

SUNSET BOULEVARD

Charles Brackett
Billy Wilder
D.M. Marshman, Jr.
March 21, 1949

THE CHARACTERS

JOE GILLIS.....William Holden
NORMA DESMOND.....Gloria Swanson
MAX VON MAYERLING.....Eric von Stroheim
BETTY SCHAEFER.....Nancy Olson
ARTIE GREEN.....Jack Webb
SHELDRAKE, the producer...
MORINO, the agent.....

A-1 Start with sidewalk credits, music, camera
thru moving down street as credits play out,
A-7 then at finish pan up to street and see
coroner's herse turing into Norma's.
Narration begins as credits finish and
camera pans up, sirens screaming--

GILLIS' VOICE

cops,
herse,
bike cops,
all turning
into driveway...

EXT. NORMA'S
cops arriving,
drive up to
house, men
getting out,
camera pans
as they walk
around to
the pool.....

UNDERWATER
SHOT OF GILLIS
face down in
pool, flashing
pictures taken
from above....

DISSOLVE:
EXT. GILLIS'
APT. IN
HOLLYWOOD.

Yes, this is Sunset Boulevard,
Los Angeles, California. It's
about five o'clock in the morning.
That's the homicide squad. Complete
with detectives and newspapermen.
A murder has been reported from one
of those great, big houses in the
ten thousand block. You'll read
about it in the late editions, I'm
sure. You'll get it over your
radios, and see it on television.
Because an old time star is involved.
One of the biggest. But before
you hear it all distorted, and blown
out of proportions. Before those
Hollywood columnists get their hands
on it, maybe you'd like to hear the
facts, the whole truth. If so, you've
come to the right party. You see the
body of a young man was found floating
in the pool of her mansion. With
two shots in his back, and one in
his stomach. Nobody important really,
just a movie writer, with a couple
of B-pictures to his credit. The
poor dope, he always wanted a pool.
Well, in the end he got himself a
pool, only the price turned out to
be a little high. Let's go back
about six months and find the day
when it all started. I was living
in an apartment house above Franklin
and Ivar. Things were tough at the
moment. I hadn't worked in a studio
for a long time. So I sat there, grinding
out original stories. Two a week.
Only I seemed to have lost my touch.
Maybe they weren't original enough.
Maybe they were too original. All I
know is, they didn't sell.

Door buzzer SOUNDS. PICK UP SCENE ON page 6.

GILLIS

Yeah.

AJM

SUNSET BOULEVARD

SEQUENCE "A"

A-1

START the picture with the actual street sign: SUNSET BOULEVARD, stencilled on a curbstone. In the gutter lie dead leaves, scraps of paper, burnt matches and cigarette butts. It is early morning.

Now the CAMERA leaves the sign and MOVES EAST, the grey asphalt of the street filling the screen. As speed accelerates to around 40 m.p.h., traffic demarcations, white arrows, speed-limit warnings, manhole covers, etc., flash by. SUPERIMPOSED on all of this are the CREDIT TITLES, in the stencilled style of the street sign.

After the final title, PAN UP to the REAR END OF A MOVING VEHICLE

It is a black County hearse. The license plate says: CALIFORNIA, 1949 -- together with a number. The metal frame around the plate is stamped with the words LOS ANGELES.

PAN UP HIGHER. Painted across the back of the hearse is the word CORONER.

DISSOLVE TO:

A-2

THE CORONER'S HEARSE TURNING DOWN AN ALLEY LEADING INTO THE COUNTY MORGUE

It pulls up before a closed gate of steel grillwork. On the wall is a sign: SOUND HORN. The driver does so. An attendant opens the gate. The hearse passes through it and into

A-3

A TUNNEL, and then into

A-4

A SMALL COURTYARD

The hearse backs up to an unloading platform and again the horn is sounded. Two white-clad attendants come out of the morgue while the driver and a sleepy official descend from the hearse. The attendants open the door in the back of the vehicle and wheel out a hospital cart on which lies a corpse covered with a brownish blanket. Only the corpse's feet show, clad in cheap cotten socks and scuffed moccasins. They are soaking wet. PAN with the feet as the cart is wheeled into a small room near the entrance to the building and brought to a stop.

DISSOLVE TO:

A-5

SAME ANGLE

The blanket has been replaced by a sheet. The feet are naked. The hands of an attendant come into the shot and attach a linen tag to the corpse's left big toe. FOCUS ON THE TAG. In ordinary handwriting it reads:

JOSEPH GILLIS
HOMICIDE
5/17/49

DISSOLVE TO:

A-6

THE MORGUE ITSELF

An attendant wheels the dead Gillis into the huge, bare, windowless room. Along the walls are twenty or so sheet-covered corpses lying in an orderly row of wheeled slabs with large numbers painted on the walls above each slab. The attendant pushes Gillis into a vacant space. Beyond him, the feet of the other corpses stretch from under their sheets: men's feet, women's feet, children's, two or three negroes' -- with a linen tag dangling from each left big toe.

The attendant exits, switching off the light. For a moment the room is semi-dark, then as the music takes on a more astral phase, a curious glow emanates from the sheeted corpses. The long row of tags sways in the breeze from the ventilator system.

(NOTE: The voices in the following scene all have a peculiar, hollow quality).

A MAN'S VOICE

Don't be scared. There's a lot of us here. It's all right.

GILLIS

I'm not scared.

His head doesn't move, but his eyes slowly wander to the slab next to him.

There, under a partially transparent sheet, lies a fat man aged 60 or so. His eyes are open, too, and directed at Gillis.

FAT MAN

How did you happen to die?

GILLIS

What difference does it make?

FAT MAN

Died of a heart attack myself. Was

FAT MAN

going to retire right here in L.A.
Had a nice pension from the Seattle
City Bank and a nice little bungalow
all picked out. The agent was just
about to show me the avocado tree
when it happened.

GILLIS

That's a shame.

FAT MAN

Only lucky thing is, I hadn't signed
the lease.

There is a little pause.

GILLIS

Me, I drowned.

On a slab against the opposite wall lies a blond boy
of eleven, his swollen, child's face also peering
through a transparent sheet.

BOY

So did I. I drowned. Right off the
pier at Ocean Park. I bet Pinky Evans
I could stay under water longer than
two minutes, and I did, too.

Under another sheet lies a husky negro.

NEGRO

You wouldn't know if Satchel Paige
beat the White Sox yesterday?

GILLIS

No, I wouldn't. I died before the
morning paper came.

NEGRO

Doggone it! I was haulin' some oranges
down from San Berdoo, and I just tuned in
the baseball scores when she hit me --
crash! Some dame in a Chevy coupe that
was all smashed and stove in and turned
turtle. You'da thought I'd be all right
in a two-ton truck. Ha, ha! She crawled
out and lit herself a cigarette, and me
lyin' dead at the crossroads in the middle
of all them oranges.

BOY

I wish my folks would come and get me.

Under another sheet lies a middle-aged woman.

WOMAN

They will. Don't worry.

BOY

Do you think they'll be sore at me?

WOMAN

No, they won't. They'll come for you, and they'll have flowers, and they'll take you someplace where it's sunny and green and tuck you away to lovely dreams.

FAT MAN

Certainly ought to be more life-guards, with all the taxes we pay.
(To Gillis)

Where did you drown? The ocean?

GILLIS

No. Swimming pool.

FAT MAN

A husky fellow like you?

GILLIS

Well, I had a few extra holes in me. Two in the chest, and one in the stomach.

FAT MAN

You were murdered?

GILLIS

Yes, I was murdered.

The fat man's eyes move toward a far corner of the room.

FAT MAN

(Confidentially)

Number seventeen was murdered, too. Interesting man. He was a bookie, he told me. Working for an Eastern syndicate. Only he started taking little bets on his own, so they sent out a couple of men from Chicago. I wonder if the police will ever put that one together.

GILLIS

They'll never put mine together right.

(With the shadow of
a wry smile)

It'll be a good joke, lying here like a jigsaw puzzle all scrambled up, with the cops and the Hollywood columnists trying to fit in the wrong pieces.

FAT MAN

Hollywood? You in the movies?

GILLIS

Yeah. Came out in forty five, to catch me a swimming pool. And, by gosh, in the end I got myself one. only there turned out to be blood in it.

FAT MAN

Were you an actor?

GILLIS

No. A writer. Never had my name on anything big though. Just a couple of B pictures. One stinker, and the other one -- well, that wasn't so hot either. I was having a tough time making a living.

FAT MAN

It's your dying I was asking about.

Gillis chuckles.

GILLIS

Well, I drove down Sunset Boulevard one afternoon. That was my mistake... Maybe I'd better start off with the morning of that day. I've been out of work for six months...

Gillis' voice overlaps a

SLOW DISSOLVE INTO:

A-7

HOLLYWOOD SEEN FROM THE
HILLTOP AT IVAR & FRANKLIN
STREETS

In contrast to the eeriness of the morgue, everything is crisp and bright in the sunshine. Gillis' voice continues speaking as the CAMERA PANS toward the ALTO NIDO APARTMENT HOUSE, an ugly stucco Moorish structure, some four stories high. CAMERA MOVES TOWARD AN OPEN WINDOW on the third floor, and right into:

GILLIS' VOICE

I had a couple of stories out that wouldn't sell, and an apartment right above Hollywood and Ivar that wasn't paid for. Come to think of it, a lot of things weren't paid for -- my car, my laundry, Dave the delicatessen man... I was trying to pound out a western this time, but it was like pulling teeth. I was in a slump, all right.

A-8

JOE GILLIS' APARTMENT

It is a one-room affair, with an unmade Murphy bed pulled out of the wall. There are a couple of worn-out plush chairs and a Spanish-style, wrought-iron standing lamp. Also a small desk littered with books and letters, and a chest of drawers with a portable phonograph and some records on top. On the walls are a couple of reproductions of characterless paintings, with laundry bills and snapshots stuck in the frames. Through an archway can be seen a tiny kitchenette, complete with unwashed coffee pot and cup, empty tin cans, orange peels, etc. The effect is dingy and cheerless -- just another furnished apartment.

It is about noon. Joe Gillis, barefooted and wearing nothing except shorts and an old bathrobe, is sitting on the bed. In front of him, on a straight chair, is a portable typewriter. Beside him, on the bed, is a dirty ashtray and a scattering of typewritten and pencil-marked pages. Gillis is typing, with a pencil clenched between his teeth.

The buzzer SOUNDS.

GILLIS

Yeah.

The buzzer SOUNDS again. Gillis opens the door. Two men, wearing hats, are standing outside, one of them carrying a briefcase.

NO. 1

Joseph C. Gillis?

GILLIS

That's right.

The men ease into the room. No. 1 hands Gillis a business card.

NO. 1

We've come for the car.

GILLIS

What car?

NO. 2

(Consulting a paper)
1946 Plymouth convertible. California
license 97 N 567.

NO. 1

Where are the keys?

GILLIS

Why should I give you the keys?

NO. 1

Because the company's played ball
with you long enough. Because
you're three payments behind. And
because we've got a court order.
Come on -- the keys.

NO. 2

Or do you want us to jack it up
and haul it away?

GILLIS

Relax, fans. The car isn't here.

NO. 1

Is that so?

GILLIS

I lent it to a friend of mine.
He took it up to Palm Springs.

NO. 1

Had to get away for his health,
I suppose.

GILLIS

You don't believe me? Look in
the garage.

NO. 1

Sure we believe you, only now we
want you to believe us. That car
better be back here by noon tomorrow,
or there's going to be fireworks.

GILLIS

You say the cutest things.

The men leave. Gillis
stands pondering beside
the door for a moment.
Then he walks to the
center of the room and,
with his back to the
CAMERA, slips into a
pair of gray slacks.
There is a metallic
noise as some loose
change and keys drop
from the trouser pockets.
As Gillis bends over to
pick them up, we see that
he has dropped the car
keys, identifiable be-
cause of a rabbit's

GILLIS' VOICE

Well, I needed about two
hundred and ninety dollars
and I needed it real
quick, or I'd lose my car.
It wasn't in Palm Springs
and it wasn't in the
garage. I was way ahead
of the finance company.

foot and a miniature license plate attached to the key-ring. Gillis pockets the keys and as he starts to put on a shirt

DISSOLVE TO:

A-9 EXTERIOR OF RUDY'S SHOESHINE PARLOR (DAY)

A small shack-like building, it stands in the corner of a public parking lot. Rudy, a colored boy, is giving a customer a shine.

GILLIS' VOICE
(continued)

I knew they'd be coming around and I wasn't taking any chances, so I kept it a couple of blocks away in a parking lot behind Rudy's Shoe-shine Parlor. Rudy never asked any questions. He'd just look at your heels and know the score.

PAN BEHIND the shack to GILLIS' CAR, a yellow 1946 Plymouth convertible with the top down. Gillis enters the SHOT. He is wearing a tweed sport jacket, a tan polo shirt, and moccasins. He steps into the car and drives it off. Rudy winks after him.

A-10 THE ALLEY NEXT TO SIDNEY'S MEN'S SHOP ON BRONSON AVE.

Gillis drives into the alley and parks his car right behind a delivery truck. PAN AND FOLLOW HIM as he gets out, walks around the corner into Bronson and then toward the towering main gate of Paramount. A few loafers, studio cops and extras are lounging there.

GILLIS' VOICE

I had an original story kicking around Paramount. My agent told me it was dead as a doornail, but I knew a big shot over there who'd always liked me, and the time had come to take a little advantage of it. His name was Sheldrake. He was a smart producer, with a set of ulcers to prove it.

DISSOLVE TO:

A-11 SHELDRAKE'S OFFICE

It is in the style of a Paramount executive's office--mahogany, leather, and a little chintz. On the walls are some large framed photographs of Paramount stars, with dedications to Mr. Sheldrake. Also a couple of framed critics' awards certificates, and an Oscar on a bookshelf. A shooting schedule chart is thumb-tacked into a large bulletin board. There are

piles of scripts, a few pipes and, somewhere in the background, some set models.

Start on Sheldrake. He is about 45. Behind his worried face there hides a coated tongue. He is engaged in changing the stained filter cigarette in his Zeus holder.

SHELDRAKE

All right, Gillis. You've got five minutes. What's your story about?

GILLIS

It's about a ball player, a rookie shortstop that's batting 347. The poor kid was once mixed up in a hold-up. But he's trying to go straight -- except there's a bunch of gamblers who won't let him.

SHELDRAKE

So they tell the kid to throw the World Series, or else, huh?

GILLIS

More or less. Only for the end I've got a gimmick that's real good.

A secretary enters, carrying a glass of milk. She opens a drawer and takes out a bottle of pills for Sheldrake.

SHELDRAKE

Got a title?

GILLIS

Bases Loaded. There's a 40-page outline.

SHELDRAKE

(To the secretary)

Get the Readers' Department and see what they have on Bases Loaded.

The secretary exits. Sheldrake takes a pill and washes it down with some milk.

GILLIS

They're pretty hot about it over at Twentieth, but I think Zanuck's all wet. Can you see Ty Power as a

GILLIS (cont'd)

shortstop? You've got the best man for it right here on this lot. Alan Ladd. Good change of pace for Alan Ladd. There's another thing: it's pretty simple to shoot. Lot of outdoor stuff. Bet you could make the whole thing for under a million. And there's a great little part for Bill Demarest. One of the trainers, an oldtime player who got beaned and goes out of his head sometimes.

The door opens and Betty Schaefer enters -- a clean-cut, nice looking girl of 21, with a bright, alert manner. Dressed in tweed skirt, Brooks sweater and pearls, and carrying a folder of papers. She puts them on Shelldrake's desk, not noticing Gillis, who stands near the door.

BETTY

Hello, Mr. Shelldrake. On that Bases Loaded. I covered it with a 2-page synopsis.

(She holds it out)

But I wouldn't bother.

SHELDRAKE

What's wrong with it?

BETTY

It's from hunger.

SHELDRAKE

Nothing for Ladd?

BETTY

Just a rehash of something that wasn't very good to begin with.

SHELDRAKE

I'm sure you'll be glad to meet Mr. Gillis. He wrote it.

Betty turns towards Gillis, embarrassed.

SHELDRAKE

This is Miss Kramer.

BETTY

Schaefer. Betty Schaefer. And right now I wish I could crawl into a hole and pull it in after me.

GILLIS

If I could be of any help ...

BETTY

I'm sorry, Mr. Gillis, but I just don't think it's any good. I found it flat and banal.

GILLIS

Exactly what kind of material do you recommend? James Joyce? Dostoevsky?

SHELDRAKE

X Name dropper.

BETTY

I just think pictures should say a little something.

GILLIS

Oh, you're one of the message kids. Just a story won't do. You'd have turned down *Gone With the Wind*.

SHELDRAKE

No, that was me. I said, Who wants to see a Civil War picture?

