

You'll Never Eat Lunch in This Town Again

To Download this book in many format Visit :

<https://wocoentala.org/source1/ffb06031c86e15e5a191c44e07385c44>

A leading female film producer provides an insider's view of Hollywood, detailing the glittering public functions, the bedroom and boardroom games, drugs, stars, agents, directors, gangsters, and politicians

Julia Phillips was the Oscar-winning producer for Taxi Driver, Close Encounters of the Third Kind, and The Sting.

From the Hardcover edition. Prologue

House Lights Dim Before Titles

The Sting had been nominated, two months before, in ten categories, including Cinematography, Editing, Actor, Screenplay, Director, and Best Picture. The Exorcist, which had garnered an equal number of nominations, had been released the same day, two days before Christmas. It had received an enormous amount of initial publicity; even The New York Times carried pictures of people lined up in the cold to get in.

Warners had been far too cautious in its release of The Exorcist. It had opened in only twenty-four theaters. At 90/10 deals, Leo Greenfield kept reminding us. But then, he was the guy who told us, based on the first week's figures, that our picture would gross maybe fifteen mil. We had opened in 220 theaters, with 70/30 deals, and kept widening the release. Warners waited a good six weeks until they went wide. But The Exorcist was only a three-week picture; the audience lost interest before it was available.

The Sting, on the other hand, had staying power. It had hung in, week after week, and it had opened in ten times the number of theaters. Not only was The Sting racking up some very impressive figures, but people had started to notice that it was an excellent movie. It certainly didn't send you out in the street unsure whether to hit a church or a bar, as The Exorcist did. And Warners had a crack at The Sting and turned us down.

We'd made damn sure John Calley and Dick Shepherd came to the one screening Universal permitted us before the release of the picture. As they were walking out, I collared Calley, because I knew how much it annoyed him, and asked him how he liked the picture.

"I'm going home to slash my wrists," he said. Good. Supercilious motherfucker.

It would be them or us tonight at the Awards.

Michael and Tony had spent weeks aggravating over whether The Sting would win for Best Picture or not. They had practiced speeches, how they would stand up, their walks to the stage. I hadn't dared to contemplate the possibility of winning. I was not a big believer in the power of positive thinking, although I had gone to college with Norman Vincent Peale's daughter. Didn't wanna put a mojo on it; didn't wanna tempt the evil eye.

I translated all my anxiety into finding a dress. Joel Schumacher was my fashion consultant. We agreed I was a New York girl, most comfortable in black, and since so many Californians dressed in colors, that I would probably stand out. Where I got the chutzpah to think I might stand out at such a gathering I don't know. We traipsed from store to store and I would try

something on and I would say, "Now if I win . . ." and then see if the dress was comfortable to walk in, and he would pull at a strap and say, "Now, when you win . . ." We finally settled on a black spaghetti-strap number by Halston at Giorgio's, a long strand of pearls, and a double feather boa made up of guinea hen and black ostrich feathers.

I was still, six months after Kate's birth, a little wide in the hip. Joel was adamant that I should wear beautiful black sandal-heels but I couldn't find any tall enough. I needed height. I ended up buying a pair of giant platform shoes from Fred Slatten. Black satin with rhinestones. They stayed hidden under the dress and they definitely gave me height. They also filled me with the quiescent fear that I might actually fall off them on global TV. A toss-up, looks or safety. The hips won out.

Trancas, California

April 2, 1974

I wake with a shudder at six thirty. The sun creates hot bounce on the sky/sea horizon. It is quite a sight, but I take this view for granted. Without pausing a moment in sincere appreciation, I automatically pop a diet pill. Bad move. Within twenty minutes, I'm dancing around the sandy living room, neatening up. I run along the beach, take a perfunctory dip in the freezing-cold Pacific, race indoors for a brief hot shower.

When I hit the bedroom, Michael is standing on his head, yoga-style, in the corner of the room. "I gotta pick up my tuxedo," Michael says, still upside down. The veins in his temples explode and contract on each syllable. Upstairs, I hear Kate's first baby-musings for the day. Sonya heats formula in the kitchen. I can smell it. I don't know how Kate can stand that shit.

"Good, that'll give me time to be nervous all by myself. Maybe Sonya could take Kate out for a while." As in: I. NEED. MY. SPACE . . .

