

Flashes of Lightning

C.J. Cronin.

Dual Acting Roles

Studio Head-Whitbread

Jack Mason-Mr. Arnold

Mr. Arthur-Elliston

Nick Lathuro-Edmund Kean

Tony-Pope

Richards-Gratten

Jenny-Mary

Will-Grenfell

Critic 1-Coleridge

Critic 2-Hazlitt

Businessman-Norfolk

Mrs. Crosby-Mrs. Cox

Mr. Crosby-Alderman Cox

Betty More-Jane Porter

Winston-Rice McKonakee

Swanson-Macready

Mr. Stewart-Lord Essex

Lawyer-Sigell

FADE IN: TITLES MONTAGE

Although detailed here the titles sequence is intended to be normal length and part of the plot.

An ornate picture frame appears to be held at the top corners by smiling/frowning Comédie dell'arte masks. (Actual) Credits appear below the frame as images within the frame change briskly. Music is emotive of Shakespearean theatre early 19th century.

WITHIN THE FRAME:

INT. A DIRTY SHELTER -- DAY

Somewhere in the slums of 18th Century London just born BABY KEAN is handed (naked, bloody) to NANCE (Kean's Mother) by his father, AARON. Aaron swills from a cask and hands it to NANCE. Unwittingly she dribbles wine onto the Baby's face. His cries are ignored.

EXT. GARBAGE STREWN STREET -- DAY

TWO YEAR OLD KEAN, in a wretched condition, plays in the garbage strewn street. Nance cavorts drunkenly with a MAN at a distance. MOSES, (Kean's uncle, Aaron's older brother) appears beside the child. He shakes his head in pity, picks up the child and takes him along.

INT. AUNT TID'S HOUSE -- DAY

A cleaned up TWO YEAR OLD KEAN plays on the floor at AUNT TID'S (Charlotte Tidswell, Moses' wife) while she prepares food. She grins down at him. There is a knock at the door. It is Nance, come to reclaim her child. Aunt Tid beats her into the street, Nance retreating under the onslaught. Victorious, Aunt Tid turns and sees the child at the door. Her face softens and she picks him up, and with a last contemptuous glare at Nance, closes the door.

INT. THEATER DRESSING ROOM - NIGHT

Before a mirror Aunt Tid puts on make-up. FOUR YEAR OLD KEAN plays nearby. ACTORS in costume pick him up, cuddle and kiss him.

INT. THEATER WINGS AND STAGE -- NIGHT

Aunt Tid is on stage, performing. In the wings, FOUR YEAR OLD KEAN watches, fascinated.

INT. THEATER WINGS AND STAGE -- NIGHT

The great actor, JOHN PHILIP KEMBLE, his tall, elegant body still held in rigid tragedian style, watches from the wings as the Incantation

scene belonging to the Fourth Act of "Macbeth" unfolds. The GOBLINS, the last of which is SEVEN YEAR OLD KEAN, scurry on stage to line up at the mouth of the 'cave'. His attention captivated by the audience, however, Kean bumps into the next Goblin, and much to the audience's amusement the row collapses like dominoes. Kemble is unimpressed.

INT. SCHOOLROOM -- DAY

Seven year old Kean sits in the classroom. The teacher looks away and Kean scurries out the door.

INT. A TAVERN -- DAY

Seven Year Old Kean stands on a table singing to the DRINKERS, his hat before him. A passing DRINKER drops a coin into the hat. Kean's momentary delight changes to apprehension as he notices the tavern doorway. Moses enters, sees Kean and halts. He shakes his head.

INT. COBBLER'S SHOP -- DAY

A shield on a dog collar is being inscribed: "Bring this boy to Miss Tidswell, 12 Tavistock Row". ENGRAVER hands the collar to Moses, who passes it to Aunt Tid. She fastens it around SEVEN YEAR OLD Kean's neck.

INT. ON STAGE -- DAY

NINE YEAR OLD KEAN, still wearing the collar, now with padlock, is trained by the Drury Lane singing coach, INCLEDON, at piano.

INT. ON STAGE -- DAY

INCLEDON is replaced by D'EGVILLE, the dance instructor, teaching Nine Year Old Kean.

INT. ON STAGE -- DAY

D'Egville is replaced by ANGELO, the fencing master, showing the correct use of foil and saber.

INT. STAGE -- DAY

Angelo is replaced by CARTER, the pantomimist, showing Nine Year Old Kean flips and tumbles.

EXT. STREET OUTSIDE AUNT TID'S HOUSE -- DAY

Nance, accompanied by KEAN'S YOUNGER HALF-BROTHER and SISTER, waits by the door. She appears sober and repentant. A now greying Aunt Tid opens the door and looks solemnly down at them. ELEVEN YEAR OLD KEAN appears in the doorway, carrying a satchel. Aunt Tid kisses him

tenderly and propels him forward. Nance nods her thanks, but Aunt Tid glares. Nance leads her three children up the street, Kean looking sadly back to his Aunt Tid.

EXT. VILLAGE FAIR -- DAY

Dressed as Harlequin, Eleven Year Old Kean performs tumbles for a crowd of PEASANTS, while Nance and Kean's half-Brother and Sister are background players.

INT. FINE DINING ROOM -- NIGHT

An aristocratic dinner party. Eleven Year Old Kean, dressed as a young gentleman, recites verse for a dinner party of ARISTOCRATS. The door to the dining room is slightly ajar, and Nance, peeping through, watches intently. As the recitation finishes Aristocrats burst into applause. Nance grins smugly.

INT. COVENT GARDEN STAGE -- NIGHT

FIFTEEN YEAR OLD KEAN performs to a LARGE AUDIENCE, which applauds enthusiastically. Nance, offstage, is having money counted into her hand by a THEATER MANAGER. Fifteen Year Old Kean comes off stage, only to see his mother pocketing the large wad of notes into her purse. As she turns, he pretends he has not seen. Nance hides the purse behind her back and comes over to hug him. As Kean's face appears above her shoulder, he looks down at the purse, then resentfully at his mother.

EXT. A BACKSTREET -- DAWN

Fifteen Year Old Kean exits stealthily from a doorway. He places his belongings into a small barrow and wheels it away.

EXT. SLUM STREETS -- DAWN

Kean pulls the barrow through wet, deserted streets.

EXT. A COUNTRY ROAD -- MORNING

Kean walks through beautiful countryside, pulling the barrow. He grins and pulls harder, now full of eager anticipation.

END OPENING CREDITS

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM -- DAY

Full screen: A white lit projection screen - a screening has just finished. EXECUTIVES sit around a conference table. The STUDIO HEAD stands up at the head of the table. Executives swivel toward him.

A bowl of nuts. Fingers scoop some up.

Studio Head pops a nut and chews, looking thoughtfully around the room. He suddenly stops chewing. His eyes have fallen on a garishly decorated riding boot resting against the table edge, at complete odds with the business setting. A slow puff of smoke rolls out across the boot, exhaled by the screenwriter, BECK (OS). Studio Head drags his eyes away to look at the Executive opposite Beck - JACK MASON.

STUDIO HEAD

Jack?

MASON

It's great... No, brilliant. He's shown Kean's entire childhood in the opening credits. We've got the rest of the film for his life, Kean the man.
(to Beck) It's good.

A slow puff of smoke rolls past the boot.

STUDIO HEAD

Will?

The man beyond MASON leans forward.

WILL

Yeah...Yeah, it works.

STUDIO HEAD

Anyone?

Studio Head moves to the curtains, chewing. After a moment, he shakes his head. An angry stream of smoke shoots past Beck's boot.

STUDIO HEAD

What if you're five minutes late?
What if you're still getting comfortable or the couple in the next row are still talking 'cause they don't think the movie's really started?

Studio Head shakes his head and paces.

Every man in this room is here 'cause he fought his way here. We all clawed with our hands and our fingers and nails and we fucked people three times over and we got here because we wanted to be here.

He relaxes, pops a nut.

STUDIO HEAD

What I want to know is, what was it to begin with that made Kean want to be the greatest actor on the British stage? Not just in life...in death. I want insight up front, something so I can say, ah, I know where we're going from here.

Beck intrudes into frame. He has long, unkempt hair, a thick mustache, a cigarette dangling from his lips. He drags heavily and looks about as if surrounded by idiots. There is a drink in his hand. He drops the cigarette in and studies it. Everyone watches. Suddenly he throws the drink into Jack Mason's face.

BECK (imitating Studio Head)
Anyone?

STUDIO HEAD

You'd better have a good...

BECK

I get shocked...when I see you suits fuck over a business partner, like you were just wiping your ass, or when you fuck up art, and say, that's okay, we got the money...What I just did, Kean did all the time. I know him...

Mason begins to object...

BECK

That was the start you told me to write. Now get the fuck out of my way and let me do my job.

All are indignant, but the Studio Head is comforted.

INT. AUNT TID'S HOUSE -- DAY

Across a small bed, SEVEN YEAR OLD KEAN is viciously beaten with a cane.

KEAN

No daddy! Daddy! Daddy! Daddy!
Please, Daddy!

Aaron, drunk and hysterical, is beating him.

AARON

You killed him! It was you! You! You!
You killed my brother! You broke his
poor heart with your trouble!

Aaron breaks off the beating. He turns.

AARON

My brother...my...my...brother.

He staggers across the room and collapses onto the corpse of Moses lying across a table. He sobs against his chest, crying with all his heart.

KEAN (crying, barely able to speak)

Daddy...It was his...his chest...He said
he had a p..pain...

He crosses the room and hugs his father's leg.

KEAN

Daddy. I didn't...I didn't...

Aaron screams and runs from the room.

KEAN

Daddy!...Daddy!

EXT. STREET -- DAY

Kean staggers into the street, crying hysterically.

KEAN

Daddy!...Daddy!

He looks about but cannot see him. He looks up, sees him.

KEAN

Daddy!

Aaron is on the roof edge of a house.

AARON

You don't understand do you, boy?!
You don't understand!

KEAN

Daddy come back!

AARON

You're nothing! Nothing! You hear?!
Your mother a whore and your father
a drunk! You're nothing!! Nothing!!!

He throws himself off the roof. Aaron's head hits the cobblestone street. Young Kean gasps. He stands breathless, the shock too great.

KEAN (screaming)

Daddy!...Daddy!!

He looks around at the PEOPLE who have gathered. He holds out his little arms. No one aids him.

INT. BOARDROOM -- DAY

There are tears in the Studio Head's eyes.

A lazy pall of smoke drifts out across the boot.

The Studio Head nods slightly, conceding.

EXT. HEATHROW AIRPORT -- DAY

Noise. Through the terminus window the giant tail of an American airline jet moves majestically by as inside a thick crowd of FANS and REPORTERS jostle their way to the V.I.P. lounge.

Boarding doors burst open. Amid camera flashes, sun lamps, and eruptions of surprise NICK LATHURO is propelled across the hall and into the VIP lounge. Allusive to a prize fighter being led out to the ring - head down, one hand resting on the back of a bodyguard - Lathuro appears diminutive within the enclosure of hired muscle. In the chaotic jostle devotees glimpse him, some voicing surprise that he looks old and short.

INT. MR. ARTHUR'S HOUSE/BEDROOM -- DAY

Abrupt silence. Stillness. A few birds twitter. MR. ARTHUR sleeps peacefully. He yawns gracefully, awakening.

INT. SECURITY LOUNGE -- DAY

Noise, commotion. A press conference in rapid assemblage. Lathuro takes his seat, along with his manager-companion, TONY, and the film's producer, Jack Mason. A PR MAN orders the microphones REPORTERS jam onto a table in front of Lathuro.

BACK TO: MR. ARTHUR'S HOUSE/BEDROOM

Slippers, neatly by the bed. Mr. Arthur's feet fall into them. He stands, reaches for his robe.

INT. MR. ARTHUR'S KITCHEN -- DAY

Boiling water is poured into a teapot. SFX: Cat meow. The back door is opened. A moggy enters.

INT. MR. ARTHUR'S OFFICE/DEN -- DAY

A needle is dropped onto a record, spinning on an old fashioned turntable. It is our THEME MUSIC.

INT. MR. ARTHUR'S HOUSE. FRONT HALL -- DAY

THEME MUSIC continues softer, coming from the office. Drinking his cup of tea from an oversize chinabone tea cup, Mr. Arthur looks out the window. MRS. CARMICHAEL, next door, potters in her front garden. The POSTMAN, riding an official bicycle, stops at Mr. Arthur's letter box and drops in some mail. He blows a whistle. Mr. Arthur cooes with pleasant surprise.

INT. TV. CONTROL VAN -- DAY

On a monitor - There is rapid zooming on Lathuro's face, the image constantly dipping in and out of focus and always badly framed.

DIRECTOR (OS)

(smoking)

C'mon c'mon c'mon, frame him!

Who is that idiot?

The shot suddenly whips away.

DIRECTOR

What the fuck?!

INT. PRESS LOUNGE -- DAY

TV CAMERAMAN

Piss off!

He pushes REPORTER 1 in the face. Reporter 1 pushes back.

BACK TO: CONTROL VAN

DIRECTOR

What brand's he smoke?

Via monitors another camera zooms in on Lathuro having his cigarette lit. The images on the accompanying monitor are crazy - revealing the brawl with the Reporter.

FEMALE PRODUCTION ASSISTANT (OS)
Looks like Camel.

DIRECTOR
(in a cloud of smoke)
How can he smoke that shit.

Small cough.

EXT. MR. ARTHUR'S FRONT PATH -- DAY

Mr. Arthur walks back to the house, holding a letter up to the sun, trying to discern its contents.

MRS. CARMICHAEL
You know, Mr. Arthur, you can easily tell what's inside if you open it.

MR. ARTHUR
Ha ha. Quite so. Quite so.

He chuckles far too pleasantly.

BACK TO: CONTROL VAN

ECU monitor as CAMERA zooms in on Lathuro.

REPORTER 2
You want to tell us why you, an American, feel you have the right to play our greatest tragedian actor?

BACK TO: SECURITY LOUNGE

Camera tightens on Lathuro dragging on his smoke.

LATHURO
Well it's my understanding he was the first non-tragedian, that's why he's so special.

REPORTER 2
Yes, but he's English and...you're not.

LATHURO
...Long answer short?...We got the money.

Some laughter.

BACK TO: CONTROL VAN

DIRECTOR

Oh, very droll. Arrogant prick. Two,
pick up fat boy on his right...

On a monitor camera quickly zooms in on Jack Mason.

DIRECTOR

...his right, stupid. Who is that
prick?

PRODUCTION ASSISTANT

Paul Thompson.

DIRECTOR (exploding)

Not the cameraman! The fat prick!

EXT. AIRPORT -- DAY

Lathuro, between Security men, fights his way to a limo. Tony flings
the door open, hitting a GIRL in the face.

INTERCUT:

SAME IMAGES ON TV MONITORS.

EXT. LIMO INT, MOVING -- DAY

Tony gorges on the courtesy bar, popping nuts, splitting caps, tugging
ring pulls.

TONY

So much for worrying about your English fans.

LATHURO

You brained one with the door.

TONY

(licking his finger to mark an invisible score)
Thirty-two and it ain't even June. You
know I heard you can die drinking from
unwashed cans. They got rat's piss on 'em.
And most people drop their ring pull
back in. I never do that.

Tossing a ring pull aside.

LATHURO

There's a trash bag, you lazy fuck.

TONY

Rats piss is deadly poison, you know.
Here, want a scotch?

He suddenly realizes he's made a huge mistake.

TONY

Oh shit, I'm sorry. I forgot. I'm sorry.

LATHURO

Yeah well, fuck you, Tony.

TONY

I'm sorry! It was...it was...

INT. MR. ARTHUR'S HOUSE. OFFICE/DEN -- DAY

An envelope is being dissected with an expensive letter opener. Mr. Arthur, smoking (cigarette holder) extracts a letter with a check attached. Wearing spectacles, he reads. He takes the check and via a magnifying glass the numbers are revealed - a five with four zeros. Mr. Arthur gasps with delight.

INT. HOTEL. NICK LATHURO'S SUITE -- DAY

Lathuro is on a couch opposite Tony. There are a half-dozen ASSISTANTS in the room. They're busy, talking rapidly, sometimes walking through frame. Tony refers to a folder.

TONY (confidentially)

You got a press conference, eight a.m....

LATHURO

Eight? I don't take a fuckin' leak by eight.

TONY

"Breakfast TV" BBC. Then you got BBC
Radio 1 at 9. We got to be at that
researcher's place by 11.

ASSISTANT 1 (English yuppie)
Hey Nick, want a drink?

LATHURO

Why the fuck I got to go to his
place? He can come here.

TONY

Well, you see he's some sort of...

ASSISTANT 1

(leaning in)

Nick. Drink?

LATHURO

Yeah. Coke.

TONY

(lighting Lathuro's smoke)

He's eccentric, you know, English. But he's a Kean genius. He's keen on Kean.

LATHURO

Yeah, but why me to him, looks bad.

He is handed the drink.

TONY

Well, he won't come to town. You know, studious type.

LATHURO

That don't look good. You realize that.

He sips the drink.

TONY

Well, maybe I could...

LATHURO

Hey, s'got scotch in it.

TONY

Oh, bullshit.

LATHURO

Hey, you. Hey, you! This's got scotch in it.

TONY

Hey, you don't give him scotch! Alright?! Alright?!

ASSISTANT 1 (scared)

I read it was your drink. Scotch and coke.

LATHURO

Hey you never, you never...

TONY

(overlapping, half-standing)
You never never never give him
drinks without my say so!
Alright?! Alright?!!

ASSISTANT 1 and the others stand stunned. Tony and Lathuro turn back to each other, immediately casual.

LATHURO

Who is that guy?

TONY

I don't know. Someone. Oh, here,
got you this book. Supposed to
be real good.

Lathuro examines the book. Tony picks up the scotch, half stands.

TONY

I'll ditch this.

LATHURO

(not looking up)
No, leave it.

(beat)

TONY

Hey do you think, you know, you sure...?

LATHURO

(reading)
Already tasted it.

INT. HOTEL. NICK LATHURO'S SUITE -- NIGHT

The scotch bottle is all but empty. Lathuro is alone, slouched in the same spot, reading the book. He's barely conscious he's so drunk. His head sinks back. He's out.

INT. TAVERN -- NIGHT

Lathuro's black hair, collapsed over a wooden table. MESSENGER BOY'S hand enters frame and shakes him.

MESSENGER BOY

Sir...Please, sir.

Lathuro, now KEAN, looks up, very drunk.

MESSENGER BOY

Sir, Mister Hughes sends his regards,
and requests you be prompt on time for
this evening's performance.

KEAN (hoarse)

(looking around!)

Pen!...Landlord!...Pen!

INT. THEATER BACKSTAGE -- NIGHT

HUGHES opens a note. The Messenger Boy stands before him.

HUGHES

"King Charles has been beheaded
on his way to the theatre"?

He looks up. The note is plucked from his hand by ACTRESS 1 (dressing
after dalliance with Hughes). She reads it.

ACTRESS 1

What's that mean?

HUGHES

Oh. Oh, no.

ACTRESS 1

That mean he's not coming?

HUGHES

Oh, my God my God my God!...Oh, my God!

ACTRESS 1

Well...Who'll play Charles?...
Can you?...You can't play Charles.

HUGHES

Ohhh!...Oh, my God!

INT. THEATER. PLAY IN PROGRESS -- NIGHT

Hughes is stumbling badly through his role as CHARLES (William
Diamond's "The Royal Oak").

HUGHES

And..It reminds me of a forest, filled
with...with...the dried leaves of autumn.
Strewn about the place like...strewn
hither and thither...

Kean enters a private box in the theatre. He is completely drunk. He sits and studies the play with an attempt at sober scrutiny.

HUGHES

...like dragon's scales shed from a
winter's coat...And then, when the
horses gallop through them, it sounds
like a splashing in a stream.

KEAN (genuinely supportive)
Oh well done, my boy, well done.

Hughes looks up and sees who it is. He is furious.

HUGHES

Poetry...poetry of these things does not
rest easy upon my lips.

KEAN

Oh, yes. Yes. Yes. Very well done.

He stands and applauds. Hughes is furious. Kean begins to lean on a rail but falls suddenly from view.

EXT. THE DOCKS. GUERNSEY -- MORNING

MARY (Kean's wife) moves into frame. Great anguish on her face.

MARY

Oh...

She rushes forward.

