

John Fante's

ASK THE DUST

Screenplay by

Robert Towne

March 30, 1993

FADE IN:

EXT THE CITY OF LOS ANGELES (NIGHT, 1933)

viewed from high in the hills, it's a flat carpet of soft lights, dribbling off into darkness at the Pacific shoreline. It is framed by Eucalyptus branches blowing in a lazy Santa Ana sounding like the twitching of horses' tails.

BANDINI'S VOICE

The night before we met I was in
my hotel room on Bunker Hill down
in the very middle of Los
Angeles...

Like the blue fairy and Jiminy Crickett finding their way thru the quaint storybook village to Gepetto's shop window, CAMERA moves down to and thru the LA basin - the splendor of old Pasadena, along the Arroyo Seco, thru the black and Gold of the Richfield building, past the waving palms and neon marquee at the Wilshire entrance to the Ambassador Hotel, past the mansions in Freemont place, past the beacon of City Hall, past Angel's Flight to the decaying wooden homes of ancient Bunker Hill to:

BANDINI'S HOTEL

and its sign:

BANDINI'S VOICE

- it was called the Alta Loma. It
was built on a hillside in
reverse, so that the main floor
was on the level with the
street...

Camera is now at street level.

BANDINI'S VOICE

- my room was 678 down on the
sixth floor, so that my window was
on a level with a green hillside
and there was no need for a
key....

Camera proceeds to drop down the side of the clapboard building, floor by floor until it reaches the top of a palm tree, proceeding down its fronds to its huge trunk and the small hillside it rests on, facing an open window. There, faintly visible in the window, framed by it and the base of the palm tree fg, sits Arturo Bandini, staring out towards camera.

BANDINI

..the window was always open...

3/30/93

2

CAMERA continues move to and thru window to a haggard and hollow eyed Bandini, staring out the window.

BANDINI'S VOICE

..I'd been going over the plans I'd made since I'd come here like everyone else in search of fortune, fame, good health and glamorous women. Only I was going to be different. I wasn't here to search for my future, I was here to create it. I'd write the first great novel about this place and everybody who came here from somewhere else - beauty contest winners from Des Moines, Filipinos from Honolulu, palm trees from Africa. "The Road to Los Angeles," by Arturo Bandini - it would bring me everything I ever wanted. Now, after five months, I was trying to make a very important decision - what to do with my last nickel.

He stares down at the Buffalo head in his hand. There's a sound at the edge of the room. Bandini hears it with preternatural sharpness. He glances to the door. The worn red carpet is littered with crumpled typewriter paper more or less concentrated around the portable Underwood on the desk in the corner. A neat little envelope has been slipped under the door. Bandini sighs, gets up and retrieves it.

INSERT NOTE

MRS HARGRAVES VO

"Mr. Bandini, it has now been six weeks since you've paid the rent. At \$4.00/per it's mounting like the national debt. Either you pay \$24.00, every penny, or pack up and leave."

G. Hargraves

Bandini nods grimly.

BANDINI VO

- it was her sixth note in six weeks. Pretty humiliating. My landlady was getting more writing done than I was -

3/30/93

3

Bandini looks out the window at the palm tree. Under the muffled sound of a typewriter, DISSOLVE:

EXT POV MOVING TO LOBBY (DAY) MRS HARGRAVES

BANDINI VO

She was a tall woman who increased her height by rising on tiptoe and peering at me over her glasses..

BANDINI

(carrying suitcase
and typewriter)

I'd like a room.

MRS HARGRAVES

Do you have a job?

BANDINI

I'm a writer.

He opens suitcase and pulls out a copy, one of many, of a magazine.

BANDINI (cont'd)

I wrote that. Here -

Mrs. Hargraves continues to peer down over her glasses as Bandini takes a fountain pen off her desk.

BANDINI

What's your name?

MRS HARGRAVES

Mrs. Hargraves. Why?

Bandini writes with a flourish on the cover.

BANDINI

' - for Mrs. Hargraves, a woman of ineffable charm, with lovely blue eyes and a generous smile, from the author, Arturo Bandini -

He offers her the autographed magazine.

She glances down at it. The story's title, "The Little Dog Laughed" by Arturo Bandini visible on the cover. She forces a smile.

MRS HARGRAVES

I hate dog stories. Young man, are you a Mexican?

Bandini points at himself and laughs.

BANDINI

Me, a Mexican? I'm an American,
Mrs. Hargraves. And that isn't a
dog story, either.

MRS HARGRAVES

(undeterred)

We don't allow Mexicans in this
hotel.

BANDINI

I'm not a Mexican and there isn't
a dog in the whole story.

MRS HARGRAVES

We don't allow Jews either.

BANDINI

I got that title after the fable -
you know, 'and the little dog
laughed to see such sport.'

Bandini signs the register with as much flourish as he can muster.
Mrs. Hargraves suddenly beams, seeming very pleased.

MRS HARGRAVES

So you're an author! How nice!
Welcome to California, Mr.
Bandini! You'll love it here!

INT HOTEL ROOM (DAY)

Mrs. Hargraves opens the door to Bandini's room, now neat as a pin.
Bandini, bright-eyed, dressed for Sunday mass, carries his suitcase
and typewriter. He rushes to the window.

BANDINI'S POV PALM TREE

BANDINI'S VOICE

(sound of typewriter
keys underneath)

Thru that window I saw my first
palm tree, not six feet away -
but the palm was blackish at its
branches -

CLOSE PAPER IN TYPEWRITER

as Bandini's hands pound the keys.

WITH BANDINI (DAY)

at his typewriter, now in shorts, hair disheveled, an ashtray full of cigarette butts and orange peels near at hand. He reaches for one of the butts, relights it. He exhales, stares out the window.

FULL SHOT PALM TREE

BANDINI'S VOICE

- stained by carbon monoxide coming out of the Third Street tunnel, it's crusted trunk choked with dust and sand that blew in from the Mojave and Santa Ana Deserts.."

BACK TO BANDINI

BANDINI

(out loud)

What jerk is gonna believe I made it all the way from Colorado to downtown L.A. without seeing one goddam palm tree?

Angrily yanks the page out of the typewriter and tosses it among the other wads of abandoned effort. There's a knock on the door.

BANDINI (INT HOTEL NIGHT)

tenses and stares down at Mrs. Hargraves' note. The knocking continues, quietly insistent. Bandini sneaks up to the door. Then he hears:

HELLFRICK'S VOICE

(muffled, urgent)

- kid..kid?..kid!

Bandini cracks open the door. Hellfrick his next-door neighbor, eyes bloodshot and gin-soaked, in his perpetual gray bathrobe that's perpetually and unattractively half-open, wedges into the room.

HELLFRICK

(whispering)

Do you like milk?

BANDINI

(instantly wary)

I do. Yes, Hellfrick. I like milk.

HELLFRICK

Okay, then. Here's the plan. The Adohr man's a friend of mine. Every morning at four he parks his truck behind the hotel and comes up to my room for a little gin...

Hellfrick seems to run out of breath.

BANDINI

That's not much of a plan, Hellfrick.

HELLFRICK

No, no, kid. While he's having a drink with me, you've got ten minutes to help yourself to the milk. So whatta you think?

BANDINI

(distastefully)

If he's your friend why not just ask him for it?

HELLFRICK

(amazed)

Kid, c'mon. Who's kidding who? He knows I don't drink milk. I'm doing this for you.

BANDINI

No thanks, Hellfrick. I like to consider myself an honest man. And I might add it certainly makes me wonder about your ideas of friendship which -

HELLFRICK

Okay, okay. I was only trying to do you a favor.

BANDINI

(angrily)

You want to do me a favor? pay me the money I loaned you.

HELLFRICK
(calmly)
How much was that?

BANDINI
Fifteen cents.

HELLFRICK
Haven't got it.

BANDINI
How about - ten cents?

Hellfrick shakes his head.

BANDINI
A nickel?

HELLFRICK
Can't give you any hard cash, kid.
But I'll see that you get all the
milk you need -

And he slips away. Bandini starts to slam his door, then thinks better of it. He turns away and practically runs into his mother's picture on the dresser. At the sight of it he's close to tears. He then spots Hackmuth of the American Mercury staring sternly down from his honored place over Bandini's bed.

BANDINI VO
Hackmuth. Editor of the greatest
magazine in the country. Do you
want to let him down?

Bandini's eyes dry immediately. He fishes in an ashtray full of orange peels for a cigarette butt long enough to light. He can't find one. The sounds his stomach make fill the room. He can't stand it.

LATER (INT BANDINI'S ROOM NIGHT)

Bandini sits in his window and rolls a cigarette with Sir Walter Raleigh pipe tobacco from a cloth sack and a square of tissure from a roll of toilet paper. Lights it and the resultant flame singes the forelock hanging in his face.

He exhales and stares out the window.

BANDINI
(VO with teletype
Winchell delivery:)
' - hello Mr. and Mrs. America and
all the ships at sea. Flash! from
the city of Angels. Promising
writer Arturo Bandini, well known
protege of American Mercury
Magazine's supereditor J.C. Hackmuth
hailed into court on charges of
petty theft. Scribe claims he wasn't
stealing milk at 4AM on Bunker Hill.
He was researching tale titled 'Milk
Thief' about a starving writer who
steals milk at 4AM on Bunker Hill.
Flash! title this one 'Likely Story'
and wrap Friday's fish in it.

Bandini goes to the dresser mirror. He faces his reflection.

BANDINI
Think of something besides
stealing a bottle of milk. You're
an author, not a thief.

Gravely he turns and walks to the typewriter, glancing up at
Hackmuth. He sits and something hits him. He swoops down on the
keys like a bird of prey.

BANDINI
(VO)
Oh, for a Mexican girl!

As his voice catches up to the words on the page, mute the sound of
the keys and DISSOLVE:

EXT LA (DAY)

Various shots of a Bandini, prowling the byways of the city.

BANDINI
(VO cont'd)
The streets are full of them, the
Plaza and Chinatown are afire
with them, and in my fashion they
are mine, Aztec princesses and
the peon girls, everywhere -

AT THE PLAZA (DAY)

by the fountain, Mexican shopgirls from Olvera Street rest and sip
lemon ices and talk with their hands and arms and mouths and eyes.

They watch Bandini watch them.

BANDINI VO

- one glance with their big brown eyes and they know he's an inexperienced gringo, ignorant of women and life and afraid of both.

Trying to look the preoccupied artist, Bandini steals glances at their bare legs and arms until they catch him looking. He's then possessed by a profound idea or a remembered appointment that causes him to hurry away from the scene. Peals of laughter and spoken Spanish nip at his heels.

IN CHINATOWN

a Mexican girl, a teenager in a peasant blouse holds her baby sister in her arms - or is it her daughter? and looks thru a shop window. In the window she sees Bandini looking at her. She turns to face him. She smiles. Bandini scowls. The Mexican girl's smile fades and she hugs her baby sister and moves on. Bandini watches her go, longing.

BANDINI VO

- they're so nice, so happy when you act like a gentleman. Why can't you just smile back and say hello?

IN CENTRAL MARKET

BANDINI VO

- he saw me coming, bullet-faced and always smiling -

Bandini holds up a nickel. The Japanese vegetable man grabs a paper sack and begins filling it with oranges, bright fresh skins, fifteen, more.

Bandini watches a couple of Mexican girls shopping, picking up lima beans, peas -

JAPANESE

(smiling)

You rike banana?

BANDINI

(watching Mexican girls)

Sure.

He tosses in a couple of bananas.

JAPANESE
(smiling)
You rike apple?

BANDINI
(watching girls)
Sure.

The Japanese tosses in a couple of apples.

JAPANESE
(smiling)
You rike peaches?

Bandini nods, his eyes still on the Mexican girls.

BANDINI VO
(watching)
- they sway and glide and their
sandals make a sound when they
walk like wheat being threshed, I
want to kiss their feet -

He's distracted by the Japanese who is holding the huge sack of
fruit, smiling.

JAPANESE
Good. Very good for you.
(Bandini hands him the
nickel)
Thank you, thank you -

He bows and leaves Bandini holding the bulging sack.

Bandini looks for the Mexican girls but they're gone.

EXT CHURCH OF OUR LADY (DAY)

Bandini enters.

BANDINI VO
- I even go to Mass to look at
them..

INT CHURCH (DAY)

Bandini furtively watching from a pew - Mexican girls at the altar,
confessional, near the holy water.

BANDINI VO

I know it's sacrilegious but at least when I write home I can truthfully say 'Dear Mother, I go to Mass every Sunday.'

Bandini rises and stumbles brushing up against a beautifully dressed teenaged girl.

BANDINI VO

- I don't have to add 'so I can bump into an Aztec princess or two -'

The girl starts to apologize. Bandini manages an 'excuse me'.

IN A PEW

Bandini prays.

BANDINI VO

St Teresa, when I was little I prayed to you for a fountain pen. You answered my prayer. Anyway I got a fountain pen - now I need to meet a girl, a Mexican girl. Bring her into my life and I'll write a story, a love story, one of the greatest of all time -

Under this the sound of the typewriter can be heard surfacing until it too is cut off by the sound of something between a whine and a growl:

ONCE AGAIN

it is Bandini's stomach. And he's holding it, having stopped writing. Bandini shivers. He's stiff, and it's late. He looks out the window at St Paul's clock. It's 3:44.

He goes to brush his teeth. There's pink in the toothbrush and blood in the sink. He doesn't like it. He turns off the light and flops on the cot. In the dark his angry stomach can be heard whining again like a petulant animal. Bandini turns and squirms.

There's suddenly a quiet knock next door. He hears Hellfrick grunt and say something as Hellfrick's door opens and closes. Bandini sits up and looks out the window.

POV WINDOW PALM TREE AND CLOCK

on St Paul's Hotel, bg. It reads 4:07.

BANDINI

looks at the orange peels, then dresses quickly.

INT HALLWAY

Bandini walks deliberately past Hellfrick's room, hearing Hellfrick and his guest, the clink of bottle on glass.

EXT BUNKER HILL ST (NIGHT)

Under a streetlamp and a palm tree sits the Adohr milk-truck. Bandini reaches in and seizes two full quart bottles by their necks. They're cool. He presses them to his cheeks, then scurries back up the steps.

BANDINI ON THE STAIRS

when the toilet flushes. Bandini throws himself against the wall. The milkman emerges from the bathroom. He scratches his head. Walks back in the bathroom and retrieves his cap.

Bandini hurriedly takes a few steps back down the stairs and leaps the railing landing ten feet or so below on the vacant lot. He winces with the impact, holds onto and cradles the precious white bottles. A moment later the milkman makes his way down the stairs to his milktruck and takes off. Bandini breathes a sigh of relief.

ON THE DRESSER TABLE

stand the two bottles of milk. They're beautiful, and fat like prosperous people.

BANDINI

looks at them in wonder. He kneels down.

BANDINI

Bless us, Oh Lord, and these Thy
gifts which we are about to
receive from Thy most bountiful
hands through the same Christ Our
Lord, Amen.

He finally rises, opens one of the bottles and pours a full glass. He turns to the photo of J.C. Hackmuth on the wall.

BANDINI

To you, Hackmuth! to the future!

He drinks greedily, then suddenly chokes and spits out the milk in his mouth. He picks up the paper bottle top.

CLOSE BOTTLE TOP

It reads 'Buttermilk.'

BANDINI

can't believe it. He frantically grabs the other bottle and pulls its top. It too reads 'Buttermilk.' Heaving something between a sigh and a sob Bandini picks up his toothbrush and slouches to the sink where he proceeds to brush out the God-awful taste.

FADE:

EXT STREET (DAY)

Bandini hops out the window of his room, scrambles past the palm tree and down the vacant lot to the street. Down Angel's Flight to the Third Street Tunnel, then:

BANDINI VO
Spring Street was anything but..

He looks across the street and sees the unlit neon sign - "COLUMBIA BUFFET", next to a dingy secondhand store.

BANDINI VO
I was looking for a place to
spend my last nickel and there -
it was.

He hurries across the street.

INT COLUMBIA BUFFET

Bandini sits at one of the tables against the wall. He's wearing a tie but his clothes are rumped, his five o'clock shadow is pushing seven, and he looks more than exhausted. He looks defeated.

BANDINI VO
The perfect place to end up flat
broke..

Bandini puts his head in his hands.

FEMALE VOICE
Can I get you something?

BANDINI
(without looking up)
Coffee with cream.

Staring at the table, it blurs and DISSOLVES:

Bandini steps off a bus, looking fresh and dewey eyed. He checks his wallet -

BANDINI VO
Just five months ago I had a
hundred and fifty dollars in my
pocket and big plans in my head.
I had a philosophy then -

Bandini struts up to the Alta Loma Hotel, greeting everyone, including the infirm and the blind who either cannot see or don't have the energy to answer. Bandini struts on into the Alta Loma.

BANDINI VO
- in those days, I was Arturo
Bandini, a lover of man and beast
alike -

BANDINI ON THE STREET

buys a paper from a one-legged man and tips him.

BANDINI IN HIS ROOM

his small kitchenette filled with freshly purchased groceries, sits on his bed and feeds cheese to a mouse, Pedro. Soon Pedro's friends are there.

BANDINI VO
- but cheese got expensive, Pedro
didn't like bread - and his
friends liked it even less.

Soon Pedro and Bandini are alone, Pedro chewing on bread and pages of an old Gideon Bible.

DISSOLVE TO:

TABLE TOP (COLUMBIA BUFFET)

and there, next to his nickel is a cup of coffee in a cracked cup - a chip out of the lip.

WIDER ANGLE

He pours cream in the coffee and the coffee immediately curdles.

looking like gray shredded paper.

He can't believe it. Tears of rage and frustration come to him. He looks around.

BANDINI

Who brought this here? Who -

Some old man points and Bandini follows the pointing finger.

FIVE OR SIX TABLES AWAY

serving beers from a tray, is his waitress. Her back is to Bandini. All he can see is the taut shoulders under an immaculate white smock, faint trace of muscle in her arms, and the black hair thick and glossy, falling to her shoulders.

Finally she turns around. Her nose is flat with large nostrils, her full mouth heavy with lipstick, dark and sullen. Unmistakably Mexican she's dangerously beautiful. She flashes a brilliant white smile at one of her old customers and with a passing glance out of the corner of an exotic eye she obviously sees Bandini frantically waving. She walks right past him to the bar, and the thin blonde bartender.

BANDINI

can't believe she's ignored him. He stares back down at the curdled cup next to his nickel. Then back up at the dark Mayan vision.

BANDINI'S

perspiring, clenching his fists. He touches his hair. He furtively checks himself in the mirror, fumbles with his collar and tie to make sure nothing is the matter with him. Then Bandini catches the waitress behind him watching his worrying and fussing with his appearance.

Another mocking smile and she waltzes back to the bartender.

She doesn't approach his table. She moves near it, even to the adjacent table, deftly handling tray after tray full of beers. From time to time whenever she passes close to Bandini her sidelong glances seem full of amusement and mockery.

Bandini's lips curl back like the flews of an angry dog. He keeps his eyes on her. She continues to sashay back and forth.

THE WAITRESS' LEGS

strong and silky, kick up bits of sawdust as they glide over the

marble floor.