Within the hour, they're toast. I lay out some coke on a small mirror. Secret stash. Mine. Michael doesn't even know I have it . . . that's how it's gotten. I chop it lightly with a razor. It falls apart like butter. This is good coke. Smooth. I do a hit, then another. I roll a joint and smoke it out on the deck. Less than a hundred yards from me, the ocean beats down in heavy waves against the sand. I pace, my heart beating in triple time to the waves.

I watch the postal van ease its way toward our mailbox, and I vault over the deck and scramble down the hill to meet it. The mailman has a stack, bills mostly, junk mail addressed to Occupant. Sandwiched between the telephone bill and the latest issue of Time is a small blue envelope. The handwriting addressing Michael and Julia Phillips is familiar. I tear open the envelope as I return to the house, yelling "Thanks" over my shoulder to the mailman's wishes for our good luck that night. The letter is short and pithy, my favorites:

Dear Michael & Julia:

In a few days, you will be getting cards and letters and telegrams from everyone, so I wanted to get in what I had to say now. The important thing to remember is that you are nice sweet people. You are about to have a lot of temptation thrown your way, so try not to forget that.

Love, John

Maybe too pithy. The letter upsets me; just now, Michael and I are nice sweet people to everybody but each other. Marriage . . . Here today, gone today. I pop half a Valium and look at my shaking hands. Shut up, I tell them.

When they do, I set about the arduous process of blow-drying my hair, then spicing it up with a curling iron. I swallow another three Valium halves and recurl my hair as a chaser each time until it is time to get dressed. After I'm dressed, I have a little coke as a chaser for all that Val out of my secret stash. I don't offer Michael any. It would provoke a fight. I'm not into fighting with Michael tonight.

Universal has been kind enough to provide a limousine for us and Tony and Antoinette Bill, and David Ward and his wife, Chris. When I first met Antoinette Bill, everybody called her Mrs. Tony. Her given name was Antoinette, but she had gone under the name Toni all her life. Tony, who was in actual fact n^o Gerard Anthony Bill, was also called Tony. Somehow, Tony stayed and Toni became Mrs. Tony. I, of course, was outraged.

"You sound like his chattel," I told her at lunch at Ma Maison one day. I had just had my lip and legs painfully waxed by Charlotte at Elizabeth Arden's, which was making me bristle. The fact that Patrick had the restaurant wrapped in polyethylene, something my father participated in inventing, and that it was a hot day with too little air conditioning, might also have added to my dyspeptic world-view. "Isn't there something else I can call you?"

She smiled. "Well, my real name is Antoinette, but I always thought it was pretentious."

"Maybe when you were ten, but you're a grown-up married lady now with two kids and a husband named Gerard who likes to be called Tony, not that I blame him. I'm gonna call you Antoinette from now on. Okay?" I still asked permission in certain matters . . .

She grinned and flushed. "Why not? What the hell!" She laughed and toasted me with a glass of dry white wine.

I started calling her Antoinette; pretty soon some other people started calling her Antoinette; after a while everyone but Tony called her Antoinette. One day she went out and had her checks, credit cards, license, passport-everything identifying her-changed to Antoinette Bill. I felt as good that day as I did the day Michael's mother, Sherry, started getting paid for finding the dresses that Michael's father, Larry, knocked off in his lower-priced dress line. I was a fucking one-woman consciousness-raising session . . .

Michael and I have to be the first to leave because we're in Trancas, which is as far away from the Dorothy Chandler Pavilion as you can be and still live in the county of L.A. David and Chris live in Topanga Canyon, so we pick them up on the way into town. There is something very silly about being all duded up at three o'clock in the afternoon, sitting in the back of a stretch limo, but the door will be closed, the Academy has reminded us in numerous missives preceding the event, at six thirty promptly.

We have already split up Bill/Phillips Productions and there's bad blood between Tony and us. This isn't to become known until we are. Tony decides to drive himself and meet us there. He doesn't want to be Hollywood and arrive in a limo. If you really feel that way, I think, why go at all? Because we're going to win. This concept makes me as nervous as the thought of losing.

A limo provided by the studio for the producers and the writer is a truly grandiose gesture, given all previous behavior by Universal. Basically we have been treated as a nasty inconvenience to be just barely tolerated. By Zanuck and Brown. By George Roy Hill. Mostly by those who live in the Black Tower, sometimes referred to locally as the Black Mariah, the reflector-sunglass mausoleum that houses all the Universal Executives, both living and dead. To them, our youth, so chic at some of the other studios, is an impudence.

The day the nominations came out, and both those who had made American Graffiti and The Sting, a ubiquitously young group, had snagged an incredible number of honors for Universal, we received telegrams from the top two execs at Universal: Lew Wasserman and Sid Sheinberg.