A ferry boat is well out into the bay. There is a sign over the jetty:
"GUERNSEY FERRY SERVICE". Mary rushes to the dockside.

MARY

(breaking into tears)
No! Please! Don't leave us! Please!
Oh, please!

INTERCUT:

EXT. FERRY, BAY, GUERNSEY -- MORNING

Among the people on the boat are Hughes and Actress 1.

MARY

How shall we get back?! How shall
we get back?!

Hughes does not react.

Mary is calling something, but cannot be heard.

MARY

What's to become of us?!

Hughes turns his back. Mary completely breaks down.

MARY

What's to become of us?! What's to
Become...? Don't leave...don't...
please....

INT. POOR ONE ROOM LODGINGS -- DAY

Mary enters, her face drawn, exhausted, forsaken. Her young children, HOWARD (3) and CHARLES (2) are on a mattress on the floor. They cough and look ill. Kean's head is over the bed edge, neck craned, roaring a snore. Mary sits. She watches him, feeling destroyed.

EXT. MR. ARTHUR'S HOUSE -- DAY

A limo is in the street. Lathuro, badly hungover, meanders toward the front door. Soft THEME MUSIC plays under. Lathuro's hand rings a small sea bell, which stabs his brain painfully.

INT/EXT. MR. ARTHUR'S HOUSE -- DAY

The door opens. Lathuro looks up at Mr. Arthur. THEME MUSIC is coming from the record player inside.

MR. ARTHUR

Oh, how do you do. You must be
Mr. Lathuro.

LATHURO

Lathuro. What, you don't even
know how to say my fucking name?

MR. ARTHUR

Well, I doubt you even know my name.

Lathuro stares, not knowing his name.

MR. ARTHUR
Love to say fuck, don't you, you
Americans?

LATHURO
(shrugging)
S'way we speak. Earthy.

MR. ARTHUR
Although of course another word for
earth is dirt.

He goes inside, indicating Lathuro should follow, which he begrudgingly does.

EXT. LIMO INT, TRAVELING -- DAY

Lathuro changes into a Shakespearean style shirt.

LATHURO
And I said, "That's it? That's all
you know?" And he said, "My dear
boy, I've never met the man!"

TONY
Fuck no.

EXT. SIDEWALK -- DAY

A PHOTOGRAPHER snaps pictures of the car going by. (Photographer never seen, just his POV.)

SFX: HIGH SPEED CAMERA SHUTTER.

FREEZE FRAMES. Several shots in quick succession showing Lathuro in the back, his shirt coming off, Tony watching.

BACK TO: LIMO INT, TRAVELING

LATHURO
So I said, "Look asshole, the studio
paid you fifty g's, pounds I might add,
to brief me, didn't they?" He said, "Oh
you mean this?" and he opens a drawer,
takes out the check and says, "I didn't
sign any contract."

TONY
What?! What an asshole!

LATHURO

Yeah, but get this, he...

The phone rings. Tony picks up but just holds it, covering the mouthpiece, waiting for Lathuro to finish.

LATHURO

He says, "My boy, I don't think it's a very good idea you play Kean." Then he tears up the check.

TONY

Tore it up?! Fifty thousand pounds?!

LATHURO

Tore it up.

TONY

Fuck no. What an asshole! (Into the phone) Yeah?! Yeah...yeah, hang on, Billy. (offering the phone) It's your hairdresser.

LATHURO

(Lathuro signals Tony cigarettes, Tony lights one)
Yeah, Billy, how's it going?...Oh, yeah...Yeah.

He wrings his face and Tony gives him the cigarette.

LATHURO

Okay. Don't worry. I'll fix it.
No, don't worry.

He hands the phone back to Tony, who hangs it up.

Get onto the studio, if I don't have my hairdresser on set I'm on the plane. Make sure about the others too. I want my make-up artist, my doctor, my chiro, my masseur and my secretary.

TONY

Right.

The car pulls to the curb.

LATHURO

(getting out)

And I don't want nothing shitty. I want The Hilton or The Dorchester, got that?

TONY

Yeah.

LATHURO

(looking around)

Tony

TONY

Yeah?

LATHURO

What am I doing here?

TONY

(leaning across)

Fencing.

INT. FENCING STUDIO -- DAY

Lathuro catches a foil.

RICHARDS

You've been trained Mr. Lathuro?

LATHURO

Yeah.

RICHARDS swipes the foil out of his hand as he goes by.

RICHARDS

Not very well I see.

LATHURO

(picking up the foil)

Wasn't ready.

RICHARDS

Ready now, Mister Lathuro?

LATHURO

Don't we get masks or something?

Richards attacks.

INT. LONG BARRACKS ROOM (OR EQUIVALENT SETTING) -- DAY

Richards, now LT. GRATTEN, completes the attack. Lathuro, now Kean, meets it. They are covered in sweat. There are a half dozen of Gratten's fellow OFFICERS watching with interest. Kean is a master

with the foil. Eventually, after a furious battle, Kean scores a hit to Gratten's chest. The Officers applaud loudly.

GRATTEN

Well done, Edmund. Gentlemen, I give you the champion!

Kean salutes them. As the applause dies away...

HOLDSWORTH

It's one thing to fight with toys and win, another to fight with a weapon.

A big man, scarred heavily across the face. He's a seasoned soldier. He throws Kean a saber.

GRATTEN

Oh come come, Holdsworth. He's beaten three. Would you fight an exhausted man?!

HOLDSWORTH

He's warmed, not exhausted.

The Officers feel he has a point and look to Kean for a reply. Kean and Gratten exchange a look, Gratten's look urging him not to take the bait. Kean throws the saber. It sticks into a beam.

HOLDSWORTH

Ha. You should keep your actor friends away from men, Gratten. There's a world between acting brave and being it.

KEAN

It's not for courage I won't fight. It's for my art.

The Officers are momentarily stunned, then burst out laughing. Angry and humiliated, Kean leaves.

EXT. ARMY BASE -- DAY

Kean strides from the barracks.

GRATTEN (OS)

Edmund!

Kean looks back. Gratten is at the barrack's door. He holds up his hand. Kean hesitates, and waves back.

Kean rounds the corner of a building. In a sudden rage he smashes a stool against a wall, then finds a stone. He hurls it with all his strength.

EXT. LAKESIDE BY A TREE -- DAY

The stone hits the water. Circles radiate out.

JENNY (VO)

"In 1811, Kean's second son was born. Like Harry, who had been named after the family name of the Duke of Norfolk, this son was named Charles, after the Duke himself.

Seen from some distance across the Lake, Lathuro wanders up and down, throwing stones while JENNY (Mary) sits under a tree, reading from the book on Kean.

JENNY (VO)

"With the birth of his second child Kean was more determined than ever to succeed. He often spoke to Mary of the great things he would achieve. That she would live in a fine house, mix with the highest gentry, and that their sons would go to Eton. For was not Kean the bastard son of the Duke of Norfolk? But Mary was sick with worry over the fate of herself and her children. She urged her husband to give up his profession, and find reliable employment.

Lathuro laughs derisively, and Jenny notes it.

EXT. DIFFERENT ANGLE, LAKESIDE -- DAY

Telephoto lens FX. FULL ZOOM is manually adjusted from a huge distance out, to encompass Lathuro and Jenny. Focus is adjusted. As this happens...

JENNY (VO)

Desperately Kean demanded a raise from his employer, Cherry, but was refused. Feeling his life would be forever wasted in the provinces, and tainted with the label of an

JENNY (VO) (Cont'd)
old child prodigy, Kean quit Cherry's
company and set off for London.

SFX: A LS snapshot of Lathuro and Jenny is taken. FREEZE FRAME.

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD -- DAY

Raining heavily. Kean and Mary strain to push a cart piled with belongings up a large hill. Their two boys are strapped on top, crying.

JENNY (VO)
They traveled through Dumfries,
Annan, Carlisle, Penrith and Appleby.
By the time they reached York,
however, they were exhausted,
penniless, and near starvation.

Mary stumbles and falls. Kean, unable to push the cart alone, drops the handles and leans against it.

INT. THEATER -- NIGHT

JENNY (VO)
Kean, though, was lucky enough to find
employment that night.

A tall, overweight woman lies onstage. She wears a bad, blonde, plaited wig. Kean enters as in stealth.

JENNY (VO)
He was cast as Alonzo the Brave, opposite
Mrs. Watson, the theatre manager's wife.
She was playing the beautiful Imogene.

ALONZO: Imogene.

IMOGENE: What? Who is there? Oh prithee if you are a demon in my mind then take me quickly to madness, as I would not suffer the fate that seems upon me.

ALONZO: Fear not my love. 'Tis I. Alonzo the Brave.

MACREADY (as a young man) (later a rival to Kean) sits in a private box. His expression is horrified amusement.

IMOGENE: Alonzo! My love! My love!

ALONZO: Oh please, still thy trembling breast.

Kean can't help glancing at her huge heaving bosom.

ALONZO: Lest we be discovered and destroyed and our
 love nipped in its virgin bud.

There is a ribald guffaw from the pit.

ALONZO: Come.

He attempts to help her up. But fails.

ALONZO: Come.

He heaves, straining. The AUDIENCE begins to laugh.

 MACREADY (laughing)
 (to his SISTER alongside)
 Oh, this is too much to bear.

Kean wrestles her to her feet. He is startled as she towers over him. The Audience laughs. SOLDIERS enter.

SOLDIER 1: What ho! A foul fox sporting with our dove!

ALONZO: (drawing his sword) What ho! Shelter behind my broad back
 my love, lest your fair flesh be pricked by their steel.

TOADIE IN THE PIT: Yes watch out for the prick of steel!

As the audience laughs Alonzo fights the soldiers off, Imogene doing her best to hide her vast bulk behind him.

INT. THEATER -- NIGHT

 JENNY (VO)
 With the money from his wage Kean
 organized a benefit.

[A] Kean is playing the role of the hero.

 JENNY (VO)
 In a single night he played the
 hero in Hannah More's popular
 tragedy, "Percy".

[B] Kean walks a tight-rope.

 JENNY (VO)
 Gave a demonstration of tight-rope
 walking,

[C] Kean fights a big, PROFESSIONAL PUGILIST.

JENNY (VO)
sparred with a professional pugilist,

[D] Kean sings. Upstage is Mary, accompanying on a lute.

JENNY (VO)
sang several songs,

[E] Kean races about, dressed in a bad monkey suit.

JENNY (VO)
and played Chimpanzee the monkey in the
melodramatic pantomime, "Perouse."

INT. DRESSING ROOM -- NIGHT

Mary is in the dressing room, waiting. Kean in the monkey suit,
puffing and happy, enters. He has a leather purse.

MARY
How much?

KEAN
I think seven pounds.

He tips out the purse and they count the coins out loud.

MARY
(I have) Four pound seven and threepence
ha'penny farthing.

KEAN
I've got two pound eight and seven. How
much is that? That's...

MARY
Six pounds fifteen and ten ha'penny farthing.

KEAN
How do you add so fast?

MARY
I'm a wife. I'll tend the boys. Don't
be long now.

KEAN
(putting the money back)
No.

MARY
Edmund. You won't be long will you?

KEAN (innocent)
No.

INT. TAVERN -- NIGHT

Kean is terribly drunk, still dressed in his monkey suit. He is singing a funny ribald song for the other DRINKERS, and lurching about the room, a bottle in his hand. The tavern is full of raucous people, drinkers and WENCHES. Kean grabs WENCH 1.

KEAN
Drinks for my friends!

He throws a handful of coins in the air. He and Wench 1 lurch drunkenly up some stairs.

INT. TAVERN BEDROOM -- NIGHT

Kean and Wench 1 burst into the room.

KEAN
C'mon! Give us a look at 'em!

He rips open her blouse, exposing ample breasts.

KEAN
Oh, Jesus, Mumma!

They laugh and he buries his face in her as they fall across the bed.

WENCH 1
Paaw! Those skins smell barely dead!

KEAN
They are! I killed my landlord's
dog this morning!

They roar with laughter.

EXT. LAKESIDE BY A TREE -- DAY

The book Jenny holds is lifted from her hands. Lathuro looms above.

JENNY (dutifully)
Let me guess.

Jenny's face is forced hard against the tree. She gasps. Lathuro is behind her, standing. Jenny begins to rock rhythmically as he pushes into her.

EXT. DIFFERENT ANGLE, LAKESIDE -- DAY

Lathuro and Jenny are naked from the waists down. A series of rapid FREEZE FRAME SNAPSHOTS appear, as seen through the reflex lens, along with accompanying SFX.

CAMERAMAN (VO)
Coooooor...Ooooooh...Lucky bastard.

BACK TO: LAKESIDE BY A TREE

Jenny's face is pressed hard against the rough bark of the tree. Lathuro is making animal sounds. He climaxes. Slowly, he withdraws, panting. For Jenny it has been less than wonderful.

EXT. CAR INT, TRAVELING -- DAY

A high performance car. DRIVER'S POV: Hurtling down a country road lined with hedges.

JENNY (VO)
"In Guernsey Kean was penniless,
and the company left him behind.
To raise money he arranged a recital.
Even three year old Howard performed.

INT. OLD HALL -- NIGHT

The Kean family behind him, HOWARD is reciting.

JENNY (VO)
Because of the wretched condition
of the family, the Governor of the
Island, Sir John Doyle, put the
recital under his patronage."

The GOVERNOR and AUDIENCE politely applaud young Howard.

EXT. CAR INT, TRAVELING -- DAY

Speeding.

LATHURO (OS)
I'm not getting anywhere.

Jenny, her knees against the dash, shifts nervously.

JENNY
You can't drive this fast in England.

LATHURO
Kean tries to get an audition in London. He fails. Goes back to the provinces. He tours. Tries to get an audition in London. He fails.

JENNY
Its the hedges. You can't see what's coming.

LATHURO
But what is he? What is the man? What is the character? What is the mind? The mind?!

Jenny gasps.

A car on their right.

Lathuro swerves.

EXT. 'T' JUNCTION INTERSECTION, THE COUNTRY -- DAY

The car clips a tree, spins, flips and rolls several times. It comes to rest upside down.

EXT. INVERTED CAR INT. -- DAY

They are suspended by their seat belts. Lathuro whines strangely, recovering from the shock. Eventually, he looks at Jenny. She looks back, then looks out the window, shaking her head in disgust.

INT. MR. ARTHUR'S HOUSE. OFFICE -- NIGHT

MR. ARTHUR
Tea?

Lathuro is seated. There is a Band-Aid on his forehead.

LATHURO
Yeah, that'd be nice.

MR. ARTHUR

(exiting)

I've just made a pot. Shan't be long.

Mr. Arthur exits. Lathuro takes out a cigarette. He slaps his pockets, looking for a light. He stands and checks the top of the desk. He opens the top drawer. As he sorts through items he suddenly freezes. He lifts out a check. It is made out for £50,000. Lathuro looks toward the door, thinking. He replaces the check, closes the drawer and finds a waste paper basket. He rummages and produces two pieces of a torn check and assembles them. The check is blank. He hears Mr. Arthur coming and drops the pieces into the basket, crosses to his chair and sits.

MR. ARTHUR

Now, let me be mother.

He shuffles with a tray to the desk and cocks his head.

LATHURO

White. No sugar. Got a light?

MR. ARTHUR

No. Sorry, I don't allow smoking
in here.

Lathuro notices Mr. Arthur's cigarette holder in an ashtray. Mr. Arthur approaches him with the cup.

LATHURO

(making no effort to take it)
Sorry. Can I change that and have
one sugar?

MR. ARTHUR (hesitating)

Certainly.

He crosses back, sugars the tea and approaches once more.

LATHURO

Perhaps just a little more milk. Looks
torpid.

MR. ARTHUR (hesitating longer)

Torpid.

He crosses back and adds milk. He looks at Lathuro, questioning if there is anything else. Lathuro grins. Mr. Arthur approaches.

LATHURO
(making no effort to take it)
What sort of tea is that?

MR. ARTHUR
Earl Grey.

LATHURO
Oh, I'm sorry, don't like Earl
Grey. Got any coffee?

MR. ARTHUR (stiffening)
No, I don't have any coffee. It is an
abomination! An American abomination!

LATHURO
What about cigarettes? That's an
American abomination. Or are those
tea stains on your teeth?

MR. ARTHUR
Your powers of observation are
inestimable.

LATHURO
Yeah. I can see a sneer across
Salisbury Plain.

MR. ARTHUR (mock gasp)
Oh, we have done our research!

LATHURO
Yeah, I'm learning. But you're
going to teach me what no one
else knows.

Mr. Arthur returns Lathuro's cup to the tray.

MR. ARTHUR
Mr. Lathuro. I believe I'm going
to ask you to leave.

LATHURO
I got, oh, fifteen, twenty million
in the bank. The studio, well the
studio has...

MR. ARTHUR
Please, money doesn't...

LATHURO

Do you have any idea of the kind of joint suit we can bring against you?

Mr. Arthur freezes.

MR. ARTHUR

There was no contract.

LATHURO

Professor William Stant of Cambridge University recommended you to Fiona Thomas, head of production. She wrote to you, you replied in the affirmative. That's a letter of agreement. Both letters are on file, I checked, and testimony from Professor Stant is a formality. A check was issued to you for 50k. Payment. You're going to cash that check when production starts, thinking it won't be noticed. That's breach of contract, one, fraud, two.

A look of sudden, great, and utterly ingenuine hospitality comes to Mr. Arthur's face.

MR. ARTHUR

My dear boy, what would you care to know?

Lathuro crosses to him.

LATHURO

For a start, why you're against me playing Kean?

MR. ARTHUR (sympathetically)
Well you see, my dear chap, you're not British. And worse, you're a wop.

LATHURO

So's Prince Philip.

MR. ARTHUR

Ah, but he has breeding. One must never overlook breeding. (patting Lathuro's arm) I'm sorry, but there it is.

LATHURO

We start tomorrow.

He exits. Mr. Arthur holds his expression until he hears the front door shut. The expression changes to a grin, supplying the mental comment via his expression - 'Perhaps he could play Kean.' He crosses to the desk, opens the top drawer. He takes out the check and studies it. A smile comes slowly to his lips. He laughs, and moving about the room, laughs more fully.

MR. ARTHUR
Letters of agreement!

EXT. COUNTRY TOWN. POST OFFICE -- DAY

Mr. Arthur's laugh carries over and fades...Kean exits from a Post Office, opening an envelope as he walks.

AUNT TID (VO)
My dear Eddie, I have of late received an advice from a Mr. Robert William Elliston, of the Olympic Theater, Wych Street, offering you the position of 'Acting Manager'. He offers you three guineas per week, and your choice of parts. As you know, at the Olympic you are not permitted to play the tragedian...

Kean stops and looks up. He looks back at the letter, and reads on, moving off, slower.

AUNT TID (VO) (Cont'd)
...and I know that will upset you. It will mean of course that you can never play Drury Lane or Covent Garden if you accept. I'm sorry I know how long you have suffered waiting your chance to trial as tragedian. Much love to you and yours, Aunt Tid.

INT. A HUMBLE COTTAGE. MAIN ROOM -- DAY

The letter is lowered by Mary. As the scene progresses, young Howard coughs in the next room (whooping cough). Mary looks at Kean, concerned.

MARY
Will you take it?

Kean is evasive, troubled. He moves away.

MARY

I know what it means to you.

KEAN

Do you.

He turns away. Mary lowers her head and cries silently.

KEAN

There's still the Taunton Tour.
I told Mr. Lee I'd do it.

He sees Mary crying.

KEAN

Oh, Mary.

MARY

I'm tired. Dragging two small children
about. Never having medicine. Never
knowing if there'll be food.

KEAN

Oh, Mary...

MARY

And you with your dreams, and
your drinking, and your wenches,
and your stupid Shakespeare!

Howard is coughing fitfully. Mary rushes into the bedroom. Howard (4 y.o.) sits up, convulsing. She tries to comfort him, giving him her apron to cough into. Kean crosses to the bedroom door. She turns, tears streaming down her face.

MARY

For pity's sake.

A look of sad acceptance comes to Kean's face.

INT. COTTAGE -- NIGHT

Kean writes a letter.

KEAN (VO)

I therefore accept your kind offer.
My stay here is for three weeks. In
consequence I hope to hear from you
immediately so that I might make
preparation. Your obedient and
grateful servant.

He looks at the letter, sighs softly, re-inks his pen, and hesitates...

KEAN

Edmund Kean.

He does not sign, but looks at the letter, considering.