BETTY

Perhaps the reason I hated *Bases Loaded* is that I knew your name. I'd always heard you had some talent.

GILLIS

That was last year. This year I'm trying to earn a living.

BETTY

So you take Plot 27-A, make it glossy, make it slick --

SHELDRAKE

Careful! Those are dirty words! You sound like a bunch of New York critics. Thank you, Miss Schaefer.

BETTY

Goodbye, Mr. Gillis.

GILLIS

Goodbye. Next time I'll write *The Naked and the Dead*.

Betty leaves.

SHELDRAKE

Well, seems like Zanuck's got himself a baseball picture.

GILLIS

Mr. Sheldrake, I don't want you to think I thought this was going to win any Academy Award.

SHELDRAKE

(His mind free-wheeling)
Of course, we're always looking for a Betty Hutton. Do you see it as a Betty Hutton?

GILLIS

Frankly, no.

SHELDRAKE

(Amusing himself)
Now wait a minute. If we made it a girls' softball team, put in a few numbers. Might make a cute musical: It Happened in the Bull Pen -- the Story of a Woman.

GILLIS

You trying to be funny? -- because I'm all out of laughs. I'm up that creek and I need a job.

SHELDRAKE

Sure, Gillis. If something should come along --

GILLIS

Along is no good. I need it now.

SHELDRAKE

Haven't got a thing.

GILLIS

Any kind of assignment. Additional Dialogue.

SHELDRAKE

There's nothing, Gillis. Not even if you were a relative.

GILLIS

(Hating it)

Look, Mr. Sheldrake, could you let me have three hundred bucks yourself, as a personal loan?

SHELDRAKE

Could I? Gillis, last year somebody talked me into buying a ranch in the valley. So I borrowed money from the bank so I could pay for the ranch. This year I had to mortgage the ranch so I could keep up my life insurance so I could borrow on the insurance so I could pay my income tax. Now if Dewey had been elected --

GILLIS

Goodbye, Mr. Sheldrake.

DISSOLVE TO:

A-12

EXT. SCHWAB'S DRUG STORE
(EARLY AFTERNOON ACTIVITY)

MOVE IN toward drug store and

DISSOLVE TO:

A-13

INT. SCHWAB'S DRUG STORE

The usual Schwabadero crowd sits at the fountain, gossips at the cigar-stand, loiters by the magazine display. MOVE IN towards the TWO TELEPHONE BOOTHS. In one of them sits Gillis, a stack of nickels in front of him. He's doing a lot of talking into the telephone, hanging up, dropping another nickel, dialing, talking again.

GILLIS' VOICE

After that I drove down to headquarters. That's the way a lot of us think about Schwab's Drug Store. Actors and stock girls and writers. Kind of a combination office, Kaffee-Klatsch and waiting room. Waiting, waiting for the gravy train.

I got myself ten nickels and started sending out a general S.O.S. Couldn't get hold of my agent, naturally. So then I called a pal of mine, name of Artie Green -- an awful nice guy, an assistant director. He could let me have twenty, but twenty wouldn't do.

GILLIS' VOICE (Cont'd)

Then I talked to a couple of yes men at Twentieth. To me they said no. Finally I located that agent of mine. He was hard at work in Bel Air. Making with the golf sticks.

Gillis hangs up with a curse, opens the door of the booth, emerges, wiping the sweat from his forehead. He walks towards the exit. He is stopped by the voice of

SKOLSKY

Hello, Gillis.

Gillis looks around. At the fountain sits Skolsky, drinking a cup of coffee.

GILLIS

Hello, Mr. Skolsky.

SKOLSKY

Got anything for the column?

GILLIS

Sure. Just sold an original for a hundred grand. The Life of the Warner Brothers. Starring the Ritz Brothers. Playing opposite the Andrew Sisters.

SKOLSKY

(With a sour smile)

But don't get me wrong -- I love Hollywood.

Gillis walks out.

DISSOLVE TO:

A-14

THE BEL AIR GOLF LINKS

On a sun-dappled green edged with tall sycamores, stands Morino, the agent, a caddy and a nondescript opponent in the background. Gillis has evidently stated his problem already.

MORINO

So you need three hundred dollars?
Of course, I could give you three
hundred dollars. Only I'm not
going to.

GILLIS

No?

MORINO

Gillis, get this through your
head. I'm not just your agent.
It's not the ten per cent. I'm
your friend.

He sinks his putt and walks toward the next tee,
Gillis following him.

GILLIS

How's that about your being my
friend?

MORINO

Don't you know the finest things
in the world have been written on
an empty stomach? Once a talent
like yours gets into that Mocambo-
Romanoff rut, you're through.

GILLIS

Forget Romanoff's. It's the car
I'm talking about. If I lose my
car it's like having my legs cut off.

MORINO

Greatest thing that could happen
to you. Now you'll have to sit
behind that typewriter. Now
you'll have to write.

GILLIS

What do you think I've been doing?
I need three hundred dollars.

MORINO

(Icily)

Maybe what you need is another agent.

He bends down to tee up his ball. Gillis turns away.

DISSOLVE TO:

3/19/49

A-15

GILLIS IN HIS OPEN CAR

Driving down Sunset towards Hollywood. He drives slowly. His mind is working.

GILLIS' VOICE

So I started back towards Hollywood. All the way down Sunset Boulevard I was composing a letter: Ho W.W. Agee, Managing Editor, the Dayton Evening Post, Dayton, Ohio. Dear Mr. Halitosis: I am in a terrible predicament. I have just been offered a writer-producer-director contract at seven thousand a week for seven years straight. Shall I do it? Shall I subject myself to the corruption and sham of this tinsel town with its terrible people, or is my place back home where there are no people -- just plain folks? In other words, how's about that thirty-five-dollar-a-week job behind the rewrite desk?"

Gillis stops his car at a red light by the main entrance to Bel Air. Suddenly his eyes fall on:

A-16

ANOTHER CAR

It is a dark-green Dodge business coupe, also waiting for the light to change, but headed in the opposite direction. In it are the two finance company men. They spot Gillis in his car and exchange looks. From across the intersection Gillis recognizes them and pulls down the leather sunshade to screen his face. As the light changes, Gillis gives his car the gun and shoots away. The men narrowly avoid hitting another car as they make a U-turn into oncoming traffic and start after him.

A-17

to

A-21

THE CHASE

Very short, very sharp, told in FLASHES. (Use locations on Sunset between Bel Air and Holmby Hills.) The men lose Gillis around a bend, catch sight of him and then -- while they are trapped behind a slow-moving truck, he disappears again.

3/19/49

A-22 GILLIS

He is driving as fast as he dares, keeping an eye out for pursuit in his rear-view mirror. Suddenly his right front tire blows out. Gillis clutches desperately at the steering wheel and manages to turn the careening car into

A-23 A DRIVEWAY

It is overgrown with weeds and screened from the street by bushes and trees. Gillis stops his car about thirty feet from the street and looks back.

A-24 THE OTHER CAR

shoots past the driveway, still looking for Gillis.

A-25 GILLIS

He gets out of his car to examine the flat tire. Then he looks around to see where he is.

GILLIS' VOICE

I had landed myself in the driveway of some big mansion that looked run-down and deserted. At the end of the drive was a lovely sight indeed: a great big empty garage, just standing there going to waste...If ever there was a place to stash away a limping car with a hot license number...

A-26 THE GARAGE

It is an enormous, five-car affair, neglected and empty except for a large, dust-covered Isotta-Fraschini propped up on blocks.

There was another occupant in that garage: an enormous foreign-built automobile. The kind that burns up ten gallons to a mile. It had a 1932 license. I figured that's when the owners must have moved out.

A-27 GILLIS

He gets back into his car and carefully pilots the limping vehicle into one of the stalls. He closes the garage door and walks up the driveway. In idle curiosity he mounts a stone staircase which leads to the garden, CAMERA IN BACK OF HIM. At the top of the steps he sees the somber pile of

I also figured it was a cinch I couldn't go back to my apartment, so the thing to do was take a bus for Artie Green's and stay there till I promoted that three hundred dollars.

NORMA DESMOND'S HOUSE.

It is a grandiose,
Italianate structure,
mottled by the years,
gloomy, forsaken, the
little formal garden
completely gone to
seed.

Some people say that when
you first see the spot
where you're going to die
it rings a bell inside you.
I didn't hear any bell.
It was just big and still,
one of those white elephants
crazy movie people built
in the crazy Twenties.

From somewhere above
comes

A WOMAN'S VOICE

You there!

Gillis turns and looks.

A-28 UPSTAIRS LOGGIA

Behind a bamboo blind there is the movement of a
dark figure.

WOMAN'S VOICE

Why are you so late? Why have
you kept me waiting so long?

A-29 GILLIS

He stands flabbergasted. A new noise attracts his
attention -- the creak of a heavy metal-and-glass
door being opened. He turns and sees

A-30 THE ENTRANCE DOOR OF THE HOUSE

Max von Mayerling stands there. He is sixty, and
all in black, except for immaculate white cotton
gloves, shirt, high, stiff collar and a white bow
tie. His coat is shiny black alpaca, his trousers
ledger-striped. He is semi-paralyzed. The left
side of his mouth is pulled down, and he leans on a
rubber-ferruled stick.

MAX

In here!

Gillis enters the shot.

GILLIS

I just put my car in the garage.
I had a blow-out. I thought --

MAX

Go on in.

There is authority in the gesture of his white-gloved hand as he motions Gillis inside.

GILLIS

Look, maybe I'd better take my car --

MAX

Wipe your feet!

Automatically, Gillis wipes his feet on an enormous shabby cocoanut mat.

MAX

You are not dressed properly.

GILLIS

Dressed for what?

THE WOMAN'S VOICE

Max! Have him come up, Max!

MAX

(Gesturing)

Up the stairs!

GILLIS

Suppose you listen just for a minute --

MAX

Madame is waiting.

GILLIS

For me? Okay.

Gillis enters.

A-31

INT. NORMA DESMOND'S ENTRANCE HALL

It is grandiose and grim. The whole place is one of those abortions of silent-picture days, with bowling alleys in the cellar and a built-in pipe organ, and beams imported from Italy, with California termites at work on them. Portieres are drawn before all the windows, and only thin slits of sunlight find their way in to fight the few electric bulbs which are always burning.

3-19-49

Gillis starts up the curve of the black marble staircase. It has a wrought-iron rail and a worn velvet rope along the wall.

MAX

(From below)

If you need help with the coffin call me.

The oddity of the situation has caught Gillis' imagination. He climbs the stairs with a kind of morbid fascination. At the top he stops, undecided, then turns to the right and is stopped by

WOMAN'S VOICE

This way!

Gillis swings around.

Norma Desmond stands down the corridor next to a doorway from which emerges a flickering light. She is a little woman. There is a curious style, a great sense of high voltage about her. She is dressed in black house pyjamas and black high-heeled pumps. Around her throat there is a leopard-patterned scarf, and wound around her head a turban of the same material. Her skin is very pale, and she is wearing dark glasses.

NORMA

In here. I put him on my massage table in front of the fire. He always liked fires and poking at them with a stick.

Gillis enters the SHOT and she leads him into

A-32

NORMA DESMOND'S BEDROOM

It is a huge, gloomy room hung in white brocade which has become dirty over the years and even slightly torn in a few places. There's a great, unmade gilded bed in the shape of a swan, from which the gold had begun to peel. There is a disorder of clothes and negligees and faded photographs of old-time stars about.

In an imitation baroque fireplace some logs are burning. On the massage table before it lies a small form shrouded under a Spanish shawl. At each end on a baroque pedestal stands a three-branched candelabrum, the candles lighted.

NORMA

I've made up my mind we'll bury him in the garden. Any city laws against that?

GILLIS

I wouldn't know.

NORMA

I don't care anyway. I want the coffin to be white. And I want it specially lined with satin. White, or deep pink.

She picks up the shawl to make up her mind about the color. From under the shawl flops down a dead arm. Gillis stares and recoils a little. It is like a child's arm, only black and hairy.

NORMA

Maybe red, bright flaming red. Gay. Let's make it gay.

Gillis edges closer and glances down. Under the shawl he sees the sad, bearded face of a dead chimpanzee. Norma drops back the shawl.

NORMA

How much will it be? I warn you - don't give me a fancy price just because I'm rich.

GILLIS

Lady, you've got the wrong man.

For the first time, Norma really looks at him through her dark glasses.

GILLIS

I had some trouble with my car. Flat tire. I pulled into your garage till I could get a spare. I thought this was an empty house.

NORMA

It is not. Get out.

GILLIS

I'm sorry, and I'm sorry you lost your friend, and I don't think red is the right color.

NORMA

Get out.

GILLIS

Sure. Wait a minute -- haven't I seen you --?

NORMA

X Or shall I call my servant?

GILLIS

I know your face. You're Norma Desmond. You used to be in pictures. You used to be big.

NORMA

I am big. It's the pictures that got small.

GILLIS

I knew there was something wrong with them.

NORMA

They're dead. They're finished. There was a time when this business had the eyes of the whole wide world. But that wasn't good enough. Oh, no! They wanted the ears of the world, too. So they opened their big mouths, and out came talk, talk, talk

GILLIS

X That's where the popcorn business comes in. You buy yourself a bag and plug up your ears.

NORMA

Look at them in the front offices -- the master minds! They took the idols and smashed them. The Fairbankses and the Chaplins and the Gilberts and the Valentinos. And who have they got now? Some nobodies -- a lot of pale little frogs croaking pish-posh!

GILLIS

Don't get sore at me. I'm not an executive. I'm just a writer.

NORMA

You are! Writing words, words! You've made a rope of words and strangled this business! But there is a microphone right there to catch the last gurgles, and Technicolor to photograph the red, swollen tongue!

GILLIS

Ssh! You'll wake up that monkey.

NORMA

Get out!

Gillis starts down the stairs.

GILLIS

Next time I'll bring my autograph album along, or maybe a hunk of cement and ask for your footprints.

He is halfway down the staircase when he is stopped by

NORMA

Just a minute, you!

GILLIS

Yeah?

NORMA

You're a writer, you said.

GILLIS

Why?

Norma starts down the stairs.

NORMA

Are you or aren't you?

GILLIS

I think that's what it says on my driver's license.

NORMA

And you have written pictures, haven't you?

GILLIS

Sure have. The last one I wrote was about cattle rustlers. Before they were through with it, the whole thing played on a torpedo boat.

Norma has reached him at the bottom of the staircase.

NORMA

I want to ask you something. Come in here.

She leads him into

A-33

THE HUGE LIVING ROOM

It is dark and damp and filled with black oak and red velvet furniture which looks like crappy props from the Mark of Zorro set. Along the main wall, a gigantic fireplace has been freezing for years. On the gold piano is a galaxy of photographs of Norma Desmond in her various roles. On one wall is a painting -- a California Gold Rush scene, Carthay Circle school. (We will learn later that it hides a motion picture screen.)

One corner is filled with a large pipe organ; and as Norma and Gillis enter, there is a grizzly moaning sound. Gillis looks around.

NORMA

The wind gets in that blasted pipe organ. I ought to have it taken out.

GILLIS

Or teach it a better tune.

Norma has led him to the card tables which stand side by side near a window. They are piled high with papers scrawled in a large, uncertain hand.

NORMA

How long is a movie script these days? I mean, how many pages?

GILLIS

Depends on what it is -- a Donald Duck or Joan of Arc.

NORMA

This is to be a very important picture. I have written it myself. Took me years.

GILLIS

(Looking at the piles of script)

Looks like enough for six important pictures.

NORMA

It's the story of Salome. I think I'll have DeMille direct it.

GILLIS

Uh-huh.

NORMA

We've made a lot of pictures together.

GILLIS

And you'll play Salome?

NORMA

Who else?

GILLIS

Only asking. I didn't know you were planning a comeback.

NORMA

I hate that word. It is a return. A return to the millions of people who have never forgiven me for deserting the screen.

GILLIS

Fair enough.

NORMA

Salome -- the woman who was all women. You know the story. She was a princess and she was a slave, crawling before John the Baptist, dancing the dance of the Seven Veils. And then she has his head chopped off. He's hers at last. His head is on a golden tray. She kisses his cold, dead lips.

GILLIS

They'll love it in Pomona.

NORMA

(Taking it straight)

They will love it every place.

(She reaches for a batch of pages from the heap)

Read it. Read the scene just before she has him killed.

GILLIS

Right now? Never let another writer read your stuff. He may steal it.

NORMA

I am not afraid. Read it!

NORMA (Cont'd)

(Calling)

Max! Max!

(To Gillis)

Sit down. Is there enough light?

GILLIS

I've got twenty-twenty vision.

Max has entered.

NORMA

Bring something to drink.

MAX

Yes, Madame.

He leaves. Norma turns to Gillis again.

NORMA

I said sit down.

There is compulsion in her voice.

Gillis looks at her
and starts slowly
reading.

