their
living rooms each week.
And if I wouldn't buy him,
do you realize what that means?
If I wouldn't buy him,
the people of this country...
aren't ready to buy him for that big job on Pennsylvania Avenue.  
(pointing to Beanie)

Do you know where I found him?  
I don't think he'll mind my saying.  
In jail.  
He's stupid, he's got no mentality, he thinks with his feet.  
But I trust those feet.  
Now if he don't laugh, if he don't think the show's any good...  
then I know there's something wrong with it... 
something people just ain't agonna take to.  
See what I mean?  
Now, Beanie...  
What did you think of the personality you just saw on screen?

BEANIE:  
Well, I, uh ---

LONESOME:  
Come on, give it to us straight.

BEANIE:  
Flatter than last night's beer.  
(Three shot of Lonesome, Haynesworth, Fuller)

LONESOME:  
You see your problem now, Senator?  
How are you going to get this man, this bush-monkey to vote for you?

FULLER:  
Frankly, I don't know.

LONESOME:  
Well, maybe I do.  
Do you know how to lift your ratings...
from 4.2 to 51.7?
You need... Now hold on
to your hat, my friend...
You need a whole
new personality.

FULLER:
A new personality?

Frankly, that’s impossible.

LONESOME:
Now, wait just a moment.
For instance, do you have a pet?

FULLER:
My wife and I have a Siamese cat.

LONESOME:
Beanie?
(Beanie looks disgusted)
My public love dogs.
One pitch with a hound
is worth 10,000 words.
That mutt didn't do Roosevelt
any harm, did it?
Dick Nixon either.
(The men all chuckle)

FULLER:
No, I'm sure you're right.

LONESOME:
How about a nickname? (He studies Fuller for a moment, then says)
Only dishonest thing about Curly
is the way he combs his hair. (He leans in and ruffles Fuller’s hair
with his finger)

FULLER:
Curly, that’s rather amusing.
HAYNESWORTH (leaning in for the three shot again)
See?

LONESOME:
Shows you've got a sense of humor
about that fine head of skin of yours.
No hard feelings now,
we're talking television.
(He sits next to FULLER.)

79

Don't press your lips together,
it gives you a kind of sissy look.
Keep your mouth relaxed
so you can say... (He laughs; FULLER laughs; Lonesome nods approvingly)
Once in a while.
Uh-huh. It sounds sorta crazy to you to you, doesn’t it?

FULLER:
No, I realize it’s a new technique
I've got to face. That’s why I came.

HAYNESWORTH:
Good!

LONESOME:
That’s a boy, Curly.
You just put yourself in my hands.
I'll have them loving him.
I mean loving him.

HAYNESWORTH:
You know, that’s just what he did
for Vitajex.

JOEY:
He ought to be in the cabinet.
(Dissolve to screening room, later, Haynesworth in a smoking jacket
and Lonesome in his shirt sleeves, drinking coffee.)

SERVANT:
I'll be going to bed now, sir.

HAYNESWORTH:
Night, Sidney. Lonesome,
I don't know anyone in the country...
who could have won the Senator
the way you did. It was...
LONESOME:
Shut up, will you? I'm thinking. (He gets up hurriedly, opens a bottle of whiskey.)

HAYNESWORTH:
Loneseome, listen to me, as your adopted father...
80
you've only one flaw,
the way you've begun...
to suddenly shoot out of control.
Like this evening,
almost walking out on the Senator.
And you're beginning
to antagonize the press. You're great ...

LONESOME:
Cracker Barrel.
"Lonesome Rhodes' Cracker Barrel."

HAYNESWORTH:
What's that?

