

PROLOGUE - CREDITS ROLL THROUGHOUT THIS SCENE

New York City - In the not so distant future.

A lens opens on a totally black screen. Luminescent green numerals in the corner of the lens display rapidly changing numbers. The camera pulls back revealing that the lens is part of a man's (THE PRODUCER) cybernetic eye. He is sitting in a laboratory, dimly visible through shrouds of wires and electrodes.

INT. INFINITY RECORDS - NIGHT

An office corridor. Angles of cubicles, computer terminals, partitions, cardboard boxes overflowing with papers. INFINITY RECORDS is stamped on the boxes. The walls are crowded with album covers and posters of Infinity's stars.

ANGLES OF POSTERS: a Kabuki-style woman, K'uei; a man wrapped in chains, his face contorted with rage: Myrddin; The Dying Earth.

The camera stops in front of an unmarked door. There is a large, elaborate keypad to the side. The door opens, revealing a large room full of computers and other equipment. Shelves on one wall contain many reels of tapes. Suddenly, a tape drive comes to life, spinning and flashing continuously.

Cut to another man (PIERSON) similarly wired-up, sitting in a chair with his eyes closed. He flinches and seems to be concentrating.

Cut back to the (PRODUCER) sitting in the laboratory. On a computer screen the words "CHERYL DOWNING - PRIMITIVE 25-317-6" appear, followed by a constant stream of symbols.

EXT. THE TARANTULA CLUB - NIGHT

A street in the East Village of New York. Neon lights flash, reflecting in the rain-slick street.

ANGLE:

A close-up of a neon sign with a tarantula that dances in one direction, stops, appears at the start and begins to do the same step over and over again. Below the sign is a worn canopy, which shields the crowds coming in and out of the club. A large black doorman sits by the door collecting money.

INT. THE TARANTULA CLUB - NIGHT

The club is large and crowded with people. The center of the floor is open for dancing; there are booths along the walls where people sit drinking beer. A band on the stage is playing a very fast dance tune to a gyrating audience.

ANGLE:

A young man playing a video game. He wears a helmet with serial cables extended from it and looking somewhat like the head of Medusa. He is playing with a joystick and two buttons. He wins; the screen begins flashing. His head begins trembling spasmodically--he is receiving "pleasure signals" through the electrodes. He smiles ecstatically.

ANGLE:

A young woman with green spiked hair holds what looks like a test tube filled with green fluorescent liquid up to the light. She shakes the tube violently until the liquid turns to a gas. She then inhales the gas deeply and passes it on to her friend. After a moment, she goes totally spastic, bouncing off walls, gyrating wildly, and mumbling inaudible sounds.

Suddenly, the lights flicker, there's a burst of fog, and the band slows up the tempo. The backup singers wail out "Shock, Shock Treatment." Lights rise on center stage. CLEO, a beautiful black woman in her mid-twenties, is assisted by two performers, a doctor and a nurse.

CLEO (SUNG)

SHOCK TREATMENT

SHOCK, SHOCK TREATMENT

SHOCK, SHOCK TREATMENT

THIS CITY IS A MAD HOUSE

INSANITY ON THE LOOSE

OH DOCTOR CAN YOU HELP ME

I NEED A PSYCHOTIC BOOST

SHOCK TREATMENT, A MIND SENSATION

SHOCK TREATMENT, BEYOND IMAGINATION

SHOCK TREATMENT, I WANT TO FEEL ELECTRIC IN MY VEINS

ETC.

Throughout the number, the band remains extremely animated, feeding off the audience energy. About mid-way through the number, a bizarre version of an electric chair is wheeled on stage and Cleo placed in it. The doctor and nurse begin to deliver the shock treatment to Cleo. The lights flash wildly as they press buttons and pull levers--a "Frankenstein" effect. At the end of the process Cleo is left lobotomized. As she's wheeled off the stage, the backup singers repeat the chorus.

CLEO(CONT')

SHOCK TREATMENT, A MIND SENSATION

SHOCK TREATMENT, BEYOND IMAGINATION

SHOCK TREATMENT, I WANT TO FEEL ELECTRIC IN MY VEINS

ETC.

The camera pans the crowd dancing, drinking and generally having an uproariously raucous time. NICKI DE SALVO a short, stocky, ostentatiously dressed man in his late forties, seems uncomfortable and out of place in the club. He and his chauffeur/bodyguard, TOMMY, decide they've heard enough, get up from their table and begin to leave. A moment passes as the band ends the song, and Cleo returns in a scant sequined gown.