Max comes in, wheeling
a wicker tea wagon on
which are two bottles
of champagne and two
red Venetian glasses,
a box of zwieback and
a jar of caviar. Norma
sits on her feet, deep
in a chair, a gold ring
on her forefinger with
a clip which holds a
cigarette. She gets up
and forces on Gillis
another batch of script,
goes back to her chair.

GILLIS' VOICE

She had a voice like a ring-
master's whip. Somehow I
found myself sitting there
reading that mad scrawl of
hers. Some letters big and
arrogant, others as small as
fly-specks. I wondered what
a handwriting expert would
make of it. Max wheeled in
some champagne and some
caviar. Later, I found out
that Max was the only other
person in that grim Sunset
castle of hers, and I found
out a few other things about
him. As for her, she sat
there curled up like a watch
spring. I could sense her
eyes on me behind those dark
glasses. She kept smoking
some Turkish brand of ciga-
rettes. There was a con-
traction she used to hold
them, so her yellow fingers
wouldn't get more yellow ...

A-34 SHOT OF THE
CEILING

PAN DOWN to the moaning organ. PAN OVER TO THE ENTRANCE DOOR. Max opens it, and a solemn-faced man in undertaker's clothes brings in a small white coffin. (Thru these shots the room has been growing duskier).

DISSOLVE TO:

A-35 GILLIS

reading. The lamp beside him is now really paying its way in the dark room. A lot of the manuscript pages are piled on the floor around his feet. A half-empty champagne glass stands on the arm of his chair.

THE CAMERA SLOWLY DRAWS BACK to include Norma Desmond sitting in the dusk, just as she was before. Gillis puts down a batch of script. There is a little pause.

NORMA
(Impatiently)

Well?

GILLIS
This is fascinating.

NORMA
Of course it is.

GILLIS
Maybe it's a little long and maybe there are some repetitions... but you're not a professional writer.

GILLIS' VOICE

It sure was a cozy set-up—Max and she and that dead monkey upstairs, and the wind wheezing through that organ once in a while. Later on, just for comedy relief, the real guy arrived, with a baby coffin. It was all done with great dignity. He must have been a very important chimp. The great grandson of King Kong, maybe ...

NORMA

I wrote that with my heart.

GILLIS

Sure you did. That's what makes it great. What it needs is a little more dialogue.

NORMA

What for? I can say anything I want with my eyes.

GILLIS

It certainly needs a pair of shears and a blue pencil.

NORMA

I will not have it butchered.

GILLIS

Of course not. But it ought to be organized. Just an editing job. You can find somebody...

NORMA

Who?....

(There is a pregnant pause)

You will do it.

GILLIS

Me? I'm busy. Just finished one script. I'm due on another assignment.

NORMA

I don't care.

GILLIS

You know, I'm pretty expensive. I get five hundred a week.

NORMA

I wouldn't worry about money. I'll make it worth your while.

GILLIS

Maybe I'd better finish reading it.

NORMA

You'll read it tonight.

GILLIS

You know, I'm pretty expensive.
I get five hundred a week.

NORMA

I wouldn't worry about money.
I'll make it worth your while.

GILLIS

Maybe I'd better finish reading it.

NORMA

You'll read it tonight.

GILLIS

It's getting kind of late --

NORMA

(Out of nowhere)

Are you married, Mr. -- ?

GILLIS

The name is Gillis. I'm single.

NORMA

Where do you live?

GILLIS

In Hollywood. The Alto Nido
Apartments.

NORMA

There's something wrong with your
car, you said.

GILLIS

There sure is.

NORMA

(Calling)

Max!

(To Gillis)

You're staying here.

GILLIS

I am?

Norma takes off her glasses.

NORMA

Yes, you are. There's a room
over the garage. Max!

THE CAMERA MOVES
TOWARD NORMA'S FACE,
right up to her
eyes.

GILLIS' VOICE

She sure could say a lot of
things with those pale eyes
of hers. They'd been her
trade mark. They'd made her
the Number One Vamp of another
era. I remember a rather
florid description in an old
fan magazine which said: "Her
eyes are like two moonlit
waterholes, where strange
animals come to drink."

DISSOLVE TO:

A-36

SMALL STAIRCASE, LEADING TO ROOM OVER GARAGE

Max, an electric light bulb in his hand, is leading Gillis up. Gillis carries a batch of the manuscript.

GILLIS' VOICE

I took the rest of the script and Max led me to the room over the garage. I thought I'd wangled myself a pretty good deal. I'd do a little work, my car would be safe down below, until I got some money out of her...

Max pushes open a door at the top of the stairs.

MAX

(Opening the door)

I made your bed this afternoon.

GILLIS

Thanks.

(On second thought)

How did you know I was going to stay, this afternoon?

Max doesn't answer. He walks across to the bed, screws a bulb in the open socket above it. The light goes on, revealing:

A-37

A GABLED BEDROOM

There are dirty windows on two sides, and dingy wallpaper on the cracked plaster walls. For furniture there is a neatly made bed, a table and a few chairs which might have been discarded from the main house.

MAX

This room has not been used for a long time.

GILLIS

It will never make House Beautiful. I guess it's O.K. for one night.

Max gives him an enigmatic look.

MAX

(Pointing)

There is the bathroom. I put in soap and a toothbrush.

GILLIS

Thanks.

(He starts taking off his coat)

Say, she's quite a character, that Norma Desmond.

MAX

She was the greatest. You wouldn't know. You are too young. In one week she got seventeen thousand fan letters. Men would bribe her manicurist to get clippings from her fingernails. There was a Maharajah who came all the way from Hyderabad to get one of her stockings. Later, he strangled himself with it.

GILLIS

I sure turned into an interesting driveway.

MAX

You did, sir.

He goes out. Gillis looks after him, hangs his coat over a chair, walks over to the window, pulls down the rickety Venetian blind. As he does so, he looks down at:

GILLIS' VOICE

I figured he was a little crazy. Maybe he'd had a stroke -- part of his brain wasn't hitting on all cylinders. Come to think of it, the whole place was like that -- half paralyzed, crumbling apart in slow motion.

A-38

THE TENNIS COURT OF
THE DESMOND HOUSE
(MOONLIGHT)

The cement surface is cracked in many places, and weeds are growing high.

GILLIS' VOICE

There was a tennis court, or rather the ghost of a tennis court, with faded markings and a sagging net.

A-39

GILLIS - IN THE WINDOW

He looks away from the court to;

A-40

THE DESMOND SWIMMING
POOL

There is no water in it, and hunks of mosaic which lines its enormous basin are broken away.

And of course she had a pool. Who didn't then? Mabel Normand and John Gilbert must have swum in it ten thousand midnights ago, and Vilma Banky and Rod LaRoque. It was empty now, except for some rubbish and something stirring down there ...

A-41 GILLIS - IN THE WINDOW

He stares down, his stomach slowly turning.

A-42 THE SWIMMING POOL

At the bottom of the basin a great rat is eating a decaying orange. From the inlet pipe crawl two other rats, who join battle with the first rat over the orange.

A-43 GILLIS - IN THE WINDOW

He starts away, but something attracts his attention. He turns back and looks down again.

GILLIS' VOICE

I thought I caught the flicker of a light. There was something else going on below -- the last rites for that hairy old chimp. She was always playing some sort of part. This time she was Lady Macbeth on a tragic Scottish moor, or a bereaved empress queen mourning her dead prince imperial...

A-44 THE LAWN BELOW

Norma Desmond and Max are carrying the white coffin towards a small grave which has been dug in the dead turf. Norma carries one of the candelabra, all of its candles flickering in the wind. They reach the grave and lower the coffin into it. Then, Norma lighting his task with the candelabrum, Max takes a spade from the loose earth and starts filling in the grave.

A-45 GILLIS - IN THE WINDOW

He watches the scene below, then turns into the room, goes to the door to lock it. There is no key, and only a hole where the lock has been gouged out. Gillis moves a heavy overstuffed chair in front of the door, then walks towards the bed, throws himself on it, picking up some of the manuscript pages to read.

GILLIS' VOICE

It was all very queer, but queerer things were yet to come...

DISSOLVE:

END OF SEQUENCE "A"

SEQUENCE "B"

DISSOLVE IN ON:

B-1 LONG SHOT THE DESMOND HOUSE - (MORNING)

The day is overcast. The house is shrouded in low fog.

SOUND: (Distant organ music - improvisations on an odd, mournful theme - not too loud, continuing throughout the scene.)

B-2 THE TENNIS COURT, blurred over with fog.B-3 THE EMPTY SWIMMING POOL
its dark outline even more melancholy under the misty blanket.B-4 THE ROOM OVER THE GARAGE

Muted daylight seeps through the blinds. Gillis lies on the bed, under a shabby quilt. The manuscript is beside him, some of the pages scattered on the floor. He is just opening his eyes. It takes him a moment to adjust himself to the strange surroundings. His eyes, wandering about the room, suddenly stop, startled. He lifts himself on one elbow and stares at -

GILLIS'S VOICE
There was organ music seeping into my dreams. It was like waking up in a belfry with mass going on below and Johann Sebastian Bach begging God to forgive us all our sins.

B-5 THE DOOR

The heavy chair he had set against it the night before has been pushed back. The door is wide ajar.

Oh sure, I was in that empty room over her garage. Only it wasn't empty anymore. I'd had a visitor.

B-6 GILLIS

He jumps out of bed. He wears, shirt, trousers and socks. He goes to the door and looks outside, then turns back to the room. Suddenly he realizes that all his

Somebody had brought in all my belongings...my books, my typewriter, my clothes....

possessions have been brought in. In the closet hang his shirts. His books and typewriter are neatly arranged on the table. His phonograph-radio combination is all installed. Gillis looks around startled, then sits down and starts putting on his moccasins hastily.

GILLIS' VOICE
What was going on?

DISSOLVE TO:

B-7 A PAIR OF HANDS IN WHITE GLOVES, PLAYING THE ORGAN

PULL BACK: They belong to Max von Mayerling. He is sitting erect, his bull neck taut as a wrestler's as he fights out somber chord after somber chord. He sits in a shaft of gray light coming from an open French window.

Through the far archway, Gillis storms into the big room.

GILLIS

Hey, you -- Max -- whatever -your-name-is -- what are my things doing here?

No answer.

GILLIS

I'm talking to you. My clothes and things are up in the room.

MAX

Naturally. I brought them myself.

GILLIS

(Furiously)

Is that so!

MAX

Why are you so upset? Is there anything missing?

GILLIS

Who said you could? Who asked you to?

Norma Desmond's shadow moves into the shaft of light.

NORMA'S VOICE

I did.

Gillis looks around.

In the window stands Norma Desmond. She is dressed in Persian style lounging pyjamas, a Persian-patterned turban hides her hair. As always, those dark glasses. She moves into the room.

NORMA

I don't know why you should be so upset. Stop that playing, Max.

(To Gillis again)

It seemed like a good idea -- if we are to work together.

GILLIS

Look, I'm supposed to fix up your script. There's nothing in the deal about my staying here.

NORMA

You'll like it here.

GILLIS

Thanks for the invitation, but I have my own apartment.

NORMA

You can't work in an apartment where you owe three months' rent.

GILLIS

I'll take care of that.

NORMA

It's all taken care of. It's all paid for.

GILLIS

I'm used to paying my own bills.

NORMA

You proud boy, why didn't you tell me you were having difficulties.

GILLIS

Okay. We'll deduct it from my salary.

NORMA

Now, now, don't let's be small
about such matters. We won't
keep books.

(To Max)

Go on, unpack Mr. Gillis' things.

GILLIS

Unpack nothing. I didn't say I
was staying.

NORMA

(Her glasses off again)

Suppose you make up your mind.

Do you want this job or don't you?

DISSOLVE TO:

B-8

BIG ROOM, NORMA DESMOND'S
HOUSE - (DAY)

Gillis sits at an impro-
vised table, his type-
writer in front of him,
working hard at the
manuscript. Pencils,
shears and a paste-pot
at hand.

Facing him at some dis-
tance sits Norma, dressed
in another version of her
favorite lounging pajamas,
the cigarette contraption
on her finger. She is
autographing large photo-
graphs of herself and put-
ting them in envelopes.

Gillis takes two or three pages from Norma's hand-
written script, crosses them out and puts them to
one side.

Norma rises, crosses towards Gillis, looks over his
shoulder.

NORMA

What's that?

GILLIS

Just a scene I cut out.

GILLIS' VOICE

Yes, I wanted the job.
I wanted the dough, and
I wanted to get out of
there as quickly as I
could. I thought if I
really got going I could
toss it off in a couple
of weeks. But it wasn't
so simple, getting some
coherence into these wild
hallucinations of hers.
And what made it even
worse was that she was
around all the time, hover-
ing over me, afraid I'd do
injury to that precious
brain-child of hers.

NORMA

What scene?

GILLIS

The one where you go to the slave market. You can cut right to the scene where John the Baptist --

NORMA

Cut away from me?

GILLIS

Honestly, it's a little old hat. They don't want that any more.

NORMA

They don't? Then why do they still write me fan letters every day. Why do they beg me for my photographs? Because they want to see me, me, me! Norma Desmond.

GILLIS

(Resigned)

Okay.

He pulls the page from his typewriter. As he does so he glances over towards Norma.

On the table in front of her are the photographs which she is signing. On the long table in the living room is a gallery of photographs in various frames -- all Norma Desmond. On the piano more photographs. Above the piano an oil portrait of her. On the highboy beside him still more photographs.

DISSOLVE TO:

B-9

THE BIG ROOM (NIGHT)

Shooting towards the big Gold Rush painting. Max, white gloves and all, steps into the shot, shoves the painting up towards the ceiling, revealing a motion picture screen. Max exits.

GILLIS' VOICE

Norma Desmond! Sometimes I felt I couldn't breathe in that room, it was so thick with Norma Desmonds. Staring at me, crowding me, stampeding me - Norma Desmonds, more Norma Desmonds, and still more Norma Desmonds.

GILLIS' VOICE

It wasn't all work, of course. About two or three times a week Max would haul up that enormous oil painting that had been presented to her by some Nevada Chamber of Commerce, and we'd see a movie -- right in her living room.

B-10 NORMA AND GILLIS

They sit on a couch, facing the screen. On a table in front of them are champagne, cigarettes and coffee. Above their heads are the typical openings for a projector. The lights go off. From the opening above their heads shoots the wide beam of light.

GILLIS' VOICE
It was all very formal-- a demi-tasse, an after-dinner drink. Loge seats. So much nicer than going out, she used to say.

B-11 MAX, IN THE PROJECTION BOOTH BEHIND THE ROOM

The light of the machine flickering over his face, which is frozen, a somber enigma.

They were silent movies, and Max would run the machine, which was just as well -- it kept him from giving us an accompaniment on that rusty organ.

B-12 NORMA AND GILLIS

watching the screen. Gillis looks down and sees that Norma's hand is clasping his arm tight. He doesn't like it much but he can't do anything about it. However, when she for a second lets go his arm to pick up a glass of champagne, he gently withdraws his arm, leans away from her and crosses his arms to discourage any resumption of her approach. Norma puts the glass down, doesn't find his arm, but is not aware of any significance in his maneuver. They both watch the screen.

She'd sit very close to me and she'd smell of tuberose, which is not my favorite perfume, not by a long shot. She was always holding me by the arm or by the hand, but I always thought it was just like caressing a dog. Then again maybe it was because she was so excited about that old worn-out celluloid up there on the screen. I guess I don't have to tell you who the star was. They were always her pictures. That's all she ever wanted to see.

B-13 THE OTHER END OF THE BIG ROOM, WITH THE SCREEN

On it flickers a famous scene from one of Norma's old silent pictures. It is not to be a funny scene. It is old-fashioned, but shows her incredible beauty and the screen presence which made her the great star of her day.

B-14 NORMA AND GILLIS ON THE COUCH

NORMA

Still wonderful, isn't it? And no dialogue. We didn't need dialogue. We had faces. There just aren't any faces like that any more. Well, maybe one -- Garbo.

In a sudden flareup she jumps to her feet and stands in the flickering beam of light.

NORMA

Those idiot producers! Those imbeciles! Haven't they got any eyes? Have they forgotten what a star looks like? I'll show them. I'll be up there again. So help me!

DISSOLVE TO:

B-15 THE BIG ROOM - (NIGHT)

It is apparently empty. The elaborate lamps make pools of light.

THE CAMERA PULLS BACK AND PANS to reveal a card table around which sit Norma and three friends - three actors of her period. They sit erect and play with grim seriousness.

Beside Norma sits Gillis, kibitzing on a game which bores him extremely. An ashtray on the card table is full and Norma holds it out for Gillis to take away. He crosses the room to the fireplace, but his eyes fall on the entrance door and he stops.

