

SANDS OF HALCYON

TV Pilot - "Pastures of Honey"

Written by

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Based on the works of Norm Hammond,
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HIGHWAY 101, JUST SOUTH OF GOLETA PASS - LATE MORNING

INT. DUESENBERG MODEL J. BACKSEAT.

Just north of Santa Barbara, the rolling hills peppered in avocado groves and palm trees, a new and luxurious Duesenberg Model J cruises Southbound. The sun shimmers magically off the ocean.

WILLIAM RANDOLPH HEARST, a gaunt and imposing newspaper magnate, industrialist, and retired politician, scowls over the newest issue of "The People's Press", a progressive, San Francisco-based newspaper. The headline reads:

"E.P.I.C. : MY PLAN TO END POVERTY IN CALIFORNIA" BY UPTON SINCLAIR

Accompanying the article is a picture of the author. He stares the camera down, fists clenched as if ready to box whomever's reading.

Across from W.H.R, a stack of newspapers between them, sits MARION DAVIES, his much younger wife and movie-star. She reclines against the window, flipping through the latest issue of "Hearst's International Cosmopolitan". She wears expensive slacks and a blouse, with a droopy, wide-brimmed hat and sunglasses. She raps a pen against her ruby red lips. Boredom radiating from her like perfume.

At the wheel, is AMBROSE BALLENTINE, W.H.R.'s longstanding head butler and occasional chauffeur. Ballentine is black and in his late 40s. He is handsome, with a stoic and polished nature. Rather than a uniform, he wears the type of suit successful men like his employer do. He is always present, never obtrusive.

Attempting to find something that will entertain her enough, Marion jadedly flips through the pages of her magazine.

MARION
(Reading aloud, deadpan but amused)
"The Ten Best Hats to Be
Photographed In".

She yawns and flips the page.

MARION (CONT'D)
"The New Rules of Sophistication:
Champagne Before Noon?"--Well I
wish I'd been told this BEFORE we
packed for the trip.

She looks over at Hearst who continues to not acknowledge her. Hearst's gaze is deadlocked on the article he is reading. His lips pursed straight, fury shining in his eyes.

Marion flips another page.

Oh! here's the one. "How to Keep a Man Interested: Ten Things Every Modern Woman should Master"

She pauses, looking over from her magazine at Hearst. Mock pouting, She purses her lips and bats her lashes.

So you trying to tell me something here or what, Pops?

HEARST
(uninterested, focus still locked on the article) I gave up trying to tell you anything years ago, Marion.

If you ever listened you'd know Ms. Helen Gurley is in charge of that section. It even says so on the first page.

MARION
(feigning hurt feelings) Oh hush you old stinker, you know I'm just teasing.

She closes the magazine with a soft slap.

Well if you want to tell me something, how about you tell me what in that rag has you scowling like a gargoyle?

HEARST
(still yet to look up from the article he is reading, gruff)
Sinclair.

Marion rolls her eyes and sighs.

MARION
Of course it is. And what's he yapping on about now?

Marion yawns theatrically and fans herself with her magazine.

HEARST

(even gruffer) He says hard-earned fortunes like ours are a form of theft. And that poverty is a crime committed by the successful.

MARION

That certainly sounds like Upton.

HEARST

And he's come up with a plan to correct these offenses. Help the common man.

MARION

And how's he plannin' on doing that, dear?

HEARST

(angrily) The lunatic wants to *SOVIETIZE* California!

MARION

Sovietize California?

She giggles to herself.

Oh Pops. You're more dramatic than your Cosmopolitan.

HEARST

Am I? Listen to this--

Hearst shoots Marion a look that says, "and don't interrupt me". With bitter precision, He begins to read aloud;

"One. There will be established a new public body, the California Authority for Land, which will take the idle land, and land sold for taxes and at foreclosure sales, and erect dormitories, kitchens, cafeterias, and social rooms and cultivate the land using modern machinery."

MARION

Oh! Social rooms? Sounds like a party! Think they'll have champagne?

HEARST

(huffing loudly) Sounds more like Summer Camp for crumb-bums!

"Two. A SECOND public body, to be called the California Authority for Production, will be made and authorized to acquire--

(increasingly livid) 'acquire'--
what a polite word for confiscate.

"factories and production plants whereby the unemployed may produce the basic necessities required for themselves and for the land colonies, and to operate these factories and house and feed and care for the workers."

He looks at Marion assuming she has an interruption at the ready. She raises her brows, mock-solemn. Pouty again.

MARION
What? I'm listening.

HEARST

"Three. These farms and factories will operate as self-sufficient, worker-run co-ops. WORKERS will decide collectively how best to manage their operations and profits."

Ballentine's eyes flick to the rearview mirror.

MARION
You would hate that wouldn't you, dear? Not getting to make every decision.

Hearst shoots her a death glare and returns his gaze to the article.

HEARST
(seethingly, through gritted teeth)
And here's the *coup de grâce*--

"The legislature will enact a state income tax, beginning with incomes of five-thousand dollars to be graduated steeply until incomes of fifty thousand dollars and above will pay a tax of thirty percent."
(MORE)

HEARST (CONT'D)

(simultaneously and violently
slamming the paper down on the
stack between them) THIRTY.
FUCKING. PERCENT!

The car hits a small pothole and jolts ever-so-slightly,
bouncing Marions hat.

Ballentine looks up and into the rearview mirror again,
adjusting it to frame Hearst. Ballentine's gimlet eyes are
shown in the mirror from the perspective of the back seat.

BALLENTINE
Mister Hearst? If I may?

HEARST
(calming down slightly) Go on,
Ballentine.

BALLENTINE
Regarding these idle plots.
Sinclair's proposal is only to
seize land with unpaid taxes--
correct, sir?

HEARST
(Snapping back to anger) SO?
Property taxes are the real theft
here, not the success of people
like me. Whats ours is ours and I
have NO obligation to the help
proletariat.

MARION
William. You know better than I
that taxes--

HEARST
(interrupting, snarling) BUT THAT'S
JUST HOW IT STARTS! Sure they *say*
it's the delinquent land but blink
and they'll be after Xanadu and the
Beach House!--then they'll come for
our furniture! OUR FOOD! EVEN THE
AIR IN OUR-

THUD! POP!

The car jolts. Marion screams dramatically.

The left rear dips and rubber flaps wildly. Ballentine's
fashionably gloved-hands tighten around the steering wheel as
he calmly eases the vehicle to the side of the road.

HEARST (CONT'D)
GODDAMN IT,,, BALLENTINE. WHY
WEREN'T YOU EYEING THE ROAD?!

BALLENTINE
Sorry, Sir. There's a lot more
potholes here than on our last
trip. I'll check the damage.

He unbuckles his seatbelt and exits the car.

HEARST
(to Marion) See what happens when
the state has control of the roads?

Speaking through the Cosmopolitan she has since starting
reading again;

MARION
(humorously) This must be why
they're calling it the Great
Depression.