CLEO

Thank you...thank you...How y'all doing?! You having a good time. *(The audience responds.)* I can't hear you...*(The audience response is louder.)* You ready to rock?! *(Wild response from the audience.)* Let's do it! We are going to party tonight...before time runs out. *(A ticking is heard, and the band kicks into TICK-TOCK.)*

CLEO (SUNG)

TICK-TOCK

NITROGLYCERIN

FOUR STICKS OF DYNAMITE

ADD SOME TNT

GOT TO GET IT RIGHT

CUT THE FUSE

SET THE CLOCK

TICK TOCK

ETC.

INT. BACKSTAGE TARANTULA CLUB - NIGHT

Cleo and the band members move through the shabby backstage area acknowledging the congratulations of sound and light crew, well-wishers.

RIPTIDE

(The drummer of the band, young compulsive loud mouth)
Nice, nice Cleo... *(He lights up a joint and inhales deeply)*
Tomorrow we should pick up the groove on Inverted
Lovers. Those verses drag, man.

STIG

(The bassist, a sarcastic snip, waves his hand for the joint.) Don't let that sucker burn up, man. Pass it over here.

SHEILA

(The keyboardist, a flighty, pretty young woman) Hey, anybody got a drink ticket? *(She snaps a nail while unbuttoning her costume.)* Ahh, I broke another nail.

STIG

We're talking major tragedy here.

CLEO

There should be some over there.

SHEILA

There's none left.

HECTOR

(Hispanic lead-guitar player)

I think Chris took a couple.

STIG

I mean major tragedy.

SHEILA

Oh, shut up. So where the hell did Chris go?

INT. SMALL DRESSING ROOM - NIGHT

Cleo and the other band members move into a small, cluttered, dimly lit dressing room. Nicki De Salvo is sitting on a sofa with his feet up on a dressing table. Tommy stands behind him.

RIPTIDE

Yo, yo, yo, yo man! What it is! *(He takes a moment to look him over.)* What the hell are you doing in here!?

NICKI

(Gets up. His manner is smooth, positive, all smiles)

Excellent, excellent performance. I'm very impressed.

RIPTIDE

Yeah, so what.

NICKI

You guys are great! My name's Nicki De Salvo, Unicorn Records. This is my assistant, Tommy. Let me give you my card.

Nicki goes around the room shaking hands and getting people's names.

RIPTIDE

Unicorn Records? I never heard of you.

NICKI

I never heard of "Plutonium Sunset" until tonight. That doesn't mean you didn't exist. We're an up-and-coming company. You've heard of the Baby Dolls? (*He scans the faces for some kind of response.*) The Baby Dolls...(*half singing*) Daddy don't you love your baby doll any more...you got me crying and sighing...(*blank looks from the band*). Come on, people, it was on the top of the charts.

SHEILA

Oh hey, the Baby Dolls. I saw their video--you produced them?

NICKI

Found them singing in the street.

SHEILA

No kidding?

NICKI

Heard them, signed them, and in a year they've had two gold records. (*Beat*) I think I could do the same for you.

RIPTIDE

You do, huh? Work yo' magic on us.

NICKI

You've got a sound, a style, and a great front person (*motioning to Cleo, who smiles*). You've got all the ingredients here, now what you need is someone to put it all together, to package you.

RIPTIDE

You think you could get us all packaged up, huh?

NICKI

I'm afraid I'm in a bit of a rush--I can't take the time to really talk to you, and explain what I have in mind. Do you have a recent demo tape?

STIG

Sure, man.

He goes to a bag and pulls out a cassette tape. He hands the tape to Nicki, who passes it to Tommy.

NICKI

Excellent. One other thing, if you have a picture.

He nods at Cleo. The band members look at each other blankly.

CLEO

We don't have a band photo, but I have a shot of myself.

Pulls a head shot from her bag, and gives it to Nicki, who looks at it carefully, smiles, and passes it to Tommy.

NICKI

Fabulous...wow. You got it, Cleo. You understand, of course, I can't promise anything now, but I'll listen to the tape, and have the producer listen. Possibly we can work something out. I promise--I'll be in touch.

RIPTIDE

Later, babe.

Nicki shakes hands with people and exits.

RIPTIDE

What a bullshit artist.