GILLIS' VOICE

Except for those outbursts of hers, it was the quietest house imaginable. The telephone never rang. The door bell never rang. No one ever came. . . . No, that's not quite true. Every second Tuesday there'd be a little bridge game in the house, at a twentieth-of-a-cent a point. I'd get half her winnings. Once they ran up to a dollar and seventy cents, which was about the only cash money I ever got. The others around the table would be actor friends, dim figures you may still remember from the silent days. I used to think of them as her wax works.

B-16 THE ENTRANCE HALL - (FROM GILLIS' POINT OF VIEW)

Max stands in the open door. Outside are the two men who came to the apartment for Gillis' car.

B-17

GILLIS

He steps back so that he cannot be seen from the door. A second later Max appears, looking for him.

MAX

(Quietly)

Some men are here. They asked for you.

GILLIS

I'm not here.

MAX

That's what I told them.

GILLIS

Good.

MAX

They found your car in the garage. They are going to tow it away.

Gillis doesn't know what to do. From offstage comes:

NORMA'S VOICE

The ashtray, Joe dear! Can we have the ashtray?

Gillis dumps the cigarette butts into the cold fireplace, crosses to the bridge table, puts the ashtray down, leans over and speaks into Norma's ear.

GILLIS

I want to talk to you for a minute.

NORMA

Not now, my dear. I'm playing three no trump.

GILLIS

They've come for my car.

NORMA

Please. Now I've forgotten how many spades are out.

GILLIS

I need some money right now.

NORMA

Can't you wait till I'm dummy?

GILLIS

NORMA

(Angry by now)

Please!

Gillis stands frustrated, hideously embarrassed by the stares of the waxworks. He turns away and hurries to the door.

B-18 ENTRANCE DOOR TO THE HOUSE

It is half open. Gillis comes into the shot and, taking cover, looks out.

B-19 COURTYARD (FROM GILLIS' ANGLE)

The men from the finance company are cranking up the car. Max stands watching silently. When they finish the cranking job, the men climb into the front seat of the truck.

B-20 GILLIS - IN THE DOOR

Over the shot the SOUND of the truck being started and the cars moving away. Gillis moves out into the courtyard and stands staring after the car. From the house comes Norma.

NORMA

Now what is it? Where's the fire?

GILLIS

I've lost my car.

NORMA

Oh...and I thought it was a matter of life and death.

GILLIS

It is to me. That's why I came to this house. That's why I took this job -- ghost writing!

NORMA

Now you're being silly. We don't need two cars. We have a car. And not one of those cheap new things made of chromium and spit. An Isotta-Fraschini. Have you ever heard of Isotta-Fraschinis? All hand-made. Cost me twenty-eight thousand dollars.

THE CAMERA HAS PANNED over to the garage and FOCUSES on the dirty Isotta-Fraschini on its blocks.

DISSOLVE TO:

B-21

NORMA'S ISOTTA-FRASCHINI
DRIVING IN THE HILLS
ABOVE SUNSET (DAY)

Max is at the wheel, dressed as usual except for a chauffeur's cap.

GILLIS' VOICE

So Max got that old bus down off its blocks and polished it up. She'd take me for rides in the hills above Sunset.

The whole thing was upholstered in leopard skin, and had one of those car phones, all gold-plated.

B-22

INSIDE THE CAR

Gillis sits beside Norma, who is wearing a smart tailor and her eternal sun glasses. Gillis wears his sport jacket-flannel trousers-moccasin combination.

He sits uncomfortably. Norma is studying him.

NORMA

That's a dreadful shirt you're wearing.

GILLIS

What's wrong with it?

NORMA

Nothing, if you work in a filling station. And I'm getting rather bored with that sport jacket, and those same baggy pants.

(She picks up
the car phone)

Max, what's a good men's shop in town? The very best....

Well, go there!

GILLIS

I don't need any clothes, and I certainly don't want you buying them for --

NORMA

Why begrudge me a little fun?
I just want you to look nice,
my stray little boy.

By this time Max has made a U-turn.

QUICK DISSOLVE TO:

B-23 INT. MEN'S DEPARTMENT - AN ELEGANT WILSHIRE STORE

Gillis stands in front of a full-length triple mirror, surrounded by a couple of salesmen and the tailor, who is busily working out alterations.

Gillis wears a double-breasted gray flannel coat with chalk stripes. His trousers belong to another suit of glen plaid. Norma is running the show.

NORMA

There's nothing like gray
flannel with a chalk stripe.

(She points at
the trousers)

This one single-breasted, of
course.

(To another salesman)

Now we need a topcoat. Let's
see what you have in camel's
hair.

The salesman leaves.

NORMA

How about some evening clothes?

GILLIS

I don't want a tuxedo.

NORMA

Of course not. Tuxedos are
for waiters. We want some tails.

GILLIS

What would I do with tails?

NORMA

For parties. What about New
Year's Eve?

(To a salesman)

Where are your evening clothes?

SALESMAN

This way, Madame.

He leads her off. The other salesman arrives with a selection of topcoats.

SALESMAN

Here are some camel hairs, but I'd like you just to feel this one. It's Vicuna. Of course, it's a little more expensive.

GILLIS

A camel's hair will do.

SALESMAN

(With an insulting inflection)

As long as the lady is paying for it, why not take the Vicuna?

DISSOLVE:

END OF SEQUENCE "B"

SEQUENCE "C"

DISSOLVE IN:

C-1 LONG SHOT DESMOND HOUSE

A day in December. Rain.

QUICK DISSOLVE TO:

C-2 INT. ROOM OVER GARAGE

Water is drizzling from two or three spots in the ceiling into pans and bowls set to catch it, one bowl right on the bed. The room is almost emptied of Gillis' belongings by now. Max is carrying out a handful of new suits on hangers. He has a dressing gown over his shoulder. Gillis holds a stack of shirts, his typewriter, and some manuscript. He surveys the room for the last time, to see whether he's forgotten anything. He has. He puts down the typewriter and picks up from under the bed a pair of very smart red leather bedroom slippers. He tucks them under his arm, picks up the typewriter and leaves.

QUICK DISSOLVE TO:

C-3 A BEDROOM IN THE MAIN HOUSE

It is obviously a man's room -- heavy Spanish furniture. One wall is nothing but a closet with shelves and drawers for shirts and shoes. Max is hanging up the suits. Gillis throws the shirts on a big chair, tosses the slippers at the foot of the bed, places the typewriter and manuscript on a desk at the window.

GILLIS' VOICE

The last week in December the rains came -- a great big package of rain. Over-sized, like everything else in California.

It came right through the old roof of my room above the garage. She had Max move me to the main house. I didn't much like the idea -- the only time I could have to myself was in that room -- but it was better than sleeping in a raincoat and galoshes.

Anyway, it was dry in the big house, even though it smelled close and musty. Generations of moths had grown fat off the carpet.

GILLIS

Whose room was this?

MAX

It was the room of the husband.
Or of the husbands, I should say.
Madame has been married three
times.

Slightly embarrassed, Gillis picks up his toilet kit with razor, toothbrushes, soap, etc., and starts towards the bathroom, pausing en route at a rain-splattered window.

GILLIS

I guess this is the one you
can see Catalina from. Only
this isn't the day.

He proceeds towards the half-opened door leading to the bathroom. Something strikes his attention and he stops. As in the door to the room above the garage, this lock, too, has been gouged out.

GILLIS

Hey, what's this with the
door? There isn't any lock.

MAX

There are no locks anywhere
in this house.

He points to the entrance door of the room,
and to another door.

GILLIS

How come?

MAX

The doctor suggested it.

GILLIS

What doctor?

MAX

Madame's doctor. She has moments
of melancholy. There have been
some suicide attempts.

GILLIS

I guess it's hard to take, being
sent to the showers -- even if
you've got platinum plumbing.

MAX

We have to be very careful. No sleeping pills, no razor blades. We shut off the gas in her bedroom.

GILLIS

Why? Her career? She got enough out of it. She's not forgotten. She still gets those fan letters.

MAX

I wouldn't look too closely at the postmarks.

GILLIS

You send them. Is that it, Max?

MAX

I'd better press your evening clothes, sir. You have not forgotten Madame's New Year's party.

GILLIS

No, I haven't. I suppose all the waxworks are coming?

MAX

I don't know, sir. Madame made the arrangements.

Max leaves. Gillis comes out of the bathroom, picks up his shirts, goes over to a closet, opens it. As he does so one of the doors without a lock swings slightly open. Gillis looks through the half-open door and sees.

C-4

NORMA DESMOND'S ROOM

It is empty. The rainy day does nothing to help its gloom.

GILLIS' VOICE

There it was again -- that room of hers, all satin and ruffles, and that bed like a gilded rowboat. The perfect setting for a silent movie queen. Poor devil, still waving proudly to a parade which had long since passed her by.

He pushes the door shut and walks back into the room.

DISSOLVE TO:

C-5

STAIRCASE OF DESMOND
HOUSE (NIGHT)

Gillis is coming down the stairs in his tailcoat, adjusting the handkerchief in his pocket. He obviously feels a little uneasy in this outfit. From below comes a tango of the Twenties, played by a small orchestra. Gillis stops in the archway leading to the big room and looks around.

GILLIS' VOICE
So she was giving a New Year's Eve party, for me and those silent friends of hers... Well, she'd certainly gone to town.... I hadn't expected anything like this....

C-6

THE BIG ROOM has been decorated for the occasion with laurel garlands. Dozens of candles in all the sconces and candelabra are ablaze. Their flickering flames are reflected in the waxed surface of the tile floor. There is a buffet, with buckets of champagne and caviar on ice. In one corner, on a little platform banked with palms, a four-piece orchestra is playing.

At the buffet are Max and Norma. She is drinking a glass of champagne. She is wearing a diamante evening dress, very high style, with long black gloves and a headdress of paradise feathers. Her eyes fall on Gillis. She puts down the glass of champagne, picks up a gardenia boutonniere and moves toward him.

NORMA

Joe, you look absolutely divine. Turn around!

GILLIS

(Embarrassed)

Please.

NORMA

Come on!

Gillis makes a slow 360-degree turn.

NORMA

Perfect. Wonderful shoulders. And I love that line.

She indicates the V from his shoulders to his hips.

GILLIS

All padding. Don't let it fool you.

NORMA

Come here!

She puts the gardenia on his lapel.

GILLIS

You know, to me dressing up was always just putting on my dark blue suit.

NORMA

I don't like those studs they've sent. I want you to have pearls. Nice big pearls.

GILLIS

Now, I'm not going to wear earrings, I can tell you that.

NORMA

Cute. Let's have some drinks.

She leads him over to the buffet.

GILLIS

Shouldn't we wait for the others?

NORMA

(Pointing at the floor)
Careful, it's slippery. I had it waxed.

They reach the buffet. Max is ready with two glasses of champagne. Norma hands Gillis a glass.

NORMA

Here's to us.

They drink.

NORMA

You know, this floor used to be wood but I had it changed. Valentino said there is nothing like tiles for a tango.

She opens her arms.

GILLIS

Not on the same floor with
Valentino!

NORMA

Just follow me.

They start to tango. After a moment --

NORMA

Don't bend back like that.

GILLIS

It's those feathers. They tickle.

Norma pulls the paradise feathers from her hair
and tosses them away.

C-7

THE ORCHESTRA

As they play the tango, the musicians eye the dancing couple, take in the situation, exchange glances and turn away with professional discretion.

C-8

NORMA AND GILLIS, TANGOING

Gillis glances at his wrist watch.

GILLIS

It's a quarter past ten. What
time are they supposed to get
here?

NORMA

Who?

GILLIS

The other guests?

NORMA

There are no other guests. We
don't want to share this night
with other people. This is for
you and me.

GILLIS

X I understand some rich guy bought
up all the tickets for a perfor-
mance at the Metropolitan and sat
there listening to La Traviata,
all by himself. He was afraid of
catching cold.

NORMA

Hold me tighter.

GILLIS

Come midnight, how about blind-
folding the orchestra and smash-
ing champagne glasses on Max's
head?

NORMA

You think this is all very funny.

GILLIS

A little.

NORMA

Is it funny that I'm in love
with you?

GILLIS

What's that?

NORMA

I'm in love with you. Don't you
know that? I've been in love
with you all along.

They dance on. Gillis is acutely embarrassed.
THE CAMERA SLOWLY PULLS BACK, PANS past the faces
of the musicians, who play on with a rather over-
emphasized lack of interest. Finally it winds up
on Max, behind the buffet. He stands watching Gillis,
a faint trace of pity in his eyes.

DISSOLVE TO:

C-9

NORMA'S FINGER, WITH THE
CIGARETTE GADGET, as she
inserts a cigarette.

It got to be about a quarter
of eleven. . . I felt
trapped, like the cigarette
in the prongs of that con-
traption on her finger . . .

PULL BACK TO:

NORMA AND GILLIS sitting on a couch in front of the
cavernous fireplace. Norma holds out her cigarette
to Gillis, who lights it.

NORMA

What a wonderful next year it's going to be. What fun we're going to have. I'll have the pool filled for you. Or I'll open my house in Malibu, and you can have the whole ocean. Or I'll buy you a boat and we'll sail to Hawaii.

GILLIS

Stop it. You aren't going to buy me anything. You've bought me enough.

NORMA

Shut up. I'm rich. I'm richer than all this new Hollywood trash. I've got a million dollars.

GILLIS

Keep it.

NORMA

I own three blocks downtown. I have oil in Bakersfield -- pumping, pumping, pumping. What's it for but to buy us anything we want.

GILLIS

Cut out that us business.

He rises.

NORMA

What's the matter with you?

GILLIS

What right do you have to take me for granted?

NORMA

What right? Do you want me to tell you?

GILLIS

Has it ever occurred that I may have a life of my own? That there may be some girl I'm crazy about?

NORMA

Who? Some car hop, or a dress extra?

GILLIS

Why not? What I'm trying to say
is that I'm all wrong for you.
You want a Valentino -- somebody
with polo ponies -- a big shot --

NORMA

(Getting up slowly)

What you're trying to say is
that you don't want me to love
you. Is that it?

Gillis doesn't answer. Norma slaps his face and
rushes from the room and upstairs.

Gillis stands paralyzed, the slap burning his cheek.

C-10 THE TOP OF THE STAIRCASE AND CORRIDOR

Norma rushes up the last few steps, down the corridor
and into her bedroom, banging the door. MOVE THE
CAMERA toward the closed door, centering on the
gouged-out lock.

C-11 GILLIS, IN THE BIG ROOM

He still stands motionless. He glances around fur-
tively, to see if his humiliation has been observed.

C-12 THE ORCHESTRA

The musicians are playing away. They have turned
their eyes away from Gillis rather too ostentatious-
ly for comfort.

C-13 GILLIS

His eyes move over toward

C-14 MAX

He is subtler than the musicians. He appears very
busy at the buffet, putting empty bottles and used
glasses on a tray. He walks across the room with
them.

C-15 GILLIS

He starts slowly out. As he does so his long gold key chain catches on a carved ornament of the sofa and holds him for a second of additional embarrassment. He yanks it loose and walks with as much nonchalance as he can muster to

C-16 THE HALL

Crossing towards the coat closet, Gillis throws a look upstairs. Then he pulls the Vicuna coat from its hanger and slips into it as he crosses to the entrance door. He opens the door on the darkness of the courtyard.

C-17 EXT. DESMOND HOUSE
(NIGHT - RAIN)

Gillis shuts the door. He takes a few steps forward, then stands for a while breathing deep. The rain is balm to that cheek where the slap still burns. He walks forward with a great sense of relief.

GILLIS' VOICE

I didn't know where I was going. I just had to get out of there. I had to be with people my own age. I had to hear somebody laugh again. I thought of Artie Green. There was bound to be a New Year's shindig going on in his apartment down on Las Palmas -- the hock shop set -- not a job in the room, but lots of fun on the cuff.

C-18 DRIVEWAY LEADING TO
SUNSET BOULEVARD

Gillis walks to the street, which is dark and empty. He starts down Sunset in an Easterly direction. A car passes. He tries to thumb a ride, without success. However, the second car, a florist's delivery wagon, stops. Gillis jumps in and the car drives off.

DISSOLVE TO:

C-19

ARTIE GREEN'S APARTMENT

It is the most modest one-room affair, jam-packed with young people flowing over into the miniature bathroom and the microscopic kitchenette. The only drink being served is punch from a pressed-glass bowl -- but everybody is having a hell of a time. Most of the men are in slacks and sweaters, and only a few of the girls in something that vaguely suggests party dress.

X Abe Burroughs sits at a small, guest-festooned piano and sings Tokio Rose. By the door, a group of young men and girls respond to the song by singing Rinso White or Dentyne Chewing Gum or something similar, in the manner of a Bach choral. Artie Green, a dark haired, pleasant-looking guy in his late twenties, is conducting with the ladle from the punch bowl.