INT. COMMITTEE ROOM -- DRURY LANE

A bowl of nuts. Fingers scoop some out and carry them to the mouth of WHITBREAD (Studio Head), heading the Drury Lane Committee. They are seated round a large table.

WHITBREAD

It's very simple. We have Liston, Munden, first rate comics, but who do we have as a tragedian? Covent Garden has Kemble and Young. The figures gentlemen, the figures. Drury Lane languishes but for want of a great tragedian. Mr. Arnold?

MR. ARNOLD (Jack Mason)

There is this chap. A friend of mine spotted him in the provinces. Edmund Kean. He's playing Dorchester. Octavian in "The Mountaineers". My friend says he's just the ticket.

Lord Byron (Beck) lurches drunkenly into the room.

BYRON

Gentlemen! Apologies, apologies, apologies! My pursuit of the dainty sex has yet again impinged on my duty to comrades.

WHITBREAD

That's alright, Byron, our business is concluded.

He and Arnold exchange a nod of understanding.

INT. COTTAGE, BEDROOM -- DUSK

CLOSE UP: Kean's inverted chin, two eyes drawn upon it, wearing a child's sock as a hat. A handkerchief covers his face from the mouth down. His lips are cherry red.

KEAN

What ho! said the farmer, fetch
me my knife and I'll cut off the
rat's head!

His hand (right way up) suddenly appears with a fork (his arms are through the sleeves of a dark cardigan, thereby obscuring everything but the hands). The children laugh. Howard and Charles are watching the performance sitting on the floor at the end of the bed. Howard is very pale.

KEAN

That's not my knife, you fool, but
my pitchfork! Oh no, pleaded the rat.
Would you would drown me, farmer, than
skewer me with that vile tool!
Very well, shouted the farmer!
(tossing the fork away) My aim is
to please, drowning it is!

His other hand appears, (arms crossed behind his chin and hands extended past it) and reach forward to strangle. He fills his mouth with saliva and speaks with a gargle.

KEAN

Oh dear, said the rat, did I
say drowning?!

There is the sound of a door closing OS.

KEAN

What's that? said the farmer,
this is your lucky day, cursed
rat. My wife is just home, and she
is partial to vermin. I should know,
she is my greatest admirer!

He pokes out his tongue and laughs manically. Howard and Charles laugh. Kean gets up quickly and kisses Howard.

KEAN

There, see, Howey? You're better
than you think.

INT. COTTAGE. MAIN ROOM -- DUSK

Kean enters from the bedroom. Mary drops a food basket on the table.

MARY

Was that him laughing? Huh, you're
a wonder. How did you manage that?

Kean kisses her hard, leaving cherry lips over her own.

KEAN

(wiping the eyes off his chin)
Being a rat.

MARY

Well better a rat than a dormouse.
There's post.

She hands him a letter as she moves to the kitchen. Kean opens it and reads.

MARY (OS laughing)

Oh Edmund, look what you've done!
I've got orange lips all over me.
And you know, I know you, you
wouldn't have told me.

Kean's face has grown sad reading the letter. Mary appears, smiling, wiping the marks off.

MARY

You best get ready for the show tonight.

Her voice fades as she sees his expression.

MARY

What?

KEAN

It's from Elliston...I am now a
dormouse.

MARY

...You'll always be a rat to me.

He does not react. She crosses to him, lowers his face onto her shoulder, and soothes him.

INT. A PROVINCIAL THEATER -- NIGHT

An eye appears at a crack in the stage curtains.

EYE'S POV: Sweeping about the theater there is only a handful of audience. In the sweep a gentleman sitting alone in one of the boxes is seen, then returned to. It is Mr. Arnold from Drury Lane.

Kean owns the eye. A stage hand, TIMMY, is passing...

KEAN (stage whisper)
Timmy. You see that man in the box?

Timmy looks.

TIMMY
Which box?

KEAN
You see any other boxes occupied?!

TIMMY
Oh. (looking around) My God, what a wretched house.

KEAN
Do you know who he is?

TIMMY
Who?

KEAN
The man in...sod off.

Timmy shrugs and departs. Kean studies the man.

Mr. Arnold sits quietly.

INT. THEATER -- NIGHT

Kean is performing Octavian in "The Mountaineers".

OCTAVIAN: For never is men's courage to be tested so severely, as we wretched band of fellows. We are kin, now, devoted through law of nature one 't'other.

He cannot help but steal a glance at Mr. Arnold.

Mr. Arnold sits, quietly attentive.

OCTAVIAN: Though I die the last of my brethren, yet I have reached this summit, and grip to its cold, hard clefts forever. The sun shines, but the air is cold. It is hushed quiet, quiet...so quiet.

Kean 'hangs' off the curtain, frozen. Eventually there is pathetic applause from the small AUDIENCE. Kean peeps up to see if Mr. Arnold is applauding but Mr. Arnold is still.

INT. CHANGE AREA BELOW STAGE -- NIGHT

Kean packs his costume, etc., into a bag.

INTERCUT:

INT. THEATER, STAGE -- NIGHT

Mr. Arnold steps onto the stage. Timmy is collecting props.

MR. ARNOLD

I say, excuse me. The fellow
playing Octavian, who is he?

Kean looks up, freezes and listens.

TIMMY

Oh that is Mr. Kean, sir, a very
clever fellow.

MR. ARNOLD

Indeed!

TIMMY

Oh yes, there's no better Harlequin.

Kean rolls his eyes, annoyed.

MR. ARNOLD

He plays Harlequin that well?

TIMMY

Oh yes, seen them all, none better.

MR. ARNOLD (OS)

I wonder if you might point me
in his direction.

Kean immediately finishes packing his bag, and crosses toward the stairs to the stage.

INT. CHANGE AREA BELOW STAGE -- NIGHT

Kean 'accidentally' meets Mr. Arnold coming down the stairs.

MR. ARNOLD

Excuse me, Mr. Kean?

KEAN

Yes?

MR. ARNOLD
My compliments on your performance.

KEAN
You are most kind. Orare est
laborare, laborare est orare.
(To pray is to work, to work is to pray.)

MR. ARNOLD
Ah, you speak Latin?

KEAN
Tipote mesa yperbasi
(Nothing in excess)

MR. ARNOLD
I'm sorry, I'm embarrassed to say
I don't know Greek. I bow to your
greater scholarship.

KEAN
Oh no, 'tis I that bow to you,
sir. It is seldom we meet a man
of refined taste in the provinces.
I am grateful for your patronage.

MR. ARNOLD
Then allow me to introduce myself.
My name is Arnold. I am the manager
of Drury Lane.

Kean is shocked.

EXT. COTTAGE -- NIGHT

Kean runs down the road to the cottage. He drops his bag, hesitates to pick it up, but leaves it behind in his haste. He approaches the front door.

INT. COTTAGE -- NIGHT

Mary is seated at the table. Kean bursts in.

KEAN
Mary! The most wonderful news!

She looks round. Her face is streaked with tears. It is enough to stop Kean in his tracks.

MARY (quietly)
It's Howard. He died but an hour ago.

Kean is stunned.

MARY (screaming, total fury)
Our son starved to death while
you had whores!!

EXT. GRAVEYARD -- DAY

Mary clasps Charles' hand. No other mourners are by the graveside. A PRIEST mutters a burial service. A GRAVE DIGGER leans on his shovel, waiting by a pile of dirt. At a hundred yards distant Kean is pacing back and forth.

EXT. GRAVEYARD -- DAY

Kean paces, making small noises of despair, his mind tormented, seething with sorrow, guilt, rage. The Priest closes his book, and looks to the Grave Digger. Kean freezes. The Grave Digger throws the first spadeful in. Kean gasps.

SUBLIM FLASHBACK: CLOSE UP: Aaron's head hits the cobblestones.

It is the breaking point for Kean.

INT. WORKER'S COTTAGE -- DAY

The door bursts open. Kean enters in a total rage. He flings chairs, buckets, anything he can get his hands on to release his fury. It goes on for some time.

SFX: KITTEN'S MEOW.

Kean freezes, panting, a chair held above his head. A tiny KITTEN struggles from the rubble. A look of deepest sympathy comes to Kean's features. He trembles, tears spilling onto his cheeks. With great gentleness he puts down the chair and takes up the kitten. He cries, with the full release of his sorrow.

EXT. CARRIAGE INT. COUNTRY ROAD -- DAY

Kean, dressed in mourning clothes, heavy with melancholy, looks out the carriage window.

HALF DISSOLVE to the image of A LETTER BEING HELD BY CANDLELIGHT.

KEAN (VO)

"Dear Mister Elliston, since last I wrote I have received a very liberal offer from the proprietors of Drury Lane Theater. It gives me unspeakable regret that the proposals did not come to me before I had commenced negotiating with you; but I hope, sir, you will take a high and liberal view of the question when I beg to decline your invitation. Another time I shall be happy to treat with you. Yours sincerely, Edmund Kean."

Complete the DISSOLVE TO:

INT. ELLISTON'S OFFICE, OLYMPIC THEATER -- NIGHT

The letter is crushed in the reader's hand.

ROBERT WILLIAM ELLISTON (Mr. Arthur) owns the hand.

EXT. DRURY LANE THEATER -- DAY

Kean approaches on foot and stops. He is pale, sickly, still in mourning clothes. But he has reached his goal.

INT. COMMITTEE ROOM -- DAY.

The committee is assembled, with the exception of Whitbread and Mr. Arnold. Kean stands before them.

GRENFELL (WILL)

Look, Mr. Kean, we have trialed many an actor here, and excuse my frankness, but many a finer and more impressive man has stood the spot where you stand. Yet, these men have failed most miserably to impress the very discriminating audiences frequenting Drury Lane. Mr. Arnold did not relate that you were...diminutive. Forgive me but you have not the natural stature of a tragedian. I speak for everyone here when I advise that it would be best if you began in a secondary role, and not as principal.

KEAN

I remind you, gentlemen, I was guaranteed by Mr. Arnold my choice of character for my trial. I expect you will honor that promise. I begin as Shylock. Caesar aut nullus.

Byron sniggers out loud. Kean glares at him.

BYRON (totally two-faced)
Sinus.

GRENFELL

Mr. Kean, we will of course honor any promise made to you, but you should think on our advice. We know what we are about.

Mr. Arnold enters, frowning heavily. He crosses to Kean.

MR. ARNOLD

Young man, you have acted a strange part in engaging with me, when you were already bound to Mr. Elliston.

Kean's head goes back in surprise. He now stands exposed.

MONTAGE SEQUENCE

As the following two letters are read:

a) NIGHT. Kean takes pen to paper.

b) Aunt Tid, holding a basket, stands at the door to poor lodgings. The door is opened by Kean. He expresses his happiness at seeing her as best he can. Before the door shuts Mary and Charles are glimpsed, appearing forlorn, sitting at a table.

c) The basket is uncovered, and there is food in it. The family eats as if starving. Aunt Tid watches sympathetically.

KEAN (VO)

My Dear Mr. Elliston, The fate of my family is in your hands. As I indicated I am not prepared to enter your service no matter the cost to me and mine.

d) Kean enters through the front door of Drury Lane. He wears a shabby great-coat and heavy dark capes.

e) ACTORS are on stage rehearsing a play. One of them notices Kean, standing toward the rear of the theater, watching them. The ACTOR indicates Kean to the others. They shake their heads in annoyance, but continue.

KEAN (VO)

But through your means I am deprived
of my situation in Drury Lane Theater,
unless I produce a document from you
that I am not a member of the New
Olympic. How can you reconcile
this more than Turkish barbarity?

f) NIGHT. Elliston takes pen to paper.

g) Jolly, Elliston drinks in a tavern, his arm around a WENCH.

h) A banquet where Elliston is carving a pig on a tray, and taking an enormous slice for himself.

i) Elliston has two WHORES in his room, and much to his delight they are all a fuss undressing him and kissing him, as he squeezes whatever he can get his hands on to.

ELLISTON (VO)

My Dear Mr. Kean, To any man with
the smallest gift of intellect and
the dimmest sense of honor, it must
appear that on the 11th November
you deemed yourself engaged to me,
and that subsequently a more
attractive offer having been made,
you held it convenient to consider
a pledge as idle as words muttered
in a dream. All my engagements are
made and fulfilled with honor on my
part, and I expect an equal
punctuality from others.

j) Kean waits in front of Drury Lane. He sees Arnold exit and hail a cab. Kean approaches, but is waved aside. Arnold is driven away and Kean is left, disheartened.

k) Kean watches rehearsals again, standing against a wall toward the front of the theater. At a given signal the ACTORS on stage suddenly pelt him with fruit. Far from shielding himself, Kean takes a step forward. Eventually the actors stop and watch him curiously.

KEAN (VO)

Are you determined to crush the object that never injured you? You have become a thorn in the side of my young fortune. Am I to be cast again, penniless and despised, into the provinces? A reject of this great city? I beg of you, please, for my family's sake and my soul, give me up.

INT. COMMITTEE ROOM -- DAY

A fist suddenly hits the edge of a bowl of nuts.

WHITBREAD

I don't care if he fucked the Virgin Mary! I left orders he be trialed!

MR. ARNOLD

But right is right, Elliston can sue us.

WHITBREAD

Am I insane or is it you?! I have told you all, we face the courts in weeks! Weeks! I'll trial a donkey's pizzle if it'll yield us income! We all are aware that Mr. Elliston works three days as an actor for us are we not?! His wages and prestige are greater here than for his pisshole theaters I'll warrant! Tell him clearly, he withholds Kean and destroys himself!

EXT. UPPER MIDDLE CLASS SUBURBAN STREET -- DAY

Kean walks down the road, glancing at a piece of paper with an address on it and looking for a house number:

ELLISTON (VO)

My dear Edmund, As one grows one reflects on life, and the madness of it. The silliness of quarrels that resolve nothing and only hurt. I have pondered your pleas and see that I am too harsh, too judging. I am moved by your strength of mind, your virtue in the worship of art. I cannot stand betwixt a man and his destiny. Perhaps though, I can be lucky enough to have a small role in the play.

Kean finds the house, ascends stairs, and knocks.

ELLISTON (VO)

If you would agree to act in my theater at Birmingham when Drury Lane is dark, then we have room for agreement. Perhaps come by for tea, and we can settle the details amicably. Yours in admiration, Robert William Elliston.

From further up the street the door can be seen opening. Kean enters. The door is shut.

EXT. DRURY LANE -- NIGHT

It is a wet, cold, and miserable night. Colors are gone, the scene bleak. CABBIES guide carriages, huddling against the wind and driving rain. With a bounce to his step, a figure moves down the street, carrying a bag. Oblivious to the conditions Kean crosses to the stage door, splashes through a large puddle, and enters.

INT. NICK LATHURO'S SUITE -- NIGHT

Lathuro enters, dripping wet. Tony is being a couch potato before the TV - surrounded by beer cans and an assortment of snack foods. He waves the remote control at Lathuro.

TONY

(mouth full of popcorn)
What happened?

LATHURO

(moving to the bedroom)
England.

TONY

Hey, look at this, you're on everywhere.

He waves the remote control. A monitor, mounted on the bedroom wall, springs to life as Lathuro enters.

In the bedroom with Lathuro as he strips off his wet clothes, he glances occasionally at the monitor.

On TV Lathuro is in a Vietnam war movie and is being interrogated by VIET CONG. (or segments from actual movies in which the actor playing Lathuro already appears)

LATHURO (melodramatic intense)
You may take Hill 437, but you won't hold
it, you won't, and you know why? There's
sixteen thousand Americans about to...

His face is slapped. The channel changes to a contemporary love story. Lathuro is in a park. Looking fresh faced and brimming with optimism, he is throwing bread to swans in a pond. He turns to his SWEETHEART on the grass behind him. Violins back the scene.

SWEETHEART
And what if she finds out about us?

LATHURO
She won't...We're getting a divorce.

SWEETHEART (overjoyed)
Oh, Peter!

She jumps up and they hug.

Channel changes. Lathuro is in the wheelhouse of a fishing vessel. He is made up as an aging GREEK FISHERMAN. Through the window he sees nets being hauled in by two CREWMEN.

LATHURO (Greek accent)
Hurry with the nets boys! Don't
worry with the catch! The storm she
is too close!

He points off. The CREWMEN look. An ominous black storm is quickly rolling across the sea.

Channel changes. A TALK SHOW HOST with two CRITICS.

CRITIC 1
I disagree. I think he has
absolutely no right to come to
this country and play this role.

Channel changes, back on the VIETNAM film. Lathuro's character is strafing all and sundry with a flame thrower. VIET CONG are dying everywhere.

Down to his underwear, Lathuro races to the bedroom door.

LATHURO
Hey put it back on that last channel!

TONY
Must be a festival of your films
or something.

LATHURO
Put it back!

TONY
(stalling, glued)
Yeah, I just love the way you
play this scene.

LATHURO
Tony, switch it back!

TONY
Yeah yeah, just a sec.

Lathuro hurls his wet clothes.

LATHURO
Switch it back!!

The clothes hit Tony with devastating effect, knocking him off the
lounge. Beer and popcorn go flying.

TONY
What'd you do that for?!

LATHURO
(taking off his underwear and throwing it)
Switch the goddamned channel back!!

TONY
(switching the channel back)
Alright alright alright! Jeez!

TONY
There! Happy?!

LATHURO
Shut up, I want to listen.

He's already back in the bedroom. Tony is stunned.

Back in the bedroom. Lathuro walks up close to the TV.

CRITIC 1

(speaking quickly, intense)
We've got literally dozens of young,
brilliant British actors who can play
Kean. To hell with authenticity.
Nick Lathuro can barely speak English
let alone perfect Kean's accent.

LATHURO

You fucking asshole.

CRITIC 1

...This is aside from the fact he
doesn't have the physical stature
to play a great tragedian.

CRITIC 2

Well I have to disagree. It is
true Nick Lathuro has been involved
in the odd scandal or two, but he's
not the first Hollywood star
to do that now is he?

LATHURO

Precisely.

CRITIC 2

And Kean was initially refused
many times because he was not
the classic tragedian. He was
quite short, only five six.

LATHURO

I like this guy, he's fair.

CRITIC 1

Oh, for heavens sake, we're talking
about acting, not the sexual posturings
of a pompous short-arse from America.

HOST

I think you should let him finish.

LATHURO

Yeah, shut up.

INT. TV STUDIO SET -- NIGHT

CAMERA moves in an arc to find CRITIC 2 through TV CAMERAMEN, the
FLOOR MANAGER, cameras etc. CUT AWAYS during the progress of the arc

to CLOSE UPS of: a CAMERAMAN'S hand adjusting zoom, TV camera's monitor as ZOOM IN is performed, ECU of the FLOOR MANAGER'S headphones with vague commands leaking from the cams.

CRITIC 2 (intense, excited)
Kean was extraordinary. He had a scope for passion far beyond that of others. Lathuro has that too. If it was a straight commercial piece, fine, I'd agree we should have a British actor, but it's not, it's on Edmund Kean, and so we should have the best actor for the job.

INT. TV CONTROL ROOM -- NIGHT

The control room interior - DIRECTOR 2 and PRODUCTION ASSISTANTS 2 & 3. ASSISTANT 2 is painting her nails and chewing gum. ASSISTANT 3 is bored, pushing buttons and drinking coffee as the DIRECTOR calls shots.

DIRECTOR 2 (overlapping)
Ready 1...Go 1.

BACK TO: NICK LATHURO'S SUITE

ECU Monitor showing Critic 1.

CRITIC 1
Oh, of course that's absolute rubbish...

INT. A PLUSH LIVING ROOM -- NIGHT

The Studio Head is seated, watching TV. He has a brandy balloon in his hand.

CRITIC 1
The general public wouldn't know art if it bit them in the foot. You're naïve if you think Hollywood pursues artistic merit. It's all about money.

Studio Head frowns, taking umbrage.

BACK TO: TV STUDIO SET

CRITIC 2
Well I'd hardly call myself naïve. And certainly not about the motives of a fellow critic.

INT. A BEDROOM -- NIGHT

Naked beneath sheets, Beck is sitting up in bed, watching TV, drinking a can of beer and smoking dope. WOMEN 1&2 are making love beside him.

CRITIC 2

If you honestly think people invest time and energy into a project for purely mercenary reasons then you have an unduly cynical view.

BACK TO: NICK LATHURO'S SUITE

ECU Monitor.

CRITIC 2

The fact is you can't make brilliant films unless you are an artist...

