

COLD OPEN:

INT - BOSTON POST NEWSROOM, 1948 - DAY

The busy Boston Post newsroom on a hot morning. In a glassed-in corner office editor EDWIN GROZIER, JR. runs the daily editorial meeting. City Editor MARTIN BIGELOW, Sports Editor MIKE FINNEGAN (the youngest of the bunch), National Editor FRANK CONKLIN, International Editor ROSS BARKLEY, and others sit around a large mahogany table. Everybody smokes - cigarettes, cigars, even pipes. A small fan whirs in the corner. As Grozier speaks a copy boy enters and hands a sheet of paper to Bigelow, who slowly smiles to himself, then at Grozier.

GROZIER

O.K., so it's settled, we lead with the Berlin situation and run a sidebar on how the planes that used to drop bombs on Germany are now dropping food. Four columns to the war in Palestine... I mean Israel, and that leaves two columns on the situation in Albania and Greece... which means, unless the mayor is back in prison, City gets pushed to page two.

Everyone chuckles.

BIGELOW

I don't know if this is more important than Israel, but I've just gotten something off the Beacon Hill police blotter that should interest you, Ed.

BARKLEY

Daddy's martini wasn't dry enough, so he had the butler shot?

More chuckles.

CONKLIN

And the blue-bloods are calling to complain about the noise?

The laughter dies. Grozier motions to Bigelow to proceed.

BIGELOW

Sorry, boss. But you're gonna love this. The cops just busted a guy running a Ponzi scheme from an office on Charles Street. Seems he was promising some old ladies he'd double their money.

GROZIER

(With a smile of recognition)
Ponzi. My God, that was, well, it's been almost 30 years.

FINNEGAN

Ponzi? What's a Ponzi?

CONKLIN

Not what. A who. Ponzi. You know, give me 5 today and I'll give you 10 next week.

BIGELOW

Only the 10 comes from two other saps who each gave you 5 expecting 10 as well.

FINNEGAN

Sounds like a lot of double-talk to me.

CONKLIN

Kid, that's exactly what it is. But by the time you figure it out, the Ponzis of this world have made a lotta money.

BIGELOW

Double the talk, double the money.

CONKLIN

Trouble is, eventually you'll run out of saps, and the whole thing collapses.

FINNEGAN

So who was Ponzi?

BARKLEY

(Looking at Finnegan)

Kid, you got a lot to learn about brown-nosing.

CONKLIN

Maybe he's not impressed with a Pulitzer Prize?

The rest of the men laugh.

GROZIER

Jesus, Mike, that son-of-a-bitch took in over \$30 million in eight months, caused three banks to close, and bankrupted hundreds of people. But you don't have a clue because you think history started at Pearl Harbor and ended at Hiroshima. What the hell do you suppose ever happened to that guy?

Grozier exits. Conklin looks at Finnegan.

CONKLIN

Kid, you just may be responsible for another Pulitzer.

INT - POST NEWSROOM - DAY

CUT TO:

Grozier walks past a plaque on the wall.

INT - POST NEWSROOM - CLOSE-UP OF PLAQUE - DAY

CUT TO:

The 1925 Pulitzer Prize for Journalism. On the plaque is engraved: "For a series of articles exposing the fraudulent financial scheme of Charles Ponzi in 1920"

CREDITS

CUT TO:

We HEAR theme music during the credit sequence.

MONTAGE Grozier doing research...going through file cabinets, making phone calls, reading old press clippings about Ponzi. Grozier is driven to Boston's Logan Airport in limousine, checks his bags, gets on a prop plane. The plane lands at the Sao Paulo, Brazil airport. Cab moves through Sao Paulo, stops at charity ward. The music fades and we HEAR the action as we

EXT - ROOFTOP SOLARIUM, CHARITY HOSPITAL, SAO PAOLO, BRAZIL - DAY

DISSOLVE TO:

Elderly patients sit in wheelchairs lining a railing that overlooks the poor but bustling section of Sao Paulo. Grozier makes his way across the solarium to CHARLES PONZI, a 66 year-old man who sits impassively in his wheelchair listening to the city below. Without warning, a shadow covers his face. He turns and squints as he looks up, turns his head back to the balcony.

PONZI

I'm sorry sonny, but I'm not interested in a subscription to the Post.

GROZIER

Hello Charles. Nice to see you too.

PONZI

I'm sorry. I suppose I should be grateful for the company. I don't get so many visitors. How did you find me?

GROZIER

I'm still a newspaperman. Oh, I almost forgot.

(Grozier pulls out several boxes of Turkish cigarettes from his jacket)
I seem to recall you liked these.

PONZI

Grazie....Wait a minute. Shouldn't I hate you? Didn't you win some prize for doing me in?

GROZIER

You did yourself in, Charlie.

Ponzi takes the pack, pulls out a cigarette, which Grozier lights. Uncomfortable silence. Ponzi turns towards the balcony.

PONZI

So... how is she?

GROZIER

She's fine. She moved to Medford a few years ago.

PONZI

Married?

GROZIER

No. But let's face it, Charles. After you, anyone else would probably seem a bit... dull.

PONZI

Maybe that's what she should have had all along. Someone who would have given her a nice dull life with some dull kids in a dull house in a dull neighborhood. At least only one of us would have ended up alone. Maybe I shouldn't have gone to America in the first place.

They both stare at the city in silence. WE HEAR some RAGTIME, with hints of Italian music.

EXT - ROOFTOP SOLARIUM - CLOSE-UP OF PONZI - DAY

Ponzi's eyes are filled with self-pity and remembrance.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT - DECK OF A STEAMSHIP BOUND FOR NEW YORK CITY IN 1903 - DAY

The deck is packed with immigrants. Among them is 21 year-old CARLO PONZI: short, fairly handsome, and better dressed than the other immigrants. He watches bills and coins fly across a decktop poker game. He licks his lips as one man wins a heavily bet hand. The DEALER sees PONZI's interest and motions to him to join the game. PONZI licks his lips, nods, and a space is cleared for him around the "table." He pulls out a wallet and removes several bills, which he tentatively lays on the deck. The other players look hungrily at the cash. The cards start flying fast and furious.

DISSOLVE TO:

SAME, TWO HOURS LATER

Ponzi's forlorn look tells the story. Having just been dealt another hand, he lays down 3 JACKS. With a wry smile, an opponent lays down 3 QUEENS. Ponzi slumps, as his opponent scoops up his winnings. Suddenly there's a rush of immigrants around and through the card game. America is in sight! The players grab their money, stuff it in their pockets and rush to the balcony, where the passengers point excitedly to the water. As the winner of the last hand gets up and walks to the rail, Ponzi sees a playing card fall out from under his sleeve and flutter to the deck. Ponzi angrily picks up a card.

CUT TO:

EXT - PONZI POV - FROM DECK OF SHIP - DAY

In the distance, the Statue of Liberty holds her torch high, and we see the fourth QUEEN in Ponzi's hand.

MUSIC UP AND OUT.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT - SOLARIUM ROOFTOP - DAY

Ponzi shakes his head at his own stupidity.

GROZIER

Charles, I'm curious. In thirty years I still haven't figured out one thing.

PONZI

What's that?

GROZIER

Did you really think you would get away with it?

PONZI

Thirty years...a hundred years. You could try a thousand years and you'd never understand what it was like for me...for any of us...

DISSOLVE TO:

INT - TRAIN STATION WAITING ROOM, NEW YORK CITY, 1903 - NIGHT

Rain drops smack against the windows, but the poorly dressed immigrants sitting listlessly on rough wooden benches in the waiting area don't notice. A few children scamper around the dark station, playing with a noisy joy that contrasts starkly with the dour adults.

The TICKETMASTER works inside an ornate booth in one corner of the room. A calendar indicates the date: October 11, 1903. He stops sorting tickets to glance through the bars of the ticket window, looking with disdain at PONZI, who stands before him. The ticketmaster shakes his head and rubs his fingers together in

the international sign for money. Ponzi looks desperate, reaches into his pocket, pulls out his last two dollars and hands them to the ticketmaster, who hands Ponzi a ticket. As Ponzi walks away the ticketmaster shoves the money into his pocket with a sneer.

PONZI sits down, and pulls out a note pad on which is scribbled a series of numbers in a column. He takes out a pen and subtracts \$2 from the last number, which leaves fifty cents. He stares at the numbers, then licks his lips. Across the aisle, an immigrant mother wipes the dirty face of her son, then kisses his forehead.

Ponzi smiles the sad smile that a man, no matter how old, makes when he realizes that his mother is very far away and may never kiss his forehead again. He pulls out a piece of stationary from the ship and begins to write a letter in Italian. As he does, we hear him speak in English...

PONZI (V.O.)

Dear Mama, this is my first letter to you from America. The boat arrived here in New York early this morning, and now I wait for the train that will take me to cousin Giuseppe and my job in Pittsburgh.

(He looks around him)

I miss you, Mama. They told us the streets here are paved with gold. Someday, I will dig a piece of gold out of the ground and send for you.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT - SOLARIUM ROOFTOP 1948 - DAY.

Grozier is now sitting in a chair next to Ponzi's wheelchair.

PONZI

It is a sad thing to be promised gold and get cobblestone.

GROZIER

I'm sure many of your customers would have said the same thing.

PONZI

Hey! I never stiffed a customer. Everybody got paid. Until you and that...Judas sold me down the canal...

He starts to get very agitated, breathes heavier, starts to cough. Grozier pours a glass of water from a nearby pitcher and gives it to Ponzi, who takes a drink and calms down. Ponzi looks back over the balcony. More silence. Ponzi takes a cigarette and places it in his mouth. Grozier quickly moves to light it. Ponzi takes a few puffs and relaxes.

PONZI

(With disdain)

Pittsburgh...

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT - PANORAMA OF PITTSBURGH, PA - DAY

Exhaust, soot, and grime from the steel factories and coal plants have made the city a grim, gray place. We HEAR Ponzi in a V.O.

PONZI (V.O.)

I went there because my family convinced Cousin Giuseppe to give me a job. Everybody in the family, they talked about what a great success Giuseppe was in the garment business. "Send him to Giuseppe, and let him learn how to be a success." The garment business.

CUT TO:

INT - PITTSBURGH LAUNDRY - DAY

Steam billows from a pressing machine. As it dissipates, Ponzi's face appears, literally drenched in sweat. He wipes his brow, but it doesn't help. The heat is oppressive. Ponzi looks to his left. Standing at another presser, also sweating profusely, is GIUSEPPE, Ponzi's cousin. Another WORKER dumps a large load of clothes in between them.

PONZI (V.O.)

Giuseppe was walking on cobblestone, just like everyone else. But I worked hard. Tried to make my own way. Tried to do right.

Ponzi and Giuseppe look at each other and the load of clothes. After a furtive glance around the shop, Ponzi kicks a small pile of clothes into a corner. Giuseppe is alarmed, but Ponzi looks at him as if to say "don't worry." Emboldened by his small success, Ponzi grabs a few more pieces of laundry, carries them to a dumpster and deposits them. Giuseppe gets angry, but there's no stopping Ponzi, who grabs another item of soiled clothing and attempts to throw it into the rafting above. He tries twice, each time failing. As he makes another attempt, the LAUNDRY MANAGER appears. Ponzi freezes, just as the soiled clothing falls back onto his head. Giuseppe looks furiously at Ponzi, who appears chagrined. The manager escorts them out.

PONZI (V.O.)

I eventually left the garment business. I left Pittsburgh, too. Turns out when I had left New York I went too far west - right by the city of real hope and opportunity - Paterson.

CUT TO:

INT - RESTAURANT IN PATERSON, NEW JERSEY IN 1903 - NIGHT

Ponzi, in a greasy, food-stained apron, staggers through the crowded restaurant with a large tray of dishes. The burly, sour-

faced MANAGER (smoking the remnants of a cigar), scowls at him.

PONZI (V.O.)

Even though my English wasn't very good,
I managed to find a job with some side
benefits.

During this speech Ponzi surreptitiously takes a sandwich and places it in an apron pocket. He sneaks through the kitchen and emerges in the alley.

CUT TO:

EXT - ALLEY BEHIND RESTAURANT - NIGHT

Ponzi is met by a poorly dressed man who hands him a few pennies in exchange for a sandwich and walks away. Ponzi, under the light of the restaurant, pulls out his note pad and a pen, scribbles some figures, the licks his lips as he puts the coins in his pocket. He puts the notebook back into his vest pocket and re-enters the kitchen.

CUT TO:

INT - RESTAURANT KITCHEN - NIGHT

Ponzi opens the door to the kitchen and comes nose-to-chest with the manager, who has seen the transaction. The manager shoves Ponzi, white with fear, backwards towards the door.

CUT TO:

EXT - ALLEY BEHIND RESTAURANT - NIGHT

The door slams in front of Ponzi as he falls backwards out of the restaurant. He starts to walk away when the door swings open. The manager storms up to Ponzi and rips off his apron.

PONZI (V.O.)

The truth was there wasn't enough
potential in Paterson for a man of my
ambition. But New Haven. Now there was
a place of real opportunity. There I
learned that there is nothing like the
camaraderie of the American worker,
pulling together, helping each other
out!

CUT TO:

INT - FACTORY ASSEMBLY LINE, NEW HAVEN, CT - DAY

Ponzi stands at a motor assembly line. FACTORY WORKERS on either side tighten bolts, and screw attachments. Ponzi, in oil-stained coveralls, is hot, bored, and very tired. His attempts to wipe the sweat from his brow only serve to smear oil on his face. Distracted, He lets a few parts run past him on the conveyor belt. Ponzi tries to catch up, but (a la "I Love Lucy") only makes things worse. The conveyor belt stops. A SUPERVISOR runs over and starts pushing Ponzi as the other workers laugh.

PONZI (V.O)

What did they know about opportunity in New Haven? Now Providence, my next stop, is where they wrote the book on it.

CUT TO:

INT - GROCERY STORE, PROVIDENCE, R.I. - DAY

The CASHIER, BAGBOY, and the MANAGER try to handle a long line of people queueing up to pay. The manager, looks around the store, exasperated, then rushes down an aisle to the meat department in the back of the store. Storming past two MEAT CUTTERS, he flings open the freezer door. A puff of smoke wafts out.

CUT TO:

INT - GROCERY STORE FREEZER - MANAGER POV - DAY

Looking into the freezer, the manager sees Ponzi and another WORKER, both in overcoats, smoking cigarettes.

WORKER

(in Italian)

Would you like a cup of coffee?

(in English)

Would you like a cup of coffee?

PONZI

Would you like a cup of coffee?

WORKER

(in Italian)

Would you like a piece of cake?

(in English)

Would you like a piece of... Shit!

PONZI

Would you like a piece of Shit. Shit?

(Sees look of horror in worker's eyes, turns around, sees the manager)
Shit.

Ponzi shakes his head, pleading against the inevitable sacking.

CUT TO:

EXT - SOLARIUM ROOF - DAY

PONZI

Some English words I learned quicker than others. America...was a disappointment. No, I take that back. I was the disappointment. I was being taught a lesson and I wasn't paying attention. I knew I couldn't be the fall guy anymore! Then out of nowhere I got a tip on a job - in a bank! Now this was where I belonged. Finance, investments... that was the real

American dream. How ironic I found it
in Canada.

GROZIER

(Has been taking notes)

I know all about Canada, Charles.

PONZI

You think you do, but no, you don't.

CUT TO:

INT - BANCO ZAROSSO, MONTREAL, CANADA, 1907 - DAY

The bank is sparsely furnished. Behind one of the two teller windows, a well-dressed PONZI handles a transaction for an elderly man. Other customers wait their turns at either line.

PONZI (V.O.)

It was a small bank, and almost all of our depositors came from the Italian section of Montreal. With my skills in math I easily made teller in just a few short weeks.

CUT TO:

INT - ZAROSSO DINING ROOM - NIGHT

Ponzi, LOUIS ZAROSSO (mid-forties, large frame, balding, has an imperial air as he lords over the family table), ZAROSSO'S WIFE (a plump, extremely amiable woman), TWO SONS (one neat, short hair, scholarly, the other burly, with longer hair), AND DAUGHTER, LOUISE (attractive, neat, a shy smile) are eating dinner served by a butler and maid. Ponzi and Louise flirt, and Zarossi and his wife smile.

PONZI (V.O.)

I even found myself a girlfriend, of sorts. And she was the bank president's daughter! What more could I ask for! I had a good job, a lovely girl, and plenty of invitations to dinner at the boss' home.

CUT TO:

INT - ZAROSSO'S OFFICE - DAY

Zarossi's office is filled with ornate lamps, paintings, a giant walnut desk, and a plush carpet. Ponzi sits in a large leather chair across from the desk. Zarossi's pudgy fingers constantly fidgeting with several expensive-looking rings.

PONZI (V.O.)

Maybe Zarossi figured since his daughter and I... well all I know is one day he called me into his office to tell me he has a big problem. He had lost a lot of money in some bad investments and he

needed help.

CUT TO:

EXT - SIDEWALK CAFE IN ITALIAN SECTION OF MONTREAL - DAY

ANTONIO SCARPINI, a young Italian man of dark complexion, medium height, and slight build, sits next to Ponzi.

PONZI (V.O.)

As it so happened, I came to meet an old friend from Parma who was living in Montreal. Scarpini. I liked him. How could you not? He always had a smile on his face and money in his pocket. I told him about Zarossi's problem and he said he could help. I had no idea he was only looking to help himself.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT - ZAROSSO'S OFFICE - DAY

Zarossi sits behind his desk talking to Scarpini and Ponzi.

ZAROSSO

You want me to leave town, my family, my...my bank!

SCARPINI

Your bank? Your bank is gone, Zarossi. Why if the crown's auditor's walked in today you'd be put away! Your only hope is to declare bankruptcy. I'll offer all your creditors 2 cents on the dollar for your assets.

ZAROSSO

Do you think they will take it?

SCARPINI

Two cents is better than nothing. Then we liquidate your assets and I'll split the take with you.

ZAROSSO

I suppose I have no choice.

SCARPINI

Not unless you prefer St. Vincent's penitentiary to the beach at Newport.

ZAROSSO

Ponzi...my boy...

PONZI

(Turns to an innocent-looking Scarpini)
I don't see what else you can do...

ZAROSSSI
(Resigned)

I'll have the papers drawn up.

SCARPINI

One more thing.

ZAROSSSI

What?

SCARPINI

I need assurance that you won't return before the deal is done and pin the blame on me. I want you to write a check...a bad check. You sign it and I'll promise not to cash it if you stay away until the bank's assets can be liquidated.

ZAROSSSI

Charles?

Scarpini's eyes narrow. Ponzi clears his throat uneasily, and nods his assent to Zarossi. Zarossi writes a check, slowing only when it comes time for the signature.

CUT TO:

INT - SMALL MONTREAL APARTMENT - NIGHT

Ponzi, Mrs. Zarossi, two boys, and a girl are crammed into a small apartment. Ponzi is at a table scribbling numbers. Mrs. Zarossi, looking worn and upset, sits on the couch reading. The two boys sit next to her. The girl knits, occasionally looking at Ponzi, who is too engrossed in numbers to pay attention.

PONZI (V.O.)

Things got tight after Zarossi left town. His family moved in with me while Scarpini was out selling Zarossi's property, and I had to take two jobs. It was Pittsburgh and Providence and Paterson all over again, except now I had a family to support...and it wasn't even mine.

CUT TO:

EXT - SIDEWALK CAFE - DAY

Ponzi and Scarpini have a drink. Ponzi looks tired and worn, but Scarpini seems to enjoy his situation. Scarpini pulls out the bad check, unfolds it, and holds it up for Ponzi to see.

PONZI (V.O.)

Then Scarpini had another idea...a way we could both make out.

Ponzi, tantalized by the sight of the check, reaches for it as we

CUT TO:

INT - DARK ROOM - DAY

Ponzi sits on a bed, writing a letter in Italian. We HEAR him dictate to himself in V.O.

PONZI (V.O.)

Dear Mama, I am fine and hope you are the same. The Canadian government has me doing a special job. They have told me it will last about two years. So I don't want you to worry.

