

Excerpt from *Film Flam*

Act I Scene ii.

“The Greatest Story Ever Told”

The front office of Cineglobe Entertainment.

Walls covered with dusty posters for schlock kung-fu movies, cheesy adventure flicks and slasher movies. Mismatched armchairs in the waiting area arranged around a glass coffee table littered with movie magazines. A front door leading out of the office on which is written “Cineglobe Entertainment: Saul Zaznick President.” A rear door, leading presumably into the private executive office.

VIVIAN and MARTIN are entering office.

	VIVIAN
The Big Store.	
	MARTIN
I’m sorry?	
	VIVIAN
Oldest con in the book. The oldest and the best.	
	MARTIN
Really.	
	VIVIAN
It’s also the movie.	
	MARTIN
My movie?	
	VIVIAN
No. Not the shitty movie <u>you</u> can’t sell. The shitty movie <u>I</u> can’t sell.	
	MARTIN
The big store?	
	VIVIAN
You’ve heard of it?	
	MARTIN
The movie?	

VIVIAN

The con.

MARTIN

I'm sorry.

VIVIAN

It's like a play, really. You have a location. It could be a racetrack. It could be a theater. It could be an office. Everyone's got a role. You've got the ticket takers. You've got the ushers. But none of it's real. Everybody there's in on the con, except for the one person. The person with the money. You set up this whole elaborate scenario to get this guy or this group of guys. Best version I ever heard, happened around the turn of the century. I think it was Detroit. Not sure. Call it Detroit. There was this theater, well a façade of a theater anyway. Call it the Odeon. They had ticket takers. They had ushers. They had advance people. They had the whole smear. And they took out ads in the daily papers. "He is coming." Who's coming? Nobody knows. Harry Houdini? Jesus Christ? They start selling tickets. A buck, two bucks. It's a lot of money those days. Huge banner across Main Street. "He is coming in 7 Days." Sell more tickets. "Can't tell you who it is, but it's big. It's real big. Better get yer tickets now." "He is coming in 6 days." Only a couple tickets left. Get 'em now. They got hawkers going up and down the street. "He's coming. He's coming." Day of the show. There is a line of people one block, two block, three blocks long. They're scalping the tickets. They don't let anybody in. "Naw, naw, can't let you in 'til show time. Can't let you in 'til eight." 8:00 comes. They're still not opening the doors. 8:05. People are getting restless. 8:10. "Come on, open up. Open up." Doors open up. People start filing in. There's a stage with a red velvet curtain in front of it. No chairs. No balconies. Just a huge empty space with a stage at the back. "Come on in folks. All the way in. Step all the way in. You won't be disappointed, folks. Step all the way in." There must be two thousand, three thousand people crammed in there. No room to breathe. Waiting, waiting. Guy steps behind the curtain and blows a trumpet. Flourish.

(Demonstrating trumpet flourish.)

"Dan da-da-da-dan, dan da-da-da-dan." Drumbeats. Boom boom boom. Who's coming? Who is it? Who's coming? He's coming. Who is he? "Dan da-da-da-dan." Boom boom boom. "Dan da-da-da-dan." Boom boom boom. Curtain falls. Boom. From the ceiling, a huge banner drops. "HE IS GONE!" The people storm the stage. They rip down the banner and they look behind. The only thing they see behind the stage is the night sky, railroad tracks and a train car full of people moving fast out of town. A whole city. A whole city conned by the Big Store.

MARTIN

You think that happened?

VIVIAN

I know it did.

MARTIN

How do you know?

VIVIAN

My grandfather did it. He ran the big store.

MARTIN

Family business.

VIVIAN

Oh yeah. I know all the cons. Did 'em all at one time or another. Pigeon drop, bank examiner, lottery hustle.

MARTIN

Big store?

VIVIAN

No. My father never had the imagination for that. He'd only let us do the small time shit. Make us cut up fifty dollar bills, put the 50s over the ones, go into the Osco, take a one dollar bill get change for a fifty. Change rolls-quarters on the outside, slugs on the inside. Fill up a Sony box with rocks and shit, make people think you'd ripped off a TV, sell it real cheap. Carny bullshit, monte, cups and balls, make twenty, thirty, forty bucks, keep one step ahead of the landlord. Never could save a fucking thing. Had to go out and get an honest job. Got into the business, told my dad I'm gonna make a movie about him. He said "Not while I'm around." Died a year ago. Net worth: \$450 bucks. Now I'm just another asshole with a script.