

DREAMS FOR SALE

(PILOT - ARRIVAL)

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FADE IN:

EXT. DESERT LANDSCAPE - DAY

It is the mid 1920s. A railroad track stretches across the vast barren landscape. A procession of passenger cars aim for the horizon. Engine smoke fills the sky.

INT. TRAIN CORRIDOR - DAY

A slim man, wearing a crocodile colored tweed suit, with a pencil thin moustache, walks the corridor. If it's possible to look distinguished and disheveled at the same time he's done it. His name is DEXTER GREENE, mid 30s.

He scans the compartments looking for an available seat. Passes a compartment with a crying child -- keeps walking. He passes an extremely fine pair of legs. Stops. Slides the compartment door open. Enters the

PASSENGER COMPARTMENT

The legs belong to LUCY STANDFIELD (22). Bobbed, brunette hair, swept under a ratty Cloche hat and coat. Her lowered head, enamored with the latest issue of "Photoplay". Lucy is beyond beautiful. The kind of looks which make all us normal people feel ugly.

Dexter sits directly across from her. He lifts up his newspaper. Pretends to read it. Folds down the corner. Glances at Lucy's legs. He works his way up to find her glaring at him.

LUCY

Get a good look mister?

DEXTER

Not quite.

Dexter smirks. Takes another long look.

DEXTER

Much better. Thank you.

He raises his newspaper up. Holds a beat, then folds it back down again.

DEXTER

So, what brings you on board?

Lucy is puzzled by this strange character.

LUCY

Look fella, I'm not really in --

The compartment door slides open, revealing a IRRITATED WOMAN (50), of substantial girth.

IRRITATED WOMAN

I have never seen such conditions in all my life! First they misplace my ticket, then the colored boy scratches my brand new Italian handbag, and now my husband has disappeared. Altogether, a wretched holiday. Tell me, have you seen him?

Dexter locks eyes with Lucy for a beat, then at the woman.

DEXTER

Seen who?

IRRITATED WOMAN

Who? Why, my husband of course.

DEXTER

No, I'm afraid not, but If I do, I'll be sure to wish him the best of luck.

IRRITATED WOMAN

And by that you mean?

Dexter gingerly folds his newspaper. Places it on his lap.

DEXTER

It means dear woman, that if I ever found myself in the unfortunate circumstance of being your mate, I would climb the highest mountain, hike barren wastelands, and swim the deepest seas to flee from such a case of matrimonious malpractice. And do pray tell if anyone ever builds a rocket to the moon, I can absolutely assure you, that its first vacancy would be filled.

Dexter flashes a delicious smile.

IRRITATED WOMAN

Goodness! Such manners.

The woman, mortified, exits in a huff.

Lucy, stunned, stifles a laugh. Looks at Dexter with wonder. Before she can speak, Dexter swings his head back to her.

DEXTER

Sorry, didn't catch the name...

LUCY  
Lucy, Miss Lucy Standfield.

DEXTER  
So, tell me Miss Lucy Standfield,  
where are you from, and where are  
you headed?

LUCY  
Well, I'm from Chicago.

DEXTER  
Small world.

LUCY  
You too?

DEXTER  
Fuller Park.

LUCY  
South side.

DEXTER  
A girl after my own heart. And the  
second part of my question...

LUCY  
Los Angeles.

Dexter's shoulders droop.

DEXTER  
Not Hollywood?

LUCY  
That's right.

Dexter frowns, exhales a deep breath.

DEXTER  
Let me guess, there you were, a  
shop-girl perhaps, living a drab  
mundane existence, and dreaming of  
a better life. Day, after long day,  
strangers would stop you in the  
street exclaiming...

(faux mid-Western accent)  
*Gee, someone with your pretty looks  
and smile outta be in the pictures.*  
And so, with bag on your shoulder,  
you shed a tearful adieu to your  
poor sweet mama, and set off to  
become a star... Tsk, tsk, my dear,  
you are simply a cliché in the  
making.

Lucy sits quietly. No one likes to be psychoanalyzed by a complete stranger, especially accurately. Her eyes well up.

Dexter feels a rare emotion, (for him anyway), shame.

DEXTER

I apologize for my sledgehammer wit. You see, I'm quite familiar with the business, and I'm afraid that the mere mention of the topic seems to bring out the devil in me.

Lucy wipes a tear from her cheek.

Dexter reaches inside his coat. We assume for a handkerchief. He pulls out a small flask. Unscrews the top. Leans over.

DEXTER

You know before prohibition I would have to be discreet with this, but now that it's the law of the land, it seems that everyone has one.  
(takes a snort)  
One big, dirty, little secret.

Dexter hands the flask to Lucy.

DEXTER

Little nip?

LUCY

No, thank you.

DEXTER

Hmmn... are you sure you're from the South side?

Lucy cracks a smile. Takes the flask. Sees no one is looking. Takes a small nip. And then another. Hands the flask back.

LUCY

You really work in the pictures?

DEXTER

Only when I have to.

LUCY

What is it you do?

DEXTER

Why don't you guess?

Now it's Lucy's turn to give him the once over.

LUCY

Well, you're obviously not handsome enough to be an actor.

DEXTER  
Obviously.

LUCY  
Hmmn... are you a director?

DEXTER  
No.

LUCY  
Not a producer?

DEXTER  
God no. Try again.

LUCY  
(pause)  
...A writer?

DEXTER  
(sotto)  
I wonder, why is that always last?

Lucy eyes Dexter with a hopeful skepticism.

LUCY  
Are you really a picture writer?

DEXTER  
Guilty as charged.

LUCY  
Maybe I've heard of you.

DEXTER  
Probably not, but just to confirm,  
it's Greene, Dexter Greene.

LUCY  
(draws a blank)  
Nope, sorry. But really, who pays  
attention to the writer anyway?

DEXTER  
Excellent point. Now you're  
probably wondering what kind of  
pearls of wisdom I usually bestow  
upon all those seekers of fame who  
come to me looking for insight?

Lucy creeps to the edge of her seat.

LUCY  
Please.

Dexter leans over, delicately.

DEXTER

Save yourself a life's worth of  
heartache, turn around, and go  
home. I'll even pay for your fare.

Lucy sits, unfazed.

LUCY

As a writer Mr. Greene, I'm sure  
you've had your fair share of  
moments when someone sitting across  
from you told you that you were no  
good, and that you had nothing of  
substance or value to share with  
this world.

Lucy leans in closer. Almost nose to nose now.

LUCY

And I'm sure those same people also  
told you to just pack your bags, go  
back home, and forgot about  
whatever your dreams you might've  
had. Now you tell me, when that  
happened, what did you say?

Dexter smiles. He's beginning to like this girl.

DEXTER

I suppose it was usually something  
like... go fuck yourself.

Lucy smirks.

LUCY

That's exactly what I thought you  
were going to say Mister Greene.

They both sit back up. Dexter studies her. Smiles.

DEXTER

Dex, you can call me Dex.

EXT. COUNTRYSIDE - DAWN

The train continues on its way. They've left the desert now.  
As the harsh sun creeps over the horizon, patches of green  
brush begin to dot the landscape.

INT. TRAIN COMPARTMENT - DAWN

Dexter, using his coat as a blanket, is fast asleep in his  
chair. A finger enters the frame. Tickles his ear.