CLEO

You know, you can be a real asshole.

RIPTIDE

What? That guy? I can't wait to see the contract he comes up with.

CLEO

You're always so negative, Rip. We need some exposure...contacts to get us out of dives like this. Someone like...you just don't get it, do you?

Cleo sits at a make-up table and begins to remove her make up. Riptide sits next to her and place his hand on Cleo's thigh.

RIPTIDE

Hey, baby you been awfully moody lately. *(He inches his hand up her dress.)* Maybe you need to release...

CLEO

Get your fuckin' hands off me! I'm nobody's piece of meat!

RIPTIDE

Attitude, baby. Attitude gonna get you nowhere fast.

INT. PIERSON'S EXECUTIVE SUITE, INFINITY RECORDS - DAY

FADE IN: On a large fish tank filled with exotic fish lazily swimming around. A hand passes over the tank with food. The fish become agitated, snapping at the falling bits. The hand teases the fish, pretending to drop a piece of food one place, then dropping it someplace else. CHARLES PIERSON is a man who exudes an air of sophistication and refinement in his middle forties. He has shoulder-length salt & pepper hair and a cheerful disposition. He is wearing a blue quilted "Chinese" suit.

PIERSON

(Chuckling) The more you give them the more they want. They can kill themselves with greed.

View of a spacious office with plush decorated multicolored carpets, futuristic metal-and-fabric furniture, and a wall of windows overlooking the New York skyline. There is a large desk, a separate sitting area, bonsai & Japanese prints. A computer keyboard and a large color monitor sit on a side table. The camera comes to rest on JEREMY PARKS, a shadow of a good-looking, athletic man worn beyond his thirty-some years. He is dressed in a poorly kept, bargain-basement suit. He is ill at ease in his current environment. Pierson completes feeding the fish and puts the food away.

JEREMY

May I smoke?

PIERSON

Smoke clouds the mind and poisons the system. *(Beat)*
Would you care for a drink, Mr. Parks?

JEREMY

Now, there's a health alternative. Can you make a Blaster?

PIERSON

That's a bit exotic for me.

Pierson crosses to a bar, touches what looks like a mirror behind the bar and "Mr. Boston Bar Guide" flashes on the screen. An attractive woman, scantily dressed, appears in the video. She speaks in a sensuous whisper.

WOMAN

Thank you for using "Mr. Boston's Bar Guide". How may I serve you?

PIERSON

I'd like a Blaster for my friend.

WOMAN

Thank you for using Mr. Boston's Bar Guide. Begin by using a Blaster number one glass. Mix one shot of vermouth, two shots of vodka...

Pierson follows the woman's step-by-step instructions as the voice fades into the background.

JEREMY

Pretty amazing stuff, huh? *(Indicating the Mr. Boston.)*

(Crosses over to Jeremy with two drinks.)

PIERSON

Another little toy. Cheers.

JEREMY

Cheers. *(Jeremy drinks and coughs.)*

PIERSON

Something wrong with the drink?

JEREMY

(With delicate sarcasm)

No, no, it's just the way I like it.

PIERSON

Information!

JEREMY

What?

PIERSON

Information is power, Mr. Parks. With the right information one could rule the world. Not that anyone would want to. Hell of mess out there. *(Beat)* Entire civilizations have been swept out of existence by new knowledge--or come to power by the skillful use of it. Someone is stealing extremely sensitive information off our master recordings.

JEREMY

What about your internal security?

PIERSON

We've checked it out thoroughly. Of course, we have the building security, and the data center has additional security. The access codes are changed daily, and my personal assistant and I are the only ones that know them. Yet the information continues to vanish. This could ruin Infinity Records if it isn't stopped. *(Beat)* I've heard excellent things about you from Mr. Schwartz, Mr. Parks. I'd like to put you on the case starting immediately.

JEREMY

Mr. Schwartz?

PIERSON

Yes. The case of the cheating wife.

JEREMY

(Confused)

You say Mr. Schwartz recommended me?

PIERSON

Yes. Highly.

JEREMY

Well, I could always use a new client, but I also need to know more about the case, before I decide whether I can accept it.

PIERSON

My secretary Charisse will give you the file documenting the security breaches and any other information concerning the case. We want this business...

JEREMY

Did you hear me? I haven't decided to accept the case.

PIERSON

Oh you'll accept it.

JEREMY

You seem pretty sure of...