LONESOME:
My new show. I want you to
set it up right away.
Give me a bunch of
colorful country characters...
all sitting around...
listening to Lonesome Rhodes
sound off about everything...
from the price of popcorn
to the hydrogen bomb.
(He looks at Haynesworth, who looks down.)
You don't like it?
Well, just forget it.
All I've got to do is pick up
the phone...
I can get Tim Andrews of National
Motors to back it in a minute.
I'm not just an entertainer...
I'm an influence,
a wielder of opinion...
a force.
A force! (He exits. Fade to black)
(Fade in on a TV screen showing the title card for “The Lonesome Rhodes Cracker Barrel” on it)

ANNOUNCER:
Now, Shelton cigarettes,
Best Friend Dogfood, and Vitajex
bring you the voice
of grass roots wisdom.
Lonesome Rhodes
on the Cracker Barrel.
81

LONESOME:
monitors in the sound booth)
You know, boys, what really
bugs me about our Limey cousins...
is the way they keep trying
to act like a first class outfit...
when their store is having to close
its branches all over the world.

CHARACTERS:
That’s right, Lonesome.
That’s telling them.

MAN IN BOOTH:
He's getting more global
every minute.

CHARACTER :
That’s the Lord’s truth.

LONESOME:
Well, look who's stopping by
to chew the fat with us...
around the old Cracker Barrel,
Senator Worthington Fuller.
(to Fuller)
Hey, howdy Curly
how's my old bunk mate?
It’s a real pleasure and surprise.
Come and meet the boys.
FULLER:
Hello, men.

CHARACTERS:
Hi.

LONESOME:
Sit down, get your feet up
on the stove, there. That’s a boy. Now you look at home.,
(CUT TO MARCIA watching in the bar in New York City. Mel enters.)

BARTENDER:
82
Hello, Mr. Miller,
long time no see, et cetera, et cetera. The usual?

MARCIA:
And just let the vermouth
blow a kiss at the gin.
LONESOME (on TV above the bar)
Yessir, In just a while I'll be tossing
some questions at old Curly Fuller.
I should say
Senator Worthington Fuller.

MEL:
Are you waiting for someone?

MARCIA:
I'm just having a quiet drink.

MEL:
I don't remember you
doing that before.

MARCIA:
I talk to a thousand people a day.
This gives me a chance to unwind.
LONESOME’S VOICE:
We didn't know that swallowing
too much raw politics...
can put a crease in your head
a whole lot deeper...
than that home-made Kickapoo joy juice
we used to concoct back in Arkansas.
I wish you'd give me
the real cotton-picking truth...
about how you feel on the subject
of more and more...
and more social security. (He looks directly at the camea)

FULLER:
I'm glad you asked me that,
Lonesome. (eating an apple)
I'd say that people today...
83
are obsessed.

LONESOME:
Huh?

FULLER:
I mean, uh, real gone
for security.
They want protection, coddling
from the cradle to the grave.
(Lonesome smiles at the camera approvingly)
I say that weakens
the moral fibre.
Why, Danilel Boone wasn't looking for unemployment
insurance and old age pension.
(Cut to Marcia, who looks nervously at Mel who is watching the show)
All he needed was his axe
and his gun...
and a chance to hew a living out
of the forest, with his own hands.
MEL (looks at Marcia)
Real woodsyy, ain't it?

LONESOME:
That's telling 'em, senator. You heard one that time. Atsa boy.

FULLER:
That's the spirit that built
this country.

MEL:
Joe, would you turn
the sound down, please?
I'll say one thing, he's got
the courage of his ignorance.

MARCIA:
How's our old station in Memphis?

MEL:
84
I didn't go near it.
I've been writing a book about (nods towards the TV)
I call it
"Demagogue in Denim".
Never had such a good time
in my life.

MARCIA :
Well, you look wonderful.

MEL:
All those months he was calling me
"Vanderbilt '44" and "Frontal Lobe",
I should've been
punching him in the nose.
Now, I've got a book
to punch him in the nose.

MARCIA:
Is it going to be published?

`MEL:
Marcia looks worried.
Came up to sign the contracts.
The publishers are real high on it. They think
the time is right to pull the mask off him.
Let the public see what a fraud
he really is.

MARCIA:
Oh, I wouldn't say that. (She turns away)

MEL:
What would you say?
MARCIA:
It’s just that it’s harder for him
to be as simple as he was...
with all those generals and senators
and political big shots hanging around him all the time

MEL:
You're still with him.