LUCY

Wake up...

Dexter's eyes flicker open. Lucy sits next to him, bubbling and excited.

LUCY  
...We're almost there.

DEXTER  
My, my, from a dream to a  
nightmare... Where exactly?

LUCY  
We just crossed the state line.

DEXTER  
(groans)  
My dear, we are hardly there.

Dexter closes his eyes again. Lucy rouses him awake.

LUCY  
It's close enough for me.

Dexter looks out the train window, recalls the familiar landscape. He stands up, grabs his coat, takes Lucy's hand.

DEXTER  
Come with me. I want to show you  
something.

INT. TRAIN CORRIDORS - CONTINUOUS

Dexter and Lucy make their way past the still sleeping passengers -- As they near the caboose, a warm light beckons from beyond the curtained window.

EXT. CABOOSE - DAY

Dexter and Lucy step onto the back platform. It's a breathtaking sight. On both sides of the retreating rail tracks, stand row upon row of canary yellow poppies. They glint like golden ribbons down the Cajun pass, as far as the eye can see.

LUCY  
It's beautiful.

DEXTER  
When the tracks were first laid  
down, the porters would stand by  
the sides, and throw poppy seeds  
out the back, as a welcome to all  
the new settlers.

The BLACK PORTER, standing outside the door gives a disbelieving look, but Lucy is awash with wonder.

LUCY  
What a glorious reception.

DEXTER  
Deceptive. You know, it's not too late, we can still jump and make a break for it.

Lucy gives him a friendly nudge.

LUCY  
Don't be a spoilsport.

Dexter takes out his flask. Gives a nod to the porter, who pays no mind to the infraction. Takes a long belt.

LUCY  
So, it is true what they say about writers then?

DEXTER  
What - about us all being drunks? If you're looking for stereotypes, believe me, you're headed to the right place. They thrive on them.

Dexter hands her the flask. Lucy takes a drink. They both stare out at the horizon.

DEXTER  
Tell me, do you have anyone waiting for you when you arrive at the station?

LUCY  
No.

DEXTER  
A place to stay?

Lucy shakes her head, embarrassed by her lack of foresight.

DEXTER  
What would you say if I offered to introduce you to a few friends of mine? Possibly get you a foot in the right door.

LUCY  
(turns)  
You would - Really?

Lucy clamps her arms around him. Dexter returns the gesture in a more fatherly embrace.

DEXTER  
I'm not promising anything.

LUCY  
Whatever you can, really!

Dexter tries to subdue her enthusiasm.

DEXTER  
I must warn you. Logic doesn't  
apply there. In almost all cases  
it's really just a matter of luck.

Lucy smiles. Playfully jabs him.

LUCY  
I am lucky. I met you didn't I?

The train continues on its way, nearing their destination.

EXT. LOS ANGELES TRAIN STATION - DAY

The place is crowded with PORTERS and PASSENGERS.

Dexter steps from the train onto the platform. He turns and stretches out his hand. Lucy, makes her way down the train steps. Stops to take Dexter's hand.

DEXTER  
Welcome to Hollywood.

Lucy steps off. As her foot hits the station platform we

CUT TO:

A pair of high heels. Lucy's. Walking across a dirt field.

EXT. MOVIE STUDIO - DAY

Dexter takes Lucy by the hand, as they make their way through a typical Hollywood back-lot.

Lucy darts her head about. Trying to take it all in. Dexter moves purposefully, on the lookout for someone.

They walk past a parade of various costumed extras dressed as COWBOYS, INDIANS, WWI SOLDIERS, and ROMAN GLADIATORS.

IN THE BACKGROUND

We get glimpses into the world of silent filmmaking. Without the advent of sound, each crew can film simultaneously right next to one another.

-- One film is crew grinding out a typical Western gunfight -- Fifty feet further, another company is shooting a period Victorian costume piece -- Dexter and Lucy stop at the last production, where behind them a slapstick comedy situation is being discussed.

## BACKGROUND

The DIRECTOR and the STUNT MAN argue over the necessity of a certain stunt. The stunt man has his arms crossed.

STUNT MAN  
(Germanic accent)  
I said no.

DIRECTOR  
Come on...  
(holds up a piece of wire)  
...you know this piano wire is  
strong enough to hold an elephant.

STUNT MAN  
No! Too high!

## FOREGROUND

Lucy watches all of this in awe.

LUCY  
It's all so amazing. I can't  
believe it.

Dexter pinches her arm.

LUCY  
Owww!

DEXTER  
Believe it.

A group of actors, dressed as TEMPLAR KNIGHTS, walk past.  
Dexter recognizes one of the knights.

DEXTER  
I'll be right back. Try not to walk  
into any shots.

Dexter follows after him.

## BACKGROUND.

DIRECTOR  
Five dollars.

STUNT MAN  
Ten.

The director looks around. Pulls a ten from his pocket.

DIRECTOR  
Okay, but don't tell the others.  
They're only making ten for the  
whole day.

The stunt man smiles. Pockets the cash.

STUNT MAN

Hook me up.

FOREGROUND

Dexter returns with two friends in their mid-twenties. One dressed as a knight, the other as a medieval princess. The man is CHARLES HART. Jet black hair with matinee idol looks. The woman is MOLLY SPENCER. More cute than beautiful, with long blonde curls.

DEXTER

Look who I found?

(to Lucy)

Miss Lucy Standfield, may I introduce my two friends --

LUCY

Molly Spencer and Charles Hart!

Lucy smacks Dexter on the arm.

LUCY

You never told me you knew anyone famous.

She turns to Molly and Charles.

LUCY

I'm such a huge fan of you both!

(to Charles)

I must have saw "The Sword of Destiny" five times. The part where you sacrifice yourself for the Queen...(sighs)

(to Molly)

And Miss Spencer - Your performance in "Lost Love" - was one of the reasons I wanted to come out here.

(proudly)

You see, I want to be an actress.

Although Charles is taken by Lucy's natural beauty, he stays aloof throughout the encounter.

CHARLES

How original.

LUCY

I want to be as famous as Mary Pickford, but with the talent of Lillian Gish.

MOLLY

Is that all?

LUCY  
They're my two favorites ...and you  
too of course.

Molly is enamored.

MOLLY  
Of course.

DEXTER  
Delightful isn't she? I was hoping  
you might be able to find her some  
work.

MOLLY  
Well, I think we're all out of  
starring roles at the moment.

Charles lights a cigarette.

CHARLES  
I do believe our script girl was  
fired today.

LUCY  
What's a script girl?

DEXTER  
Nothing you're interested in.

Molly takes Lucy by the arm.

MOLLY  
Don't worry, I'll find you  
something... there's a new bible  
picture shooting, and they're  
always looking for girls...  
(eyes her figure)  
...of the right proportions. Tell  
me, what are your plans this  
evening?

LUCY  
Plans?

DEXTER  
She's fresh off the train. Lost and  
alone in a strange wilderness.

MOLLY  
Is that so? Well, why don't you tag  
along with me, and we'll see if we  
can't get you sorted.

Dexter smiles at his match-making abilities.

DEXTER

(to Lucy)

See, didn't I tell you I had the finest friends in all the land?

CHARLES

You mean friends that don't mind when you blow into town, and then stay for months on end?

Dexter laughs, because it's true.

