

JERRY

Greased Lightning! Why do I listen to you? I ought to have my head examined!

JOE

I thought you weren't talking to me.

JERRY

Look at the bull fiddle -- it's dressed warmer than I am.

They come up to a building in front of which are gathered several small groups of shivering musicians, also equipped with instruments. Joe and Jerry exchange frozen waves with their colleagues, start through the entrance.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. CORRIDOR OF MUSIC BUILDING - DAY

Joe moves down the corridor, Jerry tagging along grimly beside him. Other job-seeking musicians mill around, and a melange of musical sounds and singing voices issues from the various offices, studios and rehearsal halls.

Joe and Jerry come up to a door marked: KEYNOTE MUSICAL AGENCY -- BANDS, SOLOISTS, SINGERS. Joe opens the door, revealing a crummy office, with a secretary behind a desk.

JOE

Anything today?

FIRST SECRETARY

Nothing.

JOE

Thank you.

Joe shuts the door, and they shuffle along to the next agency, which is marked: JULES STEIN -- MUSIC CORPORATION OF AMERICA. Joe opens the door. This is like the other office -- except a little crummier. There is a secretary behind the desk.

JOE

Anything today?

SECOND SECRETARY

Nothing.

JOE

Thank you.

He opens the door to the next agency. On the door it says:
SIG POLIAKOFF -- BANDS FOR ALL OCCASIONS. There is the usual
secretary behind the usual desk, and her name is NELLIE. She
is a brunette, somewhat past her prime, but still attractive.

JOE
Anything today?

NELLIE
(looking up)
Oh, it's you! You got a lot of nerve --

JOE
Thank you.

He shuts the door quickly, starts to move on.

NELLIE'S VOICE
(from inside)
Joe -- come back here!

Joe stops in his tracks. With a resigned shrug to Jerry, he
opens the door again, and the two of them start in.

INT. POLIAKOFF'S OUTER OFFICE - DAY

Beside Nellie, there is another secretary pecking away at a
typewriter. Nellie's face is grim as Joe and Jerry come up.

JOE
Now look, Nellie -- if it's about
last Saturday night -- I can explain
everything.

NELLIE
(to Jerry; pointing
at Joe)
What a heel! I spend four dollars to
get my hair marcelled, I buy me a
new negligee, I bake him a great big
pizza pie...
(to Joe)
-- and where were you?

JERRY
Yeah -- where were you?

JOE
With you.

JERRY
With me?

JOE
Don't you remember?
(to Nellie)
He has this bad tooth -- it got
impacted -- the whole jaw swole up --

JERRY
It did?
(Joe throws him a
look)
Boy, did it ever!

JOE
So I had to rush him to the hospital
and give him a transfusion...
(to Jerry)
Right?

JERRY
Right. We have the same blood type...

JOE
-- Type O.

NELLIE
Oh?

JOE
Nellie baby, I'll make it up to you.

NELLIE
You're making it up pretty good so
far.

JOE
The minute we get a job, I'm going
to take you out to the swellest
restaurant --

JERRY
How about it, Nellie? Has Poliakoff
got anything for us? We're desperate.

NELLIE
(slyly)
Well, it just so happens he is looking
for a bass and a sax --
(to the other secretary)
Right?
(she winks at her)

OTHER SECRETARY
(going along)
Right.

JERRY
(all excited)
Did you hear that, Joe?

JOE
What's the job?

NELLIE
It's three weeks in Florida --

JERRY
Florida?

NELLIE
The Seminole-Ritz, in Miami.
Transportation and all expenses
paid...

JOE
Isn't she a bit of terrific?
(busses Nellie on the
cheek; to Jerry)
Come on -- let's talk to Poliakoff.

They start toward the door of the inner office.

NELLIE
You better wait a minute, boys --
he's got some people in there with
him.

That stops them.

INT. POLIAKOFF'S INNER OFFICE - DAY

The room is small and cluttered, and the walls are covered with photographs of Poliakoff's clients -- bands, vocalists, trios, radio personalities.