MARCIA:
Well, at least I tone down some
85
of the crazier notions he wants to spout on the air.
And I seem to be the only person
he can talk to anymore.
I keep a
Lot of people from being fired...
And, well, There's an awful lot
of money at stake.
Our agency, the one we started with
the International Drug account...
is grossing over
a hundred million a year.

MEL:
How's Mamma Guitar selling? ( Marcia, lighting a new cigarette with a
barely started one, starts to give the stats and catches herself,
embarrassed)

MARCIA:
Mel, I found him.
He's mine for better or worse.
And I keep doing my small bit
to make him better.

MEL:
Marcia, you know what you are? you're the locker room
where he eases up after the fight...
win or lose.
You're the shock absorber for
collisions with ex-wives, models, new wives
and assorted tramps.
You're the little wheel of efficiency without which
The great streamlined express called Lonesome Rhodes...
plunges off the track
and leaps to destruction.

MARCIA:
I can hardly wait
to read that book.

MEL:
Don't worry, I've spared you
more than you've spared yourself.

MARCIA:
I know.
I know.

MEL:
I'll call you again sometime...
when I think you're ready.
CUT TO Lonesome’s penthouse, Lonesome enters

LONESOME:
Hey, Betty Lou,
take a look at this Gallup poll.
I got Curly up from 3 °/º of voters
to 11. Eleven! That’s a lucky number.
He's going to get in.
(Behind the screen, we see Joey’s shadow before Lonesome notices
anyone else is there)
Hey, Sweet Patootie...

Look who's home:
JOEY (coming out of Lonesome’s bedroom)
You're not going to hit me.
("An Old fashioned Marriage" is playing in the background)
Don't play the noble defender
of the sanctity of marriage with me, papa man.
I know where you were some of those nights
when Betty was waiting up for you.
If you hit me,
it’ll be all over the papers.
As much as the people love you tonight, they can hate you tomorrow...

LONESOME:
You're fired. You're through with Lonesome Rhodes Enterprises

JOEY:
I've got news that'll move you
and shake you.
I'm president of
Lonesome Rhodes Enterprises.
I own 51º/º of the voting stock.
You're in bed with me, Larry,
in bed!
(He leaves. Betty Lou emerges in a formal gown with a fur piece around
her neck and an ice cream soda glass in hand)

LONESOME:
Get me Beanie.

BETTY LOU:
87
I think I'll just freshen up my soda.

LONESOME:
Beanie, get Mrs. Rhodes a roomette
on the next train to Little Rock.
(to Betty Lou) You don't own 51º/º of the stock.
You're fired.

BETTY LOU:
Fired?
Lonesome...
Lonesome, nothing, nothing happened,
really. (He zips up her dress)
ANNOUNCER (on the radio)
This program is brought to you
by Shelton Cigarettes

WOMAN’S VOICE:
And oooooh, Vitajex

LONESOME:
I’m gonna treat you like any performer
on my show that flops.
I've got a contract with you.
You'll get your money every week
as long as you stay in Arkansas.
BETTY LOU:
But I don't want to go home.
Besides, Ed Sullivan wants me to do my double fire baton
dance on his show Sunday night.

LONESOME:
You can do your
baton twirling dance...
in the ladies' room
at the Little Rock depot. (Betty Lou runs shrieking into the bedroom
and throws herself on the bed, tossing a large stuffed animal. Fade to
black)
(CUT TO Marcia in bed in her dark apartment)
88
LONESOME (pounding on Marcia’s door)
Marcia, can you hear me?
Get up, wake up!
It’s me, big me, the king.
Come on, Marcia, open up.
I said hurry up on this door,
Marcia.
Lonesome's back.
(Marcia goes to the door in a black nightgown. Lonesome rushes in like
he owns the place, hastily undressing already)
Just got rid of Betty Lou.
Sweet talking little floozy,
she'd have ruined me, that’s what she’d have done
Fix me a drink. (He sits on her bed, unbuttoning his shirt)

MARCIA:
What are you doing?