CUT TO:

EXT - ST. VINCENT'S PENITENTIARY MAIN YARD - DAY

We HEAR pick-axes working away and slowly see convicts, PONZI among them, turning "big ones into little ones." The sweat pours off Ponzi's face as he strains to lift a large pick-ax.

PONZI (V.O.)

When this job is over, I think I will return to the United States. True, the cobblestones are not made of gold, but I long to see rocks in one piece.

CUT TO:

INT - PRISON CELL - NIGHT

Through the bars of his cell we see Ponzi, dressed in the classic prison outfit, on his bed writing the letter. Not happy with the last line, he crosses it out, as we

CUT TO:

INT - J.P. POOLE COMPANY, BOSTON, JANUARY 1918 - DAY

It's snowing. Inside Poole's, an importer/exporter, a crowded office/storage area crammed with boxes, shipping crates, and shelves filled with various merchandise. Gregory Petridge, the manager, sits warm and comfortable in his glassed-in office chewing on a cigar and talking on the phone. The calendar in his office shows January 1918. Ponzi works hard, moving items in the cold storage area, glancing at Petridge in his warm cocoon. After Ponzi finishes stacking cartons, he walks into the heated office area. He removes his gloves and rubs his hands in front of the stove as he speaks to Petridge.

PONZI

That's the last of the O'Connor shipment, Mr. Petridge.

PETRIDGE

Fine. Since you're done, Ponzi, I want you to deliver this. It missed the last truck.

(Hands Ponzi the box. The wind picks up, blowing snow hard against the office window)

Well, what are you waiting for?

PONZI

Well, it's just that it's snowing pretty hard out there...

PETRIDGE

Then take a streetcar. You know what that is, don't you?

PONZI

Yes sir.

PETRIDGE

Then use it.

PONZI

Yes sir. On my way, sir.

Ponzi exits.

PETRIDGE

(Under his breath)

Wop.

(He returns to the phone.)

Jimmy, yeah, nothing, just having one of my men deliver somethin' that didn't make the truck. Yeah, right, you can train 'em...so where were we? Oh yeah...you gonna take three cases off my hands?...come on...

CUT TO:

EXT - ADAMS SQUARE, BOSTON - DAY

Ponzi runs through the snow to a trolley sitting at its stop. He passes a World War I recruiting poster with a sneering German soldier bayoneting a baby. He mutters to himself.

PONZI

Yankee bastard.

Ponzi barely makes it into the door as the trolley starts. Fumbling in his pocket, he finds two pennies and gives them to the conductor. Brushing off snow from his coat, he sits down and catches his breath... only to have it taken away by the sight of ROSE GNECCO, a pretty young Italian sitting across the aisle. Trying not to be rude, Ponzi sneaks furtive glances at the most beautiful girl he has ever seen. On her lap are several packages and on the seat next to her is a shopping bag filled with

groceries. The trolley stops and she gets up, only to have a package fall to the floor and roll to Ponzi's feet. He grabs it and hands it to her. She smiles shyly. He takes the shopping bag and they walk off the trolley together, leaving the package from Petridge behind.

PONZI (V.O.)

Rose Gnecco. She was worth losing a job over.

CUT TO:

INT - J.P. POOLE'S - DAY

Petridge is pointing to the door as Ponzi dejectedly walks out.

PONZI (V.O.)

She felt so bad she got her father to give me a job.

CUT TO:

INT - GNECCO FRUIT COMPANY ON COMMERCIAL WHARF - DAY

Crates are being off-loaded from a steamer to trucks on a dock. Ponzi, a shipping clerk, works on orders. The five o'clock whistle blows, and he walks out of the loading area to the street, and is met by Rose. She beams as they walk down the street, into a White Castle restaurant.

PONZI (V.O.)

She must have felt really bad, because she even went out with me...

CUT TO:

INT - INSIDE THE WHITE CASTLE - NIGHT

Alone in the restaurant as A COOK flips burgers behind a counter, Rose listens intently to Ponzi.

PONZI

...the streets are paved with gold, they told me! Go! Grab your share! So I came to America! No gold! Do you see any gold? Of course not. It's not out there. But I know where the gold is.

(Ponzi taps his head with one hand)
It's here.

(Rose giggles. Ponzi at first looks hurt, then starts to giggle himself)
No, I didn't...I mean...I mean I have ideas, Rose. Ideas are going to make me a big man someday. Rich. I'll have those gold streets if I have to pave them myself. All I'll need then is someone to walk them with.

DISSOLVE TO:

DREAM SEQUENCE

INT - RESTAURANT - NIGHT

A fancy restaurant with candles on the table, champagne chilling in a silver bowl, and a strolling violin player. Rose and Ponzi are decked out in tailored silk clothes. They sip champagne as a waiter stands patiently next to the table waiting for them to order, when we HEAR a throat being cleared.

CUT TO:

INT - THE WHITE CASTLE - NIGHT

The cook, clearing his throat, is making a "gag me" face. Rose ignores him, staring lovingly and a bit sadly into Ponzi's eyes.

PONZI (V.O.)

I guess I made her feel so lousy she married me.

CUT TO:

INT - CHARLES & ROSE'S APARTMENT IN THE NORTH END - NIGHT

The apartment is just two rooms, a bedroom... and everything else. A small stove, an icebox, and a tiny sink constitute the kitchen. A painting of The Last Supper hangs over a tiny table around which two chairs are jammed. Rose sits on a shabby couch darning socks. Ponzi sits next to her scribbling figures on a pad of paper, stopping to take frequent gazes at Rose. Rose returns each gaze with equal affection.

PONZI (V.O.)

I was about as happy as I've ever been.
That should have been a sign...

CUT TO:

EXT - OUTSIDE THE GNECCO FRUIT COMPANY - DAY

As snow falls a small group of clerks and stevedores hover in front of the warehouse as desks, chairs, file cabinets, phones, and other office equipment are removed and placed in a pick-up truck. As the last of the equipment is loaded and the door is shut and locked, the policeman waves away the workers. As he does, we see the sign on the door: OUT OF BUSINESS. Ponzi, standing among the workers, looks both stunned and frightened.

CUT TO:

EXT - ROOFTOP SOLARIUM - DAY

PONZI

I went home and thought about everything I had seen and done since leaving my Italy... all the cities I had worked and all the men I had worked for. Why? So I could be out on the street again? Right there I made up my mind. No more warehouses or laundries or factories for

Charles Ponzi!

CUT TO:

INT - A FIFTH FLOOR OFFICE AT 27 SCHOOL STREET IN BOSTON - DAY

Ponzi and Rose are escorted by the LANDLORD into a barren room. The landlord hands Ponzi a key and leaves. As the door shuts, Ponzi and Rose embrace, and he pulls back just far enough to cup her face in his hands. She gazes back with love and confidence. She reaches into her purse, takes out a small box and hands it to Ponzi. He pulls out a business card which reads CHARLES PONZI, OWNER AND MANAGER, TRADER'S JOURNAL, BEacon 2345. They beam at each other.

PONZI

Rose...I...thank you.

ROSE

An important businessman should have his own cards.

PONZI

(Surveys the empty room)

Doesn't look like I'm very important, eh?

ROSE

To me you are, Charles. And soon to the rest of the world.

PONZI

The world. Sure. How does it feel to be married to the publisher of an international magazine that no one has heard of?

ROSE

They will, Charles. You said it yourself, it's a million dollar idea.

PONZI looks unsure, but then turns lovingly at Rose as we:

CUT TO:

INT - TRADER'S JOURNAL OFFICE - DAY

Ponzi sits alone at his desk, head in hands, looking bored.

PONZI (V.O)

It was a million dollar idea, but after three months, I didn't make a dime. Rose's family couldn't... or wouldn't...help, so I looked for a loan.

CUT TO:

INT - OFFICE OF HANOVER BANK PRESIDENT HENRY CHMIELINSKI - DAY

The office is grandly ornate. Henry, sitting behind a huge desk, is a Polish immigrant of medium height, medium build, dark hair parted slickly down the middle. A handlebar mustache is tightly wound with beeswax into two sharp points.

CHMIELINSKI

Let me get this straight, Mr Peetzy...

PONZI

Ponzi...

CHMIELINSKI

According to your application, you have experience in trade...

PONZI

Yes sir, in several companies...

CHMIELINSKI

Yet you cannot provide us with any references...

PONZI

As I told you, the Gnecco Company is out of business...

CHMIELINSKI

And all your other firms have been bought, sold, or unavailable for interviews. I'm sorry, Mr. Ponzio...

PONZI

Ponzi...

CHMIELINSKI

...but the Hanover Bank needs more than just your word. And without collateral....

PONZI

Mr Chmielinski, if I had collateral in the first place, would I come to you in the second place?

CHMIELINSKI

Thank you for thinking of the Hanover Bank, Mr. Pretzel...

PONZI

Sure, I get it. Well let me tell you something, Mr. Chmielinski, you haven't heard the last of Charles Ponzi or the Trader's Journal!

(Ponzi begins to exit, then turns)

And by the way, if I can say
Chmielinski, then you can say Ponzi!

Ponzi storms out of the office

CUT TO:

INT - CHMIELINSKI'S OFFICE - DAY

Chmielinski turns back to his paperwork, Ponzi already forgotten.

CUT TO:

EXT - OUTSIDE HANOVER BANK - DAY

Ponzi turns his collar against a cold wind.

CUT TO:

INT - TRADER'S JOURNAL OFFICE - DAY

Daniels, a furniture dealer, holding a NOTICE OVERDUE, motions to two burly movers to take the furniture.

PONZI

Mr. Daniels, please, just a little more
time.

DANIELS

No cash, no furniture.

PONZI

Look, how much do I owe you, a hundred?
I'll sign an I.O.U. for \$200... twice
what I owe you... if you'll just let me
keep the furniture.

DANIELS

(Looks at Ponzi, shakes his head)
I shouldn't do this, you know. It's
just another hundred I'm not gonna
see...

PONZI

Thank you, Mr. Daniels, thank you.

Daniels motions for the movers to return the furniture. Ponzi
signs the promissory note.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT - PONZI'S OFFICE, TWO WEEKS LATER - DAY

Ponzi is at his desk (which is empty except for the telephone, a
pad of paper, and bound volumes of shipping firms stamped
PROPERTY OF BOSTON LIBRARY) scribbling numbers on a pad. He looks
up as a silhouette of the mailman appears at the opaque glass
door and three pieces of mail fall onto the floor. Dutifully,
Ponzi gets the mail, and brings it back to the desk.

The first envelope reads ADDRESSEE UNKNOWN, NO FORWARDING

ADDRESS. He drops it into a wastebasket. The next, from the telephone company, reads NOTICE OVERDUE. Ponzi tosses it, and is about to throw the third envelope away, when he spots Barcelona, Spain on the return address. He neatly slices the envelope open and several pieces of colored paper flutter to the desktop. He ignores them...but only for a second. A shaft of light shines on the desktop and makes the slips of paper look as if they are glowing. Ponzi stops and stares at them. They are marked INTERNATIONAL REPLY COUPON - GOOD FOR ONE FIRST CLASS STAMP.

Ponzi's quizzical look suddenly becomes that of a man receiving an epiphany. Like he was grabbing for a life preserver, he reaches in a drawer for a booklet marked INTERNATIONAL POSTAL RATES. He thumbs through it, copying down numbers, cross-referencing furiously with his numbers. Sweat appears on his forehead as his pencil moves along the pad of paper. Suddenly, in a burst of almost orgasmic frenzy, he stops, the only sound in the room his own heavy breathing.

PONZI

Pasta e Fagioli!

He takes out and lights a post-orgasm cigarette.

CUT TO:

INT - PONZI'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Rose and Ponzi sit at the kitchen table. He holds up a cookie.

PONZI

Let's say that in America, you can buy this cookie for a penny. But in Italy, where things are not so good, you can buy four cookies for the same penny. So I send a penny to Italy and have someone buy four cookies and send them back to me here in America, where I re-sell them for a penny a piece. That's four cookies for the price of one!

ROSE

(Giggles)

You're going to sell cookies?

PONZI

(Drops colored pieces of paper on the table)

No, these. International Reply Coupons.

You can get them at post offices in many countries. The coupon is like the cookies because you can buy more of them for the same amount of money in a poor country, like Italy, than you can in a rich one, like America - but it's always worth the same - a first class stamp!

(Rose picks up and examines a coupon)

All I have to do is sell the stamps for

cash and I've made four times my money back!

ROSE

Carlo... it sounds so fantastic. How...
I mean... why hasn't...

PONZI

You mean if it is such a good idea why hasn't anyone else done it? You mean how could Carlo Ponzi, a dumb wop from Parma, think of something the Cabots and Lowells did not?

Rose gets up and moves to Ponzi, wrapping her arms around his waist. He turns away, avoiding her gaze. She cups his chin in her hand and rotates his head so he is facing her.

ROSE

Carlo... Carlo?
(She whispers into his ear)
I believe in you, Carlo Ponzi.

PONZI

(Rose kisses him throughout this speech)
You will see...I have sent my Uncle Giovanni in Parma a dollar. I told him to use it to buy as many coupons as he can and send them to me. When his letter arrives, I'll prove the plan will work.

They kiss one more time as we

DISSOLVE TO:

INT - PONZI'S OFFICE A FEW WEEKS LATER - DAY

Ponzi sits at his desk, anxiously staring at the mail slot. He HEARS the sound of footsteps and sees the shadow of the mailman stooping to slip a letter through the slot. The thick letter must be forced through the slot. Ponzi practically leaps over the desk and tears the letter open. Inside is a small stack of coupons, which Ponzi stuffs into his coat pocket as he bolts out the door.

Ponzi walks along busy School Street, down a small alley, and into the Post Office, a grand 19th century building with marble floors and columns, where the sound of the briskly walking Ponzi echoes a hundred times. He steps into a line, clutching the envelope in his hands. Soon he is at the window. Like a Baptist placing his first bet, Ponzi surreptitiously hands over the coupons to the clerk. The clerk examines the slips of paper, checks a list of countries tacked on the wall, goes to his drawer, and takes out 100 first class stamps and hands them to Ponzi, who quickly stuffs them in his pocket and retreats.

CUT TO:

EXT - BOSTON'S NORTH END - DAY

Ponzi greets the owner of an Italian restaurant, holding out the 100 stamps. The owner looks at first with skepticism, then acceptance. He reaches into his pocket and hands Ponzi three dollars. They shake hands and Ponzi leaves, looking like a kid who has just stolen his first piece of fruit from a street vendor. He ducks into an alley, leans against the wall, and breathes heavily. He looks down at the money in his hand, and begins to smile. The smile broadens, and soon Ponzi is laughing out loud. A matronly woman appears at the head of the alley, angrily staring at Ponzi.

WOMAN

Mmmph! This is why we need prohibition!

CUT TO:

INT - SEC OFFICE (AT 27 SCHOOL STREET) - DAY

A painter finishes putting the words SECURITIES EXCHANGE COMPANY on the front door of the former *Trader's Journal* office. ROSE and PONZI are at his desk, he in an old suit that has been repaired by Rose. He tears open a cardboard box filled with 8 1/2 x 11 inch pieces of paper.

PONZI

All these years the banks have gotten away with robbery. Four percent interest!

(They look out the window at a bank across the street)

Can you see the looks on their faces when they hear that I am offering 40 percent interest...in just three months!

(They see a husband and wife pushing a carriage)

Soon, my darling Rose... I promise... soon...

Rose blushes. The painter makes a "gag me" face. They ignore him and kiss.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT - NORTH END TOBACCONIST - DAY

A cluttered shop stocked floor to ceiling with tobacco products, magazines, patent medicines, and other assorted stationery items. The huge frame of Capricci seems stuffed into the area behind the crowded counter. ETTORE GILBERTI, an immigrant factory worker, stands behind Ponzi, listening.

CAPRICCI

Ponzi, you are a good customer. You buy your Sweet Caporals, maybe a newspaper.

But I don't try to sell you what I know you don't need...

PONZI

I'm not asking you to buy anything yourself, Capricci, I'm offering you a chance to make some extra money...10 percent commission on any certificates you sell here at the store.

CAPRICCI

I'm a tobacconist, Ponzi, not a bank. Besides, all this talk about coupons and exchange rates... it sounds like a Yankee shell game

PONZI

Fine! I'm sorry, end of story, forget it.

Ponzi puts money down on the counter and picks up his cigarettes and walks out of the shop. He is followed by Gilberti.

CUT TO:

EXT - OUTSIDE TOBACCO SHOP - DAY

Gilberti confronts Ponzi.

GILBERTI

Excuse, sir. I...couldn't help but overhear your conversation with Mr. Capricci. You're looking for someone to sell?

PONZI

Yes. Are you a salesman?

GILBERTI

Well...no. My name is Ettore Gilberti, and I work in a factory with a lot of men who are always looking to make extra money. Most of us don't get paid very much and...did I hear that you will pay 10% on any sale?

PONZI

Indeed I will, Gilberti, indeed I will. Come, let's talk... the Securities Exchange Company is new, but there is opportunity for someone like yourself who is willing to work hard...

Gilberti brightens. They walk as Ponzi continues his pitch.

CUT TO:

INT - SEC OFFICE - DAY

Ponzi is reading a column in the financial section of the newspaper titled: INTERNATIONAL CURRENCY EXCHANGE, cross

referencing those numbers with a worn POSTAL REGULATIONS book on his desk. Suddenly GILBERTI bursts into the room, very excited.

GILBERTI

Mr. Ponzi, Mr. Ponzi! Look!

Gilberti, catching his breath, holds out ten \$5 bills. Ponzi, trying not to look too excited, starts to get up, then restrains himself in his chair. He sees the money and licks his lips.

PONZI

Congratulations. Your first sale!

GILBERTI

I gave him the speech, just like you told me. I said 'Mr. Tecce, why do you suppose we only get four percent from the banks? Because they only make four percent? No, they make much more than that, but they keep it for themselves. Now why should you be content with scraps?'

PONZI

Excellent...excellent!

GILBERTI

Then I told him how the Securities Exchange Company could take his 50 dollars and in just 90 days turn it into 70...a whole 40% interest...and how over a year he would more than double his original investment!

PONZI

Did he believe you?

GILBERTI

All I know is he said 'If I can afford to lose 50 bucks in a three hour card game, I can afford to lose it in three months!' Then he gave me this.

Gilberti hands Ponzi the money, which Ponzi counts.

PONZI

Well, fifty dollars! Excellent. Tell me, Ettore, what did the other men in your factory think of Mr. Tecce's purchase?

GILBERTI

Not very much. Most of them don't think he'll see his money again.

(Ettore clutches his hat nervously as Ponzi gleefully recounts the money)
Mr. Ponzi?

PONZI

Yes, Ettore?

GILBERTI

He will see his money again, won't he?

PONZI

Ettore, are you worried that your friend will lose his money?

GILBERTI

No, I'm worried that my foreman will lose his money.

PONZI

(Laughs and hands Gilberti \$5)

Here, this is yours. And don't worry...

(Goes to a wall calendar showing the date: December 12, 1919. He flips three pages, and circles March 12)

On... March 12, when the certificate comes due and you hand Mr. Tecce his \$70, you will be a very busy man.

(Ponzi puts the money into a cigar box marked FOR COUPONS, then motions to the newspaper)

Look, the exchange rate is better than ever. Just a few more sales and I'll have enough money for the first big coupon purchase. So, Ettore, do you know anyone else who wants to make some extra money?

We HEAR a slow Dixieland tune through the following MONTAGE.

DISSOLVE TO:

MONTAGE:

INT - SEC OFFICE - DAY

Gilberti introduces PONZI to two young Italian men. Ponzi hands each a small stack of certificates.

INT - EAST BOSTON BARBER SHOP - DAY

Gilberti makes a sale to a man getting haircut as the barber shakes his head at the "sucker" being taken.

INT - NORTH END BUTCHER SHOP - DAY

A BUTCHER hands Ponzi two wrapped pork chops. Ponzi gives him a certificate. Two elderly women eye the butcher as if he is crazy.

EXT - NORTH END CAFE - NIGHT

A group of men sit around. Two OLD MEN laugh as a YOUNG MAN purchases a \$10 certificate.