PIERSON

In this business you're either certain or you're dead...that is to say out of business. You're broke Mr. Parks. You have \$57.32 in your checking account and \$10.75 in your savings. *(Beat)* You see Mr. Parks; I'm a very thorough man. A man like you would never turn down the opportunity to earn an easy twenty-five thousand dollars. *(Beat)* We want this handled very, very discreetly--we don't want the police involved. *(The intercom buzzes. Pierson presses a button on his desk.)* Yes?

FEMALE VOICE (CHARISSE) (V.O.)

The board meeting is in five minutes. Mr. Walsh wants to know if you'll need the charts.

PIERSON

Yes, I'll need them, Charisse. *(To Jeremy)* I'm afraid I'm going to have to conclude our meeting.

Pierson becomes perceptibly disoriented, sweat beads on his face, and he grows pale.

JEREMY

You okay?

PIERSON

Sure, I'm fine. My secretary will assist you in any way she can. (*Presses the button and speaks.*) Charisse.

CHARISSE (V.O.)

Yes?

PIERSON

Charisse, help Mr. Parks with anything he needs. Also, write him a memo with my signature giving him access to all records in all areas. (*To Jeremy*) You understand, of course, that this material is strictly confidential?

JEREMY

Naturally. Just one more thing.

Pierson's hands begin to shake, sweat drips from his face and he uses his hand to massage his forehead.

JEREMY

You sure you're okay?

PIERSON

Yes...yes, I'm fine. If there is nothing...

JEREMY

I'll need some money up front.

PIERSON

How much?

JEREMY

Five thousand.

Pierson moves over to the bar and touches the screen and it swings out from the wall revealing a wall safe. He opens the safe and counts out five thousand dollars. Pierson crosses to Jeremy and hands him the money.

PIERSON

Five thousand dollars. I'd like to get this matter resolved before our next board meeting on the fourteenth. It gives you a month. If you find out who's behind our security problem before the

PIERSON (CONT.)

fourteenth, you'll receive the other \$20,000 plus a substantial bonus. We like to reward...we like...

Pierson stands by his desk staring blankly at the wall.

JEREMY

Hey. Hello...

PIERSON

(Snapping out of it.) Huh?...Oh, sorry. *(Laughs, trying to conceal his disorientation.)* I guess I've been working too hard. *(Sits down.)*

JEREMY

Yeah. *(Puzzled)* I bet that's it. If your secretary has that paper together, I'll be on my way. I'll give you a progress report in a week or so.

PIERSON

Yes...*(walks past Jeremy to fish tank.)* Fish...like fish in the water, what do we really know? Swim, kill, swim and kill... *(Suddenly looks up at Jeremy).*

JEREMY

My thoughts exactly.

Pierson makes bubble shapes with his lips, imitating a fish, and grins satirically.

INT. MAD DOG CAFE - DAY

Lunch at a busy cafe in the lower East Village, featuring a menu of 10 "Eat and Run" combination specials. The cafe has a long serpentine counter, behind which Cleo, the only waitress, rushes back and forth to serve customers. Cleo calls the orders on an intercom, and the food comes up on a dumbwaiter. Food is extremely strange-looking--as is the clientele.

CUSTOMER ONE

This is a number three, Miss. I asked for a number two.

CLEO

Oh you did, didn't you? Sorry, I'll send these back and get you yours.

CUSTOMER TWO

I'll take that number three. Pass it on down here.

CUSTOMER THREE

Miss, Miss, I've been waiting ten minutes. Could you check to see if I'll get my order this century?

CLEO

Yes...yes...number two...number seven, right?

CUSTOMER ONE

If it's going to take long, I've got to get back to work. How long do you think it'll be?

The MANAGER is an obese white man in a jogging suit, bald on top but with the rest of his hair down his back in dreadlocks. He's squeezed into a cashier's booth, wearing mirrored sunglasses, listening to some heavy dub, and mopping his face with a handkerchief. Phone rings. He picks it up.

MANAGER

Mad Dog. How can I help you? *(Beat)* Phone, babe. Keep it short.

He hands out the phone to Cleo. As she talks on the phone the customers become increasingly agitated.

CLEO

Hi...who?...oh, yeah, sure, I remember--what's up? *(Looks out window)*

ANGLE:

The restaurant window looking onto the street. A large black limousine is double parked outside restaurant. The back window lowers and Nicki is on the phone. He waves to Cleo.

