FAIRY TALE OF LA

AKA

Cinder LA

Peter Nicholson

FADE IN

TASTER, ROLL CREDITS

EXT: KERSCHLER STUDIOS, 1950' LA: NIGHT

The sign reads Kerschler Studio's. The building stands alone in open scrub. A light spills from one office.

INT: LEO'S OFFICE: NIGHT

CAROL DONAHUE redheaded and full figured flicks through pages of historic cartoons and tells a story to, BOYDENS and ELLA.

INSERT: Montage: Contemporary Spanish QUILL AND INK CARTOONS of conquistadors and Aztecs.

Close on the face of the mercenary CABAZADO, he has beard, black patch and scar across his face.

CAROL (VO/OS)

... Cabazado the mercenary was a bad hombre.

EXT: CABAZADO'S CAMP: DAY

Cabazado gnaws and flings the bones over his shoulder. PULL BACK, he sits on a pile of natives, more form his table.

CABAZADO

... GRRWW.

He grunts, kicks his table over and swaggers off shouting.

INSERT. CARTOON: Cabazado fires pistols against natives.

CAROL (VO/OS)

He made them give him their gold.

INSERT.CARTOON: Of mules on a galleon, pan to,

He fled north by ship.

INSERT: CARTOON of a much bigger heavily armed ship.

The king sent a ship after him.

EXT: LONG BEACH 1950's: DAY

Cabazado, his men and the gold laden mules, march through tourists.

CAROL (VO/OS)

Cabazado landed with his gold and mule train at Long Beach.

INSERT.CARTOON: Tourists at Long Beach and Cabazado.

INSERT. CARTOON: A mission station in the hills.

INT: THE MISSION: NIGHT

Cabazado sits on native Americans. He throws the food.

CAROL (VO/OS)

He founded a mission and take-away hamburger joint in the hills.

And lived in happy excess, knowing his immortal soul was saved...

CABAZADO

...GRRWW.

He kicks his table. The sauce goes with the natives.

EXT: 1950'S LONG BEACH: NIGHT

INSERT: CARTOON: The kings men at Long Beach

Another bunch of Conquistadors, headed by DOLER, as big and ugly as Cabazado, and his TINY lieutenant, BOCA.

CAROL (VO/OS)

But the King's ship caught up with him.

They ask around if they've seen Cabazado. They show the cartoon of him, the beard and eye patch. They get no interest.

TOURIST 1

We speak English here!

In another part of the beach!

TOURIST 2

Non habla Espanol, Diego!

Doler pulls his sword. Boca waves his flaming torch.

TOURIST 2

Si Senor! Soy habla Espanol!

Other Tourist back him up " Si... Si..."

The tourists' point inland.

NEXT, Doler and his men march through Long Beach

CAROL (VO/OS)

His mission was erased from the face of the earth.

INSERT: Cartoon of a burning mission.

CAROL

Cabazado took the secret of the gold to the grave.
But his ghost remained.

BOYDENS

Is it true?

CAROL

It's legend, who knows what's true.

BOYDENS

They all believe it Miss Donahue.

CAROL

Leo used it for an idea. He doesn't just think about socks.

BOYDENS

Wowee! To think there could be a fortune under the ground ...anywhere... some where... Here! Sure gives me jingle jangles. I loved 'the legend of Las Meda'. You had great tits.

ELLA

Boydens!

BOYDENS

Sorry Miss Donahue. I mean they're still great now.

CAROL

Thank you Boydens.

Ella drags him away.

ELLA

We'd better go. We're still in Marlene's bad books.

They exit with Ella muttering at Boydens.

Carol looks close to see the SPANISH MISSION HAMBURGER JOINT sign, and power lines on the horizon.

END CREDITS

EXT: SCRUBLAND, THE PRESENT: DAY

A couple of ten year olds are playing with a trolley and spades by an over head power line overlooking the Freeway.

EXT: FREEWAY, THE PRESENT: DAY

Cont. The Honda stagnates in a tedious blue haze of traffic.

The license plate reads ELLA. OLD ELLA WENSOM, suave, late sixties watches the traffic and drums her fingers opposite a big black limo.

In a Ford three children bounce on their seats Ella lip-reads the face of the mother as she screams, "Shut up! Shut up!"

A heavily tattooed and longhaired man tranquilly reads psalms aloud to himself in a state of deep conviction.

In the sports car sits the woman in shades, next to her, bolt upright in shades is a German shepherd dog.

OLDER ELLA People? Inhuman beings!

On the dash of the truck is a goldfish tank. The trucker reaches out; picks a goldfish then munches it like a carrot.

A man beats on his roof and hood in frustration.

BAD TEMPERED MAN

I gotta get through.

The darkened rear window of the limo rolls down. An old man, (OLD BOYDENS) stares out. He suddenly holds all her attention.

The freeway fades away as she remembers: Her radio plays big band swing. Her eyes stray to the kids with the trolley

DISSOLVE

EXT: THE UNDEVELOPPED HIGHWAY BACK IN 1950's: DAY

The highway becomes a sprawl of shacks and tracks.

OLDER ELLA (VO)

It was all so different, no freeways. This was where I lived. Just trying to get into college.

Some 1950's ten-year old kids drag a trash bin on a trolley. In the trash bin are spades and a pick. They stop and dig.

Leo Kerschler's studio was no more than a big shed on scrubland.

Young Ella WALKS, smart, her hair is neat but long, she is purposeful yet unsure.

KID RODRIGO

The gold has to be here!

KID OSMOND

How do you know! How does he know Ella? He doesn't!

KID RODRIGO

I just know Osmond OK!

She checks her face and hair and an address in her purse.

INT/EXT: RECEPTION KERCHLER STUDIOS: DAY

Cont. The sign: KERSCHLER STUDIOS. The foyer is plain. BOYDENS reads a magazine. He is young, maybe twenty.

If you asked his mother about her son she'd tell you about his willing spirit and easy smile. She wouldn't mention his fine symmetrical features or good looks because Boydens didn't have any. Only his enthusiasm for life stopped him from being ugly.

He looks at the Kerschler Productions posters, all B movies, "The Thing That ate The Golden Gate", "THE LEGEND OF LAS MEDA". "Raw Courage" "Siren Of The Seas".

They all star sultry CAROL DONAHUE, AKA RED CAROL. 'The Legend of Las Meda' shows a sexy Carol FG to conquistadors and GOLD.

Between the posters are Mr. Kerschler's personal achievement certificates, "United socks salesman of the year, 1943, 1947, 1949, 1952 and 1953".

Young Ella bounces in, jaw set. Far more Dorothy than Sandy this maid is on a mission, Boydens watches with real interest.

Ella pings the bell. Crone like, MARLENE, behind the desk eyes Ella with loathing. Her impatient hand prepares for a second PING. Marlene grabs her hand before Ella can strike again.

Marlene has pulled back hair and a business suit. The lines around her eyes showed the face of a women who had laughed at least a million times but the laughter had now betrayed her.

MARLENE

Did you ask permission to do that?

ELLA

I don't have to ask anyone. I'm Ella Wensom, and I'd like a job in finance...PLEASE!

MARLENE

Oh yeah. We aint got no jobs.

Ella licks her lips with growing frustration.

ELLA

I think you have got jobs! I'm Ella Wensom and I wrote to Mr Kerschler, personally, requesting a position.

MARLENE

Did you? We still haven't got no jobs!

ELLA

You must have a job for me, in finance.

MARLENE

Well, we ain't!

ET.T.A

You must.

They repeat their words like mantras. Red Carol passes posters heading towards Marlene like a tank. Boydens is enjoying the argument so much, he tries to halt her.

BOYDENS

... Hold on, Miss Donahue.

CAROL

If you want an autograph, see publicity.

BOYDENS

... Not now Miss Donahue...

CAROL

Then get your filthy hands off me, and your filthy body out of my way.

She pushes onward.

ELLA

And whom do you think you are pushing out of the line.

CAROL

There is no line.

ELLA

There's me... And him.
And If I don't get satisfaction I'm going to speak to management.

CAROL

Who is she and what is she Marlene?

MARLENE

Says her name's Ella Wensom, Miss Donahue. And Mr. Kerschler promised her a job in finance.

ELLA

I did not say. I said I <u>wanted a</u> job in finance.

MARLENE

You did say!

ELLA

I did not say what you said!

Ella shoves Marlene in the bust; affronted, she pushes back.

MARLENE

Did you see what she did, Miss Donahue? The dog-drop, I'm not having...

... That... You little bitch!

ELLA

I did not say that!

Ella SLUGS at Marlene with her bag. Carol blows deep and cool, shouting to Boydens.

CAROL

You gonna watch or do something.

BOYDENS

I'm gonna watch.

CAROL

Do something!

Boydens timidly puts himself beside Carol, between Marlene and Ella. He makes futile calm it gestures with his hands. Ella jumps and swipes over him. She hits Carol.

Marlene throws magazines, then rolls them and stabs at Ella. Then she shreds them in temper and throws them in the air.

Ella GROWLS she shreds even more pages and makes more mess. Ripped magazines float in the air like ticker tape.

Bobbing and feinting they spar round Carol and Boydens. He can't help but notice how pretty Ella is. She jumps swiping above and below them. She hits Carol and Boydens but still finds a moment to wipe the perspiration from his face.

INT: KERCHLER STUDIOS-LEO'S OFFICE: DAY

Cont. Avuncular, LEO is in his fifties, suited and handsome. The walls are covered with his stars' photos and Leo's socks awards.

He reads his paperwork, DEMANDS from LIONSHEAD FINANCE.

He can't work. The NOISE from the fight is growing wilder. He SLINGS THE PAPERWORK over his shoulder contemptuously.

He dusts off a desk photo of himself shaking hands with military bigwigs beneath banners reading UNITED SOCKS FOR UNITED STATES FORCES, and AN ARMY MARCHES ON ITS SOCKS. Straightening his necktie and jacket Leo walks.

INT: KERSCHLER'S RECEPTION: DAY

Cont. Marlene holds her rolled magazines like a stabbing sword. She holds Carol firmly by the cuff. Marching her forward she swings her to and fro like a shield.

With Ella, her bag it is more the net and trident philosophy. She yanks him around but still wiping the perspiration from his brow before shoving him into Carol and Marlene again.

Ella hides behind him, SLUGS at Marlene or at Carol. Marlene stabs back Boydens in her attempts to get Ella.

The strains of the grandeur that was once Rome are not far away when Leo clears his throat. They stop, heavy with anticipation, Caesar has moved. He gives the THUMBS UP to Ella ELLA

Hello, Uncle Leo!

NEXT

Carol and Ella follow Leo. Marlene thrusts her claw like hands in the air like a virago then smoothes her dress down. Boydens makes to follow them, Marlene jerks him back.

MARLENE

Not you!

BOYDENS

Sorry Ma'am.

MARLENE

I'm not a Ma'am. Look! I'm a
miss... Name?

BOYDENS

... Boydens Jones, Miss.

She gets a form from her desk. It reads KERSCHLER STUDIOS EMPLOYMENT APPLICATION. She slaps it in front of him.

MARLENE

OK. Fill this in. Neatly! No spelling mistakes.

INT: LEO'S OFFICE: DAY

Cont. READ: LEO KERSCHLER, CHAIRMAN. He adjusts his military photo. Ella pulls from her bag finance textbooks throwing them on his desk flashing the titles at him excitedly.

CAROL

Have we got any finance, Leo?

ELLA

Control and management of fixed assets: Double entry, level one. Look double entry level two...

CAROL

That's illegal, in California.

ELLA

Look! The Inwards Ledger!

LEO

OK. Ella, calm it!

ELLA

I want to go to commercial college, Uncle Leo. She started it. Not her, that old crone! I need the bathroom.

Ella exits.

CAROL

Are all your relatives' nuts?

Leo produces a copy of a fan mag with Carol on the cover. The header reads RED CAROL. The unflattering photos show her facing out a throng of flash happy reporters.

LEO

Nuts? Have you seen this?

CAROL

Seen it? I was there!

INT/EXT: THEATER FRONTAGE: DAY

The billboards show posters of SIREN OF THE SEAS. Carol and her two twentyish daughters push through cub journalists.

MARSHA is big with dark hair. VELDA is a small blonde. They both enjoy the attention. They push through to the car.

REPORTER HENRY

What do you think of Red China?

CAROL

She dyes her hair.

REPORTER WILMA

How can we win the Korean War?

CAROL

With the Korean Peace!

REPORTER WILMA

Do you like Negro men?

CAROL

I prefer soup for starters.

REPORTER HENRY

What do you tell your daughters?

CAROL

Everything a mother should. Out of my way, squids!

REPORTER HENRY

Do they both have the same father?

CAROL

They certainly have the same mother.

Carol rounds on Henry.

Don't confuse me with my screen persona, encephalapod!

HEAR the CRACK! Carol is doing something horrible to Henry OS. A dozen flash bulbs capture the moment.

Carol's car pulls away, in a welter of flash bulbs. Henry stands with two pieces of pencil sticking down his nostrils.

INT: KERSCHLERS SET: DAY

Carol poses as a Cowgirl for the still shoot.

MANDINI, the effeminate director strikes each one of Carol's poses first. Today he is wearing jodhpurs an apache T-shirt.

Leo still brandishes the mag. His angry face tells the story.

CAROL

... My fans like me the way I am.

LEO

It's not the right publicity.

CAROL

So, McCarthy's dead! He always was!

LEC

But his ghost still walks.

CAROL

I don't believe in ghosts! What are you going to do about that mad girl, just let wander the building?

INT: KESCHLER STUDIOS: DAY

Cont. Ella wanders lost, past posters of Carol and the buried treasure of Las Meda.

INT: LEO KERSCHLER'S STAGE SET: DAY

Cont. Carol looks at Leo with her head propped up by an arm. Leo reads Ella's hand written letter. He apes her pose.

LEO

Her dad was a great guy. He was my packer at United Socks. No one could pack socks like Don Wensom.

The noise of a flushing cistern intrudes on them.

CAROL

Leo, you're losing the plot.

LEO

Don enlisted. He never came back. Now Ella's mom's gone... They never had much in the first place... I mean, an old sock man never let's another sock man down.

The noise of another flushing cistern intrudes.

CAROL

She's crazy.

LEO

She's desperate.

CAROL

She's crazy!

Carol rips up the fan mag and fixes Leo with a smile. Leo shakes his head and puts Ella's letter back in his pocket.

INT: DAY: KESCHLER'S LADIES WASHROOM.

Cont. Ella dares to turn on the tap. She touches her wet warm hands to her lips in front of the mirror. She admires each cubicle. COURSE LAUGHTER intrudes. She shuts a door and sits.

Marsha and Velda and TWO GUYS, all totally in lust fall through the door, kissing, laughing and thrusting. Marsha puts her backside against the basin and her guy lifts her up.

MARSHA

Hey Velda, we've found a new position. If we turn the faucet I can douche at the same time.

Ella peeps. Marsha and her guy laugh as he tries to stop her from falling off. Velda grabs her guy towards the cubicle. Ella peeps again. Marsha falls of.

VELDA

I told you the old ways are the best.

One door slams to a racy laugh then the other door. By the state of the legs under the partition, they're going for it.

VELDA (OS)

I could never do it in a bedroom. Think of laundering the sheets.

The partition walls flex with the strain. Ella dares to stand on the seat and peep. She peeps one way then the other.

She dashes out then dashes back and flushes it. Simultaneously Marsha, Velda and guys appear. They coldly scrutinize Ella from top to toe.

MARSHA

What do you think you're doing!

INT: KESCHLERS CORRIDOR AND RECEPTION: DAY

Cont. Leo hides his impatience with a smile. Orphan Ella's spaniel eyes never looked so appealing as they hustle along.

ELLA

No! You promised a job! I've always looked up to you

LEO

Ella, there are no jobs.

He produces a roll of bills. She pushes them back at him. In reception as Marlene goes through his form with Boydens.

MARLENE

You don't spell school like that. You spell it like this.

BOYDENS

But you don't say it like that. You say it like this.

ELLA

I want a job, Uncle Leo! You promised us a job if we needed one. You said sock man's honor.

LEO

I know... I know... OK. OK. We'll find a number for you... Marlene! Hire Miss Wensom.

MARLENE

I can't! Company rules. Boydens was here first. First come first served. Your rules!

Leo starts, but stops a GROAN.

LEO

Lift your pants cuffs boy!

Boydens, at attention, pulls his pants up by the knees. He has polished shoes and red white and blue hoop socks.

LEO

I can tell you're no commie. You start now!

BOYDENS

I got a job. I got a job.

He does his sort of hootenanny tap dance, and BEAMS.

BOYDENS

I got the job! WOWEE!

Next: Boydens with brush and cow gown sweeps up the mess. He keeps looking up, as if watched from on high.

INT: KESCHLER'S WARDROBE DEPT: DAY

Cont. Racks of clothes, a mezzanine reached by two staircases and a haul up elevator. Along one wall is tailoring and laundry equipment, sewing machines and bails of cloth.

OLDER ELLA (VO)

If the B movie was king of Hollywood, the Singer sewing machine was its queen.

Leo leads the way past the makeup/dressing booths with tables, sinks and mirrors, on the other wall. Ella's eyes spin round.

LEO

You'll find everything you need...

They face a booth with STARS ON THE CURTAINS. Leo rolls the curtain back with pride. Inside are Marsha, Velda, and Carol.

LEO (cont.)

Marsha...

She flicks Leo a hand

And Velda...

She flicks Leo a yawn

Carol's daughters... This is Ella our new girl.

Carol blows cigarette smoke like a piteous sneer.

ELLA

We've met! Hi Marsha. I'm Ella. Nice hand basins.

They face inwards.

MARSHA

...Crazy...

Marlene marches up, trailed by Boydens. She brushes some imaginary lint from Leo's jacket.

MARLENE

Lion's Head Finance is on line two!

Leo EXITS. Marsha and Velda leave too but manage an up and down, come and get it, look for Boydens. Carol knows her daughters well, her tap with a finger to Boydens tells him so.

CAROL

There go the best part of my last twenty years and my ex husbands fortune.

BOYDENS

They seem real friendly, Miss Donahue.

CAROL

They're on my contract as baggage. Marlene was right. That's what they are.

ELLA

Nice curtains!

Who's going to show me what to do?

MARLENE (OS)

Someone tell that girl to shut up!

Carol, Boydens and Ella POV tilts up to a synchronized SWOOSHING SFX. The GREAT PRESENCE of Marlene now LOOKS DOWN on them like she has grown into a fairy tale giantess.

MONTAGE

a) INT: RECEPTION DESK: DAY

Ella takes A TRAY OF tickets/request dockets from Marlene. She marches away happily, her head erect.

MARLENE (OS)

First you take the tickets.

b) INT: WARDROBE: DAY

Boydens and Ella work along the racks.

MARLENE (VO)

And you read the instructions, girl! And you follow them!

MOS. Ella calls out stock locations. He fetches her the costumes. She pins a ticket on them, and pins herself. He puts them in a basket on wheels. They move on to find Marlene!

MARLENE (VO)

And remember. I'm always around.

Velda and Marsha stumble out the racks with a partly dressed guy and a lot of giggles. Velda gives Ella a SUPERIOR look.

GUY

I'm gonna miss these two.

BOYDENS

It's not the fruits of love. It's the skins they leave behind I hate.

MARLENE

Forget the baggage.
And forget your sore fingers! Hurry girl! Then...

c) INT: KERSCHLERS STAGE SET: DAY

MARLENE (OS cont.)

... You collect.

They collect items from all hidden corners around the set. Ella gives them a once over before they go in the basket.

MARLENE

I said forget your sore hand girl! Check every one for damage.

Ella puts some in another, separately labeled basket.

MARLENE

And you check with continuity that it's not part of the shoot!

Never let Leo tell you he's too busy. Always make him sign the tickets. His rules!

(Distant)

If I have to live by his rules, everybody lives by them.

d) INT: AROUND THE SET: DAY

Leo and Mandini are deep in conference when Ella butts in with a damaged costume. Mandini clicks his palate in disdain.

LEO

It's ruined. Run me up a replacement. Better make it two.

MANDINI

Keep the sword gash in the same place. Actors!

ELLA

I need the tickets signing.

LEO

Not now!

ELLA

Marlene says now. Your rules!

Ella's POV tilts UP to SWOOSHING. They all look up. Leo signs.

INT: THE CORRIDORS: DAY

In a hurry, they push the basket. People never move.

ELLA

Excuse me!

BOYDENS

Make way for the future of the American show biz... tub plug!

The corridor clears. Just them and the posters remain. She carries her folder of tickets and her head with pride. Her hips swing with her feeling of success and importance.

ELLA

Happy?

Boydens is right behind her swinging walk.

BOYDENS

Happiest days of my life!

Boydens moves onward out of frame. She stops to smile and sings her song to the posters, alone.

ELLA#

I'm just an ordinary girl.
Trying to make her way in the world
So understated
And so underrated
I'm just an ordinary girl

I'm just an ordinary girl
Trying to make her way in this world
Simple and quiet!
Some one will by it
... One day my prince will come...

INT: THE WARDROBE: DAY

From her locker she takes ointment to rub on her hands. She checks her face in a little stuck on mirror.

Inside her locker are TITLED fan-mag photos of all the screen greats, and one you will not know. INSERT - LEIGHTON ROBERTS. She kisses at the handsome Leighton his photo winks at her.

DISSOVE TO

EXT: MOVIE TRAILER OF A CHEAP B FILM: NIGHT

A pantomime painted set of a wrecked town and cardboard trees. Leighton holds his Ella to his side. They stare off dramatically as the flickering lights falls on their faces.

OLD ELLA (VO) I was a fan just like everybody. Leighton Roberts was my idol. THE CAPTIONED TITLE splurges across the screen to the accompaniment of HARD BRASS DISCORDS, "THE MARLENE-O-SAURUS FROM OUTER SPACE- STARRING LEIGHTON ROBERTS-"

OVER ASSERTIVE ANNOUNCER (VO)
The Marlene-O-saurus from outer
space! Starring Leighton Roberts.

Leighton, handsome in his boiler suit space suit peers into the distance shooting his ray gun.

INSERT SPLURGE TITLE -INTRODUCING ELLA WENSOM AS THE GIRL

OVER ASSERTIVE ANNOUNCER (VO) Introducing Ella Wensom, as the girl!

Ella, beautiful and vulnerable, smoke smudged clings on to Leighton. Roaring SFX and shadows fall across them. Faces full of mock terror they look up. He blasts with his ray gun.

LEIGHTON

It's horrible. Is there nothing we can do to stop the Marlene-O-saurus from outer space?

He blasts again. SFX RUNNING WATER

It's evil! It's terrible! It's taking over the world. It's already eaten Beverly Hills.

ELLA

Good!

LEIGHTON

It's bending down, it's er... er... doing things.

ELLA

Pass me a stick of dynamite. It's an old trick but it might just work. I know exactly where to ram it.

LEIGHTON

American girls are so brave.

He looks on, she returns to cling to him. HEAR THE EXPLOSION, and the creatures dyeing whimpers. He looks off with extreme nausea. Ella smiles pleasantly.

ELLA

I think I'll have a coke.

INT: THE WARDROBE: DAY

Cont. She replaces the jar, and joins Boydens at the press.

BOYDENS

This must be the easiest job here.

He takes out a completely frazzled costume and holds it up.

Should this be like that?

Boydens works his steam press again.

BOYDENS

I said this must be the easiest job in the place... AAGH!

Boydens pulls his thumbs from the press dancing in pain.

Next. At her locker she lovingly applies balm and sticking plasters to his hands and wipes his brow.

ELLA

Better?

He loves it. They both laugh when he matches hands, he waggles his bandaged fingers, giggling she waggles hers too.

INT: KERSCHLER'S WARDROBE: DAY

Ella slaves against the obstinate will of the sewing machine. A needle breaks. The thread jams. She looks upward barring her teeth. Giantess Marlene arms across her bust towers above her.

MARLENE (VO)

The laundry and the drapery are your responsibility.

Ella picks up the drum, no needles. She looks up and throws the empty drum at giantess Marlene looming above her.

INT: RECEPTION: DAY

Ella timidly takes the costumes Boydens frazzled to Marlene, who smiles.

MARLENE

I like you, Ella. I'm giving you more work.

EXT: KESCHLER STUDIOS: DAY

The workers all finish and spill out together. Boydens shows Ella his old open topped job, his pride and joy.

BOYDENS

Wowee! Look at this. Jump in, I'll give you a ride home.

ELLA

I'll take the bus. Thanks Boydens.

BOYDENS

The bus will take you a year. My privilege, jump in. ... No charge for gas. Come on!

He opens the passenger door and salutes like a chauffeur.

EXT: ROADS THROUGH TOWN: DAY

Ella wears shades; her beret pinned firmly she smiles.

BOYDENS

I sure love Fridays.

The roads become tracks. The homes become shacks. Boydens halts, he scratches his head.

BOYDENS

We must have lost our way.

ELLA

No. This will do. I can walk the rest. I don't want the neighbors talking about me and my young man.

BOYDENS

They can talk all they like and we can laugh all we like.

She gets out.

ELLA

Thanks Boydens.

Boydens beeps his horn as he turns round. She smiles on cue.

EXT: SCRUB TRACK NEAR ELLA'S HOME: DAY

Cont. Ella TREKS across scrub to her home, a group of Negro women and kids sit outside an adjoining shack and tattle.

EXT/INT: DAY: ELLA'S HOME AND AROUND

The path is cinder and tar, the roof corrugated.

Inside is a table spread with her COMMERCIAL BOOKS; Oil lamps hang. There are two chairs, a wood stove, two cupboards, a sort of kitchen area, a simple bed and a sewing machine.

On the walls are a few photos of what was once Ella's family and an embroidery sampler, HOME IS WHERE THE HEART IS.

She pours water from a jug, puts in a few drops of iodine. She peels back the plasters from her fingers and soaks them.

MONTAGE

a) INT: ELLA'S HOME: EVENING

She perspires as she cooks on the range by flickering light.

b) INT: EVENING: ELLA'S SHACK: NIGHT

She does laundry with a flat iron heated on the range. She hops up and down a bit. She stands the iron and crosses to one of the cupboards. It contains a slopping out commode.

ELLA

I hate it! I hate it! A bathroom was all mother wanted.

c) EXT: OUTSIDE ELLA'S HOME: NIGHT

Ella sluices with the women in the dank outside latrine.

d) INT: ELLA'S HOME: NIGHT

She washes from a stand and bowl by the light of a flickering oil lamp. She throws the towels on a rack, and dresses.

She re-applies the plasters to her sore hands, extinguishes the oil lamp and falls into bed. Her scream is deafening. She jumps back out of bed.

ELLA

SPIDER, I HATE YOU!

EXT: THE TRACKS OUTSIDE ELLA'S HOME: DAY

Boydens drives her home again. He looks flash in his Indiana Jones hat. He doesn't stop on the corner.

He bumps up the track exactly to her home. She leaps out in anger, slams the door and marches onward. The cinder path crunches up to be blown in wee clouds of dust. He chases her.

BOYDENS

Where you going?

ELLA

Where am I going? The moon Boydens! The moon! I trusted you.

BOYDENS

No you didn't.

I had to ask where you lived.

She SLAMS the screen behind her. Boydens hangs around looking lost. He waves to the neighbors. He bangs on the screen!

BOYDENS

Ella! Ella...

INT: ELLA'S HOME AND AROUND: EXT

Inside she surveys her meager belongings.

BOYDENS (OS)

Ella... Ella... I didn't mean nothing wrong.

She concentrates HARD on her textbooks, ignoring Boyden's.

EXT: Cont.

BOYDENS

Gabriella Wensom! You can stick your pride where the sun don't shine!

Boydens walks away. Ella opens the door. She looks weary.

ELLA

I'm not sticking my pride anywhere, coffee? AND YOU LOT CAN ALL JUMP YOUR SELVES!

The nosy neighbors turn away and continue the tattle.

INT: ELLA'S HOME: DAY

Sitting stiffly opposite each other they drink coffee. Her family photos lie by the cups.

ELLA

I don't have many visitors.

BOYDENS

I don't get invited much. Don't your neighbors call?

ELLA

It depends what mood they're in.

She shrugs and takes the crockery.

BOYDENS

I'll wash.

ELLA

Don't bother. That was the last of the water.

BOYDENS

I'll fetch it.

ELLA

Don't you dare!

She takes the carboys and exits in upbeat style. Boydens looks round, he tries to read her textbooks.

BOYDENS

The use of com... Com..tom.. toninators in business like is, is a.. Hell no. Hell no.

He walks round. He touches the range. He twiddles the sewing machine, carefully returning the spool to where the spool was.

EXT: AROUND ELLA'S HOME: DAY

At the pump, with the women and kids she fills two carboys.

NEIGHBOUR JEMIMA

You should get your fancy young man to do this.

They all laugh.

ELLA

My only worry is he would.

They all laugh again.

NEIGHBOUR ALICE

Dumb is dumb.

Laughter and chat continues as Ella drags her trolley away.

INT: ELLA'S HOME: DAY

Cont. He opens the cupboard with the commode. Ella enters. Her secret discovered, she has no time to rant or hide her face in embarrassment because Boydens is straight on the case:

BOYDENS

You need plumbing, Ella. I can do plumbing!
I had to do all that for mom, when I was fourteen. And I know a man....

EXT: PLUMBERS YARD: DAY

At the back gate they load his car with pipes. Ella slips a few notes to a HAND who looks around furtively then scrams.

The load sticks up way too high. They pull away, Boydens holds onto her. She pushes him away with a slap on the wrist and holds on to as much of the load as she can. Bits fall.

ELLA

You don't own me, Boydens Jones. You're just my friend.

INT: KERSCHLER STUDIOS: DAY

They are shooting. The clapper SNAPS, READ "Sunrise On The Boulevard Scene 51 take 7". In front of a painted mid-west farmstead stands a mock shack Carol stands by an old truck, loaded with furniture.

CAROL

You've taken everything, but not my spirit. There is a City in the west, a city of angels where the free walk in hope of a new future.

She rides the truck to the edge of stage. Leo leads a ripple of applause. Boydens is a big fan he claps loudest of all.

CAROL

Don't kill yourselves guys.

They pack up to go. Ella collects her stock. He pushes the basket. She rules the roost with her clipboard. She spins on her heels and turns to him.

ELLA

Happy Boydens?

BOYDENS

Happiest days of my life!

Voices call "Leo", "Mr. Keschler" and "Mr. K". Leo Kerschler watches everything!

Boydens stops and shows him what's in the basket. Ella presents him with the clipboard. He signs dutifully.

LEO

You're a good boy, Boydens

BOYDENS

That's because I aint no commie. Say, Mr. Kerschler what happens to the set when you've finished.

LEO

What!

BOYDENS

I mean, that little shack the carpenters made.

LEO

We scrap it.

BOYDENS

I'll give you five bucks for it.

LEO

(Deeply offended)

This isn't Russia, Boydens.

Ella leaves, Boydens knows the sign. He follows her swaying march, but momentarily turns back and scratches his head.

EXT: KERSCHLER'S STUDIO YARD: DAY

Boydens holds out a note to the carpenters in the yard.

BOYDENS

Mr. K says I aint no commie. What would you two say if I offered you ten bucks to take that shack away?

CARPENTER

Nothing!

The carpenter takes the note and blows on it.

BOYDENS

How's 'Sunrise on the Boulevard'?

CARPENTER

Great... If you like socks or believe conquistadors buried their treasure in a film set Los Angeles.

BOYDENS

Yeh, everything's great if you believe in socks.

INT: KERSCHLERS WARDROBE: DAY

Ella throws some costumes at Boydens and some in a pile.

ELLA

Reject! Darning! Good! Hang by tag number.

She slings it in another pile. Boydens isn't watching she quickly sniffs a shirt as he takes his stock away.

ELLA (cont.)

Reject! Laundry! Hang by tag number, Boydens

BOYDENS

Don't let Marlene get to you Ella.

From behind a rack, wearing a Maid Marion costume that hardly fits, Marsha beckons Boydens she gets close and pouty.

MARSHA

Boydens, do you think I look cute in this?

BOYDENS

Sort of cute, Marsha.

MARSHA

Some men like their women to dress in fancy clothes.

She does a twirl.

They're all out there digging for a fortune, I know that I'm sitting on mine. Those guys will just love me.

She gets close. Boydens squirms.

Of course, I'd need a chauffeur...
...How about you, Boydens?
I love your car...

BOYDENS

You do Marsha? I love it too.

ELLA

Boydens!

MARSHA

Puppy lap dog, mamma's calling... Stay with Marsha.

Ella and Marsha swap frozen smiles.

ELLA

He didn't sign all the tickets. Marlene will go crazy!

MARSHA

You need a real woman, Boydens.

BOYDENS

You need a real man, Marsha.

MARSHA

Yep, twice a day.

Next.

Leo scribbles on Ella's tickets, Marlene points at the pile.

MARLENE

Have I not told that girl to be organized! ELLA!

At her shout Boydens looses the chain on the elevator.

Lionshead Finance wants you, Leo.

LEO

I'll take it on line one.

MARLENE

They're here.

The elevator and contents CRASH RESOUNDINGLY!

INT: LEO'S OFFICE: DAY

The man with his feet on Leo's desk is JIMMY JACOBS, AKA Lionshead Finance, AKA Jimmy the Tailor. He slings Leo's military PHOTO derisively, about thirty his suit is quality.

BOSKISS and KITTS, his two men, lean on the wall facing him. Boskiss is a big ugly hoodlum and Kitts a little ugly hoodlum.

OLDER ELLA (VO)

Jimmy Jacobs was a nice guy. Everyone said so, everyone who didn't want a bespoke cement overcoat.

Kitts habitually strikes matches. Jacobs tosses paperwork around, Kitts flicks matches at it. Jacobs sneers at Leo's sock certificates and film posters.

JACOBS

Paperwork makes paperwork not money! No way run business! Jesus!

He turns! His other side is disfigured through burning like the phantom of the opera. Leo, edgy, now stands in the office FG to a "Siren Of The Seas", Jacobs greets him with effervescent charm.

JACOBS (cont.)

Hey, Sock man, most people round here say the legend of Las Meda is true. And you've got the rights and all the information, right. And you shot it here right.

LEO

Don't believe what you see in the movies.

JACOBS

Well most people have got more brains than you have, right... My wife loved, Sign on the Seats. LEO

Siren of the Seas.

Jacobs EXPLODES shaking Leo by the lapels maniacally.

JACOBS

Don't tell me what my wife likes. Are you humping her or something, dung shoveling sock sucker?

He pushes Leo away, to the laughter of Boskiss and Kitts, pulling a letter from his pocket. He slaps it before reading.

JACOBS

Who the Gluck Gluck said you could laugh at my monkey. I own this chimp, lock, stock and banana.

To Lionshead Finance, from some crap bank. We hereby certify the transfer of Leo Kerschler's outstanding debts, blah blah...
Read it! I'm not doing bad for an old navy tailor.

He flashes the letter at Leo, his eyes stand out! Jacobs smoothes his suit and slaps him playfully but meaningfully. He fishes in another pocket and produces another document.

LEO

I always pay on time.

JACOBS

You're my best customer, Leo! That's why I'm here in person. I'm upgrading your credit rating.

JACOBS (cont.)

Sign here!

LEO

I can't take any more debt.

JACOBS

You a commie, Leo? This is a great country and a great opportunity. Get decent actors. I know plenty.

Waving paper at his sidekicks.

Kitts! Sign this, for Mr. Kerschler. Exactly the way I showed you! The way he would.

Kitts signs.

Boskiss! Witness his signature!

They fling Leo's stuff before they sit on the desk to write.

JACOBS

I've told you not to laugh at my monkey! Give me that!

He strips the top from the carbon and hands one to Leo. Smoothing his jacket down again Jacobs starts to leave.

JACOBS

Congratulations! Taking out that extra loan was a wise decision.

Leo, as an honored client of Lionshead Finance Show Business Division, you're invited to a party at my house. Meet my friends.

And behave! My wife will be hostess.

Jacobs makes the shape of a gun with his hand points it at Leo and goes 'Kii!' Boskiss and Kitts laugh, Jacobs slaps them.

INT: KERSCHLER'S WARDROBE: NIGHT

Shadows wash around, alone, Ella works by the light on her machine. At the sound of a CLICK She looks up slowly to see Boskiss, then Kitts leering at her. Ella sighs.

 ${ t ELLA}$

You know we're closed.

Kitts lets the match burn down stalk then fall, setting alight the threads on the floor. Ella stamps on the embryo fire she snatches their hats, pulls their jacket sleeves.

ELLA

OK. OK...No tags! Marlene will go mad.

She yanks the shirts off their backs. She sniffs them in disgust, and then she pushes the goons to the changing booth.

ELLA

Get behind the curtains and hand me your pants. If you ever drop a match in the wardrobe again, I'm reporting you to Leo...

A hand pokes out hands holding clothes. She takes some and throws others back with disgust.

ELLA

Not your underpants! You can launder them for yourself. Actors!

A lighted match flicks out onto the floor, her jaw sets!

INT: KERSCHLER'S CORRIDOR: NIGHT

Ella strides past the posters of Carol towards Leo's office. She has Boskiss and Kitts clothes in her arms, muttering to herself in temper she bumps into Jacobs.

ELLA

Actors! The place would be better without them.

He touches his forelock and smiles.

JIMMY

... That's just what I told Leo. You seen a couple of dumb guys dressed like hoodlums?

ELLA

That way.

She points. He takes in a breath so deep it reaches to the cuffs of his pants, his leg judders to prove it and goes.

JACOBS

Those young starlets! Which way is that way?

INT: LEO KERSCHLER'S OFFICE: NIGHT

Cont. Ella stands at the door, Leo looks up.

ELLA

I bought these to sign Uncle Leo.

Cautiously Ella enters through the mess. She goes face to face with Leo. His eyes can hide nothing.

EXT: THE ROADS AND AROUND: NIGHT

Leo drives Ella home. They pass Boskiss and Kitts skulking along the highway carrying shovels in singlets and underpants.

They pass by a big sedan parked up with steamy windows. The doors are thrown open and Marsha in her maid Marion costume dashes out giggling.

A GUY and Velda chase her across wasteland. Velda wears the TOP of an ape costume and nothing on the bottom. The guy wears the bottom half and nothing on top. Headlights catch them.

Marsha giggles and screams, but lets them catch her. They both tackle her to the ground. It ends up with the guy on top.

GUY FROM THE SEDAN I'm going to miss you girls.

EXT: ELLA'S SHACK AND AROUND: NIGHT

Cont. Leo's car bumps across the dark scrub to her home.

LEO

This business is never what it seem...our secret! Sockman's honor?

ELLA

You'd better come in, Uncle Leo.

Ella and Leo's feet crunch on the path. A door opens, and a couple stands and openly stares.

ELLA (Cont.)

What are you looking for? Magic Moonbeams!

INT: ELLA'S SHACK: NIGHT

Cont. By the light of flickering lamps he looks in dismay at the harsh poverty in which she lives.

LEO

Why do you live here Ella?

ELLA

It's home. I couldn't leave momma.

At least there aren't any hoodlums. But I've got nothing to steal.

She presents Leo with the photos of her family

I can't pay for tar from the lake so the path breaks up. I can't even borrow to get out of here.

Visibly moved by memories he puts his head in his hands.

ELLA

Uncle Leo you can take it.

LEO

You're looking out for me. I was supposed to look out for you.

ELLA

An old sock man never quits.

LEO

Yeah! An old sock man never quits. I'll try. I'll try. Ella you got nice perfume but it's so cheap.

ELLA

It's all I can afford.

LATER

She scrubs herself vigorously with a big green brick of soap.

ELLA

Cheap scent! I'll try. I'll try.

INT: MAIN STAGE SET KERSCHLER STUDIOS: DAY

Jovial, positive, Leo enters to a small ripple of applause. He addresses the assembled workers.

LEO

We've got a new investor!

The ripple of applause spreads

It will mean changes!

The applause ceases cynically.

INT: KERSCHLER'S FRONT DESK: DAY

Leo and Ella argue with Marlene.

LEO

My niece is going to his party as my guest. Issue a descent dress!

MARLENE

It's against company rules, Leo. Your rules, why can't she buy her own?

Leo takes a deep breath and shapes like he's going to explode. Marlene scribbles on a docket angrily and hands it to Leo who scribbles on it and hands it to Ella.

MARLENE (cont.)

All alterations must be done in her own personal time.
...She's not your niece anyway, just a hired girl.

INT: ELLA'S SHACK: NIGHT

By the flickering light Ella works on the dress. She tries it on before the mirror. Pulls a few faces, takes it off and goes back to the machine, her best friend and worst enemy.

INT: MARLENE'S HOME: NIGHT

Cont. In her bathroom she scrubs up for the party. In her bedroom the party dress and jewelry are laid out. She dresses and sings. She poses before the mirror. This is her transformation from harridan to Grande dame/ fun girl.

The jewelry catches the sparkle in her eyes. A ring hovers over her wedding finger, she changes her mind.

MARLENE#

I'm just an ordinary girl,
trying t'make her way in this world.
So understated
And so underrated
#I'm just an ordinary girl!

I'm just an ordinary girl,
trying to make a way in this world
Quiet unassuming
 Vamping and blooming
 I'm just an ordinary girl!

MARLENE

... Almost like old times Leo.

EXT: JACOBS MANSION: NIGHT

Cont. Leo (black tie) enters with Marlene on his right arm and Ella on his left arm.

MARLENE

Tell the girl to behave herself.

LEO

Will you lay off the kid?

Marlene and Leo hit Jacobs and wife with smiles and kisses.

LEO

Mrs Jacobs, this is Marlene Strichter, my head of admin. She was with me at United Socks.

JACOBS

Leo and I used to be in gents clothing, aint that right, old buddy?

Now he's brought me his young starlet.

He judders that leg again and gets elbowed in the belly from his ever-smiling wife for his trouble. They greet on!

But Jacobs' manly slaps are always more meaningful than fun. So are Kitts and Boskiss when they frisk the guests.

INT: JACOBS PARTY: NIGHT

Cont. Sumptuous décor, chandeliers and glitterati in black dresses and black ties Marlene and Leo press the flesh, kiss cheeks and laugh too loud between sips of champagne.

Ella wanders away. She takes food and drink from a tray and sits alone. She watches Jacobs greet an OLD FAT MAN with a cigar and a young beautiful escort. He pulls his arm back but stops just short of the spine crunching back slap.

She stares at a handsome man in the party scrimmage.

OLDER ELLA (VO)

It was Leighton Roberts.

Suddenly, he crosses her way. She can't believe it! He throws himself into a seat in a display of exhaustion.

LEIGHTON

Parties, parties, parties! I love them but...

ELLA

...You're English! I never knew.

LEIGHTON

I do apologize.

He holds out his hand to shake and fixes her with his baby drop eyes. She smiles but hides her hands.

LEIGHTON (cont.)

Leighton Roberts... I used to be an actor. God knows what I'm doing in this damn town.

ELLA

Ella Wensom. I came with Uncle Leo.

LEIGHTON

Then you must introduce me to the uncle of the most ravishingly beautiful girl in the house.

He puts his hand out for her again. This time she responds but spills her plate. Marlene, watching, looks off in scorn!

INT: JACOBS HOME LANDING: NIGHT

Cont. Ella searches for the bathroom. Out come Marsha and Velda and a guy in a black tie tucking in his shirt.

GUY IN THE BLACK TIE I'm gonna miss these girls.

Once inside Ella wonders at the luxury of the bathroom. Then she gets the dress off and starts scrubbing.

She rinses.

She dries it on the air blower.

She redresses and checks her appearance in the mirror.

She goes then returns for the napkin and flushes the cistern.

INT: JACOBS PARTY: NIGHT

Cont. Ella looks for Leighton. He is charming a group of starlets. She watches Leighton like a hawk as he circulates.

A tall dark haired man with a DEEP SATIN VOICE smiles at her.

DARK HAIRED HANDSOME MAN Hello, I'm Ronnie. Would you care to dance?

She shakes her head in a very disinterested refusal.

OLDER ELLA (VO)

How could I know the future? He just said his name was Ronnie.

Jacobs hustles Leighton through the crush to Marlene and Leo. Leighton kisses Marlene's hand. She is ecstatic. Ella screws up her face in disgust. She can hardly hear but listens.

JACOBS

Leo I want you to meet Leighton. Or should I say the honorable Leighton Roberts from England. How can he be a commie and an honorable at the same time?

Ella watches. Leighton has a starlets audience, Leo and Jacobs break up his scene. Jacobs mouths one word and the girls scram. They talk briefly then it is hand shakes all round.

Leo and Jacobs approach Carol. She pushes Leo then puts her fingers in her mouth and gives an ear splitting WHISTLE. The babble halts. Marsha and Velda declinch from their guys.

They follow Carol, as she waves finality to the world.

CAROL

Don't let me stop your party guys!

MAN WITH A MUSTACHE We're gonna miss those girls.

INT: MAIN STAGE SET KERSCHLER STUDIOS: DAY

Leo continues his speech in front of that painted set.

LEO

A new investor! Bigger and better productions! A leading man to work alongside Carol.

Ironic applause ripples from Carol, the only one there.

INT: KERSCHLERS FOYER: DAY

Leo and Marlene greet Leighton. She offers her best smile and cheek to kiss. Leighton walks on, leaving her, lips puckered and her dream of a handsome leading man is shattered!

DISSOLVE TO

INT: TRAILER FOR B FEATURE CIVIL WAR EPIC: DAY

POV, cheap painted backdrop shows a town in flames, from inside a great house. The rear of a woman with long hair and a gorgeous gown looks out of the window.

The SPLURGED TITLE CAPTION of "THE HOPES OF A WOMAN" comes up to the voice of the zealous announcer. He speaks over a ROMANTIC STRING CRESCENDO.

ZEALOUS ANNOUNCER (VO)
The greatest civil war picture ever!

INTRODUCING LEIGHTON ROBERTS.

ZEALOUS ANNOUNCER (VO) Introducing Leighton Roberts!

Leighton jumps in through a window, smashing the glass to smithereens, a true southern gentleman from the tips of his pencil mustache to the ends of his bootlace tie.

A bunch of unshaven renegades in mixed Yankee/ rebel/ Cheyenne garb burst in through the door; the bunch are KITTS', BOSKISS' and JACOBS' RENEGADE ANCESTORS.

Leighton fires his pistol at the renegades. His baby drop eyes then look down at the woman.

READ: STARRING MARLENE STRICHTER AS THE WOMAN

ZEALOUS ANNOUNCER (VO)
Starring Marlene Strichter as the woman!

He holds the woman in an emotional embrace, pouting Marlene, looks up at Leighton. Her lips a quiver Leighton grimaces, avoids the kiss and jumps back out another window.

MARLENE

...But you promised me!

The three renegades slither back in. She pats her hair, cocks a hip and puts a brave face on it.

MARLENE

Looks like I'm all yours, boys.

JACOBS RENEGADE ANCESTOR Not tonight, I got a headache.

Boskiss' ancestor carries away the furniture. Kitts throws a lighted match down. The place burns.

MARLENE

You can't leave me! What about my buried treasure?

JACOBS

I told you I got a headache.

INT: KERSCHLERS FOYER AND STUDIO: DAY

Cont. Leighton strides through the inner door. They chase calling. He pokes a nose into every door marching on.

- a) In props he slaps on the mask and the cloak, emitting a deep ghoulish laugh the cloak swirls then Leighton is gone. Only the cloak and mask remain when Leo and Marlene catch up.
- b) Leighton poses in a ROBIN HOOD JERKIN. He grabs a stage sword and makes passes all around them.

LEO

Leighton! Leighton!

MARLENE

Leighton! You son of a Limy bitch.

He runs. They run, to find only his hat.

INT: KERSCHLER'S STUDIO: DAY

Cont. Leighton strides into the set. He leaps on the stage and poses with his sword. Ella can't believe her eyes- it's him!

BOYDENS

Who the hell are you pal?

LEIGHTON

Leighton Roberts! Pleased to meet you old chap!

BOYDENS

You're that limy.

LEIGHTON

...That limy? The verbosity of your ignorance is only exceeded by the ignorance of your verbosity.

BOYDENS

Well, I'm not verbose and I'm not ignorant, I'm Boydens Jones and you're still that limy.

LEIGHTON

Colonist...Is this it?

ELLA

Hello, Leighton, we met at Mr. Jacobs' party.

Leighton flings out his arms as if to address the world.

LEIGHTON

Ella: the most beautiful girl in the room.

She blushes in delight. Boydens farts. Leighton leaps from the stage and slashes with the sword either side of him then holds the tip to his throat.

LEIGHTON

And you, my disgusting, scowling petty varlet?

BOYDENS

I told you I'm Boydens Jones, wardrobe and props. I'm not your pretty valet.

Leighton sees Carol. He kisses the sword hilt before lowering it mock display of obligation.

LEIGHTON

And you, sunset wench of sunset years, have I but seen those eyes that twinkled like stars in the night sky some time past?

CAROL

Just get your twinkling eyes tested, sphincter. I'm telling you this town ain't big enough for both of us.

LEIGHTON

And you pretty pretty pretty. How your eyes did once outshine all others.

He coughs

Can anyone smell cheap soap?

LEIGHTON

(Restoration drama)

With this sword of steel that runs cold like the blood in my veins, I stand-alone!

Let we two now be joined in this place of solitude, forever.

Leighton stabs himself. Marsha, Velda and Ella put their hands to their mouths. Groaning as stage blood runs free he falls, not noticing Marlene and Leo watching, arms folded cynically.

The crew cheers and applauds. Leighton rises to acknowledge his ovation. It stops as Marlene moves in.

WORKER (OS)

We liked you the way you were.

MARLENE

You haven't signed for the sword or the blood! Leo's rules!

INT: KERSCHLER'S STUDIO: DAY

In his office Leo faces Carol with Marlene as support.

LEO

I will do it! Whether you like it or not.

CAROL

I don't like it! So you'd better not.

LEO

You don't understand this game anymore. It's a different pressure.

CAROL

You don't say.

Enter Ella. Nobody speaks. Marlene writes a ticket. She thrusts it at Ella who, gasps and leaves.

INT: KERSCHLERS WARDROBE: DAY

Cont. Ella sweats blood sewing red white and blue starred curtains, lined, hemmed and edged. Each star is a quilted panel. They are tour de force of the seamstresses' art.

She looks to Boydens for appreciation and to the clock for reassurance. Neither has got time for her.

Across the wardrobe Leighton, Marlene and Mandini are examining some costumes. Leighton sees her and smiles at her. Marlene sees the looks.

MARLENE

Tell the girl, we can't afford electric machines!
And if any of today's work is incomplete, I'll stop it out her wages.
And we do the company's laundry

here not our own.

The wardrobe staff laugh.

LATER

Boydens stands on steps, fitting rails around a dressing booth. He checks his watch from his pocket. Hair a mess, Ella hustles up with the curtains for Boydens to hang.

Boydens hangs them. They both admire their handiwork in detail, he the drape and the rail fitting, she the hemming.

ELLA

Tell the girl... Give it to the girl! Everything the girl! Aren't they beautiful, what do you think Boydens?

BOYDENS

About what?

ELLA

Boydens! Oh, Boydens!

She wanders away shaking her head and rubbing a sore eye with a sore finger.

INT: KERSCHLERS STUDIO: DAY

Ella's arms are full of clothes, Boydens pushes the basket. Marlene THROWS a file of tickets at her.

MARLENE

The top one's signed. Do it first!

Her eagle eye focuses on Ella's bundle. She flips the fourth garment in the pile.

Where's the tag for the fourth shirt?

Ella pulls a face at the departing Marlene, so does Leighton. They both laugh. Boydens doesn't get it! But Marlene does. She returns, and produces another ticket.

MARLENE

One more thing... I want this ready by morning!
There will be no argument.

INT: KERSHLER'S WARDROBE: NIGHT

Ella works her machine in the poor light. She sweats blood again to make more red white and blue starred curtains.

Can anyone sew at that speed? Work with such total dedication? She sucks her fingers to relieve the soreness.

LATER

Boydens hangs these new curtains over Carol's booth. Ella watches excitedly.

E.T.T.A

What do you think?

BOYDENS

I don't think Miss Donahue can complain now she's got the same.

If Ella wanted a more appreciative response to her hard work it showed in her face and flat voice.

ELLA

...I don't suppose she can Boydens Jones, I don't suppose she can.

INT: KERSCHLERS WARDROBE: DAY

Like stepping in on a Donahue family argument.

CAROL

I don't care if you think he's the fur coat you've been dreaming of! You don't lay a finger on him!

VELDA

Would I do such a thing?

MARLENE

No fraternization between staff and actors!

VELDA

We're not staff. We're baggage!

LEO

Carol! Carol!

CAROL

If we've got to do it OK. But I'm not having him being screwed on my turf by my sweet baby girls.

Leo tries to cajole her.

LEO

Have I ever let you down?

CAROL

What's this?

Velda pulls a sweet baby girl face and sucks her thumbs.

OK, sweet baby girls! You will not have chickens chances in a foxhole to do with him.

Enter Leighton

LEIGHTON

Hi everyone!

INT: KERSHLER'S WARDROBE: DAY

Carol stands by her booth snarling frostily at Leighton who stands by his booth, looking imperiously at the ceiling.

Marlene stands at a midpoint watching Boydens clambering around the floor with a tape measure.

BOYDENS

That's it Marlene, all done.
...Say you guys looking at me?
Sea Biscuit was coming up to
winning post when this roan over
took him. It said "Hi Sea Biscuit.

Boydens tap dances.

How you doing?" Sea Biscuit replied. "Sorry I don't remember your name but I sure recognize your pace!"

He taps again.

I've got another animal joke. Did you hear about the frog news seller? Read it! Read it. Read it!

MARLENE

BOYDENS!

Boydens erects a WET PAINT sign and blows on his hands, he's the center of attention and he knows it.

OLDER ELLA (VO)

Boydens always knew how to work a crowd.

As they watch, he starts to paint a white line down the center. Follow the Boydens white line and their eyes, along the floor up the walls and across the ceiling. Boydens pushes and drags equipment from one side to the other as he works.

In a crosshatched area are PAINTED the words NEUTRAL ZONE.

Carol makes to complain. The stabbing, pointing, finger of Marlene silences her mouth and body. Leighton raises a regal hand but gets the Marlene treatment.

MARLENE

Kerschler productions are assigning you your own dresser, whether she likes it or not.

INT: LEIGHTON'S BOOTH, KERSCHLER'S WARDROBE: DAY

In Leighton's booth Ella fusses around costumes. She decants some onto dummies while he stares at himself in the mirror.

LEIGHTON

What a disaster, what a place! I wish I'd never met Jacobs.

He stands and struts a bit as he tries on a jerkin with Ella's help, before posing again before the mirror.

LEIGHTON (cont.)

Oh, your poor fingers.

ELLA

It's just the job. It's nothing.

Ella, re-pinning the costume couldn't be much closer.

FEMALE VOICES (OS)

Black scab. Black scab where you gonna run to.

ELLA

Where you two gonna run to when your mum catches you!

LEIGHTON

I wanted to go to MGM. Now what have I got? The circus! Carol, hates me. Everyone hates me.

He holds her and gives her a playful little kiss. She stays.

ELLA

They only hate you because you're a limy drip. Carol only hates you because of the money and the parts. ... And she can't stand the thought of her daughters screwing you.

LEIGHTON

The money? This was the only way I could pay the death taxes and keep Uncle Silas' castle in the family.

Ella purrs with excited imagination.

CUT AWAY

INT: THE STAGE KERSCHLERS STUDIO: DAY

A panto painted backdrop of a garden with a fairy castle BG. Leighton has his arms around Ella as she snuggles in to him.

They wear Prince and Princess charming pantomime costume.

OLD ELLA (VO)

If everything sophisticated came from the east. He came from a place called East Anglia. How sophisticated was that?

The curtain rises to reveal a second backdrop, a swimming pool with fountains. They hug and kiss. The crew shower petals.

CUT BACK

INT: LEIGHTON'S BOOTH: DAY

Ella faces towards the dummy she dresses. While Leighton comfortably holds her from behind some one rattles the curtain.

FEMALE VOICE (OS)

No where to run now black scab.

She turns to face him, Yes! This is it the moment she was dreaming of- THE KISS. They hang onto each other happily.

LEIGHTON

I've got hells little darlings hounding me too.

OLDER ELLA (VO)

And I had you...

NEXT

Ella works around Leighton. She pins herself. She winces. Leighton comes to rub her fingers and kisses them better.

Enter Boydens to an innocent SWISH of curtain. All is normal.

BOYDENS

Say Ella, you taking that ride home tonight?

ELLA

I'm real busy tonight Boydens. You go ahead.

BOYDENS

Sure... Leighton, anything you want, just ask that valet, if you see him around.

After he's gone they giggle. He comes back! All is normal.

BOYDENS

I'll be starting that job, Ella.

ELLA

(Working)

OK

EXT: WASTELAND AT THE BACK OF ELLA'S SHACK DAY: (EVENING)

It's just scrubby vegetation, watched by the nosy neighbors Boydens strides out with his shovel.

NOSY NEIGHBOUR

Royston, he's looking for the gold!

ROYSTON

There aint no gold!

SOON

Boydens checks sheet, headed SURVEY LOS ANGELES COUNTY.

He lies down. He listens. Nothing! He walks some more he lies down again. He hears water GURGLING, His face gurgles too.

INT: THE WARDROBE: NIGHT

Alone by the light on her machine Ella she hears a noise.

ELLA

Leighton? Leighton?

Boskiss and Kitts come out of the half dark to leer at her. Kitts STRIKES the match and lets it fall significantly.

She stamps on the match. Then HEELS on his toe. She kicks his buddies shin, picks up a coat hanger and wallops them.

ELLA

Get out!

They half laugh between groans, this is one way traffic! They wince, laugh a bit and go, beaten out the door.

ELLA

I'm going to see Mr. Kerschler.

INT: KERSCHLER'S OFFICE: NIGHT

Cont. The glass in his prize photo is cracked. Along with the whisky bottle the table is strewn with papers. Leo throws them over his shoulder. She enters Marlene struts and tuts around.

LEO

Why can't I be back in socks!

MARLENE

You soon will be.

ELLA

Those men have been here again.

MARLENE

Your Uncle Leo has a problem.

LEO

I've got a problem? Jacobs wants... He wants... He wants the studio.

Leo holds up a document. He throws it.

I told him No! He wants to see me. I can't go.

MARLENE

You'd better go. That way you only lose your studio, not your balls.

ELLA

I'll go. I love the house.

They look at her in stone disbelief.

LEO

We'll pay you overtime, time and a half.

Marlene scoops up and organizes the documents. She presents Ella with a brown envelope pack with hand-written address JIMMY JACOBS, LIONSHEAD FINANCE, to Ella.

MARLENE

Time and a quarter only, company rules. Your rules Leo, and wipe your feet when you get there, girl.

INT: ROADS: NIGHT

Cont. Ella rides a cab.

Boydens driving the other way doesn't see her because he has to swerve when a gorilla carrying a Stone Age bikini girl in his arms, crosses in front of him.

In his mirror, another gorilla carries another girl piggyback. The girl wallops him with a riding crop.

BOYDENS

I'm going to miss those girls.

INT/EXT: JACOBS'MANSION'S PORTALS: NIGHT

Cont. The cab pulls away from the house. Ella clutches the envelope to her chest as she rings the bell. The door opens.

The vista opens up all the same subdued lighting and glitz, but no people. It feels eerie. she wanders in, then goes back to wipe her feet, looking and calling. It doesn't feel right.

ELLA

Hello...Hello!

At either end of the table are candles, and a sumptuous display of fresh fruit. She runs her hand over the veneer.

OLDER ELLA (VO)

Dinner with Jimmy was something else.

POP, Jacobs uncorks the champagne, it FIZZES and startles her. He has two glasses and a beaming smile He judders his leg.

JACOBS

The sock man told me you were coming. You got the documents.

She clutches them to her chest.

JACOBS

My wife's not in. First we eat. Then we do Leo's business. Then we do our business!

NEXT

She is opposite Jacobs at the long table. Boskiss and Kitts dressed like chefs bring the soup.

JACOBS

You spill one teardrop-sized portion and you'll be the flavoring in the next course.

They still have the stripes on their faces from Ella whacks.

ELLA

They never speak.

JACOBS

That's what I like about them. You want to speak to them?

ELLA

No. I've got two dummies of my own.

JACOBS

...Carol's girls?

ELLA

Lazy slatternly trollops!

JACOBS

So says Miss Perfect.

ELLA

So says the perfect Miss Wensom!

JACOBS

...But they've got connections, connections count Ella. In business or life if you haven't got the connections you got to be tough. Brains just aint it. I learnt that in the navy.

ELLA

My father was in the navy. He never came back.

JACOBS

Yeh?

ELLA

His ship was bombed.

Jacobs puts an uncomfortable hand to his burns.

JACOBS

Where?

ELLA

The Coral Sea.

Jacobs scratches neurotically, inside, he feels the burning.

ELLA (cont.)

I know they tried to save him.

JACOBS

Yeh.

Somewhere a lone treble chorister sings with sweet gentleness as the first unaccompanied strains of IF I FALTER, rise.

Jacobs thoughts take him far back in time.

DISSOLVE TO

EXT: US NAVY WARSHIP: DAY

Like news footage. ZEROS DIVE. The flak spits back.

INT: DAY: US NAVY WARSHIP: DAY

The bomb has penetrated. Below deck Jacobs is the young sailor on the fire hose. Against flames and explosion he forces on.

All other seamen stampede to escape.

Jacobs fights his nerve and the fires. The FLAMES leap over his gauntlets. His eyes screw up. His hands are burning but he holds his ground. Until-

The superstructure above him melts and crashes down across the back of his head. He falls to be dragged away.

INT: JACOBS DINING ROOM: NIGHT

Cont. Jacobs is slumped, his mind entrenched in the past.

They all go close and surround him to him. With a violent spasm he snaps out of the past and into a rage.

JACOBS

Get out! All of you get out!

Boskiss and Kitts momentarily grin. Jacobs throws the contents of the table.

JACOBS

Get out, bolts of mule jerk!

He throws everything. He is breathing heavily, fighting something inside. He punches the table and draws his gun. He levels it at Ella's face. She freezes in terror.

JACOBS

Get out of my sight. All of you!

He fights to regain his breathing until his voice calms and he slumps back down. Ella can't believe her eyes.

JACOBS

Just go! Just go... Ella, tell Leo the sock man, he's got an extension.

He goes back, hand on his neck, in his kind of trance.

INT: ELLA'S HOME: NIGHT

Cont. She enters, tired, on the table is her correspondence course. On top a note from Boydens and the LA County survey.

ELLA (Reads)

I think we've found our gold. Love Boydens.

Her things, all so different to Jacobs'! On the Home Is Where The Heart Is sampler she runs her fingers over the words.

INT: KERSCHLER'S WARDROBE: DAY

Cont. Morning shift. Boydens checks his watch. The BELL RINGS. He starts sweeping between the rails and along the line. Ella's sewing machine treadles into action.

Behind Boydens, cardboard skids out from under the rails. He turns pushes his cap back in puzzlement, there's more.

He looks up from his broom to face Velda. In a seductively badly fitting Maid Marion costume. She moves in provocatively.

Behind him is Marsha, falling out of a leotard sneaks up; all claws like a spoof Leopard woman she gooses Boydens. He jumps!

VELDA

The birds in the air told me that Ella was seen driving uptown in a cab, late last night. Boydens, what do you think she was doing up town in a cab up town, late last night?

BOYDENS

What do you mean?

From her machine at the edge of sound range Ella listens.

MARSHA

Boydens, you know what we mean. And have you seen the way she looks at Leighton. I would never look at a man like that. He might get the wrong idea.

They wrestle him through a rail of clothes squealing and giggling. When they push him back, his shirt is hanging out and his cap at a ridiculous angle.

ELLA

Boydens!

She shouts where she figures the sniggering is coming from.

ELLA (cont.)

You leave my things alone Marsha Donahue, Velda Donahue.

VELDA

Just how many things do you want!

Velda and Marsha cat call! Enter a Florist's boy. He caries a huge bunch of flowers.

FLORIST'S BOY

Flower's, for Ella Wensom!

BOYDENS

Who are they from!

She takes the flowers. BG Boydens sees Marsha poke her head out between costumes on the rail and stick out her tongue.

Velda has stuck her backside out and lifted her skirt to show her pants, but Ella just waltzes away looking at the flowers.

SOON

Ella looks up from her machine to see Velda and Marsha.

MARSHA

Such beautiful flowers. Let me see.

Ella blooms with pride.

ELLA

Aren't they beautiful?

They inspect the flowers. Marsha looks for the card. TO ELLA FROM JIMMY, FLOWERS ARE THE LEAST I CAN DO.

MARSHA

You've made a hit with the right man. Velda?

Behind, Velda is sneaking all their work tickets into Ella's tray. She comes with an acid smile to admire the flowers.

VELDA

Gorgeous, what a sweet smell! The flowers I mean.

ELLA

I think so. Now take your dockets out my tray, I'm too busy, we start Heroes Of The Hour today!

INT: KERSCHLER'STAGE: DAY

Mandini the director struts, slapping his riding crop.

The whole team wants to watch (Ella, Marsha, Velda, Leo, Marlene and Carol). Read HEROES OF THE HOURS on the clapper.

MANDINI

Tighten on Count Bermando when he hits his mark.

He waddles back to his chair slapping his crop on his leg.

Action!

VOICE OFF

OK Mr. Mandini!

The clapper claps.

Leighton hits his mark and poses heroically. The wind machine blows his hair back; he squints manfully into the wind.

Boydens, high in the rigging cuts the rope holding a ballast flour sack. It crashes down, splits and spills.

The wind machine piles flour into Leighton.

VOICE OFF

Cut!

BOYDENS

I'm so sorry, so sorry.

He nods a finger to Carol who nods one back at him.

SOON

Mandini waddles from set to seat.

MANDINI

Action!

WORKER (OS)

OK Mr Mandini.

Smoke rolls across the deck of the painted galleon. Carol cowers behind Leighton as he fences with pirates in black.

The pirates disarm Leighton. Carol cowers behind Leighton's shoulder as the brutish pirates' slither in for the kill.

Leighton pulls two flintlock pistols. He aims... They POP. A flag drops below one reads HELP, the other reads I SURRENDER.

MANDINI (OS)

Cut!

High in the rigging Boydens nods two fingers to Carol.

ELLA

BOYDENS!

Cont. On the bridge of that galleon against a smoke pink sky backdrop Leighton takes Carol roughly in his arms.

Her lips are moist and inviting. He kisses her passionately then recoils coughing and spitting. He reaches into his mouth.

CAROL

Sorry, it's a habit. I always chew garlic cloves for vampire scenes.

MANDINI (OS)

Cut!

Leo's body is a picture of controlled anger.

LATER

Leo and, Carol in costume, argue while they clear up.

LEO

Jacobs is squeezing me. Carol we need you more than ever before.

CAROL

That's fine. But I am not playing second trombone to an aristocratic toffee nosed limy with a plum up his ass.

Leo, we're professionals. We came up the hard way.

LEO

I've got to do it their way. Got to!

CAROL

Make an ass of yourself their way.

She exits mixed in with the hands going home. The lights go out as they switch off. Leo is in the dark.

LEO

Hey!

INT: KERSCHLER'S WARDROBE: NIGHT

Carol back in civvies, her exit is almost one of regret as she passes the lone light from behind Leighton's curtain.

Behind the curtain Ella brushes the flour stained costume and checks out Leighton too, helping him wash and towel down as Mandini flusters around.

MANDINI

Communists! I cannot work with communists Leo.

Leo puts a consoling and directing arm on Mandini, who flinches at the touch and shepherds him from the booth.

LEO

Leighton's no commie.

Leighton and Ella drape themselves comfortably over each other, giggling. Leo opens the curtain and looks. All he sees is normal work from Ella and Leighton. He pulls it back.

MANDINI (OS)

They're stolen my riding crop. They're everywhere.

LEO (OS)

Not in an old sock man's studio!

LEIGHTON

Communists no! Jealousy Yes! Look I've made a bad start and I want to be friends. Come to the country club with me?

LATER

Leighton, alone, preens his face in front of the mirror.

LEIGHTON

A thing of beauty is a joy forever... Chat up the boss' niece. Word will soon spread I'm banging her and I'm really an OK chap.

EXT: THE LAND BY ELLA'S HOME AND AROUND: DAY

Just grass, dirt and hillocks. Boydens digs a trench. Ella sits on the edge dangling her legs passing tools to him.

BOYDENS

Don't go with him! The rules!

ELLA

Marlene's rules only. Leighton's lonely. He needs friends.

BOYDENS

He's a limy sponge fruit.

ELLA

It was nice of him to ask.

The nosy neighbors tattle. You don't have to hear to know someone's got to ask Boydens what he's doing.

They are both in the trench when A Negro man (ROYSTON) looks down.

ROYSTON

What you doing boy?

BOYDENS

Plumbing.

WOMAN

Royston, ask him how it's done!

Royston looks off in peeved frustration before asking.

ROYSTON

How you do that boy!

BOYDENS

I tell you, you won't remember. Get down and skin your fingers - you'll remember! You want to start passing me those tools?

NEXT

Royston and Boydens work. Ella dangles her legs on the rim.

BOYDENS

Wrench! You'll be making a fool of yourself.

She passes the wrench. Royston passes one too.

Not you Royston!

ELLA

Mastic! I will not. I'll be showing hospitality.

BOYDENS

You'll be accepting the hospitality of a strange man. Pass the torque spanner. That's you Royston.

ELLA

He is not strange.

BOYDENS

I say he is!

ROYSTON

I say I aint!

BOYDENS

Not you Royston! Leighton!

ELLA

He is not strange he's English.

ROYSTON

You want help? I want to learn plumbing not counseling. You two make a deal fast or I quit!

BOYDENS

Leighton is strange. He called me his valet.

I'll make you a deal Royston. Deal!

Now an olive! I want an olive!

A thin old lady comes out of the pack and peers downward

THIN OLD LADY (OLIVE)

I'm Olive. What's the deal!

EXT: KERSCHLER'S CARPENTERS YARD: NIGHT

Royston looks everywhere like the wary trespasser he is. He sneaks his flat bed truck out of the yard with a SHACK on the bed and a load of timber.

ROYSTON

...All this timber's part of the deal?

BOYDENS

... Sure is! A Boydens Jones deal is a deal.

ELLA

I made a deal too, and I can choose my own friends Boydens!

BOYDENS

Even if it's only choosing an aristocratic English Adonis.

ELLA

I can look after myself.

BOYDENS

Company rules. You need a chaperone.

Royston stops, reverses, jams on the brakes. The shack and timber SHOOT OFF THE BACK.

ROYSTON

What in hell am I doing? What am I doing? Crazy as you two! I quit.

ELLA

Why don't you come too Boydens? And I won't say another word. That OK Royston!

NEXT

Boydens and Royston strain and perspire to get the shack onto the bed using rollers and planks.

ROYSTON

So what's all in these deals Boydens ... You killing yourself for the gold or for her?

BOYDENS

She's a sort of different gold to me.

Nothing worth having comes quick.

ROYSTON

(Acid dry aside)

... You've never met my wife

In the cab Ella checks her face in the mirror. Royston drives a forklift truck. He loads the shack on the truck.

ROYSTON

The appliance of intellect over indiscipline!

BOYDENS

I was thinking something the same. Left... left... Right! Down!

CRUNCH. Ella in the cab is thrown out of her seat. She resurfaces with smudged lipstick.

EXT: ELLA'S HOME AND AROUND: NIGHT

Cont. Half the street is working by lantern light, pushing with planks to unload the shack.

Ella stands center with Jemima both watching.

BOYDENS

Here she comes!

The shack rolls off, down the rollers (scaffolding poles).

It hits rollers already lined up on the ground. It bounces it rolls like its running away out of control only to end up at the finish of its rocky journey, gently abutting Ella's home like a prefabricated extension.

It's there! As it rolls and stops against Ella's wall. There is a round of applause and cheers. Boydens throws his cap.

BOYDENS

WOWEE!

Ella hugs and kisses him. He kisses her back.

ELLA

I'm still going.

EXT: LEIGHTON'S COUNTRY CLUB: DAY

Outside the club's pavilion the beautiful people of fifties LA sit under the verandah in fashion and sports gear.

Boydens and Ella look at the beautiful people and they look at them. She looks the part in her shades but not Boydens in his work clothes. Leighton looks on, his lip curls in disdain.

BOYDENS

I've bought whites.

INT: COUNTRY CLUB LOCKER ROOM: DAY

Cont. They change for tennis, Boydens holds up a baggy top and shorts.

BOYDENS (cont.)

I've signed for them. Official chaperone duty.

LEIGHTON

You should have signed for a gorilla suit and riding crop too.

Boydens' eyes look below Leighton's waist and out of frame.

BOYDENS

I don't think we'd ever find anything small enough to fit that.

Leighton looks down, then Boydens' groin, out of frame.

LEIGHTON

Remind me never to order button mushrooms or baby gherkins.

EXT: TENNIS COURTS: DAY

The court is surrounded in mesh catch fencing. Leighton serves (white shirt and slacks) to Ella (all in white). He makes a meal of his services, bouncing the ball then grunting.

Just outside the catch fencing a trio of TREASURE HUNTERS, with a shovel and map pace out a location and dig furtively.

Boydens watches in the high umpire chair as Ella runs after Leighton's macho serves that bounce into the catch netting.

BOYDENS

Forty love. Hey! You're pretty good at beating girls, English man!

EXT: TENNIS COURT: DAY

Cont. Boydens and Leighton snarl nose to nose over the net.

LEIGHTON

I was our club junior singles champion.

BOYDENS

Were you playing girls then?

NEXT

Leighton crouches on the base line waiting for Boydens' serve. Ella IN SHADES, now the umpire stifles a yawn. Boydens WALLOPS it straight into the catch fence. Leighton has to duck.

Serve two powers into the net.

Serve three powers over the net. Hear Leighton Groan with the thud. See him double up in pain. Boydens imitates Leighton.

BOYDENS

...Must have been an accident. Sorry old chap!

NEXT

Leighton goes through his macho ritual before serving.

Boydens powers it back into the catch fencing. Then prowls up and down in full McEnroe mode. He clenches his fists, slams his racquet on the line and curses himself LOUDLY.

BOYDENS

Christ! Come on! Come on!

He prowls the baseline hunched in aggression. He slams the racquet into his hand. He drags and kicks his toes.

Leighton serves. Boydens returns a winner. Leighton snarls.

Leighton serves Boydens returns another winner.

Leighton gives his ball an extra special bounce and an extra big grunt with his serve! Boydens slams back another winner.

Ella in the umpire chair sucks indifferently on an ice water.

ELLA

Deuce!

MONTAGE.

SFX APPLAUSE AND RADIO COMMENTARY OF A BIG MATCH

- a) Leighton, now rattled, prepares for another serve.
- b) Boydens, bouncing on his toes, waits to receive.

BOYDENS

Come on you chicken sucker!

Leighton powers serves. Boydens power returns.

- c) Ella's eyes and head travel left/right, right/left to the twang of ball and the RKO radio style commentary.
- d) Leighton and Boydens run, make shots, stumble, return, and slip, curse, and run with all their heart.
- e) They perspire in torrents. They rest on their racquets and look at the prize, ice cooled, sophisticated, Ella.
- f) MOS. Boydens (arms out stretched) harangues Ella in the umpire chair. She sucks serenely on her lollipop.

ELLA

Advantage, Roberts.

BOYDENS

Are you blind! How can you be serious?

He explodes in temper and throws his racquet.

YOU CAN NOT BE SERIOUS MA'AM!

g) A great rally. All the shots, Leighton thinks he's won.

BUT

h) Leighton faces Ella with as much dignity as he can muster.

LEIGHTON

I demand you call the referee.

ELLA

Deuce!

LEIGHTON

Most unfair! You're not even a member you're my guests.

- i) ... Another great rally. They run, they play, they slip: they get up again. They sweat like horses but keep running.
- j) Boydens hits a lob so high it's never coming down! It lands just Leighton's side of the net, by the chair, but bounces almost as high.

Boydens CHARGES the net. Go with him, his racquet like a shield. Leighton smashes into Boydens is in full charge.

The ball bounces back, Leighton strikes back. It hits Boydens again. They both collide then crash into the umpire chair.

Exhausted they resurface to stagger away.

ELLA

Play a let. Deuce.

They regard the cool Ella with stone disbelief. She just sucks her lollipop behind her shades. They drag themselves up.

BOYDENS

Best of three next time buddy.

LEIGHTON

You must be joking old chap. I'm shattered. What about Ella?

BOYDENS

I'm shattered too. Ella, Crazy!

LEIGHTON

...as a lune!

They leave proud of their scraped elbows. Boydens puts a buddy-buddy arm on Leighton as he demonstrates a stroke. Leighton shows him one back and the bruise it caused.

Ella sucks her ice water behind her shades, staring blankly at SECURITY rounding up the treasure hunters who refuse to go.

INT: KERSCHLER'S WARDROBE: DAY

Cont. Ella puts stock away next to the white line while Marsha gets it out. They don't speak they ice-smile. Marsha slings trash her over the line. Ella just throws it back at her.

MARSHA

Oh yeh! You don't know when you are well off!

ELLA

Oh yeh!

VELDA

Oh yeh! When you were little I bet your mom told you to shut up and go to bed. We had to go to parties and be cute and suck up to big wigs.

MARSHA

The older we got the more sucking they wanted.

Marsha stamps over the white line. Ella stamps back.

ELLA

Oh yeh. You're breaking my heart.

Velda stamps her foot over the line.

VELDA

Oh yeh! I bet if you wanted something, I bet you had to plead and beg for it. We got everything we wanted before we knew we didn't want it.

She stamps her feet over the line again. Ella stamps back twice. Marsha retaliates with stamping and pushing.

MARSHA

Pop gave us everything we could never use. Do you know what it's like to have a father like that? Or a mom like mom.

Ella pushes and stamps again

ELLA

No and I don't care.

VELDA

Do you know what it's like to be Carol Donahue's daughters? Or to have a sister like her!

MARSHA

Or to have a sister like her! Yeh.

They stamp and push at each other.

MARSHA

So why am I here?

VELDA

Why are you here? Why am I here?

MONTAGE

a) INT: THE WARDROBE: DAY

Cont. Thus begins a wardrobe mad moment of dance and mayhem.

Marsha starts to sing and dance. Velda and, then Ella join her. But Ella is always dancing against them.

MARSHA #

I'm just an ordinary girl
Trying to make her way in this world
So understated.
And so underrated.
I'm just an ordinary girl.

VELDA#

I'm just an ordinary girl.
Trying to get by in this world.
Simple and quiet.
Some guy will buy it!
One day my prince will come!

NEXT

- b) They sling costumes as they pass clothes rails. Ella can BUMP an arrogant hip, and sling as well as they can.
- c) They dance along the mezzanine and tip stock over. They try to bump each other over the edge. Always responding with the same line. "Me, I'd never do such a thing!"

NEXT

d) At the elevator Ella bumps and grinds Marsha and Velda into the cage and slams the shutter. They swap icy smiles before she knocks off the brake letting it fall with a CRASH.

The flywheel spins like crazy. On the ground floor Ella swings back the shutter. They swap no words but only sweet icy smiles.

- e) Ella dances as maid Marion, with a couple of leggy APE WOMEN beside her.
- f) Unnoticed, Marlene has entered. Ella dances while the other two have faded back to work. Marlene makes her presence known.

Ella freezes amid the trashed wardrobe.

MARLENE

You're suspended. Abuse of company property, not my rules.

You two! Do Leighton, and tidy up!

INT: LEIGHTON'S BOOTH: DAY

They slink towards Leighton with the smile of the predator. Leighton is trapped. The curtain closes.

LEIGHTON

Oh! My God

SOON

The curtain is pulled back. Marsha decamps readjusting her clothes but in an aggravated and frustrated manner.

Velda, sniffs haughtily, tosses her hair, and goes. Leighton emerges in swashbuckling costume, battle worn already.

BOYDENS

Where's Ella?

He pushes Boydens away as he exits.

LEIGHTON

Out of my way varlet. I'm late for my call.

Boydens goes looking for Ella in the wardrobe.

BOYDENS

I said where's Ella!

Ella! I'm not his valet. I'm props.

He shouts around the wardrobe.

Ella! Hey Marsha. You seen Ella

MARSHA

Marlene sent her home. Breach of company rules.

VELDA

I can't say what. But you know who was here when you came in. (Aside)

I was!

Little twitches break out on Boydens' face.

MARSHA

I hope we haven't said nothing wrong.

Boydens is on a mission, trashing all that is still untrashed, as Boskiss and Kitts enter he shoves them aside.

The girls come. Boskiss and Kitts are now face to face with Marsha and Velda, they look each other up and down and up. Little Kitts drops a burning match.

MARSHA

You can light my fire any time big boy!

It's lust at first sight. Kitts grabs Marsha. Velda and Boskiss do the same. They crash through rails. But something isn't clicking. They swap partners. Velda lusts with Kitts, Boskiss lusts and rolls with Marsha.

The match is now alight on the discarded material shards.

INT: KERSHCLER'S SET: DAY

Cont. Leighton, wearing a sword, is being dusted down when Boydens barges in to him, shoving him two handed in the chest.

BOYDENS

What have you done with Ella?

LEIGHTON

What are you talking about! I have done nothing with Ella. I haven't even seen Ella.

Leighton raises his sword to Boydens' throat again.

Leave, or I'll see you never work in this town again varlet...

BOYDENS

Valet! That's the last time you ever say that! Some one, give me one of them toy swords.

A hand lobs one to Boydens. Exit Carol shaking a world-weary hand. BG Mandini's face is twitching with over excitement.

MANDINI

Real men, real aggression, keep them rolling!

Boydens circles Leighton. Leighton tracks him all the way. Boydens makes his first lash, Leighton parries nonchalantly.

LEIGHTON

I won the fencing award at actor's academy varlet.

BOYDENS

So what's fencing with a metal toy?

Leighton LUNGES in classic style. Boydens nearly trips as he dodges only just parrying Leighton's thrust.

The simmering us versus them mentality erupts. Instantly it's partisan (actors v the rest), they all shout!

SET ACTOR 1

Show them what you can do Leighton!

SET HAND 2

Abas les Aristo! Up the workers.

SET HAND 3

Eight to thirteen, Luvvy Limy! ... Five to four, Brainless Boydens!

See the chalkboard with the prices. He takes two bets.

SET HANDS 3(cont.)

Kill him Boydens!

NEXT

They fence across the painted galleon backdrop.

Leighton advances. He sing-talks like Rex Harrison as he attacks the retreating Boydens to the rhythmical SWORD CLICKS.

He advances lashing with his sword, and between clenched teeth, with pantomime doggerel.

LEIGHTON

I'm the man who rules the mountain. The cock who always wins.
Take that you varlet colonist.
I'll thrash you to your skin!

The power of a steaming fruitcake. The cunning of a mouse. Take this you varlet colonist. I'll run you out the house.

Now he's out of breath. Advance Boydens in counter attack.

BOYDENS

No. I'm the guy who never loses. Yeh I'm the guy to beat. Lily tongued, and lily limy. Stick this one up your seat.

The power of a speeding burger. The brain power of a cow. Take this one lily livered limy. Zap zap, crack crack, pow pow.

GASPING Boydens lands his next six blows on Leighton's sword, in rhythm. Bat man style CAPTIONS flash from the blows.

ZAP ZAP CRACK CRACK POW POW.

Against the painted backdrop, only their shadows are visible they fence back and forward, 'Prisoner of Zenda 'style.

BOYDENS

Doubles! Doubles! I need a coke!

Two more sets of fencing shadows enter the frame. Boydens and Leighton slink off.

LEIGHTON

You should really stick to tennis!

The double shadows fence aggressively.

NEXT

WORKER (OS)

Coke break over!

No longer in silhouette or shadow from each side of the set, pushed in by SECONDS, appear Leighton and Boydens.

DOUBLE

Good job that's over, Leighton's got a real sword there.

INT: DAY: KERSCHLERS SET.

Cont. Boydens is in full retreat from Leighton who knocks Boydens sword skirling across the floor.

BOYDENS

STOP! It's real. You could kill me Leighton!

The tinkling music for IF I FALTER rises, as all Boydens can do is try to escape. He sings to himself like a little boy.

Boydens flees up the rigging and down again by falling. Leighton slashes and lunges at him, but he always escapes.

CHORISTER # (VO)

If I falter if I fall.
Would they catch me if I fall.
Would they hear me shout at all?
If I falter if I fall.

Encircled by a bellicose mob waving money and fists Leighton advances, from behind on a bewildered Boydens. But Boydens suddenly turns and CLOUTS him with a chair leg.

MANDINI

I think I've popped myself.

Boydens can only duck and dive from Leighton's blade as it slashes and smashes at him. He throws what he can at Leighton defending himself with bits of set but he knows he can't last.

BOYDENS

It's real. The sword's real!

Leighton keeps coming, in classic musketeer pose, eyes full of fire, no one at home! He sees only Boydens, down, open. He pulls his sword back for the coup de gras. Suddenly:

He faces Marlene. She stands between him and Boydens.

Is she unimpressed by the whole show! She only has to LOOK and they fade away. In twisted anger she thrusts open pages of a fan magazine. The header reads AFTER RED CAROL PINK LEIGHTON.

It shows photos of the tennis match. Ella looks annoyed as they leave court arms round each other like bosom buddies.

Her face contorts with rage. Marlene's stares him out and rips the magazine in pieces. He splutters apologetically.

LEIGHTON

...Just acting.

Leo picks up Boydens and dusts him down.

LEO

OK?

BOYDENS

OK.

LEO

OK! Boydens you're suspended.

Leo grabs Boydens' collar firmly and drag marches him past the bookies chalkboard and out. His price was eleven to one.

INT: KERSCHLER'S CORRIDOR AND FRONT DOOR: DAY

Leo marches Boydens past the posters in the corridor, and the traces of SMOKE that now lace the air.

LEO

What in hell were you doing?

They both sniff.

CAROL (OS)

Marsha! Velda! Marsha! Marsha!

INT: THE WARDROBE: DAY

Leo and Boydens find their way through the thick smoke to Carol. Leo hits the alarm THE BELL RESOUNDS.

CAROL

VELDA! MARSHA!

LEO

Velda!

Boydens wades in with the fire hose shouting he goes deeper.

BOYDENS

MARSHA! VELDA!

EXT: THE CARPENTERS YARD: DAY

The alarm still rings. They are all assembled for roll checking. Marlene walks the lines coolly ticking names. She comes face to face with the smoke stained Boydens. TICK!

From out of a stack of timber crawl the legs and bottom halves of Marsha and Velda in the top half of ape suits.

They look at the lines of workers. Marlene's voice is a distant drone of surnames. A couple of workers turn to look.

WORKER NEXT TO VELDA

Hey Marlene!

Boskiss yanks the workers hair back so hard he squirms. One big and one small gorilla woman comes to investigate.

INT: KERSCHLERS FOYER: DAY

Leo throws Boydens out through the doors.

LEO

You're suspended twice. Once for attacking Leighton and twice for letting Marsha set the place on fire.

... And you lot can all scram!

A group of treasure hunters with map and shovels are digging.

Who's selling those maps? That's breach of copyright.

EXT: ELLAS HOME: DAY.

Cont. Boydens pulls up. They wave and call to him. Ella runs with a big smile and a kiss. Boydens tap dances for his fans.

BOYDENS

Seems a good day to finish a job.

She hugs him. He hugs her. Look at her home and the shack extension. Look through the window. It's a bathhouse!

EXT: ELLA'S SHACK AND AROUND: DAY

The neighbors have come for the grand unveiling. Ella stands next to Boydens hugging him with glee.

JEMIMA

Now you can have clean sheets and a clean body every night.

Boydens releases the stopcock in the ground with his long handled key. He turns and turns, and they hear a sound of RUSHING WATER. It grows to become an ear splitting torrent.

Look at the ground, they can feel it vibrating. Ella's smile is dropping. Boydens eases back on the key. The sound drops.

BOYDENS

Just a little too enthusiastic.

INT: ELLA'SHOME: DAY

Cont. Ella turns a tap. Nothing! Then it drips a bit and coughs. A stream of dirty brown water gushes out. Boydens keeps his smile and nerve until it turns to pure clear water.

Ella touches it; plays with it, with a tear in her eye.

BOYDENS

You got that Royston! Now the piece de resistance.

He flushes the cistern.

Straight into the tank!

Ella hugs and kisses him enthusiastically.

BOYDENS

WOWEE!

They all applaud.

EXT: AROUND ELLA'S HOME: NIGHT

You can just make out her small hamlet in the dark. Ella looks to the power lines and the two shady figures with lanterns.

NEXT

Boydens climbs a power cable pole to the junction box. At the foot is Royston with a lantern.

Boydens works atop the pole wearing thick rubber gloves. He connects up the crocodile clips. They FIZZ and SPARK at contact. He dodges instinctively.

BOYDENS

Seems a good day to finish a job!

He falls

BOYDENS

It's OK. It's OK...

He yells.

WOWEE! We done it!

Royston opens the lantern shutter and waves it at head height.

ROYSTON

One...Two...Three...

In the distance ELECTRIC LIGHTS flick on in the shacks.

NEXT

One then two then five, the whole hamlet of shacks is lit.

EXT: ELLA'S HOME AND AROUND: NIGHT

Everyone parties and dances by the light of low output bulbs. Tonight Ella and Boydens are heroes; everyone loves them.

INT: ELLA'S HOME: NIGHT

Ella and Boydens dance in to the music of the party. He throws his hat. She dances off as the music plays.

SOON

Boydens carries a tray and jug.

BOYDENS

Ella... Ella... Coffee up!

Light shines in her bathhouse. Boydens cautiously pushes the door and peers through the steam. A grin splits his face from ear to ear and his eyes open wide. He drops the tray.

From the steam Ella emerges with an open laugh. Boydens covers his face with his hand and laughs and laughs.

ELLA

Happy Boydens?

She fan dances to the music. She has two lip stick written notices. One, WHAT DO YOU THINK OF THE RULES, across her naked bust. The other, NOW BOYDENS, across her naked loins.

He laughs and laughs peering through his fingers.

INT: SOPHISTICATED RESTAURANT: NIGHT

Black ties, Kerschlers' hierarchy dines. Across the table is a FAN MAG. It headlines 'Hero of the hour', as 'Mandini's masterpiece'. As Leo takes Marlene to dance Jacobs gives Leighton a heartyslap.

JACOBS

Aren't you asking the co-star of this hit to dance?

LEIGHTON

I wish you wouldn't do that, I'm an honorable. But... Would you care to dance Carol?

CAROL

Drop dead! I'll dance with him. He may be a crook but he's got balls.

LEIGHTON

Just what I thought, like trying to knit snow with a monkey wrench.

Jacobs stands and shakes a leg.

Jacobs and Carol dance.

JACOBS

When your new boss makes it clear he wants you to dance you jump!

BG amongst the dancers Leighton and Mandini glide elegantly around inconspicuously. Boskiss and Kitts grope past with Marsha and Velda.

JACOBS (cont.)

Crazy! They're going to miss those girls when you go.

He gives Carol a vulpine grin. She smacks him straight in the face he holds his chin forcing a grin. Flash bulbs FLASH!

JACOBS

...What a gal, hey! What a curtain opener for our celebration ball!

EXT/INT: DOWN TOWN THEATER: NIGHT

The bulb display reads HEROES OF THE HOUR, PREMIER AND BALL.

Leighton, Mandini, Leo, and Jacobs greet their guest with show biz pizzazz. No one misses the chance of a photo call.

Jacobs dispenses his spine breaking backslaps but when the old fat man with the cigar arrives he cools until he's gone:

JACOBS

Where is she, the tub of pork dripping!

INT: THE WARDROBE: NIGHT

Cont. The corridors are deserted except for Ella and Boydens who go through the regimen of checking stock for tomorrow.

ELLA

Ella at least we got our jobs back.

... These are disgusting.

She pulls back the curtain on Carol's booth with a casual swish to find Carol smoking, in a somber mood.

CAROL

How come you're not at the party kids.

ELLA

Marlene made the girl work. I can fit your dress now.

CAROL

I'm aint going! It started here and it's going to end here. I don't know this game any more.

ELLA

You aint, aint going! You know how many hours I spent on that dress?

CAROL

Witch hunts, fan-mags, gangsters and limies no more. Go for me Ella. Red Carol's last gesture, she sent the wardrobe girl instead.

ELLA

What?

CAROL

I aint going.

ELLA

You are going!

CAROL

Wild donkeys couldn't drag me there. Want to see the dress in action? You go! You know you want to!

ELLA

...Marlene would kill me...and you!

CAROL

I'd like to see her try. The limo's booked 'til midnight. You go!

She stands and faces Ella with God-motherly affection.

Boydens! Help Red Carol prepare Princess Hollywood for her ball!

NEXT

They dress her sewing tucks into Ella's fairy tale gown.

NEXT

CAROL

... Gloves! Those hands!

Carol puts the spangled harlequin half mask on Ella too.

NEXT

Boydens jumps into the doorway dressed as Buttons in bell hop gear. He tap dances.

BOYDENS

How do I look?

They throw things and laugh.

LATER

Carol, alone switches the off light on Ella's machine.

EXT: THE THEATER: NIGHT

The limo decants Boydens and Ella at the entrance.

LIMO DRIVER

Remember I'm only hired 'til midnight!

They read the HEROES OF THE HOUR SIGNS as the limo goes.

BOYDENS

We'll always be friends. I'll always love you.

ELLA

Like brother and sister.

BOYDENS

No. Not like brother and sister!

He kisses her. She kisses back but is thoughtful not gleeful, he knows, he adjusts her outfit.

BOYDENS

Mask and gloves: all part of the dream, Cinder Ella.

INT: THE BALL: NIGHT

The ball is going, but not flowing. Leighton is at the center of a handful of adoring starlets.

Leo and Marlene play genial hosts and everyone avoids Jacobs backslaps, the old fat man waves him away. Marsha and Kitts and Velda and Boskiss dance like there is no tomorrow.

The clock reads TEN. Enter Boydens and Ella, heads turn. Boydens announces her.

BOYDENS

May I introduce tonight's mystery guests, Princess Hollywood, and her faithful Buttons!

He applauds her; she curtsies. Leighton cuts his starlets and heads straight to her. He entranced he clasps her gloved hand.

They dance to a SLUSHY STRING RENDITION OF ORDINARY GIRL. The starlets look jealous. Leo and Marlene look on.

MARLENE

Who is she?

Boydens, on his own, watches everyone like little boy lost.

INT: THE WARDROBE: NIGHT

Cont. Carol, alone, looks around and puts the lights out.

INT: THE BALL: NIGHT

Cont.

LEIGHTON

I have never seen such beauty or smelt such sweet perfume...Who are you?

Ella plays it with beguiling lips and eyes behind her fan.

NEXT

THE CLOCK READS ELEVEN. Boydens has started to mix. He puts down his hat like a street busker and tap dances.

BOYDENS

Anything you want to know Mr. Kelly, just ask!

He gets a few laughs and the old fat man leans forward on his elbow to watch Boydens antics.

NEXT

Leo, Marlene, and Jacobs watch Ella and Leighton dance.

MARLENE

Who ever she is, she's a class act.

JACOBS

<u>She</u> could replace that piece of boiled pork.

The starlets whisper. BG Ella and Leighton dance eye to eye.

STARLET 1

She's European aristocracy.

STARLET 2

What does the bitch want another castle for?

STARLET 1

Perhaps Leighton wants two castles. No photos with me, only with her!

Boydens now shares the table of the old fat man and his clique. He gives a round of his worst jokes to great laughter.

BOYDENS

Chinese checkers! Oriental supermarket tellers!

They laugh through their drinks. The fat man bangs the table.

President Nasser! The fez that staunched a thousand ships!

BOYDENS

Forget Princess Hollywood, I got a thousand of them.

Leighton and Ella meet Leo and Marlene on the floor. Leo bows his head. Marlene curtsies. Ella hides behind her fluttering fan. The first chime of the lock resounds! Ella looks, MIDNIGHT! The face of the clock jumps at her.

LEIGHTON

Beautiful princess be mine tonight and forever.

She pushes him away and runs mad cap across the floor.

ELLA

Boydens! Boydens!

She runs a bit more. She sees Boydens. She barges up.

ELLA

Boydens! It's midnight!

BOYDENS

It's midnight every night, Sugar! These are my people.

Everyone laughs, but Ella! She sees Leighton in pursuit, hitches her skirt and pelts for the door, loses a shoe and has to refit it.

EXT: THEATER ENTRANCE: NIGHT

Cont. The last chimes of midnight strike. The limo driver checks his watch and pulls away. Behind is a desperate Ella.

Close behind her is a desperate Leighton. She looks left, she looks right; she looks back at Leighton and scrams. Leighton runs on. He looks but he can't find her.

EXT: NIGHT: DOWN TOWN STREETS

Cont. See the guys driving the vegetable truck. Ella desperately holds on to the truck, standing in the back like something from the Ride of the Valkeries.

EXT: ELLA'S HOME: NIGHT

The truck halts. She scrambles down inelegantly and rips her dress, the one thing she knew she should not do.

The truck pulls away.

DRIVER

Have a nice day princess!

Ella examines the tear like it was the size of a cavern.

ELLA

No. No!

Like all good nosy neighbors, they never miss a thing watching in baffled silence as a fairy tale princess, cursing and muttering stomps up in her frock to Ella's place.

INT: ELLA'S HOME: NIGHT

Cont. She turns out her box, searching for thread and needles. The clock reads two. She cuts out a section from the underside. She matches it to the damaged section.

ELLA

If I don't get you back to Carol's size Marlene will know.

She cuts out the damaged section and sews on the new panel by hand. The clock reads four.

She transfers some braiding to hang over the seams. The clock reads five, a rooster crows and daylight breaks.

INT: KERSCHLERS STUDIO: DAY

Ella marches down the corridor struggling with a big bag. She smiles to security man.

SECURITY MAN

Early Miss Ella!

She bounces onward.

ELLA

I have to be! This girl is still in Marlene's bad books.

She keeps up the smile until she passed him!

INT: KERSCHLER'S WARDROBE: DAY

Cont. She hangs the dress in its place. There is a strange low noise reverberating through the wardrobe like an animal. She pulls aside Leighton's curtain. There is Boydens with a bottle clutched to his sleeping hand. She shakes him awake

ELLA

Boydens. Boydens wake up.

He wakes with a leery smile.

BOYDENS

Hi Ella. I'm a star.

ELLA

You're a drunk!

BOYDENS

But I'll be sober. What's your excuse!

INT: KERSCHLER'S WARDROBE: DAY

Ella and Boydens work like zombies, yawns that reach the moon. Velda and Marsha rush around excitedly.

VELDA

Ella where's that dress my mother should have worn?

ELLA

...Where I left it.

VELDA

Has anybody been here?

ELLA

Only me... And him...

They examine the dress.

MARSHA

That's the dress.

Leighton quizzes Ella.

LEIGHTON

Has anyone else been in here?

Ella cocks her head and smiles knowingly

ELLA

Why?

LEIGHTON

Last night at the ball I danced with the most ravishing creature, a European Princess. Such elegance, such perfume.

She holds her wrist under his nose.

ELLA

Like this.

LEIGHTON

Yes, but not cheap. She wore this dress. Stop looking at me like that. You know something.

ELLA

There's only been me here, Leighton.

That's stumped him completely!

SOON

Leo and Leighton circle around the dress and Ella.

LEO

She could be the greatest find of the year.

ELLA

What did Carol say?

LEIGHTON

Getting an answer from Carol is like asking a dead man the time of day.

LEO

We' have to find her. Orders of tailor and the fat man.

INT: KERSCHLER'S STUDIO (THE LINE OF HOPEFULS): DAY

Sign reads "The Princess Hollywood auditions \$1000 prize"

Some are in costume. Most are normal girls but some are weird.

INT: KERSCHLER'S STAGE: DAY

Cont. The audition panel of the fat man, Leo, Jimmy, Leighton, Mandini and Marlene check a sample.

An attractive blonde in period costume curtsies and flutters her fan. She walks back and forth with smiling poise. The panel's faces give nothing away.

WORKER (OS)

Next!

She shoots a finger at the panel. She has a Bronx accent.

ATTRACTIVE BLONDE

Up yours!

NEXT

They get a swimsuit princess parading.

WORKER (OS)

Next!

NEXT

Marsha vamps in. She never gets to do her piece.

MARLENE

Get out Marsha!

ENTER Velda in Maid Marion dress.

MARLENE

Get out Velda!

VELDA

I'm telling my dad, he's bigger than all of you!

WORKER (OS)

Next!

NEXT

A big black mama plays the spoons and laughs raucously.

INT: THE WARDROBE: DAY

Cont. Boydens and Carol take the dress and gear to Ella at her machine. She looks away coldly.

ELLA

No! Never, ever, never!

BOYDENS

Orders from the man who makes the best cement overcoats in town.

His mood changes to thoughtfulness

You want Leighton?

ELLA

If he wants me.

BOYDENS

What if he doesn't? You'll still want him.

ELLA

I like him!

BOYDENS

You like me but you don't love me.

If he gives you the jingle jangles like I get every time I see you, you should go to him!
Wear it... Go on. Get dressed. Do it... Do it for me.

INT: KERSCHLERS SET (THE LINE OF HOPEFULS): DAY

They barge through. Boydens dressed as Buttons heads the trio.

BOYDENS

Make way for Princess Hollywood! Make way!

Ella followed by Carol, shove through the complaints.

AUDITION HOPEFUL You can't break the line...

BOYDENS

Make way for the Princess...

INT: KERSCHLER'S STAGE: DAY

Cont. Boydens bursts onto the stage, taps his feet, and YELLS.

BOYDENS

Oh Yez! Oh Yez! All you good people! The one and only Queen of the ball, illusteress of light, Princess Hollywood!

He applauds himself as well as Ella's entrance and curtsy. Leighton comes forward to clasp her hands. His baby drop eyes glisten with expectation as he removes the mask. Forty megawatts of beauty beam at him.

LEIGHTON

Ella! Ella?

LEO

Ella?

MARLENE

Ella?

JACOBS

That's Ella?

CAROL

Five hundred green ones Jacobs! Finders fee.

She sashays across, Jacobs resentfully smacks the money into her out stretched palm. Carol stifles a yawn.

JACOBS

I don't understand this game no more. I thought I was the pro.

Leighton still holds Ella in his grasp (or she holds him).

LEIGHTON

Ella, I don't understand.

Ella looks at Boydens. He kisses her through the air. She plants a massive enthusiastic kiss on Leighton. He tries to escape but she holds on.

She looks to Boydens again and gives Leighton a second taste.

He doesn't bite. The panel stare, Mandini gives a knowing click of the palate and looks off in a huff.

OLDER ELLA (VO)

Had anyone ever made such a fool of herself? I was too late for Leighton and too dumb to understand someone who loved me enough to do anything for me and who could let me go but not say a word. I was only eighteen.

The fat man stands.

FATMAN

That's him! Buttons! He's the one I want.

Boydens sort of smiles and gives the finale of a tap dance!

Carol sashays forward, with outstretched palm and itchy fingers. The fat man with the cigar flicks ash into her palm on his way to shake hands with Boydens.

OLDER ELLA (VO)

But they still let me keep my job.

MONTAGE

a) INT: KERSCHLER'S FOYER: DAY

The staff are gathered around cards and Banners reading, BEST WISHES FOR THE FUTURE MARLENE.

Leo gives a speech MOS. He presents Marlene with a crystal vase. Ella presents her with a bouquet and an insincere kiss. They whisper!

MARLENE

... See I don't bite

ELLA

...You just look like an alligator.

They smile sweetly for everyone and the photograph! FLASH.

b) INT: MARLENE'S DESK: DAY

Ella sits at the desk. She pulls back her hair tight, then reaches down for a pair of specs. She seems to age.

OLDER ELLA (VO)

In time I even took over from Marlene.

Ella, like a Headmistress stares sternly forward. The background darkens, Jacobs appears at her shoulder.

OLDER ELLA (VO)

Jimmy liked me. Funny, his wife didn't.

c) INT: A TRAINING ROOM: DAY

MOS. Leo and Marlene give a presentation to a group of bun faced sales recruits.

The diagrams on the blackboard are Leo's sketches of socks. There is a bit of cross-hatching and arrows pointing to the TOE, TOP and HEEL. The recruits write copiously.

OLDER ELLA (VO)

Leo and Marlene went back to socks.

d) EXT/INT: SUBURBAN FRONT PORCH: DAY

MOS. A smiling Leo rings the bell. A lady answers. He tips his hat. His foot goes in the door. He opens the case. Marlene wades in with the sales patter, managing to flash her WEDDING RING. It GLINTS, the lady notices.

Leo gestures towards his class standing six feet away with their suitcases. The men all raise their hats.

OLD ELLA (VO)

The king of sock sales was happy and so was Marlene.

e) INT: A THEATER STAGE: DAY

At a gushy awards ceremony Leighton and Mandini, in black tie, hold up each other's hands and display their award.

OLDER ELLA (VO)

Leighton and Mandini became known as one of the most successful partnerships in Hollywood.

They blow kisses all around.

But what did you expect. He was English.

f) INT: DAY: THE WARDROBE

The sewing machines stand idle.

OLDER ELLA (VO)

We went over to Japanese electric machines. Mr. Singer had to find something else to do with his talents. He made flight simulators for NASA.

g) INT/EXT: THE MOON

The EAGLE HAS LANDED. ARMSTRONG takes his famous first steps.

NEIL ARMSTRONG (VO)

... One small step for man but a great one for man kind...

OLDER ELLA (VO)

... And to think it all started from my machine. I felt so proud.

Boydens made it big time.

INT: A THEATER STAGE WITH PAINTED BACKDROP: DAY

Glitz and glamour! The audience cheer. At the foot of a stepped stage Boydens is half way through a jaunty little number supported by a big band and leggy chorus girls.

BOYDENS

We can share the world together.

Make the day. Make something better.

Make a better way to live this life

. Today

The chorus girls TWIRL and smile at Boydens. He cools the number and talks to the audience while the band plays sotto.

BOYDENS

You know folks this is a great town.

Anyone can make it here if they've got neighbors and work colleagues.

He flips a hand to the back of the stage. Enter Royston in a spangly bib brace and mechanics cap, he waves followed by Jemima and Ella's neighbors. The audience applauds.

BOYDENS

Today . . . Today I've got due considerations. Practiced obligations, Can you love me for how? I am . . . today

Can we share this world we live in?
Wreck the boat- we'll keep on giving.
Can we make a better way
To live. . . today.

In their spangly versions of every day clothes they stand along a tier of steps and sing-a-long with Boydens. They wave. The crew from Kerschler's arrives in spangly baseball caps and cow gowns. The applause continues.

At the top of the tier stand Marsha with Kitts and Velda with Boskiss. They swap partners and descend to applause.

MARSHA

YOU GONNA MISS US BOYS?

Jimmy Jacobs appears! The applause stops he gets hisses and boos! He points a mean finger backwards! Boskiss and Kitts square up moodily and significantly.

Kitts strikes a match and drops it. Boskiss pulls a Tommy gun, then strolls along the stage apron callously SPLURGING SHAVING CREAM PELLETS AT THE FRONT ROW.

The applause comes, eventually. Jacobs accepts it regally.

From opposite sides appear Mandini and Leighton. They throw out wild congratulatory gestures, applaud everything that breathes and blow kisses before separating to different sides.

Leo and Marlene stand at the top. He has a suitcase. She wears a stole. As they descend, a few steps behind, mirroring every movement, nuance of dress are Leo's young recruits.

Carol descends to Mae West like music, to kiss Boydens. She smiles and beckons back up the stepped tier.

Boydens arms are an open invitation as Princess Hollywood descends to cheers. Ella sees Velda and Marsha, chewing and resentful of her then Carol, proud and welcoming.

OLDER ELLA (VO)

That's how I always remember Carol.

Cut away

INT: PRESENT DAY TALK SHOW STUDIO: NIGHT

Music! Applause on cue! The TV show's suited host gives his audience the run down of tonight's guests.

TALKSHOW HOST BERNI MEAMAN On tonight with Berni Meaman, we have an English Rock star who has come out of retirement for one last final tour.

A young ball player who is raking his team up the national league with some phenomenal performances

And for those of old enough to remember, a star from the days when Hollywood really was the dream factory of the world.

Ladies and gentlemen, they don't make 'em like they used to: Miss Carol Donahue

ELLA (VO)

... She could hardly walk but you'd never know.

With stately pride Carol enters to applause

It was only heart that kept her going. Big C had left her with nothing outside or inside.

As she closes to kiss the host the audience stands, the applause grows, a quick thinking floor manager switches cameras to show even the studio staff stopping to applaud her. Carol fixes them with look as feisty as ever. She barks!

CAROL

What are you doing? Sit down you fools! I'm only here because he paid me.

The Audience laugh.

EXT: MANSION GARDENS: DAY

Two ladies of years and comfortable figures, stroll amid the flowers, chatting MOS in a tasteful display of opulence.

ELLA (VO)

Would you know Marsha and Velda now that butter wouldn't melt in their mouths?

I think I saw them on a Docu channel a while back...

INT: THE MANSION: DAY

In twin sets and pearls and a room furnished in discreet good taste, soft focus Marsh and Velda tell anecdotes to a young lady interviewer like school girls reminiscing.

INSERT LEGEND: MRS MARSHA TOMLINSON AND MRS VELDA WEINSTOCK (Carol Donahue's daughters)

Fade up sound as they laugh affably.

MARSHA

We had to work so hard at the studio. Those times with Leo Kerschler! We were such innocents...

VELDA

(Fading)

I remember when Boydens Jones burned down the wardrobe and stores.

Boys and stars? We knew them but we had to work so hard we could never get a date.

OLDER ELLA (VO)

Another fairy tale! The old ones are the best.

INT: THE THEATER: DAY

Cont. Ella gets another God motherly hug from Carol and a bouquet from some neighbor kids.

BOYDENS#

She's just an ordinary girl.
On her ordinary way in the world,
So underrated
And so understated.
She's just an ordinary girl.

Ella and Boydens bow and curtsy to take the ovation. She gives him a kiss and looks deep in his eyes.

OLDER ELLA (VO)

He always wrote. Times changed.

EXT: ELLA'S HOME AND AROUND: DAY

The bulldozer splinters her home and bathhouse into fragments. Her 'Home is where the heart is' sampler sits on the wreckage. Pan to see, hard hats and diggers have taken over the world.

OLDER ELLA (VO)

The B movie died and the Freeway became King, Jimmy's treasure wasn't buried in the land. It was the land. It made him a fortune in real estate.

Kitts and Boskiss, with a VERY STERN Mrs. Jacobs between them, remove their hats in respect and watch a wreath sink as the mixer dispenses concrete into shuttering.

OLDER ELLA (VO)

... But it couldn't save him from himself. He slapped the wrong person once too often.

No hand crafted bespoke cement overcoat for Jimmy, just simple shuttering.

Kitts flicks a match. It catches alight to the CARD." JIMMY THE TAILOR". Traffic passes close the noise fades up...

INT/EXT. PRESENT DAY ELLA STUCK ON THE FREEWAY: DAY

From watching Boydens she switches to watching the road.

OLDER ELLA

I used to live here.

Boydens stares straight through her. She looks at him, then to where he stares. They are both lost in memories.

DISSOLVE TO FLASH BACK

EXT: ELLA'S HOME: DAY

Young Boydens runs towards a waiting Ella. He throws his cap. She rushes and hugs and kisses him they twirl.

ELLA

Happy, Boydens?

BOYDENS

The happiest days of my life.

Arms wrapped around each other, they both stand at the center of the neighbors and kids like in a team photograph.

INT. THE FREEWAY, PRESENT: DAY

Cont. Ella sees a tear in his eye. She BEEPS!

OLDER ELLA

Boydens! Boydens!

They all BEEP back at her. The bad tempered man makes a bad tempered gesture. The traffic moves. Boydens is gone.

NEXT

The bad tempered man is still banging his car. Now that the traffic is moving around him he can't get back in it.

INT/EXT: THE FREEWAY: DAY

Ella swaps lanes, chasing the limo and sounding her horn.

OLDER ELLA

Boydens it's me! Ella!

His driver watches the road through the rear view mirror.

DRIVER

We've got a stalker boss, the woman in the Honda.

Boydens looks, Ella is weaving and waving. He looks some more he can see the license plate it means something and nothing.

MONTAGE

INT/EXT: THE FREEWAY: DAY

a) Ella is in pursuit of Boydens. The bad tempered man is in pursuit of her.

BAD TEMPERED MAN

The slutty old horse! Who does she think she is..? WHO DO YOU THINK YOU ARE!

- b) The goldfish eating trucker drives on.
- c) The longhaired man who reads psalms is in such a heightened state of consciousness that he drives with his eyes closed.

LONG HAIRED MAN

The lord is my Shepherd I shall not want... He maketh me lie down in green pastures; he leadeth me beside the still waters He restoreth my soul:

d) The lady with the bouncing kids drives with a cell phone to her ear. But she does not neglect her parental duties.

LADY WITH KIDS

Shut up! Shut up! Shut up!

f) The longhaired man drives on in sublime faith oblivious to the HORNS and desperate maneuvers of others.

LONG HAIRED MAN

. Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death I will fear no evil: for thou art with..

INT/EXT: THE FREEWAY: DAY

The bad tempered man BUMPS Ella. He BLARES his horn. The trucker BLARES his horn.

BAD TEMPERED MAN

Just who do you think you are!

Ella bangs his body panel back.

ELLA

Not today pumpkin head!

INT/EXT: THE FREEWAY: DAY

Cont. Boydens watches Ella get buzzed. The bad tempered man swerves towards him.

DRIVER

Now we got two!

INT/EXT: THE FREEWAY: DAY

Cont. Ella still chases Boydens. The bad tempered man zooms in on the limo. The limo swerves cutting him up.

The horns BLARE!

OLDER ELLA

Boydens! Oh Boydens!

The bad tempered man bangs body panels. He loses out. He finds someone else to curse.

EXT.INT. THE FREEWAY

From inside his car Boydens sees the bad tempered man swearing swerving and BLARING as he leaves. Ella is behind him. See the license plate. He looks, he thinks. It must mean something!

His driver hits the brakes hard and swerves to avoid the bad tempered man.

Ella is opposite Boydens, they see each other. She waves and shouts. He's confused? Ella you should watch the road!

The Goldfish eating trucker, caught unawares, has no where else to go but straight at Ella. He sounds his horn, stands on the brakes but he just keeps going.

That was a close!

The limo speeds up. Ella keeps waving. Boydens keeps looking.

EXT: THE FREEWAY: DAY

Follow the weaving Honda and the limo as she chases. They halt they drive, they change lanes. She loses it. She finds him.

She chases she waves. They weave through the traffic. Boydens window rolls down, he laughs and puts out an arm.

INT: EXT: THE FREEWAY.

The traffic slows to a crawl. They drive side by side.

Boydens and Ella reach out to bridge the gap between the two cars. They hold hand across the gulf.

OLDER ELLA

Happy Boydens?

OLDER BOYDENS

The happiest day of my life!

An older man and woman sing in schmaltzy but powerful duet#

Today.. Today.. have I left it all behind me Will my future ever find me Today is all my future in my past.

Do we know a better way ##

Can we change what's left behind us

Do we know a better way today to last.

The POV pulls back into the sky over above scrub to leave the Honda and the limo looking like just any other of the thousand toy cars that trail across the screen.

As they drive into the sunset some kids struggle with a trolley.

EXT: SCRUBLAND: DAY

Cont: Kids like the ones young Ella knew push and pull.

NEIGHBOUR KID

Granddad told me about it. I knew it was true!

The low rays of the sun DAZZLE and reflect from the treasure of gold ornaments piled on the trolley.

They pass beneath the old overhead power line; and where Boydens once dug for water they rest. As they check their find a BIG UGLY MAN with a beard and black patch appears.

KID BY THE TROLLEY Look out! He's behind you!

UGLY MAN

Los mio! Los mio!

The ugly man clenches a heavy stick in one hand and gestures for to them GIVE with the other.

The kids race away one pushing the other pulling. The desperado chases, a trolley wheel breaks and the treasure flies downhill showering everywhere and into oblivion.

The frame degrades to become a black and white quill cartoon like the ones of Cabazado.

FADE OUT