The door behind some of the singers is pushed open, jostling them out of their places. In comes Gillis, his hair and face wet, the collar of his Vicuna coat turned up. Artie stops conducting, but the commercial goes right on.

ARTIE

Well, what do you know! Joe Gillis!

GILLIS

Hi, Artie.

ARTIE

Where have you been keeping that dirty old face of yours?

(To the company)

Fans, you all know Joe Gillis, the well-known train robber, opium smuggler and Black Dahlia suspect.

Gillis greets some of the kids by name as he and Artie push their way into the room.

ARTIE

Give me your coat.

GILLIS

Let it ride for awhile.

ARTIE

You're going to stay, aren't you?

GILLIS

That was the general idea.

ARTIE

Come on.

Artie starts peeling the coat off Gillis. Its texture takes his breath away.

ARTIE

What is this -- mink?

He has taken the coat. He looks at Gillis standing there in tails.

ARTIE

X Judas H. Priest, who did you borrow that from? Adolphe Menjou?

GILLIS

Close, but no cigar.

Gillis stands embarrassed while Artie rolls up the Vicuna coat and tucks it above the books on a bookshelf.

ARTIE

Say, you're not really smuggling opium these days, are you?

GILLIS

Where's the bar?

The two make their way toward the punch bowl. It's a little like running the gauntlet for Gillis. There are whistles and stares of astonishment at his tails. When they reach the punch bowl, Artie picks up a half-filled glass and fills it.

GILLIS

Good party.

ARTIE

X It's all on C.B.S. Just signed up to play the lead in a new suspense serial: The Belcher.

(Burlesquing "The Whistler")

I know many a strange dish, so I belch at night.

They take a drink.

GILLIS

Listen, Artie, can I stick around here for a while?

ARTIE

Sure, this'll go on all night.

GILLIS

I mean, could you put me up for a couple of weeks?

ARTIE

It just so happens we have a vacancy on the couch.

GILLIS

I'll take it.

ARTIE

I'll have the bell-hop take care of your luggage.

He runs his finger across the decollete back of a girl standing in a group next them.

ARTIE

Just register here.

The girl turns around. She is Betty Schaefer.

BETTY

Hello, Mr. Gillis.

ARTIE

You know each other?

Gillis looks at her a little puzzled.

BETTY

Let me help you. Betty Schaefer, Sheldrake's office.

GILLIS

Sure. Bases Loaded.

ARTIE

Wait a minute. This is the woman I love. What's going on? Who was loaded?

GILLIS

Don't worry. She's just a fan for my literary output.

BETTY

(to Artie)
Hurt feelings department.

GILLIS

About that luggage. Where's the phone?

ARTIE

Over by the Rainbow Room.

Gillis squeezes his way through groups of people to the telephone, which is next to an open door leading to the bathroom. The phone is busy. A girl sits listening to it, giggling wildly. Another girl beside her is laughing too. They are apparently sharing a conversation with some man on the other end of the wire. The telephone passes from hand to hand. Gillis watches impatiently, then

GILLIS

When you're through with that thing, can I have it?

The girl just nods, going on with her chattering. Gillis stands waiting, and Betty Schaefer comes up with his glass.

BETTY

You forgot this.

GILLIS

Thanks.

BETTY

I've been hoping to run into you.

GILLIS

What for? As if I didn't know. You wanted to recover that knife you stuck in my back.

BETTY

I felt a little guilty, so I got out some of your old stories.

GILLIS

Why, you sweet kid.

BETTY

There's one called....Window... something with a window.

GILLIS

Blind Windows. How did you like it?

BETTY

I didn't.

GILLIS

Thank you.

BETTY

Except for about six pages.
You've got a flashback there ...

There is too much racket for her.

BETTY

Is there someplace we can talk?

GILLIS

How about the Rainbow Room?

They squeeze their way towards the bathroom, past Artie.

ARTIE

I said you could have my couch.
I didn't say you could have my
girl.

BETTY

This is shop talk.

She and Gillis go through the open door into

C-20 ARTIE'S BATHROOM

It's a little less noisy, although there are some guests there, chatting and having fun. Betty and Gillis sit down on the edge of the tub.

GILLIS

Now if I got you correctly, there was a short stretch of my fiction you found worthy of notice.

BETTY

The flashback in the courtroom, when she tells about being a school teacher.

GILLIS

That wasn't exactly fiction. That's something that happened to my cousin Katie. She taught school in Dayton.

BETTY

Maybe that's why it's good. If you forgot all the rest and made those six pages into something ...

GILLIS

Into what? A lampshade?

BETTY

Into something true, something moving.

GILLIS

Who wants true? Who wants moving?

BETTY

Drop that attitude. There are good pictures being made, and this can be one of them.

GILLIS

Want me to start right now? Maybe there's some paper around.

BETTY

I'm serious. I've got a few ideas.

GILLIS

I've got some ideas myself. One of them being this is New Year's Eve. How about living it up a little?

BETTY

As for instance?

GILLIS

Well

BETTY

We could make some paper boats and have a regatta. Or should we just turn on the shower?

GILLIS

How about capturing the kitchen and barricading the door?

BETTY

Are you hungry?

GILLIS

Hungry? After twelve years in the Burmese jungle, I am starving, Lady Agatha -- starving for a white shoulder --

BETTY

Phillip, you're mad!

One of the girls who was on the phone comes to the door.

GIRL

You can have the phone now.

GILLIS

(Paying no attention)
Thirsting for the coolness of
your lips --

BETTY

No, Phillip, no. We must be
strong. You're still wearing
the uniform of the Coldstream
Guards! Furthermore, you can
have the phone now.

GILLIS

O.K.

(He gets up, starts
out, turns)
I find I'm terribly afraid of
losing you.

BETTY

You won't.
(She takes the glass
out of his hand)
I'll get us a refill of this
awful stuff.

GILLIS

You'll be waiting for me?

BETTY

With a wildly beating heart.

GILLIS

Life can be beautiful!

He leaves.

C-21

THE MAIN ROOM

Gillis squeezes himself through some guests to the phone. He has to stand in a cramped position, holding the instrument close to him as he dials a number.

GILLIS

Max? This is Mr. Gillis.
I want you to do me a favor.

C-22 NORMA DRSMOND HOUSE

Max is at the phone, in the lower hall.

MAX

I am sorry, Mr. Gillis.
I cannot talk now.

C-23 GILLIS ON THE PHONE

GILLIS

Yes you can. I want you to get my old suitcase and I want you to throw in my old clothes -- the ones I came with, and my typewriter. I'll have somebody pick them up.

C-24 MAX AT THE PHONE

MAX

I have no time to talk. The doctor is here.

C-25 GILLIS ON THE PHONE

GILLIS

What doctor? What's going on?

C-26 MAX ON THE PHONE

MAX

She got the razor from your room. She cut her wrists.

Max hangs up, moves toward the staircase.

C-27 GILLIS AT THE PHONE

GILLIS

Max! Max!

He hangs up the dead receiver, stands numb with shock. Betty elbows her way up to him, carrying the two punch glasses filled again.

BETTY

I just got the recipe: take two packages of cough drops, dissolve in one gallon of lukewarm grape juice --

Gillis looks up at her. Without a word he pushes her aside so that she spills the drink. He makes his way through the guests to the Vicuna coat, pulls it from the shelf, some books tumbling with it, and rushes towards the door and out. Betty stands looking after him, completely bewildered.

DISSOLVE TO:

C-28 EXT. DESMOND HOUSE (NIGHT, RAIN)

The doctor's car is parked in the driveway. A taxi pulls up. Gillis, in his Vicuna coat now, jumps out, throws a couple of dollars to the driver and runs toward the house. From the door come the musicians in hats and overcoats, carrying their instruments. Gillis pushes past them into the house.

C-29 ENTRANCE HALL AND STAIRCASE, DESMOND HOUSE

Gillis crosses the hall and starts up the stairs three at a time. Down the stairs come Max and a doctor, carrying a black bag.

GILLIS

How is she?

MAX

Go on up.

Gillis continues up the stairs.

C-30 INT. NORMA DESMOND'S ROOM

Only one alabaster lamp lights the big, cold room. On the bed lies Norma in her evening dress. She is white as a sheet. Her wrists are bandaged. Her eyes are wide open, staring at the ceiling. One of her shoes has half slipped off her foot. The other is on. Gillis opens the door and stands there for a second. Then he slowly moves to the foot of the bed. He takes the shoes from her feet and puts them on the floor.

NORMA

Go away.

GILLIS

What kind of a silly thing was that to do?

NORMA
I'll do it again, I'll do it
again, I'll do it again!

GILLIS
That sure will make attractive
headlines: Great Star Kills
Herself for some crumb of a writer.

NORMA
Great stars have great pride.

She puts one bandaged forearm over her eyes, sobbing. Gillis walks slowly over to the mantelpiece, stands there for a while. His eyes fall on his wrist watch and he begins to whistle Auld Lang Syne very softly.

NORMA
Go away. Go to that girl of yours.

GILLIS
Look, I was making that up be-
cause I thought the whole thing was
a mistake. I didn't want to hurt
you. You've been good to me. You're
the only person in this stinking
town that has been good to me.

NORMA
Why don't you just say thank you
and go, go, go!

Gillis takes off his coat, walks over to the bed, sits there.

GILLIS
Happy New Year.

Norma turns her head away. Gillis puts his hands on her shoulders and turns her around.

GILLIS
Happy New Year.

Norma looks at him, her pale eyes dim with tears.

NORMA
Happy New Year, darling.

She kisses him, enfolding him in her bandaged arms.

DISSOLVE:

END OF SEQUENCE "C"

SEQUENCE "D"

DISSOLVE IN ON:

D-1

PATIO, NORMA DESMOND'S
HOUSE (A SUNNY DAY)

The garden is in somewhat better shape. The old house looks less unkempt. The pool is filled and lying on a rubber mattress in the middle of it, is Gillis in bathing trunks. He is tanned and relaxed. Norma sits on a wicker chaise longue, her face shielded by an enormous straw hat, her eyes by dark glasses. She is studying a typewritten letter.

Across the patio from the house Max has wheeled a luncheon table, set for two. He is arranging two chairs beside it.

NORMA
(To Gillis)
Luncheon is ready, darling.

GILLIS
O.K.

Lackadaisically he starts paddling the raft towards the pool's edge.

MAX
(To Norma)
I went to Santa Monica and got some of the small lobsters ...

NORMA
Mr. Gillis hates lobsters.

MAX
There is some ham and eggs for Mr. Gillis.

NORMA
Very good. Now this afternoon I want you to get out the car and take the script over to Paramount. Deliver it to Mr. deKille in person.

MAX

Yes, Madame.

GILLIS

(Climbing out of
the water)You're really going to send it
to deMille?

NORMA

This is the day.

(Indicating the letter)

The chart from my astrologer. She
read deMille's horoscope. She
read mine.

GILLIS

Did she read the script?

NORMA

(Picking up an enor-
mous bath towel)DeMille is Leo; I'm Scorpio.
Mars has been transiting Jupiter
for weeks. Today is the day of
greatest conjunction. Now turn
around -- let me dry you.She puts the towel around his shoulders and starts
drying him.

GILLIS

I hope you realize, Norma, that
scripts don't sell on astrologers'
charts.

NORMA

I'm not just selling the script.
I'm selling me. Norma Desmond
in Salome. How does it sound?

GILLIS

Sounds fine.

NORMA

DeMille will jump at it.

GILLIS

Norma dear, don't get your hopes up
too high ... I'm sure deMille would
like to make a picture with you --

NORMA

The question is: would I like to
make a picture with him.

D-2

INT. THE ISOTTA, DRIVING
DOWN SUNSET ABOUT 8:30
IN THE EVENING

Max is driving. In the tonneau sit Norma, in a chinchilla wrap, and Gillis in his tuxedo. Norma is rummaging through her evening bag. She finds a cigarette case, opens it. It is empty.

GILLIS' VOICE

A few evenings later we were going to the house of one of the waxworks for some bridge. She'd taught me how to play bridge by then, just as she'd taught me some fancy tango steps, and what wine to drink with what fish.

NORMA

That idiot. He forgot to fill my cigarette case.

GILLIS

(Proffering his case)

Have one of mine.

NORMA

They're awful. They make me cough.

GILLIS

(Pushing open the glass partition, to Max)

Pull up at the drugstore, will you, Max.

(To Norma)

I'll get you some.

NORMA

You're a darling.

She takes a dollar bill from her purse and gives it to him.

D-3

EXT. SCHWAB'S DRUGSTORE

The car drives up and Gillis hurries into the store.

D-4

INT. SCHWAB'S DRUGSTORE

Business is still rather lively. There are about a dozen shoppers, and the soda counter is half filled. Gillis enters and steps to the tobacco counter.

GILLIS

(To the salesgirl)

Give me a pack of those Turkish cigarettes -- Melachrinos.

The girl opens the glass showcase to locate the fancy brand. From OFF comes

ARTIE'S VOICE

Stick 'em up, Gillis, or I'll let you have it!

Gillis turns.

D-5

AT THE SODA FOUNTAIN

Artie Green and Betty Schaefer sit having a sandwich and a milk shake. With his forefinger and a sound effect, Artie riddles Gillis' body. Gillis walks INTO THE SHOT.

GILLIS

Hello.

BETTY

(Excitedly)

You don't know how glad I am to see you!

ARTIE

Walking out on the mob. What's the big idea?

GILLIS

I'm sorry about New Year's. Would you believe me if I said I had to be with a sick friend?

ARTIE

(To Betty)

That explains it. A pal of his got bitten by Lassie. Gangrene set in. Now he's all dressed up for the funeral.

BETTY

Stop it, Artie, will you?

(To Gillis)

Where have you been keeping yourself? I've got the most wonderful news for you.

GILLIS

I haven't been keeping myself at all. Not lately.

4-8-49

BETTY

I called your apartment, I called your agent. I was just about to call the Bureau of Missing Persons.

GILLIS

What's the wonderful news?

BETTY

Sheldrake likes that angle about the teacher.

GILLIS

What teacher?

BETTY

Blind Windows. I got him all hopped up about it.

GILLIS

You did?

BETTY

He thinks it could be made into something.

GILLIS

Into what? A lampshade?

BETTY

Into something for Olivia DeHavilland. They have a commitment with DeHavilland.

ARTIE

Unless you'd rather have Sarah Bernhardt.

BETTY

This is on the level. Sheldrake really went for it.

GILLIS

O.K. Where's the cash?

BETTY

Where's the story? I bluffed it out with a few notions of my own. It's really just a springboard. It needs work.

GILLIS

I was afraid of that.

BETTY

I've got twenty pages of notes.
I've got a pretty good character
for the man.

GILLIS

Could you work in a part for poor
old Artie? Kind of a repulsive
Rory Calhoun?

BETTY

Shut up, Artie.
(To Gillis)
Now if we could sit down for two
weeks and get a story.

GILLIS

Sorry, Miss Schaefer, but I've
given up writing on spec.

BETTY

This is half sold.

GILLIS

As a matter of fact, I've given
up writing altogether.

ARTIE

I told you he took over where
Bugsy Siegel left off. Get those
studs. Get those cuff-links...

There is a honk from the horn of the Isotta.

GILLIS

I've got to run along. Thanks
anyway for your interest in my
career.

BETTY

It's not your career -- it's mine.
I wanted to get in on this deal.
I don't want to be a reader all my
life. I want to write.

GILLIS

Sorry if I crossed you up.

BETTY

You sure have.

GILLIS

So long.

He leaves.

ARTIE

(Patting her hand)

Babe, it's like that producer says:
In life, you've got to take the
bitter with the sour.

D-6

THE ISOTTA, PARKED OUTSIDE

Gillis comes from Schwab's, gets into the car.
Max takes off.

NORMA

What on earth, darling? It took
you hours.

GILLIS

I ran into some people I knew.

NORMA

Where are my cigarettes?

GILLIS

Where are your...?

He realizes he's forgotten them, takes the dollar
and hands it back to her.

GILLIS

Norma, you're smoking too much.

DISSOLVE TO:

D-7

LIVING ROOM, NORMA
DESMOND'S HOUSE
(EARLY AFTERNOON)

Start on a tiny
parasol being
twirled...Norma
peeks out from one
side of the parasol,
a bandanna tied
around her head with
a rabbit's-ear bow.
She bats her eyes,
winks roguishly.

GILLIS' VOICE

Whenever she suspected I
was getting bored, she
would put on a live show
for me: the Norma Desmond
Follies. Her first number
was always the Mack Sennett
Bathing Beauty.

THE CAMERA PULLS BACK to reveal that Norma's black
pyjama trousers are rolled up over her knees and her
black stockings rolled down below them. The whole
effect approximates a Mack Sennett bathing costume
pretty effectively. She points at a leather pouf.

NORMA

This is a rock.

She climbs on it, pantomimes timidity, an attempted dive, then jumps off.

Gillis lolls on a couch, watching the performance, very bored.