CLEO

Man...this is...I like it...great, when would be good?

MANAGER

Babe...*(Pointing)*...work.

CLEO

(Waves him off) What, right now?...Yeah, but what about Rip?...He's the leader of the band; he should be there, you know...

MANAGER

(Points at dumbwaiter) Remember food? Remember job?
Get off the phone.

CLEO

Look, I'm at work, I can't talk...

The manager reaches over and disconnects the phone. He points at Cleo, at the dumbwaiter full of food, at the customers. Cleo, outraged, throws down the phone and goes to the dumbwaiter. She takes two plates of food, dumps one on the manager and throws the other against the wall. She takes off her apron and throws it on the manager's head.

CLEO

Serve 'em yourself, asshole. I quit.

She kick the door open and storms out to the limousine.

EXT. STREET IN FRONT OF MAD DOG - DAY

Cleo goes to limousine, sits down in back next to Nicki. They look at each other.

NICKI

Drive, Tommy.

CLEO

I've been working for that...that pig for-- Where are we going?

NICKI

Sit back and get accustomed to being in the lap of luxury.

INT. EXT. LIMOUSINE MOVING - DAY

A plush limousine equipped with phone, TV, bar, etc.

NICKI

Hey, look when someone jerks me around, I give as good as I get it, but when I like someone, and I like you Cleo, believe me...you gotta believe that, sweetheart, cause we're gonna be seeing a lot of each other...so anything you want, you just ask me. If somebody's giving you a hard time, listen, you come to Nicki, I'll take care of it. Anything you want, cause I like you, and I know you're talented, I believe in you, I'll tell anybody that, I'll shout it to the whole world.

NICKI (CONT.)

You're going to be a star, Cleo. I can see it now. Here, have some champagne.

CLEO

Thanks. *(Nicki gives her a glass and pours. They raise their glasses in a toast and drink.)*

NICKI

Good stuff, huh? It's first class all the way.

CLEO

So you like the tape?

NICKI

Like it? I love it! I must've listened to it twenty times. Baby, you got some magnificent pipes. What's more, the Producer liked it. That's where we're going now. Listen, I tell you absolutely confidentially...sincerely...this man is a genius. An absolute musical genius...you know what I'm saying. He blows me away every time I see him. An absolute genius...

CLEO

What about the rest of the group? Rip negotiates all...

NICKI

Listen, just one thing...one thing. Trust him. He knows. You know what I mean? *(Beat)* He knows what's good. *(Cleo notices that the limousine is leaving Manhattan.)*

CLEO

What, isn't he in Manhattan?

NICKI

He's not into that whole scene, Cleo. He's got his own trip, his own world that he lives in, and I'm telling you, it's beautiful, Cleo, it's so beautiful....

Aerial view of the limousine moving on the Brooklyn Bridge.

CLEO

Does this producer have a name?

NICKI

(Abstractedly, looking out window) Nah, nah...just the Producer.

EXT. DESERTED DOCK IN BROOKLYN - DAY

The limousine pulls up. Nicki steps out and gives a hand to Cleo, who looks around at the bleak surroundings of a dilapidated, abandon dock.

CLEO

This is it?

NICKI

This is only the beginning, babe.

He wraps his arm around her and they move forward toward the door, Cleo suddenly stop in her tracks.

CLEO

I'm sorry.

NICKI

What? What's wrong?

CLEO

This whole thing is wrong. I'm about to go into an abandoned building with two men I hardly know. I'm sorry but there is something very strange about this entire scenario. I hope you don't take offense but...

NICKI

I know what you're saying. Yeah...cool. What can I do to put your mind at ease? Name it.

CLEO

I don't know, Nicki. I feel like I'm cheating on a boyfriend or something. I don't know. Maybe if could let someone know where I was, who I was with, I would feel more comfortable.

NICKI

Tommy, get me the phone out of the car. Miss Brown needs to make a call.

Tommy moves to the car, retrieves the phone, and brings it to Nicki who in turn give it to Cleo. She takes the phone and dials.

CLEO

I'm calling my girlfriend, Sheila. She in the band with me.
I'll just let her know where I'm and whom I'm with.

NICKI

The address is 1439 Front Street, Brooklyn.

SHEILA (V.O.)

Hi. Sheila speaking. *(Beat)* Hello...anyone there? If this is one...

(Cleo hangs up the phone.)