EXT - OUTSIDE A NORTH END RESTAURANT - DAY

Ponzi walks out, counting out several bills, smiling as he strolls down the street. The music fades out.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT - PONZI'S SEC OFFICE - EVENING

The calendar on the wall indicates it is February 10. A smiling Ponzi, wearing a new suit and carrying a cane, enters, shuts the door, and walks to his desk, pulling cash from several pockets. He is sorting bills as Gilberti enters.

PONZI

I'm glad you're here. I've decided there will be a slight change in plans.
(Ponzi picks up a cigar box marked FOR COUPONS, hands \$70 to Gilberti)
Tomorrow, I want you to take this money and give it to Mr. Tecce.

GILBERTI

But the certificate isn't due for...

PONZI

Another month, I know.

GILBERTI

Wasn't that money for buying postal coupons?

PONZI

Yes, but the fact is we can pay off your foreman and some of our other customers early with the money we've taken from our newer customers.

GILBERTI

But what about the coupons?

PONZI

(Indicates cash in shoe box)
Look, there's plenty of dough and plenty of time for that later. What we need now are more customers.

CUT TO:

INT - GLASS FACTORY ON A STREET - DAY

Gilberti hands his FOREMAN, who looks surprised, confused, but ultimately pleased, \$70. The FOREMAN flashes his money around. A small crowd then gathers around GILBERTI, thrusting bills into his hands.

PONZI (V.O., CONT)

Think about it. When was the last time

a bank gave out interest in advance?
Tecce will tell anyone who will
listen... the word of mouth will be
terrific! Pretty soon we won't have to
go door to door... they'll be banging
down this one!

CUT TO:

EXT - SCHOOL STREET OUTSIDE SEC - DAY

There is a huge crowd of people - mostly immigrants - queuing at
the door of the building.

CUT TO:

INT - SEC OFFICE - DAY

Two weeks later. Gilberti is now dressed in a suit and is
standing behind a makeshift teller's window. Another teller
stands next to him, and each has a line of four or five immigrant
men and women. The "tellers" are being handed cash - \$5, \$10,
\$20 - and putting it into cash boxes. They write down the names
and addresses of each client on 3x5 index cards, and then hand
out certificates. The stack of cards is about an inch high.
Ponzi watches and smiles.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT - OUTSIDE THE SEC, THE NEXT MORNING - DAY

The crowds on School Street even larger than before. Ponzi
watches as an immigrant, coming out of the Tremont bank, sees the
cash in another immigrant's hands who has come from the SEC.

TONY

Luigi! So, I see you been to Ponzi's.

LUIGI

So, Tony, I see you are on your way
over!

TONY

Hey why not, he's just raised his rates!

LUIGI

I heard! 100 percent--double your
money--in three months!

TONY

My wife said I was crazy. She said no
man could turn stamps into money!

LUIGI

I told my wife 'hey, the government
won't let us buy liquor, what else are
we gonna spend our money on!'

TONY

So how much did you make?

LUIGI

Enough to find some liquor!

The two men laugh and walk off. Ponzi laughs to himself as he walks into the crowd towards the SEC.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT - OUTSIDE SEC ON SCHOOL STREET - DAY

It is later in the same day and EDWIN GROZIER, JR., the city editor of the Boston Post and PHILLIP BIGELOW, a reporter, walk up School Street.

GROZIER

... And after the way he handled the police strike, the party would be crazy not to put him on the ticket! My God, man, with Bolsheviks blowing up Wall Street, people need someone who is going to take a stand!

BIGELOW

I know, but old sourpuss?

GROZIER

(Laughs)

Look, I'll be the first to agree that Coolidge is not be the most inspirational...

Two Italian laborers exit 27 School Street and bump into them.

LABORERS (TOGETHER)

Scusi.

The laborers bow and run away. Grozier and Bigelow look at them with disdain as they continue walking.

GROZIER

As I was saying, "old sourpuss" may not be the most inspirational...

(They are bumped again by another immigrant running towards the building)

Mmmm. Must be a sale on garlic...

They start to walk, when a third immigrant brushes by them.

BIGELOW

(As if waving a smell away from his nose)
Phew! Giving it away is more like it...

They laugh and walk, then stop, looking with concern at each other. They reach for their wallets. Finding them in place, Grozier and Bigelow continue, as two different immigrants walk out of 27 School Street, each clutching some cash. They bump into

WILLIAM MCMASTERS, who was walking behind Grozier and Bigelow.

MCMASTERS

Excuse me.

IMMIGRANT #1

No, excuse us.

IMMIGRANT #2

We were so excited...

MCMASTERS

(Eyes the cash, then looks at crowd
at the door)

I can see why. Do you get that from in
there?

IMMIGRANT #1

Yes. You haven't heard about Signore
Ponzi?

IMMIGRANT #2

He doubles the money in just 3 months!

MCMASTERS

Doubles money in three months? That's
unheard of.

IMMIGRANT #1

(Waving his money)

Yea, well, I never heard of this much
cash before in my whole life.

IMMIGRANT #2

This man Ponzi is a great man.

IMMIGRANT #1

This Ponzi is great American.

IMMIGRANT #2

And we're rich Americans!

The two immigrants laugh and walk off. McMasters studies the crowd, licks his lips, then walks up to another immigrant and begins speaking to him. A small crowd gathers around him.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT - THE STAIRWELL LEADING UP TO THE SEC OFFICE - DAY

A line of people wait, some clutching certificates. A POSTAL INSPECTOR, who wears a dour expression, makes his way up the stairs. He carries a newspaper folded to display the headline: 3 COUNTRIES DROP OUT OF POSTAL AGREEMENT. We HEAR ominous music.

CUT TO:
INT - THE SEC OFFICE - DAY

The INSPECTOR walks down the crowded hallway and opens the door to the SEC, which is exploding with activity. He stands before Lucy Meli, who is talking to PONZI on the intercom. Several customers look with curiosity towards the inspector.

LUCY

Mr. Ponzi, there's a Mr. Callahan here to see you. He says he's an inspector with the Post Office, and wants to ask you some questions...

The door to Ponzi's office swings open. Ponzi, an ebullient grin on his face, extends his hand to Callahan, who limply returns the gesture. As they talk, Ponzi maneuvers Callahan into his office.

PONZI

Mr. Callahan, I'm Charles Ponzi, president of the Securities Exchange Company. What can I do for you?

Ponzi gently takes Callahan's elbow and leads him to his office.

CALLAHAN

Mr. Ponzi, the post office has some questions about your use of Postal coupons as a source of profit...

PONZI

I'm happy to answer all your questions, Inspector. Why don't we step into my office where we won't be disturbed...

CALLAHAN

Very well.

The door shuts behind them.

CUT TO:

INT - PONZI'S OFFICE - DAY

Callahan casts a suspicious eye around the office. Ponzi, walking behind his desk, motions for Callahan to sit down, but the inspector coldly refuses.

CALLAHAN

Mr. Ponzi, it has come to my attention that your business is based on trading International Reply Coupons. Now, this morning my office received word that three countries have dropped out of the agreement...

PONZI

Trade is a rather inexact word for what

I do, Mr. Callahan. You see, currency in many countries is like a balloon. It goes up. It goes down. If you follow the balloon and know when it's up or down...you can make money.

CALLAHAN

Mr. Ponzi, I am not a child. Please don't talk down to me.

PONZI

I'm sorry. Let me talk in your language then.

Ponzi turns his back on Callahan and points to a map of the world tacked on the wall near his desk. About 50 colored pins are stuck on the map in countries that are IRC members. At the beginning of this speech Ponzi reaches for a volume labeled POSTAL REGULATIONS. During the speech he turns several times to refer to the map. Each time he does that, Callahan looks frightfully confused, only to return to a look of comprehension when Ponzi turn again to face him.

PONZI

By taking advantage of the existing disparity in the exchange rate we can purchase a quantity of International reply coupons, as allowed by postal regulation 6.3.2 paragraph 8, and ship them using overseas post to my company in the United States where, according to the bylaws of the International Postal Union I can go to any local Post Office and redeem them for First Class stamps...that's section 2, regulation 1.2.1, paragraph 1. Now, as the sliding scale of the dollar matches the return rate of investment according to the United States treasury, we can maximize our return by...

DISSOLVE TO:

INT - PONZI'S OFFICE - CLOSEUP OF THE DOOR - DAY

PULL BACK to Lucy's desk. Gilberti is standing next to the desk.

GILBERTI

How long have they been in there?

MELI

About half an hour.

At that moment, the door to Ponzi's office opens. Meli and Gilberti watch as a smiling PONZI and smiling CALLAHAN walk out towards a teller window. Ponzi brings a very respectful CALLAHAN to the front of the line, much to the annoyance of the people who were already standing there.

PONZI

How much was it you were going to invest... 100?

CALLAHAN

Yes...100...thank you, Mr. Ponzi.

PONZI

(To clerk)

Mr. Vapore, please take good care of Mr. Callahan.

(To Callahan, who's giving the clerk money)

And if there are any more questions...

CALLAHAN

(Being handed a certificate by the clerk)

Thank you, Mr. Ponzi. No, I am quite impressed, quite impressed.

The inspector walks out the door, muttering to himself. GILBERTI and MELI look impressed. Ponzi, wearing a huge grin, walks past them into his office.

CUT TO:

INT - PONZI'S SEC OFFICE - DAY

Moments later, Ponzi looks at himself in the mirror. A DREAM SEQUENCE begins. Slowly, the image Ponzi sees in the mirror changes, as his business suit changes into a tuxedo. A monocle, cigar, and top hat follow. The office behind him turns into the stuffy Somerset Club on Beacon Hill. A fire burns in the huge mahogany fireplace, as servants pour gin and tonics for Brahmin blue bloods sitting idly in their leather chairs. We HEAR chatter and laughter from the men.

BRAHMIN #1

Tell us again, Ponzi, old boy, about how you manipulated the coupons.

BRAHMIN #2

Yes, and after that tell us about how you bought those five banks.

BRAHMIN #3

And what the President said to you when you visited the White House for the fifth time?

BRAHMIN #1

How about it? Mister Ponzi? Mister Ponzi? Mister Ponzi?

The sequence ends as we HEAR the voice of Brahmin #1 fade into the voice of Inspector Callahan, standing at the door to Ponzi's office.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT - PONZI'S SEC OFFICE - DAY

CALLAHAN

Mister Ponzi? Mister Ponzi?

Ponzi is jolted out of his dream, and sees Callahan. For a brief moment a look of panic begins to appear on his face...then he regains composure, pastes a smile on his face.

PONZI

Yes, Inspector?

CALLAHAN

Ponzi, I've been thinking that perhaps I missed something...

PONZI

Yes?

CALLAHAN

Well, you said your salesmen get 10% commission, and as it turns out my son is looking for a job...

PONZI

Say no more...have the lad come by and I'll give him a job.

CALLAHAN

Splendid! Thank you, Mr. Ponzi. Good day.

Callahan exits, shutting the door behind him. Ponzi leans against it, licks his lips and laughs.

PONZI

It can't be this easy...

(He is still chuckling to himself as he walks to his desk and studies the shoebox marked FOR COUPONS)

Or is it?

(He turns and reaches behind his desk for a book labeled POSTAL REGULATIONS, blowing a thick layer of dust off the top)

Maybe I should buy at least a few coupons. After all...

(Gets up and walks to the map, slowly pulling out the pin from France, then romania, then Italy. He looks with concern at the Italian pin.)

Uncle Giovanni. What am I gonna do without you?

Ponzi mulls that over as he exits his office.

CUT TO:

INT - ETTORE GILBERTI'S TELLER STATION - DAY

Ponzi walks behind the tellers, stopping to watch as Gilberti swaps a \$10 bill from a customer for a certificate, on which he stamps a maturity date.

GILBERTI

Thank you, Peter.

(Gilberti puts the money from Peter into a drawer. Another customer walks up to the window and hands a certificate to Gilberti, who checks the date, then reaches into the same drawer, pulls out two 10 dollar bills and hands them to the customer)

Thank you for doing business with the Securities Exchange Company, Paul.

Ponzi is struck by an epiphany. He watches another teller receive cash from a customer, then reaches into the same drawer to pay off the mature certificate of another customer. Ponzi pantomimes taking money in with his right hand, moving it to his left hand, and handing it out. He shakes his head as if to say 'this can't be right.' He paces around the office, watching the cash flow over the counter into drawers and garbage pails. He strides into his office and emerges with his hat and coat, passing his secretary, Lucy Meli.

PONZI

Miss Meli, I'm going out for a bit of fresh air.

CUT TO:

EXT - PORTLAND STREET IN BOSTON - DAY

Ponzi walks thoughtfully through the crowded streets, pantomiming the transaction he witnessed at the SEC. He stops to tie his shoelace, and realizes he is in front of St. Joseph's Catholic Church - and 4 o'clock mass has started. Like an estranged husband bearing a decade-late alimony check, Ponzi slowly pushes himself up the steps into the chapel.

CUT TO:

INT - ST. JOSEPH'S CHURCH - DAY

Ponzi self-consciously slides into a back pew to listen to the service. The priest's voice echoes throughout the cathedral.

PRIEST

...and so as we strive to succeed in the world, let us also strive to make our way honestly and with virtue. Do not cheat. Do not lie. Do not rob Peter to pay Paul. These are the precepts of good living...

Ponzi has heard enough, and as he glances towards the heavens he sneaks out of the church to the dark street, illuminated by a street lamp. Ponzi licks his lips and makes the money-passing motion with his hands. Suddenly, the street lamp bursts, sending a shower of sparks on Ponzi, who shields himself with his arms and hands. He glances about for witnesses, then guiltily races off into the darkening night.

CUT TO:

INT - CHARLES & ROSE'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Charles sits at the kitchen table staring at a pile of cookies. Rose enters.

ROSE

Charles, I'm back from Daddy's. He said to say hello and... Charles, is everything all right?

PONZI

Hmmm? Oh, hello, Rose, darling. Yes, everything is fine.

ROSE

Are you hungry?

PONZI

No.

ROSE

Then why do you have all these cookies in front of you?

PONZI

Oh...I'm working on a problem.

ROSE

Can I help?

PONZI

Let me ask you a question. If someone promised to pay you some money by a certain time and they did, would it matter to you where they got it?

ROSE

Well, as long as they didn't steal it...

PONZI

No! No! Of course not! But what if they said they would get the money one way...
(He picks up a cookie in his left hand.)
Like sending money to Italy to buy cheaper cookies, but instead...
(Transfers one from his left hand to his right while picking up two

cookies in his left hand)
they use the money made from this week's
cookies sales to make last week's
payment...

(Transfers 2 cookies from his left
hand to his right, picking up 4
cookies in his left)
and then pay off this week's customers
with more sales the following week...

ROSE

But you are saying that everyone gets
paid?

PONZI

Yes.

ROSE

As much as you promised?

PONZI

Well, yes.

ROSE

And you pay them on time?

PONZI

Like clockwork. But -

ROSE

But what?

PONZI

Everyone thinks I'm making the money
from buying cookies!

ROSE

But you just said everyone is getting
paid on time.

PONZI

Sure!

ROSE

(Cupping his face in her hands)
Charles, in America, I think that's what
they call success.

PONZI

I just worry if...

ROSE

If what, darling?

PONZI

Well, if it's...if I'm...moral...

ROSE

Now you listen to me, Charles Ponzi. My father lost his business...a place where fifty men worked to put food on the table and keep a roof over their family's heads. And do you know why? Because the people who owed my father money stopped paying on time. 'Sorry Mr. Gnecco, but things are a little tight this month.' 'Sorry, Mr. Gnecco, but the shipping firm is late in paying us.' Father was just one more bill they either couldn't or didn't want to pay. And before we knew it the Gnecco Fruit Company was shut down, padlocked, and everything in it sold by the creditors to pay off others who were not as patient as my father. After fifteen years...out of business. And fifty men - you among them - were out on the street. No, Charles, I don't want you to worry. In America, the Yankees have taught us that they understand one thing above everything else. A moral man is a man who can pay his bills.

Ponzi looks convinced, and they kiss.

CUT TO:

INT - SEC MAIN OFFICE - DAY

There are long lines at the teller windows. Meli, at her desk, is about to spoon some sugar into a hot cup of tea. Ponzi enters.

PONZI

Good morning, Miss Meli.

MELI

Good morning sir, here's your mail.

PONZI

Thank you. Tea, huh? I thought you Bostonians threw all your tea into the harbor!

As she lifts the spoon, some of the sugar for her tea spills on her desk.

MELI

Nah! Just the British tea. This stuff's from China, I think.

PONZI
(Laughs)

By the way, have you arranged for that special item I spoke to you about?

MELI
Yes, I did.

PONZI
The blue one?

MELI
Just like you wanted.

PONZI
Thank you. Excellent.

MELI
(As Ponzi heads to his office)
Oh, Mr. Ponzi! I almost forgot. That man -
(Motions to a professional-looking man standing near the window)
- says he'd like to have a minute of your time.

CUT TO:

INT - PONZI'S OFFICE AT THE SEC - DAY

Ponzi POV sitting at his desk, listening to one visitor after another. The first is Arthur Hill, a sleazy-looking lawyer.

HILL
Ponzi, allow me to introduce myself...

CUT TO:

INT - PONZI'S OFFICE - DAY

Ponzi POV sitting at his desk, listening to William McMasters.

MCMASTERS
...my name is Bill McMasters...

CUT TO:

INT - PONZI'S OFFICE - DAY

Ponzi POV sitting at his desk. Before him is a WASPy-looking man named Richards wearing a loud jacket and tie.

RICHARDS
...and I'm here to talk to you about...

CUT TO:

INT - PONZI'S OFFICE - DAY

Ponzi POV sitting at his desk, listening to a short, bald man with a pencil-thin mustache named Young, a car salesman.

YOUNG

...the only way to travel, Mr. Ponzi,
and that's by au-to-mo-bile...

CUT TO:

INT - LUCY MELI'S DESK - DAY

She sips her tea as two flies buzzing near the sugar. She ignores them and continues to drink.

CUT TO:

INT - PONZI'S OFFICE - DAY

Ponzi POV sitting at his desk, listening to Pendleton, a stocky insurance salesman.

PENDLETON

Sure, things are going great now, but
what if you get injured in an accident
or, worse yet, killed?

CUT TO:

INT - PONZI'S OFFICE - DAY

Ponzi POV sitting at his desk, listening to Hill.

HILL

...because I know that getting sued is
the last thing you're thinking of...

CUT TO:

INT - PONZI'S OFFICE - DAY

Ponzi POV sitting at his desk, listening to McMasters.

MCMASTERS

...but everyone needs publicity...

CUT TO:

INT - PONZI'S OFFICE - DAY

Ponzi POV sitting at his desk, listening to Richards.

RICHARDS

...a car...

CUT TO:

INT - PONZI'S OFFICE - DAY

Ponzi POV sitting at his desk, listening to Pendleton.

PENDLETON

...insurance...

CUT TO:

INT - LUCY MELI'S DESK - DAY

The two flies are joined on the sugar by three more flies. Other flies continue to buzz around the desk.

CUT TO:

INT - PONZI'S OFFICE - DAY

Ponzi POV behind his desk, Hill handing him a business card.

HILL

Please...

CUT TO:

INT - PONZI'S OFFICE - DAY

Ponzi POV behind his desk, McMasters handing him a business card.

MCMASTERS

...take my card...

CUT TO:

INT - PONZI'S OFFICE - DAY

Ponzi POV behind his desk, Richards handing him a glass paperweight with a snow scene and a sled.

RICHARDS

...and a small gift of appreciation...

CUT TO:

INT - LUCY MELI'S DESK - DAY

The sugar on the desk is now inundated with flies, with even more buzzing around waiting to land.

CUT TO:

INT - PONZI'S OFFICE - DAY

Ponzi POV sitting at his desk, listening to Hill.

HILL

Feel free to call me....

CUT TO:

INT - PONZI'S OFFICE - DAY

Ponzi POV sitting at his desk, listening to McMasters.

RICHARDS

...anytime of day...