BANDINI

is furious. Then he sees something.

HER SHOES

are huaraches, the leather thongs wrapped several times around her ankles. In stark contrast to the rest of her, they are ragged - the woven leather has become unraveled.

BANDINI

suddenly smiles. He fastens his stare on her tattered huaraches.

THE WAITRESS

gradually becomes aware that Bandini is looking at her feet. It begins to unsettle her. Her flashing smile fades.

BANDINI

makes a point of watching them wherever she goes.

THE COFFEE

has grown cold and curdled, a scum on its surface.

THE WAITRESS

grows more subdued, her face drained of whatever amusement and liveliness it had shown.

BANDINI

meanwhile has come to life, twisting and turning in his chair like a lively little puppet, grinning and chuckling as he never takes his eyes off the waitresses' feet.

THE THIN BARTENDER

hears Bandini's laughter and looks in his direction. Bandini winks back. The bartender tosses his head a little by way of acknowledging Bandini.

BANDINI

settles back, conversing with other customers.

THE WAITRESS

glances down quickly to examine her feet.

BANDINI

laughs out loud when he sees this.

THE WAITRESS

spills a beer.

BANDINI

laughs again.

THE WAITRESS

now has grown grimfaced and when she glances at Bandini it is with undisguised anger.

BANDINI

smiles back. He stares down at the nickel he's left next to the curdled coffee. The scum on it is now thick as fondue.

WHEN THE WAITRESS

goes to the bar for beer, she waits at the rail.

BANDINI'S

sneering glare remains fastened on her.

THE WAITRESS

leaves the tray of beers she was to pick up. She walks from behind the bar straight for Bandini's table.

BANDINI

braces himself, watching her approach, straight shouldered, chin tilted, hands at her sides. Finally Bandini, the smirk still on his face has to look away as she stands over him at the table, her fresh white smock just inches from his nose.

WAITRESS

Would you like some more coffee?

The sneer leaves Bandini's face.

BANDINI

You call this stuff coffee?
Maybe it isn't coffee at all.
Maybe it's just water after they
boiled your filthy shoes in it.

(looking her dead in
the eye)

Maybe you don't know any better.
Maybe you're just naturally
careless. But if I were you I
wouldn't be seen in a Main Street
alley in those huaraches.

Bandini spits this last word out himself.

THE WAITRESS

stands trembling under the starched stiffness of her smock, her
fists writhing in her pockets.

WAITRESS

I hope you die of heart failure.
Right there in that chair.

Bandini tries to laugh, but it's hollow. The waitress' dark eyes
are flashing once more. She waltzes away and stands in front of
the bar again, looking insolently back at Bandini.

BANDINI

the smile still on his face, grows red and sweaty. He tugs at his
tie, trying to loosen it, but it won't loosen. He grows more
frantic, desperately pulling at it like it's a noose strangling
him. Then, utterly without warning he clutches his chest, and
collapses, his head smacking the tabletop. The thick sludge in the
coffee cup shakes like jello.

THE WAITRESS

is appalled. The bartender looks accusingly at her. She mutters
something in Spanish and hurries back over to the table, frantic.

WAITRESS

- it wasn't my fault, I didn't do
nothing I swear to God, I just
asked him if he wanted more
coffee, young fellow, you there,
say something, please!..

She's now trembling with terror and guilt. Bandini's not moving.
Then, slowly he rises to a sitting position. The sneer is back on
his face.

BANDINI

You can dish it out, but you
can't take it, can you?

He points to the nickel on the table top.

BANDINI

You want the nickel?

He overturns the coffee cup on it. The brown sludge spreads across
the table and starts to trickle onto the floor.

BANDINI

Then mop it up.

He rises insolently out of the chair, and walks to the door. There
he turns and gives the waitress a salute of farewell.

EXT LA STREETS (NIGHT)

It's a hot night and a Santa Ana is blowing. Bandini takes off his
jacket, breaks into a run. He scrambles up the vacant lot past the
palm tree and thru the open window to his room.

INT BANDINI'S ROOM

Trembling, he opens a drawer. There are at least a dozen copies of
the American Mercury Magazine with "The Little Dog Laughed" neatly
stacked in it. He pulls out one copy.

CLOSE MAGAZINE

on it Bandini writes "To a Mayan Princess, from a worthless
Gringo."

BANDINI

examines the inscription. He seems satisfied. Blows at the dust
on his dresser top.

BANDINI VO

Sand from the Mojave was blowing
across the city. It was
everywhere..

Bandini slips out of his trousers, and sand falls like a powder from
them onto the rug. He stands for a moment in front of the open
window letting the Santa Ana blow over him, then flips out the light
and slips into bed.

BANDINI VO
- it was even between the sheets..but
I didn't care - all I could think
about were those huaraches.

He can almost see them moving before everything FADES:

EXT SPRING STREET (DAY)

Bandini's face is pressed against the window of the Columbia Buffet. The chairs are piled on the tables and an old man in rubber boots is swabbing the floor. Bandini pounds on the window. After a moment the old man, sweat seeping from his hair, opens the door.

BANDINI
What's the name of that girl who
works here?

OLD MAN
You mean Camilla?

BANDINI
The one who worked here last night.

OLD MAN
That's her. Camilla Lopez.

BANDINI
Will you give this to her?

The old man wipes his dripping hands on his apron and takes the magazine

BANDINI
Take good care of it. It's
valuable. See that Miss Lopez gets
it personally.

The old man drops the mop handle.

OLD MAN
You get out of here!

Bandini tries to exit gracefully.

INT ALTA LOMA (DAY)

Bandini once again crawling thru the window to his room.

BANDINI VO

- the truth was I couldn't afford
to go back and see her that night.
I didn't have a nickel for a cup of
coffee..

He sinks on his bed and tries to eat one of the two oranges he has left. He bites into the rind but his stomach whines and growls and it pains him. He drops the orange and starts to cry. There's a knock on the door. Bandini immediately straightens up and reaches for a cigarette butt.

BANDINI

Yeah?

Hellfrick walks into the room, wearing a shirt and pants. He's almost unrecognizable.

BANDINI

Whatta you want?

Without a word Hellfrick puts fifteen cents on the table.

HELLFRICK

I'm an honest man, kid. I'm honest
as the day is long.

And he walks out.

CENTRAL MARKET (DAY)

The little Japanese man grabs a sack, smiling and at the ready at the orange bin - is amazed to see Bandini fly by him and enter the staples market.

INT BANDINI'S ROOM (DAY)

sitting on the bed Bandini washes down two dozen cookies with gulps of water. Only when he finishes does he pause, relieved.

He then reaches into his pocket and pulls out a nickel. He holds it in the palm of his hand as if it were a precious stone.

INT COLUMBIA BUFFET (NIGHT)

Camilla turns toward the front door. Her face suddenly brightens and she seems younger than she did on the previous night.

BANDINI

has entered the bar, scrubbed and clean. He heads to the table he'd been at the previous evening and sits.

CAMILLA

gliding between tables and around customers is making her way to Bandini.

When she clears the crowd he can see the cup of coffee on her tray, this time with a large container of fresh cream and a bowl of sugar. Her eyes open wide, a smile on her lips, she reaches Bandini. Her hair is so black and heavy it looks like clusters of grapes around her neck. Bandini looks like he's going to faint.

CAMILLA

I'm sorry about the coffee.
Everybody usually orders beer. We
don't get many calls for coffee.

BANDINI

I can see why. I'd drink beer
too, if I could afford it.

Camilla carefully serves the coffee and cream and sugar.

CAMILLA

Anyway, I hope this is better.
You want cream, right?

Bandini nods, then picks up a spoon, stirs, and sips like he's tasting wine.

CAMILLA

Good?

BANDINI

Not bad.
(Camilla looks a
little disappointed)
- certainly an improvement over
last night. Did you read 'The
Little Dog Laughed?'

Camilla looks momentarily startled.

CAMILLA

Sure.

BANDINI

So?

CAMILLA

It's very good. Listen, you want some beer? I'll get you some. You don't have to pay for it.

BANDINI

(a little annoyed)

You don't have to get me anything. What did you like about it?

CAMILLA

About what?

BANDINI

The story. 'The Little Dog Laughed' -

Camilla's called by the bartender. She hurries away. Bandini watches with some frustration. He sees her take a couple of orders, then return to the bar and order a single beer and pay for it.

She carries the beer directly to Bandini and places it before him.

BANDINI

You still haven't told me what you thought.

CAMILLA

I did tell you. I liked it. I like dog stories.

BANDINI

You like dog stories.

CAMILLA

I love dog stories.

BANDINI

(coldly)

There's no dog in the story.

CAMILLA

(flustered)

- there's..no..

BANDINI

(louder)

There's no dog in the story.

CAMILLA

I heard you, okay? Then why do you call it 'The Little Dog Laughed?'

BANDINI

Why did you lie to me? why did you say you read it when you didn't?

CAMILLA

- look - kid - please just drink your beer. It's tough enough to have a good time, okay?

She hurries away at some other customer's behest. Furious, Bandini kicks at a table leg. He looks under the checkered tablecloth and finds a spittoon.

He picks up the spittoon and pours his beer into it, triumphantly displaying the beer-filled spittoon.

CAMILLA

bites her lower lip and seems to grow pale, but she never takes her eyes off Bandini. Then she goes into the kitchen.

BANDINI

satisfied, is now humming along with the piano and the violin.

WIDE ANGLE

Camilla reappears. She's smiling, her hands behind her back.

The old man Bandini had seen cleaning the floor in the morning steps out of the kitchen, smiling too. Camilla waves to Bandini.

BANDINI

sits up stiffly. He senses something bad about to happen.

REV ANGLE CAMILLA

produces the magazine from behind her back - just out of view of the rest of the customers - so it is Bandini only who sees this, along with the old man.

Camilla turns the pages of the magazine to 'The Little Dog Laughed' and waves it in the air. She smiles brightly, wets her fingers and clamps the magazine between her knees, tearing the story away page by page by page.

BANDINI

watches, his mouth going dry, his breathing growing shallow.

CAMILLA

her face a mask of determination now tears each page into little pieces, letting them fall into the spittoon she now has at her feet. She looks over to Bandini for his approval.

BANDINI

tries to smile, as if to say, 'is that the best you can do?' but he's crushed.

He manages to get to his feet, stumbling a little awkwardly over the spittoon.

CAMILLA

back at the bar, casts a covert glance toward the retreating sorrowful figure of Bandini. There's regret for what she's done in the look - but Bandini doesn't see it.

EXT COLUMBIA BUFFET (NIGHT)

Bandini, numb, walks into the street, oblivious to the clanging of street cars, and the screeching of brakes.

CAMILLA'S VOICE

- hey, watch it!

Bandini indeed has stepped off the curb at the wrong time - steps back on it to the honks and curses of a passing car.

It's quiet. There's the running of soft feet, the jingling of coins in a smock, and Camilla enters the SHOT.

CAMILLA

- I'm sorry, I shouldn't have done that to your story.

BANDINI

It's okay.

CAMILLA

(glancing nervously
toward saloon)

I have to get back. They'll miss me. I'm awfully sorry about tonight. Come back tomorrow night, will you?

BANDINI

Sure.

She's very close to him now. Camilla looks like she wants to devour Bandini.

CAMILLA

I've got to go -

She breaks away and hurries back to the bar.

BANDINI

Camilla! Wait. Just a minute.

They run along the sidewalk and meet halfway.

CAMILLA

Hurry! They'll fire me.

Bandini glances at her feet and Camilla recoils, senses it coming.

BANDINI

(slowly)

Those huaraches - do you have to wear them, Camilla? Do you have to emphasize the fact that you always were and always will be a filthy little Greaser?

Clasping both her hands to her mouth Camilla rushes inside the saloon. As she goes:

CAMILLA

(moaning)

- oh, oh, oh..

Bandini is near tears himself, but he squares his shoulders and swaggers away. He spots a lone cigarette butt in the gutter. He picks it up and lights it, still with one foot in the gutter. Exhales and looks around, up at the buildings and then the stars:

BANDINI

(out loud to no one)

So what? I'm an American and proud of it...

(then, V.O.)

Americans built this city, outta sand and cactus. We did it. Camilla's people had their chance, and they failed.

(MORE)

BANDINI (cont'd)
(out loud again)
Thank God for my country. Thank
God I was born an American -

Bandini senses more than he sees someone listening. He looks over to the kitchen entrance of the Columbia Buffet and there the old man seen that morning with the mop and pail stands in the alley with a garbage can. Bandini's mortified but takes a drag on his cigarette butt.

BANDINI
Is there something you wanted to
say?

OLD MAN
Camilla can't read. Not English
anyway -

The old man takes the garbage can and continues with it down the alley.

CLOSE J.C. HACKMUTH (INT BANDINI'S ROOM NIGHT)

It's the photo on Bandini's wall.

His stern, taskmaster's gaze ever vigilant. Bandini sits at a desk, the "American Mercury" and a placard bearing his name as editor visible on it. Hackmuth has signed the photo personally: "June 15, 1931 - inscribed to Arturo Bandini in the hope that he will take his readers to far places - J.C. Hackmuth"

The sound of Bandini's Underwood can be heard.

CLOSE UNDERWOOD

as the words spill across the page. "Dear Mr. Hackmuth, I'm having bad thoughts about myself as a writer. Perhaps it's because I'm having bad thoughts about myself as a man."

ON BANDINI

as he types, his eyes red and weary and full of pain.

BANDINI VO
"- and another thing. I have no
understanding of women. How can I
write about what I don't understand?
How can I write about experiences I
haven't had? When I first came here,
(MORE)

BANDINI VO (cont'd)

I was so sure of myself, so sure I wasn't like the others...

SLOW DISSOLVE:

BANDINI VO

"- the others came to the land of sunshine with just enough money to live until the sun killed them..

Here are scenes of migration, of old, young and tubercular folks in Pershing Square or at Venice Beach, sitting in the sun feeding pigeons, wandering down Main Street.

BANDINI VO

"- a four bit polo shirt and a pair of sunglasses and a cop won't pick you up for vagrancy. You're a Californian. You belong. Here at the Alta Loma - I'm surrounded by all of America. My landlady, Mrs. Hargraves -

MRS HARGRAVES (DAY)

This is a slight reprise of that moment where Mrs. Hargraves asks the arriving Bandini if he's Mexican.

BANDINI VO

"- is very proud of Bert, even tho Bert didn't make it out here to Paradise. He died in Bridgeport Connecticut 30 years ago as a matter of fact.

Mrs. Hargrave's serves Bandini tea and refers constantly to what is obviously her husband's portrait on a mantle next to a shaving mug marked "Bert", laughing, then with tears in her eyes.

BANDINI VO

"Apparently Bert never drank or smoked, and she keeps his clothes ironed and hung up in the closet..

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT ALTA LOMA (DAY)

view widens to see an exceptionally homely young man in his teens sitting on the porch at the Alta Loma, trying to hide his pimples with his hands. He says 'hi' to Bandini and Bandini says 'hi'

back, morning and evening.

BANDINI VO

"- the Memphis kid sat rocking in the wicker chair early in the morning and late at night..during the day he'd wander around the city's parks, full of desire -

EXT PARKS (DAY)

The Memphis kid wandering around thru Avril Park (San Pedro) Echo Park (LA) looking, looking.

BANDINI VO

"- but he never found it..

EXT PORCH ALTA LOMA (NIGHT)

Bandini and the Memphis kid, sitting out on a warm night under a yellow moon.

MEMPHIS KID

- people aren't real here, you know? Nobody knows anybody and nobody cares. Some day I'll get back to Memphis - where your friends are your friends -

CLOSE POSTCARD (DAY)

It's a shot of Fort Worth Texas. Bandini turns it over. In scrawled pencil " - I'm on my way. I told you so, your friend, the Memphis kid -"

BANDINI

smiles, watches the postman move on his rounds.

INT LOBBY ALTA LOMA HOTEL (DAY)

a room with antimicassars. Heilman, a huge man with clothes too small for him sits and opens his Book-of-the-Month selection, talking with Bandini.

BANDINI VO

"- Heilman was a bank teller with a wife in Illinois and a son at the University of Chicago but his health was bad and he was told he had to stay here or die. He hated

(MORE)

BANDINI VO (cont'd)
 the sun and the fog and the SC
 Trojans. He wouldn't lend me his
 books - then there's the redheaded
 girl from St Louis who always asks
 about the Filipinos. She always
 wears green..

INT ALTA LOMA HOTEL (LOBBY)

a tall gaunt redheaded girl with brown freckles in a green dress is
 fanning herself with a newspaper and questioning Bandini.

REDHEADED GIRL
 Nobody'll let them live anywhere.
 They're so brave in the face of so
 much prejudice, aren't they?

LAP DISSOLVE:

BANDINI AT THE TYPEWRITER (DAY)

and we realize his letter to Hackmuth has stretched over some
 period of time. As he types:

BANDINI VO
 *- the other day when I went to San
 Pedro looking for work unloading
 the fishing boats I saw her..

EXT SAN PEDRO STREET (DAY)

The redheaded girl is walking down sixth street, window shopping arm
 in arm with a short Filipino. The Filipino, handsomely decked out in
 padded shoulders and a short-waisted suit is obviously very proud of
 her.

BANDINI VO
 *- even with high leather heels he
 was a foot shorter than she was.

INT ALTA LOMA HOTEL (DAY)

Bandini spreads American Mercury Magazines featuring Little Dog
 Laughed everywhere in the lobby, on the divan, even in the deep
 leather chairs.

HEILMAN

the Book-of-the-Month-Club man finds himself uncomfortable sitting on
 several copies. He pulls them out like so much stuffing.

BANDINI VO

*- nobody at the Alta Loma read
 "The Little Dog Laughed." Nobody
 came near it.

In a quiet corner of the lobby a Japanese house boy cleans.

BANDINI VO

*- the Japanese house boy wouldn't
 even lift them to dust. It was
 getting to be disheartening...

EXT SAN PEDRO HARBOR (DAY)

Bandini in the hold of a fishing boat is slipping and sliding over
 the briny bodies of dead fish as he's helping to unload them.

EXT RED CAR (DAY)

clutching his check for a few dollars, Bandini in work clothes jumps
 on the Red car to take him back to LA.

MAIL BOX (EXT ALTA LOMA PORCH DAY)

with A. Bandini written on it. Bandini opens the box and retrieves
 the letter with fish slime on his trembling hands.

INT BANDINI'S ROOM (DAY)

Bandini sinks on his cot and opens the letter. He reads it. It
 slips from his fingers and zig-zags to the floor. Still holding the
 envelope, Bandini manages to stand up and look in the mirror. He
 walks to Hackmuth's picture on the opposite wall and puts his
 fingers on the photo. He then opens the window and climbs out of
 it, lying down in the bright hillside grass and staring up at the
 fronds of the palm tree. His hands are tugging at the grass and he
 chokes back a sob. He rolls over and quickly opens the envelope as
 if he'd forgotten something. In his trembling hands he holds:

INSERT

a check to Arturo Bandini for \$175.00 from American Mercury
 Magazine. Enraptured, Bandini kisses the check repeatedly. CAMERA
 MOVES thru the window to Hackmuth's stern visage. As it does:

HACKMUTH'S VO

Dear Mr. Bandini,
 With your permission I shall
 remove the salutation and ending
 (MORE)

HACKMUTH'S VO (cont'd)
of your very long letter and print
it as a short story for my
magazine. It seems you have done a
fine job here. I think "The Long
Lost Hills" would serve as an
excellent title. Check enclosed.
Sincerely yours, J.C. Hackmuth.