NORMA

I can still see myself in the line: Bebe Daniels, Marie Prevost, Mabel Normand ... Mabel was always stepping on my feet ... What's the matter with you, darling? Why are you so glum?

GILLIS

(Lighting a cigarette with a match)

Nothing is the matter. I'm having a great time. Show me some more.

NORMA

(Taking the match)

All right. Give me this. I need it for a moustache. Now close your eyes.

She runs out of the picture. Gillis has closed his eyes. THE CAMERA MOVES to his face.

GILLIS' VOICE

Something was the matter, all right. I was thinking about that girl of Artie's, that Miss Schaefer. She was so like all us writers when we first hit Hollywood -- itching with ambition, panting to get your names up there: Screenplay by. Original Story by. Hmph! Audiences don't know somebody sits down and writes a picture. They think the actors make it up as they go along.

NORMA'S VOICE

Open your eyes.

Gillis opens his eyes.

Norma has equipped herself with a derby hat, a cane, and blacked in a small moustache. She goes into a little Chaplin routine. While she is doing it, the telephone rings. After a moment Max comes to the living room door.

MAX

Madame is wanted on the telephone.

NORMA

You know better than to interrupt me.

MAX

Paramount is calling.

NORMA

Who?

MAX

Paramount studios.

NORMA

(To Gillis)

Now, now do you believe me? I told you deMille would jump at it.

MAX

It is not Mr. deMille in person. It is someone by the name of Gordon Cole. He says it's very important.

NORMA

Certainly it's important. It's important enough for Mr. deMille to call me personally. The idea of having an assistant call me!

MAX

I myself was surprised at Mr. de Mille's manners.

NORMA

Say that I'm busy, and hang up.

MAX

Very good, Madam.

He bows and exits.

NORMA

How do you like that? We've made twelve pictures together. His greatest successes.

GILLIS

Maybe deMille is shooting.

NORMA

I know that trick! He wants to belittle me. He's trying to get my pride down. I've waited twenty years for this call. Now Mr. deMille can wait till I'm good and ready.

DISSOLVE TO:

D-8

NORMA, IN THE TONNEAU
OF THE LIMOUSINE,
DRIVING DOWN MELROSE

She is in full makeup with a veil, a daring hat, a suit so stunning only she would venture to wear it. THE CAMERA PULLS BACK. Beside her sits Gillis in the glen plaid suit. Max is driving.

GILLIS' VOICE

About three days later she was good and ready. Incredible as it may seem, there had been some more of those calls from Paramount. So she put on about half a pound of makeup, fixed it up with a veil, and set forth to see deMille in person.

Norma is examining her face in the mirror of her vanity. Max, while driving, sees her in the rear view mirror.

MAX

If you will pardon me, Madame. The shadow over the left eye is not quite balanced.

NORMA

Thank you, Max.

With a handkerchief, she corrects it.

D-9

MAIN GATE, PARAMOUNT STUDIO

The car drives down Bronson and stops smack in front of the iron gate. A young policeman is talking to an extra; an old policeman sits reading a newspaper. Max sounds the horn impatiently.

YOUNG POLICEMAN

Hold that noise!

MAX

To see Mr. deMille. Open the gate.

YOUNG POLICEMAN

Mr. DeMille is shooting. You got an appointment?

MAX

No appointment is necessary. I am bringing Norma Desmond.

YOUNG POLICEMAN

Norma who?

Norma has rolled down the window on her side. She calls to the old policeman.

NORMA

Jonesy! Come here, Jonesy!

OLD POLICEMAN

Yeah?

(He comes forward slowly)

Why, if it isn't Miss Desmond!
How have you been, Miss Desmond?

NORMA

Fine, Jonesy. Now open that gate.

OLD POLICEMAN

Sure, Miss Desmond.
(To the young policeman)
Come on, Mac.

YOUNG POLICEMAN

They can't drive on the lot without a pass.

OLD POLICEMAN

Miss Desmond can. Come on.

They fling open the gate.

OLD POLICEMAN

(As the car
drives through)

Stage eighteen, Miss Desmond.

NORMA

Thank you Jonesy. And teach your friend some manners. Tell him without me he wouldn't have any job, because without me there wouldn't be any Paramount Studio.

(To Max)

Go on.

They drive through the gates. The old policeman goes to wall phone beside the gate, dials a number.

OLD POLICEMAN
(Into phone)
Norma Desmond coming in to
see Mr. deMille.

D-10 STAGE 18

A scene from SAMSON AND DELILAH is being rehearsed in the background. The usual turbulent activity surrounds it: extras, makeup men, grips, assistants, etc., etc. In the dim foreground a stage hand is answering a stand telephone. He puts down the phone and moves (CAMERA WITH HIM) to a second assistant.

STAGE HAND
Norma Desmond is coming to see
Mr. deMille.

The second assistant walks (CAMERA WITH HIM) to the first assistant.

2nd ASSISTANT
Norma Desmond coming in to
see Mr. deMille.

The first assistant (CAMERA WITH HIM) hurries to the set. Sitting with his back toward us is C.B. himself. His is rehearsing a scene with Hedy Lamarr.

1st ASSISTANT
Norma Desmond is coming in to
see you, Mr. deMille.

C.B. turns his head.

DEMILLE
Norma Desmond?

1st ASSISTANT
She must be a million years old.

DE MILLE
I hate to think where that
puts me. I could be her
father.

1st ASSISTANT
I'm terribly sorry, Mr. deMille.

By this time deMille is on his feet.

DE MILLE
It must be about that appalling
script of hers. What can I say
to her? What can I say?

1st ASSISTANT
I could give her the brush.

DE MILLE
Nobody gives Norma Desmond the
bursh.
(To the set)
Hold everything.

He starts towards the door of the stage, the assistant
following him.

D-11 EXT. STAGE 18

Norma's limousine drives up. Max dismounts and opens
the door.

NORMA
(Taking Gillis'
hand)
Don't you want to come along,
darling?

GILLIS
I don't think so. It's your
script. It's your show. Good
luck.

NORMA
Thank you, darling.

She presses his hand against her chest, descends
from the car and walks toward --

D-12 THE DOOR TO STAGE 18

The first assistant is holding it open. In the doorway stands Mr. deMille. Seeing Norma, he stretches out his arms.

DE MILLE

Hello, young fellow.

NORMA

Hello, Mr. deMille.

She has reached him. They embrace.

NORMA

Last time I saw you was someplace very gay. I remember waving to you. I was dancing on a table.

DE MILLE

Lots of people were. Lindbergh had just landed in Paris. Come on in.

He leads her into

D-13 STAGE 18

During the ensuing dialogue, Mr. deMille walks Norma towards the set.

DE MILLE

Norma, I want to apologize for not calling you.

NORMA

You'd better. I'm very angry.

DE MILLE

I'm pretty busy, as you can see...

NORMA

That's no excuse. You read the script, didn't you?

DE MILLE

Yes, I did.

NORMA

Then you could have picked up the phone yourself instead of leaving it to one of your assistants.

DE MILLE

What assistant?

NORMA

Don't play innocent. Somebody
named Gordon Cole.

DE MILLE

Gordon Cole?

NORMA

And if you hadn't been pretty
darned interested in that script,
he wouldn't have tried to get
me on the phone ten times.

DE MILLE

Gordon Cole...Look, Norma,
I'm in the middle of a rehearsal.
(Indicating his
own chair)
Make yourself comfortable.

He walks onto the set, accompanied by his assistants.

DE MILLE

(Sotto voce, to his
first assistant)
Get me Gordon Cole on the phone.

Meanwhile, Norma starts to sit, sees the name
MISS LAMARR on the chair and with a look of
distaste changes and sits on the one marked
C.B. DE MILLE. From somewhere comes

A VOICE

Hey, Miss Desmond! Miss Desmond!

She looks around her.

A VOICE

Up here!

Norma looks up at the scaffolding.

On the scaffolding is one of the electricians next to his light.

ELECTRICIAN

It's me! It's Hog-eye!

Norma waves at him.

NORMA

Hello.

Hog-eye points his light at her.

HOG-EYE

Let's get a look at you.

The beam of the lamp moves toward Norma. It hits her. She sits bathed in light. A couple of old costume extras recognize her.

EXTRAS

Say, it's Norma!
Norma Desmond!

They rush over and start shaking her hand. Into the shot comes a middle-aged hairdresser.

HAIRDRESSER

Hello, Miss Desmond. It's Bessie.

Some elderly electricians and stagehands move in.

D-14 ANOTHER PART OF THE STAGE

The first assistant brings the portable phone to deMille. DeMille lifts the receiver.

DE MILLE

Hello.

D-15 GORDON COLE'S OFFICE BY THE PROPERTY DEPARTMENT

GORDON COLE ON THE PHONE.

COLE

Prop Department. Gordon Cole speaking.

D-16 DE MILLE ON STAGE 18

DE MILLE

Cole, This is C.B. deMille. Have you been calling Norma Desmond?... What's it about?

D-17 GORDON COLE, ON THE PHONE

COLE

It's that car of hers -- an old Isotta-Franchini. Her chauffeur drove it on the lot the other day. It looks just right for the Crosby picture. We want to rent it for a couple of weeks.

D-18 DE MILLE ON THE PHONE

DE MILLE

(Troubled)

Oh. Well, thank you.

He hangs up, walks back towards Norma. (CAMERA WITH HIM).

Norma still sits in the shaft of light, surrounded by about a dozen people who have come up to pay court. DeMille gestures up to Hog-eye and the light shifts away. The people about Norma disperse slowly with various ad-libs.

DE MILLE

Well, Norma...

(He sits down next to her)

I got hold of Gordon Cole.

Norma hasn't heard a word.

NORMA

Did you see them? Did you see how they come?

DE MILLE

You know, crazy things happen in this business. I hope you haven't lost you sense of humor...

NORMA

(Not hearing him)

They were coming like little children.

DE MILLE

Norma dear, all those telephone calls...

NORMA

It's all right. I've forgiven you. You like the script, that's what matters.

DE MILLE

It's got a lot of good things. Of course, it would be a very expensive picture...

NORMA

Who cares? Can't you see them standing at the box office? Lines that stretch for blocks!

DE MILLE

Look, Norma, it isn't entirely my decision. New York must be consulted.

NORMA

I'm not afraid. Ask any exhibitor in the country. I am not forgotten.

DE MILLE

Of course you're not, Norma.

NORMA

Let's get one thing straight, here and now. I don't work before ten in the morning, and never after four-thirty in the afternoon.

The first assistant has come up.

1st ASSISTANT

We're ready with the shot, Mr. deMille.

DE MILLE

You'll pardon me, Norma? Why don't you just sit and watch?

(He steps onto the set)

O.K. Here we go.

1st ASSISTANT

Roll 'em.

DE MILLE

Action!

D-19 THE ISOTTA PARKED OUTSIDE STAGE 18

Max stands talking to Gillis, who is seated in the car.

MAX

(Pointing to the row
of offices in the
building opposite)

You see those offices there, Mr. Gillis? They used to be her dressing room. The whole row.

GILLIS

That didn't leave much for Wallace Reid.

MAX

He had a great big bungalow on wheels. I had the upstairs. See where it says 'Reader's Department'? I remember my walls were covered with black patent leather...

The words "Reader's Department" have registered on Gillis' mind. He gets out of the car.

GILLIS

I'll be with you in a minute.

He crosses the street towards the green staircase leading to the second floor.

Meanwhile, two prop men walking down the street come inot the SHOT.

1ST PROP MAN

Hey, that's the comic car Cole was talking about!

(To Max)

Do you mind if we look inside?

MAX

Go away. Go away.

D-20 CUBICLE IN THE READERS' DEPARTMENT

Behind the desk sits Betty, typing the synopsis of a novel, a half-eaten apple marking her place. The door behind her opens and Gillis enters.

GILLIS

Just so you don't think I'm a complete swine -- if there's anything in Dark Windows you can use, take it. It's all yours.

BETTY

Well, for heaven's sake!

She moves the book and the apple aside and points at the free space on the desk.

BETTY

Have a chair.

Gillis sits on the desk.

GILLIS

I mean it. It's no good to me anyway. Help yourself.

BETTY

Why should you do that?

GILLIS

If you get a hundred thousand for it, you buy me a box of chocolate creams. If you get an Oscar, I get the left foot.

BETTY

You know, I'd take you up on that in a minute. I'm just not good enough to do it all by myself.

GILLIS

What about all those ideas you had?

BETTY

See if they make sense. To begin with, I think you should throw out all that psychological stuff -- exploring a killer's sick mind.

GILLIS

Psychopaths sell like hotcakes

BETTY

This story is about teachers -- their threadbare lives, their struggles. Here are people doing the most important job in the world, and they have to worry about getting enough money to resole their shoes. To me it can be as exciting as any chase, any gunplay.

GILLIS

Check.

BETTY

Now I see her teaching day classes
while he teaches night school. The
first time they meet...

From below comes the SOUND of the Isotta's horn.

GILLIS

Look, if you don't mind, I haven't
got time to listen to the whole
plot...

BETTY

I'll make it short

GILLIS

Sorry. It's your baby now.

BETTY

I'm not good enough to write it
alone. We'll have to do it together.

GILLIS

I'm all tied up. I can't.

BETTY

Couldn't we work in the evenings?
Six o'clock in the morning? This
next month I'm completely at your
disposal. Artie is out of town.

GILLIS

What has Artie to do with it.

BETTY

We're engaged.

GILLIS

Good for you. You've got yourself
the best guy in town.

BETTY

I think so. They're on location
in Arizona, shooting a Western.
I'm free every evening, every week-
end. If you want, we could work at
your place.

GILLIS

It's just impossible.

BETTY

Nobody can be that busy.

There is antoher honk from down below.

GILLIS

Look, Betty, It can't be done.
It's out.

GILLIS

No I'm not. I've given you the story. Stop being chicken-hearted. Write it.

BETTY

Honest to goodness, I hate you.

GILLIS

(Turning in the open door)

And don't make it too dreary. How about this for a situation: the two live in the same boarding house. They're so poor they have to share the same room, the same bed. They sleep in shifts, of course -- because she teaches daytimes and he teaches at night, see?

BETTY

Are you kidding? Because I think it's good.

GILLIS

So do I.

BETTY

Come on back. Let me show you where it fits in.

She reaches in a drawer for her notes on Blind Windows.

GILLIS

(At the door)

So long.

Betty picks up the apple and is about to throw it after him.

BETTY

Oh, you --

GILLIS

And here's a title: AN APPLE FOR THE TEACHER.

He ducks out quickly, slamming the door behind him. Betty looks after him, then angrily hurls the apple into the wastebasket.

Max is rushing up the stairs toward the descending Gillis.

GILLIS

What's the matter, Max?

MAX

I just found out why all those telephone calls. It is not Miss Desmond they want. It is the car they want to rent.

GILLIS

What?

Max has seen something off.

MAX

Ssh...

With his head he indicates

D-22

THE ENTRANCE TO STAGE 18

The first assistant has opened the door. DeMille is showing Norma out.

DE MILLE

Goodbye, young fellow. We'll see what we can do.

NORMA

(embracing him)

I'm not worried. Everything will be fine. The old team together. Nothing can stop us.

She turns and walks out of the shot. De Mille stands for a second watching her, then turns to his assistant.

DE MILLE

Get Gordon Cole. Tell him to forget about her car. He can find another old car. I'll buy him five old cars, if necessary.

1ST ASSISTANT

Yes, Mr. De Mille.

They turn back into Stage 18.

4/11/49

D-23

THE ISOTTA

Gillis seated in the rear. Max is helping Norma in and putting the robe over her.

GILLIS

(Apprehensively)

How did it go?

NORMA

It couldn't have gone better. It's practically set. Of course, he has to finish this picture first, but mine will be his next ... I feel it ... I feel it.

There is an exchange of looks between Max and Gillis.

GILLIS

He must be quite a guy.

NORMA

Just wonderful. He says I've never looked better in my life. Of course I've never looked better, because I've never been as happy.

(She lifts the veil)

Kiss me, darling.

Gillis bends forward to kiss her cheek just as the car drives off.

SLOW DISSOLVE:

END OF SEQUENCE "D"

4-11-49

SEQUENCE "E"

DISSOLVE IN ON:

E-1 CLOSEUP OF NORMA'S FACE

Absolutely no makeup. A hand with a strong small flashlight comes into the picture. The beam of the flashlight travels over the face, exploring it mercilessly. While the light is still on it, two pairs of creamed hands come into the shot and start to massage it.

GILLIS' VOICE

After that, an army of beauty experts invaded her house on Sunset Boulevard. She went through a merciless series of treatments, massages, sweat cabinets, mud baths, ice compresses, electric devices. She lived on vegetable juices and went to bed at nine. She was determined to be ready -- ready for those cameras that would never turn.