CUT TO:

INT - PONZI'S OFFICE - DAY

Ponzi POV sitting at his desk, listening to Flynn.

FLYNN

...because we want to give you the best deal possible...

CUT TO:

INT - PONZI'S OFFICE - DAY

Ponzi POV sitting at his desk, listening to McMasters.

MCMASTERS

...because if I'm successful, you're successful...

CUT TO:

INT - LUCY MELI'S DESK - DAY

The flies are gone.

CUT TO:

INT - PONZI'S OFFICE - DAY

A stack of business cards, brochures, and gifts (sponges, paperweights, and backscratchers) sitting on Ponzi's desk. Smiling and shakes his head with amazement, he reaches into a box marked FOR POSTAL COUPONS, putting a stack into his coat pocket.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT - SCHRAFFT CANDY FACTORY IN CHARLESTOWN - DAY

Trucks trundle in and out of a busy loading dock.

CUT TO:

INT - THE SECRETARIAL POOL OF THE SCHRAFFT CANDY COMPANY - DAY

Rose is at her desk typing out invoices when she looks up. She first appears shocked, then worried.

ROSE

Charles! What are you doing here?

PONZI

Is this how you greet a man who has come all the way across town to visit his wife?

ROSE

But Charles, I'm working, can't you wait?

PONZI

No more waiting. Get your things. You're leaving.

ROSE

Leaving? Charles, please. If Mr. Stafford comes in...

PONZI

(Presses a finger on her lips)

Shhh. Just get your things.

Ponzi takes Rose's hand. She starts to protest again as the other secretaries look on (some with annoyance, others with rapt interest) as Charles guides her away from her desk. Rose, gets her pocketbook, gloves, and hat.

CUT TO:

EXT - OUTSIDE THE SCHRAFFT CANDY COMPANY - DAY

As Rose emerges from the building, her eyes widen to register disbelief. She turns to Ponzi, who nods.

CUT TO:

ROSE POV

EXT - PARKING LOT OF SCHRAFFT'S - DAY

Revealing a shiny, blue Locomobile. An oriental chauffeur stands at attention by the open passenger door.

CUT TO:

EXT - PARKING LOT OF SCHRAFFT'S - DAY

Like a King escorting his Queen, Ponzi walks Rose to the car and helps her in, following close behind. The driver shuts the door and gets behind the wheel.

CUT TO:

INT - INSIDE THE LOCOMOBILE - DAY

PONZI

Take us home, Mr. Cabot.

ROSE

He's a Cabot?

PONZI

Not really, but I've always wanted a Cabot to drive my car...if you like, we can call him Mr. Lowell. He gets paid the same.

The car drives out of the parking lot. The secretaries squeal with delight.

CUT TO:

INT - BACK SEAT OF THE LOCOMOBILE - DAY

Charles overflows with excitement, as Rose beams at him.

PONZI

I tell you Rose... they all want the same thing - to talk to Charles Ponzi. Publicity men, lawyers, car salesmen,

insurance men, investors, even
politicians...

ROSE

Politicians?

PONZI

I didn't tell you? Some guy who works
for an Ohio Senator... what was his
name? Oh, yea, Harding! Asked if I
wanted to contribute to his campaign.

ROSE

Did you?

PONZI

Nah! I told him if I gave to one, I'd
hafta give to the other 95!

(The car stops at a light. He sees a
Beacon Hill dowager being helped into
a limousine)

What a shame people like her will never
understand that the best thing about
making money is not having it in the
first place.

ROSE

I don't understand, Charles.

PONZI

Look at her. She grew up with it. All
her life she's been treated like a
queen. She's never known anything else.

It's what she expects life is supposed
to be - people like her driver...people
like you and me serving her every need.

How can she possibly appreciate money
as much as we do, coming from nothing?

ROSE

I guess I've never realized this, but
it's not just the money, is it?

PONZI

Oh, it's the money, Rose. Don't ever
forget that. But there is something
else. Its the same world, sure. The
same streets and buildings and cars, but
it's also different.

ROSE

Different?

PONZI

Now that I have money and success
everyone wants to be my friend. They
all want my success to stick to their

shoes. Total strangers on the street smile and nod in my direction. My telephone calls get returned. Suddenly Charles Ponzi matters.

ROSE

Oh, Charles, you know you always mattered to me.

PONZI

I know, Rose, I know. It wouldn't be half as much fun if I didn't have you to share it with.

The driver makes a "gag me" face.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT - A HOUSE IN LEXINGTON - DAY

An hour later, the car stops in front of a large Tudor-style home in Lexington. The chauffeur opens the door. Ponzi gets out first, then extends his hand to his wife, who gets out with some trepidation.

PONZI

Welcome home.

ROSE

All of it?

Rose looks at Charles, who slowly nods his head and smiles. Rose starts to cry and buries her head in his shoulder. Ponzi smiles and leads her up the walkway, as we:

CUT TO:

INT - LIVING ROOM - DAY

As they enter, Rose raises her head, her eyes widening as she sweeps her view across the room. It is decorated a bit ostentatiously... too much marble and gilded gold to be anything but nouveau riche. Rose begins to walk around the room, examining each item with such care as if everything were made of the most delicate china.

ROSE

Oh, Charles, a marble table, just like at a museum.

PONZI

\$150. Cash.

ROSE

This couch, it's velvet--and it's dreamy...

PONZI

\$200, and that's before the velvet went over it. I had that specially made for...

ROSE

And this roll-top desk...soooo elegant!

PONZI

\$350. Just think...a few months ago I had to give a \$200 promissory note to that bastard Daniels so I could keep one desk and chair at the office!

(Rose has exited the room. We HEAR Rose scream. Charles starts to run to her, as she rushes back into the room, into his arms)
Rose, what is it!?

ROSE

There's a man in the kitchen!

A small, older man with white hair, dressed in a BUTLER uniform, anxiously follows Rose out of the kitchen.

BUTLER

Is there anything wrong, sir?

PONZI

My fault, William. I forget to tell my wife about you and the rest of the household staff.

ROSE

The...staff? How many...

PONZI

Six. Not counting the chauffeur who drove us here.

(Rose gapes at Ponzi, who smiles broadly)
Well, it is a big house...Come on...let me show you the upstairs...and the bedroom.

Rose blushes, as she and Charles walk up a small but grand staircase.

CUT TO:

EXT - CROWDED SCHOOL STREET - DAY

GROZIER JR. walks up the street, fighting his way through the crowd. As he emerges from the gauntlet, he stops to view the throng with disdain, then brushes himself off and attempts to regain his dignity. He resumes walking, but suddenly stops to check his wallet. Satisfied he still has it, he continues.

CUT TO:

INT - PONZI'S OFFICE - DAY

McMasters stands before Ponzi, who winces at McMasters bad attempt at Italian words.

MCMASTERS

Sure, you're getting all your *paisons* from the North and West Ends to buy, but what about the South End and Charlestown and the rest of the city?

PONZI

But I can't afford a... what is it you say you do?

MCMASTERS

I'm a publicity man.

PONZI

Uh huh. You see, all my salesmen work on commission. They get a piece of what they sell -

MCMASTERS

Say no more. I'll work for a piece, too.

PONZI

I have enough guys getting pieces -

MCMASTERS

But I'm better than a salesman. I can have people lined around the block just begging you to take their dough.

PONZI

But I've already -

MCMASTERS

I'll tell you what - I'll get a story about you in the biggest paper in town, the Post. Now when you see that I can -

PONZI

The Post? You're gonna get me in the Post? An immigrant in that Yankee rag? That'll be the day!

Ponzi ushers McMasters out the door, relieved.

CUT TO:

INT - SOMERSET CLUB ON BEACON HILL - DAY

A bastion of the "Proper Bostonian," the Somerset Club reeks of old money. The all male members relax heavy leather chairs reading and talking about business. EDWIN GROZIER SR., the Post's

owner and publisher, is talking with McMasters at a small dinner table. Grozier Jr. smiles as he enters the club, but both he and McMasters register displeasure at the sight of the other.

MCMASTERS

Ed...

GROZIER

McMasters. This is a surprise.

MCMASTERS

To both of us. Believe me.

GROZIER

(As he sits down)

Let me guess, father, it slipped your mind to have your secretary inform me that there would be a third for dinner.

GROZIER SR.

An old man forgets a few things...

GROZIER

You never forget to check the layout of the front page.

GROZIER SR.

I never forget to make sure the front page of my paper is laid out correctly.

GROZIER

Your paper. My front page.

MCMASTERS

Well, it's nice to know some things don't change.

A butler arrives, puts three empty glasses and a bucket of ice on the table, then exits.

GROZIER SR.

(To Grozier and McMasters)

Have a drink?

MCMASTERS

Well, I...

GROZIER SR.

Come on, just because you're not a reporter anymore doesn't mean you can't drink, eh? Scotch? Or brandy?

MCMASTERS

(Looks around the bottle-less table)

Well, I... scotch, I guess.

GROZIER SR.
Excellent choice. Edwin?

GROZIER
Scotch will be fine, father, thank you.

Grozier Sr. opens his jacket and we see two flasks. He pulls one out, pours the drinks, returns the flask, and raises his glass.

GROZIER
To the Volstead Act!

GROZIER SR.
To hell with Volstead. To the
Canadians!

MCMASTERS
And their scotch!

They all laugh.

GROZIER SR.
So, Bill, how's my favorite reporter?

Grozier Jr. reacts with hurt and disdain.

MCMASTERS
Fine. Keeping busy.

GROZIER SR.
But not in my newsroom.

GROZIER
My newsroom, remember?

MCMASTERS
Boy, how things don't change.

GROZIER SR.
(To Grozier Jr.)
Bill called me today and told me this remarkable story about this fellow on School Street. Damndest thing I've ever heard. He says this fellow is doubling people's money in just 90 days.

GROZIER
Doubling money? Wait a minute, I know this Barnum, it's whathisface...

MCMASTERS
That's Ponzi. Charles Ponzi.

GROZIER
Billy, I told you I there was no story here, didn't I? Just some dago con game no one understands.

GROZIER SR.

Oh, I don't know. From what Bill says it sounds like a nice little story. You know, one immigrant starting his own business which helps other immigrants pull themselves up by their bootstraps.

It's a good old-fashioned American success story, don't you think?

GROZIER

Oh really, father, for the Globe or the Transcript, maybe. But not for us.

MCMASTERS

And why not?

GROZIER

Because the readers we want aren't interested in that American Dream balderdash.

MCMASTERS

I'm curious, Eddie, what kind of readers do you want?

GROZIER

The kind of readers our advertisers want to reach.

MCMASTERS

So that's how journalism works these days? Really?

GROZIER

Bill, if nobody buys the paper then what good does it do to print it?

MCMASTERS

So you feed your readers a steady diet of throat slashings and scandal.

GROZIER

My job as editor and as part owner is to put together a paper that people will buy. And most don't give a hoot about some I-talian's business.

MCMASTERS

And why should they? You've got them thinking that every immigrant wants to blow up Wall Street.

GROZIER

(To McMasters)

Who knows, maybe your Mr. Ponzi is an anarchist using this... business of his

to cheat people out of money so he can buy bombs for his anarchist friends.

MCMASTERS

Or maybe he's a true American success story?

GROZIER SR.

Either way, boys, I smell a story.

GROZIER

(To Grozier Sr.)

All I can smell is garlic.

(To McMasters)

And a hungry publicity man.

MCMASTERS

(Stands up)

That tears it. I tried reason but it just doesn't work on someone so unreasonable.

GROZIER SR.

(To an exiting McMasters)

William!

GROZIER

Oh, let him go, father.

GROZIER SR.

That was uncalled for, you know. He happens to believe very sincerely -

GROZIER

In the American Dream, I know father. He's a prince of a man and a helluva reporter.

GROZIER SR.

And one thing that set him apart was his ability to find a story where others couldn't. Or wouldn't.

GROZIER

You mean Ponzi? He doesn't think that's a story any more than I do. He's just trying to get us to print one of his pieces of "immigrant makes good" hokum. Wonder how much the dago is paying him.

GROZIER SR.

A man comes out of nowhere and starts doubling people's money. Seems to me there was a time when you would have at least wondered how, or why. You used to love the street. Where's the reporter who went out of his way to prove he

didn't get his job because his father
ran the paper? Where's the boy with ink
running through his veins?

GROZIER
(Stands up)

He spent five years on the street
proving he belonged. Do you expect me
to spend the rest of my life chasing
fire engines and police cars? Father,
I'm happy where I am. Stop trying to
push me back on the street!

The butler returns as young Grozier exits.

GROZIER SR.
Price, do you have any children?

PRICE
Eight, sir.

GROZIER SR.
Don't ever try to bring them into the
family business.

PRICE
I'm sure that will break their hearts,
sir.

CUT TO:

EXT - SCHOOL STREET - DAY

The line outside the SEC extends into the street. Cops,
laborers, women clutching purses, others with fistfuls of money
wait their turn. Vendors have set up carts along the sidewalk to
handle the lunch time crowd. Occasionally an exiting client
waves a fan of money to the crowd, which lets out a cheer.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT - PONZI'S SEC OFFICE - DAY

Ponzi stands by his window watching the throng outside. He licks
his lips, then peers down at the crowd again. There is a knock,
and Meli pokes her head through the door.

MELI
Mr. Ponzi, you wanted to know when it
was time.

PONZI
Oh! Thank you, Miss Meli.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT - PASSENGER PIER ALONG BOSTON'S WATERFRONT - DAY

The gangplank of a cruise ship is being lowered. The pier is a flurry of activity, as stevedores unload personal baggage and shipped goods. As the gangplank hits the ground a line of people moves along its narrow confines, waving and yelling as they spot friends and relatives in the crowd below. Rose watches as Ponzi scans the faces of the people disembarking.

ROSE

Can you see her?

PONZI

There...there she is! Mama! Mama!
Over here!

CUT TO:

EXT - LOOKING AT THE GANGPLANK - DAY

Among the crowd shuffling down towards the dock is an older Italian woman, medium height and frame, white hair, wire-rimmed glasses, scanning the crowd below. Suddenly she smiles at a sight not seen in 17 years.

CUT TO:

EXT - BOTTOM OF GANGPLANK - DAY

Mama barely gets off the gangplank when Charles is upon her, hugging her and burying his head in her shoulder, almost sobbing. Mama pats her son's head, strokes his hair. Rose walks up behind them.

PONZI

Oh, Mama, Mama, Mama, I missed you so much.

(He brings himself to full height)

Mama... I want you to meet Rose.

ROSE

(Reaching out for Mama)

Mrs. Ponzi, I am so glad to finally meet you. Charlie's been waiting so long for-

Mama, who gives a piercing glare at Ponzi, bear-hugs Rose, who nearly gets the wind knocked out of her.

MAMA

Charlie? Charlie, they call you now?

(She releases Rose, who gasps for air.)

So, Carlo is not good enough, eh? You are ashamed of who you are? You no like being Italiano?

PONZI

Mama, please. It's a good American name. Like Charles Goodyear. You've heard of him...he makes tires that make him a rich man.

MAMA

So you'll make yourself a rich man... someday. But as Carlo, the name I gave you!

PONZI

You don't understand, Mama. I've already made a million dollars. And I've made it the only way I could in America, as Charles.

MAMA

You've made a million dollars?

PONZI

Yes, Mama. And there's millions more to come.

MAMA

Then come and give your Mama a hug... Charles, my baby!

Ponzi smiles as he and Mama hug. He reaches out one arm to Rose, and they walk towards the car, past a newsboy hawking papers.

NEWSBOY

Extra! Extra! Read all about it!
Favorite son Coolidge gets Vice-
Presidential nomination!

MAMA

Who's a-this Coolidge? And why doesn't his father like his other boys?

ROSE

Calvin Coolidge is our Governor, Mrs. Ponzi, but some people want him to be Vice-President.

MAMA

Vice-President? Is that like a king?

Rose and Ponzi look at each other, wondering how to explain it.

ROSE

Uh, it's kind of like assistant king.

PONZI

Only you can't order anyone's head chopped off!

ROSE

Charles!

The chauffeur waits by the car door, but before they can step in, Ponzi is stopped by two middle-aged Italian men, who reach for his hand.

PAUL

Mr. Ponzi! Peter, look! It's Ponzi!
The guy with the certificates!

PETER

Mr. Ponzi. You're all right, you know
that?

PAUL

Yea, I got a car thanks to you...

Upon hearing Ponzi's name several people, including stevedores, baggage men, and dock personnel turn. They move closer to shake his hand, pat his back, or thank him for their SEC profits. A crowd of about twenty people gathers around them. Mama puts her arm around Ponzi.

MAMA

That's-a my boy, Charles Ponzi! I made
him what he is today, eh?

The small crowd cheers. Rose has no doubt whose mother this woman is.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT - OUTSIDE THE LEXINGTON HOME - DAY

The Locomobile pulls up in front of the house, and the chauffeur steps around to open the door. Ponzi gets out first, holding out his hand to ROSE and then Mama. The chauffeur steps to the trunk to get Mama's luggage, while Ponzi stands with his mother who looks at the house.

MAMA

Is this where we stop for eat?

PONZI

Mama, it's not a restaurant, it's my
house.

MAMA

House? Carlo...Charles. You tell your
Mama the truth about something?

PONZI

Of course, Mama.

MAMA

Since when you learn to play cards this
good?

PONZI

Mama, I didn't buy this house playing cards. I told you, I'm a businessman now.

MAMA

You make-a all this money with-a the postage stamps?

PONZI

(Tentative)

Well... yes, Mama, that's how I started.

MAMA

This America, she's-a some country. And that's-a some boy! My boy! I am so proud of you.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT - SCHOOL STREET JULY 3, 1920 - DAY

Hundreds line the street, cheering Ponzi as he makes his way into the front entrance. People slap his back, women try to hug him.

VOICE IN THE CROWD

Three cheers for the greatest Italian who ever lived!

PONZI

What about Columbus? He discovered the New World. And Marconi, he discovered radio.

ANOTHER VOICE IN THE CROWD

Yea, but you discovered money!

The crowd laughs and cheers. One person stands out from the throng, a sour-looking man in a bowtie and bowler hat standing near the front of the line. He watches as Ponzi makes his way past him into the building.

CUT TO:

INT - PONZI'S SEC OFFICE - DAY

Ponzi stares at the hand-drawn chart hanging on his door showing the growing difference between MONEY IN and MONEY OUT. He licks his lips.

PONZI

Damn coupons.

CUT TO:

INT - SPEAKEASY ON SCHOOL STREET - DAY

Even though a sign reads DUE TO THE VOLSTEAD ACT NO ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGES WILL BE SERVED the male patrons at the counter at several small tables in the dimly lit room are drinking. Grozier sits glumly at the bar nursing a scotch. Behind him, a table of reporters drink and laugh.

REPORTER #1

...so the mayor turns around and pow!
Right in Coolidge's eye!

REPORTER #2

The photograph of the decade and his
camera's out of film!

REPORTER #3

Cause he used it getting a cheesecake
shot of the mayor's secretary!

They all laugh. Grozier watches them. The bartender, a burly Irishman named McGee, wipes the bar with a dirty rag.

GROZIER

Do you have a father, McGee?

MCGEE

Everyone's got a father, Mr. Grozier.

GROZIER

Son. I mean a son. Have you got a son?

MCGEE

I got two, Mr. Grozier.

GROZIER

How old?

MCGEE

Well, lessee... Tommy is eight and
Richie is ten.

GROZIER

Are you proud of them?

MCGEE

There my boys, Mr. Grozier. Of course
I'm proud of them.

GROZIER

Just like that, huh?

MCGEE

I don't getcha.

GROZIER

I mean, did Timmy -

MCGEE

Tommy -

GROZIER

- ever hit a home run in the bottom of the ninth to win the big game for his school baseball team? Did Roger -

MCGEE

Richie -

GROZIER

- ever get an A on his geography exam and make the honor roll?

MCGEE

Well, truth be told, Mr. Grozier, the youngest boy couldn't hit a fly ball out of the infield. And if the oldest were any stupider we'd could rent the space out between his ears as a spare bedroom.

GROZIER

(Laughs, then intensely serious)
And yet you love them. Can't hit, can't spell...