As Bandini dashes thru the hotel, telling all its guests, including
the Japanese houseboy and Mrs. Hargraves of his good fortune and
showing off his check:

HACKMUTH'S VO
- p.s. As to your anxieties about
your limited experience with life
in general and women in particular,
it is alas, a truism that author's
generally have less experiences
than other men, this owing to the
incontestable fact that you simply
can't be in two places at once, Mr.
Bandini. Either you're in front of
the typewriter writing or you're out
in the world having experiences.
Therefore since you need to write
and you need to have experiences to
write about - you have to learn to
do more with less. And doing more
with less is, in a word, Mr.
Bandini what writing is all about -

During this, Bandini has become a whirling dervish, a Tasmanian devil
transplanted into somnambulistic Bunker Hill:

INT ALTA LOMA

Bandini pays off Mrs. Hargraves and adds two months in advance.

EXT LA STREET (DAY)

Bandini fairly skips downtown. He spots what he's looking for.

EXT MAY COMPANY (BASEMENT)

Bandini is on a buying spree - suit with two pair of pants, two-tone
shoes, shirts, socks, a felt hat.

AT VARIOUS STORES AND KIOSKS

Bandini buys sunglasses, cigarettes, candied fruit, expensive writing paper, a filing cabinet, a watch, a bed lamp, skin lotion, bathrobe and bedroom slippers - and a first aid kit. In other words, completely ignoring Hackmuth's heartfelt postscript.

EXT LA STREET

A package-laden Bandini sweating in his new suit hails a taxi.

INT BANDINI'S ROOM

Bandini in a bath with his new lotions and shaving cream, splashing about.

BANDINI

sits around in new slippers, smoking packaged cigarettes and eating candy.

ON HIS COT

Bandini carefully lays out his wardrobe for the evening, from socks to suit to new shirt to pants.

BANDINI IN FRONT OF HIS MIRROR

is finely turned out in all his new haberdashery. He tilts the felt hat over one eye. He doesn't quite like it. Now the collar on his new shirt seems starchy. The tie bothers him. His new shoes squeak and hurt. He smells the jacket on the suit, tugs at the crotch on the pants, and begins to itch. He looks in the mirror. He's sweating like a pig. Suddenly he tears all his new clothes off.

EXT ALTA LOMA HOTEL (EVE)

Bandini slides thru the window onto the lot and stands under the palm tree, serene in his old clothes, and looking down the hill toward Spring Street as if he can see the future there.

EXT COLUMBIA BUFFET (NIGHT)

A taxi pulls up. The driver wheels to the curb directly in front of the open door. Bandini hops out and hands the driver a twenty.

CAB DRIVER

(astonished)

I don't have change for this.
What's the big idea?

BANDINI

Oh, sorry.

He spots her out of the corner of his eye, holding a tray but at the door, obviously curious about who would be arriving at the Columbia in a taxi. Bandini sees her while he fishes for a smaller bill.

BANDINI

(to driver)

Keep the change.

He nods casually to Camilla and walks past her, sitting at the first table.

Camilla comes over. She moves tentatively, almost as tho she were on stilts. Her huaraches are gone and she's wearing white pumps with high heels.

CAMILLA

Still mad at me?

Bandini is conspicuously buried in Hackmuth's letter.

BANDINI

Not that I know of.

(referring to letter)

Sorry - business..

Camilla is clearly disappointed. He hasn't commented on her shoes.

CAMILLA

You want to order anything?

BANDINI

(not looking up from
letter)

A cigar. Something from Havana.

CAMILLA

(very quietly:)

They're a quarter.

Bandini hands her a dollar.

BANDINI

Keep the change.

Camilla stares dumbly at the dollar, then turns away to get the box of cigars. The white pumps make her wobble a little, a fact Bandini notes with enjoyment. In a moment she returns, trying to keep her gait smooth. She sets down the box of cigars and seventy-five cents.

BANDINI
(picking up a cigar)
I said keep the change.

CAMILLA
Not from you. You're poor.

Bandini lights the cigar and exhales, letting the smoke tumble out of his mouth as he leans back and stares at the ceiling

BANDINI
Not bad for the money.

CAMILLA
Don't I look different?

Bandini manages ignore the white pumps Camilla has placed like obedient puppies at Bandini's feet.

BANDINI
Not particularly, no.

CAMILLA
I thought you'd like my new shoes.

BANDINI
They're very nice. How about something to drink?

CAMILLA
(wounded by his casual tone)
You want a beer?

BANDINI
Scotch highball. Saint James.

CAMILLA
You've changed. Before you were just mean. Now you're mean and nasty.

She turns and practically hobbles to the bar to get his drink. Her feet are obviously hurting her.

CAMILLA
Forty cents.

BANDINI

(giving her another
bill)

You haven't changed. You're just
the same little Mexican princess.
Charming and innocent.

CAMILLA

I'm not a Mexican. I'm an
American.

BANDINI

To me you'll always be a sweet
little peon. A flower girl from
old Mexico.

CAMILLA

You Dago sonofabitch!

She stomps away. She wipes off a nearby table, her arm churning
furiously, her face a dark flame.

BANDINI'S VOICE

(quietly)

Take off those shoes.

Bandini's on his feet and at her back. She stiffens. It's a moment
that could erupt into sudden violence.

CAMILLA

You don't think my legs look good
enough to wear them?

BANDINI

I don't think they look good enough
for your legs.

Without a word she disappears into the kitchen. In a moment she re-
emerges, and the effect is magical. She glides gracefully into the
room, her feet quick and sure in her huaraches.

CAMILLA

I'm sorry what I called you. I
didn't mean what I said.

BANDINI

It was my fault.

Suddenly she runs her fingers thru Bandini's hair. Bandini nearly
faints.

The head bartender, Sammy, blonde and emaciated but oddly handsome

calls over:

SAMMY

Camilla, for Chrissake! the customers!..

CAMILLA

Okay, okay - do you have a car?

BANDINI

(hates to admit it)

- no.

CAMILLA

I do. It's in the parking lot. A '29 roadster - the top's down and the stuffing's outta the upholstery but it runs -

(going to pick up an order)

- I get off at eleven.

EXT PARKING LOT (NIGHT)

Under a lamp hanging from a phone pole sits the '29 Ford, no top, battered fenders. Bandini stands on the running board and checks the registration on the steering column.

INSERT

The registraton reads 'Camilla Lombard.' There are footsteps.

BANDINI

looks up to see Camilla moving onto the lot, with someone. It's the tall bartender.

CAMILLA

Arturo, this is Sammy.

BANDINI

- hi.

SAMMY

- hi.

Sammy gets in the passenger side of the roadster. Camilla moves to the driver's side. She opens the door. Bandini seems frozen on the running board, glances at the handsome, languid Sammy.

CAMILLA

You coming?

Bandini gets in the roadster, sitting uneasily between the two of them.

EXT SPRING STREET (NIGHT)

The Ford rattles down Spring Street to First and over the railroad tracks to a shabby neighborhood. It pulls up in front of one of the dirty frame houses where a dying pepper tree has spilled brown leaves over the sidewalk. Sammy gets out.

SAMMY

Goodnight.

CAMILLA

Goodnight, Sammy.

EXT FORD (NIGHT) MOVING

BANDINI

Who is he?

CAMILLA

Sammy? just a friend.

BANDINI

What kind of a friend?

CAMILLA

(smiles, enjoying the
jealousy)

A good one -

They've crossed back over the railroad tracks and move thru downtown. Camilla runs a stop signal. Sidelong glance to Bandini to see how he takes it.

CAMILLA

- he got me my job.

She runs another signal, swerves around a couple of cars. The door on the passenger side swings open and Bandini nearly falls out.

BANDINI

(worried, he lights a
cigarette for poise)

They let the bartender hire you?

CAMILLA

Sammy's not just a bartender.

She mashes her palm into the horn and moves around the pokey car.

BANDINI

Oh yeah? what else is he?
a concert pianist?

CAMILLA

Listen, Arturo. You're not the
only writer in town.

BANDINI

Sammy's a writer?

Camilla smiles.

CAMILLA

You'd be surprised.

BANDINI

I'd be surprised if he could write
his name.

CAMILLA

Hold the wheel.

Camilla abruptly lets go of the wheel and Bandini has to lunge for it. The car swerves and rattles. Camilla pulls off her huaraches and tosses them in the back seat. She retakes the wheel.

BANDINI

Has he been published?

CAMILLA

Why do you want to talk about
Sammy?

She turns onto Wilshire, throws one foot over the side of the Ford and her dress balloons out, spanking her face. She tucks it under herself, but her thighs are exposed, down to pinkish underwear. Bandini nearly swoons. Then gets embarrassed. She's also drawing attention from other cars. Motorists slow down or speed up, heads popping out of windows to catch a glimpse of Camilla's brown naked leg dangling over the roadster door.

INTERSECTION (NIGHT)

Camilla can't run the signal at Western and Wilshire because of the traffic in front of them and the pedestrians crossing the street.

BANDINI
How're you gonna stop?

CAMILLA
Easy.

She pops the clutch, shoves the gearshift into neutral, and brakes with her right foot bringing the car to a stop without once moving the leg dangling over the door. Satisfied with her performance, she swings her leg back inside.

WILSHIRE BLVD (NIGHT)

From Beverly Hills to the beach it's mostly palm trees, low hills, and a white line in the pavement leaping ahead of them.

Bandini stares at the cigarette burning hotly in the rush of wind.

CAMILLA
You like my car?

From streetlight to streetlight Camilla changes - an impish brown child, a dark dangerous vision.

BANDINI
How come it's registered to Camilla Lombard? Your name's Lopez. Are you married?

CAMILLA
No.

BANDINI
So what's the Lombard for?

CAMILLA
For fun. Sometimes I use it professionally.

BANDINI
As a waitress?

CAMILLA
Do you like your name? Don't you wish it was Johnson, or Williams, or something?

BANDINI
No.

CAMILLA

Come on. Do you honestly like being called Bandini?

BANDINI

I'm satisfied with my name.

CAMILLA

No you're not.

BANDINI

I am!

CAMILLA

Don't be embarrassed, you can admit it to me. I know. I understand.

BANDINI

What's Sammy's last name? Johnson or Williams?

CAMILLA

(after a moment)

It's White.

BANDINI

That pretty much sums up your ambition in life, doesn't it? to be Mrs. White?

CAMILLA

You can be a real son of a bitch, you know that?

BANDINI

Who can't?

CAMILLA

Well when you find him, you let me know, okay? I been looking for that guy all my life.

Bandini shrugs, flips the cigarette butt out of the car. It shoots into the night air like a falling star.

EXT PALISADES (NIGHT)

In brooding silence they drive along the bluffs overlooking the sea, a cold wind sideswiping them. Bandini shivers. The jalopy teeters on the bluff. From just below comes the roar of breakers

smashing into the sand.

Camilla coasts the Ford down a spiral road onto the sand below the cliffs, and stops. They watch the breakers. Oddly, the surf is quieter here.

BANDINI
(breathing deeply)
The air's so clean.

CAMILLA
No dust, the ocean washes it all
away. Still cold?

BANDINI
No.

CAMILLA
The cliffs keep you warm They're
like a blanket when you're
underneath them.

She curls her legs under her and turns to Bandini.

CAMILLA
Why do you get so mean?

BANDINI
(shrugs)
Why do you get so mean?

Camilla looks away, then takes Bandini's hand.

CAMILLA
Can't we be friends?

BANDINI
Friends like you and Sammy?

Camilla winces, starts to withdraw her hand. Bandini catches it, holds on. The gesture takes Camilla by surprise, and it causes her to shiver. She stares at Bandini for a long moment.

CAMILLA
Your freckles...

BANDINI
What about 'em?

She starts to unbutton his shirt.

CAMILLA
Do you have any on your chest?

BANDINI
- what're you doing -

CAMILLA
(delighted)
- you do! how about your stomach?

BANDINI
- Camilla -

CAMILLA
Where else do you have them?

With that she goes for his belt buckle.

BANDINI
(grabbing her wrists)
Camilla!

Camilla slips to her knees. Her face is nearly touching his crotch. Bandini's alarmed. Camilla is eye to eye with Bandini's trouser buttons.

BANDINI
- I don't want to disappoint
you..but..I don't think I have any
freckles there...

Camilla rests her chin lightly but firmly on Bandini's fly, and looks up, forlorn. Her chin promptly rises in Bandini's lap. Bandini's embarrassed. Camilla juts her chin slightly and pushes it gently but firmly into Bandini's fly. Her chin rises again. She pushes again. Another rise. She pushes again.

BANDINI
(going crazy)
Camilla -

CAMILLA
(amused, holding him
on the point of her
chin)
I don't think I'm going to be
disappointed -

A breaking wave hits the beach with temblor force, spraying the windshield and the two of them.

CAMILLA
(doused, wiping away
the salt water)
And that was with your pants on.

Camilla sits up. She rests her head on Bandini's shoulder. They watch the strong surf and the heavy fogbanks.

CAMILLA
Look at the fog.

BANDINI
- an army of ghosts, crawling on
their bellies..

Camilla eyes him suspiciously.

CAMILLA
What are you talking about?

BANDINI
The fogbank. It creeps in, it
hugs the water -

CAMILLA
I know what a fogbank does. Why
don't you teach me to ride a wave?

She opens the car door and tugs at Bandini. A breaking wave pounds the beach with particular force.

BANDINI
Out there?

CAMILLA
(leading him by the
hand)
Why not?

BANDINI
Usually you learn on smaller
waves..

Camilla laughs and undresses immediately. She's brown all over. Bandini's awed and intimidated by Camilla offering up the perfection of her body to a shower of surf spray.

CAMILLA
What are you waiting for!

Bandini scrambles out of his clothes. He's so white he's nearly luminous.

CAMILLA

You're the ghost! come here, come here!..

She dashes over and grabs Bandini, who is self-conscious as they walk in to the surf:

CAMILLA

What're you hiding? You've got a pretty one, pink as a baby's bottom. Looks brand new.

This last remark bothers Bandini. He lets go of Camilla's hand.

CAMILLA

Let me have a little fun with you, please?

A wave breaks and the rush of foamy water knocks them off their feet. Camilla screams, holding onto Bandini. The surf recedes, leaving them sitting in shallow water.

BANDINI

You all right?

CAMILLA

(clinging to him)
That was a big one.

BANDINI

You're not gonna ride a wave tonight.

CAMILLA

Sure I will. You can show me how.

Bandini eyes the powerful surf.

BANDINI

I'm from Colorado.

CAMILLA

So?

BANDINI

Usually I swim in a river, or a lake.

CAMILLA

You mean you don't know how to ride a wave.

BANDINI

I didn't say that. But my technique might not be good for you to learn. It's unorthodox.

CAMILLA

That's okay. If you can show me, I'll learn. I'd like to learn from you.

Bandini rises to face the surf and the music. The waves are breaking twenty yards out.

BANDINI

First thing you gotta do is get to where the waves are.

Camilla nods. Bandini gingerly wades thru the churning water. Ahead of him the waves loom dark and menacing. He glances back. Camilla's coming in after him.

BANDINI

- just watch, don't take any chances - stay back!

Bandini's blindsided by the seven foot wave that crashes over his head. He's crunched, tossed and turned like he's in a washing machine. He spots Camilla on a late-breaking part of the crest. She rises up and tumbles out of sight, just as he's hit by riptide and dragged under. He's rolled and pounded and swept to the beach. He tries to stand but is knocked down. He rises choking, gagging, and gasping for breath. He looks around. She's nowhere.

BANDINI

Camilla? Camilla!..

He hears her scream. It seems to come from far out. She screams again.

Bandini wades back in. He's felled again. He gamely dives under the next wave that's broken into a foaming wall, surfaces but hits the rest of the set and is thoroughly slapped around. He nevertheless persists until he's made it beyond the breaking waves.

BANDINI

(treading and
breathless)

Camilla! Camilla!..oh God
please..

He's nearing the fogbank. He looks to the beach.

INLAND POV (NIGHT)

The waves are breaking on what now seems like a distant shore.

BANDINI
(more weakly)
Camilla..Camilla..Camilla..
please God help me..

There's no answer but the slap and backwash of choppy water.

Bandini doubles up with a cramp in his right foot. He brings it to the surface. He frantically kicks the surface of the water, and the pain shoots into his thigh which he grips and kneads.

He now swims blindly toward shore, unable to use one leg and barely able to use his arms. Before he knows it, the breakers grab him and dash him to the bottom. He's too weak to fight them:

Suddenly he's in churning water to his waist. He flounders toward shore. Here he crawls on his hands and knees, sobbing and mumbling:

BANDINI
- please please God, help -

He staggers toward the car, bleeding from his forehead and his knee. He makes one last turn and looks to the sea.

NOT FIFTY FEET AWAY

Camilla wades toward the shore. She's laughing.

CAMILLA
(delighted)
Fooled you pretty good!..

She dives expertly underneath the wave breaking at her back, surfaces, dives under the next, then rides the third one into the shore like a playful seal.

Bandini wades out to meet her, his steps growing stronger and more resolute. Camilla rises out of the foam, slicking her hair back, a big smile breaking across her face.

CAMILLA
It was as good as your heart
attack, admit it!

BANDINI
It was better.

Bandini picks her up bodily.

CAMILLA

Hey -

He lifts her up over his shoulders and throws her down in a pool of water only a couple of feet deep. The thud knocks the breath out of her.

CAMILLA

(gasping)

- what's wrong with you?...

Bandini wades to her, drops to his knees and tries to lift her up to dash her down again.

CAMILLA

- cut it out, cut it out, goddam
you - stop it!

He loses his footing and falls on her in the water, taking her hair in both his hands, rubbing her face and mouth in the sand and swirling brine. Camilla gags.

CAMILLA

- please don't..I'm sorry, it was
a joke, please I beg you - don't,
don't, don't - you're going to..
drown me..

He dunks her again and again, and for a moment it seems as if he is going to drown her. Finally he stops and staggers out of the water. He leaves Camilla on her hands and knees, moaning.

BANDINI

sits by Camilla's car, smoking a cigarette. His hair is wet, but he's dressed. Camilla makes it into her clothes. She stands over Bandini.

CAMILLA

..I'll never forgive you..not for
my whole life.

BANDINI

I thought your life was over. I
thought I was gonna die looking
for you. That was my first time
in the ocean.

He gets to his feet and starts walking.

CAMILLA
What're you gonna do now? walk
home?

Bandini doesn't answer. He heads up the spiral road to the bluffs.

CAMILLA
(calling)
It's ten miles to downtown. Where
do you live?

BANDINI
(without looking back)
Bunker Hill.