In the background the Stunt Man is being hoisted into the air. Three men pull on the wire lifting him up higher, and higher...

MOLLY

(to Lucy)

Would you like to come to a party with me tonight?

LUCY

A party? I would love to, but I have only the one bag, and probably nothing to wear.

MOLLY

I'm sure I can find you something.

Our group walks off-screen.

BACKGROUND

The stunt man is over twenty feet up now.

DEXTER (O.S.)

Oh Charles, I'm going to need to borrow one of your cars.

CHARLES (O.S.)

No problem.

LUCY (O.S.)

I just don't know how to thank you?

MOLLY (O.S.)

We've all been there... Besides, I've got a good feeling about you.

The wire snaps. The three lifters are sent falling back. The Stunt Man crashes to the ground.

EXT. GATES OF PREMIUM PICTURES - DAY

Dexter drives Charles's car up to the closed gate. The affable pot-bellied guard, GOMER (50), exits his booth.

DEXTER  
Good morning Gomer.

GOMER  
Well well, if it isn't Mr. Greene.  
What are you doing in this neck of  
the woods? Got a new picture lined  
up do ya?

DEXTER  
Not exactly. Just thought I'd do a  
little scavenging.

GOMER  
(rubs his chin)  
Oh. Well that's a pickle then. You  
see we ain't supposed to let you on  
the lot no more.

DEXTER  
Please, tell me you're kidding?

GOMER  
Fraid not. Orders came from Mr.  
Wilson himself... All on account of  
that kerfuffle last summer.  
Remember?

DEXTER  
(trying desperately)  
I'm afraid not.  
(pause)  
I've got an idea. Why don't you let  
me pass, and if anyone asks me how  
I got on the lot, I'll tell'em I  
lied through my teeth.

Gomer smiles. Opens the gate. Dexter drives through.

DEXTER  
You're too good for these people  
Gomer.

Dexter drives through the lot. Parks outside a three story  
brick and mortar building.

The sign above the entrance reads "WRITER'S BUILDING".

INT. WRITER'S BUILDING - DAY

Dexter climbs the stairway. Peeks his head in and out of  
doorways like a secret agent. On his way up to the third  
floor, Dexter pauses half-way. Slips his shoes off. Then  
using his long legs, he skips three steps, and creeps  
gingerly up, nearing the top.

INT. WRITER'S ROOM - DAY

A prominently displayed sign reads "*No Book-reading Allowed!*"

Rows of desks. Typewriter's at the ready. All stand empty, like a classroom with no students. Several desks in the back corner have been pushed together. A GAGGLE OF WRITERS, consisting of both men and women, are huddled together, presumably involved in some kind of creative bull session.

Two writers stare intently at one another.

WRITER 1

Come on, make up your mind already.

WRITER 2

I'm thinking... This is a crucial decision.

Writer 2 lifts his cards one more time. Looks down where a kitty of cash and coins lie in the center.

Writer 2 ponders. It's deathly quiet, and then --

-- Dexter bursts into the room.

DEXTER

Awaken you slaves!

The group is jolted by his sudden appearance. Playing cards fly into the air. A writer falls back in his chair.

DEXTER

I've come to rescue you from the corporate shackles of this corrupt art-form.

Everyone relaxes. Dexter helps up the fallen writer back onto his feet. His name is HENRY (22).

DEXTER

Rise up my fellow hacks. Let's unite, and together we will vanquish our common foe.

HENRY

What common foe?

DEXTER

Why our own insatiable lust for greed of course. For why else would such a crew of brilliant young minds lock themselves up in this tower of sin?

No one answers. They look at each other blankly.

HENRY

How'd you get up here anyhow?

Dexter lifts up his shoes.

DEXTER

I have the stealth of a cat.

As Dexter slips his shoes back on, he looks about. Notices the card game.

DEXTER

Interrupting anything?

Writer 2 is still picking up the scattered cards.

DEXTER

Ah, a little afternoon relaxation.  
What are you playing for?

WRITER 2

Our monthly bonus cheques.

Dexter smiles. And then a LOUD CREEK from the stairwell. Everyone runs to their desk. Assumes the proper position.

A booming voice from off-screen.

VOICE

I don't hear any typing going on!

Everyone starts typing madly on their Underwood's.

The head of the department WILBUR (40), storms into the room.

WILBUR

Where the hell are the re-writes on  
the new Steele picture?

Upon seeing the infiltrator, Wilbur comes to a sudden stop.

WILBUR

Who let you up here?

DEXTER

Hello Wilbur. Still losing at  
craps?

WILBUR

Still cranking out poetry for those  
New York queers?

Dexter smiles. He loves him and hates him.

DEXTER

In fact, I've come to offer you my  
services for a bargain rate.

Wilbur huffs. But then again, it is Dexter Greene.

WILBUR  
Meet me in my office.

A writer hands Wilbur the demanded pages. Wilbur snatches them from his hand.

WILBUR  
Back to work!

Wilbur exits. His heavysset frame stomps down the creaky staircase.

WILBUR (O.S.)  
I thought I told someone to get  
these god-damned stairs fixed!

Dexter, and the rest of the room, share a collective smile.

DEXTER  
Ah, the sweet assurances in life.

Another writer pipes up.

WRITER 3  
How come he doesn't treat you like  
a bastard?

DEXTER  
Why, because you're nothing but a  
lowly writer. While I have elevated  
myself to a much higher position -  
that of fellow gambler and card  
player - a skill they can respect.

Dexter addresses them like adoring pupils.

DEXTER  
You see, they know that they can't  
survive without you, and that truth  
terrifies them. So in order to  
combat that terror, they treat you  
with utter disdain, which therefore  
enables them to feel superior....  
Clever isn't it?

WRITER 2  
So, what we do about it?

DEXTER  
(unsheathes his flask)  
I, drink!  
(takes a swig)

A beat later.

HENRY  
What about sound?

DEXTER  
What sound?

WRITER 1  
Yeah, the word is Warner's been spending a lot of dough tinkering with synchronized sound.

HENRY  
If it ever breaks, that could change the whole industry couldn't it?

A wolfish smile creeps along his lips.

DEXTER  
Perhaps, perhaps.

Dexter pats Henry on the head like a loyal pup. Rewards him with a dollar.

INT. MOLLY'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Lucy stands in front of a full length mirror. Wearing an elegant sequin dress. Molly stands beside her, looking similarly striking in her twenties flapper attire.

LUCY  
What do you think?

MOLLY  
Are you pulling one? That dress looks better on you than me. Still a little tight in the chest though.

A loud honk from outside.

MOLLY  
That's Charlie. C'mon, he doesn't like to wait.

STAIRCASE (WALKING)

LUCY  
So, what is the situation with you and Charles? All I know is what the columnists in Photoplay print.

MOLLY  
Hon, they probably got a better clue than I do most of the time.

EXT. MOLLY'S HOME - NIGHT

A Spanish style house. White, with a large veranda.

Molly and Lucy come prancing out the door, across the lawn, towards Charles, who is waiting behind the wheel of his LUXURY SEDAN CONVERTIBLE. Charles is caught off guard by Lucy's appearance.

CHARLES

My goodness. Don't you look stunning?

Lucy blushes. Molly raises an eyebrow.

CHARLES

I mean don't you both look stunning.

MOLLY

Better.

Molly and Lucy slide into the backseat.