CLEO

You know something? I'll trust you.

INT. DOCK BROOKLYN - DAY

Nicki, Cleo and Tommy move through dark corridors, large empty storage areas, up a flight of steel stairs.

NICKI

(Motioning to a rat) Watch your step.

They approach a large corroded door. Nicki takes a plastic card and runs it through a slot in the door, then begins to tap out a combination on a small keypad. He hesitates and turns to Cleo.

NICKI

There is one thing I should let you know about the Producer. He had a bad accident. He got that--you know--cybernetic implant stuff.

CLEO

Oh, Nicki that's the rage of the day. I've even thought about getting it myself.

Nicki turns back to the pad and completes entering the code. After a pause the door slides open, revealing an elaborate recording studio.

INT. THE PRODUCER'S RECORDING STUDIO - DAY

The studio consists of several sound stages, glass booths, various instruments, two large grand pianos. Computerized panels of equipment flash on the walls. High above the main studio is the master control room. Nicki looks up to it.

NICKI

Hello...hello--we're here.

A shadowy figure appears in the glass booth and speaks. His voice is routed through a reverb unit, giving it an awesome presence.

PRODUCER

Good Nicki. You've done well. Welcome, Miss Brown.

INT. MASTER CONTROL ROOM - DAY

The room is crammed with sophisticate recording equipment. The producer's cybernetic prosthetic piece lies on one of the control panels. He picks it up and fits the piece on his face. The cybernetic eye cycles rapidly through cryptic codes ending with the artificial iris opening up. The PRODUCER, an intense black male in his late thirties, gives the impression of a volcano on the verge of erupting.

PRODUCER

Nicki, offer Miss Brown a drink. I'll be down in a moment.

The Producer sits down in front of a computer and begins typing. Several monitors that hang over head spring to life. He moves to various instrumentation making adjustments.

NICKI (V.O.)

You want something to drink.

CLEO (V.O.)

Oh, no thank you.

NICKI (V.O.)

You hungry? We got plenty of...

PRODUCER

Offer her some Dom Pergion.

INT. RECORDING STUDIO, MAIN FLOOR - DAY

CLEO

He can hear us, huh?

NICKI

Yeah. And see us. (*Indicating a camera attached to the wall.*)

The PRODUCER enters a small elevator and descends to the main level where Nicki and Cleo are waiting for him. He moves towards Cleo.

CLEO

I guess you must be the Producer...

PRODUCER

Yes. *(The Producer carefully sizes her up.)* The resemblance is amazing.

CLEO

What?

PRODUCER

So, you want to sing?

CLEO

I think...I mean I would like...

PRODUCER

There is no room for I think! You must be driven! Absolutely committed. Singing must be your greatest passion.

CLEO

Yes, of course I want to sing. That's why-- you know, I don't believe I got your name.

PRODUCER

Miss Brown, I have spent years building this studio, developing a sound, a style that is uniquely Unicorn Records, all with one purpose in mind. *(Beat)* You've heard of the Baby Doll Rappers.

CLEO

Yeah, I saw their...

PRODUCER

A trite mediocre talent. I took them from Alphabet City street performers to the top of the charts. But could never turn them into pop icons. To make an icon, you need more than technology; you need raw volatile talent.

(The Producer raises both hands above his head as Moses parting the Red Sea.)

PRODUCER

Miss Brown, I give you my Cathedral of Sound.

The instrumentation in various areas of the studio come to life in a burst of lights and color, monitors explode with information and a powerful sound of music blast out.

PRODUCER

Music!

CLEO

WOW! Some set-up.

PRODUCER

Music is my life.

CLEO

What? I can't hear you.

(The producer gestures again and the volume is lowered.)

CLEO (CONT.)

How did you do that?

PRODUCER

Listen. *(Indicating the studio monitors)* The eye can trick you, Miss Brown, but the ear...the ear can render a perfect truth. It needs something there. An acoustic guitar.

(Acoustic guitar can be heard in the mix.)

NICKI

What did I tell you the man is a genius?

PRODUCER

I live to create music. Music that penetrate this superficial vale we call reality, that goes beyond the formulative rehashes. I want to make music that awakens the soul, enlightens the mind, take you beyond all that is, to all that can be. *(Listening to the sound tracks.)* Now the strings should come in here. Orchestral strings! *(Orchestral strings are heard in the music.)* Ahhh...It's taking shape. Music can be a doorway to other places, times.