EXT PALISADES (NIGHT)

Camilla's jalopy makes it to the top of the road, pausing at the crest by Bandini. Up here the wind whips at both of them:

CAMILLA
Bunker Hill. Old women and weak men.
It's the perfect place for you.

BANDINI
Couldn't be better. At my hotel
they don't allow Mexicans.

Camilla spits at his feet and takes off into the night, leaving Bandini alone on the bluff in the wind.

ECU THE WORDS 'PALM TREE' (DAY)

on the paper cradled in the crescent of Bandini's typewriter keys. After a moment the words are struck again - and again and again. The keys are spitting out line after line of nothing but 'palm tree palm tree palm tree palmtreepalmtreepalmtree'.

BANDINI

sits back from the typewriter and sighs. He's haggard. His face and elbows have sandscrapes. He stares at the page. He looks out the window.

POV PALM TREE

BANDINI
(addressing it,
disgusted)
Thanks. You've been a big help.

He rises, stretches. His trouser cuffs still hold last night's beach sand. He starts to empty the cuffs into the waste basket when he glimpses his upper body in the mirror. His rumpled polo shirt has hiked up and exposed his navel. He pinches the flesh around his waist.

BANDINI

(more disgust)

White dough. No wonder she laughed, who wouldn't? Arturo Bandini, genius, man-of-the-world can't take a walk on the beach without trying to hide his dick -

He looks from his reflection to the ever stern presence of J.C. Hackmuth over the typewriter.

HACKMUTH'S VOICE

"- misjudged that Bandini kid. Not much talent, and no guts. Don't know what he's good for really. Afraid he's neither fish nor fowl nor good red herring."

Bandini slouches out his window and tosses himself at the blackened trunk of the palm tree. He looks up at its fronds and smiles grimly.

BANDINI

(repeating)

'..neither fish nor fowl nor good red herring..' good red herring. Sounds good.

His stomach growls. He shuts his eyes.

EXT PALM TREE (NIGHT)

Green and red light bathes Bandini's face. He wakens and looks across the street to the neon sign of St Paul's hotel. Its clock catches his eye. It's 10:40. He jumps up quickly.

EXT STREET (NIGHT)

Bandini hurries past the broad window of the Columbia Buffet. Camilla has changed out of her white uniform. She grabs a sweater off a hook and reaches behind the bar for her purse.

EXT PARKING LOT (NIGHT)

Camilla, the sweater over her shoulders rounds the corner and stops cold.

BANDINI

sits in the front seat of her open roadster, behind the wheel. He's smoking a cigarette.

CAMILLA

Get out or I'll call the police.

BANDINI

(amiably)

Go ahead. Have me arrested for sitting in a car.

Camilla shivers, warily gets in the passenger side. A tense moment.

CAMILLA

You were so mean last night. So cruel.

BANDINI

We both were. Give me the keys.

CAMILLA

(alarmed)

What for? Where are we going?

Bandini waits patiently, holding out his hand.

CAMILLA

I never wanted to see you again...

BANDINI

I know.

EXT BEACH NIGHT

With Camilla's car parked on the sand as before. A wave breaks, its churning surf, if anything heavier. It rushes toward shore.

CAMILLA AND ARTURO

stand naked and thigh deep in it, holding hands, facing the onrushing foam, Camilla screaming with delight. The broken wave nearly knocks them off their feet. Arturo grips Camilla more tightly to steady them both. He starts to move toward a fresh set of oncoming waves.

CAMILLA

(giddy, laughing)

No, wait they're too big..too far out..it's dangerous, Arturo..

She's tugging him back. He lets her hand slip away.

BANDINI

Let me give it a try.

CAMILLA

It's too far out. It'll break
before you catch it! It's way too
big!

Her warning is nearly lost in the surf. Worried, she struggles after him in water up to her waist.

Bandini nears the wave which is rising to its full height - a dark, rolling mountain. It breaks just before he reaches it and comes crashing down on his head. Camilla screams before she's knocked off her feet and sent spinning and churning to shore.

Coughing and prostrate on the sand she looks around. Arturo floats just a few feet away, head down in foaming surf that already begins to recede.

Frantic, she crawls to him, turning him over.

CAMILLA

- ARTURO -

Bandini looks up and smiles.

CAMILLA

(pounding him)

Stop trying to scare me, goddammit!

BANDINI

I'm not trying to scare you - I'm
trying to prove myself. That I'm
worth something. That I'm not
nothing.

Camilla looks warily at Bandini, kisses him softly, then with more fervor. The sea has fallen away from Bandini's loins. Camilla looks. Her eyes widen. She's alarmed. Fully aroused, Arturo rises to an elbow.

CAMILLA

(still staring down in
disbelief)

- I don't know where you come from
but in California that's not
nothing -

Bandini has begun to kiss her lips and eyes and throat. Gently but inexorably he crushes her into the sand. Camilla moans and thrusts herself towards him, grabbing him ferociously.

CAMILLA

Oh, no - don't!..don't!
(with a shudder)
- ohh!..

Bandini's door squeaks open and Hellfrick enters, looking wrecked. Bandini leaps to his feet instantly and tears what he's been writing out of the machine.

BANDINI

Jesus Christ, Hellfrick, have you ever heard of knocking before you come into a room?

HELLFRICK

Sorry kid. Didn't mean to disturb you. Artist at work, huh?

Thru the remnants of an alcoholic veil, Hellfrick notices that Bandini is perspiring.

HELLFRICK

Kid, you look like you been thru the wringer. Writing always make you sweat like that?

BANDINI

I don't know. Does booze always make you sweat like that? Or have you been writing?

Hellfrick, pale and trembling, with skin like wet paper, looks hurt.

HELLFRICK

Kid, I haven't touched a drop, I swear. I'm off the sauce. For keeps.

BANDINI

Well, that's good Hellfrick.

HELLFRICK

Listen, kid..

BANDINI

(immediately on guard)
I'm listening.

HELLFRICK
How much dough you got -

BANDINI
Oh, for Chrissake -

HELLFRICK
(highly exercised)
No, no, it's not for booze -

BANDINI
Then what is it for?

Hellfrick sits on the edge of Bandini's bed and wrings his bony fingers.

HELLFRICK
Meat.

BANDINI
Meat?

HELLFRICK
I mean like the steaks you used to get back East, real meat. Not like out here.

BANDINI
Oh sure. The cattle are different out here.

HELLFRICK
(fervently)
Absolutely. Here it's always sunny and dry and the cows eat nothin' but weeds. Dead weeds. Their meat's full of worms and they paint it to look bloody and red, did you know that?

BANDINI
No. No, I didn't, Hellfrick.

HELLFRICK
Maybe you could use that in one of your -
(sees it's not going over very well)
- never mind, the point is there's this butcher on Olive who's got the real McCoy. Beef from Kansas City.
(MORE)

HELLFRICK (cont'd)

Could you loan me fifty cents? It'll
help keep me off the hard stuff.

Disgusted, Bandini digs into his pocket and pulls some change.
Hellfrick practically drools watching Bandini put them in Hellfrick's
pale wet palm.

HELLFRICK

I'll make it good with you, kid.
I'll pay you back a thousand times.

And he's out the door. Bandini checks the remainder of his funds.

BANDINI (VO)

I had just under ten bucks. It
would pay the rent for two and a
half weeks, or buy me three pairs
of shoes, or two pairs of pants -
(glancing up at the
stern visage)
- or a thousand postage stamps to
send stories to Hackmuth -
(his fist closes
around the money)
- but you don't have any stories or
talent -

He looks accusingly at what he takes to be the evidence: the sheaf of
pages neatly piled by the typewriter.

BANDINI

(in a mocking
falsetto)

" - oh no, don't!..don't!..it's too
big, Arturo! ohh!..

He slaps at the pages and sends them scattering about the room.

BANDINI

(bitterly, out loud)
Ugly fucking trash.

He looks out the window past the palm tree to the St Paul Hotel.
It's 10:25. Bandini gives the pages one last kick, grabs a sweater
and is out the window.

EXT PARKING LOT (NIGHT)

Bandini sits behind the wheel of Camilla's roadster. It's parked in
a corner near a shed with a neon clock in red. Bandini keeps his

eyes on the minute hand as it nears eleven. He shivers. The seats in the open roadster are full of moisture from the night air. He tosses out his cigarette. It joins several butts on the pavement beneath the running board. It's after eleven. He lights another cigarette. Then she rounds the corner but with Sammy.

SAMMY
(pleasantly enough)
Hi there.

CAMILLA
(not pleasant)
What do you want?

BANDINI
(cooly)
To see you.

CAMILLA
I'm busy.

BANDINI
Not that busy.

Camilla controls her fury. She walks to the driver's side and opens the door.

CAMILLA
Get out.

BANDINI
Nothing doing.

CAMILLA
Get out, goddammit!

BANDINI
I'm staying.

SAMMY
Camilla -

Camilla tugs and jerks at Bandini's sweater, trying to yank him out of the car.

CAMILLA
- get out! get out! get out!

SAMMY
Camilla! let him stay.

Camilla stops her exertions. She looks at Sammy as if he'd just invented the lightbulb.

CAMILLA
(to Bandini)
Okay. Stay.

She slams the car door and walks off with Sammy - leaving Bandini alone in the parking lot.

BANDINI (VO)
(miserable)
I liked it better on paper.

Bandini's hand feels something wedged between the seat beneath him. It's a Tam O'Shanter. He brings it to his face and inhales. It's Camilla's.

INT BANDINI'S ROOM (NIGHT)

Arturo can be seen in bed, holding Camilla's cap in his arms. He takes another whiff of the cap, holding it next to him on the pillow. He seems to hear her feet slide across the shavings in the Columbia Buffet - and the music that is Camilla's theme. Thru it there's a faint tapping which Bandini ignores until he realizes it's someone quietly knocking on his door. He bolts upright - looks guiltily at Camilla's stolen Tam O'Shanter.

BANDINI
(quietly)
Who is it?

He quickly hides Camilla's cap under the pillow and slips into his trousers.

A YOUNG WOMAN

VERA RIVKEN stands there. She's small, but with large, luminous eyes brilliant from too much whiskey and too much intelligence. She's simply dressed in black coat and furpiece, a white blouse showing. Bandini is too surprised to register disappointment.

BANDINI
- hello.

VERA
What are you doing?

BANDINI
Just sitting here. Do I know you?

She ignores the question and walks right in. Her eyes dart about the room, taking in everything, her full lips moist. She pulls a page out of the typewriter, glares at it and lets it fall to the floor.

VERA

No good.

BANDINI

(moving from alarm to
irritation)

What's no good?

VERA

(continuing to stalk
the room)

It's pitiful. Pitiful and sad, a
hopelessly bad writer buried in a
cheap hotel on Bunker Hill. In Los
Angeles of all places.

(distracted for him)

They'll never read what you write.

BANDINI

Look, lady, I -

VERA

They won't even have a chance to
forget it.

BANDINI

Okay..that's enough! I've had -

Before he can react further, Vera abruptly lies back on the bed, fingers laced behind her head. Bandini doesn't know what to do.

VERA

(staring at the
ceiling)

You are nobody and I might have
been somebody and here we are.

She shuts her eyes and starts to breathe evenly. The fur on her coat moves from her breath - and that's all that moves.

BANDINI

Say, what's going on? Where did
you come from? Is this a gag?

He moves close to the bed. Vera is out like a light, or appears to be. He stands over her inert form and sways suddenly, hit by something.

BANDINI
That's pretty strong perfume, lady.
Lady?

Bandini tries to nudge her into consciousness, but has to turn away as he does to avoid inhaling the fumes.

BANDINI
(shakes her)
- whew..lady, wake up.
(shakes her
vigorously)
How about..a little..fresh..air?

Vera suddenly sits up and opens her purse.

VERA
Look. I have money, money!

BANDINI
Lucky you. Why don't you go
somewhere and spend it?

VERA
Of course. We'll go out and have a
drink!

BANDINI
(without enthusiasm)
Good idea.

AT THE HEAD OF THE STAIRS (INT ALTA LOMA NIGHT)

Bandini pokes his head into the apparently deserted lobby. Obviously he's not anxious to have anyone see him.

BANDINI
Try and be quiet, okay? My
landlady's kinda strict -

VERA
(her eyes shining)
Should I tiptoe?

BANDINI
Yeah, sure, just -

Vera suddenly squeezes Bandini's arm, hanging on him, thrilled. He whisks her thru the lobby like a broom.

EXT BUNKER HILL (NIGHT)

The streets are thoroughly deserted, fog rolling in. Vera tugs on Bandini's arm. He has to bend down before she'll speak.

VERA

You're going to be so marvelous!
So wonderful!

BANDINI

Forget it now. Let's just walk.

VERA

(stopping)
But we're having a drink. I
insist. Look -
(opening her purse and
pulling out bills)
- money -

BANDINI

Okay, we'll have a drink. Just -
put it back in your purse.

EXT-INT SOLOMON'S BAR (NIGHT)

Bandini and Vera enter a nearly deserted corner bar. Solomon the proprietor is behind the bar, chin in hands, resting on his elbows.

BANDINI

Hi Solomon. How's business?

SOLOMON

Until you showed up Mr. Bendini, I
had more pinball machines than
customers.

He points to the lone pinball machine in the corner.

SOLOMON (cont'd)

A short beer, am I right?

He has moved from behind the bar to escort them to a booth facing the open window.

VERA

And whiskey. Lots of whiskey.

Solomon frowns. He appears to recognize Vera, leaves to get their drinks.

BANDINI
Does he know you?

VERA
Kiss me!

Vera's suddenly at Bandini's throat, her long fingernails pressing nervously against the soft skin under his jaw.

VERA (cont'd)
- your mouth, your wonderful
mouth, God what a mouth -

She reaches for it but Bandini resists.

BANDINI
- let's - have a drink.

Vera nods but her brilliant black eyes are brimming with tears.

BANDINI
(shocked)
What's wrong?

VERA
You know what's wrong.

BANDINI
No I don't.

VERA
You're just like the rest of them.
You know.

BANDINI
About what?

VERA
That's why you won't kiss me.

SOLOMON
Well, here we go. One short beer
and a double whiskey.

Bandini reaches for money but Vera has been expecting it. She's got the cash in hand and Solomon takes it before Bandini can protest.

VERA
So who was it?

BANDINI

Who was what?

VERA

Who told you about my wounds?

BANDINI

(doesn't get it)

- your wounds..

(then suddenly)

Do you have a nickel?

Now Vera's thrown.

BANDINI (cont'd)

I love pinball machines..one game,
would you mind?

Vera suddenly brightens.

VERA

Oh of course not. Whatever my
darling wishes.

She fishes about in her purse and hands him a nickel.

BANDINI

Thank you.

Bandini gets up and goes to the pinball machine, throws in the
nickel and plays. Vera sips her whiskey and watches, practically
kvelling. Bandini looks back. She smiles reassuringly.

VERA

Play, play.

Bandini nods and surreptitiously kicks the machine.

BANDINI

Solomon, could you come over here?
For some reason it's on 'tilt.'

Solomon hurries over. As he looks over the machine:

BANDINI

(quietly)

Who is that woman?

SOLOMON
(quietly)
Who knows? She was in week before
last - when you were talking about
Sinclair Lewis to that couple from
Minnesota.

BANDINI
I didn't notice her.

SOLOMON
(quietly)
She noticed you, believe you me.
Listened to every word you said.
Every single word. And when you
left, she left.

BANDINI
(facing the pinball
machine)
What's she doing now?

SOLOMON
(glancing)
- watching you like a prize dog.

BANDINI
I gotta get outta here.

SOLOMON
(he understands)
The door opposite the men's room.

Solomon appears to have the machine in working order.

VERA
Is everything all right darling?
do you need another nickel?

BANDINI
No, no I just -

Bandini jerks his thumb toward the men's room. Vera nods
understandingly. Bandini nods gratefully.

SOLOMON

watches Bandini take the unmarked door opposite the men's room, just
beyond Vera's line of sight.

INT STOREROOM (NIGHT)

Bandini dashes into a room not much bigger than a closet and out another door that leads onto an alley.

EXT ALLEY AND STREET

Bandini races into the now fog-filled night, like Ichabod, running from the headless horseman.

INT ALTA LOMA HALL

Bandini races up the back stairs and down the hall. Out of breath, he bursts into his room.

BANDINI

Oh my God.

VERA

Darling!..I took a cab and the door was open.

BANDINI

Don't you think this has gone far enough?

Ignoring him she walks around the room and pulls a new page from the typewriter. This time she breaks into a smile.

VERA

Why this is wonderful! You're a genius afterall.

BANDINI

Will you please get out?

She sits on the bed, unbuttoning her jacket. She dangles her feet over the floor.

VERA

I love you. You're my darling and you're going to love me.

BANDINI

Some other time. I think you'd better go.

There's an edge to Bandini's voice. Vera responds. The humming bird madness stops. A stillness surrounds her and a sudden, luminous beauty.

VERA

(quietly)

I know how I revolt you. That you know what my clothes are covering up.

BANDINI

(stunned)

Know what? I don't even know your name.

VERA

Vera Rivken. I'm a housekeeper. I work for a very nice Jewish family in Long Beach. I'm tired of being a housekeeper.

BANDINI

I can imagine.

VERA

..I saw you one day at Solomon's and I heard you talk and then I went and bought your story. I read it and felt you were someone who could look at me and see me for what I am and ignore my - forgive me for my body. So I followed you home..so stupid, hopeless..

Bandini offers her a handkerchief. She grasps it gratefully.

BANDINI

What do you want?

VERA

Tell me...tell me I'm like other women. Tell me I'm beautiful.

BANDINI

(means it)

But you are. Really. Plenty of men would give anything -

VERA

Let me show you something.

She spots Camilla's Tam O'Shanter poking out from under the pillow. Picking it up by its fluffy nob she lets it fall to the pillow, then rises off the bed. She jerks her dark skirt loose. It falls in a nest at her ankles.

BANDINI

You don't have to show me anything!

VERA

You're going to see for yourself.

She tries but is unable to reach the clasps at the rear of her blouse. She offers her back to Bandini.

VERA (cont'd)

Undo it, please.

BANDINI

(with rising panic)

Hey, look you've convinced me, all right?

Vera wraps her arms around herself, seizes the thin blouse at the back and rips it away from her body. She turns around to Bandini wearing only a slip. Her breasts are visible thru it. They're perfectly formed. She smiles a tight little smile as if she knows what Bandini thinks of them. Then she bends to lift her slip. Bandini turns away and walks to the window.

VERA

(with mocking
laughter)

Yeh! yeh! I thought so! you know!
you know all about them!

Bandini braces himself. He turns and looks. Vera's slip falls into frame on the floor, fg. Then Vera, her back to camera moves into SHOT feet first. She's nude except for shoes and hose. Her lower legs reveal themselves and they're very shapely. Then at mid-thigh it goes all wrong. Suddenly they're withered, burnt, scarred like some explosive had burst between them leaving a cruel gap at the cruellest possible spot.

BANDINI

(slowly raising his
gaze)

- so what's the fuss? That's -
nothing.

Inadvertently Vera gives herself a quick glance - did something suddenly change? Then:

VERA

(bitter)

Tell it to my husband. "Deformed..
disfigured..disgusting." That's
what he said.