DISSOLVE TO:

E-2 A SHORT MONTAGE of various beauty treatments applied to Norma.

DISSOLVE TO:

E-3 NORMA BEFORE THE MIRROR IN HER BEDROOM

It is nine o'clock in the evening. She is in night gown and negligee and has put triangular patches on the saddle of her nose and at the outer corner of each eye. She is rubbing lotion on her hands.

She gets up and crosses to the door of Gillis' room and opens it a crack.

NORMA

Joe darling, are you there?

E-4 GILLIS' ROOM

It is dark except for a lamp over the chaise longue. Gillis lies on it, fully clothed, reading a book.

GILLIS

Yes, Norma.

Through the slit in the door there is a suggestion of Norma.

NORMA

Don't turn around. Keep your
eyes on the book.

GILLIS

Yes, Norma.

Norma pushes the door open and comes in.

NORMA

I just came to say good night.
I don't want you to see me --
I'm not very attractive.

GILLIS

Good night.

NORMA

I've lost half a pound since
Tuesday.

GILLIS

Good.

NORMA

I was a little worried about the
line of my throat. This woman
has done wonders with it.

GILLIS

Good.

NORMA

You'd better get to bed yourself.

GILLIS

I think I'll read a little.

NORMA

You went out last night, didn't
you, Joe?

GILLIS

Why do you say that?

NORMA

I just happen to know it. I had
a nightmare and I screamed for
you. You weren't here. Where
were you?

GILLIS

I went for a walk.

NORMA

No you didn't. You took the car.

GILLIS

All right, I drove to the beach. Norma, you don't want me to feel I'm locked up in this house?

NORMA

Of course not, Joe. It's just that I don't want to be left alone. Not now, while I'm under this terrible strain. My nerves are being torn apart. All I ask is for you to be a little patient and a little kind.

GILLIS

I haven't done anything, Norma.

NORMA

Of course you haven't. I wouldn't let you.

She bends and kisses the top of his head.

NORMA

Good night, my darling.

She goes into her room, shutting the door behind her.

Gillis puts his book down and looks at her door.

E-5

THE DOOR TO NORMA'S ROOM

The light can be seen through the gouged-out keyhole. It goes out.

DISSOLVE TO:

5-17-49

E-6 UPPER LANDING, STAIRWAY
AND HALL BELOW (NIGHT)

Gillis, with his coat on by now, comes cautiously to the upper railing and looks down into the lighted hall below.

Max is just extinguishing the lights. Max exits in the direction of the living room.

After a moment Gillis starts silently down the stairs.

E-7 LIVING ROOM

(Lighted only by the last flicker of a fire on the hearth). Max is putting a fire screen in front of the fire. He hears some steps and the creak of the main door being opened. He looks out and sees

E-7a THE MAIN DOOR

Gillis, in the moonlit porch, is closing the main door behind him.

E-8 LIVING ROOM

Max looks after Gillis, his face enigmatic as ever.

DISSOLVE TO:

E-9 GARAGE AND DRIVEWAY
(MOONLIGHT)

Gillis comes into the shot, gets into the Isotta, drives it out of the garage and down the driveway to Sunset, as quietly as possible.

DISSOLVE TO:

GILLIS' VOICE

Yes, I was playing hooky every evening along in there. It made me think of when I was twelve and used to sneak out on the folks to see a gangster picture. This time it wasn't to see a picture, it was to try and write one. That story of mine Betty Schaefer had dug up kept going through my head like a dozen locomotives...

E-6 UPPER LANDING, STAIRWAY
AND HALL BELOW (NIGHT)

GILLIS' VOICE
(Narration to be
written)

Gillis, with his coat on by now, comes cautiously to the upper railing and looks down into the lighted hall below.

Max is just extinguishing the lights. Max exits in the direction of the living room.

After a moment Gillis starts silently down the stairs.

E-7 LIVING ROOM

(Lighted only by the last flicker of a fire on the hearth). Max is putting a fire screen in front of the fire. He hears some steps and the creak of the main door being opened. He looks out and sees

E-7 THE MAIN DOOR

Gillis, in the moonlit porch, is closing the main door behind him.

E-8 LIVING ROOM

Max looks after Gillis, his face enigmatic as ever.

DISSOLVE TO:

E-9 GARAGE AND DRIVEWAY
(MOONLIGHT)

Gillis comes into the shot, gets into the Isotta, drives it out of the garage and down the driveway to Sunset, as quietly as possible.

DISSOLVE TO:

A. NORMA'S BEDROOM

Norma, a negligee over her nightgown, sits dialing a number.

NORMA

Can I speak to Miss Betty Schaefer? She must be home by now.

B. A BEDROOM IN BETTY'S FLAT

Connie, a girl of Betty's age, with whom she shares the flat, is on the phone. Betty, in a dressing gown, comes from the bathroom, toothbrush in hand.

CONNIE

(Hand over mouthpiece)

Betty, here's that weird-sounding woman again.

BETTY

What is this anyway?
(Taking the phone)
This is Betty Schaefer.

C. NORMA AT THE PHONE

NORMA

Miss Schaefer, you must forgive me for calling you so late, but I really feel it's my duty. It's about Mr. Gillis. You do know Mr. Gillis? ... Exactly how much do you know about him? Do you know where he lives? Do you know how he lives? Do you know what he lives on?

D. BETTY AT THE PHONE

BETTY

Who are you? What do you want?
What business is it of yours anyway?

E. NORMA ON THE PHONE

NORMA

Miss Schaefer, I'm trying to do you a favor. I'm trying to spare you a great deal of misery. Of course you're too young to even suspect there are men of his sort...

NORMA (Continued)

No, Miss Schaefer, he does not live with relatives, nor with friends, in the usual sense of the word. Ask him... Ask him again.

During the latter part of her call, the doors from Gillis' room have been pushed open and Gillis has walked towards her. Suddenly Norma senses his presence and turns around. The telephone freezes in her hand. She tries to hang it up. Very calmly Gillis takes the receiver from her hand.

GILLIS

(Into phone)

That's right, Betty, ask me again. This is Joe.

F. BETTY ON THE PHONE

BETTY

Joe, where are you? What's this all about?

G. GILLIS ON THE PHONE

Norma beside him.

GILLIS

Or maybe it would be a better idea if you came over and saw it for yourself. The address is 10086 Sunset Boulevard.

He hangs up.

* * *

E-11 AN EMPTY STREET AT THE
PARAMOUNT STUDIO (NIGHT)

Gillis and Betty are walking down it. From a stage where they are erecting a new set comes a great shaft of light. They stop at an apple-vending machine in the foreground, buy themselves a couple of apples and walk on.

DISSOLVE TO:

GILLIS' VOICE

Sometimes when we got stuck we'd make a little tour of the drowsing lot, not talking much, just wandering down alleys between the sound stages, or through the sets they were getting ready for the next day's shooting. As a matter of fact, it was on one of those walks when she first told me about her nose ...

E-12 PARAMOUNT'S NEW YORK STREET (NIGHT)

Betty and Gillis are walking down it, THE CAMERA AHEAD OF THEM.

BETTY

Look at this street. All cardboard, all hollow, all phoney. All done with mirrors. I like it better than any street in the world. Maybe because I used to play here when I was a kid.

GILLIS

What were you -- a child actress?

BETTY

I was born just two blocks from this studio. Right on Lemon Grove Avenue. Father was head electrician here till he died. Mother still works in Wardrobe.

GILLIS

Second generation, huh?

BETTY

Third. Grandma did stunt work for Pearl White. I come from a picture family. Naturally they took it for granted I was to become a great star. So I had ten years of dramatic lessons, diction, dancing. Then the studio made a test. Well, they didn't like my nose -- it slanted this way a little. I went to a doctor and had it fixed. They made more tests, and they were crazy about my nose -- only they didn't like my acting.

E-10

READERS' OFFICE BUILDING
PARAMOUNT (NIGHT)

Start on a LONG SHOT. THE BOOM MOVES FORWARD to the only two lights. They are the door and window of Betty Schaefer's cubicle. Betty sits at the desk, typing. Gillis, his coat off, his shirt-sleeves rolled up, is pacing the floor, discussing the construction of a sentence. The discussion at a stalemate, Betty suggests some coffee. Gillis agrees. From the electric plate on the shelf beside her, Betty takes a glass coffee machine. Gillis seats himself in her chair and starts typing.

GILLIS' VOICE
So we'd started working on it, the two of us. Nights, when the studio was deserted, up in her little cubby-hole of an office.

Betty opens the door and comes out on the balcony to fill the coffee machine from the water cooler standing beside the door.

BETTY

I got the funniest letter from Artie. It's rained every day since they got to Arizona. They re-wrote the whole picture for rain and shot half of it. Now the sun is out. Nobody knows when they'll get back.

She moves back into the room.

GILLIS

Good.

BETTY

What's good about it? I miss him something fierce.

GILLIS

I mean this is good dialogue along in here. It'll play.

BETTY

It will?

GILLIS

Sure. Especially with lots of music underneath, drowning it out.

BETTY

Don't you sometimes hate yourself?

GILLIS

Contently. No, in all seriousness, it's really good. It's fun writing again. I'm happy here, honest I am.

He resumes typing. Betty puts the water on. She ~~finds a box of~~ cigarettes on the desk, finds it's ~~empty~~ and throws it away, sees Gillis' open gold ~~case~~ and lighter on the table by the couch. Betty reaches for a cigarette. The inscription engraved inside the case catches her eye. It reads:

MAD ABOUT THE BOY --

Norma

BETTY

Who's Norma?

GILLIS

Who's who?

BETTY

I'm sorry. I don't usually read private cigarette cases.

GILLIS

Oh, that. It's from a friend of mine. A middle-aged lady, very foolish and very generous.

BETTY

I'll say. This is solid gold.

GILLIS

I gave her some advice on an idiotic script.

BETTY

It's that old familiar story? you help a timid little soul across a crowded street. She turns out to be a multimillionaire and leaves you all her money.

GILLIS

That's the trouble with you readers. You know all the plots. Now suppose you proof-read page ten while the water boils.

DISSOLVE TO:

GILLIS

(Examining her nose
by the flame of his
lighter)

Nice job.

BETTY

Should be. It cost three hundred
dollars.

GILLIS

Best thing I ever heard.

BETTY

Not at all. It taught me a little
sense. I got me a job in the mail
room, worked up to the Stenographic.
Now I'm a reader ...

GILLIS

Come clean, Betty. At night you
weep for those lost closeups,
those gala openings ...

BETTY

Not once. What's wrong with being
on the other side of the cameras?
It's really more fun.

GILLIS

Three cheers for Betty Schaefer!
I will now kiss that nose of yours.

BETTY

If you please.

Gillis kisses her nose. As he stands there, his
face close to hers --

GILLIS

May I say you smell real special.

BETTY

It must be my new shampoo.

GILLIS

That's no shampoo. It's more like
a pile of freshly laundered hand-
kerchiefs, like a brand new auto-
mobile. How old are you anyway?

BETTY

Twenty-two.

GILLIS

That's it. You smell of being twenty-two. And may I suggest that if we're ever to finish this story, you keep at least two feet away from me. And the first time you see me come any closer, I want you to take off a shoe and clunk me over the head with it. Now back to the typewriter.

They start walking in the direction of the office.

DISSOLVE TO:

E-13

THE GARAGE

Gillis gets out. From the seat next him he takes a batch of script, folds it and puts it in his pocket. He suddenly becomes aware that he is watched, turns. Max stands in the moonlight, evidently waiting for him.

GILLIS

What is it, Max? Want to wash the car, or are you doing a little spying in your off hours?

MAX

You must be very careful as you cross the patio. Madame may be watching.

GILLIS

How about my going up the kitchen stairs and undressing in the dark. Will that do it?

MAX

I'm not inquiring where Mr. Gillis goes every night ...

GILLIS

Why don't you? I'm writing a script and I'm going to finish it, no matter what.

MAX

It's just that I'm very worried about Madame.

GILLIS

Sure you are. And we're not helping her any, feeding her lies and more lies. Getting herself ready for a picture ... What happens when she finds out?

MAX

She never will. That is my job. It has been for a long time. You must understand I discovered her when she was eighteen. I made her a star. I cannot let her be destroyed.

GILLIS

You made her a star?

MAX

I directed all her early pictures. There were three young directors who showed promise in those days: D.W. Griffith, C.B. deMille, and Max von Mayerling.

GILLIS

And she's turned you into a servant.

MAX

It was I who asked to come back, humiliating as it may seem. I could have gone on with my career, only I found everything unendurable after she divorced me. You see, I was her first husband.

DISSOLVE TO:

E-14 NORMA DESMOND'S BEDROOM

One lamp lit. Norma, in a white negligee, with the patches on her face, is pacing up and down -- a small, tormented, pitiable woman. Finally she opens the door to:

E-15 GILLIS' ROOM (MOONLIGHT)

Gillis lies in bed asleep, Norma in the doorway.

NORMA

You're here, Joe ... When did you come home? Where were you? Is it a woman? I know it's a woman ... Who is she? Oh Joe, why can't I ask you? I must know, I must!

Her eyes fall on Gillis' coat, which hangs over a chair. In a pocket is part of the script. Norma takes it out, looks at it. She can't see it in the moonlight. She hurries with it into:

E-16 NORMA'S BEDROOM

Carrying the script Norma goes to the lamp and looks at it. On the first page she sees something which confirms all her suspicions. It reads:

UNTITLED LOVE STORY

by

Joseph C. Gillis

and

Betty Schaefer

DISSOLVE:

E-17 BETTY'S CUBICLE (NIGHT)

Betty is typing. Gillis sits on the couch, proof-reading a scene. Betty stops typing and Gillis becomes aware of her eyes fixed on him.

GILLIS

Hey, what's the matter ...

Betty, wake up!

(He whistles and catches her attention)

Why are you staring at me like that?

BETTY

Was I? I'm sorry.

GILLIS

What's wrong with you tonight?

What is it, Betty?

BETTY

Something came up. I don't want to talk about it.

GILLIS

Why not?

BETTY

I just don't.

GILLIS

What is it you've heard. Come on, let's have it.

Betty gets up.

GILLIS

Is it about me?

Betty doesn't answer, walks out on

E-18

THE BALCONY

She leans against a post, crying. Gillis comes out after her.

GILLIS

Betty, there's no use running out on it. Let's face it, whatever it is.

BETTY

It's nothing. I got a telegram from Artie.

GILLIS

From Artie. What's wrong?

BETTY

He wants me to come on to Arizona. He says it only costs two dollars to get married there. It would kind of save us a honeymoon.

GILLIS

Why don't you? We can finish the script by Thursday.

Betty stands crying silently.

GILLIS

Stop crying. You're getting married. That's what you've always wanted.

BETTY

I don't want it now.

GILLIS

Why not? Don't you love Artie?

BETTY

Of course I love him. I always will. I'm just not in love with him any more.

GILLIS

What happened?

BETTY

You did.

There is a moment's pause before he takes her in his arms. THE CAMERA MOVES AWAY.

DISSOLVE TO:

E-19 HALL AND STAIRCASE,
DESMOND HOME (NIGHT)

Gillis enters, closes the door as quietly as he can, and goes up the stairs.

E-20 GILLIS' ROOM

He enters and turns on the light. He sinks down on the chaise longue, thinking. His eyes wander to the door of Norma's room. Through the gouged-out keyhole he sees the light.

GILLIS' VOICE

Well, there it was, right in the palm of my hand -- the future of Betty Schaefer, engaged to Artie Green, the nicest guy that ever lived. Ready to give him up for me. Me! She was a fool, and I loved her and I'd been a heel not to tell her. Maybe I'd never have to. Maybe I could get away with it. Away from Norma. Maybe I could wipe the whole nasty mess right out of my life.

From Norma's room comes the sound of a telephone being dialled. Gillis enters the shot and stands listening.

NORMA'S VOICE

Is this Gladstone 0858?

E-21 NORMA'S BEDROOM

Norma lies in bed, dialing a number. She has the beauty patches at the corners of her eyes and over her nose.

NORMA

Can I speak to Miss Betty Schaefer? She must be home by now.

E-22 A BEDROOM IN BETTY'S FLAT

Connie, a girl of Betty's age with whom she shares the flat, is on the phone. Betty, in a dressing-gown, comes from the bathroom, toothbrush in hand.

CONNIE

(Hand over mouthpiece)
Betty, here's that weird-sounding woman again.

BETTY

What is this anyway?
(Taking the phone)
This is Betty Schaefer.

E-23 NORMA AT THE PHONE

NORMA

Miss Schaefer, you must forgive me for calling you so late, but I really feel it's my duty. It's about Mr. Gillis. You do know Mr. Gillis? ...Exactly how much do you know about him? Do you know where he lives? Do you know how he lives? Do you know what he lives on?

E-24 BETTY AT THE PHONE

BETTY

Who are you? What do you want? What business is it of yours anyway?