Sitting behind the desk, speaking urgently into the phone, is SIG POLIAKOFF, a gruff, likable man in his fifties. Pacing up and down on the other side of the desk is SWEET SUE, flashily-dressed broad, who has seen thirty summers and a few hard winters. As she paces, she nervously flips a large white pill from one hand to the other. Slouched in a chair is BIENSTOCK, a somewhat prissy man of forty wearing thick glasses. He has a card file on his lap, is thumbing through it.

POLIAKOFF

(into phone)

Look, Gladys, it's three weeks in Florida -- Sweet Sue and Her Society Syncopators -- they need a couple of girls on sax and bass -- what do you mean, who is this? Sig Poliakoff. I got a job for you -- Gladys, are you there?

(hangs up)

Meshugeh! Played for a hundred and twelve hours at a marathon dance, and now she's in bed with a nervous collapse.

SUE

Tell her to move over.

She has poured herself a glass of water from a pitcher on the desk, and now she plops the pill into her mouth, washes it down.

BIENSTOCK

(looking up from file)

What about Cora Jackson?

POLIAKOFF

The last I heard, she was playing with the Salvation Army, yet.

(consulting list on desk; into phone)

Drexel 9044.

Sue has wandered over to one of the framed photos on the wall. It shows Sue posed in front of her band -- sixteen girls, all blonde, all in identical gowns. On the drum it says SWEET SUE AND HER SOCIETY SYNCOPATORS.

SUE

Those idiot broads! Here we are all packed to go to Miami, and what happens? The saxophone runs off with a Bible salesman, and the bass fiddle gets herself pregnant.

(turning to Bienstock)

I ought to fire you, Bienstock.

BIENSTOCK

Me? I'm the manager of the band -- not the night watchman.

POLIAKOFF

(into phone)

Hello? Let me talk to Bessie Malone --
what's she doing in Philadelphia? --
on the level?

(hangs up)

Bessie let her hair grow and is
playing with Stokowski.

SUE

Black Bottom Bessie?

POLIAKOFF

Schpielt zich mit der Philharmonic.

BIENSTOCK

How about Rosemary Schultz?

POLIAKOFF

Did you hear? She slashed her wrists
when Valentino died!

SUE

We might as well all slash our wrists
if we don't round up two dames by
this evening.

She picks up her handbag. Bienstock rises, takes his glasses
off, puts them in his pocket.

BIENSTOCK

Look, Sig, you know the kind of girls
we need. We don't care where you
find them -- just get them on that
train by eight o'clock.

POLIAKOFF

Be nonchalant. Trust Poliakoff. The
moment anything turns up, I'll give
you a little tingle.

SUE

Bye, Sig.

(feels her tummy)

I wonder if I have room for another
ulcer?

Bienstock opens the door, and follows Sue into the outer
office. Joe and Jerry, who have been biding their time
outside, slip in and shut the door after them.

JOE

Hey, Sig -- can we talk to you?

POLIAKOFF

(into phone)

Nellie, get me long distance.

(to the boys)

What is it?

JERRY

It's about the Florida job.

POLIAKOFF

The Florida job?

JOE

Nellie told us about it.

JERRY

We're not too late, are we?

POLIAKOFF

What are you -- a couple of comedians?

Get out of here!

(into phone)

Long distance? Get me the William
Morris Agency in New York.

JOE

You need a bass and a sax, don't
you?

POLIAKOFF

The instruments are right, but you
are not.

(into phone)

I want to speak to Mr. Morris.

JERRY

What's wrong with us?

POLIAKOFF

You're the wrong shape. Goodbye.

JOE

The wrong shape? You looking for
hunchbacks or something?

POLIAKOFF

It's not the backs that worry me.

JOE

What kind of band is this, anyway?

POLIAKOFF

You got to be under twenty-five --

JERRY

We could pass for that.

POLIAKOFF
you got to be blonde --

JERRY
We could dye our hair.