LONESOME:
We'll have to be more careful
than we used to be.
I'll have to stay married
till I get my new appointment.

MARCIA:
Your what?

LONESOME:
This is still top secret.
The General's been talking to Fuller.
He's selling him on the idea of creating a new Cabinet post for me.
"In time of imminent crisis and danger".
That's the way the General puts it.
Who could rally people better than I could?
Hold them in line, right behind the government?
If we put Fuller across the way I know we will, he's gonna owe me that.
Secretary for National Morale.
How's that sound to you, Marcia?
Secretary for National Morale!
(laughs)
The General's asking him to shake hands with me on it after the big banquet I'm throwing for Fuller tomorrow night launching Fighters for Fuller.

MARCIA:
Fighters for Fuller?

LONESOME:
Yeah, Fighters for Fuller! How do you like that name? Huh? Huh? Huh? Huh?
I made it up.
Everybody's nuts about it!
I got 20 of the biggest men in this country coming to my banquet tomorrow night to get Fighters for Fuller rolling.
I've got an admiral from the Joint Chiefs, two governors... some of them big investment house boys and a Cabinet minister.

MARCIA:
Which one?

LONESOME:
I don't know.
I told the General to pick one.

MARCIA:
And they're coming to your party?

LONESOME:
Oh, honey, if I ask them, they've got to come.
They'd be afraid not to come.
I could murder them, like this. (He does his big, loud laugh.)

MARCIA:
I'm afraid it's true.

LONESOME:
What's true?

MARCIA:
Right here, tonight, you might have that much power.

LONESOME:
Seen the new ratings this morning?
90 53.7 (He draws the numbers on the air with his finger.)
Just picked up another million.
This whole country's just like my flock of sheep.

MARCIA:
Sheep.

LONESOME:
Rednecks, crackers, hillbillies...
housefraus, shut-ins, pea-pickers...
everybody that's got to jump when somebody else blows the whistle.
They don't know it yet... but they're all gonna be Fighters for Fuller.
They're mine. I own them.
They think like I do.
Or they're more stupid than I am, so I've got to think for them.
Marcia, you just wait and see...
I'll be the power behind
the president...
and you'll be the power behind me. (lies back on the bed)
You made me, Marcia,
you made me.
I always say that.
I owe it all to you.
I owe it all to you.
All to you.

MARCIA :
I know it.
I know it.

LONESOME:
Turn the light out.
I'm tired.
Big day tomorrow...
Real big day.
Real big day.
(She leans over him and turns the light out, then runs into the closet)
Come on, come on,
I've got to get some sleep.
(She throws on some clothes, grabs her purse, and runs out)
91
Marcia!
Where are you going?
(She runs out into the dark, rainy street, and walks away)
(Next day, office: Lonesome is pouring himself a generous drink)

MAN:
Well, All I can say is tonight’s show
is going to be a mess.
LONESOME (furious):
Now you tell me the show's
in a mess. Now you tell me!

MAN:
Yes, but you see, Marcia never showed up all day.
DISTRAUGHT SECRETARY:
I've looked every place...
She's the only one who can co-ordinate.

LONESOME:
Co-ordinate, hell! Do you mean to tell me the success of my show... depends on one self-important, neurotic, temperamental female? I'm fed up with the whole lot of you incompetents. Nincompoops! Bootlickers!

SECRETARY:
Would you like some hot coffee, Mr. Rhodes?

LONESOME:
Is that your subtle way of trying to tell me I'm swacked? Well, I'm not drunk, just disgusted. 
92
Okay, I'll handle it.

SECRETARY:
Of course you will, Mr. Rhodes.

LONESOME:
Ad lib! Just keep up with me. I've saved the show before. (He walks out)

IN THE STUDIO:

LONESOME:
Well, I just wonder what they do with their afternoons, wives and all...

TECHNICIAN:
I don’t care what you’ve been doing, have it ready ......
- One more day like this, and I quit. 
(Marcia comes into the sound booth.) Marcia, where've you been? We've
been trying to find you all day.
Take two.

COLLIER :
You know how important it is.