BACK TO: TV CONTROL ROOM

Quick CUT AWAYS to a color balancing screen, mixer slide switches being adjusted, control panel switches flicked.

CRITIC 2

...and artists do have morals.
Art is ultimately about morality.

DIRECTOR (overlapping)

2, drop to a three shot. Turkey on the right's getting pissed off.

CRITIC 1

Oh, I have never heard such immature ravings in all my life.

ASSISTANT 2 (chewing gum)

Hope he throws his water.

INT. BATHROOM -- NIGHT

Jack Mason is in a spa, smoking a cigar, a TV on the wall

CRITIC 1

Do you think in any other deregulated industry people wouldn't take advantage and deliver inferior goods to the public?

BACK TO: NICK LATHURO'S SUITE

CRITIC 1

It's purely a case of the guy with
the biggest check book wins. Forget art.

Lathuro is aghast at the comment.

EXT. LATHURO'S HOTEL -- NIGHT

SFX: A windy location, high up, raining.

FX: Looking through the viewfinder of a camera about a hundred yards
from the hotel room, a naked Lathuro stands in the bedroom.

SFX: A camera shot is taken.

CAMERAMAN (VO) (Cockney)
Got ya. Teach you to go prancin'
round in the nuddy, my son.

Viewfinder swings onto Tony, watching TV, and widens out to encompass
both rooms. Focus is adjusted.

SFX: A shot is taken.

CAMERAMAN (VO) (Cockney)
And one of your boyfriend 'n' all.

INT. TV STUDIO SET -- NIGHT

The show over, Host, and Critics 1 & 2 are standing, chatting,
friendly, perhaps with paper cup coffees. TV CREW are packing up.

HOST
Well I suppose all that's left is
to find if he can play the role.

CRITIC 1
(smoking a pipe)
Well absolutely. Is he up to it? Well
look, chaps, I'm off. Thanks so much.
Lovely as always.

They shake hands.

HOST
Oh look, wonderful. Thanks for coming in.

CRITIC 1
Oh please, my pleasure.

CRITIC 2

You drive safe in the wet.

CRITIC 1

Yes, same to you. Cheerio, lads. Cheers.

He departs.

HOST (confidentially)

I'm so glad he's gone, because I was dying to tell you I agree with you 100%. Lathuro's perfect for Kean.

CRITIC 2

Yes. Yes, of course his big test is yet to come.

HOST

Yes. Oh, my word, yes.

INT. DRURY LANE -- NIGHT

The stage door swings shut behind Kean. He stands, dripping wet, looking around. ACTORS move about briskly. WINSTON (Rice McKonakee), the stage manager, notices him.

WINSTON

Kean?

Kean nods.

Sign on.

Kean goes to do so.

Don't drip all over the book, man,
take your cape off.

Kean does so and signs on.

WINSTON

This way.

Winston heads for an upper staircase.

KEAN

Um...I'd prefer to change with
the others.

WINSTON (tiredly patient)
It's your trial, you are entitled
to the principal's rooms.

KEAN
Thank you...

Kean moves past him to a lower staircase.

KEAN
...I'll...just go here.

Winston rolls his eyes and goes about his business.

INT. SUPPORT ACTORS CHANGE ROOM -- NIGHT

Kean lays out his make-up. Other ACTORS are getting changed around him. Kean takes out a black wig and puts it down. An actor nearby, playing BASSANIO, notices. He crosses to the actor playing ANTONIO.

BASSANIO (confidentially)
Do you see what that clown from
Exeter bought?

He nods at the wig.

ANTONIO
Is it dark red?

BASSANIO
No...Black.

They both look in astonishment. Oblivious, Kean smears on his make-up.

INT. DRURY LANE THEATRE -- NIGHT

The boxes are empty, whilst the gallery and pit are barely half full. BASSANIO listlessly expounds his love for PORTIA. ANTONIO, seated, listens; BASSANIO walks slowly to and fro.

BASSANIO: ...sometimes from her eyes
 I did receive fair speechless messages:
 Her name is Portia; nothing undervalued
 To Cato's daughter, Brutus' Portia.

INT. DRURY LANE THEATRE, WINGS -- NIGHT

Winston follows the script. To the CALL-BOY:

WINSTON

Fetch Kean.

Call-Boy obeys. However he has gone only a few feet when he is stopped by a hand spearing from the darkness. Kean leans out, already waiting. He is strikingly different as SHYLOCK. As this happens BASSANIO continues:

BASSANIO (OS):Nor is the wide world ignorant of her worth;
For the four winds blow in from every coast.

BASSANIO: Renowned suitors; and her sunny locks.

The AUDIENCE watches, bored.

BASSANIO (OS):Hang on her temples like a golden
fleece;...

Kean sucks in a lungful of air, tensely awaiting his cue.

ONSTAGE: (ACT 1: SCENE 3: VENICE. A PUBLIC PLACE.) SHYLOCK enters and stands, listening, thinking for a moment. There is general hubbub in the AUDIENCE.

AUDIENCE: A PATRON turns in alarm to the man beside him.

PATRON (voiced whisper)
He wears a black wig!

CAMERA holds on the man he has addressed, it is Hazlitt (CRITIC 2), critic for "The Morning Chronicle".

BACK TO: ONSTAGE

SHYLOCK turns and looks at BASSANIO.

SHYLOCK: Three thousand ducats - well.

BASSANIO: Ay, sir, for three months.

SHYLOCK: For three months - well.

BASSANIO: For which as I told you, Antonio shall be bound.

SHYLOCK: Antonio shall become bound, - well.

BASSANIO: Your answer to that?

SHYLOCK: Antonio is a good man.

BASSANIO: (quickly) Have you heard any imputation to the contrary?

SHYLOCK: Ho, no, no; no, no; - my meaning, in saying he is a good man, is to have you understand me that he is sufficient:

AUDIENCE: Faces in the AUDIENCE. People are attentive, thoughtful.

SHYLOCK (O.S.) yet his means are in supposition: he hath an Argosy bound to Tripolis, another to the Indies; I understand, moreover, upon the Rialto,

BACK TO: ONSTAGE

SHYLOCK: he hath a third at Mexico, a fourth for England - and other ventures he hath squandered abroad...

TIME DISSOLVE TO:

ONSTAGE. (ACT 3: SCENE 3: VENICE. A STREET.)

SHYLOCK is angry, voice raised. He speaks to SALARINO. ANTONIO stands dejectedly to one side.

SHYLOCK: I'll have my bond; and therefore speak no more. I'll not be made a soft and dull-ey'd fool, To shake the head, relent, and sigh and yield, To Christian intercessors. Follow not; I'll have no speaking: I will have my bond.

SHYLOCK stomps off stage. Spontaneous applause from the small AUDIENCE.

EXT. COVENT GARDEN -- NIGHT

Rain. Coming down from a sign which reads 'Covent Garden' A small crowd is gathered outside, cowering beneath umbrellas. There is a billboard with "A Farmer's Wife" advertised. A STAGE HAND places a canvas roll above it and drops it. It unfurls to read "Performance Cancelled". A noise of irritation and disappointment ripples the crowd. The STAGE MANAGER appears.

STAGE MANAGER (perfunctory)
Ladies and Gentlemen, I apologize most sincerely, but we have just had word this evening's performance is

STAGE MANAGER (Cont'd)
canceled due to the inclement weather.
On behalf of management, I am
most sincerely sorry.

BYRON
You could have announced it earlier
than have us trapped in weather like this!

STAGE MANAGER
I am sorry. I have only just heard.

BYRON
A likely story. Perhaps you won't mind
then if we take our business to your
competitor!

He and a group of companions set off. There is general mumbled
agreement with Byron from the Crowd. They follow.

STAGE MANAGER
(calling out too late)
Not surprising seeing you are on the
Drury Lane committee, Lord Byron!

The Stage Manager assumes the matter is over. Byron, however, suddenly
reappears through the crowd and gives him a quick little punch to the
nose. Stage Manager clasps his nose in shock and as Byron disappears
he sinks onto the wet steps.

INT. DRURY LANE FOYER -- NIGHT

Interval. Audience chats excitedly. Byron strides in from the street.
He spies the critic, Hazlitt, standing alone with a cup of tea in his
hand, lost to his thoughts.

BYRON
Well Mr. Hazlitt, are you pleased
with our new man?

HAZLITT
I have never been more amazed at
the telling of Shakespeare in my life.

Byron is surprised.

BYRON
Yes...Well, I knew he was good.

He waves at the crowd coming in from Covent Garden.

BYRON

I've used my influence to gather him a better crowd. He deserves it.

He departs. Hazlitt is impressed with Byron's influence.

INT. DRURY LANE THEATER, ONSTAGE -- NIGHT

(ACT 4: SCENE 1: VENICE. A COURT OF JUSTICE.) The DUKE is on the bench, listening. SHYLOCK, addressing him, is in full flight.

SHYLOCK: The pound of flesh which I demand of him
 Is dearly bought, is mine, and I will have
 it: If you deny me, fie upon your law!
 There is no force in the decree of Venice.
 I stand for judgment: answer: shall I have
 it?

SHYLOCK sits. The AUDIENCE applauds enthusiastically.

INT. GREEN ROOM -- NIGHT

ACTORS are sitting around, idly smoking, reading. The sound of thunderous applause comes suddenly from outside.

ACTOR 1 (looking up, utterly bored)
 Oh God, it's turned to hale.

They listen, then collectively realize what the noise is. They look at each other in astonishment and rush out.

THE WINGS. Winston is no longer watching his script, but is fully absorbed watching Kean. The Actors from the green room arrive. They watch, jostling for position.

(ACT 4: SCENE 1: VENICE. A COURT OF JUSTICE.) PORTIA HAS WON THE CASE. SHYLOCK'S mood alternates between fury and misery. He has one last rage at the court.

SHYLOCK: Nay, take my life and all, pardon not that;
 You take my house when you do take the prop
 That doth sustain my house; you take my life
 when you do take the means whereby I live.

PORTIA: What mercy can you render him, Antonia?

GRATIANO: A halter gratis; nothing else; for God's
 sake.

PORTIA: Art thou contented, Jew? What dost thou say?

SHYLOCK: I am content.

PORTIA: Clerk, draw a deed of gift.

SHYLOCK is so dejected that he is almost physically sick.

SHYLOCK: I pray you, give me leave to go from hence;
I am not well; send the deed after me
And I will sign it.

He exits slowly, a broken man, gut wrenching in his misery. Kean milks the exit. He leaves the stage. AUDIENCE comes to their feet, applauding wildly.

Winston and the ACTORS pat Kean on the back as he passes.

Whitbread sits, people standing all around him and applauding. He is saying a thankful prayer.

EXT. POOR LODGINGS -- NIGHT

Kean runs down the road to the lodgings. He drops his bag, hesitates, but leaves it behind in his haste.

INT. POOR LODGINGS -- NIGHT

Kean bursts in. Mary is darning.

KEAN

Mary, you shall ride in your carriage!
And Charlie shall go to Eton!

INT. NEWSPAPER OFFICE -- NIGHT

Hazlitt is writing his review.

HAZLITT (VO)

Mr. Perry, my editor, has been asked by the Drury Lane Committee to report kindly on Mr. Kean's debut. Not surprising given the state of Drury Lane's economy. (Cont...)

EXT. DRURY LANE -- NIGHT

A billboard advertises Kean as RICHARD III.

A large CROWD jostles aggressively for tickets at the box office. Once given a ticket, they hurry into the theater.

THE BOX OFFICE. Money is pouring into the tills.

HAZLITT (VO)

As a favor to the theater, Mr. Perry passed on their request to me. I do not give favorable accounts: I give true ones. I am not one of those who, when they see the sun breaking from behind a cloud, stop to ask others whether it is the moon. (Cont...)

INT. DRURY LANE, THEATER -- NIGHT

The AUDIENCE is hushed. The theater dark. The stage bare. Individual faces are tense, watchful, wondering what will happen. (ACT 1: SCENE 1: LONDON. A STREET.) RICHARD, at this point, is still only the Duke of Gloucester.

HAZLITT (VO)

Mr. Kean's appearance was the first gleam of genius breaking athwart the gloom of the stage. He conveys Heaven's flare and Hell's fire within a single, uttered sentence.

Kean bursts across the stage as the hunchback, RICHARD III. His costume has long, black, tentacular strands hanging from the sides. Bent over he looks like a spider.

Audience gasps. The 'spider' disappears behind a Gothic pillar. (Beat) It reappears, slinking to confide.

RICHARD: Now is the winter of our discontent
 Made glorious summer by this sun of York;
 And all the clouds that lower'd upon our
 house In the deep bosom of the ocean....
 ...buried!

The 'spider' disappears.

RICHARD (OS behind the pillar): But I - that am
 not shap'd for sportive tricks.

He comes round the pillar slowly.

RICHARD: Nor made to court an amorous looking glass;

The Audience is spellbound.

RICHARD (OS): I, that am rudely stamp'd, and want love's majesty
 To strut before a wanton ambling Nymph.
 I; that am curtailed of this fair proportion,

RICHARD: Cheated of features dissembling nature,
Deform'd, unfinished, sent before my time
Into this breathing world scarce half made up,
And that so lamely and unfashionable
That dogs bark at me as I halt by them.

Hazlitt is enchanted.

INT. PRIVATE LOUNGE -- NIGHT

The lounge is crowded with ARISTOCRATS sipping wine.

ARISTOCRAT 1

I believe he's an Eton man. Studied
the bard there.

Another part of the room.

ARISTOCRAT 2

Yes, he was an officer in some
Irish posting. I've heard it said
that in eight hours he took on each
man of his regiment with sword and
saber and, although bloodied, won
the day. Watching his energy here,
I'm not surprised.

Another part of the room.

FEMALE ARISTOCRAT 1 (confidentially)

...a bastard by birth. And do you know
the parents are Miss Tidswell, and the
Duke of Norfolk. Actually if you look
closely he does resemble both.

Another part of the room. Byron is talking to very pretty, sexual,
FEMALE ARISTOCRAT 2, who is fascinated by him.

BYRON (barely aware of her)

By Jove he is a soul! Life, nature,
truth without exaggeration or diminution.
Kemble's Hamlet is perfect, but Hamlet
is not nature. Richard is a man, and
Kean is Richard. He feels nature's flesh.

Female Aristocrat 2 is flushed with the lewdness of nature.

EXT. CARRIAGE. TRAVELING -- DAY

Inside the cab, the DUKE OF NORFOLK looks out. He thumps on the
ceiling with his cane.

EXT. AUNT TID'S HOUSE -- DAY

The carriage arrives and draws up.

INT. AUNT TID'S HOUSE -- DAY

A female NEIGHBOR of Tid's peeps out the window.

NEIGHBOR (gasping)
My goodness me, Tid! It's the
Duke of Norfolk!

Aunt Tid, working on a handicraft, looks up.

BACK TO: EXT. AUNT TID'S HOUSE

Norfolk, short and portly, alights from the carriage.

BACK TO: INT. AUNT TID'S HOUSE

NEIGHBOR
He looks to be coming in!

Aunt Tid goes back to her craft, as if Norfolk's arrival is a normal event (although not for 20 years).

BACK TO: EXT. AUNT TID'S HOUSE

Norfolk heads for the door.

BACK TO: INT. AUNT TID'S HOUSE

The Neighbor fusses with her hair in front of a mirror.

AUNT TID
Skip out the back would you, Rosie.

NEIGHBOR
What?!

AUNT TID
Hurry.

Muttering, the Neighbor departs. There is a knock at the front door. Aunt Tid crosses and opens it.

INT. AUNT TID'S HOUSE - DAY

NORFOLK
Charlotte.

AUNT TID
Charlie...Well, step in.

He enters and she shuts the door.

NORFOLK
Wasn't sure I'd be welcomed.

AUNT TID
Whyever not?

NORFOLK
Well I believe we've a son I've
not known of.

AUNT TID
Oh Heavens, pay no heed. It's just
Eddie, he's a terrible little liar.
Never could face that his father
was a drunk and his mother a whore.

NORFOLK
But doesn't he have a son named Charles?

AUT TID
Fits the delusion.

NORFOLK
So then all else is false?

Tid looks at him quizzically.

NORFOLK
That he was a lettered man of Eton and
an officer in the forces.

Tid nods sarcastically.

NORFOLK
Well he may be a liar as you say,
Charlotte, but I've seen him act,
and there's no lies there. His work
is so unique, so fresh, so true.

AUNT TID
I predicted it would make or break
him. For or against, he leaves
no other room.

NORFOLK

Yes, well his real test looms. "Hamlet". He'll be held up to Kemble for that, and I believe Coleridge from "The Times" is coming, and you know how he admires Kemble.

AUNT TID

Well, sad to say, I suspect Coleridge judges by height, not acting, 'specially as Kemble's so tall and noble-like.

NORFOLK

They say height can be measured from the neck up.

AUNT TID

'They' don't watch "Hamlet" from the pit.

NORFOLK

(grinning)

And which do you prefer? Size or ability?

AUNT TID

Well, the big man is God, but little men go harder for longer.

Norfolk bursts out laughing. He looks her up and down and moves closer, sliding an arm round her waist.

NORFOLK

You know, I've wanted an excuse all these years to come by. Fancy a roll in the hay for old times?

AUNT TID (mock surprise)

You pox ridden old sod!

His grin infects her and she slides her hand onto his buttock.

AUNT TID

Hhmm. Why not.

She jerks him hard against her.

AUNT TID

Haven't had a tumble since the last one died. Right there on that table.

NORFOLK (suddenly impassioned)
(Pushing her to the table)
Very well.

AUNT TID
No, I meant...

NORFOLK
What?

AUNT TID
Nothing.

She lies back.

AUNT TID
Do your worst.

EXT. DRURY LANE -- NIGHT

There is a CROWD gathered, going well down the street. TICKET TAKERS struggle to get doors to the theater closed. Angry PATRONS demand access.

INT. THE PIT -- NIGHT

TOADIES and GENTRY alike struggle for room to stand. The small ORCHESTRA is playing. It can barely be heard.

A pair of spectacles are held up to the light.

The spectacles come down to the face of COLERIDGE (CRITIC 1). He is in the process of cleaning them. He looks down imperiously from his private box.

INT. KEAN'S DRESSING ROOM -- NIGHT

Kean sits before a mirror, putting on make-up and practicing expressions. ANOTHER ANGLE reveals that the room is jam-packed with ADMIRERS watching silently.

INT. DRURY LANE THEATER, STAGE, AUDIENCE & WINGS -- NIGHT

The play is underway. (ACT 1: SCENE 2:) The Royal Court of Denmark is assembled, however the actors are barely heard above the din.

CLAUDIUS: Though yet of Hamlet our dear brother's death
 The memory be green; and that it us befitted
 To bear our hearts in grief, and our whole
 kingdom To be contracted in on brow of woe;

Coleridge sighs with irritation.

INT. DRURY LANE. KEAN'S DRESSING ROOM -- NIGHT

Fully suited as Hamlet, Kean practices gestures before a full-length mirror. Call-Boy struggles through the jam.

CALL-BOY
Your call, Mr. Kean.

Kean picks up his sword. He merely glances at the door and the Admirers instantly part to allow passage. He exits. Admirers struggle for a position in his wake.

THE WINGS: Kean approaches.

KING (OS): What wouldst thou have, Laertes?

LAERTES (OS): Dread my lord, Your leave and favour to
 return to France;

Winston grabs a riding crop and lays into the first few Admirers, turning back the tide. Kean goes on, oblivious.

BACK TO: ONSTAGE

KING: Have you your father's leave? What says
 Polonious?

POLONIOUS: He hath my lord...

BACK TO: AUDIENCE

A hush falls over the Audience.

Coleridge looks away toward Hamlet's entrance.

The whole audience looks away toward Hamlet's entrance.

KING: Take thy fair hour, Laertes; time be thine,
 And thy best graces spend it at thy will!

HAMLET enters.

A ripple of disappointment runs through the audience. AUDIENCE MEMBER 1 whispers urgently to AUDIENCE MEMBER 2.

AUDIENCE MEMBER 1
He's so small.

Coleridge frowns.

KING (OS): But now, my cousin Hamlet, and my son.

As the scene plays on, Coleridge's hand comes slowly to his glasses to adjust them on his face but it hangs in the air as his intrigue forces him to forget what he is doing.

HAMLET stands still, staring insolently at the KING.

KING: How is it that the clouds still hang on you?

HAMLET: Not so, my lord; I am too much 'i the sun.