POLIAKOFF
-- and you got to be girls.

JERRY
We could --

JOE
No, we couldn't!

POLIAKOFF
(into phone)
William Morris!

JERRY
You mean it's a girls' band?

JOE
Yeah, that's what he means. Good old
Nellie!
(starting toward door)
I ought to wring her neck!

POLIAKOFF
(into phone)
Yes, I'm holding on.

JERRY
Wait a minute, Joe. Lets talk this
over.
(to Poliakoff)
Why couldn't we do it? Last year,
when we played in that gypsy tea
room, we wore gold earrings. And you
remember when you booked us with
that Hawaiian band?
(pantomiming)
Grass skirts!

POLIAKOFF
(to Joe)
What's with him -- he drinks?

JOE
No. And he ain't been eating so good,
either. He's got an empty stomach
and it's gone to his head.

JERRY

But, Joe -- three weeks in Florida!
We could borrow some clothes from
the girls in the chorus --

JOE

You've flipped your wig!

JERRY

Now you're talking! We pick up a
couple of second-hand wigs -- a little
padding here and there -- call
ourselves Josephine and Geraldine --

JOE

Josephine and Geraldine!
(disgustedly)
Come on!

He drags Jerry toward the door.

POLIAKOFF

Look, if you boys want to pick up a
little money tonight --
(they stop and turn)
At the University of Illinois they
are having -- you should excuse the
expression -- a St. Valentine's dance.

JOE

We'll take it!

POLIAKOFF

You got it. It's six dollars a man.
Be on the campus in Urbana at eight
o'clock --

JERRY

(protesting)
All the way to Urbana -- for a one
night stand?

JOE

It's twelve bucks. We can get one of
the overcoats out of hock.

POLIAKOFF

(into phone)
Hello, Mr. Morris? This is Poliakoff,
in Chicago. Say, you wouldn't have a
couple of girl musicians available?
A sax player and a base?

JERRY
(at the door)
Look, if William Morris doesn't come
through --

JOE
Come on, Geraldine!

He pulls him into the outer office.

INT. POLIAKOFF'S OUTER OFFICE - DAY

Joe leads Jerry out.

JERRY
It's a hundred miles, Joe -- it's
snowing -- how are we going to get
there?

JOE
I'll think of something. Don't crowd
me.

NELLIE
(brightly)
How did it go, girls?

JERRY
We ought to wring your neck.

JOE
Please, Jerry -- that's no way to
talk.
(turning on the charm)
Nellie baby -- what are you doing
tonight?

NELLIE
(suspiciously)
Why?

JOE
Because I got some plans --

NELLIE
I'm not doing anything. I just thought
I'd go home and have some cold pizza --

JOE
And you'll be in all evening?

NELLIE
(melted by now)
Yes, Joe.

JOE
(brightly)
Good! Then you won't be needing your
car.

NELLIE
My car? Why, you --

Joe silences her protest with a kiss. Jerry shakes his head
with mock admiration.

JERRY
Isn't he a bit of terrific?

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. CLARK STREET - DAY

Joe and Jerry, carrying their instruments, are coming along
the snow-covered sidewalk toward a garage entrance, above
which is a sign reading: CHARLIE'S GARAGE. Their shoulders
are hunched up against the cold.

JERRY
We could've had three weeks in Florida --
all expenses paid. Lying around in
the sun -- palm trees -- frying
fish...

JOE
Knock it off, will you?

They step over the chain blocking the entrance, start into
the garage.

INT. CHARLIE'S GARAGE - DAY

There are rows of parked cars, a lube rack and a gas pump.

Against the wall under a naked electric light bulb hanging
from a cord, five men are playing stud poker.

A couple of mechanics, in grease-stained coveralls, are
watching the game. The dealer is Toothpick Charlie, the
inevitable toothpick in his mouth.

TOOTHPICK CHARLIE
(dealing)
King high -- pair of bullets --
possible straight -- possible nothing --
pair of eights --