WOMAN:
Mr. Collier, we still haven't got
our commercials routined.
(Cut to Lonesome on screen)
I know that's kind of going out
of style, like the corset...
but every once in a while,
I ask myself, Lonesome...
(Sound man hands his cigarette to Marcia, who takes it)
where's that unmodern,
uncomplicated, unliberated...
93
but oh-so-happy
one-man woman gone?
Ain't no use getting het up
about something we can't change.
I was duck-shooting
over the weekend...
I brought my movie camera along
to show you folks what it was like.
DIRECTOR in booth:
Roll the film.

WOMAN’S VOICE:
Roll film.

MAN:
Hit it.

LONESOME:
Hey, you lunkheads up there in the projection room,
show us the movie!

TECHNICIAN:
You're off the air, Mr. Rhodes, they can't hear you.

LONESOME:
It's about time.
(yells through window of sound booth to Marcia) I want to talk to you.
I can't tonight, I have to
rush to the banquet...
but first thing in the morning.
In my office, in the morning.

TECHNICIAN:
Twenty seconds, Mr. Rhodes.

SOUND MAN:
Who can take this?
I'd quit today.

LONESOME:
Even after the senator bagged
his limit, how he hated to leave that blind.
He says to me, "Lonesome..."
(Lonesome rushes from backstage to go back on the air)
Keep that door clear. I'm surrounded
by a lot of dumb sons of nitwits.
(on screen)
Hey, you redneck scoundrels
still here?
Why aren't you out working
someplace?
Ain't that Curly Fuller
a duck-shooting fool?
You know when we were
standing out there shoulder to shoulder...
in that cold water,
belly button high...
and the sun was commencing to smile in on us...
Curly looked at me,
and he says, "Lonesome...
the family that prays together,
stays together."
That’s what he said.
I tell you, that man
is an inspiration...
a man among men.

( Cut to Marcia watching the sound man turn off the audio (her POV)
The Cracker Barrel, starring that irrepressible Arkansas traveler...

DIRECTOR:
You're off.

LONESOME:
I'm glad that's over.
I'm gonna start shooting people instead of ducks.

ANNOUNCER:
For relaxation and for health...
the cigarette that cleans
your tobacco without a filter...
and by Best Friend Dogfood...

DIRECTOR:
Take one

ANNOUNCER:
your dog's best friend.
95
And by Vitajex, that old "Vitajex
what you doing to me" pill.

LONESOME:
Hurry back, you all, remember
what old Uncle Lonesome said...
the family that prays together
stays together.

TECHNICIAN:
All right, super one,
and start the crawl.

ANNOUNCER:
This has been an FBN production...

LONESOME:
Fuller, the great hunter.
He's shaking like this.
Oh, if they ever heard the way that psycho really thinks...

ANNOUNCER:
Scenic design, James Fitzsimmons.
Costumes by Robert Hose.
Unit manager, George K George.
(MARCIA pulls the lever so what Lonesome says can be heard on the air)
CHARACTER ON STAGE:
Can you really sell that stiff as a “man among men”?

LONESOME:
To those morons out there?
Shucks, I sell them chicken fertilizer as caviar.
(Technicians try to drag Marcia away from lever)
I can make them eat dog food and think it’s steak.
Sure, I've got them like this.
You know what the public's like?
a cage full of guinea pigs.
(Shot of a shocked Haynesworth hearing this)
Good night, you stupid idiots.
(Shot of FULLER watching)
Good night, you miserable slobs.
(Shot of angry old lady)
They're a lot of trained seals...
(Shot of men in hard hats in a bar)
I toss them a dead fish and they'll flap their flippers.
(Shot of ladies playing cards, a Chinese family, and then of Mel, rushing out of the bar with this broadcast on in the background)
(Lonesome begins to sing a hymn on TV)

SOUNDMAN:
Marcia. (gets her away from the soundboard; hugging her)
MARCIA (she is sobbing)
No!
CARD PLAYING LADY:
Why, he's a monster!
ANOTHER CARD PLAYING LADY:
I'm going to call the station and
give them a piece of my mind.