MCGEE

They don't have to do any of that stuff. They're my boys. That's all they have to be for me to love them.

GROZIER

They are two very lucky boys.

MCGEE

No, you got it all wrong, Mr. Grozier. A year ago I owned three bars and was getting set to buy a fourth. Then they pass a law that says if I'm caught selling a drink I could go to jail. I can't sell my business because who wants to buy a bar these days? So to keep food on the table I gotta sell the bars for a sixth of what they're worth. Then I look for a job, but the only thing I find is here, selling booze all night. For tips. But each morning when I get home it's just about the time my boys are getting ready for school. And the old man walks in the door and it's like I'm Pershing marching into Paris. No, I'm the lucky one.

(A customer at the bar raises his

empty glass and waves it at McGee)
Excuse me, Mr. Grozier.

Grozier reflects, then stuffs a \$5 bill into the tip jar. McMasters enters. The reporters who ADLIB boisterous greetings ('hey, Billy, how's the boy,' 'Whattya say, Bill,'). He acknowledges them but sits next to Grozier. McMasters motions to McGee to bring him what Grozier is drinking. The bartender pours then leaves. The two men silently sip their drinks and stare at each other through the mirror across the counter, the moment broken only by occasional laughter from the reporters.

MCMASTERS

Look, Ed...

GROZIER

What?

MCMASTERS

I'm sorry if I caused a scene at your club the other night. I was a guest and I should have respected that, and... I'm sorry.

GROZIER

Do you feel better?

MCMASTERS

Why are you so hostile? Because I'm a publicity man?

GROZIER

No. A man has to make a living.

MCMASTERS

Is it my politics?

GROZIER

I don't dislike you because you're wrong, Bill.

MCMASTERS

Then why?

GROZIER

It's this thing you have for causes. The way you carry on you make it sound as if Ponzi is John D. Rockefeller, Andrew Carnegie, and Jay Gould all rolled into one.

MCMASTERS

On the contrary, I think Ponzi is honest.

PONZI

(Exasperated)

Bill... think about it... doubling money?

MCMASTERS

Give me some credit, Edwin. I was suspicious, too, at first. But I've been asking around the West and North Ends, and talked to at least a hundred who've been paid off on time and double their money.

GROZIER

Mmmph. What's he paying them off with? Cannolis?

MCMASTERS

Cash.

GROZIER

Cash?

MCMASTERS

Cash. Not even a bank gives you cash.

GROZIER

Mmmmm.

MCMASTERS

So I was thinking of seeing if this Ponzi needed some help in the publicity department.

GROZIER

Bill, if this dago is actually doubling money he's not going need a publicity man.

MCMASTERS

You wouldn't think so, would you? You're lucky if you get four percent a year from a bank and this fellow doubles it in three months! But I haven't seen a single column-inch on this guy.

GROZIER

I told you. The Post doesn't -

MCMASTERS

Not just the Post. None of the papers in town -

GROZIER

So?

MCMASTERS

So? You can barely walk down School Street around lunchtime with all those people outside his office. How can a newspaperman ignore that crowd?

GROZIER

Because it's just a business, McMasters. I may not be the newspaperman father says you are but even I know you don't scream "stop the presses" when Jordan Marsh has a sale on socks.

MCMASTERS

He ain't selling socks...

GROZIER

(Very sarcastic)

I know, Bill, he's an immigrant selling a slice of the American Dream.

MCMASTERS

You hit the nail on the head. It's just some immigrant to you. And if they're not murdering bank guards then it's not a story, is it?

GROZIER

Is that the great newspaperman Bill McMasters talking, or the 'promoter of the American Dream?'

MCMASTERS

Would it make a difference? I'm talking about a story. A great story that the Post could scoop up and make its own.

GROZIER

Well, the Post is not going to be used to help this... Pizza fellow rip more people off. Or helping you and your business, for that matter.

MCMASTERS

(Swallows last of his drink)

That's Ponzi. A good reporter endeavors to get names correct. I should have known better than to try to teach the news business to Little Lord Fauntleroy. See ya 'round, Grozier. Don't take any wooden nickels.

One of the drunk reporters slides up to the bar.

GROZIER

If I do I'll be sure to invest them with Ponzi.

MULLIGAN

Ponzi? Ho boy, he'll need every dime he can get.

MCMASTERS

Geez, Mulligan, you smell like a distillery. And what are you talking about, anyway?

MULLIGAN

Ponzi. You didn't hear? Got served today with papers. Some furniture dealer's suing the little dago for a million bucks!

MCMASTERS

A million dollars!

MULLIGAN

The word over at the Courthouse is that the D.A. wants to know who this dago is that he could make a million dollars in the first place! Bigelow's on his way there now to get a quote from the poor bastard.

GROZIER

(Laughing)

So much for the American Dream, eh, McMasters? Well, look on the bright side, at least he's finally going to get some publicity!

Grozier's laughter continues as McMasters seethes.

CUT TO:

INT - DANIEL'S FURNITURE COMPANY OFFICE - DAY

Small, disorganized, with boxes stacked to the ceiling. Daniels sits smoking a cigar, across from Ponzi.

PONZI

Look, Daniels, I'm just a small businessman trying to make a buck...

DANIELS

And who am I? Mrs. Astor? Listen you little dago, I knew you when you didn't have two dimes to rub together. Now your rubbing every dime in your part of town. And as far as I'm concerned you wouldn't be rubbin' anything if I didn't help you out at the start.

PONZI

You mean the promissory note for those crummy desks and chairs? Give me a

break, Daniels! I paid that off last February! Look, I'm prepared to offer you...

DANIELS

Shit. You're offering me shit. You're making millions and I'm supposed to be happy with a few grand? Well, you can forget it. I want my share of the pie and I'm not settlin' for anything less!

PONZI

Your share of the pie?

DANIELS

Damn right.

PONZI

Is that your final word?

DANIELS

No. Get out is my final word. Now.

CUT TO:

INT - PONZI'S SEC OFFICE - DAY

Haggard, his collar unbuttoned, Ponzi paces around his office. Meli sticks her head through the door.

MELI

Mister Ponzi? There's a gentleman here -

PONZI

Not now, Miss Meli, I'm really too -

With some effort, McMasters forces his way past Meli.

MELI

Hey!

MCMASTERS

Mr. Ponzi! Please. Just a minute of your time.

PONZI

Who the hell are you?

MCMASTERS

McMasters? Bill McMasters?

PONZI

I'm sorry I don't -

MCMASTERS

The publicity man?

PONZI

Publicity man?

By now, McMasters has managed to push Meli out of the office.

MCMASTERS

I knew you'd remember...

PONZI

(Motioning out the window)

Publicity man. Well, as you can see, Mr. McMasters, my customers still speak loudly for my business.

MCMASTERS

I'm sure they do. But how are they going to feel after they hear about your lawsuit?

PONZI

Lawsuit! How did you know about the -

MCMASTERS

There's already been at least one reporter up here asking questions, hasn't there?

PONZI

And how did you know about the reporter?

MCMASTERS

It's my business to know. It's also my business to help guys like you get a fair shake from guys like him - and the others that will follow.

PONZI

Now why wouldn't the press be fair?

MCMASTERS

I don't know. Why don't you ask your 'paisans,' Sacco and Vanzetti?

PONZI

(Reflects)

And why should you be in such a fast hurry to help me?

MCMASTERS

Because I respect what you are doing, Charlie. Can I call you Charlie?

(Ponzi nods)

Everybody talks about the American Dream, but we both know what happens when somebody like you finds it. Suspicion. Mistrust. You've been a success all these months, but has a

single reporter bothered to ask a single question? No. But the moment you got sued, well, they couldn't wait to pounce. To get the dirt on the cheating dago.

PONZI

God Damn it, you're right, McMasters.
All right. What do I have to do?

MCMASTERS

First of all, you didn't say anything to that reporter, did you?

PONZI

No.

MCMASTERS

Good. They'll be plenty of time for that later. But it's going to be on our terms. But before that, we need to pay a call on the District Attorney.

PONZI

The District Attorney! Why would I -

MCMASTERS

Because he's heard there's some guy on School Street getting sued for a million bucks. Some guy - some dago - with a business no one seems to be able to explain what it is or how it works. So you've got to go up there and tell him.

Calm his fears that it's not some anarchist's plot to blow up the city.

PONZI

Well, I...

MCMASTERS

Ponzi, trust me, I know these Beacon Hill types. You're not worried, are you? After all, you're a straight guy with a straight business, right?

PONZI

Yea, sure...

MCMASTERS

Just a guy dealing in postal coupons, right?

PONZI

Sure. That's right.

MCMASTERS

Tremendous. What an inspiration. All this, from a simple 5 cent coupon.

PONZI

(Falling for McMasters' line)
Well, you know, that's what I keep saying. If one has an idea and the courage the see it through -

MCMASTERS

Now that's the kind of talk we'll need at the D.A.'s this afternoon and at your house tonight.

PONZI

My house? Tonight?

MCMASTERS

Yes. You're going to have some visitors.

PONZI

Who?

MCMASTERS

Getting the D.A. off your back is just step one. Step two is getting the press on your side. So tonight, you're inviting some reporters to your home.

PONZI

Reporters? But you just said that reporters are only interested in dirt.

MCMASTERS

Reporters are lazy. They write about dirt because it's so easy to find. We just have to make it just as easy to see your side of the story. Are you married?

PONZI

Yes.

MCMASTERS

Any kids?

PONZI

No.

MCMASTERS

Anyone else living with you?

PONZI

My mother. I brought her over from Italy a few weeks ago.

MCMASTERS

That's perfect. We're going to give these boys your nice, supportive wife and your nice, sweet old mother in your nice American home.

PONZI

And that's gonna change their minds about a dago?

MCMASTERS

That, and some nice, free liquor. Trust me, after a few bottles of 12 year-old scotch these boys are gonna love you.

CUT TO:

EXT - PEMBERTON SQUARE COURTHOUSE - DAY

Ponzi and McMasters walk up the steps into the building.

CUT TO:

INT - OFFICE OF DISTRICT ATTORNEY PELLETIER - DAY

Ponzi and McMasters sit in the empty office across from DA's desk. McMasters looks around the office at photographs of arrests and newspaper clippings with Pelletier's successes. Ponzi sits quietly, a briefcase by his side. The door opens and Pelletier, two assistants, and a stenographer enter. You can smell the ambition of Pelletier, a dapper, serious fellow whose charcoal gray suit is highlighted only by a flashy yellow handkerchief in his breast pocket. He is flanked on either side of his desk by two earnest aides. The stenographer sits down and starts taking notes. Introductions and pleasantries are exchanged. Pelletier sits down and opens a folder.

PELLETIER

Gentlemen, let me get to the point. My boss...

(He motions to a photo of Governor Calvin Coolidge)

...doesn't like crowds. Hates them. I think he made that clear enough during the police strike when he called out the militia to maintain order. Now less than a year later, thanks to you, there are traffic jams every day from Scollay Square to the Common.

PONZI

Is it a crime to be a success?

PELLETIER

Not at all. But you are being sued.

PONZI

People get sued every day in this state.

PELLETIER

Indeed they do, Mr. Ponzi. But not for a million dollars.

PONZI

Can I help it if Daniels is greedy?

PELLETIER

Mr. Ponzi, let's cut the crap. Millions of dollars profit from a five cent coupon?

PONZI

Well, naturally, I cannot divulge the secret to my business, you understand, but the basic principles are easily understood.

(He pulls from his briefcase the volume of U.S. Postal Regulations)
Now, let us begin with the basic idea behind the International Reply Coupon. You can purchase a coupon in anyone of fifty countries...

PELLETIER

...47...

PONZI

Yes, of course, 47. These coupons can be exchanged for one first class stamp. But the value of that stamp is going to change, depending on...

DISSOLVE TO:

INT - JUST OUTSIDE PELLETIER'S OFFICE - DAY

The door opens. Ponzi and McMasters emerge. McMasters looks admiringly at Ponzi, who is relieved to be out of the "lion's den." As they walk away from the office, Ponzi begins to relax. With each step a smile slowly grows on his face. They step, alone, into an elevator, occupied only by an operator.

CUT TO:

PONZI POV

INT - ELEVATOR - DAY

As the elevator door closes. Just before it shuts, a hand appears. A voice calls out from the hall.

PELLETIER

STOP!

(The operator opens the door as Pelletier walks in. He stares seriously at Ponzi)
Mr. Ponzi? I need to talk to you.

CUT TO:

INT - INSIDE THE ELEVATOR - DAY

Looking from outside the elevator, from the hallway.

PONZI

About what?

Pelletier reaches into his pocket and pulls out some bills as the elevator door closes.

PELLETIER

Well sir, the lines outside your office
are so long and I don't get much of a
lunch hour around here and...

The elevator door shuts.

CUT TO:

INT - FIRST FLOOR OF COURTHOUSE - DAY

Outside elevator door, as it opens. Pelletier walks out first,
smiling. An amazed McMasters walks out next. Ponzi walks out
last, smiling and counting out money.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT - LEXINGTON HOME - DAY

That same day, Rose and Mama are seated on the living room couch.
Ponzi stands in front of them.

ROSE

A million dollars! My God! Charles,
how could this happen?

PONZI

It's nothing, really. A man says I owe
him some money.

ROSE

But what will you do? Your business,
this house, what will happen?

PONZI

Everything is going to be fine, Rose.

ROSE

How can you say that? My God! A
million dollars. How many cookies will
you have to sell to make that much
money?

MOMMA

Cookies? What is this with cookies?

PONZI

Nothing Momma.

MOMMA

But what does she mean cookies? I thought you sell-a the stamps?

PONZI

I do Momma. Rose is just upset. But everything is going to be okay. Just today I've hired a man to help me. But I'm going to need your help, too.

MOMMA

Whatever you need, my boy.

PONZI

Rose?

ROSE

Huh? Of course, darling. Whatever I can do.

PONZI

That's my girls.

He spreads his arms and they both respond by standing up and giving him a hug. Momma looks strong, Rose terrified, and Ponzi a mixture of both.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT - LEXINGTON HOME - NIGHT

Rose, Mama, and Ponzi in the living room. Ponzi paces, while Rose and Momma sit on the couch. We HEAR the sound of rain drops hitting the window. A BUTLER walks into the room.

BUTLER

A Mister McMasters to see you sir...

McMasters bursts into the room. The BUTLER, attempts to remove McMasters' straw hat, which he refuses to relinquish.

MCMASTERS

Hello Charlie.

PONZI

McMasters...

MCMASTERS

Ah, this must be Mrs. Ponzi.

ROSE

Hello.

PONZI

And this is my mother.

MCMASTERS

How do you do? So, are we all set?

He looks over to a table upon which is a tray of cold cuts, bread, and several bottles of scotch, whiskey, and beer.

PONZI

I guess so. You're sure this is going to work?

MCMASTERS

It better, because it's too late to stop now.

McMasters opens the front door, and a swarm of reporters and photographers enter the living room. Rose gasps as she sees them track muddy feet into her house. We HEAR a crack of thunder. Photographers take pictures of Ponzi and Rose, who squeals when the flash of the camera goes off. A couple of reporters stop to grab a drink. One motions to another what is on the table.

ROSE

(Runs wraps her arms around Ponzi)
Charles?

REPORTER #1

So what's the story behind this business of yours, Ponzi?

REPORTER #2

Yea, is this some secret Italian system that you've brought to America?

REPORTER #3

Ponzi, do you have any comment about the lawsuit that's been filed?

MCMASTERS

I'm glad you asked that, Arthur. Mr. Ponzi will be more than happy to answer that question and any others you boys may have.

Another flash goes off. We HEAR another clap of thunder.

ROSE

Charles!

PHOTOGRAPHER #1

Hey Ponzi, how about a shot of you and the Missus.

PHOTOGRAPHER #2

Now one with your mother...that's it...hold it.

REPORTER #1

Mrs. Ponzi, how's it feel to be married to the biggest thing to happen to Boston since the police strike?

ROSE

(Looks desperately at their muddy feet)
Well, I...

REPORTER #2

Say, Mrs. Ponzi, did your son always
want to be in business?

MAMA

Ever since he was old enough to take my
advice!

The reporters all laugh, then start yelling over each other and angling for pictures of Rose and Mama. A few reporters pour themselves a glass of booze. Meanwhile, as Mama takes over and answers questions, Ponzi grabs McMasters and pulls him to another room, away from the reporters.

CUT TO:

INT - DINING ROOM - NIGHT

Ponzi swings the french doors behind them.

PONZI

McMasters... Bill... I appreciate all
the work you've done but you never said
they would be this many reporters.

MCMASTERS

There are seven dailies in Boston alone,
Charlie. Plus Quincy and Cambridge and
Malden and -

PONZI

(Peering through the doors, sees a
newsreel camera)
Is that... a newsreel camera?

MCMASTERS

Movietone news....next week you'll be
seen before the main feature in every
movie house in the country.

(Ponzi licks his lips.)

Now look, Charlie. You're being sued
for a million bucks and that's big news.
My job is to make sure these guys tell
your side of the story in the headline
and bury the other guy's story in the
jump.

Ponzi puts his arm around Ponzi as they both listen to the commotion in the other room. We HEAR the sounds of the reporters and photographers yelling for Ponzi to return.

CAMERAMAN #1 (FROM OTHER ROOM)

Hey Ponzi, how about another picture?

REPORTER #2 (FROM OTHER ROOM)
Ponzi, how about it? I got a morning
edition I wanna make.

REPORTER #3 (FROM OTHER ROOM)
Just a few questions, Mr. Ponzi...

MCMASTERS
Listen! Every reporter in town is
falling over himself to write you up as
the financial genius of Boston!
Charlie, what have you got to be worried
about? You're a straight guy with a
straight business, right?

PONZI
Right. Sure.

There is another rumble of thunder as McMasters takes Ponzi by
the arm and opens the door.

MCMASTERS
Come on, your public awaits.
(McMasters turns to the reporters.)
Gentlemen, Mr. Ponzi will be happy to
answer all your questions, including how
his phenomenal business is doubling
investor's money in a mere three months!

The screaming by the reporters for attention reaches an even
higher level as flashbulbs go off, thunder rumbles, and Rose
despairs of her now completely muddied rug. Mama just beams.

DISSOLVE TO:
EXT - OUTSIDE SEC - CLOSEUP OF BOSTON GLOBE HEADLINE - DAY

A newsboy holds up the headline: **DOUBLES MONEY WITHIN THREE
MONTHS.** Above the masthead, in large type, is: **TAKES ADVANTAGE OF
RATES OF EXCHANGE.** In smaller type: **JUNK MAN WANTS HIS SHARE.**

CUT TO:
EXT - OUTSIDE SEC - DAY

Edwin Grozier, Jr. watches the pandemonium as people grab for a
newspaper from a street vendor. School Street looks like Times
Square on New Year's Eve. Vendors hawk sausage, peanuts, drinks,
and slush as cops try to keep order.

CUT TO:
INT - INSIDE THE LOCOMOBILE - DAY

Ponzi is reading out loud from the Transcript.

PONZI
'At his luxurious mansion...' Mansion?
'Mister Ponzi brushed off any fears of

losing one million dollars to someone he described as, quote, a junk man looking for a quick buck, unquote.' Junk man? Oh McMasters, that's good. 'Mr. Ponzi confidently claimed 'I have twice that amount in assets.' Only his thousands of investors can answer the obvious question: do they believe him?'

Ponzi looks up from his paper, concerned. We hear a dull roar that first sounds like a waterfall. He unrolls his window, the roar gets louder, and we realize it is the sound of people.

CUT TO:

EXT - SCHOOL STREET - DAY

The Locomobile turns onto School Street. The crowd rushes forward as the car tries unsuccessfully to inch its way to the SEC. Police rush to create a path for Ponzi as he exits the car. The first of the crowd to reach him holds certificates, and they cry for their money back. The swarm follows him to the door, as a young MAN pushes his way through the crowd towards Ponzi. He looks almost maniacal in his desperation to reach the diminutive financier, who himself is almost swallowed by the throng. Suddenly, with one last push, the MAN lunges past the police in front of Ponzi. The crowd parts, creating a small open space in which the man and Ponzi face off. Ponzi musters as much bravado as he can - could this be an assassin? - as a policeman prepares to club the stalker who reaches into his coat and pulls out... a wad of cash.