E-25 NORMA ON THE PHONE

NORMA

Miss Schaefer, I'm trying to do you a favor. I'm trying to spare you a great deal of misery. Of course you may be too young to even suspect there are men of his sort ...

NORMA (Cont'd)

I don't know what he's told you, but he does not live with relatives, nor with friends, in the usual sense of the word. Ask him ... Ask him again.

During the latter part of her call, the doors from Gillis' room have been pushed open and Gillis has walked towards her. Suddenly Norma senses his presence and turns around. The telephone freezes in her hand. She tries to hang it up. Very calmly Gillis takes the receiver from her hand.

GILLIS

(Into phone)

That's right, Betty, ask me again.
This is Joe.

E-26 BETTY ON THE PHONE

BETTY

Joe, where are you? What's this all about?

E-27 GILLIS ON THE PHONE

Norma beside him.

GILLIS

Or maybe it would be a better idea if you came over and saw it for yourself. The address is 10086 Sunset Boulevard.

He hangs up. Norma looks up at him as he crosses to the other end of the room and stands staring at her. The silence becomes unbearable.

NORMA

Don't hate me, Joe. I did it because I need you. I need you as I never needed you. Look at me. Look at my hands, look at my face, look under my eyes. How can I go back to work if I'm wasting away under this torment? You don't know what I've been through these last weeks. I got myself a revolver. You don't believe me, but I did, I did! I stood in front of that mirror, only I couldn't make myself. It wouldn't be

NORMA (Cont'd)

fair to all those people who are waiting to see me back on the screen. I can't disappoint them. Only, if I'm to work, I need sleep, I need quiet, I need you! Don't just stand there hating me! Shout at me, strike me! But don't hate me, Joe. Don't you hear me, Joe?

GILLIS

Yes, I hear you. And I wish you'd keep still so I can hear the doorbell when she rings it.

E-28 BETTY AND CONNIE, DRIVING IN A SMALL COUPE DOWN SUNSET BOULEVARD (NIGHT)

E-29 INT. COUPE

Connie is looking at the house numbers.

CONNIE

Here's ten thousand seventy-nine, Betty. It must be over there.

Betty turns the car into the driveway of Norma's place, stops at the entrance steps. Betty gets out.

CONNIE

Betty, let me come along with you. Please.

BETTY

No. I'll be all right.

She shuts the door of the car and goes up the steps.

E-30 NORMA'S BEDROOM

Norma lies on the bed. Gillis sits in a far corner of the room, motionless.

NORMA

(In a whimpering monotone)

I love you, Joe. I love you, Joe.
I love you, Joe. I love you, Joe.

There is the sound of footsteps below and the ringing of a doorbell. Gillis rises.

NORMA

What are you going to do, Joe?

Without a word, he leaves the room. Norma raises herself on the bed, reaching for a black negligee lying at the foot of it. As she does so, she dislodges her pillow a little, revealing a revolver hidden beneath it.

E-31 DOWNSTAIRS HALL, THE DESMOND HOUSE (DARK)

Max crosses the hall, putting on his alpaca jacket. He turns on the lights. Outside stands Betty. From the staircase comes -

GILLIS' VOICE

It's all right, Max. I'll take it.

MAX

Yes, sir.

He stands back as Gillis opens the door.

GILLIS

Hello, Betty.

BETTY

(On the threshold)

I don't know why I'm so scared, Joe. Is it something awful?

GILLIS

Come on in, Betty.

Betty enters. As he leads her into the living room, Gillis puts his arm around her shoulders.

GILLIS

Ever been in one of these old Hollywood palazzos? That's from when they were making eighteen thousand a week, and no taxes. Careful of these tiles, they're slippery. Valentino used to dance here.

BETTY

This is where you live?

GILLIS

You bet.

BETTY

Whose house is it?

They have reached

E-32

THE LIVING ROOM

Gillis leads Betty in.

GILLIS

Hers.

BETTY

Whose?

GILLIS

Just look around. There's a lot of her spread about. If you don't remember the face, you must have heard the name of Norma Desmond.

BETTY

That was Norma Desmond on the phone?

GILLIS

Want something to drink? There's always champagne on ice, and plenty of caviar.

BETTY

Why did she call me?

GILLIS

Jealous. Ever see so much junk? She had the ceiling brought from Portugal. Look at this.

He pulls the rope, showing the projection screen under the picture.

GILLIS

Her own movie theatre.

BETTY

I didn't come here to see a house. What about Norma Desmond?

GILLIS

I'm trying to tell you. This is an enormous place. Eight master bedrooms. A sunken tub in every bathroom. There's a bowling alley in the cellar. It's lonely here, so she got herself a companion. A very simple set-up: An older woman who is well-to-do. A younger man who is not doing too well ... Can you figure it out yourself?

BETTY

No.

GILLIS

All right. I'll give you a few more clues.

BETTY

No, no! I haven't heard any of this. I never got those telephone calls. I've never been in this house ... Get your things together. Let's get out of here.

GILLIS

All my things? All the eighteen suits, all the custom-made shoes and the eighteen dozen shirts, and the cuff-links and the platinum key-chains, and the cigarette cases?

BETTY

Come on, Joe.

GILLIS

Come on where? Back to a one-room apartment that I can't pay for? Back to a story that may sell and very possibly will not?

BETTY

If you love me, Joe.

GILLIS

Look, sweetie -- be practical. I've got a good thing here. A long-term contract with no options. I like it that way. Maybe it's not very admirable. Well, you and Artie can be admirable.

BETTY

Joe, I can't look at you any more.

GILLIS

Nobody asked you to.

Betty turns from him, to hide the fact that she is crying.

GILLIS

All right, baby. This way out.

He leads her in the direction of the door.

E-33 UPPER LANDING, DESMOND HOUSE

Sitting crouched behind the balustrade is Norma, peering down into

E-34 THE LOWER HALL

Betty and Gillis have reached the entrance door. Gillis opens it.

GILLIS

Good luck to you, Betty. You can finish that story on the way to Arizona. When you and Artie get back, if the two of you ever feel like a swim, here's the pool ...

He switches on the light.

E-35 THE PATIO

The lights go on in the pool, which shines brilliantly in the dark garden.

E-36 BETTY

She doesn't even look. Her eyes filled with tears, she runs down the entrance porch toward her car.

E-37 THE ENTRANCE HALL

Gillis looks after her, closes the door. From the upper landing comes the sound of soft sobbing. He looks up.

E-38 NORMA, ON THE UPPER LANDING

Gillis ascends the stairs.

NORMA

Thank you, Joe -- thank you, Joe.

She tries to take his hand to kiss it as he passes. He doesn't stop. Norma catches his coat. Gillis moves right on into his room. Norma lies on the floor looking after him. She crawls toward a console, pulls herself up by it, starts towards Gillis' door, passes a mirror, realizes how she looks, moves back to the mirror and takes the patches off her face and does a hasty job of removing the cream with her handkerchief, readjusts her expression to a poor travesty of a smile and goes to the door of Gillis' room.

NORMA

May I come in? I've stopped crying. I'm all right again. Joe, tell me you're not cross -- tell me everything is just as it was, Joe.

She opens the door.

E-39

GILLIS' ROOM

In the foreground, open on the bed, is a half-packed suitcase, Gillis just putting some of his old shirts in. Norma stands staring, speechless, for a second. Gillis moves out of the shot towards the closets.

NORMA

What are you doing, Joe? What are you doing? You're not leaving me?

GILLIS

Yes, I am, Norma.

NORMA

No, you're not.
(Calling)
Max!. Max!

GILLIS

Max is a good idea. He can help with my luggage.
(He gestures in the direction of the closet)
Thanks for letting me wear the handsome wardrobe. And thanks for the use of all the trinkets.

He takes the cigarette case and throws it on the chaise longue. Then he throws the lighter, the wrist watch, the platinum key-chain and the tie clip.

GILLIS

(Indicating the bureau)
The rest of the jewelry is in the top drawer.

NORMA

It's yours, Joe. I gave it to you.

GILLIS

And I'd take it in a second, Norma -- only it's a little too dressy for sitting behind the copy desk in Dayton, Ohio.

NORMA

These are nothing. You can have anything you want if you'll only stay. What is it you want -- money?

GILLIS

Norma, you'd be throwing it away. I don't qualify for the job, not any more.

NORMA

You can't do this! Max! Max! ... I can't face life without you, and I'm not afraid to die, you know.

GILLIS

That's between you and yourself, Norma.

NORMA

You think I made that up about the gun...

She rushes into her room. Gillis closes the suitcase calmly, notices that he is still wearing some cuff-links Norma gave him, takes them off.

Norma reappears in the door, carrying the revolver.

NORMA

See, you didn't believe me!.. Now I suppose you don't think I have the courage!

GILLIS

Oh, sure -- if it would make a good scene.

NORMA

You don't care, do you? But hundreds of thousands of people will care!

GILLIS

Wake up, Norma. You'd be killing yourself to an empty house. The audience left twenty years ago. Now face it.

During the preceding, Max has entered. He stands listening, paralyzed.

NORMA

That's a lie! They still want me!

GILLIS

No, they don't.

NORMA

What about the studio? What about De Mille?

GILLIS

He was trying to spare your feelings, The studio wanted to rent your car.

NORMA

Wanted what?

GILLIS

De Mille didn't have the heart to tell you. None of us has had the heart.

NORMA

That's a lie! They want me, they want me! I get letters every day!

GILLIS

You tell her, Max. Come on, do her that favor. Tell her there isn't going to be any picture -- there aren't any fan letters, except the ones you write yourself.

NORMA

That isn't true! Max?

MAX

Madame is the greatest star of them all... I will take Mr. Gillis' bags.

He leaves.

NORMA

You heard him. I'm a star!

GILLIS

Norma, grow up. You're a woman of fifty. There's nothing tragic about being fifty -- not unless you try to be twenty-five.

NORMA

I'm the greatest star of them
all.

GILLIS

Goodbye, Norma.

NORMA

No one leaves a star. That
makes one a star.

Gillis picks up the typewriter and leaves.

NORMA

You're not leaving me!

E-40

STAIRCASE

Gillis descending with the typewriter.

NORMA'S VOICE

Joe! ...Joe!

There is the SOUND OF A SHOT. The glass of the front
door is shattered. Gillis at the door opens it and
walks out, without looking back.

Down the staircase rushes Norma, a disordered wild-
ness in the way she moves.

NORMA

You're not leaving me!

She hurries after Gillis.

E-41

PATIO (NIGHT)

Dark except for lights from the house and the
luminousness of the lit pool.

Gillis is crossing the patio towards the garage. He
is carrying the typewriter. He doesn't accelerate
his step, although he has heard the shot. Behind
him Norma comes from the lighted house.

NORMA

You're not leaving me!

She shoots twice in rapid succession. Gillis drops
the typewriter. The shots have swung him around. He
is now facing Norma. She shoots him. This shot
hits him in the belly. He doubles up, instinctively
backs away from her, plummets into the lit pool.

Up the stone steps from the garage rushes Max. He sees the situation, hurries towards Norma, who stands exultant in the strange light from the pool.

NORMA

Stars are ageless, aren't they?

DISSOLVE TO:

E-42 THE PATIO

Dawn is breaking. At the edge of the pool stand policemen, detectives and police photographers. Motorcycle policemen are holding off the mob which is trying to storm the house.

A lieutenant from the Homicide Bureau leaves the crowd around the pool and goes into

E-43 THE LOWER HALL, DESMOND HOUSE

It is filled with a pandemonium of police officers, newspaper people, etc. who are kept from the upper floor by two policemen at the head of the stairs. The lieutenant from the Homicide Bureau goes through the crowd to the telephone at the foot of the stairs, picks up the phone and dials.

LIEUTENANT

Coroner's office? ... I want to speak to the Coroner ... Who's on this phone?

E-44 THE WHITE TELEPHONE IN NORMA'S BEDROOM

Standing talking into it is Hedda Hopper.

MISS HOPPER

I am! Now get off, this is more important ... Times City Desk? Hedda Hopper speaking. I'm talking from the bedroom of Norma Desmond. Don't bother with a rewrite man, take this direct. Ready? -- As day breaks over the murder house, Norma Desmond, famed star of yesteryear, is in a state of complete mental shock ...

THE CAMERA PANS TO ANOTHER PART OF THE BEDROOM, where Norma sits at a mirror, staring at herself blankly. Firing questions at her are the Captain of the Holmby Hills Division and the L.A. Homicide Squad. Max stands by faithfully.

HOLMBY HILLS CAPTAIN

You do not deny having killed
this man, Miss Desmond?

HEAD OF HOMICIDE

Did you intend to kill him? Just
answer me that.

HOLMBY HILLS CAPTAIN

Was it a sudden quarrel? Had there
been any trouble between you before?

HEAD OF HOMICIDE

If it was a quarrel, how come you
had the gun right there?

HOLMBY HILLS CAPTAIN

This guy -- where did you meet him
for the first time? Where did he
come from? Who is he?

HEAD OF HOMICIDE

Did he have a wife? Did he have a
girl friend? Did you know them?

HOLMBY HILLS CAPTAIN

Had he been trying to blackmail you?

E-45

PATIO - (DAWN)

The body of Gillis
being fished from the
pool, put on a stret-
cher, covered with an
army blanket. Two men
from the Coroner's
office carry it towards
the Coroner's hearse,
CAMERA PANNING with
them.

GILLIS' VOICE

It got to be five in the
morning and I was still
floating in that pool of
hers... Finally they fished
me out like a harpooned baby
whale. The whole place was
jumping by then -- cops,
newsmen, columnists, and the
usual crowd we get in Los
Angeles when they open a
super market. Everything but
searchlights. Well, they
checked the damage, but they
didn't have to. I was all
set for the Coroner and a
nice ride to the morgue, down
Sunset Boulevard. Only by
then the newsreel guys had
arrived, with cameras and
celluloid, so I decided to
stick around a while. This
was too good to miss.

E-46

NORMA'S BEDROOM

The interrogators are still firing questions at Norma, who sits lifeless, staring at herself. Max watches.

HEAD OF HOMICIDE

Did the deceased ever threaten you?
Were you in fear of bodily injury?

HOLMBY HILLS CAPTAIN

Did you hate him? Had you ever thought
of doing something like this before?

HEAD OF HOMICIDE

Was theft involved? Did you catch
him trying to steal something, or
find he had stolen something?

A police lieutenant has entered, goes to the Head of Homicide.

LIEUTENANT

The newsreel guys have arrived with
the cameras.

HEAD OF HOMICIDE

Tell them to go fly a kite. This
is no time for cameras.

A word has pierced the mists that surround Norma.

NORMA

Cameras? ... What is it, Max?

MAX

The cameras have arrived, Madame.

NORMA

They have? Thank you, Max. Tell
Mr. De Mille I will be on the set
at once.

Max looks at the Head of Homicide who, after a
moment's consideration, nods at him.

MAX

Yes, Madame.

He leaves with the Head of Homicide.

NORMA

(To the others)
You will pardon me, gentlemen.
I have to get ready for my scene.

She takes a comb and runs it through her hair, then starts applying some wild makeup.

E-47

STAIRCASE AND LOWER HALL

Max makes his way down the stairs through the crowd of newsmen to the newsreel cameras, which are being set up in the hall below.

MAX

Is everything set up, gentlemen?
Are the lights ready?

From the stairway comes a murmur. They look up.

Norma has emerged from the bedroom and comes to the head of the stairs. There are golden spangles in her hair and in her hand she carries a golden scarf.

The police clear a path for her to descend. Press cameras flash at her every step.

Max stands at the cameras.

MAX

Is everything set up, gentlemen?

CAMERAMAN

Just about.

The portable lights flare up and illuminate the staircase.

MAX

Are the lights ready?

2ND CAMERAMAN

All set.

MAX

Quiet, everybody! Lights!
Are you ready, Norma?

NORMA

(From the top of the
stairs)

What is the scene? Where am I?

MAX

This is the staircase of the palace.

NORMA

Oh yes, yes. They're below,
waiting for me to dance the
Dance of the Seven Veils.
I'm ready.

MAX

All right.
(To cameramen)
Camera!
(To Norma)
Action!

Norma arranges the golden scarf about her and proudly descends the staircase. The cameras grind. Everyone watches in awe.

At the foot of the stairs, Norma stops, moved.

NORMA

I can't go on with the scene.
I'm too happy. Do you mind,
Mr. DeMille, if I say a few words?
Thank you. I just want to tell
you how happy I am to be back in
the studio making a picture again.
You don't know how much I've missed
all of you. And I promise you
I'll never desert you again, because
after "Salome" we'll make another
picture, and another and another.
You see, this is my life. It always
will be. There's nothing else -
just us and the cameras and those
wonderful people out there in the
dark... All right, Mr. DeMille,
I'm ready for my closeup.

FADE OUT.

THE END

7-19-49