BACK TO: AUDIENCE, COLERIDGE

ECU on Coleridge's face. He is thinking hard.

ECU: PROFILE. Coleridge's face is moving slowly forward through the air. Eventually it stops. (Perhaps a SOUND FX, building, dominating stage dialogue) If not:

QUEEN (OS): Good Hamlet, cast thy nighted colour off,
And let thine eye look like a friend on Denmark.
Do not, for ever, with thy veiled lids
Seek thy noble father in the dust:

BACK TO: ONSTAGE

QUEEN: Thou know'st 'tis common, - all that live must die,
Passing through nature to eternity.

HAMLET: Ay madam, it is common.

QUEEN: If it be, Why seems it so particular with thee?

HAMLET: Seems Madam! Nay it is; I know not seems.

BACK TO: AUDIENCE, COLERIDGE

Coleridge's hand comes up slowly and clasps his chin. His eyes widen slightly, excited by thoughts.

MONTAGE SEQUENCE.

Underscored either by music or building SFX, comparative cuts are made between KEMBLE (considerably aged) and Kean playing the role of HAMLET, demonstrating the striking difference in the declamatory and naturalistic styles; the traditional heroic manner of entering the stage, and the use of props, in stark contrast to Kean's practices.

(Translated as taking place in Coleridge's mind.) Perhaps begin with repetition of each line from Kemble and Kean, but go on to use CUT AWAYS to the QUEEN as a bridge e.g. It may be that the QUEEN is dressing herself as she speaks with HAMLET. If so, KEMBLE would avert his eyes, while Kean would watch her with open sexuality.

HAMLET (KEMBLE): Now, mother, what's the matter? (Entering)

HAMLET (Kean): Now, mother, what's the matter? (Entering)

QUEEN: Hamlet, thou hast thy father much offended.

HAMLET (KEMBLE): Mother, you have my father much offended.

HAMLET (Kean): Mother, you have my father much offended.

QUEEN: Come. Come, you answer with an idle tongue.

HAMLET (KEMBLE): Go, go you question with a wicked tongue.

QUEEN: Why, how now, Hamlet!

HAMLET (Kean): What's the matter now?

QUEEN: Have you forgot me?

HAMLET (KEMBLE): No, by the rood, not so:

HAMLET (Kean): You are the queen, your husband's brother's Wife.

HAMLET (KEMBLE): And - would it were so! - you are my mother.

QUEEN: Nay, then, I'll set those to you that can speak.

HAMLET (Kean): Come, come, and sit you down; you shall not budge;

HAMLET (KEMBLE): You go not, till I set you up a glass.

HAMLET (Kean): Where you may see the inmost part of you.

CUT MUSIC or SFX.

INT. COLERIDGE'S OFFICE -- NIGHT

A sheet of paper by lamplight. A nib pen appears. It hovers above the paper, waiting on inspiration. Eventually it writes the word: "Kean". Coleridge is looking down at the paper. The pen begins scratching. Following the nib as it finishes writing: "To see him act, is like reading Shakespeare by flashes of lightning." The nib stalls. Coleridge looks down at what he has written. He blinks.

INT. LATHURO'S HOTEL SUITE. BEDROOM -- DAY

A perverse heavy-metal video clip on a TV screen.

INT. HOTEL FOYER -- DAY

To the strains of Muzak, Jenny enters the hotel, looking professional, carrying a valise. She approaches a lift.

BACK TO: LATHURO'S BEDROOM

The video clip is playing on the wall monitor.

Lathuro passionately kisses WOMAN 1. They are standing. Pulling back they are revealed to be naked. WOMAN 2, however, perched on a bed corner, kisses him in a more intimate manner, while WOMAN 3, behind him, kisses his buttocks.

Beck is on the bed, WOMAN 4 on his face and WOMAN 5 on his groin.

INT. HOTEL HALL -- DAY

Jenny drifts from the lift along with some Muzak. She produces a card and enters Lathuro's apartment.

INT. LATHURO'S APARTMENT -- DAY

The sitting room is curtained off. The main TV is blaring. Jenny looks toward the bedroom. The door is slightly ajar. Jenny shakes her head and grins. She takes out some papers and puts down her valise.

BACK TO: LATHURO'S BEDROOM

Things are hot in the bedroom. The door opens, Jenny stands, frozen, the papers in her hand.

Lathuro has not seen her. His eyes are closed in hedonistic Heaven. Controlling her outrage, Jenny crosses the room. She glances at the goings-on on the bed. She halts beside Lathuro, her hands on her hips. Still no one has noticed her. She leans forward and whispers an obscene suggestion in Lathuro's ear.

LATHURO

Oh, yes. Oh...

He rolls his head to kiss her. They kiss. His eyes open slightly. Suddenly they spring open.

LATHURO

Oh!!

He suddenly realizes he is still being given head.

LATHURO

Oh!

He jumps away. (The pop sound of empty sucking)

JENNY

Here's your contracts!!

She throws them in his face and storms out.

LATHURO

Jenny!

He rushes after her.

Jenny storms toward the apartment door. Lathuro stumbles out of the bedroom, kicking a statue with his big toe. He hops desperately after her as she picks up her valise.

LATHURO

Ahhh! Jenny! Jenny! Wait!

She flings open the door, hitting him in the face.

INT. HOTEL HALL -- DAY

Jenny is pressing the lift button furiously. Lathuro, naked, hobbles into the hall, his nose bleeding.

LATHURO

I can explain!

JENNY

You can explain?! You can explain?!

LATHURO

Why are you back so early?!

JENNY

I took an earlier flight!

LATHURO

He just showed up! He's the writer!

The lift arrives. She gets in. It is full of people.

JENNY

Oh, and I suppose he had five naked women with him?!

LATHURO

Yes!! Well...they were with him!

The doors start to close.

LATHURO

But it never means anything!

He grabs her arm.

JENNY

Leave me alone! Let go of me!

LATHURO

Look look, just stay! I can explain!

He is suddenly hit on the head by the wooden handle of an umbrella and falls slowly back into a sitting position in the hall. The lift doors close.

INT. LIFT -- DAY

Jenny is next to an elderly BUSINESSMAN (Duke of Norfolk) dressed in classic suit, bowler hat, and umbrella.

JENNY

Thank you.

BUSINESSMAN

Oh please, my absolute pleasure.

He tips his hat. Jenny becomes aware she is surrounded by PEOPLE. She glances around, embarrassed.

INT. LATHURO'S APARTMENT, BEDROOM -- DAY

Lathuro lies on the bed, an icepack on his head and smoking a cigarette. Beck, beside him, smokes a joint. The Women are draped over them, sharing the joint.

BECK

So what are you doing tomorrow?

LATHURO

(icepack over eyes)

I know she doesn't see it, but I honestly love her...What's wrong with me?

BECK

Going to this party...Want to come?

LATHURO

...Sure.

SMASH CUTS STOCK FOOTAGE MUSIC MONTAGE - A PLANE LANDING, RIO CARNIVAL

INT. BOARDROOM -- DAY

STUDIO HEAD

Rio?!!

He suddenly chokes and clasps his throat. He staggers about, choking. STUDIO DEPARTMENT HEADS leap to his aid.

ALL

What's wrong?!/What's he saying?!/He's
choking!/Grab him before he falls!/Help him!

Studio Head desperately points at his throat. He is going purple. His hand spasms, releasing a few mixed nuts.

EXT. ENGLISH COUNTRYSIDE, AERIAL. -- DAY

Sweeping across the countryside, eventually intersecting a road. Moving along the road is a horse drawn coach.

EXT. COACH INT. -- DAY

Moving. Mary looks out the window. Her look is anxious. She sees COUNTRY FOLK in the fields.

MONTAGE: Mary's despair matched to the COUNTRY FOLK of the era as the carriage is passing. Each face and costume is strong and earthy. They are all simple, happy folk.

Mary's head goes down, joyless.

EXT. WOOLWICH -- DAY

The coach draws to a halt. The door is opened for Mary.

MARY (to the DRIVER)
Is this Woolwich?

DRIVER
Yes, ma'am.

MARY
Where is the tavern here?

DRIVER
Over there, ma'am.

Mary sees it and heads for it.

INT. TAVERN -- DAY

Kean drinks from a large mug, surrounded by TOADIES. He is in the particular company of POPE (Tony), the head toadie. Mary enters, sees him, and crosses to him.

POPE
Oh, look out. Trouble's afoot in Woolwich.

The toadies make schoolboy sounds - Kean is in trouble.

KEAN (drunk)
Mary?! What on earth brings you so far from the shops?!

Laughter.

MARY
I got your letter. May we speak?

KEAN
The letter to which she refers, gentlemen, is my resignation from our marriage. I give her all, take not a jot for meself. Yet you see, she hunts me like a rabid dog.

TOADIE 1
If you're finished, matie, then I'll take her arm!

POPE
And me!

Laughter.

KEAN
Take her. Take her. Mind you, mind you, there's mileage on her rump I'll not cop charge for!

Laughter.

MARY
I've come to take you home.

Laughter.

MARY

The committee has been asking for you.

Laughter.

KEAN

(standing)

The committee?! The committee?! I've known deaf mutes with more fertility in their bollocks than the committee's brains in collection!

Laughter.

MARY

Mr. Whitbread is dead.

Kean is suddenly attentive.

MARY

There's talk of a management contract. I thought we might apply.

Slowly the implications come to Kean.

KEAN

Ho ho ho! Ho ho ho!

He walks across the table, jumps down and embraces her.

KEAN

Mary, Mary! You are a wonder, child.

He kisses her hard. Aside from revulsion to his drunken stench, she is conscious of the rabble around them. There are hoots of encouragement from the TOADIES.

KEAN

Drink up men! Tomorrow...we strike London!

Hearty cheers and toasts from the men. Mary is frightened.

INT. KEAN'S HOUSE -- DAY

Kean is well dressed and shaven. Money can be seen left neglectfully in large heaps about the room. CHARLES 2 (4 y.o.) is playing with gold guinea pieces on the floor.

MARY

I only said there was talk. How was I to know there was a sub-committee.

KEAN

I really am confused. I spend half my life fighting to find a worthy company, only to realize when I arrive it is run by amateurs.

MARY

Oh, surely you can't call people like Lord Essex...

KEAN

Amateurs! You're so stupid, Mary, with your worship of them.

BUTLER

Excuse me, sir, madam. A Mr. Arnold to see you.

Kean looks at Mary. His anger changes. She sees the change and knows what it means.

KEAN

Show him in.

MARY (picking up Charles)
I'll leave you to talk business.

KEAN

No, stay, I'll show you respect for class.

MARY

No, no, I shan't.

She exits via another door.

KEAN

(throwing money at her)
Or can't!

She is gone. He mutters.

Sycophant.

INT. KEAN'S HOUSE -- DAY

Mr. Arnold is shown in.

MR. ARNOLD
Edmund, how nice to see you again.

He extends his hand.

KEAN
Arnold.

He moves away, ignoring the hand.

MR. ARNOLD
I was hoping this would be a
pleasant reunion.

KEAN
Why, are you lonely?

MR. ARNOLD
You really have no right to speak to
me that way. Your failures have been
ours too.

KEAN
Failures? I'm not aware of failures.
I am aware of poor management.

Arnold sighs, barely tolerant.

MR. ARNOLD
I'm on a mission. I have the most
wonderful news. The sub-committee
has quadrupled your pay to twenty-five
pounds. And here...

He produces a large wad of notes.

MR. ARNOLD
A gift of five hundred.

KEAN
Drop it with the rest.

Arnold finds a pile of money and drops the wad onto it.

MR. ARNOLD
I'll see you at the theater then.

He nods, and begins to leave.

KEAN
I'm thinking of playing Woolwich.

MR. ARNOLD

You're contracted to us (beat)
Edmund, take this advice as a friend.
See a solicitor. This is London.
Drury Lane. Not some rural circuit.

He leaves. Kean is grinning defiantly.

EXT. WOOLWICH ARTS HALL -- NIGHT

There is a sign, "Woolwich Arts Hall". Applause and shouts of "bravo" are coming from within.

INT. COMMITTEE ROOM. DRURY LANE -- DAY

MR. ARNOLD

You're quiet, Lord Byron.

BYRON

Yes. I usually laugh loud.

LORD ESSEX

Why do you mock us, Byron? You're
never a help when it counts.

BYRON

Adversity is the first and finest
path to truth. I'm off for a sherry.

He heads for the door.

LORD ESSEX

You could at least stay while
we resolved the matter.

BYRON

Let me understand. You would have me sit
for another two hours while you make up
your minds to do nothing. I'm just faster.

LORD ESSEX

Now you know that's not the case.

BYRON

First part or second? Careful,
I'm known to duel. Gentlemen,
I'll wager this: you won't sue the
man who will save you. No one of
intelligence would.

He exits. The SUB-COMMITTEE MEMBERS appear impotent.

EXT. PUBLIC PARK -- DAY

Punched in the mouth, Byron staggers. His opponent is Kean. They are bare-chested, sweating, dirty, surrounded by a large throng of ONLOOKERS. Kean and Byron clinch and wrestle.

KEAN

Just heard a bet of five guineas.

BYRON

On who?

KEAN

You.

BYRON

I'll not disappoint then.

Byron flattens him. Kean springs to his feet. They trade several blows, break, and circle, panting.

KEAN

I'm forming a club. The Wolves Club.

BYRON

Oh?

KEAN

You can't come. It's not for gentlemen amateurs.

Byron drops him. Kean hooks his foot behind Byron's heel and pushes on his knee with his other foot. Byron goes down. As he is getting up, Kean hits him with a haymaker. Kean rushes in and grabs him in a headlock. They stumble into the crowd, knocking down a FAT ARISTOCRAT. They land on him, squashing him.

KEAN

(squeezing hard)

This is the man who bet on you.

BYRON

Fear not, sir, I'll win the day!

Holding Byron's head, Kean punches him rapidly in the face several times.

INT. KEAN'S NEW HOUSE -- NIGHT

CHAMBER MUSIC drifts from the dining room. Walking arm in arm into the room are Mary and MRS. COX:

MRS. COX (softly)
I just adore your new home.

MARY (softly)
Why thank you.

MRS. COX
Edmund has such exquisite taste.

Mary is a little surprised and offended.

They enter the dining room.

INT. DINING ROOM -- NIGHT

The dining room is large, opulent. CHAMBER MUSICIANS play in an adjoining alcove. The table is crowded with DIGNITARIES and ARISTOCRATS, all having a good time. Kean, at the head of the table, looks up from his conversation as Mary enters. They exchange a grin. His eyes drift onto Mrs. Cox. There is sexual gravity between them.

EXT. KEAN'S NEW HOUSE CLARGES ST, PICCADILLY -- NIGHT

Kean and Mary stand on the front porch, waving good-bye to the last departing couple. They turn to go inside.

MARY
Thank you, Edmund. You were a
gracious and dignified host.

She kisses his cheek. He puts his arm around her.

KEAN
I'm glad you're happy, dear.

MARY
And I had so many compliments on
the house. And you know, they really
didn't mind our move to Piccadilly.

Kean lets her go, irritated.

MARY
I fully expected them to shun us...
Aren't you coming in?

KEAN
No...I'll wait a while.

She grins.

MARY
Well, don't be too long.

She hesitates at the door.

MARY
Edmund...Do you think things might
go better for us now, between us.

KEAN
Why not? We have everything. With
so much, we can be more tolerant
toward each other. Do you agree?

MARY
Yes.

KEAN
Good.

She grins, and goes inside.

INT. MASTER BEDROOM -- NIGHT

Mary, in a nightdress, removes a bed warmer from beneath the covers with a wooden spade. She takes it to a table near the window. Something catches her eye. She lifts the curtain back. Below a STABLE BOY has brought a horse round for Kean. Kean wears a hat and cape. Mary is saddened and embittered as she watches him ride out.

EXT. OLD LONDON -- NIGHT

Kean gallops his horse down Piccadilly, through Haymarket, across Trafalgar Square, and down the Strand.

EXT. COAL HOLE TAVERN, FOUNTAIN COURT -- NIGHT

Kean reins up his mount and hurries inside.

INT. UPSTAIRS CORRIDOR. TAVERN -- NIGHT

Kean strides down a corridor. Sounds of rabble-rousing ahead.

INT. PARTY ROOM. WOLVES CLUB -- NIGHT

Kean flings the door open.

KEAN

Ha ha! The Chairman has arrived!

Pope looks up with drunken delight. Kean strides to his chair, reserved next to Pope. The tables are arranged in a long rectangle.

POPE

All hail the Chairman!

All the men in the room toast Kean.

ALL

All hail the chairman!

There are PROSTITUTES being openly had on the tables, amongst the food. WENCHES with their breasts exposed are serving drinks and being molested. Kean picks up a mug.

KEAN

I declare the Wolves Club now in session!

Cheers.

INT. STABLE -- DAY

Mary walks between a long line of stalls, glancing into each either side. She stops as she sees her husband.

MARY (curt)

Edmund...Edmund!

Kean sleeps on a pile of hay, his horse's head across his lap. He raises his head blearily, grunting.

MARY

You're on in less than an hour.

She departs.

EXT. A FIELD -- NIGHT

A large campfire. Looking through it, Lathuro raises himself up, appearing to emerge from within the flames. He is bedraggled and without the slightest idea where he is. He becomes aware he is surrounded by sleeping men, big men, often obese, wearing black

leather, and snoring heavily. Utterly disorientated, Lathuro notices the insignia on the back of the nearest man's jacket - "Widow Makers". There are bottles and cans everywhere on the ground. Staggering about he stumbles over a body not far from the fire. The man groans and rolls over.

LATHURO

S'cuse me. S'cuse me...S'cuse me.
S'cuse me.

BIKER (drunk and annoyed)
Uh...what?

LATHURO

What country's this?

BIKER

What?

LATHURO

What country?

BIKER

G.B., man...fuck off.

The biker rolls away and goes back to sleep. Lathuro staggers away.

LATHURO

G.B...? G.B.?

He throws his leg over the nearest Harley and hits the starter. As he roars out of camp, not a single man stirs.

INT. LATHURO'S APARTMENT -- DAY

Lathuro sneezes.

MASON

Where's Beck?!

Lathuro is wrapped in a dressing gown, looking bad.

LATHURO

Oh, God!...Mason, keep your voice down, or Tony, throw this dickhead out.

Mason looks round at Tony. Tony shrugs.

MASON

Where's the writer, Beck?

LATHURO

Think I left him in Rio. Not sure.

MASON

You're not sure. You think you left him in Rio. Well here's something you can be sure of, he's gone, finished, off the picture!

LATHURO

Fine, tell him, get out of my face. Tony.

MASON

(whirling to face Tony)
Touch me and I'll have you kneecaped!

Tony has not moved, nor intends to.

MASON (to Lathuro)

Alright, what's this?!

He throws down a magazine article in front of Lathuro. There are cover photographs of Lathuro and Jenny having sex by the lake, pictures of him naked in his apartment, Tony in the next room as if awaiting him, pictures of him stripping off his shirt in the car, Tony alongside him, watching him. The heading reads, "SEX MAD AC/DC MOVIE STAR CAUGHT WITH HIS PANTS DOWN!".

LATHURO

Oh, Jesus.

INT. VARIOUS LIVING ROOMS -- NIGHT. QUICK CUTS TO: (They are lit as for watching TV at night in a darkened room)

1)

JENNY

Oh, Jesus.

2)

TONY

Oh, Jesus.

3)

MASON

Oh, Jesus.

4)

MR. ARTHUR (amused)

Oh, Jesus.

5)

MR. AVERAGE BRIT.
Jesus! Hey Alice, come and have
a look at this drunken ponce!

In a typical lower-class English household. 'THE WIFE' enters from the kitchen. On the TV Lathuro is in the process of demolishing the set on a talk show.

HOST
Mr. Lathuro! Mr. Lathuro! Please!

Lathuro hurls a chair knocking down a flap.

LATHURO (very drunk)
And as for you, you fucking pile of
ape shit! You fucking dog turd! You
pile of puke! Why don't I just break
your fucking legs right here on TV?!

HOST
Now look, there's no need for
this! This is not America!

LATHURO
We don't do this in America either!
It's a special effort just for you!

As TV studio action progresses, cut between Jenny, Tony, Mason and Mr. Arthur watching Lathuro on TV. Mr. Arthur finds the whole thing wonderful.

HOST
Mr. Lathuro, why don't we just calm
down, and sit down, and talk like
civilized human beings!