MAN

Mr. Ponzi, they are trying to say you're not honest, but I don't believe it.
Will you take my money?

Relieved, Ponzi waves away the police, puts his arm around the young man, and makes a sweeping wave of his other arm to the crowd, which is now completely silent, and in a bit of awe. He looks at the crowd.

PONZI

Everybody who wants his money back can have it. I will personally see to it. But the smart ones who want to invest, like this man - follow me upstairs!

The crowd cheers, waving money at him. They want to buy! Like a piper, Ponzi leads them in. Grozier, at the fringe of the crowd, watches with disgust and suspicion.

CUT TO:

INT - SEC OFFICE - DAY

Ponzi enters and watches as the young man goes to Gilberti's window and is handed an envelope, which he puts in his pocket. Turning to leave the office, he winks at McMasters. Meanwhile

the crowd fills the office. Ponzi moves to a smiling McMasters.

PONZI

Why you son-of-a-bastard, I almost had a heart attack out there.

MCMASTERS

(Beaming at the crowd)

Look at them, Charlie. All here to grab a piece of the American dream. And they're getting it from an Italian immigrant. If this isn't what America is supposed to be about...

(Looks at Ponzi's frightened face)

Are you okay? I thought you'd be happy. Just look at all these customers!

PONZI

Yes, just look at them...

Ponzi turns and walks into his office. McMasters is confused.

CUT TO:

EXT - ACROSS THE STREET FROM THE SEC - DAY

In the shadows of an alley, SCARPINI and AL CAPONE hover. Scarpini licks his lips at the sight of all the people waiting to hand Ponzi their money. We see a prominent scar on the cheek of Capone.

SCARPINI

See, it's just like I told you.

CAPONE

Jesus Christ. The money doesn't stop going in.

CUT TO:

INT - PONZI'S SEC OFFICE AT THE SAME TIME - DAY

Stuck behind the door to Ponzi's office, a crudely drawn chart with two lines: MONEY IN and MONEY OUT. The OUT line is twice the height of the IN line with the space in between colored in red. He exhales deeply and runs his hand through his hair.

PONZI

Jesus Christ. The money doesn't stop going out.

He looks at his haggard reflection in the mirror and licks his lips.

DISSOLVE TO:

DREAM SEQUENCE.

EXT - CROWDED STREET DURING A PARADE - DAY

Ponzi, in a top hat and silk tuxedo, is in the back of an open limousine being driven through a parade. Next to him is the

mayor. Both are waving to an enthusiastic crowd of well-wishers. Ticker-tape floats around the car and floods the street. The faces of the people are happy, cheering. Ponzi beams back at his adoring fans, when he notices something wrong. They no longer smile and cheer, but shout epithets, and wave fists in the air. Suddenly Ponzi no longer wears a tuxedo, but a striped prisoner's shirt. The man next to him is now a policeman, and the open limousine is now a "paddy wagon," in which Ponzi is being driven to jail.

CUT TO:

INT - PONZI'S OFFICE - DAY

Beads of sweat line Ponzi's brow as he shifts his look between the chart and the crowd.

PONZI

Shit. I gotta get more money. Look at all those Peters. In three months, they'll be Pauls lining up for their money, and I'll need twice as many Peters to pay them off. All this success is gonna ruin me!

DISSOLVE TO:

INT - PONZI'S SEC OFFICE - NIGHT

Ponzi has been working on figures at his desk, but is too tired to continue. He shuts the desk lamp and the room becomes very dark. We can barely see the face of anyone in the room. The door opens slightly.

PONZI

Miss Meli? Is that you?

Scarpini enters.

SCARPINI

Hello, Charlie. You're looking... well. How long has it been?

PONZI

Scarpini. You son-of-a-bastard.

SCARPINI

Is that any way to greet an old friend? I was on my way to New York with a business associate and I heard about this very successful business. Imagine my surprise and delight when I find out it's my old buddy Charles Ponzi from Montreal.

PONZI

Don't even mention Montreal to me you -

SCARPINI

Anyway, my associate wanted very much to meet you, and I promised him an introduction.

(Scarpini opens the door)

Mr. Brown?

(Capone enters, sitting down in one of the two chairs opposite Ponzi's desk)

Ponzi, say hi to Al Brown, a *paisan* from New York.

PONZI

Al Brown? Doesn't sound very *paisan* to me.

CAPONE

Sometimes it's easier to do business by not using my real name.

PONZI

Which is?

Capone lights a cigar with a match. We see, by the glow of the match light, the famous scar.

CAPONE

Capone. Alphonse Capone. You can call me Al.

Ponzi leans over and turns on the desk light so we can see Capone and his infamous scar.

SCARPINI

Mr. Capone represents some New York businessmen who are interested in purchasing the Securities Exchange Company.

PONZI

(Pensively sits down in his chair)
Well, Mr. Capone...Al...I think it's only fair that I should tell you right off the ball that the SEC is being sued...

CAPONE

I wouldn't worry about that, Mr. Ponzi.

PONZI

But it's for a million dollars.

CAPONE

(Puffing calmly, contentedly on his cigar)
Mr. Ponzi, my associates don't get sued. Play ball with us, and you won't have anything to worry about.

Ponzi reacts with instant understanding.

CUT TO:

EXT - SCHOOL STREET OUTSIDE SEC - DAY

Grozier silently fumes as he watches the crowd squeezing into the building. Even though it's raining, another large crowd waits patiently for its chance to enter the SEC. Grozier makes his way through the crowd to the alley on the side of the building.

CUT TO:

EXT - ALLEY NEXT TO 27 SCHOOL STREET - DAY

Grozier exiting the alley to the back of the building.

CUT TO:

EXT - BEHIND SEC ON COURT STREET - DAY

From Court Street, Grozier "stakes out" the alley next to 27 School Street. He waits patiently, clearly enjoying his chance to be a reporter. Suddenly, Ponzi's Locomobile rumbles down Court Street, past Grozier and stops next to a door on the SEC's building. The door opens and Ponzi steps out, turns, and motions to Gilberti who dumps a duffel bag into the back of the car. Then Ponzi hands a bankbook to Gilberti, who gets into the car and shuts the door as it begins to back up the alley. Grozier frantically looks for a cab. He sees one, hails it, and gets in. The cab follows the Locomobile down Court Street.

CUT TO:

EXT - OUTSIDE THE SUFFOLK COUNTY SAVINGS BANK - DAY

The Locomobile pulls up to a large granite building. Gilberti gets out, carrying the duffel bag into the bank. Grozier jumps out of the cab, throws some money to the driver follows Gilberti into the bank.

CUT TO:

INT - SUFFOLK COUNTY SAVINGS BANK - DAY

Grozier watches Gilberti deposit the duffel bag full of money. He pulls out and scribbles in his reporter's notebook as we

DISSOLVE TO:

INT - EDWIN GROZIER SR.'S OFFICE AT THE BOSTON POST - DAY

It is still raining outside, and the drops splatter noisily on the windows of Edwin Grozier Sr.'s office. Grozier Sr. sits at an old roll-top style desk in which every nook crammed with notebooks. Strewn on top of a table in the middle of the office are copies of six Boston dailies, each with a headline on Ponzi: WIZARD OF SCHOOL STREET! BUSINESSMAN TO FIGHT LAWSUIT! JUNK MAN WANTS HIS SHARE!

GROZIER SR.

Damn it Edwin! Look at this! The biggest story since the Molasses Flood and every paper in town has it except ours. Care to explain yourself, mister senior editor?

GROZIER

It's those other editors who'll have to explain themselves, not me.

GROZIER SR.

We're even being scooped by the suburbans. What could you have been thinking?

GROZIER SR.

I'm on to something, father. Something big. Something that will make the molasses flood look like a trickle.

GROZIER SR.

Alright, I'm waiting.

GROZIER

Charles Ponzi is a fraud.

GROZIER SR.

Is that was this is about? Look, boy, your feelings about Bill McMasters are no reason -

GROZIER

- I'm not going to lie to you, sir. At first it was about McMasters and his smug 'immigrant and the American Dream' crap. Maybe if there were an ounce of truth to it I wouldn't have cared. But the fact is that Ponzi is a fraud!

GROZIER SR.

As far as I know he hasn't failed to pay back a single certificate of his. Everyone's getting double their money back, as promised.

GROZIER

Exactly! So let me ask you a question. If you could double money in just 90 days, would you put your cash into an account at the bank? That only brings four percent per year?

Father and son look at each other. The only sound is the rain splattering against the window. The sound of the raindrops segues into the sound of typewriters.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT - BOSTON POST BUILDING - NIGHT

Through the window of the second floor of the gothic granite building, a few haggard reporters can be seen in the office, typing out a story or on a phone. One floor above, only the light in Grozier's office remains lit. He sits behind his desk studying some newspaper clippings.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT - EDWIN GROZIER'S BOSTON POST OFFICE - NIGHT

Grozier studies the newspapers and some assorted sheets with figures written on them. He shuffles the papers, then winces from a paper cut, holding up his index finger to examine a small bit of blood oozing from the cut.

GROZIER

(Disappointed)

Nope. No Ink. Just blood.

(Pulls out a handkerchief and wipes
the cut. Looks at the clippings)

Okay, Mr. Ponzi. We know you're not
making enough money from the banks to
pull this off... just how are you doing
it?

CUT TO:

INT - GROZIER'S OFFICE - CLOSE-UP GLOBE HEADLINE - NIGHT

Headline reads: WIZARD OF SCHOOL STREET DOUBLES MONEY IN 3
MONTHS!

CUT TO:

INT - GROZIER'S OFFICE - CLOSE-UP TRANSCRIPT HEADLINE - NIGHT

Headline reads: POSTAL COUPONS SOURCE OF AMAZING PROFIT.

CUT TO:

INT - GROZIER'S OFFICE - CLOSE-UP TRAVELLER HEADLINE - NIGHT

Headline reads: MILLIONS FROM 5 CENT COUPONS.

CUT TO:

INT - GROZIER'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Grozier, whose eyes have been darting back and forth between the headlines, picks up the last item, and stares at it grimly. Suddenly, a smile breaks out across his face, and he looks at his finger.

GROZIER

All right, father. Maybe there's some
ink in there after all.

CUT TO:
INT - RECEPTION AREA OUTSIDE THE POSTMASTER GENERAL'S OFFICE -
DAY

Edwin Grozier, Jr. sits patiently. The phone at the desk of the secretary outside the door marked POSTMASTER GENERAL rings. She picks it up, then puts it down in its cradle.

SECRETARY
The Postmaster General will see you now,
Mr. Grozier.

CUT TO:
INT - POSTMASTER GENERAL'S OFFICE - DAY

A window overlooks old Post Office Square. A photograph of Woodrow Wilson hangs behind his desk. The Postmaster General is an average-looking "hale fellow well met."

POSTMASTER
Come in, Mr. Grozier, come in.

GROZIER
Thank you, sir. I appreciate your time.

POSTMASTER
Nonsense. Always glad to meet with a member of the Fourth Estate. Now, what can I do for you?

GROZIER
Well sir, I'm doing a story on this Ponzi fellow...you know, the one who claims to make his money...

POSTMASTER
(The smile disappears from his face)
...from postal coupons, yes I know all about Mr. Ponzi's work and frankly, I don't like it.

GROZIER
And why is that?

POSTMASTER
For one thing, I don't like the United States Post Office being used for personal profit one bit. I don't. Smells a bit...foreign to me, if you know what I mean mister...

GROZIER
Grozier.

POSTMASTER
(Concluding Grozier is American enough)
Right. Grozier. But there's something

more troubling to me.

GROZIER

What's that?

POSTMASTER

(Pulling some papers from his desk)
Mister Grozier, these are the monthly reports from every post office in Massachusetts for this year... just about the entire time Ponzi has been in business.

(Hands the top sheet to Grozier)
I had them totaled them up.

GROZIER

This number accounts for every coupon bought since January?

POSTMASTER

Every one.

GROZIER

But this report says that's only 360 coupons.

POSTMASTER

At five cents apiece, yes, that's right.
360.

GROZIER

(Looking at his cut finger. To himself)
Christ. I may need a transfusion before this is over.

(To the Postmaster)

Can I ask you one more question?

POSTMASTER

Of course.

GROZIER

Why haven't you said anything about this to anyone?

POSTMASTER

Well...I figured why bother. I mean, let's face it...it's just some dago making money for other dagos, right, Grozier?

Grozier looks suddenly uncomfortable with the Postmaster.

CUT TO:

EXT - BOSTON COMMON - DAY

Near Parkman Bandstand, Grozier interviews Ponzi, who in gesture offers Grozier a cigar, which is refused in kind.

PONZI

Again, thank you for agreeing to meet out here. As you know my office is very busy these days.

GROZIER

Getting back to what I asked before, Mr. Ponzi. You can image my confusion when the Postmaster told me that only 360 postal coupons have been sold in the past six months.

PONZI

Do you actually think that those coupons are the whole story?

GROZIER

Well, that's what you've been saying all along.

PONZI

Maybe I'm not saying the English loud enough. The International Reply Coupon is only part of the story.

GROZIER

And the rest of the story?

PONZI

Is my own special way of using the difference between the value of money in America and another country.

GROZIER

I find it hard to believe that anyone... even the most ingenious financier, could somehow make millions from 18 dollars worth of stamps.

They stop walking.

PONZI

Boy, you really can't stand to see one of us make it, can you, Grozier?

GROZIER

What's that supposed to mean?

PONZI

It's alright when we're bricklayers and steamfitters and dock workers, but when

we start building business right around the corner from you. I don't see you banging down Commodore Vanderbilt's door asking how he made his millions.

GROZIER

Commodore Vanderbilt is not the issue here. And frankly I don't quite see what this has to do with my original question. The postmaster says...

PONZI

Mr. Grozier, if I've said it once I've said it a hundred times. My business is just that - my business. What do you or anyone else care as long as everyone is getting paid?

GROZIER

I'm not sure I know how to answer that question, Mr. Ponzi. All I know is that it does.

PONZI

Then I don't think I have anything more to say.

GROZIER

Very well. I think you've told me what I need to know, anyway.

CUT TO:

INT - PELLETIER'S OFFICE - DAY

Two aides stand behind the D.A. as he talks to Grozier. Pelletier's top desk drawer is open.

GROZIER

Thank you for taking the time to see me, Mr. Pelletier.

PELLETIER

Always glad to speak with a member of the Fourth Estate.

GROZIER

(To himself)

Everybody is...

PELLETIER

Now what can I do for you?

GROZIER

Well, I understand that you were looking into the business of one Charles Ponzi, when you suddenly ceased your investigation.

CUT TO:

INT - PELLETIER POV OF HIS DESK DRAWER - DAY

An SEC certificate for 100 dollars sits in the drawer.

PELLETIER

There was nothing to investigate.

GROZIER

Really? So you are stating, for the record, that your office has no interest in the business of Charles Ponzi.

CUT TO:

INT - PELLETIER'S OFFICE - DAY

Pelletier slowly shuts the drawer.

PELLETIER

Mr. Grozier, while this use of postal coupons may be a bit... unorthodox, Mr. Ponzi's business is breaking no laws. Furthermore, this office has received no complaints from anyone that he has failed to live up to his promises. Everyone who has turned in a mature certificate has gotten what they were promised, double their money back.

The two aides nod vigorously.

GROZIER

I see. And what if I told you that Ponzi was putting his own money into a bank instead of his own company?

PELLETIER

(After turning and consulting with his aides)

I've never known a businessman who didn't diversify.

GROZIER

I suppose that's true. Well, what if I told you that over the past six months only 360 coupons have been bought in all of New England?

PELLETIER

What?

GROZIER

Which at 5 cents apiece makes 18 dollars worth of postal coupons.

PELLETIER

18 dollars?

(After whispering to the aides)

Yes, well, those are very interesting facts but they don't prove -

GROZIER

I was wondering if you'd have any comment for my paper about those interesting facts.

PELLETIER

(Opens the drawer, looks at his certificate)

Now, let's not be rash, Mr. Grozier. We certainly don't want to make accusations that may lead to a panic. You don't want to be responsible for a panic, do you? After all, these are the working people of this city who have invested in this business.

GROZIER

(Stands up, peers over the desk and sees Pelletier's certificate)

No, certainly not. Not when so many... working people have invested.

PELLETIER

(Shuts the drawer)

All I'm saying is that you have nothing but a few disparate facts. They don't prove anything illegal. The man claims he has a secret method of producing his profits, and I for one am in no position to argue that claim. And neither, so far as I can tell, are you.

GROZIER

Very well, then. If it's proof you want, I'll get proof. But I'm not bringing it here. You'll find it on the front page of the Post.

PELLETIER

(As Grozier leaves)

Mr Grozier?

(Grozier stops and faces him)

We take libel very seriously in this town.

GROZIER

As seriously as you do fraud, I hope.

CUT TO:

EXT - FENWAY PARK - DAY

No lights, no coke bottles, but plenty of ads on the outfield walls as the New York Yankees play the Red Sox at the 8 year-old park. There's a line drive up the middle by a Red Sox batter and 8,000 people cheer as he takes a standup double. McMasters and Grozier sit in a box seat on the first base side.

MCMASTERS

So are you going to tell me?

GROZIER

Tell you what?

MCMASTERS

Why there's been no Ponzi story in the Post.

GROZIER

Oh, there's going to be a Ponzi story in the Post alright. But it's not going to be the story that you want to see.

MCMASTERS

What the hell does that mean?

GROZIER

What if I told you Ponzi hasn't been using postal coupons to make his money?

MCMASTERS

Well that just - what the hell makes you say that?

GROZIER

The Postmaster told me that only 360 coupons have been sold in the last six months.

MCMASTERS

Well, Charlies always made it clear that the coupons are just a part of his business.

GROZIER

All right. How about the fact that he's putting his own dough into a bank account. Where it's earning a tidy four percent interest.

MCMASTERS

(Shocked)

He is?

(Shakes it off)

Well, that still doesn't prove anything. All you've got is innuendo!

GROZIER

Is that Italian for fraud?

(McMasters starts to get up, Grozier reaches for his arm)

McMasters... Bill... I'm sorry. That was uncalled for.

MCMASTERS

You're damn right it was. You know that there isn't a single person who says they haven't gotten paid off. As promised.

GROZIER

Boy, if I had a dollar for everyone who has said that to me. I didn't say he hasn't. I am saying that he's not doing it with coupons, which mean Ponzi is lying about his business. And if he's been lying about that then there could be a hundred other things he's lying about. Like who he is and where his money is really coming from... or going.

MCMASTERS

Come on now, Grozier. You're not suggesting he's buying bombs with his money, are you?

GROZIER

No, he's no anarchist. I know that.

MCMASTERS

So why did you invite me here? Just to tell me this?

GROZIER

The truth is... I need your help. I know where the money isn't coming from. I need to know where it is coming from.

MCMASTERS

And why should I help you?

GROZIER

If nothing else, to prove that it is just innuendo. Because if it's not, a lot of people who can't afford to will lose everything. All we need is the proof...

MCMASTERS

Oh, Eddie, really! After everything we've been through you really don't think that I'm going to...

GROZIER

(Turns to the game)

You know, at prep school they made us play cricket. Some of the chaps took to it but to me... well there's always been something about this game. Maybe because it's an American game. I was here, you know, when they won it all in '18. That's before they traded Ruth, of course. Best pitcher we ever had. Who knows if we'll ever win another series without him. 18. What a year. First, the World Series, then the Armistice.

MCMASTERS

Yea, then influenza.

GROZIER

Of course, the Black Sox made a lot of people swear off the game. Not me, though. I figure, why let what a few people do ruin it for everybody, right?

I mean just because eight ballplayers on one team took a dive doesn't mean that every ballplayer on every team is crooked, right? And the reporter who broke the story didn't have anything against ballplayers or baseball, he just wanted to expose wrongdoing. Wanted to protect the fans.