SINCEREST CONGRATULATIONS AND BEST WISHES FROM ALL OF US AT UNIVERSAL FOR TEN ACADEMY AWARD NOMINATIONS, INCLUDING BEST PICTURE, FOR THE STING.
LEW R. WASSERMAN

Not warm, but essentially correct.

CONGRATULATIONS FOR THE ACADEMY AWARD NOMINATION FOR AMERICAN GRAFFITI. THE FILM IN OUR JUDGEMENT IS AN AMERICAN CLASSIC AND DESERVING OF ALL OF ITS ACCOLADES. LET'S HOPE THERE ARE OTHER VENTURES THAT WE CAN SHARE WITH YOU IN THE FUTURE. SID SHEINBERG

Not warm, and incorrect in all its essentials.

I have this image of Sid's secretary: Well, all young people look alike, don't they? I've always wondered if the message Western Unioned to George Lucas congratulated him on the receipt of so many nominations for The Sting. I wonder if he kept his, too . . .

And now, here we are: Chris and David and Michael and Julia, flying along the Pacific Coast Highway, compliments of Universal Airlines, to the Dorothy Chandler Pavilion. I have nibbled another half a Valium at the Wards'. I've decided it's okay to carry Valium to the Academy Awards. Most of the people in the Academy are from the Valium-and-Alcohol

Generation. I'm becoming a tad too relaxed behind it, though. Sleepy might be a better word.

Need a little hit, I think, as my head lolls around on my neck. Need a big hit, I amend. You have a big hit. The Sting . . . Not that kind of a hit . . . maybe coffee. If nothing else was around. I'm pissed at myself for leaving my secret stash behind. I focus on getting downtown, like that's going to make the drive quicker.

By the time we reach the exit to the Music Center, limousines are backed up onto the ramp. Behind us they stack up quickly. Limos to the left of me, limos to the right. A limo! A limo! My kingdom for a limo! It is a boiling-hot day and all the air conditioners are blasting. The hot and the cold mingles with the poisonous air; the exhaust makes a greenish brown cloud that hangs over us. I feel I am in line for the funeral of the most popular guy in Hollywood. Who could that be, I wonder . . .

The limousines, the cloud, the heat, make me think: We are all going to die. A thought I have two, maybe three hundred times a day anyway. I concentrate on Life and it makes me realize I have to pee semi-badly. At the rate we're moving, I won't get to check my makeup. I know the only part of my face that is glowing with health right now is my shiny forehead.

It's ridiculous to worry about how I look. There's a long red carpet; it is the only route to the door. The door that closes promptly at six thirty! There are barricades and cops and fans and photographers. Everywhere. We do not rate a flicker. There is nothing quite like being the only unknown in a bevy of luminaries. Unless it is to be the only name at a gathering of nobodies. If I had to vote for the lesser of two evils, as I do for my president, I'd go with anonymity. But I didn't know that then.

We walk along that red carpet, graced by Sally Kellerman in front of us and Paul and Linda McCartney behind us. Nobody reaches out to us. No Army Archerd interview. No hail-fellow-well-met interchange with milling celebs. An all-time Humbler. A year or two before, I'd have been amazed to be here. Now that I am, I can see that the only way to attend one of these events is as a star. We traverse the gauntlet in that casual way that says: I don't care to be noticed. I feel like a walk-on in a high-school play.

Of course, Tony and Antoinette are here already. We see Tony chatting up Steve Shagan, who's in competition with David Ward for Best Screenplay, and drinking, from the look around his mouth, his third glass of wine. He looks pretty cool in his tux. He looks like he belongs. Shagan insincerely wishes us luck. That's okay, I forgive him. He's insisted we hire Norman Garey, who acts as our lawyer and is truly our friend. I shift back and forth, no small feat on platforms four inches from the ground in the toe and probably six in the heel. It gives me the illusion that I am taking steps, presumably away, from a situation that makes me uncomfortable.

Other Books

21 Days of Loving YOU!. When is the last time you spent time with yourself? Often times we spend all of our time with our love ones and/or significant others. Just like you love them, it

is equally as important that you love yourself! Take the challenge! Spend the next 21 days loving you!

☺ ☺ ☺ ☺ ☺ . Jeff you are the bomb! Thank- You . To my family; Mommy, Daddy, Tish, Greg, and Shawn. You guys are my backbone; I couldn't imagine life w/o either of you. Each of you have contributed to my success in your own way and for that I could ..."