LATHURO
Oh, its civilized to call me a homo
on TV? That's civilized? You know
what you people are? You're parasites.
A man can't go boffing his own wife
without some limey turd clicking up his
ass with a camera!

HOST
Sorry? Boffing?

LATHURO
You heard me! You heard me!

HOST
(receiving instructions off camera)
Oh, you mean bonking!

LATHURO
No, I mean boffing you son of a
bitch! You son of a bitch! Why do
you have to twist everything!

HOST
And you say she's your wife?

LATHURO
Yeah, that's right, my wife, my
own wife. Not my secretary, not some
slut like you been disrespecting!

HOST
But you're single!

LATHURO
I'm trying to protect her, you idiot,
from assholes like you! You can feed on
me, no need to eat her!

Jenny rolls her eyes.

FX: a NEWSPAPER spins out toward us and stops, the headline reads:
"Feed On Me, No Need To Eat Her!"

Mr. Arthur laughs and claps his hands.

EXT. TERRACE. SEASIDE VILLA -- DAY

ECU on a screenplay, folded back. Pages are flicked.

LATHURO (OS)
It's that speech where Kean is
saying goodbye to Byron when Byron's
being thrown out of the country.

Lathuro is on a deckchair, dressed in a robe, wearing sunglasses.

LATHURO
Here it is...Yes. Wonderful.
Very touching.

He looks across to a young English woman, BETTY MORE.

MORE (flattered)

Oh.

LATHURO

And, when did Mr. Mason hire you?
I'm intrigued.

MORE

Well I submitted a piece to the
studio some time back, but I...I thought
they'd lost it or just shelved it or...

LATHURO

And you've been a romantic novelist
'til now?

MORE

Yes, yes, that's my forte.

LATHURO

Amazing you can write scripts so well
too. You English writers...Couldn't help
noticing though that now there's a strong
emphasis on Mary, Kean's wife...

MORE

Oh, oh, Mr. Mason and I discussed that,
and I've agreed to make a few little
changes, you know, to strengthen your
role. I'm a bit worried about going
too far though, you know, because it...it...

LATHURO (overlapping)

Oh no no, no you don't want to spoil
the integrity of the script...

MRS. CROSBY (Mrs. Cox) comes to the terrace doors. She wears a see-through negligee.

MRS. CROSBY

I'm having a drink, Nick. Want one?

Lathuro doesn't look round, but More does.

LATHURO

Yeah. Sure.

Mrs. Crosby departs. Lathuro grins at More's discomfort.

LATHURO
Well...Ain't it swell we'll be
working together.

More tries hard to smile.

INT. LATHURO'S TRAILER -- DAY

Lathuro tumbles about naked with Mrs. Crosby. They are laughing,
pretty drunk.

EXT. FILM LOCATION SITE -- DAY

The site is on a large scale, a costly production. A stretch limo
barrels to a fast stop. The FILM DIRECTOR (Winston) comes hurriedly
forward and meets Mason getting from the car. They talk briefly and
set off. Closer, Mason and the Director are approaching Lathuro's
trailer.

DIRECTOR
...everything bar kicking the
fucking door down! I even
phoned the prick!

Mason gets the picture. He knocks on the trailer door.

INTERCUT:

Lathuro and Mrs. Crosby are having sex. He's behind her.

Mason knocks harder.

MASON
Come on Nick, open up!

Lathuro and Mrs. Crosby are in a world all their own.

MASON
Come on for Chrissakes, what are
you doing in there?!

LATHURO
Research!

Mrs. Crosby bursts out laughing.

MASON (beginning to pace)
Alright, what is it?! If you want
more money forget it, the budget's
too fat as it is.

He stops and looks at the door.

MASON

Well at least come out and let's talk. We're ready to roll and we're burning light. Every minute costs me ten grand!

He stares at the door.

EXT. FILM SET -- DAY

A considerable time later. Mason and the Director are seated, waiting, defeated by the circumstances. In the background, the CREW have also mostly sat down. The activity that was everywhere when Mason arrived has been replaced with a strange silence. There is a small noise at Lathuro's trailer door. Mason and the Director stand. The door swings slowly open. There is no one there. Mason and the Director exchange a look.

MASON

Wait here.

He crosses to the trailer, and steps up.

EXT. TRAILER INT -- DAY

Lathuro is eating a steak at the table and drinking a glass of red wine. Mrs. Crosby is cooking on the stove. Barely acknowledging Mason's presence in the doorway, Lathuro gestures with his fork for him to sit opposite. Mason does so. He waits for Lathuro to look up, but it doesn't happen.

MASON

Well?

LATHURO

We're going with Beck's script.

MASON (stunned)

The hell we are.

LATHURO

We go with Beck's script, or I'm on the plane, and you're getting your ass sued off.

MASON

Fuck you.

LATHURO
Fuck yourself, here.

He tosses him a contract with a section circled in red.

LATHURO
I signed for Beck's script.

Mason looks up at him, amazed.

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM -- DAY

CLOSE UP: Mason (sitting in Studio Head's chair.)

MASON
I think a statement to the effect that
we no longer find Nick Lathuro suitable
and that we have decided instead on
England's own William Swanson.

He grins to his right. SWANSON (Macready), sitting in the chair Mason
previously occupied, returns his grin.

MASON
...and an entirely British cast.

MR. STEWART (Lord Essex) is on Mason's left.

STEWART
What about something for the investors?

MASON
Oh...say we've rescheduled to May
for better weather, always sounds good.
And something like, the buy-out of
Lathuro has been underwritten by a
powerful cartel of Hong Kong bankers.
Um...Mr. Lai?

Mason looks to the opposite end of the table. An elderly Chinese
banker, MR. LAI ('lie') is sitting there.

MR. LAI
(smiling to his right)
It's been a while, but I'm sure I still
know how to tell white lies.

He suddenly bursts out laughing. He is joined in an equally out-of-
proportion laugh by Mr. Arthur, sitting in Beck's chair. They hoot
with laughter. The others grin with confused politeness.

INT. CORRIDOR. OFFICE COMPLEX -- DAY

Mr. Arthur and Mr. Lai are walking side by side. Mr. Lai stops to take the lift. Mr. Arthur walks on.

MR. LAI
Thanks for the tip.

MR. ARTHUR
Thanks for the job.

The lift doors open.

INT. CORRIDOR. LATHURO'S HOTEL -- DAY

Fat Tony hurtles from the lift, newspaper in hand, and stops beside Lathuro's door. He puffs as he searches his pockets desperately. In his panic he can't find the entry card so pounds on the door instead.

TONY
Open! Open up! Let me...!

Jenny opens the door.

JENNY
It's open.

Tony rushes past her.

INT. LATHURO'S APARTMENT -- DAY

Lathuro, in his trousers, socks and singlet, has a low, portable tight-rope stand set up and is practicing tight-rope walking. Jenny has an ironing board out and is ironing his shirts.

TONY
You're never gonna believe this!

LATHURO
(balancing)
What?

TONY
(putting on glasses, reading)
"It's been decided that the role of
Kean will go to English stage star,
William Swanson."

Lathuro falls off the rope.

LATHURO

What?!

TONY

(holding up his hand and continuing)

"A studio spokesperson said that it was decided to dump Lathuro in favor of Swanson even though it could mean a multi-million dollar buy-out of Lathuro's contract. The spokesperson said that it was considered Lathuro's behavior is counter-productive to the film's interests." And get this, get this, "In a shock announcement it was decided that little-known, retired English film director, Mr. Philip Arthur, is to be the film's new director. Arthur is recognized as the foremost authority on Edmund Kean, and is delighted with the new script by English author Betty More."

Lathuro snatches the newspaper and turns to the cover.

LATHURO

Oh my God, it's "The Times"!

He throws on the shirt from the ironing board.

LATHURO

Ahh! Ahh! Ahh!

He tears it off, and pulls another from a coat hanger.

LATHURO

C'mon.

Grabbing shoes he flings open the door. Mr. Crosby (Ald. Cox) fills the doorway, about to knock.

MR. CROSBY

Oh, hi, have you seen...?

LATHURO

Not now, Crosby!

Lathuro and Tony rush past.

LATHURO

Jenny, get him a drink or something!

MR. CROSBY
(chuckling to Jenny)
He's a crazy guy...Have you seen my wife?

EXT. LIMO INT -- DAY

INTERCUT SCENES (or perhaps a diagonally split screen): Tony is driving, Lathuro in back, on the car phone. His LAWYER (Sigell) is at a table in a room lit only by a desk lamp. It is night in the US. He has his pajamas and a gown on. Through half-moon reading glasses he studies the contract on the table before him.

LAWYER
My advice is take the money and run.
They'll settle. You'll get about a third
to a quarter. Not bad for doing nothing.

LATHURO
But I want to play Kean! He invented
real acting! He he he...found the truth!

LAWYER
Well, fortunately, Nicholas, I know you,
so I stuck a special clause in for these very
circumstances. Won't stop them buying you
out, but you can definitely tie 'em up in court.

LATHURO
What? What is it? What?

LAWYER
Well, it's in heavy legalese, but it's
clause 21(b).

Lathuro flips quickly through his copy.

Tony swerves the car, avoiding a near collision, having his own
nightmare driving on the left side of the road.

LATHURO
Hey, dummy, kill me after the movie.
(to the lawyer) Yeah, right, got it.

LAWYER
What it means essentially is that
you have the right to choose the
director anytime after you've signed.
Now you haven't exercised that option
as yet. I put it in because it's the
perfect way for you to blackmail a
director if you have to.

Lathuro grins.

INT. COMMITTEE ROOM. DRURY LANE -- DAY

PHILLIPS

(reading)

"These are my proposals: I offer eight thousand pounds per annum for rental of Drury Lane. In a word I shut my doors against all committees, expecting an immediate surrender of their keys and all privileges in possession. This is my offer - if they like it, so; if not, farewell. I cross the Atlantic, Et Vito Alterius sapiens emendat sum!"

He bows and exits. There is a roar of laughter.

LORD ESSEX

He loves the Latin, that man...

I think Mr. Elliston's proposal...?

Everyone nods, amused.

INT. MANAGER'S OFFICE. DRURY LANE -- DAY

DUNN enters the room. Elliston is behind the desk.

ELLISTON

Any Luck?

Dunn waves a letter and hands it to him.

DUNN

It was a merry chase, but the quarry is cornered. With great difficulty I found he was sighted at the Regent in Brighton. So I wrote there. It was returned unopened. So I...

INT. RECEPTION. REGENT HOTEL. BRIGHTON -- DAY

Dunn talks with the Landlord. They act out what Dunn is saying.

DUNN (VO)
...went there. The landlord insisted
he had left for France two days
prior, but I thought I heard his
laughter through the wall. So later I...

SFX: MUFFLED laughter.

Dunn departs.

INT. RECEPTION. REGENT HOTEL -- DAY

DUNN'S MESSENGER speaks with the LANDLORD.

DUNN (VO)
...paid a man, who was to tell
the landlord he was in Kean's
confidence and to pass on a note.
The note was greetings from yourself,
Inquiring as to his health.

BACK TO ELLISTON'S OFFICE:

DUNN
The note was passed. (indicating)
The reply.

Elliston has opened the letter and reads.

KEAN (VO)
Elliston! I hate a trickster!

EXT. REAR. REGENT HOTEL -- DAY

A dining table is set up on the grass at the rear of the hotel. Kean, Pope, and various TOADIES and WHORES feast, all very drunk. AS VO continues the LANDLORD and SERVANTS bring out a roast pig on a tray and a barrel of ale set on a carpenter's horse.

KEAN (VO)
You have employed unworthy means
to disturb my solitude. I am here
under the direction of Sir Anthony
Carlisle, and will not stir from
this place until I have gone through
all the routine of medicine and
sea-bathing prescribed by that great
man. "Kean must have repose!".

INT. STAGE. DRURY LANE -- NIGHT

Macready performs RICHARD III. (ACT 3: SCENE 7: LONDON, THE COURT OF BAYNARD'S CASTLE.) RICHARD is in conference with BUCKINGHAM. They are both seated.

KEAN (VO)

I leave you in no distress. You have
Macready! Macready, Elliston! Why
should you be anxious about poor Kean?
Yet, a breath - a breath I say,
of Kean shall confound a generation
of Macreadys!

As Kean's VO takes place, Macready as RICHARD (under).

RICHARD: I cannot tell if to depart in silence
Or bitterly to speak in your reproof
Best fitteth my degree or your condition:
If not to answer, you might haply think
Tongue-tied ambition, not replying, yielded
To bear the golden yolk of sovereignty
Which fondly you would here impose on me...

INT. THE WINGS, DRURY LANE THEATRE -- NIGHT

Winston is writing in his diary, his face twisted with bitterness. The play goes on in the background.

WINSTON (VO)

This liar, this debaucher, Kean,
still evades the drunkard, Elliston.
The books are in ruins. Yet Elliston
has not the stomach to sue.
Creditors press him on all sides.

INT. STORAGE ROOM -- DAY

The door opens. Elliston, with a bottle, and looking very drunk, is cringing in the corner. Winston is in silhouette in the doorway looking down upon him.

WINSTON (VO)

It is difficult to know who is
the more insane. Kean or Elliston.

INT. A PASSAGEWAY -- DAY

WINSTON (VO)

Elliston has taken to kicking people's

WINSTON (VO) (Cont'd)
bottoms if they disagree with him.
Yesterday, he kicked both mine and
Lord Essex's.

There is a mildly heated discussion going on between Elliston,
Winston, and Lord Essex. Elliston suddenly starts kicking bottoms.

BACK TO: THE WINGS

The twisted face of Winston. He slaps his book shut as an ACTOR passes
behind him, waiting on a cue. Winston decides it is safe, and
continues writing.

WINSTON (VO)
That egotist, Kean, tries all around
him as if he alone should stand like
the Colossus of Rhodes athwart the
stage. Even his leading ladies are
dismissed if they perform too well.

INT. KEAN'S DRESSING ROOM, DRURY LANE -- NIGHT

WINSTON (VO)
It must be Kean, only Kean,
always. First there was Booth,
the imitator of Kean. He was
cunningly lured from Covent Garden
by a contract Kean devised.

Kean smears on make-up. CHARLES 3, (12) watches his father from the
far side of the room. The DRESSER sorts clothes, pottering about.
Close on Kean, the mirror below showing us his face. He pauses,
staring at himself. As the Dresser leaves the room Kean's eyes find
his son in the mirror and he holds out his hand. Charles crosses to
him, and takes the hand.

KEAN
(watching his own reflection)
Feel it?

Charles does not understand. Kean looks up at him.

I tremble.

CHARLES
Why?

KEAN (small, frightened)
Do you believe in me, Charlie?

CHARLES

Yes.

Kean looks back at his own reflection, unsure of himself.

INT. DRURY LANE -- NIGHT

Kean is playing OTHELLO, BOOTH is playing IAGO. (ACT 3: SCENE 3: CYPRUS. THE GARDEN OF THE CASTLE) OTHELLO and IAGO move diagonally to the corners of the stage, and across the front. The direct imitation of the movement by Booth creates a ridiculous effect. There are titterings from the AUDIENCE.

OTHELLO: What dost thou say, Iago?

IAGO: Did Micahel Cassio, when you woo'd my lady,
know of your love?

OTHELLO: He did, from first to last; why dost thou
ask?

IAGO: But for a satisfaction of my thought;
No further harm.

OTHELLO: Why of thy thought, Iago?

IAGO: I did not think he had been acquainted with
her.

OTHELLO: O, yes; and went between us very oft.

TIME DISSOLVE TO:

(ACT 4: SCENE 1: CYPRUS. BEFORE THE CASTLE) IAGO, in his twisted psychology, has brought OTHELLO to believe that CASSIO has had sex with DESDEMONA. OTHELLO is now in a white-hot rage of jealousy and is venting his spleen on the nearest object - namely, IAGO.

OTHELLO: Lie with her! Lie on her! We say lie on her
when they belie her. Lie with her!
That's fulsome.
Handkerchief, confessions, handkerchief!

With total histrionics, OTHELLO strikes IAGO and pushes him around the stage.

OTHELLO: To confess and be hanged for his labour -
first to be hanged, and then to confess.
I tremble at it. Nature would not invest
herself with such shadowing passion
without some instruction. It is not words

OTHELLO: that shake me thus: - pish! - nose,
 ears, and lips. Is't possible - Confess
 - handkerchief! - Oh devil!

IAGO has been battered to a standstill. (Booth is in a state of shock.) To crown his victory, OTHELLO falls down in an epileptic fit. At the height of the fit...

INT. BACKSTAGE -- NIGHT

Followed by various sycophantic members of the CAST, Kean strides toward his dressing room. Charles stands before his door. On seeing him, Kean throws up his arms in triumph and lets forth a victory cry. He embraces his son, picking him up.

INT. BACKSTAGE -- NIGHT

Against a wall, where backdrop ropes are tied off, Booth slumps, shattered.

 WINSTON (VO)
 The poor boy fled back to
 Covent Garden.

EXT. CITY STREET. (KEAN'S ERA) DAY

A BILL POSTER is pasting a bill advertising JUNIUS BRUTUS BOOTH to appear at Covent Garden as RICHARD III.

 WINSTON (VO)
 When bills were posted advertising
 him for Richard, Kean sought an
 injunction and he had Booth's contract
 to secure it. The poor boy's career
 was over, all because he had dared
 imitate the great monarch, Kean.

INT. AN OFFICE. DRURY LANE -- DAY

Kean sits behind his desk, reading. There is a knock.

 KEAN
 Entree.

Booth enters, accompanied by BOOTH'S SON (3 y.o.).

 BOOTH
 Mr. Kean.

 KEAN
 Your son?

Booth nods.

KEAN

I have sons...Had sons...They're
very precious...precious little...
I dare say you'd like to care and
protect this one?

Booth waits.

KEAN

Did you bring him along that I
would pity you?

BOOTH

No, his mother is a washer woman, for now.

KEAN

(holding up a contract)
I've decided to tear up your contract.

Tears spring to Booth's eyes.

KEAN

But...You will never, ever, imitate
me again.

Humiliated, Booth nods. Kean tears the contract in half.

KEAN

Voila.

He leans forward and cups the child's chin.

KEAN

And what do they call you, little sir?

CHILD

John Wilkes Booth.

KEAN

That's a pretty name.

Hold on the child's face as Kean holds it tenderly.

BACK TO: THE WINGS

Winston, scribbling...

WINSTON (VO)

Then there was Young, Elliston's great prize, wrested from Covent Garden for more money than there was to spare.

EXT. KEAN'S SCOTTISH HOME. ISLE OF BUTE -- DAY

At some distance to the house, Kean PACES. PHILLIPS sits on a rock, penciling quickly.

WINSTON (VO)

He planned to match Kean with Young as a special draw. Two greats on the one stage.

KEAN

...that as Mr. Young is engaged for 30 nights and my services are wanted to act with him - now this I call exceedingly impudent. The throne is mine, Elliston! Go where I will I shall always bear it with me - even if I sail to another quarter of the globe, no man, in this profession, can rob me of the character of the first English actor!

INT. MANAGER'S OFFICE -- DAY

Elliston and Kean are very drunk, and as they speak are slowly taking off their clothes.

KEAN

Did Young save the theater from bankruptcy? No, it was me. Me. Me. "Hamlet", "Richard", "Shylock". Drury Lane owes me. It owes me.

ELLISTON

I wasn't...didn't have Drury Lane then. You haven't seen Young play "Hamlet". He's frigging...he's frigging... He's good. And "Pierre"?! Huh! Huh! "Pierre"? Wipe you...wipe you, Wipe your arse!

KEAN

I don't give...See, I know you, Elliston. I know you. You think I don't but I...

He rubs his thumb and fingers together in the 'money' sign, indicates himself, then shakes his hand 'not interested'.

KEAN

Art. Art. "Hamlet". "Othello". That
Scottish play. They all belong to me.

A contract falls to the floor as he takes off his pants.

KEAN

Oh! Ha! Almost forgot! Ha! See!
See here?! Ha!

He indicates a clause.

KEAN

Says here, I have the right to
direct my own plays. See?

He gives it to Elliston, who is too drunk to read.

KEAN

I have the right, and I choose, that
Young should play wee wee itty bitty.
parts Ha ha ha ha ha. I win! I win.

There is a knock at the door. Kean staggers to it and opens it. FOUR WHORES come in. Kean bows low. Elliston, his trousers half off, bows too and falls over.