MCMASTERS

This isn't fair. I work for this man. There's thousands who've invested what little they have with him. What am I supposed to do?

CUT TO:

INT - SOMERSET CLUB - NIGHT

McMasters sits in a leather chair opposite Grozier Sr.

GROZIER SR.

You are supposed to ask yourself if protecting Ponzi is going to help or hurt the things that you believe in.

MCMASTERS

It just seemed so perfect. An immigrant comes out of nowhere with an idea that makes millions. He makes money, his fellow immigrants make money, and the Yankees learn respect for someone different.

GROZIER SR.

You have to ask yourself how you'll feel if Edwin is right and you've helped perpetrate a swindle. Never mind the impact on your reputation, your business, but think of the legal implications.

McMasters looks scared.

CUT TO:

INT - PONZI'S OFFICE - DAY

It is late afternoon and Ponzi is looking at the chart behind his door, with the ever-widening gap between MONEY IN and MONEY out.

There is a knock, and Ponzi hurriedly turns the chart around. McMasters pokes in his head.

MCMASTERS

Hiya Charlie, How are you doing?

PONZI

Me, I'm doing fine. Fine.

Ponzi walks to his desk and plops down on the chair.

MCMASTERS

Say, Charlie, you look all in. When's the last time you took your wife out for a good time? Tell ya what.

(Pulls two tickets from his pocket)

I've got box seats to the show at the Orpheum. Call Rose. Enjoy an evening on the town...on me.

PONZI

(Takes the tickets)

Well that's very considerate of you, Bill. You're right, you know.

Everything's been happening so fast since the lawsuit began...

(Picks up and speaks into the phone)

Lexington 5931 please. Thank you. Yes, this is Mr. Ponzi, please put Mrs. Ponzi on the line. Rose? I just had a great idea. Let's do the town tonight. We'll go to a show. And dinner. You bet! Well, of course we'll be taking Mama, too.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT - ORPHEUM THEATER - NIGHT

The Orpheum has a grand high ceiling laced with frescos and gilded molding, two balconies that sweep around the stage book-ended with grand boxes. PONZI, ROSE, and MAMA enter the box, escorted by a splendidly attired usher. As they sit down near

the edge of the box, several in the mostly immigrant audience look up and recognize Ponzi. A buzz fills the theater. The lights go down and a spotlight turns on the master of ceremonies.

M.C.

Ladies and gentlemen, the management of the Orpheum Theater is pleased to recognize a member of our audience tonight. Sitting in the stage left box is a man whose success story you are about to see on this very screen. A model of the American dream. A man who's got them guessing from Beacon Hill to the Back Bay - Mr. Charles Ponzi!

The audience roars its approval. We HEAR encouraging shouts from the crowd ("Hang in there, Charlie," "Don't let the Yankee bastards get ya down, Charlie!" "We believe in you," etc.) Rose and Mama look at Ponzi, who nods to his "subjects" with a small smile. Mama nudges Ponzi to stand up, which he does. The applause gets louder as he waves. Finally, the tumult dies down, and he settles in his seat. The lights dim, and the projector begins to whirl. Occasionally an audience member turns to look at Ponzi. Rose is self-conscious, but Mama sits proud as a peacock. As the screen lights up, a piano in the orchestra pit plays. The first feature is a newsreel. We HEAR the orchestra as we

CUT TO:

INT - PONZI'S SEC OFFICE - NIGHT

McMasters, using a set of burglar's tools, opens one of Ponzi's desk drawers, pulls out some papers, and reads.

CUT TO:

INT - ORPHEUM THEATER - NIGHT

As the newsreel flickers in their faces, Ponzi reaches out to hold Rose's hand. Mama sees this and reaches out to hold Ponzi's other hand. Audience members continue to glance up at the box. On the screen are images of Sacco and Vanzetti being led to court. The title card reads: JUSTICE WILL PREVAIL.

CUT TO:

INT - PONZI'S SEC OFFICE - NIGHT

McMasters sits behind the desk, grimly going through papers. He writes down figures in his notebook.

CUT TO:

INT - ORPHEUM THEATER - NIGHT

The next story on the newsreel starts with the title: BOSTON'S FINANCIAL WIZARD. The faces of Ponzi, Rose, and Mama all light up with the pleasant surprise. The movie cuts to Ponzi walking across School Street being followed by a band of people. Now the audience stirs appreciably, people raising their arms and pointing to the box.

CUT TO:

INT - PONZI'S SEC OFFICE - NIGHT

McMasters looks up from the desk at the back of Ponzi's door. He walks over to it and turns the chart around, revealing the graph of MONEY IN and MONEY OUT.

CUT TO:

INT - ORPHEUM THEATER - NIGHT

On screen, the title card reads: PONZI AT HIS MANSION WITH HIS DEVOTED WIFE AND MOTHER. A shot of Ponzi, Rose, and Mama on the front porch. The next title card says: AN AMERICAN DREAM FULFILLED. Ponzi watches himself on screen waving to the camera, as the newsreel cuts to a title card that says: THE END.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT - PONZI'S SEC OFFICE - NIGHT

McMasters mouths the words "Son of a bitch."

DISSOLVE TO:

INT - SPEAKEASY - NIGHT

Grozier sits at a table drinking and laughing with a couple of reporters. McMasters enters and sits at the bar. Grozier excuses himself from the table and sits next to him. As he does, McMasters pulls a sheet of paper from his coat pocket.

GROZIER

What's that?

MCMASTERS

What you've been looking for... Ponzi's own figures that show he's five million in the hole.

GROZIER

Well let's have a look...

MCMASTERS

(Pulls the papers behind him)
Not so fast, Eddie. This is hot stuff. Why, the newspaper that breaks this story could double, maybe triple its circulation.

GROZIER

We've already have the highest circulation in town, McMasters.

MCMASTERS

But you haven't got this. And without it all you've got is... innuendo.

GROZIER

So what are getting at?

MCMASTERS

What am I getting at? How about seven thousand dollars?

GROZIER

Why you son-of-a- After everything my father has done for you?

MCMASTERS

Grozier, they don't call this Newspaper Row for nothing. I could spit and hit at least five of your competitors, any one of them more than willing to pay for this information.

GROZIER

But you didn't cut your teeth in their newsroom, did you? Doesn't that count for anything?

MCMASTERS

Yea. It counts for 7000 dollars.

GROZIER

Where's your sense of loyalty? For Chrissake, where's your sense of journalism?

MCMASTERS

Where's your seven thousand dollars?

GROZIER

So all you really care about is the money.

MCMASTERS

It's the American Dream.

DISSOLVE TO: MONTAGE

INT - PELLETIER'S OFFICE - DAY

Pelletier reads the Post headline: EXCLUSIVE! PROOF THAT PONZI IS HOPELESSLY INSOLVENT! He yells into an intercom and two assistants appear. He gestures wildly at the Post.

EXT - A NORTH END STREET - DAY

A newsboy is mobbed by people. We see another headline: \$5 MILLION IN DEBT! Some people curse wildly as they read.

INT - LEXINGTON HOME OF PONZI - DAY

Ponzi glares at a headline TRUSTED ADVISOR WILLIAM MCMASTERS TELLS ALL TO POST. As Rose and Mama enter with trays of food

Ponzi hides the paper. The phone rings. Ponzi answers it, turning white.

INT - A DARK ROOM - DAY

We see the Capone scar as he speaks on the phone.

INT - SEC - DAY

Meli looks out of the window onto the crowd on School Street.

EXT - SCHOOL STREET OUTSIDE THE SEC - DAY

The mob looks more scared than angry.

INT - SOMERSET CLUB - DAY

Grozier Sr. sits in a leather chair, beaming while he reads the paper. The montage ends.

CUT TO:

EXT - OUTSIDE THE BUNKER HILL MONUMENT, CHARLESTOWN - DAY

Ponzi paces the sidewalk. He tries to lick his lips but they are too dry. He looks up as a black car pulls up. He gets in.

CUT TO:

INT - INSIDE THE CAR - DAY

It is early morning. Scarpini and Capone sit together in the back, Ponzi, looking very frazzled, sits opposite them.

PONZI

All right. I'm here. What do you want?
And make it snappy, I've got to get to
the office.

CAPONE

(To Scarpini)

Your friend doesn't seem to have much
manners.

(To Ponzi)

It was your idea to meet here and not
your office.

SCARPINI

Yea, anything wrong at the office,
Charlie?

PONZI

Look, I don't have a lot of time. What
do you want? If it's about selling my
company then I should tell you right off
the ball that the SEC isn't for sale.

CAPONE

Sale? You had your chance to sell,

Ponzi. That opportunity has passed. My associates are no longer interested in buying your company.

PONZI

No?

CAPONE

No, we're here to protect it.

PONZI

Oh, Jesus.

SCARPINI

You don't want a repeat of what happened in Montreal, do you, Ponzi?

PONZI

Why you son-of-a-bastard, Montreal was your doing!

SCARPINI

Who's the one who spent the two years in prison?

CAPONE

What a blow to the confidence of your customers...not to mention the authorities who, we understand, are going to audit your company, if it came out that Boston's financial genius was an ex-con...

PONZI

Boy, are you guys barking up the wrong dog. Those crowds are people waiting to withdraw, not deposit!

CAPONE

So what are you paying 'em off with? Rigatoni?

PONZI

Look, you don't understand. I need every dime I've saved to pay these people off! That's the only reason the government hasn't shut me down. If I give you any money...

CAPONE

No, you don't understand. If you don't cooperate, then we can't be responsible.

PONZI

Look, all I need is some time until the D.A. finishes his audit. Once I'm in the clear, the money will start pouring

in again. Then I can...

CAPONE

My company doesn't accept I.O.U.s,
Ponzi. Either come across with some
lettuce now, or I make a phone call.

PONZI

Look, you don't understand! There's no
money because there's no coupons! Never
has been. There's nothing but new
investors paying off old ones. Peter...
paying Paul... paying Peter... paying
Paul...

SCARPINI

Why you son-of-a...

CAPONE

(to Ponzi)

Whattaya talkin' about?

(to Scarpini)

What's he talkin' about?

(Scarpini whispers into Capone's ear.

Capone's look of confusion turns
into anger)

You mean all these months you been
runnin' nothin' more than a god-damned
pyramid scheme?!

PONZI

Uh-huh. That's why I couldn't sell you
the company.

CAPONE

Jesus. All this time I thought I was
dealing with Jay Gould. But you're just
another creep with a knife cutting the
straps off old ladies' handbags.

PONZI

(Angry, goes nose-to-nose with Capone)
Now just a minute you bastard!

SCARPINI

Uh, Charlie, that may not be such a good
idea...

PONZI

How dare you! No one - not even old
ladies carrying handbags - has ever
walked out of my office without getting
paid off. Charles Ponzi robbed from
nobody. Do you understand?

CAPONE

(Pushes Ponzi back in his seat)
Yea, I understand. You got a business
to run. Well, so do we. You do what
you have to do and so will we.

Ponzi looks truly frightened.

CUT TO:

EXT - LEXINGTON HOME - DAY

Ponzi's Locomobile jerks down the street and stalls in front of
the home. Ponzi gets out from the drivers side.

CUT TO:

INT - LEXINGTON HOME - DAY

Ponzi quietly lets himself into the house, then looks around,
obviously hoping to avoid being seen. He walks upstairs. Rose
steps out of the kitchen, sweating and wearing an apron
splattered with tomato sauce.

ROSE

Charlie?

Momma steps out of the kitchen, also wearing a sauce-splattered
apron.

MAMA

Rose? What is it?

ROSE

I thought I heard Charlie.

MAMA

Come. Back into the kitchen so I can
finish showing you how to make-a the
sauce.

Mama returns to the kitchen and Rose follows, but only after
looking once more in the direction of the stairs.

CUT TO:

INT - PONZI'S BEDROOM - DAY

Ponzi closes the door to his bedroom, pulls out a suitcase from
the closet, opens it on the bed, and begins stuffing it with
clothes from various dresser drawers.

PONZI

Peter... paying Paul... paying Peter...
paying District Attorneys... paying
Paul... paying Scarpini... paying
Peter... paying Capone... paying
Zarossi... paying Paul...

The suitcase full, he slams it closed and begins to tie the strap

when he hears Mama and Rose downstairs. He walks to the door, opens it a crack, and listens.

MAMA

I'm glad Charlie get rid of all those servants. I like cleaning my own house, making my own sauce.

CUT TO:

INT - LEXINGTON LIVINGROOM - DAY

Mama and Rose, exhausted from cooking, sit and talk.

ROSE

You know what, Momma Ponzi? I agree.

MAMA

You're a good girl, Rose. You're good for my Charlie. You make-a the nice home. Maybe soon you give-a me the grandkids, eh?

ROSE

(Blushes)

Maybe someday. It's just that Charlie he... he works so hard and wants so much to be a success.

MAMA

Success? What more does he need, eh? He's got a beautiful wife, a home, he bring his mama all the way from Italy to share in his good fortune... Back home, I tell them all. I tell them all about how my boy make it in America. How he find the street paved with gold. How I couldn't be more proud if he were King of America. Or even Vice-President!

CUT TO:

INT - PONZI'S BEDROOM - DAY

Ponzi shuts the door and begins to unpack.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT - CROWDED SCHOOL STREET - DAY

The crowd is quiet and grim, but well-behaved.

CUT TO:

INT - SEC OFFICE - DAY

Empty but for Meli, four tellers, and Ponzi.

PONZI

Maybe it makes the Yankees nervous when we show them up. Maybe they're just

jealous. But I'm not going to give them the satisfaction of seeing one person walk out of this office without getting paid. Even if I have to use my own money, everyone out there gets paid!

The employees ADLIB their assent. Ponzi unlocks the door, and the people begin to swarm into the office. Soon it is wall-to-wall people. Anxious but still well-behaved, they wait patiently for their turn to redeem their certificates, which pass quickly into the teller windows as cash passes out. Ponzi walks back to his office.

CUT TO:

INT - SEC - DAY

Late afternoon. Ponzi is tired but he smiles broadly as the last patrons, who look at him with suspicion, exit. One man even looks unsure as he sees Ponzi's confident smile. Ponzi tries to shut the door behind the last patron but it won't budge. The SEC workers stop to see what has happened. Ponzi peers around the side of the door as an old immigrant man pokes his head inside.

IMMIGRANT

Signore Ponzi?

PONZI

Yes?

IMMIGRANT

Am I too late?

PONZI

Well, we were about to close up...

IMMIGRANT

Oh...I was hoping to buy before the *Governo* shut you down.

PONZI

Why would you want to buy from a man the *Governo* wants to shut down?

IMMIGRANT

Because they say I shouldn't.

PONZI

(Laughs)

Ettore! We can handle one more sale, eh?

IMMIGRANT

Thank you Mr. Ponzi, thank you.

Ponzi watches the man waddle over to a teller window.

CUT TO:

INT - BOSTON POST NEWSROOM - DAY

Grozier walks through the newsroom, holding a slip of paper in his hand. McMasters enters from the other side and they meet in the center.

GROZIER

I'm a little busy right now, McMasters.

MCMASTERS

I know, the switchboard operator told me you just got a call from the North End. Someone has more dope on Ponzi?

GROZIER

Jesus! Everyone in this town is either a reporter or a snitch!

MCMASTERS

So what have we got?

GROZIER

What is this 'we' stuff?

MCMASTERS

Well, it's a tip on the Ponzi story, right?

GROZIER

Yes, so?

MCMASTERS

So, that's my story.

GROZIER

Your story? Since when are you back on the paper?

MCMASTERS

Well, I just figured you'd want your best man on the case.

GROZIER

I do. Now if you'll excuse me, I have a story to follow up.

MCMASTERS

But what about me?

GROZIER

What about you? You got your pieces of silver. 7000 of them, as I recall.

MCMASTERS

(As Grozier exits)

You'll regret this, Grozier! I'll go to

the Transcript...or the Globe.

GROZIER

(Stops at the elevator and turns)
You're tainted goods, McMasters, and you know it. You can't go back to Ponzi, and now that you've spilled all the beans in the Post you've got nothing to offer anyone else.

MCMASTERS

What are you saying?

GROZIER

(As the elevator doors shut)
You've always got your business. I dare say no one has ever gotten their client more publicity than you have.

CUT TO:

EXT - NARROW NORTH END STREET - DAY

Grozier checks his notebook to make sure he has the correct address. Satisfied, he walks up the stairs into the building.

CUT TO:

INT - OUTSIDE NORTH END TRIPLE-DECKER - DAY

Grozier knocks on the door. Scarpini opens it. In the shadows in the back we see Capone and his scar.

GROZIER

Hello, I'm Edwin Grozier from the Post.
You called and said you had some information about Charles Ponzi?

DISSOLVE TO:

INT - LEXINGTON HOME - NIGHT

Ponzi in his robe and slippers, looking very tired.

GROZIER

Mr. Ponzi?

PONZI

Oh, it's you again. Don't newspapermen believe in going home?

GROZIER

I used to, Mr. Ponzi....I used to.

PONZI

Well, why don't you go there now and stop bothering me in mine.

GROZIER

I'd like to, Mr. Ponzi, but in the
interest of fairness...

Rose slips into the room, looking concerned and upset.

PONZI

Fairness? You come here talking about
fairness? I make a success of myself
with my own business, and you attack me
like I'm Sacco or Vanzetti. Let me ask
you-if one of your Beacon Hill pals made
a killing on the stock market, would
that be a headline? But me you do this
to. Little Charlie Ponzi...the
immigrant who brought a piece of the
American dream to everybody. I guess not
everybody has a right to make money...

ROSE

(Starts to cry)

Every day it's another reporter or
photographer. Asking questions, taking
pictures. I can't even go to church
without one of you monsters...

MAMA

(Storms into the room)

What's going on, eh? Why is she crying?
What have you done to her?

Mama rants. Rose cries. Ponzi leads Grozier out of the house.

PONZI

Mr. Grozier, please, this is obviously a
very bad time. I'm sure whatever
questions you have can wait until
tomorrow, right?

GROZIER

(As Ponzi shuts the door on him)

I just thought you'd want to respond to
this story about Montreal...

PONZI

(Leans face first against the
closed door)

Shit.

(Flings open the door)

Mr. Grozier?

GROZIER

(Stops and turns around)

Yes?

PONZI

(Steps outside, shuts the door
behind him)

I don't wish to be uncooperative. It's
just... well, you can see how upset my
wife and mother are...

GROZIER

And I'm sorry for that, but I spoke with
the Chief Constable of the Montreal
Police today

PONZI

(To himself)

Capone...

GROZIER

...and he confirms that a Charles Ponzi
was arrested, tried, and convicted in
1906 of forgery and bank fraud...

PONZI

You obviously don't get to my part of
town very often, Mr. Grozier. There are
many Ponzis in Canada and America. This
person must be someone else.

GROZIER

Is that your statement? That this
person in Montreal and you are two
different people?

PONZI

It is not only my statement, it is my
fact.

GROZIER

Even after I tell you that a copy of the
man's mug shot will be here in a few
days?

PONZI

Let me tell you this--if you print that
me and this... this... man are the same
person, I'll sue your paper for five
million dollars!

GROZIER

5 million dollars. Did you just make
that figure up, Mr. Ponzi?

The two men stare intensely into each other's eyes.

PONZI

Let me ask you a question, Mr. Grozier.

GROZIER

What's that?

PONZI

What did I do that's so wrong? I start a company. Many people come to me and they invest their money. Three months later I give them back twice their investment. What in your Yankee mind have I done wrong?

GROZIER

(Stunned)

Well, for one thing, you lied. You didn't invest in anything but yourself.

PONZI

First of all, that's not true. Second of all, even if it were, what's your point? I mean I never stole a dime from anyone.

GROZIER

Is that what you think? That a balanced ledger makes up for everything?

PONZI

Are you telling me that it doesn't?

GROZIER

Ponzi... Charles, we both know you haven't bought any postal coupons... certainly not enough to account for what you've paid out.

PONZI

I've told you and everyone else in this town...

GROZIER

...that you have a secret method of making big profits from a little coupon, I know. But why does a man who can double other people's money in 3 months put all of his cash in a bank, where it earns a measly 4 percent?