BANDINI

I say..you're beautiful..

Bandini takes hold of her shoulders and gives Vera a soft, full kiss. Vera regards him with both curiosity and wild disbelief. Then, like a sleepwalker waking up nude in the street:

VERA

Excuse me!

She swoops up her slip.

VERA (cont'd)

(diving into it)

I'm sorry!..I'm so..sorry!
I don't know what was in my -
head I -

BANDINI

Take it easy. I'll wait outside.
So you can -
(points to the rest of
her clothes)
- take it easy.

He starts out the door.

VERA

(hastily picking them
up)

- no wait! I'm not like this. I want
you to understand that. That..

She trails off, seemingly lost.

VERA

(puzzled)

..whenever I take off my clothes I'm -
ashamed - always - ashamed but I've
never felt..

(tentatively)

..shy..

She smiles at Bandini, pleased. Then she blushes and has to turn away. Bandini leaves. Vera gives herself a little hug, holding onto a new feeling, and its unexpected afterglow.

INT HALLWAY (NIGHT)

Bandini hurries down it to the fire escape window. It's jammed. He

forces it open and tumbles out onto the grating where he chokes out a sob. He grips the railing, gulping in the night air.

INT HALLWAY (NIGHT)

Outside his room Bandini strikes a casual pose, and strides into the room.

Vera's gone. There's a note pinned to Camilla's Tam O'Shanter on the bed. Bandini picks up the black cap and reads the note.

VERA'S VOICE

"Dear Boy,

Of course I should have known
you'd have a girlfriend. Is she
very beautiful? She's very lucky.
Is she also kind and generous?
would she ever allow me to borrow
this and put it on one day? allow
you to come to Long Beach, if only
for an hour?"

Her address can be glimpsed under her name. Bandini takes her note off the cap and drops it on the dresser, and douses the light. He sinks down to his bed, pressing Camilla's cap to his face.

FADE:

INT BANDINI'S ROOM (DAY)

Once more Bandini is at his post, in worn undershirt and staring at a blank piece of paper. He notices his right leg jiggling. He stops it. Sees his right bicep. He flexes it. He flexes his left bicep and looks at it. Then his right, then his left, then his right. He appears satisfied with their look. He hears a repeated dull thud. It's his heartbeat. Concerned, he takes his pulse.

Out the window, by the palm tree a cat plays with the tail of a torn kite. Sitting at a bus stop, a well worn woman in her thirties crosses and recrosses her bare legs. The dull thud in his ears quickens. Bandini squirms. He gets out of the chair. His pants are bulging at the crotch and he grabs it, then he sees:

HACKMUTH

on the wall staring down at him.

BANDINI

takes his hand off his crotch. Stares defiantly back at Hackmuth. He picks up Vera's half-crumpled note on the dresser top, turning

away to avoid Hackmuth's accusatory gaze.

INSERT NOTE

favoring Vera's address in Long Beach.

BANDINI

crumples up the note and tosses it on the floor.

BANDINI
(angrily)

No!

EXT ALTA LOMA (DAY)

Bandini emerges from his apartment window. He strides past the palm tree and tumbles down the lot to the street.

EXT STREET BANDINI (DAY)

His energetic figure struts downhill toward camera, growing in the frame as he works on his jacket cover:

BANDINI VO
' - not tall, but solid, with the sinewy shape of a lean welter-weight, the pugnacious Bandini meets each new challenge on the balls of his feet. Bold. Brazen - bold, at times brazen.. Bold, at times even brazen - this gifted young chronicler of hard times in the city of angels grapples with life in the raw. He seems to fear nothing - '

GIRL'S VOICE
Hello, honey.

Bandini finds himself being accosted by a blonde hooker in a skimpy green dress. She cozies up to him:

BLONDE GIRL
So how about it? Want me to show you a good time?

BANDINI
Nah. It's uhh..a little early in the day for me.

BLONDE GIRL
 (annoyed)
 Honey, I'm not asking you to have a
 drink.

But Bandini moves on, wincing at the girl's insulting aspersions about his masculinity.

BANDINI (VO)
 - afraid of nothing but women, heart
 trouble, earthquakes, death,
 appendicitis, the Third Street
 tunnel, and a Mexican waitress...

He stops, realizes he's about to pass the Columbia Buffet. He throws caution to the winds and ventures on:

BANDINI (VO)
 You need to experience other women.
 You need to experience a woman, any
 woman, you need a bath, you need
 money, you need a story -

VOICE
 Mr. Bandini. Hey, Bandini!

Bandini turns when he sees it's Sammy the bartender crossing the street. He scowls.

SAMMY
 - saw you thru the window, settin'
 up for the night..
 (in response to
 Bandini's glare)
 - it's Sammy - the bartender at the
 Columbia -

BANDINI
 Yeah, Sammy White.

SAMMY
 Camilla was telling me you're a
 writer, mind if I walk along?..

Sammy's slender frame is wracked with a coughing fit. For a moment it looks like he'll have trouble staying on his feet.

BANDINI
 Sure, if you feel up to it.

Sammy gets his cough under control. Disappointed, Bandini sees this and picks up the pace.

SAMMY

She says you been published.

BANDINI

What of it?

SAMMY

I been thinking about...gettin' into that line of work.

BANDINI

(suppressing a sneer)

Publishing?

SAMMY

No. Writin' stories like you. Bartending and the damp nights here don't seem to agree with me so much anymore - I'm lookin' to find somethin' I can do..pretty much.. anywhere.

BANDINI

Like writing stories. Yeah, well good luck Sammy.

They've started to ascend the hill toward Bandini's hotel and Sammy's having a harder time breathing.

SAMMY

I was hoping you could give me.. some pointers..and that magazine with 'The Little Dog Laughing' in it? you wouldn't happen to have..a spare copy? I'd sure like to read your story.

Bandini stops. He looks to see if Sammy's pulling his leg. Sammy's using a handkerchief to wipe away perspiration. His pale blue eyes look pained.

BANDINI

(after a moment)

It's 'The Little Dog Laughed.' Not laughing.

SAMMY (INT BANDINI'S ROOM DAY)

stands while Bandini sits rummaging thru his suitcase. He pulls out a copy of the American Mercury (hiding the rest of the stack from

Sammy's view) and hands it to Sammy.

SAMMY

Say could you autograph it?

Looking mildly put out, Bandini brusquely takes up his fountain pen, then pauses point poised:

BANDINI

'Sammy' or 'Sammy White?'

SAMMY

Sammy's good.

Bandini writes with a flourish and offers up the magazine. Sammy reads the inscription, moving his lips.

SAMMY

Thank you - Arturo. It's a real honor. If there's anything I can do for you let me know.

BANDINI

I'll do that.

An awkward pause.

SAMMY

Just say the word.

Sammy doesn't move. Bandini clears his throat.

BANDINI

Sounds like you've got something in mind.

SAMMY

(with a sly but goodnatured smile)
- well, I thought you might like a little advice about Camilla.

BANDINI

That's real white of you Sammy. But I think I can handle the situation.

SAMMY

(nodding)
Okie-Dokie. But Camilla's one tough little pony, got a real hard mouth on her.

BANDINI
(unable to curb his
curiosity)
A 'real hard mouth.' Interesting
turn of phrase.

SAMMY
You're too nice to that girl, Mr.
Bandini.

BANDINI
(laughing)
'Too nice?'

SAMMY
Way too nice. You don't understand
Mexican women.

BANDINI
Oh. Mexican women are different.

SAMMY
- nossir, they're like most women,
except more so. You let up on 'em
they're all gonna take advantage.
But you ease up on that little
Spick, she's gonna peg you for a
lily-livered gringo and buck you
outta the saddle before you're in
it. A horse with a hard mouth don't
feel the bit, Arturo. So keep 'em
on a tight rein, never let 'em
forget who's boss for a second.
There's no trick to it. You ride
'em hard and it's easy.

BANDINI
Well, Sammy it sounds like you -
know your horseflesh.

SAMMY
Hope so, Arturo. I'm gonna write
westerns -
(pauses at the door:)
- by the way amigo - Camilla's a
pony who's worth the ride. Adios.

Sammy has a violent coughing fit and heads out, leaving Arturo to ponder the wisdom of the sage. He's impressed enough to be pissed and unsettled.

EXT COLUMBIA BUFFET (NIGHT) (LONG SHOT) (POV)

Thru incoming fog the modest neon of the Columbia Buffet can be seen halfway down the block. Cigarette smoke tumbles lazily into FRAME.

HELLFRICK'S VOICE

Kid, where you been? I haven't heard the typewriter for a week.

BANDINI

is leaning against a lamppost smoking. Hellfrick has emerged from a tiny market, small brown paper bag in hand.

HELLFRICK

(squinting)

- you worried about something?

BANDINI

(instantly suspicious)

Why would you say that?

HELLFRICK

You look worried.

BANDINI

What about?

HELLFRICK

How would I know?

BANDINI

I don't know. I was hoping somebody would.

HELLFRICK

Well kid look on the bright side. If it's hopeless, then you don't know that either. How about a snort?

He offers up the brown paper bag.

BANDINI

(shakes his head)

But thanks for asking, Hellfrick.

Bandini turns back toward the Columbia Buffet. He flicks the cigarette into the street, and comes off the lamppost, with a determined gait.

INT COLUMBIA BUFFET (NIGHT)

Camilla's eyes light up. Smiling she hurries over to Bandini.

CAMILLA

- I'm glad to see you!

Bandini notices she's back to wearing pumps.

BANDINI

Why?

CAMILLA

Does there have to be a reason?

BANDINI

There usually is.

CAMILLA

Okay. Sammy said you were really nice to him. I was beginning to think you couldn't be nice to anybody. What can I get you?

She's breezy, friendly.

BANDINI

(looking around)

Where is Sammy tonight?

CAMILLA

He left.

BANDINI

Went home?

CAMILLA

To the desert for a while. He's not feeling real good.

BANDINI

What's the matter?

CAMILLA

TB I think -

She has to pick up an order of beer and picks up some coffee and cream and sets it down on Bandini's table on her way to delivering the beer.

BANDINI

Sammy has tuberculosis?

CAMILLA

Here, you can start with this -
yeah, tough break, huh?

BANDINI

We all gotta go.

CAMILLA

What are you talking about?

She's called by a portly bartender for another order. She ignores the bartender.

BANDINI (cont'd)

He won't live long. So how are all
your other boyfriends?

CAMILLA

I haven't got any other boyfriends.

BANDINI

(under her withering
gaze)

- sure. Forgive an incautious
remark. Could I have the check?

CAMILLA

No charge.

Bandini tosses a fifty cent piece down on the table and leaves. It spins and rings, like silver does. Camilla stares at it. She looks drained.

INT BANDINI'S ROOM (NIGHT)

Bandini sits and stares at his typewriter, looking drained himself.

A fifty cent coin hits his desk top, and spins and rings. Bandini looks up. Camilla is sitting in the window.

CAMILLA

You don't need to pay to be a smart
alec. Besides -

(coming into room)

- if it cost half a buck you
couldn't afford to be one.

BANDINI

Very funny. Sammy writing your
dialog?

Camilla sits on the bed.

CAMILLA

Why do you insist on being so mean?

BANDINI

Mean? me? I am anything but mean.
I'm a lover, my dear girl. A
lover, equally fond of man and
beast alike. You can't be mean and
be a great writer.

CAMILLA

(teasing)

Are you a great writer?

BANDINI

(not teasing)

That's something you'll never know.

CAMILLA

What are you so mad about?

BANDINI

I'm not. Just disgusted.

CAMILLA

With me? why?

BANDINI

Take a look in the mirror.

CAMILLA

I don't want to look in the mirror.

BANDINI

I don't blame you.

CAMILLA

- I'm tired. We were busy tonight.

BANDINI

Being busy's not the problem. It's
those shoes, and all that paint on
your face. You look like a cheap
imitation of an American. If I were
Mexican I'd knock your block off.

Camilla flinches but remains determined to control her anger.

CAMILLA

I'm just as much American as you -
I was born here. You're dark, like
Italians. And your eyes - they're
black.

BANDINI

Nobody's eyes are black.

CAMILLA

(softly)

Yours are.

She half lies on the bed to look up into his eyes. Bandini turns
away.

BANDINI

Why don't you go home and - think
about Sammy. What're you doing
here anyway?

Camilla doesn't react to this latest insult. She stares curiously at
Bandini. He's quickly uncomfortable.

CAMILLA

Would you ever change your name?

BANDINI

What for?

CAMILLA

Would you?

BANDINI

No. What's it to you, anyway?

CAMILLA

I don't want to go from Camilla
Lopez to Camilla Bandini. It's not
much of an improvement.

Bandini is stunned.

BANDINI

Who asked you to go anywhere?

CAMILLA

(sitting straight up)

You'd ask me.

BANDINI

No I wouldn't.

CAMILLA
Yes you would.

BANDINI
No I wouldn't.

CAMILLA
Yes you would.

BANDINI
I wouldn't.

CAMILLA
You would.

BANDINI
(leaning forward)
I wouldn't.

CAMILLA
(leaning forward)
I know you like the back of my
hand, Arturo. I'm telling you,
you'd do it.

Her conviction and her breath-taking closeness cause Bandini to lean back and turn away.

BANDINI
Yeah, right after Sammy would.
Would Sammy do that? Would he
marry you?

CAMILLA
(uneasily)
- who knows what Sammy's going to
do?

BANDINI
Would Sammy White ask Camilla Lopez
to be his wife?

CAMILLA
Who knows! who cares?

BANDINI
You do. I know you like the back
of my hand, Camilla.

Bandini swivels his chair forward so their knees are nearly touching.

CAMILLA

I care about his name! I want a chance in life! I want my kids to have a chance!..

She's close to tears. Bandini's astonished. She sees Bandini's surprise and goes back on the offensive before he can take advantage of her unexpected vulnerability.

CAMILLA

You think you're smart. You're going to write a book and have the world on a string. What if you don't?

BANDINI

I will.

CAMILLA

Yeah but what if you don't?

BANDINI

I will.

Bandini literally backpedals, wheeling to the far side of his desk.

CAMILLA

You're book smart. But you're not smart. And you're not tall. And you're not nice.

She leans back on her elbows, appraising Bandini with casual insolence.

BANDINI

Then why stick around?

He busies himself with a few stray papers.

CAMILLA

Come here.

BANDINI

What for?

CAMILLA

Come here and I'll show you why.

Camilla kicks off her shoes. She lifts her feet off the floor where she regards them for a tantalizing moment before she swings her legs onto Bandini's bed and lies lengthwise, her feet on his pillow,

nearest him, her head at the foot of the bed farthest away. Bandini is definitely unnerved.

BANDINI

I'm busy.

CAMILLA

You're afraid.

BANDINI

Of what?

CAMILLA

(suggestively bending
a toe)

Me.

Bandini laughs.

CAMILLA

(wiggling toes)

You are. You're afraid..to lie..
down..next to me...

Bandini finally sighs. He rises out of the chair and lies down beside her. He folds his arms and stares at the ceiling, trying to look bored.

BANDINI

I'm terrified.

CAMILLA

(leans on an elbow,
looking down at him)

Take off your pants...want me to
do it for you?

BANDINI

(leaning up on his
elbow, not to be
outdone:)

Why don't you take off your pants?

She flips up her dress.

CAMILLA

They're off.

And she lies back down, fully exposed and unlike the beach, in clear light. She's naked under his nose.

CAMILLA

How does it look?

BANDINI
(dizzy from the
sight)
All right. Okay. Fine.

CAMILLA
(mimicking)
"All right. Okay. Fine." Come
on. A great writer oughta do
better than that.

Still lying down, Camilla without looking and without hurrying runs her hand up Bandini's leg to his crotch where she slowly and firmly squeezes.

CAMILLA (cont'd)
But maybe..maybe you're not so
great. Maybe you can't fuck or
write -

She flaps her dress back down over herself and sits up. Digging her heels back into her pumps:

CAMILLA (cont'd)
So long -

She rises to leave. Bandini grabs her and sits her rudely back down.

Camilla isn't surprised. She remains motionless on the edge of the bed. Bandini doesn't know what to make of this. Camilla seems taken with something on the floor. Bandini lets her go and follows her gaze.

In a flash she's on her feet. Bandini lunges after her, reaching her when she's nearly out the window. He yanks her backward. She falls on top of him. She struggles to stand up.

Bandini pushes her back down to the bed. She springs back up. He pushes her down. She springs up. Down. Up. Down, up, down, up. It's farcical, until there's a lull because both combatants are gasping for air, desperate, full of hatred.

Bandini whips a leg behind Camilla and pushes, knocking her off balance, collapsing on her.

Papers and pencils go flying - Bandini's typewriter is jostled closer to the edge of the desk with each bang of the bed.

The two are a Tom and Jerry blur of fur-pulling and cat-clawing. Bandini works at getting his trousers down and her dress up.

Camilla's kicking and biting and scratching.

BANDINI

(gasping)

' - think I can't?..think I
can't?.. think I can't?..

There's a crash o.s. and almost simultaneously Camilla cries out.

BANDINI (cont'd)

(triumphant)

What's that feel like?...

CAMILLA

(quietly)

Not much..like any other pain in
the ass...

Oddly, she makes no further attempt to resist, but lies there, wrinkled, tangled, makeup garishly smeared, saliva drying at the corners of her twisted mouth.

Bandini, sickened, gets off her. Camilla makes it to a sitting position.

CAMILLA

I thought you were something else.
But you're even worse than other
men. Rough stuff. God.

She's off the bed and out the window. It's only then Bandini notices his typewriter: it was the o.s. crash. It's on its side, the ribbon spool crushed and the keys jumbled and stuck. Like him it's a mess.

FADE:

EXT RED CAR MOVING (DAY)

down its plumbline rails. LONG BEACH ROUTE can be read over the front of the car.

EXT RED CAR STATION (LONG BEACH DAY)

Passengers alight, a subdued Bandini among them.

EXT-INT LONG BEACH APARTMENT HOUSE (DAY)

Bandini examines a cluster of mailboxes. He enters the building. Rickety stairs and a twisted bannister lead him to apartment 4A.

AT THE DOOR

He knocks. Vera Rivken opens the door. Bandini notices she's in the same outfit she'd worn that night in his room. It doesn't look as good in the daytime.

BANDINI
(at a loss)
You look - wonderf -

Vera smothers him with kisses, clinging like a wet vine. The Ferris Wheel and Roller Coaster on the Long Beach Pike are visible thru a far window.

BANDINI
(moving across to it)
Say, that's quite a sight - what
the!..

Bandini jumps like he's been goosed. Vera right behind him has stripped off his coat, before he's even made it to the window.

VERA
Sit. Enjoy the view.

She offers an overstuffed chair. When he sits Vera falls to her knees at his feet.

BANDINI
- hey don't -

VERA
(unlacing his shoes)
Relax. Be comfortable.

She disappears with his shoes and coat. Bandini doesn't like it. There's a banging sound from the kitchen. It's more unsettling. Abruptly:

VERA
Here. Something nice and cool.