**HARD HAT GUY:**
We'll fix you, jerk.

**MRS. RHODES:**
the show and drinking beer with two bell boys)  
I knew he'd open his big yap  
once too often and blow my three Gs.  
NURSE (in Macey’s hospital room)  
97  
Mr. Macey, I cant’ believe it’s the same  
Lonesome Rhodes.

**MACEY:**
It is, only this time his personality  
finally came through.

**LONESOME:**
Give me a drink.  
Got to hurry, boys,  
Heap big important day.  
You better come in strong tomorrow.  
I'll be loaded for bear!  
Cut to Marcia sobbing in sound booth  
ELEVATOR OPERATOR:
Held the elevator for you, Mr. R!  
the Lonesome Rhodes express...  
going down!

**LONESOME:**
All the way down, lad.  
ELEVATOR OPERATOR:
Yes, sir.  
(Close-up of the elevator floor numbers lighting up in succession. Cut  
to frantic switchboard. Then a montage of callers intercut with panel  
of elevator floor numbers lighting up as elevator descends)

**SWITCHBOARD:**
Central Broadcasting Network.  
That line is busy.  
Second CARD PLAYING LADY:
Just tell him for me that I'll never listen  
to his filthy program again.
HARD HAT:
So we're slobs, are we?
Well, you can tell Lonesome for me...

HAYNESWORTH:
I said, are we paying you network
a hundred thousand an hour...
98
to build up our business,
or destroy it?

FBN PRESIDENT:
Now just a minute, General. (and into intercom)
Get De Palma on the phone.
(to Haynsworth again)
Remember it was your company that
brought Lonesome to FBN.

HAYNESWORTH:
We’ve got to Keep this scandal from
rubbing off on Vitajex.
I mean disassociate ourselves.
SWITCHBOARD OPERATORS:
Lonesome Rhodes?
That line is busy.
(to fellow operator)What did he say?

OTHER OPERATOR:
I don’t know, but it must have been a whopper.

HAYNESWORTH:
You’d better come up fast with a good replacement.
(LONESOME emerges from elevator in lobby)
ELEVATOR OPERATOR:
Got you down in a hurry, didn’t I?

LONESOME:
Thanks for not stopping
to pick up the peasants.
(smug) How's your ratings? (to some execs who look after him with
satisfied grins - they know what has happened.

SWITCHPBOARD:
NO, I’m sorry, Mr. Rhodes has left for the day.
No, I’m sorry, there's no one in the studio.

FBN President:
That’s right, De Palma, you know your contract, 99
the morals clause.
Any act abusing public confidence.

JOEY:
I think I've got just the boy to fill the gap.
Barry Mills.
He's a young Lonesome
and a lot easier to handle.

BARRY:
Buddy, I'm just a country boy.
CUT TO Lonesome in his limo, pouring himself a drink)

LONESOME:
Don't spare the horses, I've only got 30
minutes to get into my dinner clothes.
(Beanie climbs into limo with him)
CUT TO Newspaper layout room: headline shown, read aloud by

PRINTER:
"L. R's blooper tops Unk Don's"

OTHER PRINTER:
I never seen what people saw
in that guy, but whatever it was, he's had it.
(Cut to TV studio as Mel enters)
Like the sinking of the Titanic, a night to remember.
What happened?

MAN:
Marcia, she went, uh ...

MEL:
Where is she?

MAN:
She's still in the booth.
MEL:
100
I hear you just wrote
the ending to my book.
(Marcia doesn’t answer. Mel answers the ringing telephone)
Yeah?
Just a minute,
I'll see if she's here.
It’s him.
(Cut to Lonesome’s penthouse. Beanie runs up to Lonesome with the phone)

BEANIE:
I’ve got her, Lonesome, I’ve got her!