PRODUCER (CONT.)

Imagination can let you in and the mind can...can transport you anywhere you dare to dream. *(Beat)* Backup singers here. *(Backup singer wail out on the tracks.)*
There is only one thing missing to make this all complete.

CLEO

Maybe some horns?

PRODUCER

It needs your voice.

CLEO

(Beat) You mean...you mean you want me to sing.

PRODUCER

That's exactly what I want. I can see you have potential, but you need a lot of work. It's a big investment--a big risk I'll have to take. I have to ask you to sign a standard contract. *(He leads Cleo to a desk, pulls out a contract and a pen.)*

CLEO

(Looking over the contract.)

A recording contract? This is all happening so fast. Is this some kind of a joke? Did Stig put you up to this?

PRODUCER

Miss Brown, I assure you this is no joke.

CLEO

You mean you'd offer us a contract just like that.

PRODUCER

I didn't say anything about your band, Miss Brown. This is a solo deal.

CLEO

You don't want the band? You just want me.

PRODUCER

That was the definition of "solo" the last time I looked. You sing--I'll produce you and develop your career. This is a standard contract. You see what I've got here--you've heard the work I've done. I don't do business with people who

PRODUCER (CONT.)

don't know what they want. I've got to have an immediate decision.

CLEO

(Studies the contract, shakes her head.) I don't know what to say. I can't do something like this without talking to the band. We've been together too long, worked too hard. This contract would tie me up for years. To sign it without even looking at it overnight...

PRODUCER

Nicki, take Miss Brown home.

NICKI

Hold it, hold it, boss, wait a minute. *(To the Producer)* Let me talk to her. *(Takes Cleo aside.)* Cleo, listen to me. He comes on strong, but he's no small-time bullshitter. He can do everything he says. Don't worry so much about the contract--if you make it big, you can worry about it then, and if you don't make it big, nobody's going to care. Think about the next six months, the next two years. This man can do it for you.

CLEO

It's all happening too fast...I need some...*(To Producer)* Look, just come down and see us once. We're really good, that's not asking too much...we do a good show, the place is packed every night we play. Just give us a chance.

PRODUCER

Free yourself, Miss Brown. This is your destiny.

CAMERA PANS across the equipment in the studio and comes to rest on Cleo--her face shows her indecision and anger at being forced to make a decision. She picks up the pen and signs the contract and the Producer signs. Nicki witnesses the contract.

PRODUCER

Nicki, we'll begin Miss Brown's training on Thursday. See that she gets set up in suitable living quarters, and given an adequate expense account. Take care of anything else she might need during the transition. *(To Cleo)* So you want to sing? Now, you'll have your chance.

INT. HALLWAY OF INFINITY RECORDS - DAY

Jeremy gets off elevator. Lettering on wall (*with gaps*) reads: INFORMATION SYSTEMS & TECH LOG. There are double glass doors leading off the hallway. Jeremy goes through the doors.

INT. INFORMATION SYSTEMS - DAY

The same hallway as in the opening sequence. A very large room divided into dozens of small cubicles like a maze. Every cubicle contains a variety of computer terminals, and boxes of papers. In-boxes are filled to overflowing. About a third of the cubicles are occupied. Jeremy stops by the cubicle of LLOYD HILLMAN, a handsome black male in his early thirties with a sarcastic attitude. He has horn-rimmed glasses, is well dressed, and has his feet up on his desk, studying a computer printout. A plastic plaque on the wall reads, "Lloyd Hillman/Console Cowboy." A large autographed poster of Cheryl Downing in concert is prominently displayed on the wall divider. Jeremy taps him on the shoulder and he jumps.

LLOYD

Damn man, you could give someone a heart attack, sneaking up on `em like that. (*He studies the unfamiliar face.*)
Who the hell are you?

(*Jeremy shows him his pass.*)

LLOYD

(*Reading*) "All staff...cooperate fully... access to all records...." You? You don't exactly look like the Audit & Control type. Where'd they dig you up?

JEREMY

I was just about to ask you the same thing.

LLOYD

(*Laughs*) I'm out of here in fifteen. What do you want?

JEREMY

(*Throws a list on Lloyd's desk.*) I need printouts on all personnel involved in these productions. The dates they were started and completed. Post-production, financial records, people that knew the access codes.

LLOYD

Investigating the stolen master programs?