She hands Bandini a glass of milk and again deposits herself at his feet, like a devoted Cocker Spaniel.

BANDINI
Did you want some of this?

Vera shakes her head. Her mute, moist adoration is unnerving. He spots yellowish clumps floating around in the glass of milk.

BANDINI
It's not - buttermilk?

Again Vera shakes her head. Under her adoring eye, Bandini must, and does sip the milk. It's an effort.

BANDINI
- good.

He shuts his eyes.

VERA
Oh darling! you're tired.

She sits up and touches his brow.

BANDINI
A little -

He gratefully manages to set down the glass.

VERA
(stroking him)
Working late as usual -

BANDINI
Well no -

VERA
(rising)
My darling's so dedicated. Such
an artist. He must take a nap.

She's on her feet and has a Murphy bed pulled half off the wall.

BANDINI
Wait. I'd like to tell you
something -

VERA
You can tell me lying down.

Before he can protest she's got him on the bed. Bandini tries to remain upright.

BANDINI
I wasn't working last night -

VERA
(unbuttoning his
shirt)
Oh you bad boy! let me guess..out
with your best girl?

BANDINI
Not exactly -

Vera leans with her full weight and flattens him down on the bed.

VERA
You don't have to explain to me, my
darling, rest, rest now. Rest -

She's running her feverish hands up and down Bandini's body,
quivering and half-moaning as she repeats, 'rest, rest, rest - '

BANDINI
(immobile)
She's not my best girl.

VERA
(breathlessly)
..you mean..you don't love her
anymore? oh dear, dear -

Bandini sits up. Quietly insistent:

BANDINI
She doesn't love me. Unlikely as
that seems.

He lights a cigarette and flops back on the pillow. Blows smoke at
the ceiling. Vera looks hurt, and more than a little suspicious:

VERA
She doesn't love you?

BANDINI
She hates my guts.

VERA
She couldn't do that! How could
she possibly...

BANDINI
Possibly because I insult and
humiliate her every chance I get.

Preoccupied, Bandini doesn't see or sense the serious emotional
effect of his words on Vera:

VERA
(trembling)
You wouldn't. You couldn't...do
such things.

BANDINI
(staring at ceiling,
chuckling)
Oh yeah? I called her Spick and
greaser and every name in the book.
That's when I was in a good mood.
She's Mexican by the way.

VERA
(softly at first)
Oh, oh, oh my God, oh my God, God
in heaven!

This last she practically shrieks. Bandini jumps straight up off
the bed.

BANDINI
Jesus Mary mother of God -
He turns and sees Vera trembling and shaking.

BANDINI
What happened? what's going on?
Vera? Vera? Vera!
He grabs Vera. Vera won't look at him.

VERA
God..is punishing me...

BANDINI
..right now?

VERA
What..do you do to..Jewish girls?

BANDINI
(utterly mystified)
Jewish girls?

VERA
You're going to hit me.

BANDINI
(annoyed now)
Are you nuts?

VERA

Okay, call me names but don't hit
me -

Eyes nearly closed, Vera prays, davening on the bed. Bandini can't believe it. He taps her on the shoulder. She moans.

BANDINI

I'm not going to hurt you, I'm not
going to hurt you. Look, if I
wanted to hurt you I didn't have to
come to Long Beach, I could've done
it in my room...

(no effect, he explodes)

Oh for Pete's sake. Why would I
hurt you? why would I bother? I
don't even love you!

Vera finally allows herself a guarded look at Bandini.

VERA

Why did you come here?

BANDINI

(angrily)

Why not? I wanted to make
someone happy!...

(rises off the bed)

..ahh, look, I'm sorry. If I
could get my coat and shoes -
really I just need my shoes -

VERA

Is that why you insult her?..
because you can't make her happy?

This catches Bandini by surprise.

BANDINI

(sinks back to the
bed)

All I know is..she usually starts it.

VERA

How? what does she say?

BANDINI

It's not so much what she says.

VERA

What does she do?

BANDINI

Sometimes she'll walk across the room. That's pretty insulting. Or serve me a cup of coffee wearing a brand new uniform - skin like maple syrup, hair spilling like ink down starched, white linen..that's about as insulting as anything gets. She's perfect, like the weather.. the hot days and cool nights, salt air and fog, eucalyptus and dusty sunlight, the perfect place to live. Then we come along - dig for gold, drill for oil, get into the movies, build these crappy hotels and dirty streets. We don't even come here to live - just dig it up, mess it up and grab whatever we can get. This is her home. If God had any sense or decency - he'd blow us all to Kingdom come and leave her home the way it was. Pure and perfect, like her.

VERA

When you tell her these things -

BANDINI

(hastily)

I don't tell her this. It would sound like an insult. No matter what I say to Camilla it sounds like an insult.

He lies back down.

VERA

(with great longing)

Then tell it to me.

BANDINI

What for?

VERA

Pretend I'm her. I'll believe you.

BANDINI

Look I'd like to but -

VERA
(desperately)
Please let me! Let me be Camilla.
Camilla?...

And Bandini sees she's pleading at least as much for her own sake as for his.

BANDINI
(reluctantly)
Camilla Lop - well you're Mayan.

Vera looks puzzled. Bandini sighs.

BANDINI
- a Mayan princess.

VERA
(with growing assurance)
'- I am..Princess Camilla..and all this beautiful land belongs to me -
(her gesture takes in the apartment)
There are no Americans here, no Los Angeles, only me and the desert and the mountains and the sea and'..and then...?

She looks to Bandini.

BANDINI
(not exactly swept up in it)
Then..I come.

VERA
'Then you come.' And you are..

Bandini realizes she's waiting for his answer.

BANDINI
- I'm myself. Arturo Bandini.

VERA
(half-choking it out)
'- ah yes, of course! Arturo Bandini, the writer, the genius of the earth! has come here for me. But I am proud, I resist and resist and resist, until finally you are
(MORE)

VERA (cont'd)
 irresistible, your powers are
 legion - you overwhelm me, you
 conquer me, you are like a great
 conquistador, you are like
Cortez -'

Bandini in spite of himself is getting interested.

BANDINI
 - only I'm Italian.

VERA
 '..only you're Italian..'

They kiss. DISSOLVE TO:

BANDINI'S FANTASIES

as he makes love to Vera Rivken are overlapping dissolves:

1. EXT DESERT (DAY) where Vera indeed has been transformed into a luscious Camilla making torrid, glistening love under a blazing sun - supine, her head and back hanging heedlessly off some dramatic rock formation at the desert's edge.
2. EXT SEA (SUNSET) Camilla and Bandini intertwined amidst the churning foam and garlands of seaweed - backlit in the spindrift purple haze of a coastal California sunset.
3. EXT SANTA MONICA MOUNTAINS (NIGHT) A breeze rustles thru moonlit silver dollar Eucalyptus and Camilla's hair as she and Bandini are caressed by a gentle Santa Ana, and caress one another.

INT VERA'S APARTMENT (LATE AFTERNOON)

Vera dozes in the rumpled sheets of the Murphy bed. Bandini sits gingerly on the edge, putting on his shoes. Vera's eyes don't open. A slender little arm reaches out to Bandini from under the sheet.

VERA
 You're very kind.

She squeezes his hand, withdraws her frail arm. Bandini looks for a moment at Vera's face, serene and almost beautiful. He brushes back a curl at her temple. She rewards him with a soft little murmur.

EXT LONG BEACH PIKE (TWILIGHT)

Bandini swaggers down the busy boardwalk, lit cigarette between his lips, hands thrust into his trousers, flexing and looking so full of himself he's about to push out of his own pockets and into a handstand.

BANDINI VO

' - as he passed the endless row of canvas concessions and customers eagerly wallowing at their troughs of ten-cent pleasures, men in sailor suits and girls in bathing suits the old the young the aged and infirm, the native the tourist the Filipino, this riotous panoply of humanity that came pouring into California to search desperately for its place in the sun, tonight he knew was willing to settle for a kewpie doll on the pike. Tho Bandini pitied them their petty aspirations he admired their boundless courage, he was after all a lover of man and beast alike and he knew in his heart what they knew in their hearts, that their place in the sun was really no more than a handful of dust -

He stops still looking at what he's been describing. His buoyant mood leaves him. The sweat on his brow grows cold. He drops his cigarette. He's actually frightened himself. A flock of gulls squall overhead. As he watches them:

BANDINI

(out loud)

- we're here for a while, then we're somewhere else, God knows where. We're going to die. Camilla, Vera, and you Arturo. Even Hackmuth. Everybody's going to die.

Shaken, he stops and balances against a stone bench while he pulls off a shoe and empties sand out of it.

BANDINI

God damn you. God damn you, God!

Suddenly Bandini loses his balance and falls down on the sand. He starts to rise to his feet and has trouble doing it, doubly annoyed.

It takes him a moment to look at the ground and see the sand is moving back and forth beneath him, being shaken as if it were in a sieve. He looks up - the boardwalk has buckled, the canvassed concessions are shaking, milk bottles are falling off their perches, baseballs spill off the front counters, plaster-of-paris Popeye and Hawaiian Hula Girls are hurled off their shelves and splatter when they hit the pavement, women are screaming, men are shouting, babies are crying. Fire bells go off. Horns honk.

BANDINI

(as it goes on)

- God I didn't mean it, I take it back, please don't hurt these people, it's not their fault, it's mine!

EXT LONG BEACH (NIGHT)

There's only an occasional siren, marines b.g. can be glimpsed roping off the street, another brigade of firemen dousing the smoking ruins of a clapboard structure. Stretcher bearers move between ruined buildings, the Red Cross is setting up emergency quarters, airplanes drone overhead, roving search-lights periodically brighten the smoking devastation like flares in the night.

VIEW SHIFTS slightly to include Bandini watching firemen digging thru the collapsed facade of Vera's old brick building. Rooms are visible - a mangled doll's house of missing floors, exposed bathrooms, and jumbled furniture. Vera's apartment is virtually obliterated except for one wall, with the Murphy bed hanging off it, stripped of everything but one bloody sheet.

A fireman calls out, 'Here she is.' Flashlights poke thru rubble and Bandini glimpses Vera's forehead and hair lying matted with dust and blood. Her frail arm, oddly, seems untouched. He hears a fireman murmur, 'She never knew what hit her,' and turns away.

FADE:

EXT ALTA LOMA HOTEL (DAY)

It seems untouched by the catastrophe.

BANDINI

can't believe it. He hurries inside.

INT ALTA LOMA (DAY)

MRS HARGRAVES

Oh, Mr. Bandini, there you are.
Someone was looking for you last
night.

BANDINI

Oh?

MRS HARGRAVES

I didn't ask her name. She was a
Mexican girl.

Mrs. Hargraves returns to busying herself with the making out of
bills.

BANDINI

What did she say? Mrs. Hargraves,
what did she say?

MRS HARGRAVES

I told her you were out of town.
She wanted to wait in the lobby. I
couldn't really permit that, even
if she were white.

BANDINI

(trying to control his
temper)

Mrs. Hargraves, I told you I'd be
back today. Why didn't you tell
her that?

MRS. HARGRAVES

Mr. Bandini, we had an earthquake
yesterday. I had no idea where in
the world you would be - or if you
would be in it.

EXT COLUMBIA BUFFET (DAY)

The portly bartender, HAROLD, is setting up with a new waitress, a
freckled redhead.

HAROLD

Camilla just up and quit. Packed
up her place over on Alameda too.

BANDINI

Where'd she go?

HAROLD

Sammy's. It's in the desert
somewheres - that's not real
helpful, I know.

INT BANDINI'S ROOM

He sits on his bed, his worldly fortune neatly laid out on the
blanket. Hellfrick lurches into Bandini's room, a sheet or two to
the wind.

HELLFRICK

Holy smoke. That's nine dollars...
and eighty-one cents.

BANDINI

- it's gotta last me, Hellfrick.

HELLFRICK

Til when?

BANDINI

- I write something.

He glances over at his mute and dusty typewriter, a ribbon spool
still bent.

HELLFRICK

Kid, come on. With that kinda
dough you could write the
Encyclopedia Britannica. You're
loaded. Speaking of which -

EXT CABRILLO BEACH (NIGHT)

Hellfrick and Bandini are toasting marshmallows and going thru pints
of gin. Hellfrick's car, an old Packard, is visible b.g. Hellfrick
wears a WW I doughboy's overcoat.

HELLFRICK

(singing)

'Mademoiselle from Armentiers
parlez-vous
Mademoiselle from Armentiers
parlez-vous
Mademoiselle from Armentiers
hasn't been fucked in forty years,
Inky, dinky parlez-vous..'

(MORE)

HELLFRICK (cont'd)

- ah, Paris in the days before
I pickled my pecker with gin..you
get stiff and it gets limp, now
does that make sense? what you
been doin' for nookie these days,
kid?

BANDINI

I been..busy..you know what
Michelangelo said. 'What the boy
puts into the girl, he can't put
into the statue.'

HELLFRICK

Well, he was wrong. When I was your
age, I could put it into a statue.

(Hellfrick looks over
at the preoccupied
Bandini)

- writin' a hot one, huh?

BANDINI

(another swig)

I'm not..writin'.

HELLFRICK

How come?

BANDINI

Don't feel like it.

Bandini tosses another empty pint onto the accumulating pile.

HELLFRICK

Yeah..must be rough, sittin' there
day after day by yourself -

BANDINI

- deliver milk. Deliver mail.
Deliver babies. Anything where you
do something..besides sit..get
flabby.. and make things up..be a
fireman.

HELLFRICK

What the hell for?

BANDINI

Put out fires..save somebody's life -
writing's not gonna save anybody..

HELLFRICK

Kid, you're a good Catholic, aren't you?

BANDINI

I'm not sure..I'm a good anything. What about you?

HELLFRICK

Me? Oh, hell I'm - retired.

BANDINI

A retired what?

HELLFRICK

A retired atheist.

BANDINI

How does an atheist retire?

HELLFRICK

Well I did it..on an army pension.. not very comfortably. So what's the church teach you..to believe in?

Bandini's eyes are glazing, but he's trying to concentrate.

BANDINI

..Christ..

HELLFRICK

Jesus, right? you're not cursing? -

BANDINI

(going on)

- that He's the son of God. That He - died for our sins. That Mary's His mother. There's a Heaven and a Hell. There's Redemption.

HELLFRICK

- that there's some point to life. Yeah, I get it. Tell you what, kid. I'm gonna make this easy on you. By the time we're finished you won't have a choice, you're gonna be so broke, you're gonna hafta write to keep from starving to death. Let's get to the liquor store before it closes.

BACK IN HELFRICK'S ROOM

The wee small hours.

HELLFRICK

How would you like a big thick steak? Lots of butter. Burnt just enough to give it a tang. How would you like it?

BANDINI

We're broke and nothing's open.

HELLFRICK

Come on. Leave it to me.

INT PACKARD MOVING (NIGHT)

Bandini lolls in the front seat next to Hellfrick who's eyes are red and feverish from alcohol. He straddles the white line of a slender country road.

BANDINI

Hellfrick, we been driving forever..

HELLFRICK

Hold on, kid, it won't be much longer..

He turns the wheel. The car begins to bump and buck.

BANDINI

(eyes jostled open)
What the hell's open out here?

EXT SAN FERNANDO VALLEY (NIGHT)

Hellfrick has just turned off the road and thru a brace of eucalyptus to scattered farmhouses and pasture lands.

INT CAR (MOVING AND BOUNCING)

Bandini's eyes at alcoholic half-mast sees the barbed wire and fence posts pass him in the glare of headlights. The road abruptly ends.

BANDINI

Where the hell are we? Do you know?

Hellfrick's doused the headlights.

HELLFRICK

Do you want a steak or don't you?

BANDINI

- of course.

HELLFRICK

- okay.

Hellfrick gets out of the car, opens the rear door, and fumbles with car tools under the rear cushion. Bandini peers into the back seat to see Hellfrick holding a jackhammer.

BANDINI

Oh, no. A flat tire. You need some help?

HELLFRICK

You wait here.

Bandini nods, shutting his eyes again.

In a moment there's a mooing of a cow. Bandini's eyes open slowly. There's a faint thud, then another 'moo' - a lowing, piteous one this time. Bandini sits slowly up.

BANDINI

Hellfrick. Hellfrick?

Bandini opens the car door and practically falls out. He circles the car, peering under the light of a quarter moon for Hellfrick changing a tire. But he's not at any of the four wheels.

Then he spots Hellfrick staggering out of the barn door, a dark mass over his shoulders like a huge knapsack.

Behind him a cow follows, mooing continually and pushing her nose into Hellfrick's back.

Hellfrick turns and kicks wildly at the cow, then lurches crazily up to the fence, the cow still in lowing pursuit.

HELLFRICK

(breathless gasps)

Help me, kid!..help me!..

Hellfrick stumbles and drops his burden at the barbed wire's edge, practically at Bandini's feet.

It's a calf, blood spurting from a gash between her ears. Her eyes are wide open full of terror, quite visible in the moonlight. Her

hind quarters are in a death spasm.

HELLFRICK
(struggling with the
barbed wire)
- what'd I tell you, kid? you'll
never get better beef!..not in
California anyway!..how about
helping, this cow's not making it
any..kid!..

Bandini has sunk to his knees. The calf is still.

BANDINI
Oh, dear God -

He touches the calf's face, and starts to cry.

HELLFRICK
(sees this)
..come on kid, don't let me down
now -

But Bandini's weeping grows.

HELLFRICK
Are you crazy? do you wanna get
caught? come on.

Hellfrick stands and tries to shove the calf thru the barbed wire.
Bandini knocks Hellfrick down.

BANDINI
Go away! you go away!..

But Bandini goes. He staggers down the dirt road away from the
pathetic carnage. Hellfrick, flat on his back in the pasture, looks
helplessly thru the barbed wire toward Bandini's retreating figure.

HELLFRICK
- kid, I'm sorry..

EXT COUNTRY ROAD (NIGHT)

back to pavement and a single white-line. The headlights of
Hellfrick's car bounce off a heavy creeping fog, but manage to
reveal Bandini on his knees in some roadside grass.

HELLFRICK'S VOICE
(over the idling engine)
Kid..please! come on, it's miles back
to town -

BANDINI
(turning into the
headlights)
Get outta here Hellfrick. I never
want to see you again.

Hellfrick can be heard sighing. After a moment, the car's in gear,
the headlights move on, leaving Bandini in darkness and cool fog.
FADE:

THE BULLET FACED JAPANESE VEGETABLE MAN (INT CENTRAL MKT DAY)

looks up and beams. He grabs a paper sack and begins filling it with
oranges. VIEW WIDENS to include a pale Bandini gamely holding up his
nickel.

JAPANESE V.M.
You rike banana?

BANDINI
Yes.

JAPANESE V.M.
You rike apple?

BANDINI
Yes.

JAPANESE V.M.
You rike prum?

BANDINI
(eyeing the beautiful
Satsuma plums)
- oh yes.

There have been Mexican girls shopping b.g. as before, but Bandini's
eyes are on his merry, generous greengrocer.

JAPANESE V.M.
Good. Very good for you.