Charles speeds off down the road.

INT. CHARLES'S CAR (MOVING) - NIGHT

Charles takes a swig from his gold encrusted flask. Passes it back to Molly. She takes a swig and passes it to Lucy.

LUCY

So, where are we going?

Charles shouts over the wind.

CHARLES

Don't know yet kid.

MOLLY

It's not up to us you see.  
(gestures)  
C'mon drink...

Lucy takes a swig from the flask, then another.

MOLLY

That a girl.  
(pointing off screen)  
How about that one?

They fly past a home with a dozen cars parked in the round drive-way.

CHARLES

Nah, not nearly big enough.

Charles takes a wild turn. Molly and Lucy swoosh back and forth like they're on a "Tilt-A-Whirl".

They come upon yet another palatial home with several cars parked out front.

CHARLES

Boring.

The keep driving. Lucy is perplexed. Molly tugs her elbow.

MOLLY

You see, nobody ever announces that they're going to have a party, otherwise the whole town gets word, and it's totally overrun. So what you do is just drive around until you see a street with plenty of cars parked out front, and once you've found it, then you know where you're going that night.

LUCY

And the people hosting these parties don't mind?

MOLLY

Honestly, I don't think anyone's ever bothered to ask before.

The flask makes its way back to Lucy again. She drinks.

LUCY

So tell me, what other stars do you two know?

MOLLY

Practically everybody knows each other someday around here.

LUCY

Do you know Norma Talmadge?

MOLLY

No.

LUCY

What about Gloria Swanson?

MOLLY

No, not personally.

LUCY

Theda Bara?

CHARLES

She's a fucking nutcase.

LUCY

Oh.

Lucy feels the breeze in her hair. Looks up to see the stars glittering behind the stretched out leaves of the palm trees.

LUCY

It's so magical here. All the palm trees. I love it.

CHARLES

Don't believe everything you see.

MOLLY

(to Lucy)

They're planted here. The first big money men who came here wanted to recreate some sort of lost paradise. A garden of Eden just for us. Anything to try and impress the initial investors. Basically the whole town is one giant film set.

Charles slows the car down.

CHARLES

We may have a winner.

They approach what can only be described as a mansion. White, with a Romanesque colonnade. Lit up like a cathedral. Dozens of cars line the street up to the house.

Charles scopes out a parking spot. They exit the car and walk headstrong up the front steps.

CHARLES

Leave it to Wildman to throw a bash like this on a Wednesday.

Charles raps on the front door, then makes his way inside.

Lucy tugs at Molly's arm, whispers...

LUCY

Are you sure we're invited?

Molly, joyfully, extends her hand out.

MOLLY

Silly. Everyone's invited!

INT. WILDMAN'S MANSION - NIGHT

Charles, Molly, and Lucy walk through the grand foyer, and step into

THE GREAT ROOM

Filled with young, beautiful people. Men in tuxedo's chomp on cigars. The woman, dressed like flappers, smoke long cigarettes, and drink dry martinis. A Negro jazz band plays in the corner. Champagne is flowing everywhere.

Lucy is awestruck. Like a fantastical dream come true. And then A PAIR OF HANDS covers Lucy's eyes.

VOICE

Guess who?

Lucy turns, to see Dexter dressed in his ill-fitting tails.

LUCY

You're here?

DEXTER

Just arrived. So Alice, how are you enjoying the rabbit hole so far?

LUCY

It's all so amazing. I still can't believe I'm here.

(points off-screen)

Oh my god, that's Phillip Taylor!

Dexter places his hand on Lucy's finger. Gently lowers it.

DEXTER

Don't point. They hate that.

CHARLES

(announcing)

I'm going to get a drink.

Charles takes Molly by the wrist. Heads for one of the many bars situated around the room.

Lucy looks about, noticing all the youthful faces.

LUCY

(to Dexter)

I can't believe how young everybody here is?

DEXTER

Oh yes, that's a constant.

A pretty blonde walks past them.

LUCY

She can't be more than seventeen.

DEXTER

What can I say? Big screens and wrinkles don't mix.

LUCY  
Oh yeah, what about Douglas  
Fairbanks, he's pretty old?

DEXTER  
Men don't grow old here, only more  
masculine.

LUCY  
Give me a break.

Suddenly, Molly returns, already holding a cocktail.

MOLLY  
What're you two standing at the  
door for?  
(takes Lucy by the arm)  
Let's get you a drink girl.

As Molly drags her away from Dexter.

LUCY  
I guess I'll see you later.

DEXTER  
Have fun.

INT. WILDMAN'S MANSION - LOUNGE AREA

Molly and Lucy are camped out in a corner, observing the party. Lucy is captivated by her surroundings.

LUCY  
Where did Charlie go?

MOLLY  
Who knows? Probably off chasing  
something in a short skirt.  
(sidles close to Lucy)  
Now let's fill you in on some of  
the guests...

Molly gets cheek to cheek with Lucy. We follow their POV around the room, to

An OVERWEIGHT MAN (40's), eating all the appetizers from a server's platter.

MOLLY (O.S.)  
That's Harold Katzman. He directed  
"Murder at Midnight".

SWOOSH OVER

To a very SUAVE MAN (20'S). He strikes a romantic pose as he lights a woman's cigarette.

MOLLY (O.S.)  
That's Reed Harrington. An up and  
comer at Fox. Very handsome.

SWOOSH OVER

To a SHORT MAN (50), smoking a large cigar.

MOLLY (O.S.)  
That dinosaur is Edgar Vance. The  
new casting director at First  
National. I'll introduce you later.

SWOOSH OVER

To a woman, sitting alone, observing the party much like the  
two girls are doing. Her name is MARGARET BLUNT, (40).

MOLLY (O.S.)  
And that, is Margaret Blunt.

LUCY (O.S.)  
The gossip queen of Tinseltown.

MOLLY (O.S.)  
That's her.

Blunt looks like a chaperone at a high school function.  
Everyone is very cordial, but no one will sit with her.

BACK TO THE GIRLS

MOLLY  
She's a snake with a smile. So  
watch your tongue if she's within  
fifty feet of you, or else whatever  
you say will be on the lips of all  
her readers the next morning.

Lucy nods like a student. Molly continues her tour.

MOLLY  
And that is --

Molly's attention is drawn to A thin, SKEEVY LOOKING MAN,  
across the room. She turns to Lucy.

LUCY  
If you'll excuse me...  
(mischievously)  
My night just got a little better.

Lucy watches Molly approach the skeevy man. They briefly  
talk, and then enter an adjacent room.

Lucy wonders what's going on, when a HULKING MAN saunters up  
next to her, and then with a rather feminine voice.

HULKING MAN  
Hello there.

Lucy turns. Her eyes pop. She actually gulps.

INT. WILDMAN'S MANSION - BAR

Dexter is at the bar getting another refill. He keeps mostly to himself, eavesdropping the collective party chatter.

PARTY CHATTER  
Not the best whiskey really/ Not  
bad for bootleg though/ I've had  
better/ Not on this coast.

MIKE STEWART (30), approaches Dexter from behind. Grabs his shoulders. Dexter clenches up.

MIKE  
I'll be damned! Dexter Greene - I  
didn't know you were in town.

Dexter turns. Holds up his drink. Rattles the ice-cubes.

DEXTER  
I'm trying to forget. Hi Mike.