BACK TO: THE WINGS

Winston writes in his diary. He listens to the play, checks his call sheet.

WINSTON

Boy. Fetch Reynolds.

The CALL-BOY rushes off. Winston goes back to writing.

WINSTON (VO)

And now, Macready. Equal to Kean
on many levels. But off stage a
gentleman, a natural aristocrat.

INT. BANK -- DAY

Kean and Winston stand before a teller's window.

WINSTON (VO)

I once saw Kean when he skulked
back to London for banking. I
challenged him to act with Macready.
He replied...

KEAN

Fabius Maximus conquered not by
fighting a powerful enemy, but by
avoiding him. He weakened his
resources, and saved the city of Rome.

A TELLER pushes a big bag of money across to Kean. Kean departs,
swinging the bag pretentiously.

EXT. STREET OUTSIDE BANK - DAY

Kean hails a cab and it pulls up before him, however he notices JANE
PORTER (Betty More) nearby, also trying to hail the same cab. He tips
his hat and opens the door, offering it with over-zealous gallantry.
Jane Porter walks away, humiliated and angry.

WINSTON (VO)

He didn't care whose life he ruined.

Kean gets into the cab and shuts the door.

The little upstart.

INT. OFFICE. MR. ARTHUR'S HOME -- DAY

Mr. Arthur paces. He wears a summer frock, gloves, high heels, a hat
with veil, and a purse. He stops and looks across the room.

LATHURO (OS)

Try leaning back a little.

Lathuro sits cross-legged on the floor. He wears buckskins, with an
Indian chief's headdress. Mr. Arthur sets off, leaning back a little.

MR. ARTHUR

Better?

LATHURO

Yeah, great. Yeah, you got it.
Let me hear a line.

MR. ARTHUR

"Those little red and green finches
have the most delightful twitter
don't you think, Mr. Montcriffe?"

Lathuro holds up his hand, palm up, indicating that Mr. Arthur is perfectly in character. Mr. Arthur lifts up his veil, sits down and takes off his gloves.

MR. ARTHUR

It's only an amateur production.
I have to do it. Too late to pull
out now.

LATHURO

Put your knees together.

Mr. Arthur does so quickly, caught-out being unladylike.

MR. ARTHUR

I'll just go change.

LATHURO

No no, leave it on. Grow into character.

Mr. Arthur agrees. Asked as a statement...

LATHURO

Kean, he used to research his character?

Mr. Arthur sucks in a lungful of air, and looks up.

EXT. LUNATIC ASYLUM. COURTYARD -- DAY

CROSSMATCH CLOSE UP: LUNATIC 1 sucks in a lungful of air, and looks up. Kean, sitting beside him, watches him with minute care. There are other LUNATICS all around them. Kean looks up to the sky, to see what Lunatic 1 is looking at so intensely.

There is an odd-shaped cloud.

Kean looks back at him. Lunatic 1 frowns slowly. He looks down, now straight ahead, and his eyes turn fierce. Kean gets up, and moves round in front of him, studying his face in close detail, inches away. He sits on the other side of him. Kean looks to the front, sucks in a lungful of air, and looks up thoughtfully.

INT. DRURY LANE. ON STAGE -- NIGHT

CROSSMATCH CLOSE UP: Kean as KING LEAR. (ACT6: SCENE 6: IN THE COUNTRYSIDE; NEAR DOVER.) LEAR sits on stage, fantastically bedecked in flowers. He frowns slowly. He looks down, straight ahead, and his eyes turn fierce.

LEAR: (Near Madness) No, they cannot touch me for conning; I am the king himself.
Nature's above art in that respect.
- There's your press - money. That fellow handles his bow like a crow-keeper: draw me a clothier's yard - Look, look, a mouse!
Peace, peace; - this piece of toasted cheese will do it.
There's my gauntlet; I prove it on a giant. - Bring up the brown bills. - O, well flown, bird! - i' the clout, i' the clout: hewgh! Give me the word.

Gratten, now in his 30's, is in the AUDIENCE, watching intently, marveling at Kean's genius.

INT. BACKSTAGE -- NIGHT

Gratten and GRATTEEN'S BROTHER (20's) are approaching Kean's dressing room. They knock. There is a muted response within. They enter.

INT. KEAN'S DRESSING ROOM -- NIGHT

Kean retches into a bucket, held by his Dresser. He is ghostly pale in his make-up.

GRATTEEN

Edmund, what is it? What's wrong?

KEAN

(wiping his face)

Oh, my good friend. Nothing, I think, just poor food.

As the Dresser goes by he surreptitiously shows Gratten the contents of the bucket. It contains a great deal of blood. Gratten looks at Kean, who is panting, sweating, trying to get up, but failing. He rushes to him.

GRATTEEN

My dear friend...you have tuberculosis.

KEAN (ironically amused)

And syphilis, gonorrhoea, gout.

Gratten is stunned. Kean pats his shoulder and moves on.

GRATTEEN

Are you being treated?

Kean holds up a goblet full of medicine in answer. He drinks it, and shudders at the horrible taste.

KEAN

Did you enjoy my Lear, Tom?

GRATTEN

(looking in the goblet)

Of course...Watch what doctors prescribe, Edmund. You may think they know what they're doing in this modern age, but it's not always so.

Kean shrugs, grins, uncomfortable. There is a knock at the door. MRS.COX (Mrs. Crosby) enters. She is followed by her husband, ALDERMAN COX (Mr. Crosby).

MRS. COX

Edmund, my darling, you were absolutely magnificent!

She kisses him on the mouth, a fraction too long. Cox and Gratten exchange a nod. Mrs. Cox sits on Kean's lap.

KEAN

Ha ha! Thank you, my sweet. Oh, Alderman Cox, Mr. Gratten, his brother. Mrs. Cox.

They exchange hand shakes.

GRATTEN

Well, we'll clear the decks as they say.

KEAN

Dinner tomorrow night, Tom, I'll be well then, you'll see.

GRATTEN

Alright, if you're sure. (to the Coxes')
A pleasure.

The Grattens depart.

MRS. COX

Oh, you're not dining with him?!
Robert and I we're going to ask
you and Mary over!

Ald. Cox is grinning and nodding. Kean's hand squeezes her rump on the side away from Cox.

KEAN

Oh, but it's his last day, and
we're old friends.

MRS. COX

(slapping his chest in mock rebuke)
Oh, poo!

Ald. Cox is grinning indulgently.

EXT. RESTAURANT -- NIGHT

Through the restaurant window Kean, Gratten, Gratten's Brother,
Gratten's (male) FRIENDS 1 & 2 can be seen dining. They are laughing.

INT. RESTAURANT -- NIGHT

The restaurant is crowded, noisy with conversation. There is a cross
conversation going; Gratten's Brother is talking to Friend 1, while
Gratten and Friend 2 are talking with Kean. It is cigar and port time.

GRATTEN

In your dining room?!

KEAN

Yes.

GRATTEN

In the middle of dinner?!

KEAN

Yes. Just before the pudding.

Gratten and Friend 2 laugh. Gratten's Brother leans in.

GRATTEN'S BROTHER

What was that? I missed it.

GRATTEN

He took on Mendoza and Richmond the
Black in the middle of dinner.

GRATTEN'S BROTHER

What, the pugilists?

KEAN

Yes, what's more I beat Richmond,
the Black which surprised even me.

GRATTEN

(to his brother)

Yes, but he's neglecting to say that
this was when his guests included
Lord Essex and fifteen other
Lords and Ladies.

Gratten's Brother bursts out laughing in amazement. Kean is handed a
note by PHILLIPS, his secretary, who departs.

GRATTEN'S BROTHER

Oh, my God! What did they say?!

KEAN

(reading the note)

Those cretins. They sit in their
ivory towers, pissing vicious gossip
on men who live full lives. Now,
Byron, there is a man, and look
what they're doing to him.

The others become quiet.

GRATTEN'S BROTHER

Who is that man who keeps handing you notes?

KEAN

My secretary. They're calling for
me at the club again.

GRATTEN'S BROTHER

Your secretary?! An actor with
a secretary?!

KEAN (terse)

Should not the leading actor of
the British stage have a secretary?

GRATTEN

Of course you should. (checking his
watch) Heavens, it's gone twelve. You
shouldn't stay for me, Edmund. You were
expected by nine, weren't you?

KEAN

Well in the overdue situation I
always rely on an excuse oft used
by Alexander the Great.

GRATTEN

Which was?

KEAN

Fuck 'em.

They all laugh. He stands.

KEAN

I suppose you're right, but I'll not let the night end here. You are such good company, and my dear friend. You must come too.

GRATTEN

Oh, but, now? I sail with the morning tide.

KEAN

No no no, you must come, I insist.

Kean, Gratten's Brother and Friends 1 & 2 simultaneously urge him to go, lifting him from his chair. Gratten eventually concedes.

GRATTEN

Alright, alright, alright! (to his Brother) But don't forget it is you who must drive me to the docks.

INT. PARTY ROOM. TAVERN -- NIGHT

Kean is on his feet, a mug of ale in his hand, urging on Pope and a Fat Prostitute in the middle of the room. Pope is naked from the waist down, and fornicating with an enormously obese PROSTITUTE, who is completely naked except for a delicate lace bonnet. It is not a pretty sight. All of the Toadies are uproariously drunk. Suddenly Kean becomes aware that Gratten is watching him.

Gratten and his Brother and Friends 1 & 2 are seated midway down one side of the room. The spectacle of Pope and the Prostitute is directly in front of them. Gratten and his companions, all gentlemen, appear in strong contrast to the people surrounding them. They sit, silently disgusted. Of them, only Gratten looks at Kean; his look not judgmental, but almost sad. Kean grins, trying to pretend it is all just fun. He knows, however, what he is becoming in Gratten's eyes.

SLOW ZOOM into CLOSE UPS on Kean and Gratten. Introduce SAD MUSIC and the BACKGROUND SOUNDS of the DOCKS (Two scenes on). As this is happening:

GRATTEN (VO)

He has changed. It's not enough
for him to be merely the best now.
He craves attention, like a drunkard
craves grog. He rages to be conspicuous.

EXT. THAMES -- DAY

Kean sits next to his PET LION as a WHERRYMAN propels them. Gratten is in a wherry behind. His words are illustrated.

GRATTEN (VO)

He invited me to follow him in
one of his wherries, while he sat
in another with a pet lion. I noticed
him tell his wherryman to make closer
to an oncoming punt. It was for no
reason but to shock the occupants.
I saw when they drew close that he
affected an air of nonchalance, but
I knew he basked in the glory of their
astonishment and likely gossip.

EXT. THAMES -- DAY

Kean, a glass of wine in his hand, holds aloft a silk handkerchief. He releases it delicately. SPECTATORS around him cheer. A fleet of WHERRYMEN start to race. The banks of the river are crowded with SPECTATORS. A banner reads, "EDMUND KEAN ANNUAL WHERRYMEN'S RACE".

GRATTEN (VO)

He inaugurated an annual wherryman's
race in his name, and now owns no
less than twenty wherries himself.
He even bought the most beautiful
yacht, yet I know he hates the open sea.

EXT. THE DOCKS -- MORNING

Gratten and his Brother walk to his ship.

GRATTEN

He was humble once, unaffected.
But now, there's a strange
connivance about him.

GRATTEN'S BROTHER

Maybe he disguised it before.

GRATTEN

Mmm, perhaps I'm naive but I've always felt he was honest with me. He's conceited, yes, but then one has to have flawless belief to become...Kean.

GRATTEN'S BROTHER

How do you think he feels about last night? He must be aware you were angry with him.

GRATTEN

Not angry...disillusioned.

EXT. DRURY LANE -- NIGHT

Kean spurs a magnificent black horse up and down the steps of the theater, screaming, sweating, frenzied.

EXT. COUNTRYSIDE -- NIGHT

Kean rides at the gallop. The fall of the horse's hooves punch hot air from it's lungs as it labors with effort, foaming at the mouth. They jump a hedge.

BACK TO: THE DOCKS

GRATTEN

Well, they're casting off.

He offers his hand. They shake, then embrace.

GRATTEN'S BROTHER

Take care, brother. Write well.

GRATTEN

I can only improve.

Suddenly a carriage comes to a halt alongside. Kean leaps out, and embraces Gratten desperately.

KEAN (almost sobbing)

I thought I would miss you.

He clings to Gratten, trembling. Gratten looks in surprise to his Brother. A kindly look comes to their eyes. Gratten embraces Kean, and rocks him like a child.

GRATTEN

It's nice of you to come, Edmund.

Kean, still clutching his arms, separates.

KEAN

I was sorry for last night.

GRATTEN

We won't speak of it. I do love you,
Edmund. I can't fathom you, and I
doubt you know yourself. But I do
love you.

They part. Gratten moves onto the ship.

EXT. DOCK -- DAY

The ship is moving away from the dock. Gratten, on deck, waves. Kean,
on the wharf, forward of Gratten's Brother, stares.

KEAN

Write me!

GRATTEN

I will!

DISSOLVE on Kean's face TO:

INT. MR. ARTHUR'S HOUSE. OFFICE -- DAY

MATCHING: Lathuro's face, looking up. Still in Indian dress, he is on
his knees, a bunch of pins in his mouth. Mr. Arthur stands on a pouf
beside him. Lathuro is pinning up Mr. Arthur's dress hem.

MR. ARTHUR

The world of politics had Napoleon.
The world of society had Byron. But
what was Kean? A pathetic imitator
of both.

EXT. MR. ARTHUR'S HOUSE -- DAY

A newspaper flies through the air and slaps noisily against Mr.
Arthur's pathway.

BACK TO: MR. ARTHUR'S OFFICE

MR. ARTHUR

Ah!

He steps off the pouf. Lathuro leans with him, trying to get the last
pin home before he is gone.

EXT. MR. ARTHUR'S HOUSE -- DAY

Mr. Arthur picks up the paper.

MISS CARMICHAEL
Your slip's showing.

MR. ARTHUR.
Ah, Miss Carmichael...I'm doing a play.

Her look is doubtful, and she goes back to trimming her rose bushes. Mr. Arthur turns to go inside. As he reaches for the door he tugs down his skirt.

INT. MR. ARTHUR'S HOUSE, OFFICE -- DAY

The opened newspaper is dropped in front of Lathuro on the floor.

MR. ARTHUR (OS)
My hem's too short and your wife's
left you.

The headlines read: "LATHURO MUST GO!", subheading: "An Outraged British Public Says 'Enough!'".

Lathuro picks up the paper.

LATHURO
What?...Why would she do that?

MR. ARTHUR
(lighting two cigarettes)
My dear boy, I can't imagine why.

Lathuro see a photograph of Mrs. Crosby. His eyes widen. He gets up, finds his clothes and searches quickly through them. He produces a packet of cigarettes. Mr. Arthur hands him the already lit cigarette.

LATHURO
(crossing to the phone)
Can I use your phone?

MR. ARTHUR
(fixing his own cigarette into its holder)
Absolutely not.

LATHURO
What?

MR. ARTHUR

A half-hour's histrionics on an international line, culminating in her hanging up in your ear, you being (American accent) 'really pissed' and me being shafted with the bill. Not on your Nelly.

LATHURO

I'll pay you!

MR. ARTHUR

(holding out his hand)
One hundred pounds.

LATHURO

A hundred...?! I haven't got...!

MR. ARTHUR

How much do you have?

LATHURO

I don't carry money...!

MR. ARTHUR

(blocking off his route)
Or a mobile phone it would seem. Sorry, but there it is. You know, Kean's wife left him. Left him to live in their house in Scotland.

LATHURO

Fine, can I use...?!

MR. ARTHUR

You can imagine how he felt. Lost, bleak, abandoned.

LATHURO

I'll get a guy to bring money over, just let me...!

He puts his hand on the phone. Mr. Arthur holds down the receiver.

MR. ARTHUR

Imagine that feeling of desolation. Arriving home, finding her gone.

LATHURO

Please, let...

MR. ARTHUR

They didn't have phones then. You couldn't just pick up the receiver and ask, 'What's wrong, honey? Was it something I said?'.

LATHURO

Let...

MR. ARTHUR

But what about seizing the moment for what it is? What about capturing the feeling and letting it fester in you just as it festered in him?

LATHURO

Let...!!

Mr. Arthur walks away suddenly.

MR. ARTHUR

And you call yourself an actor.

Lathuro punches out the ISD number. The phone can be heard ringing. Lathuro looks at Mr. Arthur, thinking. Mr. Arthur stands with his back to him, elegantly smoking, the holder out to one side. The phone is ringing. Lathuro is thinking. It's ringing. He's thinking. Eventually, it's answered.

JENNY (sleepy) (Phone VO)

Hello....?

Lathuro watches Mr. Arthur.

JENNY

...Hello?

Lathuro hangs up.

REVERSE ANGLE: Mr. Arthur facing us, Lathuro over his shoulder, watching him. Mr. Arthur grins.

FADE IN: CROWD LAUGHTER.

INT. COURTROOM -- DAY

The packed courthouse rocks with laughter. THOMAS DENMAN, council for the plaintiff, is on his feet, a letter in hand.

LORD CHIEF JUSTICE (laughing)

Could we have that last bit again, please.

Renewed laughter.

DENMAN

Certainly, m'Lord. "All I ask, my Little Breeches, (laughter) is that for a few months you will hide yourself, that when the hue and cry is raised, they shall find nothing to criminate me: If the goods are not found upon the thief, there can be no conviction'."

LORD CHIEF JUSTICE (Laughing)
That's "Othello", isn't it?

Laughter.

DENMAN

Yes, m'Lord.

LORD CHIEF JUSTICE (Laughing)
Oh, a very nice touch!

Laughter. Lord Chief Justice laughs so hard he wipes tears from his eyes. The gallery and jury are laughing as much at him as at the evidence. Lord Chief Justice sobers and raps his hammer. He indicates for Denman to proceed.

DENMAN

Then there is this letter. The most damning of all.

Lord Chief Justice snorts laughter again. He has a case of the giggles. The gallery bursts out laughing again.

LORD CHIEF JUSTICE
(barely able to speak)
I'm sorry...I'm sorry...

One feels the demeanor of the Court is shattered.

INT. PRIVATE ROOM. TAVERN -- DAY

Sigell stands before the door. Kean opens it joyously. Pope and TWO WHORES are in the room.

KEAN

Sigell! Come in, come in! I have the finest brandy ready to drink damnation to whores and Alderman!

He indicates a tray with a fine decanter upon it. The Two Whores react in mock outrage to his jibe. Kean bows.

KEAN

Excepting those present, of course!

POPE (throw away)

It's alright. I'm no Alderman.

Everyone but Sigell laughs.

KEAN

Well, come in, come in. What news now, tell me the squalid details. Was Cox too upset?

SIGELL

You lost.

The room goes quiet. Kean is stunned.

SIGELL (heated)

I don't know how you thought you could win. I tried to warn you. It was those blasted letters sent the same day to Alderman Cox and Mrs. Cox. You came out looking very bad.

INT. COURTROOM -- DAY

Denman reads a letter to the jury. The mood of the courtroom is much changed; serious and still.

DENMAN (reading)

"Dear little imprudent girl, Your incaution has been very near bringing our acquaintance to the most lamentable crisis. Of course he will show you the letter I have written him; appear to countenance it, and let him think we are never to meet again, and in so doing he has lost me as a friend. Leave all further arrangements to me. All shall be shortly as you wish."
(holding up another letter) I read to you now, the letter Mr. Kean referred to, written to the plaintiff, Alderman Cox, that same day.

Ald. Cox is sitting in the gallery. Denman reads:

DENMAN (reading)

"My Dear Cox, I have been seriously considering the mass of nonsense uttered by us the last two nights. I must own likewise they have given me great uneasiness. To remove all doubts upon the subject, I shall beg leave to withdraw a friendship rendered unworthy by suspicion."

He lowers the letter.

DENMAN

Had he paused there...was it possible for anything to be better calculated to remove suspicion than this air of injured honor? But he did not pause there. Mr. Kean proceeded, and let the jury take from his own pen his own character as written against himself.

(reading)

"I must be the worst of villains if I could take you by the hand, while mediating towards you an act of injustice. You do not know me, Cox: mine are follies, not vices. It has been my text to do all that is good in the world, and when I am called to a superior station, my memory may be blamed, but not despised. Wishing you and your family every blessing the world can give you, believe me, nothing less than Yours,
most sincerely, Edmund Kean."

Shocked silence in the court, followed by mutterings.