Bandini hands him his nickel. Bowing and completing the ritual:

JAPANESE V.M.
Thank you, thank you -

BANDINI

Thank you..

He watches the little man bow a last time and scurry down the aisle to take care of another customer.

INT BANDINI'S ROOM (DAY)

His teeth sunk in an apple, Bandini is using a pair of pliers, in an effort to straighten out his ribbon spool and several keys that were bent out of shape in the typewriter's fall.

CLOSE PAPER (AND MOVING CARRIAGE)

with the typewriter keys banging out 'a;sldkfjghA:SLDKFJGH', then 'The quick brown fox jumps over the lazy dog the quick brown fox jumps over the lazy dog'.

BANDINI

is pleased. His machine is back in working order. He pulls the test paper out and replaces it with a blank sheet. He takes a breath, glances up at Hackmuth, then out the window as if he longs to be at the farthest point his eye can sight. Like a man preoccupied with some other task he ought to be doing, Bandini begins to strike keys in a seemingly random, even idle fashion.

CLOSE PAPER (AND MOVING CARRIAGE)

the keys punching out 'She was not a large woman and she was not beautiful, but she seemed attractive and she had' (the carriage pauses) '- nervous black eyes.' (The carriage begins to speed up:) 'the sort a woman gets from too much bourbon, very bright and glassy and extremely insolent -'

DISSOLVE TO:

AN ASHTRAY

overflowing with orange seeds, plum pits and cigarette butts.

BANDINI (INT ROOM NIGHT)

According to the St. Paul clock out his window, it's nearing eleven. The time gives him pause. He pulls the page out of the typewriter and places it face down on the rest of the day's pages, surprised by their number. He stretches, rises, and yelps. He falls straight to the ground. He laughs. His back is out from all the sitting. He wraps his arm around the nearest leg on the bed to pull and stretch.

He spots Camilla's Tam O'Shanter under the bed. Bandini takes it and tosses it onto the dresser, hits the light. In the dark he lies back on the bed, he recalls hearing the strains of 'Over the Waves' coming from the Columbia Buffet player piano.

FADE:

CLOSE BANDINI TYPEWRITER (DAY)

with the sentence fragment 'The name on the mailbox was ' visible. Bandini's breathing can be heard. Then the keys complete a sentence, 'The name on the mailbox was Doris Slotkin.' (The keys continue: 'It was down on the Long Beach Pike, across the street from the Ferris Wheel and the Roller -')

BANDINI'S VOICE

Yeah, what is it?

INT BANDINI ROOM (DAY)

Hellfrick tentatively opens Bandini's door, carrying some mail. It's a different time. The weather's changed. Bandini wears a sweater.

HELLFRICK

Am I - disturbing you?

Bandini says nothing.

HELLFRICK

Just thought you'd wanna know you got a certified letter.

Hellfrick waves a blue slip of paper.

BANDINI

Thanks.

HELLFRICK

- I'll just set it down on the dresser, okay?

Bandini nods, remains with his hands poised over the keys while he does this.

HELLFRICK

(as he exits)

By the way, how's it goin'?

BANDINI

(not moving)

- it's going.

Bandini remains motionless, waiting. Hellfrick shuts the door. Bandini can't continue. He grabs a jacket and almost as an afterthought the certified letter notice. He slips out the window to a gray windy day.

INT POST OFFICE (DAY)

Bandini signs for and receives the letter.

INSERT

Its return address is 'The American Mercury' with the letters 'J.C.H.' neatly typed over the magazine letterhead. Bandini tears open the envelope, sitting into SHOT at a bench by the post office entrance.

HACKMUTH VOICE (VO)

'Dear Mr. Bandini,
I would rather not publish this
latest effort of yours just now -

Bandini pauses, crestfallen. Then resigned, returns to read the rest of the letter.

EXT ALTA LOMA (NIGHT)

Huddled against a cold wind, Bandini makes his way up the steps to his hotel.

INT HOTEL

Bandini wanders thru the lobby, Heilman, and the Filipino houseboy its only occupants.

MRS. HARGRAVES VOICE

Mr. Bandini? Mr. Bandini? Mr.
Bandini!

Bandini turns, still holding his coat collar up around his neck.

BANDINI

..Mrs. Hargraves?

MRS. HARGRAVES

Yes, Mrs. Hargraves. That's very
good, Mr. Bandini. How's the
writing business these days, Mr.
Bandini?

BANDINI

Oh, very good, thank you. Is it a little chilly tonight or is it my imagination?

MRS. HARGRAVES

It should reach 32 degrees according to the fruit frost service in Pomona. So the writing's going well?

BANDINI

Very well. Smudge pots in October. Isn't that unusual?

MRS. HARGRAVES

What's unusual, Mr. Bandini, is that someone who can get as lost in their imagination as you seem capable of doing, takes a sudden interest in practical details like smudge pots. Could I also interest you in a little twenty-seven dollar detail, that's forty-six days overdue? Your rent.

BANDINI

All I've got's a check.

MRS. HARGRAVES

A check's fine. As long as it's good.

BANDINI

It's a pretty big check.

MRS. HARGRAVES

As long as it's good.

Heilman looks up from a davenport and rolls his eyes. Mrs. Hargraves nods, and folds her arms, waiting to see just how long Bandini is going to draw out his bluff.

BANDINI

(peering in envelope)
It's...in here somewhere...oh yeah.
I stuck it in the letter.

Bandini pulls a green piece of paper out of the folded Hackmuth note and hands it to Mrs. Hargraves. She studies the check like someone trying to read directions off a road map.

BANDINI
It's certified. Right there -

MRS. HARGRAVES
(acidly)
You haven't endorsed it.

BANDINI
Oh yes, of course.

Bandini has reopened Hackmuth's letter. He takes a fountain pen off Mrs. Hargrave's desk and scribbles on the back of the check - then returns to Hackmuth's letter.

HACKMUTH'S VO
' - I would rather not publish this just now - for one thing I believe it's a yarn that is part of a bigger ball than you, in your present financial straits, are able comfortably to contemplate. Therefore please use the enclosed two-hundred and fifty dollars to follow out the string. I suspect you'll find it reaches novel length. Do keep me informed. Very truly yrs
J.C. Hackmuth

MRS. HARGRAVE'S VOICE
Mr. Bandini!

She catches up to him at the far side of the lobby. She hands him an envelope as tho it contained indecent material.

MRS. HARGRAVES
(lowering her voice)
- your change.

BANDINI
Thank you.

MRS. HARGRAVES
(as he exits)
Don't you want to count it?

EXT HALLWAY BANDINI

finds the door to his room is locked. He reaches into his pocket for a key and realizes he doesn't have one. He twists the knob and rattles it. It's definitely locked. Puzzled, he starts away.

A WHISPERED VOICE:

Arturo?

BANDINI

Who is it?

Even as he asks, he realizes who. She giggles.

CAMILLA'S VOICE

- I came in thru the window. I hope you don't mind.

Bandini struggles for a casual tone.

BANDINI

Not at all. Sounds like fun. I'd like to come thru the door. How do you feel about that?

CAMILLA'S VOICE

Just a minute, okay?

Bandini sniffs. He's picking up some scent that he doesn't recognize.

BANDINI

Is someone in there, Camilla?
Camilla?..Camilla?

CAMILLA'S VOICE

Yeah -

She opens the door and pulls Bandini back into a darkened room.

CAMILLA

- me and you, come on, make yourself at home -

She laughs again. Bandini glances around in the darkness, unable to see her or anything else very clearly. He doesn't like it.

BANDINI

What's the big idea?

CAMILLA

I'm here to see you. Hard to believe?

BANDINI

I don't like the smell in here.
What is it?

Bandini goes for the light switch overhead. Camilla grabs his arm.

CAMILLA
Nothing! Just - don't turn on the
lights.

BANDINI
Why not?

She moves right into him.

CAMILLA
I'm shy -

She reaches up to kiss him - and as she does, Bandini grabs the light switch and pulls it. She turns her back on Bandini and he circles her.

BANDINI
So you came here to see me..

CAMILLA
Surprised?

BANDINI
Very.

He's walked around to face her. But now Camilla's staring at the floor.

BANDINI
So how do I look? -

Bandini lifts her chin. Camilla's lower lip is swollen and she's got a black eye.

BANDINI
Who hit you?

CAMILLA
No one. It was an automobile accident.

BANDINI
Was Sammy driving the other car?

Camilla tries to keep her face from registering any reaction - but she can't quite stop it when it starts:

CAMILLA
Please turn the lights out.

She buries her face in his shoulders. Bandini reaches up and shuts

off the light. In the darkness Bandini lifts her up and carries her to the bed.

CAMILLA

Don't leave. Don't let go of me..

BANDINI

Why did he do it?

CAMILLA

He said I asked for it.

BANDINI

Did you?

CAMILLA

Maybe, maybe not. However they want to hurt you that's what they say...just put me to bed? I'm so tired..

She snuggles into him.

FADE:

INT BANDINI ROOM (MORN)

Bandini, dressed and holding his typewriter, steps into SHOT. He looks down at Camilla, bruised anguished and exhausted even in sleep. He slips thru the window and into the morning fog.

Camilla seems to sense his absence. She opens her eyes and looks around the room. It's stripped of Bandini's belongings. In a panic she sits up. Shivering and wincing with pain, she hurries to put on her clothes.

BANDINI

- where's the fire?

Bandini is back, sitting in the window.

CAMILLA

Where you goin'?

BANDINI

Laguna.

CAMILLA

What for?

BANDINI

It's nice there..it's nearly winter, probably get a place pretty cheap -

Suddenly Camilla squeezes Arturo's arm.

CAMILLA

- loan me a coupla bucks before you go, could you? I'll mail it to you when I get my job back -

BANDINI

I thought you might like to come along.

CAMILLA

(immediately wary)

Oh yeah? What for?

BANDINI

You look like you could use the rest. Maybe even a walk on the beach.

CAMILLA

(still suspicious)

That's all?

BANDINI

Isn't that enough?

She doesn't quite know what to make of Bandini. She shrugs.

CAMILLA

It's your funeral.

EXT CAMILLA'S ROADSTER MOVING (HWY 101 DAY)

Bandini and Camilla driving in silence, Camilla scowling and being whipped by her own hair in the open car. There's a break in the overcast sky and they're struck in the face with bright morning sunlight. Camilla's scowl becomes an angry squint. She swears.

BANDINI

Somethin' wrong?

CAMILLA

(almost amused)

It's not any one thing.

BANDINI

Okay, name two.

CAMILLA

A black eye and a hangover.

Bandini pulls off the road again.

CAMILLA

(surly)

Now what?

BANDINI

Just a sec -

He disappears into a roadside shack that offers "FISHING TACKLE BAIT & SPORTING ACCESSORIES".

CAMILLA

I'm not going fishing, Arturo!

EXT 101 DAY

The roadster pulls away from the shack and Bandini drops a small sack in Camilla's lap. She opens it and finds a pair of sunglasses. Chastened and annoyed:

CAMILLA

- thanks.

She takes a peek in rear view mirror. The sunglasses cover her black eye. Suddenly Camilla lifts her arms high, runs her fingers thru her hair, and yawns. She flops back to the seat and lets the wind sweep over her. Bandini's approving smile is cut dramatically short by the road sign: ENTERING LONG BEACH.

EXT REALTY OFFICE (LAGUNA LATE AFTERNOON)

Camilla sits in her roadster, fidgeting. In a moment, Bandini emerges with a set of keys, waves to Camilla then disappears back inside. Annoyed, Camilla fishes into her cloth purse. She pulls out a Prince Albert tobacco can, opens it and retrieves the tail end of a reefer. She bends below the dashboard and lights it. She takes one drag, then another.

BANDINI

What are you doing?

Camilla straightens up so fast she hits the back of her head on the dash.

CAMILLA

Jesus Christ! don't sneak up on people like that.

BANDINI

(getting in the car)

- I didn't.

Camilla's oilcloth purse is open. Bandini spots the Prince Albert Tobacco Can, its lid off. He looks inside and then backs out onto the highway.

CAMILLA

I'm not a hophead..once in a while. When I'm tired, that's all.

She looks at Bandini, waiting for him to say something. He doesn't. He checks the tag on the keychain and pulls onto the highway.

CAMILLA

Is that the address?
(Bandini nods)
Do you know where it is?

BANDINI

We'll see. Why?

CAMILLA

(shrugs)
I don't know why. The beach is the beach. A house is a house.

EXT LAGUNA (DAY)

They pass a scattering of seaside houses, Bandini slowing to check addresses. Camilla regards these one-story bungalows planted in weeds and iceplant with disinterest bordering on distaste.

Then they pass a twin-gabled white clapboard cottage, with a white picket fence and white-washed stones to match, less than fifty yards from a gentle surfline. Camilla takes off her sunglasses and emits an involuntary gasp at its modest perfection.

Bandini drives by it. Camilla's disappointment is evident. However he shortly turns off the highway onto an unpaved road, flanked by white-washed stones. CAMERA holds at the highway and watches Bandini follow the road which quickly doubles back to the front porch of the cottage.

He barely pulls up to the entrance before Camilla is out of the car. In a moment they're inside.

Camilla can be glimpsed poking her head out the kitchen window; on the second story Bandini opens one gable, Camilla the other.

CLOSER ANGLE COTTAGE (DAY)

They tumble out the door onto a bed of white sand, Camilla doing a slow spin, happily taking in the cottage and beach and sea.

BANDINI

I knew you'd like it.

CAMILLA

You didn't know. Nobody's that predictable.

BANDINI

You are. You'll go for anything that's white.

CAMILLA

Why you Dago son-of-a-bitch!

BANDINI

Yeah, I figured you'd say something like that -

Camilla sees the twinkle in Bandini's eye.

CAMILLA

You were teasing me..

INT-EXT ROADSIDE MARKET AND GAS STATION (DAY)

The cashier rings up \$5.65 for a cornucopia of fresh and canned goods stuffed into a half-dozen grocery bags. Camilla carries a couple of them out to the car while Bandini waits for change.

EXT (DAY)

Bandini loaded with the remaining bags puts them in the roadster. There's no sign of Camilla. He's annoyed and as usual, vaguely suspicious. Then he spots something.

BEHIND THE GAS STATION

In the front yard of an adjacent bungalow there's a sign 'Pups for Sale.' Camilla is kneeling and cooing, the pups yipping and falling all over her. One little white pup has her adoring eye. He tears a grocery bag, spilling its contents and immediately begins lapping at

the milk leaking from under a loose bottle cap. Camilla looks up and sees Bandini looking down. Clutching the dog protectively and trying to pick up the groceries:

CAMILLA

It's my fault, I'm sorry - he's just a little pup -

BANDINI

Okay..but you can't call him Whitey.

(to the owner)

How much?

INT COTTAGE BANDINI (SUNSET)

in the kitchen fries hamburgers, warms the buns, readies the trimmings, and pulls the cork out of a bottle of dago red.

He hears Camilla laughing, glances out

THRU THE WINDOW (SUNSET)

Camilla on the beach. Camilla laughs as her new white pup yips and growls at the incoming surf. She skips along, displaying a reprise of the easy grace she had shown at the Columbia. She breaks into a few bars of "Oh Where Has my Little Dog Gone?" singing it in Spanish - "Donde a donde a eda me pero, donde a donde sefui -"

Bandini's entranced. Camilla spots him.

CAMILLA

He thinks he's being attacked! - the ocean's out to get him personally!..

BANDINI

Tell him I understand the feeling.

CAMILLA

Yeah, you would!

POV BANDINI (NIGHT)

in the hollow of one of the gables, hunched and smoking, staring intently at something just below the frameline. He starts making faces at it, and talking to it.

CAMILLA (INT BED NIGHT)

comfortable in bed, watches Bandini and giggles. Then the staccatto typewriter keys can be heard in counterpoint to the lazy surf.

INT BEDROOM (DAWN)

Bandini, exhausted, creeps into the bedroom, glances at Camilla who appears to be sleeping, then gets out of his trousers and under the covers wearing an undershirt and shorts. He pointedly keeps a healthy distance from Camilla's side of the bed.

WHICH SHE IMMEDIATELY NOTICES

with the one eye not covered by the pillow.

CAMILLA
You talk when you write.

Bandini, a little surprised, doesn't turn toward her when he answers.

BANDINI
Do I?

CAMILLA
Are you kidding? You carry on whole conversations. Who are you talking to in there anyway?

BANDINI
Depends.

CAMILLA
On what?

BANDINI
(turning to her)
- the page I'm on, what else? Get some sleep, kiddo.

He turns away from Camilla. Like a velvet whip, he feels a shapely brown arm across the back of his neck.

CAMILLA
Help out.

BANDINI
How?

Camilla follows her arm into FRAME and kisses Bandini's ear.

CAMILLA

How else?

BANDINI

Oh, now wait -

He's turned toward her in protest, which is a self-defeating move. He's wrapped in her arms and her lips are on his.

BANDINI

- no, come on -

CAMILLA

- where to? I know.

Still kissing him, she starts humming 'Take me out to the Ball Game.'

CAMILLA (cont'd)

Let's see if I can get to first.

(her hand snakes under the covers)

Steal second..go for third and head for - home plate.

(she whistles)

- hey fella, don't you know it's against regulations to use a bat that size - you're really ready to hit one out of the park, aren't you?

Bandini's laughing but trying, vainly, to dislodge Camilla's very firm grip.

BANDINI

- no.

CAMILLA

But why not? if you want to and I want to?

BANDINI

Why do you want to?

CAMILLA

(dumb question)

Why do you usually want to?

BANDINI

Why do you?

CAMILLA
Because - this is ridiculous. You
know why. What's the point of
spelling it out?

BANDINI
(quietly)
You'd just hate me in the morning.
Or the morning after. Or the
morning after that. And I don't
want you to hate me, Camilla.

She sees he means it. Bandini gives her a quick kiss and turns
away.

CAMILLA
(after a moment)
Can I leave my arm around you? It
won't offend you or anything?

BANDINI
(more emotional than
she has any idea)
Camilla. Don't talk like that.

He quickly kisses her forearm, then shuts his eyes, very much aware
of it inches from his lips. FADE:

INT BEDROOM (DAY)

Camilla wakes up. Bandini's not in bed. The newspaper on the floor
beside her is unoccupied.

CAMILLA
Arturo. Willy?

She clambors out of bed and then hears shouts. She goes into the
adjoining room and the gable that houses Bandini's desk and
typewriter. The gable window's open and she peers out.

BANDINI

accompanied by Willy is refereeing a touch football game on the
beach, played by eight Japanese kids in their early to mid-teens.
He sees Camilla in the gable and blows the play dead.

BANDINI
Hold it a minute, fellas.

CAMILLA

watches a quick colloquy with Bandini and the Japanese kids, then
Bandini comes trotting over with Willy.

BANDINI

Hurry up, get dressed, come on down.

CAMILLA

What for?

BANDINI

So the sides'll be even.

CAMILLA

What are you talking about?

BANDINI

Playing in the game. You on one side, me on the other.

CAMILLA

Are you crazy? With a bunch of Japs?

BANDINI

Yeah they didn't want to play with you either.

CAMILLA

(getting angry)
Because I'm Mexican?

BANDINI

- worse. Because you're a girl.

EXT BEACH TOUCH FOOTBALL GAME (DAY)

Camilla mixing it up with Bandini and the Japanese kids. She loves it.

AT THE END OF THE DAY (EXT BANDINI HOUSE LAGUNA)

A nursery truck drives up to the cottage. One of Camilla's teammates hops out of the back of the truck, carrying a potted plant. He spots Camilla thru the kitchen window. He bows and offers it to her. The white flowers of the plant are in beautiful bloom. Camilla's astonished.

INT KITCHEN

Camilla shuts the door and brings the plant inside. She's just fed Willy and Bandini's opening another bottle of dago red, preparing to

feed them.

CAMILLA
(fussing over them)
Beautiful.

BANDINI
Oh yeah.

CAMILLA
What are they?

Bandini stops grinding the garlic.

BANDINI
(surprised)
You don't know?
(Camilla shakes her
head)
They're cammelias.

CAMILLA
- oh.

She places them very carefully on the table.

BANDINI
- and very beautiful.

Camilla gives Bandini a quick glance with real longing in it.
Bandini is back to his garlic.

INT (NIGHT)

Bandini in the gable is whacking away on the typewriter keys,
puffing on a cigarette and trying to keep the smoke out of his eyes.
Camilla's upper legs and pelvis move into SHOT, clad, more or less
in a Balboa version of a Hawaiian silkie. She takes the cigarette
out of Bandini's mouth.

BANDINI
(typing)
..thanks..

CAMILLA

sits on the side of the desk and watches. She periodically offers
Bandini a puff.

CAMILLA
What are you writing about?

BANDINI
(typing)
..a..girl..

CAMILLA
- is she Mexican?

BANDINI
(typing)
..Jewish..at the moment.

CAMILLA
She's gonna change religions?

BANDINI
- no!..there might be more than
one girl in this, you know.

Camilla nods. She takes a puff of Bandini's cigarette, hands it to him.

CAMILLA
Why did you say that? that if we -
slept together I'd end up hating you?

BANDINI
(typing)
Because - I believe it...

CAMILLA
(takes the cigarette)
Would you hate me?

BANDINI
..I don't know..

He reaches for the cigarette but she fails to give it to him.

CAMILLA
- why am I here? because I make you
feel sorry for me?

BANDINI
No.

CAMILLA
What do I make you feel?

Bandini tries to answer, but can't.

CAMILLA (cont'd)

After all that's happened you can't
imagine sleeping with me anymore,
is that it?

BANDINI

(with a touch of a
smile)

I can - and have imagined it.

Camilla thinks about this.

CAMILLA

- I'm not sure I like you doing
that.

BANDINI

Why not? I did.

CAMILLA

What you imagine might be better
than the real thing.

BANDINI

I'm not that good a writer.

Camilla rises, trying to figure out how not to be neutralized by the
compliment. She puts her arms around Bandini's shoulders.

CAMILLA

- regardless, I think you should
save your imagination for your
work. Why waste it on me? when you
don't need to? come to bed,
Arturo...

She takes his hand, as if she's ready to heft him out of his chair.
Bandini looks at her hand holding his. Then:

BANDINI

Would you say 'please?'

Camilla is surprised by the request and its evident sincerity. After
a moment she kneels, looking up into Bandini's face.

CAMILLA

(quietly)

..please..

INT BEDROOM (NIGHT)

They lie in one another's arms, in silhouette. The surf's the only sound.

BANDINI
Promise me something.

CAMILLA
Name it.

BANDINI
That stuff in the Prince Albert can -
throw it out.

CAMILLA
It's not a habit or anything. I
hardly ever use it.

BANDINI
Throw it out anyway.

CAMILLA
It doesn't bother me.

BANDINI
It bothers me. Promise you'll
quit.

She makes a cross over her heart.

CAMILLA
Cross my heart and hope to die.

BANDINI
Swear to God?

CAMILLA
I swear to God..feel better?

BANDINI
(he does)
- yes..
(laughs at himself)
..I do..

They kiss. FADE:

CLOSE NEWSPAPER

a photo of an SC football game visible.

CAMILLA'S VOICE

How come you always read the sport section first?

BANDINI

lowers the paper, revealing Camilla, her reader in one hand, while she feeds a piece of toast to Willy, who has doubled in size.

BANDINI

I don't 'always.'

CAMILLA

- and that particular part of the sports section -

She rises and starts to clear the breakfast dishes.

BANDINI

(amused)

Oh? What particular part is that?

Camilla's right there, pointing at what he's been reading:

CAMILLA

The box scores - and this particular box -

(pointing it out)

'New York Yankees 7 Boston Red Sox
3 Dimaggio, Joe, three for five and
hitting .357.'

BANDINI

(floored)

You can read that?

CAMILLA

As long as Joe Dimaggio leads the league in batting and is still a credit to the Italian people -

She slaps the front page with its warnings of Hitler's latest mischief.

CAMILLA (cont'd)

- the rest of the world can go sit on a flagpole, right Bandini?

She sits on his lap and tweaks him on the nose.

CAMILLA (cont'd)
You don't have to read to figure
that one out!

CLOSE TYPEWRITER KEYS

They punch out and Camilla reads:

CAMILLA'S VOICE
'The - End.'

Standing over Bandini's shoulder as he finishes the last page of his manuscript, Camilla emits a little cry like a Flamenco dancer.

CAMILLA
Holy Toledo!
(yawning and
stretching)
That one was hard work.

Bandini laughs, grabs her and they kiss.

INT KITCHEN (NIGHT)

Bandini in coat and tie, Camilla wearing makeup and a splashy dress, drink red wine and serenade Willy with 'Donde a Donde', 'Oh Where Has My Little Dog Gone' in Spanish. Willy cocks his head quizzically and makes little vocal responses.

CAMILLA
(looking at Willy)
I'm so crazy about him!

She takes Bandini's hand and kisses it.

INT MOVIE THEATRE LOBBY (BALBOA ISLAND NIGHT)

Camilla and Bandini stand in line at a very busy candy counter. The other customers are almost exclusively of the Smith and Johnson variety, and particularly strong on the blond and blue-eyed side here in Balboa. Camilla, dark in a bright dress is a vivid contrast and there are sidelong glances and open stares.

CAMILLA
(quietly)
Let's go sit down.

BANDINI
I thought you wanted something.

CAMILLA

Now I don't.
(hissing it out)
They're staring at us, Arturo.

BANDINI

(well aware of it)
That's not gonna stop me from
getting a box of Crackerjacks.

CAMILLA

Let's just sit down.

She breaks away from the line.

BANDINI

(quietly)
Camilla!

But he has to go with her. Sheepish and enraged he hurries to catch up as she enters the theatre.

INT THEATRE (NIGHT)

The movie is playing to a full house, tho the seat next to Camilla happens to be empty. Camilla feels the eyes and whispers and occasional guffaws around her are directed at her, and Bandini senses her agitation.

BANDINI

(quietly furious)
Ignore 'em, dammit. Ninety-percent
of it's your imagination anyway.

Unfortunately, on screen Ginger Rogers sassily takes this moment to declare to her scion-suitor: 'I'll do as I please. I'm free, white and twenty-one.'

Bandini winces. Camilla bolts and heads up the aisle.

INT THEATRE LOBBY

Bandini waits outside the Ladies Room. He loosens his tie, wipes away perspiration. Checks his watch.

BANDINI

Camilla. Camilla? you all right in there?

CAMILLA'S VOICE

I'm fine.

BANDINI

Then what's -
(he smells it)
- taking so long?..

CAMILLA

(emerging)
- nothing. Shall we go? or do you
want to catch the rest of the
picture?

Bandini looks at her, taking in her glazed calm, the white oilcloth
purse.

BANDINI

I've seen enough.

EXT ROADSTER MOVING (NIGHT)

Down the highway, Camilla driving. The white oilcloth purse rests on
the seat like a ticking bomb between them.

CAMILLA

Is something wrong? aside from the
obvious.

BANDINI

The 'obvious'? what would that be?

CAMILLA

Getting upset like I did.

BANDINI

Well it was upsetting.

CAMILLA

Well I overreacted.

BANDINI

Well sometimes..you just can't help
yourself -

He goes for her white purse, and so does she. They have a tug of war
and the car weaves wildly, crossing back and forth over the white
line.

CAMILLA

Goddam you, let go! you're gonna
get us killed!

BANDINI

(holding on)

You let go! you're doing the
driving -

Camilla slams on the brakes. The roadster fishtails and takes a hard bounce off a phone pole. Camilla's purse hits the road. It bursts open and the Prince Albert Can, along with her lipstick, mascara and other contents are revealed. It's all pretty visible under the swaying street light hanging off the phone pole.

BANDINI

You been doin' this all along,
haven't you? haven't you?

CAMILLA

- what's it matter!

BANDINI

(gets out of the car
and picks up the purse)

It doesn't. You'll give your word,
swear to God, swear on a stack of
bibles - none of it matters - not
when you're Mexican..not when it
comes to marijuana -

He's picked the purse's contents off the road, including the Prince Albert can and replaced them in the purse. Offering it to Camilla:

CAMILLA

- yeah like a Wop with his Dago
red.

BANDINI

I thought you changed.

CAMILLA

I thought you changed - keep it as
a souvenir.

She drives off, leaving Bandini stranded in the road holding her purse.

EXT (DAWN)

Under a louring sky, Bandini follows the white-washed stones to the

cottage. As it comes into view, Camilla's roadster is conspicuously absent.

INT COTTAGE (DAY)

Bandini races from room to room. There's not a trace of Camilla anywhere. He spots a soiled newspaper set down for Willy.

EXT COTTAGE (DAY)

Bandini bursts out the backdoor onto the sand, calling:

BANDINI
Willy! Willy? Willy!

Up and down the beach there's not a sign of Camilla or Willy - or much of anything else this particular morning. Even the surf is not in evidence - only a glassy, lifeless sea.

BANDINI VO
..the rent was paid for another
month, and I decided to stay, hoping
she'd cool off and come back.

During this Bandini, increasingly ravaged, wanders the house aimlessly day and night, searching its surfaces, listening to every passing car on the highway.

INT GABLE (DAY)

Bandini kneels and picks up a cigarette butt wedged behind one of the legs of his desk. It's got Camilla's lipstick. He holds it like a religious relic. There's the sound of a car approaching. Bandini races downstairs.

AT THE FRONT DOOR (DAY)

Bandini greets a uniformed telegraph boy. He signs for the telegram, eagerly tears it open. His face falls.

TELEGRAPH BOY
Bad news?

BANDINI
- no. It's actually - good news.

TELEGRAPH BOY
(not convinced)
Glad to hear it - say, do you know
what this is?

Bandini had fished in his pocket and handed the boy a bill.

BANDINI
(turning back)
- it's a fin.

TELEGRAPH BOY
That must have been good news.
Thanks, brother!

Bandini shuts the door and glances back down at the telegram.

INSERT

Hackmuth's voice accompanies the telegram:

HACKMUTH VO
YOUR BOOK ACCEPTED MAILING
CONTRACT TODAY HACKMUTH

BANDINI VO
Some days are so bad good news
makes 'em even worse..I moved back
to the Alta Loma, with a check for
five hundred dollars. I was rich.

During this, Bandini is greeted enthusiastically by Mrs. Hargraves in the hotel lobby, signs his name 'Arturo Domenic Bandini' on the check, and looks out the window of a new room at the hotel.

BANDINI VO
- someone had taken my old room
and there was no more rolling out
the window whenever I felt like a
taste of the world - the ground
was twenty feet away, and my old
life a million miles away.

Bandini gets behind the wheel of a nice looking roadster.

BANDINI VO
- I bought a '31 Ford and drove
everywhere looking for Camilla..

SHOTS of Bandini up and down the coast, getting out of his car in front of the Columbia Buffet, parked on the Santa Monica palisades at night, overlooking the beach where he and Camilla had gone to ride the waves on their tempestuous first date.

BANDINI VO
When I got one of Sammy's literary
efforts in the mail, if you could
call it that, I even made an
(MORE)

BANDINI VO
 attempt to criticize it, adding
 that if he should ever happen to
 hear from Camilla Lopez, to please
 let me know.

Bandini shakes his head, picks up a fountain pen and begins to make notes in the margins of Sammy's story.

BANDINI VO
 Then the day came, when I got my
 first advanced copy.

INT ALTA LOMA (DAY)

Bandini enters his new room with the mail, eagerly opens the package from Hackmuth and there it is: a sepia toned dust jacket with the desert the sea and the mountains and the highway: "THE ROAD TO LOS ANGELES" by ARTURO BANDINI. For a moment there's a flush of excitement from Bandini. Then he spots it half hidden in the rest of his mail: a post card with a desert setting. He quickly picks it up.

SAMMY (VO)
 "Dear Mr. Bandini: Well you asked
 and I'm lettin' you know, that
 Mexican girl is here.
 yours sincerely,
 Sammy

During the above:

Bandini hops into his car, tossing the postcard and the advanced copy of his book onto the front seat.

EXT GAS STATION (DUSK)

Under salmon colored skies on the edge of vistas of cactus, sagebrush and Joshua trees Bandini tops off his tank.

EXT MOJAVE DESERT (NIGHT) MOVING

Bandini drives thru a desert pimped with rocks and stumpy little hills. He checks the postcard and turns off the main highway.

EXT WAGON TRAIL (NIGHT)

Bandini's roadster rises and falls in listless hills, then reaches the shadowy outlines of canyons and steep gulches. He stops. Just below him is a squat adobe shack, planted at the very edge of a sandy plain that spreads east to the horizon.

EXT ADOBE (NIGHT)

A coal-oil lamp shines in the single window of the hut. Bandini bangs on the door.

Sammy, so cadaverous it shocks and tempers Bandini, opens the door, wearing long underwear. He smiles.

SAMMY

Hey. Come on in. Caught me with my pants down, fella. Just gettin' to work -

(indicates a scroll-top desk)

Think I got a good un this time -

BANDINI

(looking around the hut)
Where is she?

SAMMY

Damned if I know. She left.

Bandini stands there for a moment, silently hating Sammy.

BANDINI

Where'd she go?

Sammy jerks his thumb toward the east.

SAMMY

That way, somewhere.

BANDINI

You mean out in the desert?

SAMMY

With the pup. Cute pup.

BANDINI

When did she leave?

SAMMY

Sunday night.

BANDINI

Jesus Christ, that was three days ago. What did she take with her?

SAMMY

Whatta you mean?

BANDINI
(sharply)
In the way of something to eat or
drink for one thing.

SAMMY
Milk. She had a bottle of milk for
the dog.

Bandini looks at Sammy as if he's going to choke him, but Sammy saves him the trouble with a coughing fit that nearly knocks him on his back.

BANDINI
(ignoring it)
Come on and show me which way she
went -

SAMMY
I told you -

Sammy points again toward the east. Bandini takes him by the neck and drags him outside into the night.

BANDINI
Show me out here -

EXT ADOBE HUT (EVE)

Bandini hauls Sammy out to the edge of the stone path.

SAMMY
Take it easy, will you?

He begins coughing again.

BANDINI
Point to where she was when you saw
her last.

SAMMY
(hacking it out)
Just..goin'..over that..ridge.

Bandini leaves him standing there and walks toward the top of the ridge a cold desert wind whipping at him. He pulls his coat around his throat.

UNDER HIS FEET

coarse dark sand and little stones give and crumble, making each step something of an effort.

EXT DESERT NIGHT LONG SHOT

Bandini sits on a round white stone, perspiring heavily yet shivering with cold. The moon's dipping down out of the sky.

He looks behind him, from where he's come. It's the same as in front of him - miles of rambling little ridges and mounds without end, dotted with cactus, sage, and ugly plants. Bandini gets up and walks on, numb with cold, sweat pouring off him, toward an eastern horizon that grows grayer with each minute. He looks up - the first blush of pink begins to glow in the eastern sky.

Suddenly a ball of fire breaks out of the dark horizon in front of him. It blinds him and he stops - there's desert everywhere and not a prayer of finding her.

EXT CLEARING (DAY)

with the sun high overhead Bandini trudges back past Sammy's hut. He's caked with dust and sweat. Sammy's in the doorway of the hut, watching him.

SAMMY

Find her?

Bandini doesn't answer, but continues on and makes his way up the road to his car.

ON THE SEAT

the fresh copy of his novel has already begun to curl under the sun's heat. Bandini picks it up.

WIDE ANGLE DESERT (DAY)

Bandini carries the book about a hundred yards back into the desolation from which he'd just come. He opens it up, thumbing thru it until he finds the page he's looking for. He begins to read:

BANDINI

Camilla, when I was a kid back in Colorado it was Smith and Parker and Jones who hurt me with their hideous names who called me Wop and Dago and Greaser, and their children hurt me, just as I hurt you. They hurt me so much I could never become one of them, drove me to books, drove me within myself, drove me to run away from that Colorado town, and into your home

(MORE)

BANDINI (cont'd)

and your life..and sometimes,
Camilla when I see their faces out
here, the same faces, the same set
hard mouths from my home town I'm
glad they're here fulfilling the
emptiness of their lives and dying
in the sun..I've vomited at their
newspapers, read their literature,
observed their customs, eaten their
food, gaped at their art. But I am
poor and my name ends with a soft
vowel, and they hate me and my
father and my father's father, but
they are old now, dying in the sun
and in the hot dust of the road,
and I am young and full of hope and
love for my country and my times,
and when I say Greaser to you it is
not my heart that speaks, but the
quivering of an old wound, and I am
ashamed of the terrible thing I
have done.

As he speaks the camera has slowly moved in, until Bandini's face and figure fill the screen. Emotional and exhausted, Bandini fumbles in his coat and pulls out a fountain pen. He unscrews it and in a shaky hand manages to write something on the frontispiece. He then takes the book and hurls it.

BANDINI'S NOVEL

flies thru the desert air in the direction Camilla had gone.

BANDINI

never sees it land. He gets into his car, starts the engine, and heads back toward Los Angeles.

CLOSE BOOK

'The Road to Los Angeles' lies on its back on the desert floor, its pages flipping idly in a light dry wind. A fortuitous gust and Bandini's inscription on the frontispiece is momentarily revealed. In a shaky hand, with the ink running from the letters it reads:

FOR CAMILLA LOPEZ WITH LOVE,
ARTURO BANDINI

HOLD for a moment before other pages obscure the inscription and the encroaching sand stirred by desert wind, begins to obscure and bury the book itself.

FADE:

EPILOGUE: (Perhaps to be done as part of the crawl, over snapshots:)

JOHN FANTE NEVER GREW MUCH OLDER THAN BANDINI, EVEN THO HE LIVED IN LA FOR OVER HALF A CENTURY LONGER THAN HIS FICTIONAL COUNTERPART. LIKE HIS HERO BANDINI JOHN WAS ALWAYS FEISTY, FULL OF WORK AND WILDLY CONTRADICTORY PASSIONS ABOUT HIMSELF, HIS FAMILY, AND HIS FELLOW MAN UNTIL HE DIED IN 1981 - AS THIS WORLD GOES, UNKNOWN, UNTAMED, AND MUCH LOVED.