PONZI

Hey! Banks have vaults.

GROZIER

It's been there all along, but none of us could see it. Maybe we... I was too busy dismissing it all just an "Eye-talian" thing. That's a mistake I won't make again. It finally made sense when the constable in Montreal told me that

his Charles Ponzi was in charge of a bank that offered 10 percent interest.

PONZI

That Charles Ponzi sounds like a good business man to me.

GROZIER

I'm not surprised you'd say that. That Charles Ponzi never invested his bank's money, he simply used money that new depositors put in his bank to pay off his old depositors. An old-fashioned pyramid scheme. You know, using Peter to pay Paul? Just like the one you're running now.

For a moment, Ponzi looks as if he might crumble. Instead, he steels himself for the final round in this game of chicken.

PONZI

A pyramid, huh? If that's true, then the auditor will find me in the ground by several million, right?

GROZIER

That's right.

PONZI

Then why don't you wait and see what he has to say before you print those accusations.

GROZIER

(As he walks away)

You know I can't do that. The people have a right to know that the man they are trusting with their money has a criminal record.

PONZI

And you have a right to make money off of me? Don't I have any rights? Hey! What about me? Don't I have any rights?

Ponzi watches as Grozier steps into his car and drives away.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT - ROOFTOP SOLARIUM, 1948 - DAY

The sun is setting in the distance. Ponzi and Grozier stare into each other's eyes, but much less intensely than before.

PONZI

Three days until the audit was complete and my mug shot on its way to Boston. My last hope was that the photo wouldn't

arrive until after the audit. After all, who cares if their banker is an ex-con when the government says he's on the level!

GROZIER

But even if the mug shot arrived after the audit, you were still 5 million short.

PONZI

Ah, yes. But I still had one ace up my hole.

GROZIER

What was that?

PONZI

The Hanover Bank.

GROZIER

You know, I never understood how that could help you.

PONZI

Then listen and get smart. You wanted to know why I put my money in a lousy four percent bank account?

CUT TO:

INT - PONZI'S SEC OFFICE, 1920 - DAY

He is handing Gilberti and two other tellers one bank book each.

PONZI (V.O.)

You see, back when the D.A. started his audit, I came up with a plan.

CUT TO:

INT - COSMOPOLITAN BANK - DAY

Gilberti is being handed a small wad of cash through the teller window.

PONZI (V.O.)

Slowly, so no one got suspicious, I began moving my money into the Hanover.

GROZIER (V.O.)

I know. I saw you do it. But why the Hanover?

PONZI (V.O.)

Oh, I had a special reason for choosing the Hanover. Anyway, pretty soon I had a couple of million sitting in old Chmielinski's vault.

CUT TO:

INT - HANOVER BANK - DAY

Gilberti deposits the cash into the Hanover. He is handed a bank book. The figure inside causes his eyes to widen.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT - HANOVER TRUST BANK - DAY

The paneled executive meeting room. Henry Chmielinski, the bank president, sits at the end of the long table. Sitting closest to the end of the table near Chmielinski are the 8 other major stockholders. Five are Polish, one Irish, and two are Yankees. Ponzi, sits at the other end of the table, smiling slightly.

PONZI

Chmielinski, is it so unreasonable that your largest depositor have a seat on the board?

CHMIELINSKI

I think it is clear, from the board's reaction, that our answer is no.

PONZI

No, it is not unreasonable?

CHMIELINSKI

Yes, it is...I mean no...you cannot have it!

PONZI

Why not?

CHMIELINSKI

Well, for one thing, it wouldn't do our reputation much good to have on the board someone who is being investigated by the District Attorney.

PONZI

In a town that elected someone mayor who was in jail?

CHMIELINSKI

It's not the same thing.

Ponzi gets up and packs his papers into a briefcase.

PONZI

It never is when it's me. Very well, if my money is no good here then I will simply remove it.

CHMIELINSKI

We're sorry you feel that way, but our answer is still no. We will be happy to arrange for a transfer of funds to another institution. Just give the information to any teller and we'll have your money in a few days.

PONZI

I don't think you understand. I mean I intend to remove my money. Today. All of it.

CHMIELINSKI

All of it?

PONZI

All of it. In cash.

CHMIELINSKI

In cash?

PONZI

In cash. Today.

CHMIELINSKI

Today?

PONZI

All of it. In cash. Today. What words don't you understand?

CHMIELINSKI

(Jumps up, sputtering)

Ponzi, are you mad? We don't have that kind of cash lying around! It's... it's in investments... bonds... stocks... it's working to make interest for our depositors.

PONZI

(Pulls out bank books from his briefcase)

Mr. Chmielinski These bank books indicate my accounts with you at \$1,287,324 and 79 cents. Are you saying that this bank is not prepared to handle a simple withdrawal?

BOARD MEMBER #1

Simple? Ponzi, be reasonable.

PONZI

Reasonable? I have over one million dollars in this institution...

CHMIELINSKI

Ponzi, this is outrageous.

PONZI

No, what will be outrageous will be the public's reaction to the fact that the Hanover Bank can't take care of its customers!

CHMIELINSKI

Outrageous.

PONZI

Henry, Henry. Just because we failed to do business before...

CHMIELINSKI

Before? What do you mean, before?

PONZI

(mimicking Chmielinski)

Thank you for thinking of the Hanover Bank, Mr. Pretzel...

CHMIELINSKI

Now, Charles... I'm sure that any misunderstanding we had before can be cleared up now...

PONZI

Oh, I know that it can, Henry. And all you have to do is sell me as many shares as the nine of you own.

CHMIELINSKI

What! Why that's outrageous! Unheard of!

PONZI

Don't look so worried. This way, I get my directorship, and as long as all of you vote in a bloc you'll still have control of the bank.

Chmielinski and Ponzi stare at each other across the long table.

Chmielinski looks at the other board members who appear as helpless as he does.

CHMIELINSKI

All right, Ponzi, you've got your directorship.

CUT TO:

EXT - ROOFTOP SOLARIUM, 1948 - DAY

GROZIER

But I don't see how that could help you

with your problem.

CUT TO:

INT - HANOVER BANK, 1920 - INT

Ponzi walks into the bank's executive area, signs a few papers, and hands them to a clerk.

PONZI (V.O.)

You Yankees are supposed to be so smart. Look, the D.A. would call to tell me the audit was completed. On my way over to his office, I would stop by the Hanover and, using my power as a board member, transfer \$5 million temporarily into my account.

CUT TO:

INT - PELLETIER'S OFFICE - DAY

Pelletier sits behind his desk. A bald auditor wearing wire-rimmed glasses is delivering his findings to Ponzi and Pelletier.

PONZI (V.O.) (CONT)

Then, at the D.A.'s office, when the auditor declared me about \$5 million in the ground I would present my bankbook. (Ponzi hands over his bankbook. The auditor casts a suspicious eye on it, snaps his fingers, is handed a phone by an aide, and makes a call) A quick check with the bank would prove my solvency.

The auditor nods, and hangs up the phone. Pelletier, the auditor, and Ponzi all shake hands.

CUT TO:

INT - HANOVER BANK - DAY

Ponzi fills out another set of forms and hands them to the clerk.

PONZI (V.O.) (CONT)

On my way back to the SEC, I stop by the bank and return the \$5 million.

CUT TO:

EXT - SCHOOL STREET - DAY

Ponzi walking grandly down the middle of a ticker-tape parade.

PONZI (V.O.) (CONT)

I could then re-open the SEC with the approval of the government.

As Ponzi waves to the crowd, We HEAR tumultuous cheers, as the crowd yells PONZI! PONZI! PONZI!

DISSOLVE TO:

INT - PONZI'S SEC OFFICE.

August 11, 1920. Ponzi is in a dream state, smiling and licking his lips. We fade from the crowd chanting Ponzi's name to Meli's voice over the intercom.

MELI (ON INTERCOM)

Mr. Ponzi? Mr. Ponzi?

Ponzi doesn't answer, so Meli enters the office. She walks to Ponzi's desk and gently shakes his shoulder.

PONZI

(Reluctantly awakens)

Oh...Miss Meli? What is it?

MELI

You have a phone call, sir. It's a Mr. Grozier from the Post...

Ponzi reluctantly picks up the phone, as Meli exits the office.

CUT TO:

INT - BOSTON POST NEWS ROOM - DAY

Ponzi strides purposely through the newsroom into Grozier's office. Reporters, secretaries, and copy boys watch as the diminutive man makes his way.

CUT TO:

INT - EDWIN GROZIER'S OFFICE - DAY

Ponzi sits across from Grozier's desk, a photo in each hand.

PONZI

Surely you're not suggesting that this is me?

GROZIER

Surely you're not suggesting it isn't?

PONZI

(Laughs as he gets up.)

You must be one of those who thinks we all look alike.

GROZIER

May I quote you on that?

PONZI

You may quote this. If you print that photo and say it's me then I'm gonna end up owning this rag.

Ponzi turns for the door, the pictures still in his hands.

GROZIER

Uh...Mr. Ponzi?

Ponzi feigns ignorance as he hands the photographs to Grozier, who watches him walk out. Grozier shakes his head, then picks up his telephone. He looks at the two photos as he speaks.

GROZIER

(On the phone)

Get me the District Attorney. Hello?
Mr. Pelletier, please. Edwin Grozier,
Boston Post. Mr. Pelletier? I was
wondering if you had any comment on the
fact that Charles Ponzi is a convicted
embezzler and check forger? Libel? I
have his mug shot in my hand now. It
will be in the Post tomorrow.

CUT TO:

INT - PONZI'S SEC OFFICE - DAY

The next day. Ponzi looks at his mug shot on the Post's front page. The headline reads: WIZARD OF BOSTON AN EX-CON. Suddenly, the door flies open and Chmielinski barrels into the office like a run-away freight train.

CHMIELINSKI

You son-of-a-bitch!

Before Ponzi can react, Chmielinski punches him in the eye, knocking him over a chair and onto the floor. Ponzi is hurt, stunned, and scared as he wipes away a trickle of blood.

PONZI

What the hell!?

Chmielinski is so angry he can barely speak between deep breaths and an occasional sob.

CHMIELINSKI

...You son-of-a-bitch! They shut it
down!

PONZI

What are talking about?

CHMIELINSKI

My bank, you little weasel! They shut
it down!

PONZI

(As he lifts himself up)

What!?!

CHMIELINSKI

The D.A. read about your criminal

record, you little dago!

PONZI

(Stands up)

But that was 13 years ago! In Canada!

CHMIELINSKI

(Grabbing Ponzi by the lapels, shaking him)

Do you think that matters? You're a
check-forgery and swindler! How long is
the bank commissioner gonna let me run a
bank with you on the board?

Chmielinski, who outweighs Ponzi by about a hundred pounds, has a commanding advantage, but Ponzi squirms out from under the big man, pushing him away. As he does, Ponzi falls back onto the floor. Chmielinski, surprised by the force of Ponzi's shove, also falls to the floor under his own weight, sobbing. Meli and Gilberti open the door, gaping at the sight before them.

MELI

Mister Ponzi! Are you O.K.?

PONZI

(Gasping for air)

It's all right... it's all over.

(Sadly, morosely)

It's all over.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT - SEC OFFICE - DAY

August 13, 1920. The teller windows are empty. Meli is going through the mail. Ponzi, sporting a black eye, walks out of his office, holding his cane and straw hat.

PONZI

That was the D.A. The auditor is
finished and he wants to see me. I
can't imagine why.

Ponzi smiles impishly as Meli opens another envelope, and three \$5 bills float to the top of the desk. Ponzi picks up the bills and examines them, as Meli reads from the enclosed letter.

MELI

"Dear Mr. Ponzi, I have been saving so I
could make an investment in your
company. Please send the certificate to
the following address..."

Meli and Ponzi look at the letter. A giggle becomes a laugh so big that tears come down their faces. Then, as quickly as it started, the mood deflates into a silent sadness.

PONZI

Miss Meli... Lucy...

MELI

That's alright, Mr. Ponzi. I know.

She gets up, grabs her purse and hat.

PONZI

I'd offer you a reference, but somehow I don't think it's going to carry much weight in this town.

MELI

(Laughs)

It's okay. I'll find something, alright. Look at it this way, when the Burdette Business School has its reunion, I'll have the best stories of any of my classmates. Good luck.

PONZI

Thank you.

(He looks at the money in his hand)

Miss Meli...I...Please...take it.

MELI

Mr. Ponzi, I couldn't...besides, you need every dollar...

PONZI

(Tries again to hand it to her)

Don't worry, I'd still be about 5 million in the hole.

MELI

No, I just couldn't. Thanks anyway.

Ponzi watches as she walks out of the office. He's alone. He looks at the money, shrugs his shoulders, and stuffs the bills into his pocket. Then he scans the room nostalgically, tilts the hat at a jaunty angle and exits.

CUT TO:

INT - BOSTON POST NEWSROOM, 1926, DAY

We first see nothing but the flashing of camera bulbs. As they subside, we see Grozier Jr. is holding a plaque. Everyone from the newsroom is gathered around, including Grozier Sr., who beams at his son.

CUB REPORTER

So that's what a Pulitzer Prize looks like.

VOICE #1 FROM THE CROWD

So where you gonna hang it, Mr. Grozier?

VOICE #2 FROM THE CROWD
I'll trade it for some of Ponzi's
certificates I still haven't cashed!

GROZIER JR.

(As the crowd laughs)

Ladies and gentlemen... I'm not going to
make a big speech.

(The crowd cheers, then laughs.)

Very funny. After all, we do have a
paper to put out.

(Some in the crowd groan.)

But I want you to know that I'm going to
have this hung here in the newsroom,
with the hope that it will be both a
reminder of a past successes and an
inspiration for future ones.

(He looks at his father.)

Just as I have been inspired by others.

And I have learned a lot. Including
how to judge people for what they are,
not where they come from.

The crowd applauds and disperses. Grozier Sr. walks over to his
son, who is shaking hands with reporters and copy boys. They
walk to Grozier Jr's office.

GROZIER SR.

Think the police will ever catch him?

GROZIER JR.

Eventually. Can't say I blame him for
jumping bail. He didn't take two steps
out of federal prison when the state
indicted him for fraud.

GROZIER SR.

Give him credit. He almost proved
Lincoln wrong.

GROZIER JR.

How's that?

GROZIER SR.

For a while he really did fool all the
people.

GROZIER JR.

Yea, and to do it he had to prove Barnum
right - a sucker is born every minute.

GROZIER SR.

And let's not forget what else he did.

GROZIER JR.

What was that?

GROZIER SR.

He also proved an old man wrong.

The two men look at each other, then hug.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT - FLORIDA OFFICE OF THE CHARPON LAND SYNDICATE - DAY

The Florida land boom. Ponzi is in the middle of his pitch to a man and woman, which takes place over a map.

PONZI

...and the house will be built here, with a picture window facing the Atlantic here. Now we have very agreeable terms. Just 10 percent down and this spectacular Florida ocean front property can be yours.

MAN

It seems very nice. What do you think, dear?

WOMAN

I don't know...what about all those stories about developers switching deeds and selling people swamp land instead of...

PONZI

A sad by-product of our cynical times. But you have my personal guarantee that this property is everything I say it is or my name isn't Charles Peterson! Have I told you folks how I got where I am, to be president of the Charpon Land Syndicate? I was just a poor immigrant who came to this country seeking those mythical gold-paved streets. What I found was hard work...and lots of it. But I learned that the American dream can be had. We can all be had... I mean have it. Right, Mama?

Ponzi smiles sweetly and looks over to Mama, who is performing secretarial duties while holding a phone receiver to her ear.

MAMA

You listen to my boy. He knows what he's talking about!

Ponzi eagerly continues his sales pitch to the couple, as we

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT - ROOFTOP SOLARIUM 1948 - DAY

The sun hangs blood-red over the tropical horizon. Nurses and attendants are wheeling the other patients away to their rooms. Ponzi, who has closed the scrapbook, looks up at Grozier.

PONZI

So whatever happened to that bastard McMasters? Did he ever make it back to the paper?

GROZIER JR.

No. That front-page was the last thing he ever helped write. He did alright, though. Made a pretty good living in Public Relations...

We HEAR Grozier's V.O. as we

CUT TO:

INT - PRISONER'S VISITING ROOM, FEDERAL PENITENTIARY,
CHARLESTOWN, 1926 - DAY

A guard leads Bill McMasters to a table in the visitors room.

GROZIER JR. (V.O.)

Although he never lost his knack for finding interesting clients and causes.

CUT TO:

PRISONER POV

INT - PRISONER VISITING ROOM - DAY

A smile plastered firmly in place, McMasters introduces himself.

MCMASTERS

Mr. Sacco? Mr. Vanzetti? I'm Bill McMasters.

CUT TO:

EXT - ROOFTOP SOLARIUM 1948 - DAY

PONZI

I guess I should be grateful. All I got was deported.

GROZIER

But your choice of employers wasn't much better...

CUT TO:

INT - OFFICE OF THE ITALIAN NATIONAL AIRLINES, 1939 - DAY

Ponzi and several other agents stand behind a counter processing some tickets. A sign reads RIO DE JENIERO AIRPORT. A picture of Mussolini hangs over them.

PONZI (V.O.)

Il Duce's retirement benefits did leave
a lot to be desired.

CUT TO:

EXT - ROOFTOP SOLARIUM 1948 - DAY

A nurse stands behind Ponzi's wheelchair.

GROZIER

Which explains how you ended up here.
(Grozier feels remorse for that last line.)
Charles...I'm sorry. I didn't mean...

PONZI

That's okay. You know what? This isn't
what people are gonna remember about
Charles Ponzi.

(Opens up his scrapbook with
newspaper clippings:CLEVELAND BANKER
IN PONZI SCHEME, CANADIAN DEVELOPER
GUILTY IN PONZI DEAL, PONZI DEAL
ALLEGED IN SWISS REAL ESTATE CASE)

I may be the most famous businessman who
ever lived. Who else has a scheme named
in his honor?

(Grozier laughs sympathetically.

Ponzi stares into the setting sun)

I just wish I could have done more for
Rose.

GROZIER

I wouldn't worry about Rose.

Ponzi looks quizzically at Grozier as we

DISSOLVE TO:

INT - MANGER'S OFFICE, COCONUT GROVE NIGHTCLUB, 1942 - NIGHT

Rose, worn but tough, closes a ledger as ALFREDO, a shady-looking
man, stuffs money into a burlap bag. A small, meek club MANAGER,
stands helplessly as he looks at the money. A large, cigar-
chomping BRUTE watches them all.

BRUTE

Everything look alright to you, Rose?

ROSE

Yea, I guess. Although the cut is a
little slim...

MANAGER

Hey! There's a war on. I was hoping
tonight would make up for the bad month,
but Boston College lost the game and a
lot of people - and all the players -

canceled their reservations.

The bag is tied up and handed to the burly man.

BURLY MAN

Yea, yea. Times are tough all over.
C'mon Rose... let's go Alfredo. We
still gotta hit the Latin Quarter.

As Rose, Alfredo, and the Burly Man exit, we see the date on the calendar with the Cocoanut Grove name on top: November 28, 1942. Moments later, smoke wafts past the calendar.

BRUTE

Hey. Any of you guys smell something?

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT - ROOFTOP SOLARIUM 1948 - DAY

It is twilight, and the sun is almost gone now.

NURSE

Mr. Ponzi, we'll have to ask your guest
to leave now, it's time for dinner.

PONZI

Dinnertime! Goodness, I hadn't noticed
how late it was! I've got to get
downstairs!

(In his wheelchair he catches up to
the old man, pulling out little slips
of paper from his nightshirt.)

Federico! My friend! Remember our
deal? You give me your one desert
tonight and I will get you two next
week, eh?

Grozier laughs, then sees that Ponzi has forgotten his scrapbook.

CUT TO:

EXT - ROOFTOP SOLARIUM 1948 CLOSE-UP OF SCRAPBOOK COVER - NIGHT

PONZI is written in large letters on the front. We HEAR Ponzi.

PONZI

And I've got those magazines I promised
you...no, no, no, I said five
cigarettes for each one, not four...

THE END