LONESOME:
Marcia.
Oh, Marcia, I need you.
Come over right away.
Nobody's come,
everybody cancelled out.
(a high angle shot of the long banquet table, Lonesome at the head; two huge portraits of a smiling Fuller behind him; surrounded by stately black waiters)
Fuller didn't even send me
a wire.
The General sent me a wire.
(Cut to Marcia ducking her head hearing Lonesome read these wires)
The Secretary of the Interior sent
me a wire, "Regret to inform you...
unavoidably detained,
unable to attend."
All of a sudden,
everybody's too busy.
All of a sudden, I’m, I’m, I'm poison.
(to row of waiters - we see one circle his temple with his white-gloved finger, indicating Lonesome is nuts)
Are you laughing at me?
(He removes his tie and gets up to confront them. Cut to Marcia
listening to this rant)
Huh? You laughing at me?
You think I'm washed up, don't you?
The same way I lost them,
I'll get them back again.
101
I'm going to make them love me.
(He manhandles the impassive waiters throughout, here)
You're gonna love me.
Say you're gonna love me.
Say you're gonna love me.
You're gonna love me,
you're gonna love me.
Say you're gonna love me.
Say you're gonna love me.
Say you're gonna love me,
you're gonna love me...
What's your name?

WAITER:
Francis.

LONESOME:
Francis, Francis,
you're gonna love me.
(He embraces Francis)
Cut to booth, where Mel is thrusting the phone at Marcia)
Francis, you're gonna
love me, love me, love me.
Get out! Get out!
Get out, you black monkeys!
You turn my stomach.
Get out!

MEL:
Sounds like he's finally
gone through the roof.

LONESOME:
Marcia, how soon can you get here?
I'm surrounded by traitors.
That engineer...
wait till I get him, I'll fire him.
I'll burn him over a slow fire.
Marcia...
If you don't come right away,
I'll jump!
I'll jump! I'll jump!

MARCIA:
Jump! Jump!
Get out of my life!
102
Get out of everybody's life.
Jump.
Jump.
Jump.
(She is sobbing. Mel takes the phone and hangs it up.)

MEL:
I don't believe you.
In an hour, you’ll ne up there.

MARCIA:
Oh, Mel...

MEL:
Why didn’t you tell him on the phone that it was you?

MARCIA:
Because it’s hard to.

MEL:
You'll just make it harder.
I think you should go up and tell him face to face
before he blames it on 20 other guys.
Face to face.
Then maybe I'll believe you.

MARCIA:
It’s never as simple as that.

MEL:
Finally you've got to force complicated things into simple channels. Like this.
(phone rings)
Either you go up there and tell him it was you who did it and chop it off clean...
so he never comes
crying to you again...
or you hold his hand...
wipe his poor perspiring brow,
fan his smoldering dampened ego...
so it can burst into flames
and burn again.
(Dissolve to elevator door opening to let Marcia and Mel into
Lonesome’s penthouse. The applause machine is on LOUD.)

LONESOME:
Secretary for National Morale...
is a job that I was born for!
ELEVATOR OPERATOR:
Somebody oughta send for a doctor.
He's been screaming like that for 20 minutes
(We see the empty banquet table against the lighted towers of NYC
through the windows, and Lonesome’s shadow gesturing wildly cast
against the white tablecloth)

LONESOME:
In a time of crisis...
who else could rabble the people
like Lonesome Rhodes?
Who else could move the people
to action like Lonesome Rhodes?
You are looking...
at America's answer...
to the crying need for national...
(Marcia puts her hands to her face and walks toward Lonesome. Mel turns
to Beanie at the controls of the applause machine)

MEL:
What are you doing that for?

BEANIE:
He likes lots of applause.