MIKE  
Once again, you and me are the only  
writers at the party. Why is that?

DEXTER  
Because no one ever asks us. So,  
why are you here?

MIKE  
You haven't heard? I'm dating Kathy  
Pollard.

DEXTER  
Moving up in the world huh? You  
best be careful, she doesn't know  
you like I do.

MIKE  
That's right, she doesn't.  
(pokes his chest)  
So don't go around spewing that  
venom of yours.

Dexter enjoys the reptilian compliment, takes a drink.

INT. WILDMAN'S MANSION - LOUNGE

The hulking man kisses Lucy's hand.

HULKING MAN

Very nice to meet you Lucy.

LUCY

A pleasure, really.

The hulking man leaves -- just as Molly reappears.

MOLLY

Having fun?

LUCY

I can't believe it. Hank Hilton just came up and introduced himself to me. The big rugged cowboy from all those westerns, sounds... just like a girl!

Molly bends over laughing.

MOLLY

I know! It's a scream. If the public only knew. I also heard his real name is Hollis.

LUCY

Holly Hilton. And to think what a tough guy my mother always thought he was. How does he get away with it?

MOLLY

As long as he's bankable, the studio will keep Blunt and her team of bloodhounds on a leash.

Molly's attention is drawn to the doorway.

MOLLY

Speaking of tough guys...

Molly and Lucy turn toward the main entrance where another star, the great WILLIAM STEELE (35), has just entered. Escorted with a gorgeous woman on each arm.

The whole room toasts his arrival.

LUCY

William Steele!

MOLLY

He's no phony. I heard he once took on a group of louts, who were disrespecting a woman he didn't even know.

Steele glances around the room to survey his peers.

LUCY

Wow.

Steele strides through the room -- past Molly and Lucy.

MOLLY

You know how you know when you're  
really a star?

Lucy leans in.

MOLLY

When you walk into a room, and you  
know everyone wants to fuck you.

INT. WILDMAN'S MANSION - BAR

Dexter and Mike are still at the bar.

MIKE

Now, if I remember correctly, the  
last time I saw you, you called me  
an artistic sell-out, who would  
trade both his grandmother, and the  
family dog for a sweeter deal.

(recalling)

And...

DEXTER

There's an and?

MIKE

And, that if I was able to salvage  
whatever shreds of integrity and  
character I may have once  
possessed, I should immediately  
flee, before I sink any deeper into  
this swamp of despair.

Dexter's blurred memory fails to recall the encounter.

MIKE

I wrote it on the back of a  
matchbook so I wouldn't forget.

DEXTER

I feel there's a point coming...

MIKE

The point is - what the hell are  
you doing here?

Dexter downs his glass. Signals the bartender.

DEXTER

Good liquor.

MIKE

Come on.

Dexter, playing coy, stews in his spot.

MIKE

Jesus, you're broke again!

Dexter, embarrassed, looks about. No one seems to care.

DEXTER

I just need to find some quick jobs  
around town.

MIKE

How much do you owe? It can't be  
more than before?

DEXTER

(smiles)  
Wanna bet?

Mike contains a belly laugh.

MIKE

God, how can one guy be so smart,  
and so dumb at the same time?

Dexter treats the question seriously.

DEXTER

Extreme apathy.

MIKE

Extreme horse-shit. If you really  
need some work, go upstairs and  
talk to Paul. I hear he's having a  
helluva time on his new flick.

DEXTER

Paul Webb is here?

MIKE

Upstairs, playing craps.

Dexter instantly perks up. Gives Mike a shot in the arm.

DEXTER

Thanks Mike. I think I will.

INT. WILDMAN'S MANSION - LOUNGE

Charles is sitting on one of the sofas. TWO BEAUTIFUL GIRLS,  
sit on each side of him. They look at him adoringly.

CHARLES

I actually tried to enlist in the big one, but I was only fourteen at the time. Still, after starring in so many war pictures now, what with all the great sets and effects, I gotta tell you, I have a real sense of what that terrible war must have been really like.

BEAUTIFUL GIRLS

Golly/Wow

ACROSS THE ROOM

Molly watches Charles and the two girls. Turns to Lucy.

MOLLY

Do you think they're pretty?

LUCY

Are you kidding? They can't hold a candle to you.

MOLLY

I'm not going to let him spoil another evening.

A waiter walks by carrying a tray of champagne. Molly takes two glasses. Hands one to Lucy.

MOLLY

After all, this is a special day.

LUCY

It is, why?

MOLLY

Why? Because I met you silly.

Molly clinks Lucy's glass. Lucy beams. Molly opens her sequin change purse. Takes out a single white pill. Pops it into her champagne glass.

LUCY

What's that?

MOLLY

Just my depression medicine.  
(takes a sip, smiles)  
See, works like a charm.

Molly glances back at Charles. Still flirting with the girls.

Molly takes Lucy's hand.

MOLLY

Let's go mingle.

INT. WILDMAN'S MANSION - UPSTAIRS HALLWAY

Dexter prowls the hallway. From one room we hear the sound of passionate love-making. Dexter presses his ear against the door. Smiles. Continues along until he hears some shouting coming from one of the storage closets.

Dexter swings the door open --

INT. WILDMAN'S MANSION - STORAGE CLOSET

-- to find FOUR MEN IN TUXEDO'S (40's); down on their knees, huddled together, playing craps. You wouldn't think the most powerful men at the party would be found here. They all turn around, recognizing Dexter. They're mostly friendly.

DEXTER

Now I know where the real party is.

TUXEDO 1

Close the door will ya!

Dexter closes it. One gentleman, not playing, crosses over to shake Dexter's hand. PAUL WEBB (30). Hungarian. Refined.

PAUL

Hello Dexter, when did you get into town?

DEXTER

This afternoon.

PAUL

Sick of it yet?

DEXTER

Like anthrax.

Dexter looks down upon the game, like a starving man at a sandwich.

PAUL

You want to join in?

DEXTER

No thanks. I appear to be a little bit strapped at the moment.

PAUL

You're kidding? Where did all that money from "The Informant" go? That was a big hit for us.

DEXTER

I didn't make out quite as well as some others I know.

PAUL

You want to try directing those adolescents? If they're not hung over, they're popping something. Many show up late, some don't show up at all. Most days I feel like some glorified nurse-maid instead of a film director.

DEXTER

Oh yeah, try coming up with original, yet creative scenarios, in a factory environment.

One of the tuxedo's grumbles, as he rolls the dice.

TUXEDO 2

Fucking writers never happy unless they're bitching about something.

DEXTER

(to Paul)

I heard that your having some problems on your new picture?

PAUL

I am, but it's not story related. I'm having trouble with the role of the younger sister. The actress we have now is fine, but...

DEXTER

You're not looking for fine.

PAUL

It's a small part, but still crucial. It must be right.

DEXTER

(ponders)

Does she have to be established?

PAUL

You've got someone in mind?

DEXTER

Not really, maybe. It's a shot in the dark, but why don't you come downstairs and meet someone.

PAUL

All right.

(to the tuxedos)

If you gentlemen will excuse us?

Dexter and Paul exit, closing the door behind them.

Tuxedo #2 throws down a wad of cash. Rolls the dice.

TUXEDO 2  
Come on baby!

The dice bang up against the wall, landing snake-eyes.

TUXEDO 2  
Cocksucker!

INT. WILDMAN'S MANSION - LOUNGE

Charles is on another sofa with TWO DIFFERENT GIRLS. Do I need to say they're both stunners? Charles enjoys his life.

CHARLES  
...Actually I played tennis with  
Chaplin last week. Terrible serve,  
and no backhand whatsoever.

One of the girls creeps closer, noodles his ear.

GIRL  
Is it true what all the magazines  
say - about you and Clara Bow?

CHARLES  
Ladies, ladies, you can't believe  
everything that you read in those  
awful tabloids... but yes.

GIRL  
I knew it.

The girl is just about to kiss his cheek -- when an  
inebriated Molly appears. She hovers over them.

MOLLY  
Come on Charlie, I want to dance.

CHARLES  
Can't you see I'm busy right now?

GIRL  
(to Molly)  
Yeah, he's busy right now.

MOLLY  
Fine.

Molly walks away, pretends to trip. Spills her drink all over  
the girl.

MOLLY  
Oopsie.

Soaked, the girl, stands up.

GIRL  
Look what you did!

The two girls storm off toward the ladies room.

Molly hops over onto the sofa. Kicks her legs up on Charles.

CHARLES  
Very subtle.

MOLLY  
I thought so.

INT. WILDMAN'S MANSION - BANDSTAND

Lucy, drink in hand, watches the band play. Intoxicated not only from the champagne, but the music as well.

Dexter and Paul emerge through the crowd to find Lucy.

DEXTER  
There you are.

LUCY  
Dexter!

Lucy gives him another hug. Dexter reacts with cool disposition. Picks her off of him.

DEXTER  
Having a good time dear?

LUCY  
Only the best night of my life.

DEXTER  
I want to introduce you to someone.  
Now, this is an actual friend of  
mine, so be nice.  
(brings them together)  
Lucy Standfield meet Paul Webb.  
Paul is a director over at American  
Pictures.

LUCY  
A pleasure.

PAUL  
Mine as well.  
(to Dexter)  
I see that you weren't  
exaggerating.

Lucy blushes.

DEXTER

I never lie. It comes with being  
void of regret.

(notices his empty glass)

How did that happen?

(to them both)

If you two will excuse me.

Dexter exits.

PAUL

So, Lucy, have you ever been to Los  
Angeles before?

LUCY

I've never been to anywhere before.

PAUL

All this must seem quite bizarre? I  
know I certainly felt that way,  
when I first arrived.

LUCY

Honest?

PAUL

Sure. I spent the majority of my  
life growing up on a farm.

LUCY

You did?

PAUL

A little village on the Hungarian  
border no one has ever heard of.

LUCY

How did you end up here?

PAUL

It didn't take long before I knew I  
wasn't cut out to be a farmer.  
After the Treaty of Trianon, I  
eventually made my way to Berlin to  
write. I never planned on this  
life. Each job led to another. And  
then one morning I woke up here,  
and it felt like I'd lived here my  
whole life.

LUCY

And being an artist, a real artist,  
you must really love what you do?

PAUL

Very much. It's the only thing I've  
ever felt passionate about.

(MORE)

(smiles)  
Work related anyway.

Lucy begins to speak, stops herself.

PAUL  
Tell me.

Lucy inches closer. Stares into his eyes.

LUCY  
Have you ever felt that there was something you were supposed to be doing in life, something important, but you weren't doing it?

PAUL  
That's just your instinct telling you to not settle for the ordinary. To try and live a meaningful life.

LUCY  
Is that awful?

PAUL  
Of course not. Everyone's life is meaningful Lucy.

Paul takes her by the hand.

PAUL  
It all depends on what you do with it.

The band strikes up another number.

PAUL  
Would you care to dance?

LUCY  
I would love to.

Paul and Lucy hit the dance floor.

OVER AT THE SOFA

Charles and Molly are passionately kissing. Apparently all is forgiven. Molly stops, pushes Charles away.

MOLLY  
You didn't think those other girls were pretty did you?

CHARLES  
Of course not. I was just trying to make you jealous.

MOLLY

I love you.

CHARLES

What's not to love?

They start kissing again.

ON THE DANCE FLOOR

Lucy and Paul are having a grand time dancing to *The Charleston*.

OUTSIDE THE DANCE FLOOR

Dexter, fresh drink in hand, watches them. He smiles, then turns to admire the band, who are really swinging. For a tiny sliver of time, Dexter is genuinely happy.

And then a fat, drunk, named SAM slaps him on the shoulder.

SAM

God, can those boys play or what? I hear Wildman brought them all the way over here from New York.

If Dex is pleased to see him, he hides it well. Stays focused on the band.

DEXTER

He did. I saw them in Harlem.

Sam sidles up close; puts his arm around Dexter, breaking his no contact rule.

SAM

What a beat! I swear I don't know where those people get it from?

DEXTER

If they're so great, then why don't you put them in something?

SAM

Huh?

DEXTER

Oh right, I forgot, not a lot of roles for their kind - I mean since "Birth of a Nation".

Sam takes his arm away.

SAM

You're trying to be funny right?

DEXTER

What's funny is the wild adulation  
tossed about while they entertain  
us, yet I would bet the farm that  
if there was ever one of "those  
people" at any of your parties,  
you'd hand him your hat.

Sam takes the not so subtle hint, and departs. Dexter smiles.  
Takes a drink. So much for working at that studio.

ON THE DANCE FLOOR

Paul and Lucy whoop it up.

PAUL

You're a swell dancer.

LUCY

Thanks. So are you.

He's really not. Lucy's first white lie.

PAUL

I don't mean to be forward, but do  
you have any plans tomorrow?

LUCY

None whatsoever.

PAUL

I would love to bring you down to  
the studio to talk about a new  
project of mine.

LUCY

I'd be thrilled.

PAUL

Let's say just after lunch.

LUCY

I'll be there.

The band heats up for the big finish. Pace quickening.

Paul takes Lucy by both hands. Spins them in a circle.

LUCY'S SWIRLING POV

The glamorous people -- the liquor -- the band -- all fueled  
together into a dizzying cocktail. Lucy looks up at the  
glittering chandelier.

The spinning intensifies. Focus blurs, as we

FADE OUT.

INT. MOLLY'S GUEST BEDROOM - DAY

Lucy lies fast asleep, in the middle of an enormous California King size bed. Her head smashed into a pillow. The bright sun shines directly on her. One eye opens. And then the other. She slowly rouses. Finds herself wearing a silk dressing gown. She looks around the room.

It is filled with a hodgepodge of ornate antiques and furniture. All with a decidedly feminine touch. Lucy sees her suitcase in the corner. All her clothes laid out nicely. She climbs off the bed.

INT. MOLLY'S HOME - FOYER

Lucy clutches the rail as she descends the staircase. The large house is eerily empty. Lucy calls out...

LUCY  
Molly...

From the kitchen area, we hear Charles's voice.

CHARLES (O.S.)  
In here!

INT. KITCHEN

Molly enters to find Charles in his bathrobe, enjoying a cup of coffee, and the morning trades.

CHARLES  
Look who's awake. Good morning.  
(checks his watch)  
Or should I say good afternoon.

Charles kicks a chair out from under the table.

CHARLES  
Take a seat.

Lucy sits next to him.

CHARLES  
Care for a coffee?

LUCY  
Please.

A butler (60), appears from seemingly nowhere. His name is MR. PARKER, always on hand, always inconspicuous. He pours Lucy a cup of coffee.

MR. PARKER  
Anything else Miss Standfield?

LUCY  
No, thank you.

Mr. Parker withdraws into obscurity. Lucy takes a sip of coffee. It warms her soul. She takes another.

CHARLES  
Feeling a bit rough are we?

LUCY  
I don't usually drink champagne.  
(pause)  
I have to admit there are parts of the evening I don't quite remember.

CHARLES  
Yes, you passed out on the ride home.

LUCY  
How did I get from the car to the bedroom?

CHARLES  
That would have been my honor. Under Molly's strict supervision of course.

LUCY  
Of course. So, where is Molly?

CHARLES  
Working. She's been on the lot since six, and she was late.

LUCY  
Six! How does she do it?

CHARLES  
Practice. Work hard, play hard, you know? And don't worry about work today, I'm sure they can start you tomorrow.

Lucy shoots him a confused look.

CHARLES  
You know, for that bible picture?

LUCY  
Oh! Forget about that. I think I have a better opportunity.

Now it is Charles's turn to look confused.

LUCY  
You see, I met Paul Webb last night.

You know the director - and he told me to drop by the studio today to see if he could find me something.

CHARLES  
Paul Webb huh?

Lucy nods, takes a bite of one of the pastries laid out.

CHARLES  
I must've missed that, Molly too. So, I suppose you won't be needing the job after all?

LUCY  
I suppose not.  
(looks about)  
Do you and Molly both live here?

CHARLES  
No, I have a place over on Whilshire.

LUCY  
And Mister Greene, where is he?

CHARLES  
Dex. I'm not sure where he sleeps some nights, or if he even sleeps at all.  
(pause)  
Paul Webb's a helluva director.

LUCY  
Is he?

CHARLES  
I'll be driving down past the studio, I can give you a ride?

LUCY  
That would be swell Charlie.

EXT. POVERTY ROW - DAY

Poverty row, an area of Los Angeles outside the glitz and glamor of the more formidable studios. Ramshackle production companies sit side by side, each one creating small pictures. Each one hoping for that one giant hit.

EXT. CHASE PICTURES - DAY

Dexter, still driving Charles's car, pulls into the open entrance to CHASE PICTURES.

INT. MR. GOWER'S OFFICE - DAY

An office. Messy. Cramped. Piles of scripts fill every inch of the tiny desk. Organized chaos in all it's glory.

The crusty studio head LOUIS GOWER (40), eyes Dexter over the cluttered desk.

GOWER

So, what brings someone of your esteem down to poverty row?

DEXTER

Oh, just here for some sun, and I thought I might whittle down the hours with some extra writing.

GOWER

Is that so? Well, I've got six scripts here I don't know what to do with.

Gower picks up each script, one by one.

GOWER

This one is a comedy. It was so funny I read it during a funeral service and nobody noticed - This one you could read backwards to forwards and would still make the same amount of sense - And this one, It's about how much Jesus suffered. At least Jesus didn't have to read this script.

DEXTER

Sounds like a challenge. I'll take them all. For only four hundred a pop.

NAME

(chuckles)

Two.

DEXTER

Three-fift --

GOWER

It's two. The word's out Dex. You've been all over town, taking whatever you can get. I know that you need the work.

Dexter is deflated. His only advantage gone.

Gower takes pity on him. He holds the scripts up.

GOWER

Six for twelve. I can bump it up to fifteen. You want it or not?

Dexter sighs, reaches across the table, and takes the scripts.

GOWER

It's a small town. People love to talk, especially about other people.

Dexter stands, and tucks the scripts under his arm.

GOWER

I'm gonna need those by Tuesday.

Dexter nods. Fakes a smile.

EXT. AMERICAN PICTURES INC. - DAY

A four story building overlooks the mammoth studio.

INT. MR. ROACH'S OFFICE - DAY

Inside the heart of American Pictures. The imposing office of studio head STANLEY ROACH (40), overweight, and balding.

Roach sits behinds his large oak desk. Chomping on a cigar.

Paul Webb stands across the room, staring out the window, at the front gate.

PAUL

I feel this role requires something special, someone new.

MR. ROACH

The people don't want new faces, they want famous faces. They should. I'm paying them enough.

PAUL

Remember, every star needs a first picture. She could be the biggest draw you've ever had, and you just want to shoe her out the door.

MR. ROACH

I decided to meet her didn't I?

(pause)

So, where is she?

EXT. AMERICAN PICTURES - FRONT GATE - DAY

A group of AUTOGRAPH SEEKERS, comprised mostly of young women, stand outside the gates, hoping to catch a glimpse of one of their favorite film stars.

Lucy and Charles pull up in his convertible.

Two girls spot Charles. They run up to the car.

AUTOGRAPH SEEKER #1  
Charles Hart! Hey Charlie, where's Molly?

AUTOGRAPH SEEKER #2  
Is that your new girl Charlie?

The guard HARRY approaches, shoos off the autograph girls.

HARRY  
Afternoon Mr. Hart.

CHARLES  
Hi, Harry.

HARRY  
How are things over at the ranch?

CHARLES  
No complaints. I'm here to drop off Miss Lucy Standfield.

Harry checks his schedule.

Another seeker approaches Lucy. Pen and paper ready.

AUTOGRAPH SEEKER #3  
Hi. If you're famous will you please sign this?

LUCY  
Ummm, if you like.

Lucy signs her book.

HARRY  
Here it is. Miss Lucy Standfield to see Mr. Roach at one o'clock.  
(checks his watch)  
You better get moving missy.

Charles can't believe his ears.

CHARLES  
Mr. Roach, but I've never even met Mr. Roach.

HARRY  
Maybe one day kid.

Harry opens up the gate. Charles drives through.

INT. MR. ROACH'S OFFICE - DAY

Mr. Roach eyes the marble clock on his desk.

MR. ROACH  
Problem with talent these days is  
they have no sense of punctuality.

Paul butts out his cigarette in the elephant foot ash-tray.

PAUL  
What do you expect? Imagine, you're  
far away from home, with more money  
than you ever dreamed. Nestled away  
from the rest of the world, in a  
place where everyone seems to be  
making the rules up as they go.  
Frankly, I'm amazed this town  
functions at all.

MR. ROACH  
Tell me Webb, are you a communist?

PAUL  
Why, would that scare you?  
(pause)  
No, I'm not a communist. I've seen  
far too much pain inflicted by that  
ideology to endorse it. But you  
might say I'm a humanist. It's like  
communism without the politics.

MR. ROACH  
Whatever, ...  
(blows smoke)  
Just keep it out of my pictures.

A tap on the office door. Roach's SECRETARY enters.

SECRETARY  
Miss Standfield is here to see you.

Paul gives Roach a promising look. Roach sneers. And then

LUCY ENTERS

She crosses the long room. In full command of her allure.

Roach almost loses his cigar, whispers under his breath.

ROACH  
Dear lord.

He turns to Paul, who has a *I told you so* look on his face.  
Lucy shoots Paul a smile, but she keeps her focus on Roach.

LUCY  
I hope I'm not too late?

MR. ROACH  
Late, no, not at all.  
(extends his hand)  
How do you do?

They shake.

LUCY  
I'm honored to meet you. I'm such a  
admirer of most of your pictures.

MR. ROACH  
I'm glad.  
(gestures to Paul)  
I believe you already know Mr.  
Webb?

LUCY  
Yes, of course, hello Paul.

PAUL  
So nice to see you again.

MR. ROACH  
Please, take a seat.

Lucy and Paul sit across from Roach.

MR. ROACH  
Paul's been singing your praises  
all morning. He's most smitten.

LUCY  
I'm flattered.

ROACH  
So, tell me a little about  
yourself?

LUCY  
There's not much to know. I was  
born and raised in Chicago. Not  
much education.

ROACH  
What about family?

LUCY  
Not really. No siblings. Just me  
and my mother. My father. He's...

ROACH

I see. And it's to my understanding that you're staying at Miss Spencer's at the moment?

LUCY

That's right.

ROACH

Well, I guess that's fine for the time being.

Paul slides his chair closer to Lucy.

PAUL

I was thinking the two of us would head down to the lot and do a few lighting tests. See how the camera likes you - perhaps run through a couple of scenes. How does that sound?

LUCY

It sounds wonderful.

Roach leers over his desk with a crocodile smile.

ROACH

Wonderful indeed.

INT. BEDROOM - DAY

A cheap two bedroom apartment. Curtains drawn. A crack of sunlight breaks in. TWO HANDS pull back a pair of black lace garters. They belong to MABEL (19). Her long, black hair hangs down over her curvaceous nude body.

MABEL

Well, thanks for stopping by Charlie. What's the matter - is the meter running?

Charles buttons up his shirt. Checks his appearance in the cracked, smudged mirror. Begins to tie his tie.

CHARLES

I told you, I can't stay. I still have to drive across town to pick Molly up.

MABEL

And the prince mustn't be late.

Mabel reaches over to her night table. Lights up a cigarette.

CHARLES

Must you smoke? I don't what's  
gotten into all you girls lately?  
All trying so hard to act like men.

MABEL

I like to smoke.  
(purring)  
I like lot's of things.

Charlie smiles. Still adjusting his tie in the mirror.

CHARLES

Don't I know it.

MABEL

I wish you could stay.

CHARLES

I can't. Besides I thought your  
mother comes home about now?

MABEL

She had to pick up second job. Our  
landlord raised the rent again.

Charles ties a perfect knot. Turns, slightly concerned.

CHARLES

Oh - that's too bad.

He reaches into his wallet. Counts a few bills.

Mabel hops off the bed, and closes his wallet.

MABEL

I don't want your money Charlie.

She stares into his eyes. Her hand reaches down under frame.

MABEL

Just this.

Charles breathes deep. Smiles. Loosens his tie.

INT. STUDIO LOT - WARDROBE - DAY

MRS. BRACEGIRDLE (50). Plump. Opinionated. Speaks with clothe  
pins in her mouth. Adjusts Lucy's Victorian era dress.

MRS. BRACEGIRDLE

Well dear, the good lord may not  
have given you everything in this  
world, but you sure can't say she  
didn't give you a perfect figure.  
(pulls pin from mouth)  
(MORE)

But then, I suppose you can thank your ma and pa for that too.

LUCY

Thing is ma and me don't look all that much alike. And pa, I haven't seen my pa for so long now, it's hard to remember what he looks like.

MRS. BRACEGIRDLE

That's a shame. Family is all we got in this world.

LUCY

Oh, me and ma are still close, but she's back home in Chicago. It's odd, how long it already seems since I saw her last.

MRS. BRACEGIRDLE

Don't you worry. It won't be long before you'll be able to afford to bring her out here with ya.

LUCY

Why do you say that?

MRS. BRACEGIRDLE

Mr. Webb's been raving all about you - says that you've got "It".

LUCY

But we only just met. He really doesn't know anything about me.

Mrs. Bracegirdle makes her final adjustments. Cups Lucy's cheeks like a grandmother.

MRS. BRACEGIRDLE

Well, you want to be a star don't you dear?

LUCY

Yes.

MRS. BRACEGIRDLE

What else is there to know?

From off-screen we hear a stage-hand.

STAGE HAND (O.S.)

All ready for ya out here!

MRS. BRACEGIRDLE

Okay, good luck. Be yourself, act natural, and if Mr. Webb asks you to do something questionable, Don't worry, it'll be okay.

(winks)

He's one of the good ones.

Mrs. Bracegirdle exits. Lucy mutters to herself.

LUCY

Who are the bad ones?

INT. STUDIO LOT - VICTORIAN SET - DAY

Lucy sits on a stool. Uncomfortable, from the hot lamps which burn right next to her.

A SMALL CREW, consisting of Paul, the cameraman, and two lighting technicians.

Paul handles Lucy gently. Precisely. As he adjusts her face to the light, he looks deeply into her eyes.

PAUL

Just try and relax. Look at me as a doctor. Sit back, and this won't hurt a bit....

(finds what he wants)

There.

Paul steps behind the camera. Bends to the proper height.

He locks eyes with Lucy. Gives her a reassuring smile.

Taps the cameraman.

PAUL

Start rolling.

CAMERAMAN

Rolling!

The SLATE MAN (16), steps in front of the camera. Smacks the clapper. *"Lucy Standfield - Screen test - Dir. Webb"*.

EXT. VENICE BOULEVARD - DAY

A long white luxury car, with "American Pictures" written on the side, moves down the boulevard.

In the background lie the Hollywood Hills, and the brand new sprawling "HOLLYWOODLAND" sign.

EXT. MOLLY'S HOME - VERANDA - DAY

Molly and Charles sit outside. Molly is having tea and cakes, while Charles reads the trades.

MOLLY

The man literally wreaked of garlic and onions. I mean is he being purposefully offensive?

CHARLES

Do you know how much Harold Lloyd is making a picture now?

MOLLY

It should be in our contract. No kissing anyone with bad breath, especially when it's strong enough to knock out a camel.

Charles lowers the trades.

CHARLES

You'd think he would be more careful with his reputation, with the way you girls gossip.

From across the lawn, a passing automobile toots out his car horn as it passes by the house.

Charles gives a friendly wave to the driver.

MOLLY

I don't gossip.

CHARLES

Ah, don't fret pumpkin, you're back with me next week, and I promise I will use plenty of mouthwash.

Molly turns to him, with a delicate blend of sour and sweet.

MOLLY

I can hardly wait.

And then the same white luxury car stops outside the house.

Charles and Molly turn to one another.

CHARLES

Are you expecting someone?

MOLLY

Not that I know of.

The CHAUFFEUR exits. Walks around the car. Opens the passenger door. He takes the occupant by the hand, as --

-- Lucy emerges from the car. Dressed like a star. Hair. Makeup. Wearing a stylish dress.

Charles and Molly are both taken aback.

CHARLES  
Well, I'll be a...

MOLLY  
...Monkey's uncle.

Lucy strides confidently up the walk.

MOLLY  
Lucy. Look at you.

Charles gets up from his seat.

CHARLES  
I, uh, didn't know you were all  
through. I could have driven over  
to the studio and picked you up.

LUCY  
It's okay Charles...

Lucy stops in close-up. Smiles directly to the camera.

LUCY  
I'm here now.

FADE OUT.

**END OF EPISODE ONE**