DENMAN

Ladies and gentlemen, you see exposed before you the most treacherous of deceivers, and the most sanctimonious of hypocrites.

As Denman takes his seat, there are louder mutterings throughout the room. The hammer is rapping for silence.

INT. THEATER. DRURY LANE -- NIGHT

The play is underway. Kean is doing his best to appear calm, urging the other actors to be brave. Nothing can be heard over the contesting parties in the AUDIENCE, booing and cheering him. In the pit various

members of the Wolves Club are among the sordid rabble. There is the FAT PROSTITUTE, wearing her little bonnet. She is constantly shouting, "Bravo! Bravo!".

(ACT 2: SCENE 1: LONDON. A ROOM IN THE PALACE.) Present are EDWARD, who is sick, QUEEN ELIZABETH, DORSET, RIVERS, HASTINGS, BUCKINGHAM and VARIOUS COURTIERS. RICHARD, who is not yet king, is walking about, addressing the assembled court.

RICHARD: If any here,
By false intelligence or wrong surmise,
Hold me foe;
If I unwittingly, or in my rage,
Have committed that is hardly borne
By any in this presence, I desire
To reconcile me to his friendly peace:
'Tis death to me to be at enmity;
I hate it and desire all good men's love.

A barrage of oranges and rotten fruit hit the stage from the back of the theater. The action on stage stops and all actors look out, afraid. In defense of Kean, a half dozen Wolves Club members start to fight other people in the Audience. There is chaos and screams. Kean, watching, is more astonished than afraid.

EXT. KEAN'S HOUSE -- NIGHT

Kean arrives in a cab. Getting out, he immediately sees a front window has been smashed. He dashes inside.

INT. FRONT SITTING ROOM -- NIGHT

Kean rushes in. There is only one lamp on in the corner. Mary sits curled in a chair, trembling, terrified.

KEAN

Mary.

Her reaction for him to stay away is so violent he stops.

KEAN

Mary, what is it? Were you hit?

He looks round for the rock, finds it, shows it to her, and crosses to the window. He drops it outside.

KEAN

Here, let me...

MARY

No!

She gets up and cowers in the corner.

MARY

All day...All day...Where were you?!

KEAN

At the theater. Mary, my love, what have they done?

MARY

Stay away!!

She breaks down crying and slides to the floor. Eventually...

MARY

All day they were at the door. I told them, those people from the "Times", I told them...everything.

KEAN

Everything?

MARY

Yes, everything!!...I even told them ...you've...given me the pox.

She lowers her head, sobbing. The full impact of what is upon him finally comes to Kean.

INT. PROVINCIAL THEATER -- NIGHT

Kean performs LEAR. He is booed mercilessly. (ACT 4: SCENE 6: THE COUNTRY NEAR DOVER.)

LEAR: (Kneeling) Adultery?
Though shalt not die: die for adultery! No:
The wren goes to't, and the small gilded fly
Does lecher in my sight.
Let copulation thrive! For Gloster's
bastard son
Was kinder to his father than my daughters
Got 'tween the lawful sheets.
To't, luxury, pell-mell, for I lack soldiers.

FARMER (North Country accent)

Boo! Go back to London! Kean! We don't want your kind here! Go back to London, Kean!

He reaches into a bag, pulls out an orange and hurls it.

Closer on Kean: Struck by the orange, he nevertheless continues.

EXT. ENGLISH COUNTRYSIDE, AERIAL. -- DAY

Sweeping across the countryside, eventually intersecting a road. Moving along the road is a horse drawn coach. (Going the opposite way to Mary's coach earlier)

EXT. COACH INT. -- DAY

Moving. Kean stares out the window, deeply depressed.

MARY (VO)

Dear Edmund, I am sorry that you must return to an empty house. I've dismissed the servants to save you money and left for the home in Scotland. I hope your American tour goes well and you recover your lost prestige, which as we both know is of primary importance to you. The Americans are probably unaware of happenings here so far away. (Cont'd)

INT. FRONT SITTING ROOM. KEAN'S HOUSE -- DAY

Kean enters the house and discovers the note.

MARY (VO)

Please leave me alone, Edmund. You have your whores, your mistresses, other men's wives. I'm sorry I didn't give you more in our bed, but then it was not in my nature to be what you needed. Best wishes in your life, Mary.

Kean crumples the letter in his hand.

KEAN (finally breaking)
Mary!...Not you!...Not you!

He cries, sinking to his knees.

Oh, my God, not you, Mary!

INT. DINING ROOM. MR. ARTHUR'S HOUSE -- NIGHT

There is a semi-circle of light against the wall, indicating the room is illuminated only by a poker light shade, low down over the table. Camera focuses on a photograph of Mr. Arthur. He is on a film set,

directing, a megaphone in one hand, his cigarette holder in the other. OS are the sounds of a meal being eaten. PULL FOCUS to a wine glass ascending into frame.

MR. ARTHUR (OS)
May you be in heaven long before
the Devil knows you are dead.

The wine glass is joined by another.

LATHURO (OS)
To death. Like the rumble of
distant thunder at a picnic.

The glasses clink.

Their shadows on the wall, talking, glasses held high.

MR. ARTHUR (OS)
Like the smell of ashes on the wind.

LATHURO (OS)
Life is a game at which everyone loses.

MR. ARTHUR (OS)
Life differs from the play only
in this: It has no plot, all is vague,
desultory, unconnected, 'til the
curtain drops with the mystery unsolved.

The glasses clink.

INT. KEAN'S RESIDENCE. BEDROOM -- DAY

Kean, his features bloated with alcohol and age, wears a full red Indian costume complete with war paint. As the shot widens, a pillow is revealed behind his head, propping him up. Wider, he is holding a tomahawk. His other hand carries a wine glass into shot. He is propped up on his bed. An ARTIST is painting his portrait. It shows Kean in a standing position, looking much younger, fitter, and more handsome than he is, Pope and a TOADIE sit to one side, drinking. There is a knock. Pope crosses to the door. A BLACK BOY, dressed in fine livery, mutters something to him. Pope turns.

POPE
Someone named Gratten?

KEAN
Ah, he's here?! Yes!

Pope nods to the Black Boy, and he departs. Kean struggles to get off the bed. Pope and the Toadie rush to help him up. They let him go. Kean staggers, quite drunk.

KEAN

(referring to the buffalo hide)
Ooop! Ooop! This blasted hide.
Stand off, stand off.

He steadies himself, assumes a noble pose, facing the door. He signals the others to move away from him. The door opens and Gratten enters.

GRATTEN

Good God!

Kean laughs, throwing off the robes and tossing aside his tomahawk. He crosses, laughing, to Gratten and hugs him.

KEAN

It's me! Alanienouidet!

GRATTEN (laughing)

Who?

KEAN

Alanienouidet! The name given me by the Huron chiefs. Canada. Oh, noble, hard men, Tommy, powerful, strong men. Fierce. They only give names to equals, you know.

GRATTEN

You're drunk.

KEAN

No!...No, no!...Tiddled. Drunk's hours away.

He waves the others away. They depart. Kean staggers to the bed and produces a script from beneath his pillow.

KEAN

You see! I have it! It's here! I study it by the hour!

GRATTEN

You like it?

KEAN

Like? It's...it's...it's masterpiece.
I...it's, I can't believe you
haven't written for theater.
Tommy...it's genius.

He hands Gratten a drink.

GRATTEN

Well I wouldn't go that far.

KEAN

No, no! Yes! Listen! I am at a crisis!
A crisis...in my life, my art.

GRATTEN

Really?

KEAN

Oh, the worst, the worst is upon
me, Tommy. I'm not heckled anymore.

He looks significantly at Gratten. Gratten is mystified. He begins to answer but is forestalled...

KEAN

It's coldness!

GRATTEN

What is?

KEAN

They're cold. They just watch. And
then...then they applaud. Politely.
It's terrible, Tommy, worse than...
cold, like death.

Gratten waits, unsure of Kean's meaning.

KEAN

But this! This!...will be my
deliverance. This...

GRATTEN

"Ben Nazir."

KEAN

"Ben Nazir, The Saracen", yes,
sorry just forgot. This is my
new force. This is my new chance.
Shakespeare, fuck Shakespeare.

KEAN (Cont'd)

It's old, they've seen it.
Seen it! Seen it!

GRATTEN

Did they really burn down theatres
in America while you were there?

KEAN

Oh, only one, 'The Boston' I think.
Americans get so excited about
infidelity.

GRATTEN

Another tea party.

KEAN

Yes, something about Boston.

The door to an adjoining sitting room opens. Gratten and Kean look in that direction. The Black Boy holds the door as TWO YOUNG WOMEN, dressed in black, with heavy veils obscuring their faces, enter and sit on a chaise longue.

KEAN (very loud stage whisper)
Oh! I forgot. These are two
clergyman's daughters, lovely
creatures, beautiful. Besotted.
They've come to London with the
most unlimited offers.

He waves his hand at Gratten intimating he should catch his meaning and make himself scarce. Gratten looks at the two, sure they must have heard. They sit, waiting.

GRATTEN (quietly)

Well, I'll not crowd your
hunting ground then.

KEAN (loudly)

Oh! Are you leaving?!

GRATTEN (amused)

Yes...Yes! Will I see you at
the theater, then?!

KEAN

Yes. Yes. Tomorrow we begin
on your masterpiece. Be prompt.
Bright and early. At one.

Gratten is out the door. Kean turns to the sitting room, full of saucy anticipation.

HALL. Gratten moves down the hall. He stops, thoughtful, glances back, wondering. He continues on.

INT. DRURY LANE -- DAY

Gratten sits in the theater, alone. Kean is rehearsing "BEN NAZIR, THE SARACEN". He is sober. He reads his part from the script. There are ten SUPPORTING CAST also on stage.

KEAN

Blood is blood. Men who hold honour
in their hearts know no Gods to speak
of. They are blessed from within by
the bond of battle; the strength in
their enemy's eyes, the only parlance
of reverence. If Allah favours me,
and I am defeated, then does it mean
your God is greater than mine?

At some stage while Kean is reading CROSSFADE TO:

GRATTEN (VO)

He has degenerated from the handsome
man I played with in our youth.
Now is the pot belly, the spindly
legs, the bloated face of the
alcoholic. But still, the
magic, the power is there.

PRICE, the new American manager, smoking a cigar, enters below and watches the rehearsal.

EXT. LAKE -- DAY

Gratten sits under a tree, writing in a notebook.

GRATTEN (VO)

I've never seen a man labor so
hard over a part. Edmund insisted
he study alone.

He looks up, over the book. Kean sits in a wherry in the middle of the lake, studying a script, mouthing lines.

GRATTEN (VO)

This was brought about in the midst
of a most unpleasant scene with his
son, Charles.

INT. KEAN'S DRESSING ROOM -- DAY

A wig stand, with wig, is knocked over. It appears momentarily as if a head has been struck. Kean is revealed as the source of the violence.

KEAN

I paid for your education at Eton
and I'll be damned to see you waste
it on the stage!

CHARLES 4 (18)

It suits me! I've my own mind and
determination! I can survive
without your droppings to a dog!

Kean slaps his face. Gratten is alarmed. Kean is suddenly overcome with remorse and hugs Charles, kissing him repeatedly.

KEAN

Oh, I'm sorry! I'm sorry, my child.
Sorry. If I strike you it is only
to make you see sense. Charlie, take
this job with the East India Company.

CHARLES

You're sure it's not to preserve the
name of only one holy Kean for the stage?

KEAN

There is truth in that, but only
little. You're what I never could be,
Charles. I wanted what I am as much
for me as for you, and believe it
or not, for your mother as well.

Charles walks away. He opens the door, looks back at his father, and leaves.

KEAN

I want only what's best for him.

He crosses to a medicine bottle, pours some in a glass.

...What were we talking about?

GRATTEN

I...I was just asking about your
technique. You always keep the
script in your hand whether
you know the lines or not?

Kean drinks the medicine and winces.

KEAN

Yes...Yes, that is my way. Huh,

He waves his hand dismissively.

I'm ready this very night if need
be. But I cherish solitary study.
So I'll take the next week to
perfect the wee details. Ho, what
a shock is in the making for
London...England!

EXT. LAKE DAY -- DAY

SLOWED MOTION: Behind the wherry. Kean's cloaked figure is standing and the fluid motion of the paddle as he propels the wherry along with the long, single oar, swells the water behind.

GRATTEN (VO)

Each day, he would say the words
over and over, his voice carrying
faintly to the bank where I sat.

As the bow of the wherry surges into frame, the words, "BEN NAZIR" can be seen engraved in the wood.

INT. FITTING ROOM. TAILOR'S SHOP -- DAY

Kean is being fitted with a fabulous costume for BEN NAZIR. TWO TAILORS fuss with the fitting. Gratten leans on a cane, watching, smiling. Kean chats happily.

GRATTEN (VO)

Out of friendship for me, and a
desire to impress for himself, he
ordered a magnificent costume be made,
at 50 guineas from his own purse.
He refused to attend the final
rehearsal, claiming it would only
confuse him.

INT. DRURY LANE -- NIGHT

Gratten is taking his seat in a box, Aunt Tid beside him. We see PRICE, standing near an exit, smoking a cigar.

GRATTEN (VO)

Although this was met with uneasiness by the actors, and anger by the new manager, Mr. Price, it was accepted on the strength of Kean's genius.

The play is underway. (ACT 1. SCENE 1: THE PALACE OF BEN NAZIR) A grand court is assembled. The set is designed in a Persian style. NAFFIR, an envoy, is battling a large PALACE GUARD. They fight with scimitars. NAFFIR disarms the GUARD. The GUARD turns and runs. NAFFIR seizes a spear, throws it across stage, hitting the GUARD in the middle of the back. GUARD dies, falling into the wings. The AUDIENCE applauds the feat of spear throwing. NAFFIR turns to the COUNCIL OF FIVE ADVISERS.

NAFFIR: If infidels are fruit for us to pick and consume then why are we not bloated and fat on the sweets?! Why do our hands not stick with juice, instead of slipping our hilts with our own blood?!

ADVISER 1: (standing) Hold your fierce young heart! His highness draws nigh. Explain the death of his favorite if you can. We'll see your valor now.

Gratten leans closer to Aunt Tid.

GRATTEN

This is Edmund's cue.

She nods, grinning.

Kean enters. There is applause.

AUNT TID

(applauding)

Oh, magnificent, magnificent.

The theater goes quiet. Kean begins.

KEAN

So when the men of the desert, in the knight's armor come galloping upon sand dunes, rugged men, hard, hard men...

Gratten frowns, wondering what Kean is saying.

KEAN

...fierce men, come down the dunes, and then, then there is a fight, it isn't that we cannot hold them,

KEAN (Cont'd)
because they are fighting God, and
the God is upon the mantle of our
empire...etc.

It is a rambling, nonsensical discourse. Slowly Gratten goes beyond confusion and begins to express concern. Aunt Tid cannot understand Kean, and looks at Gratten for clarification. Individuals within the Audience are also unable to fathom meaning. Gratten's head goes down sadly. Aunt Tid suddenly realizes, puts her hand to her mouth and stifles a sob.

INT. DRURY LANE. BACKSTAGE

Gratten moves toward Kean's dressing room. Kean's Dresser exits from the room. He sees Gratten.

DRESSER
Oh, Mr. Kean departed immediately
after the performance, sir.

Gratten nods. Dresser departs. Gratten looks at the dressing room door, then decides to leave. Price, however, arrives in a great temper and enters the dressing room. Gratten watches. Price reappears.

GRATTEN
He's left.

PRICE
I'll kill that son of a bitch! I'll
see he never works in this theater again!

GRATTEN
You fool...Can't you see he's lost
his memory.

He departs, leaving an astonished Price.

EXT. KEAN'S HOME -- NIGHT

Gratten approaches the front door. It is ajar. He can hear a piano being softly played. He enters.

INT. KEAN'S HOME -- NIGHT

Following Gratten in, Kean is discovered at the piano, still in costume. His face is streaked with tears. He sings "Lord Ullin's Daughter". Before the song is over, FADE SOUND and CROSS FADE TO THEME MUSIC, very soft, building through the next four scenes.

GRATTEN (VO)

The worst of all worst things that could befall an actor was upon him. He could remember his old parts perfectly, but nothing new could be retained. By not confessing his limitation, he had ruined my opportunity. But I knew he cried as much for me as for himself, for we both knew it was my lot to take blame for the failure. I was not angry, only pitying. I kissed him good-bye. We embraced, I left for France the next day. I was sorry when I read he had died.

EXT. PARKLAND BY A LAKE -- DAY

Kean walks with Aunt Tid. She is now in her 70's. Tall, grey, erect. Kean is shriveled, looking pale as death. He limps badly, and is hunched over.

MR. ARTHUR (VO)

The years passed. Kean kept on. He played to thinning audiences. They knew his every gesture, the intonation of every phrase by heart. He had nothing to offer them but his old repertoire. He had founded no school, yet he had explored new, unthought of horizons. However, like all pioneers there was a price to be paid. John Doran, the theater historian wrote:

INT. CONVENT GARDEN -- NIGHT

Kean is acting OTHELLO. Charles is playing IAGO.

MR. ARTHUR (VO)

To those who saw him from the front, there was not a trace of weakening of any power in him. But, oh ye few who stood between the wings,

INT. COVENT GARDEN. WINGS -- NIGHT

Kean is helped into a chair, and given a steaming brandy.

MR. ARTHUR (VO)

where a chair was placed for him, do you not remember the saddening spectacle of that wrecked genius -

MR. ARTHUR (VO) (Cont'd)
a man in his very prime, with not merely
the attributes of age about him, but the
infirmities of it, which are wont to try
the heart of love itself.

Kean's face is patted dry of sweat.

MR. ARTHUR (VO)
Have you forgotten that helpless,
fainting man bent in that chair,
or the very unsavory odor of that
very brown, very hot, and very strong
brandy-and-water, which alone kept
alive the once noble Moor?"

KEAN
Charles is acting well tonight. I
suppose that is because he's acting
with me.

Kean's cup is taken, and he is helped painfully to his feet, and
steadied. He takes a few steps, staggering slowly to the stage.

MR. ARTHUR (VO)
"When his time came, he looked
about as from a dream, and sighed,
and painfully got to his feet, swayed
like a column in an earthquake, and
in not more time than is required
in the telling of it, was before the
audience, as strong and as
intellectually beautiful as old."

INT. COVENT GARDEN -- NIGHT

(ACT 3: SCENE 3: CYPRUS. THE GARDEN OF THE CASTLE) OTHELLO is in a
fury. He is desperate in his misery.

MUSIC STOPS.

OTHELLO: I had been happy if the general camp,
Pioneers and all, had tasted her sweet body,
So I had nothing known. O, now, forever
Farewell the tranquil mind! Farewell content!
Farewell the plumed troop and the big wars
That made ambition virtue! O, farewell!
Farewell the neighing steed and the shrill
trump, The spirit stirring drum, the ear-
piercing fife, The royal banner, and all
quality' Pride, pomp and circumstance of

OTHELLO: glorious war! And, O you mortal engines,
 whose rude threats
 The immortal Jove's dread clamours counterfeit,
 Farewell! Othello's occupation gone!

The AUDIENCE bursts into applause.

Silence. IAGAO moves toward him.

IAGO: Is't possible, my lord?

Kean is near death. His mind tries to find the words...He staggers a step. Charles sees something is very wrong. Kean staggers another step. Charles makes to help his father. Kean makes a guttural noise, ordering him to be still. A very long silence. At last, he finds some strength.

OTHELLO: Villain, be sure thou prove my love a whore!

He staggers to Charles, his arms outstretched.

SUBLIM FLASH: SEVEN YEAR OLD KEAN with his arms outstretched, when his father died.

Kean collapses into Charles' arms.

 KEAN
 I am dying, Charlie...speak to them
 for me.

 CHARLES
 Father!

He takes him gently to the floor.

 KEAN
 My son...My son.

Kean's eyes glaze over.

 CHARLES
 Father.

He weeps.

 CHARLES
 Oh, father.

INT. DINING ROOM -- NIGHT

Close on Mr. Arthur, tears rolling down his face, blackness beyond.

MR. ARTHUR
He was forty-five years old.

He blinks slowly, looks to his left.

MR. ARTHUR
Well, Mr. Lathuro...Can you play Kean?

Mouth agape, Lathuro, stares back. Upon his face can be seen the transitions...awe, consideration, and finally, quiet triumph.

FADE OUT.