LONESOME:
BEANIE! (Beanie cranks the applause. High angle shot of Marcia
looking up in horror, reverse shot to Lonesome on the balcony)
Maybe I'm just a country boy...
but if the President
tries to stop me...
I'll flood the White House
with millions of telegrams!
I made him
and I can break him!
104
Yeah!
Yeah, you know I can.
Because the people listen
to Lonesome Rhodes.
Because the people
love Lonesome Rhodes!
Lonesome Rhodes is the people!
The people is Lonesome Rhodes!
Beanie!
More! Yeah! Yeah!
Go! Go!
(Sound of cheering. He sobs. Marcia looks away in pain. Mel looks over
at a sign—his POV: “There is nothing as trustworthy – as the ordinary
mind of the ordinary man” – Lonesome Rhodes)
(Lonesome starts to sing)
Ten thousand miles away
from home...
and I don't even know my name.
(He suddenly becomes aware of Marcia below, and stretches out his arms
for her)
Marcia...
Oh, Marcia.
Yeah -- Marcia... (He rushes happily down the stairs)
I knew you'd come.
I knew you'd get here.
Listen, Marcia, I lost them...
but all I've got to do
is talk to them one more time.
Yeah, I’ll tell ‘em, I’ll tell ‘em, I'll say I said that just to see
how many was really listening.
Yeah! HA HA! Sure, I'll have them eating out of
my hands again, just like old times.

MARCIA:
Larry, it was me.

LONESOME:
I'm back on top again.
First thing I'll do
when I'm back on top...
I'll get that sound man...
I'll get that dirty, stinking
little mechanical genius...
MARCIA:
It was me.
105
It was.
It was me.
I held the key open...
on purpose.
I'm telling you this,
so you'll never call me again.
Never again.

LONESOME:
Okay.
My little Marshmallow.
Good luck with Mel.
(She reaches out to Lonesome)
No, leave me alone.
(Mel puts his hands on Marcia’s shoulders.)

MARCIA:
Larry, I'm sorry. Forgive me.

LONESOME:
Go on.
Go.
(They turn and walk quickly toward the elevator. Lonesome yells after them.)
Listen, I'm not through yet.
You know what’s going
to happen to me?

MEL:
Suppose I tell you exactly
what’s going to happen to you?
You'll be back on television...
only it won't be quite the same
as it was before.
There'll be a reasonable cooling-off period,
And then somebody will say...
"Why don't we try him again
in an inexpensive format?
People's memories aren't too long."
And you know, in a way, hell be right.
Some of the people will forget,
And some of them won't.
Oh, you'll have a show.

106

Maybe not the best hour, or top ten.
Maybe not even in the top thirty-five.
(Marcia is frantically pressing the elevator button.)

But you'll have a show. It just won't
be quite the same as it was before.

Then a couple of new fellas
will come along...

(During this speech Mel approaches Lonesome. POV camera tracks toward
Lonesome.)

and pretty soon a lot of your fans
will be flocking around them.

And then, one day, someone will ask

"Whatever happened to...
what's his name? You know,
the one who was so big...
the number one fella
a couple of years ago.

He was famous. How can we
forget a name like that?

By the way,
have you seen, uh, Barry Mills?
I think he's the greatest thing
since Will Rogers."

(The elevator arrives, and Mel turns ro go get on it with Marcia. He
turns back and yells)

Beanie!
(Beanie, who has fallen asleep at the controls of the applause
machine, wakes up and cranks the applause. They leave. Lonesome walks
slowly past the banner, the banquet table, out on to the balcony, to
thunderous applause, whistling, cheering)

(Cut to the street below; a taxi pulls up and as Mel and Marcia get
in, we hear from above)

LONESOME'S VOICE:
Marcia!

MARcia:
Mel...

LONESOME'S VOICE: (a low angle shot up to the penthouse
high above)
Don't leave me!
MEL:
107
I don't figure him for a suicide.

LONESOME:
Marcia!

MARCIA:
Oh, Mel, if I'd only left him
in that jail in Pickett.

MEL:
Marcia, stop it.
You were taken in
just like we were all taken in.
But we get wise to them.
That’s our strength. We get wise to them.
LONESOME’S VOICE:
Come back, Marcia!
Marcia!
(They get into the taxi.)
Come back!
Don't leave me!
Don't leave me!
Don't leave me!
Marcia!
Don't leave me!
Come back!
Come back!
Come back!
( Cut back and forth between the taxi departing into the dark New York
streets and
the low angle shot of Lonesome’s penthouse. End with a s hot of Times
Square(?)
with its glittering Coca Cola neon, diegetic city noises, almost drowning out
Lonesome’s shouts.)

THE END: