

6/25/79

"COMMERCIALS"

BY

JOSHUA M. BECKER

Registered
W.G.# 218067

CHARACTERS

CHUCK O'MALLEY: He is thirty, about six feet tall with jet black, very straight hair that he slicks straight back. His features are very sharp, almost ridiculously so. He always wears a suit, usually one that's right out of the twenties or thirties. He is co-owner of Wiseman/O'Malley Productions.

BETH WISEMAN: She is twenty-nine, five-seven with very dark hair and complexion. She is very attractive in a very semetic way. Her figure is of the Vogue model ilk and she is always attired in the most fashionable clothing. She is co-owner of Wiseman/O'Malley Productions.

TED RAYMOND: He is twenty-five, five-eight with curly blond hair that has a life of it's own. He is sort of goofy-looking and faintly resembles a punch-drunk boxer. He invariably wears tennis shoes, baggy pants and tee shirts. He is the director.

RUTH WIER: She is twenty-nine, five-five and has close-cropped brown hair. She is somewhat over-weight and looks like a bitch. She is the editor.

MIKE NITZ: He is twenty-seven, six-two and has rather long blond hair that is usually in his face. He has bad posture, a bad complexion and dresses poorly. He is the cameraman.

INTERIOR - CONVENTION ROOM-

This is a dinner convention for The Commercial Producers Association. Dinner has just ended and coffee is being served. At one of the many tables sits BETH and CHUCK, both attired in formal evening wear, and both looking a bit bored as a speaker babbles on and on. CHUCK glances at his watch.

CHUCK

If we leave right now we can still catch the late show.

BETH

They're going to be showing the commercials soon, I want to see ours.

CHUCK

Like you haven't seen it before? Come on, "THE MAGNIFICENT AMBER-SONS" is on tonight, that's a helluva lot better than commercials.

BETH

Naw, I'd rather stay.

CHUCK

I have a T.V. in my bedroom, we could fool around during the commercials.

BETH

They'll be showing commercials here.

CHUCK

Yeah, but this just doesn't seem like the right setting.

BETH

Oh cut it out, we're business partners, that's all.

CHUCK

Does that preclude sex?

BETH

Yes.

CHUCK

Then I'm going home.

BETH

Then go, I'll get home somehow.

CHUCK
Now I feel guilty about leaving you.

BETH
Then stay.

CHUCK
But I'm bored and I want to see
the late show.

BETH
Then go, stop acting like a baby.

CHUCK
Fine, I will. Gimme a kiss and
let's see if my deoderant holds
out.

CHUCK leans over in anticipation of a kiss and gets
a peck on the cheek.

BETH
Are you all hot and bothered now?

CHUCK
I'll drive with the windows down.
Are you sure you'll get home all
right?

BETH
I'll manage, don't worry about
it.

CHUCK
Okay, see you at work tomorrow.

BETH
Bye.

CHUCK leaves and BETH takes a sip of coffee and looks
around at the people. She spots someone across the
room, looks away, then stands and goes over. She stops
behind a big, blond, extremely good-looking fellow in
his late twenties whose name is RICHARD ROGERS.

BETH
Richard Rogers?

RICHARD looks up blankly, does a double-take and smiles.

RICHARD
Beth?

BETH
(Coldly)
You remembered, how nice. How are
you?

RICHARD
I'm, I'm...shocked. It's been
a long time. Sit down.

BETH sits very formally and folds her hands in her lap.

BETH
Nine years. It was the sophomore
year at college.

RICHARD
You look great, what're you doing
here?

BETH
There's no wrestling matches on
Sunday and I happened to have this
old evening gown lying around so...

RICHARD
No, really?

BETH
I'm a commercial producer.

RICHARD
Really? So am I.

BETH
(Mock surprise)
No? And to think of meeting at
a commercial producers convention
of all places.

RICHARD
(Smiling)
Right, right. I'm just really
amazed to see you. I've thought
about you a lot since college.

BETH
Oh? Anything worth repeating?

RICHARD
Just that I acted pretty foolish
and regret it.

BETH
What was that cute little cheerleaders
name that you blew your mind over?

RICHARD
Cindy Bottoms.

BETH
Right. And everyone called her
"Bottoms-up", I remember now.

RICHARD
I never heard anyone call her that.

BETH
Well they did. What ever happened
to her?

RICHARD
I married her.

BETH
(Laughing)
Oh...

RICHARD
But, um, we're seperated now.

BETH
So, where are you living now?

RICHARD
Chicago, how about you?

BETH
Right here, L.A. How long are
you in for?

RICHARD
Till Wednesday. What do you say
we get out of here and get a drink
or something?

BETH
I was sort of waiting for the
commercials, they're going to be
showing one of mine.

RICHARD
They're going to be showing one
of mine, too, but all of a sudden
it no longer seems important.

BETH

Why's that?

RICHARD

Because I'd rather be with you.

BETH

This is not working out at all. I was going to come over here and treat you as miserably as you treated me in college, get you all upset, then walk out feeling great and now look what's happened.

RICHARD

What's happened?

BETH

You asked me to go out with you and I'm considering it.

RICHARD

You are truly one of the most beautiful women I've ever met.

BETH

Where do you want to go?

* * *

INTERIOR - CHUCK'S APARTMENT-
CHUCK sits in the living room, dressed in his bathrobe, yelling at the T.V. set.

CHUCK

Stop it! Stop it! I don't want a mobile home! I don't want a used car! Show me my lousy movie already! God almighty, I hate commercials!

He stops abruptly, shocked at his own words.

CHUCK

What am I saying, I make the damn things.

There is a knock at the door and it's BETH, still dressed in her evening gown.

BETH
I didn't get you up, did I?

CHUCK
No, no. I was just yelling at
the T.V. No one can ever accuse
me of not being constructive.

BETH
You'll never guess who I met
tonight?

CHUCK
I'll just take a shot in the dark,
Abraham Lincoln?

BETH
That's real close, Chuck. You
remember Richard Rogers?

CHUCK
Yeah, he wrote "THE SOUND OF MUSIC".

BETH
No...Richard Rogers from college,
remember?

CHUCK
Oh, right. You went out with him
for a little while, then he dumped
you, right?

BETH
In a manner of speaking, yes.
Anyway, I met him at the convention
tonight--he's a commercial producer.

CHUCK
And to think of meeting him at a
commercial producers convention,
well, what next? So, what happened?

BETH
What do you mean, what happened?
We talked, that's all.

CHUCK
Did you find out why he dumped
you?

BETH
Will you stop saying that, it makes
me sound like a load of dirt.

CHUCK

All right, all right. Did you find out why he trashed you like a used kleenex?

BETH

Oh swell, that's much better. No, I didn't as a matter of fact, but that's not the interesting part.

CHUCK

Well don't keep me in suspense, my heart may not take the strain.

BETH

I think I'm in love with him.

CHUCK looks like someone just pulled his plug.

CHUCK

Wait a minute. This guy drops you like you've got the plague, you don't see him for ten years, you see each other again and talk for a few hours and whammo, you're in love?

BETH

I think so.

CHUCK

I hope his commercial was good.

BETH

I didn't see it. We left before they showed them. I know it's kind of crazy, but that's how I feel.

CHUCK

So what's he been doing for the past ten years, pining over his stupid mistakes in college?

BETH

No, he lives in Chicago and he's married and has two kids.

CHUCK

Oh, well that's better. You've fallen in love with an old flame that's married and lives two thousand miles away. Are congratulations in order?

BETH

So it's insane, what can I do?

CHUCK

It's two-thirty in the morning.
Go to bed, maybe you'll feel better
in the morning.

BETH

By the way, I invited him to the
set tomorrow, so you can meet him
and tell me what you think.

CHUCK

You need my approval?

BETH

Why not, you're my best friend.

CHUCK

Am I really?

BETH

Yeah.

CHUCK

We've gotta be up in a few hours,
so we'd better get to sleep.

BETH goes to the door.

BETH

'Night Chuck.

CHUCK

G'night.

BETH leaves and CHUCK drops into a chair.

CHUCK

I'm in love with my best friend
and she's in love with Richard
Rogers. It figures.

INTERIOR - SOUNDSTAGE - MORNING-

This is a small film studio strewn with scrapes of wood
and lighting equipment, with a blue process screen (a
background for superimposition) curving around two walls.
TED, RUTH and MIKE are groggily laying cable (and bumping
into things) as CHUCK enters with coffee and donuts.

CHUCK

Good morning energetic employees,
your beneficent ruler comes bearing
sweet-meats and fragrant spices
from the east.

CHUCK sets the goodies down on the camera dolly and
everyone comes to get their share.

RUTH

It's about time you got your butt
in gear, you stupid lazy mick.

CHUCK

It's so nice being greeted with
a kind word and a smile.

MIKE

Those are two things Ruth has never
heard of.

RUTH

Excuse me, but aren't you the one
whose trying to develop moaning
and complaining into an art-form?

MIKE

That's from having to work with
you everyday, Ruth.

TED

The Great Oz demands silence!
You know, you two are really
becoming a tedious bore. The
fact that both of you are amazing-
ly depressive characters is bad
enough without being in a constant
battle to prove which one is more
depressing.

RUTH

Oh blow off!

MIKE

Yeah, take a hike, Ted.

CHUCK

Well, at least you got them agreeing
on something. So what's the good
word?

TED

Alacrity is a good word. Globule is pretty good, too. So, how was the convention?

CHUCK

I was bored out of my mind, so I left at about eleven to watch the late show.

TED

Ah-hah! Another movie addict who stayed up all night watching "THE MAGNIFICENT AMBERSONS", at least we all have the same excuse for being tired.

CHUCK

Yeah, but that wasn't the end of my night. Beth came over at about two to tell me about the new love in her life.

RUTH

What happened to that gorgeous, blond-haired, blue-eyed nazi she was going out with last week?

CHUCK

I have no idea, although I'm glad she dumped that creep, anyway, now it's an old flame from college named Richard Rogers.

TED

Didn't he write "OKLAHOMA"?

RUTH

I remember him, he was on the football team. Didn't he drop Beth for a cheerleader?

CHUCK

You remember that too, huh? Well, she met him again at the convention and she's bringing him here today.

TED

Maybe we can talk him into doing a medley of hits from his musicals. By the way, Chuck, any idea why the car's not here yet?

CHUCK

The car we're filming today?

TED

No, the new Maserati I ordered yesterday.

MIKE

Who's ever heard of National Motors, they're probably assembling the car right now. I've been meaning to ask you, Chuck, where do you get all these great clients?

CHUCK

Your pay-checks don't bounce, do they? What are you complaining about?

MIKE

Not a thing, Mr. Employer sir. I praise the name of Allah every-day that you're kind enough to let me work for you.

CHUCK

I should think you would, who else would be stupid enough to hire a near-sighted, color-blind cameraman?

MIKE

You'll pay for that, sucker. They'll be one crooked shot dedicated to you today.

TED

So Beth actually told you she was in love with this shnook?

RUTH

Who are you calling a shnook? This guy was the star quarterback of our football team.

TED

Big deal. Where does Beth find these guys? She falls in love ten times a month, I'll tell you, it's truly disheartening.

RUTH

That's so cute, you're jealous.

CHUCK

Listen to us, we sit around discussing Beth's love-life like it's a soap-opera. We must all live pretty meager little lives.

BETH enters holding hands with RICHARD (which seems to make him a trifle uneasy).

BETH

Hi everybody.

Everyone replies in unison.

EVERYONE

Morning Beth.

They all look at each other wincing as though they've just made a communal ass out of themselves. BETH picks up on this and smiles, although RICHARD still looks uneasy.

BETH

Everybody, I'd like you to meet Richard, um, Richard that's Chuck, my co-producer, whom you may remember from college.

RICHARD takes a step forward and thrusts out his hand, which CHUCK takes two steps forward to shake. It's all a trifle awkward and everyone grins foolishly.

CHUCK

Sure I remember you, Richard, you were the football team's star quarterback.

RICHARD

Half-back.

CHUCK turns around and gives RUTH a menacing sneer. BETH keeps going.

BETH

And Ruth, our editor.

RUTH

You sat in front of me in Comparative Psych, remember?

There is a very short pause that becomes blatantly revealing in the half second it goes on too long.

RICHARD
Oh, right. Sure, I remember.

BETH
And Mike, our cameraman.

They shake hands.

BETH
And Ted, the director.

TED shakes RICHARD's hand vigorously.

TED
Richard, good to meet you. How
about doing a medley from "OKLAHOMA"
for us?

RICHARD
(Smiling)
Maybe later.

There is another odd pause.

BETH
So...any donuts left?

MIKE
No, Ruth ate them all.

RUTH
Shut-up, that's not true.

MIKE
Sorry, Ruth and her tape-worm ate
them all.

RUTH
Just keep it up, big-mouth, you'll
be looking backwards for the rest
of your life.

MIKE
Watch out everyone, Ruth is start-
ing to throw her weight around,
the results could be catastrophic.

BETH
Is it humanly possible for you two
to act like adults?

RUTH

Mike missed that stage of development. He went straight from puberty to senility.

BETH looks around with a preplexed expression.

BETH

Where's the car?

RICHARD

What car?

BETH

The car we're filming today, where is it?

CHUCK

You set up this deal with National Motors, why are you asking me?

BETH

Well you are the co-producer, you could have checked.

CHUCK

What time was it supposed to be here?

BETH

Eight O'clock.

CHUCK looks at his watch.

CHUCK

It was supposed to be here at eight, it's almost nine, that darn car isn't here. Well, I just reviewed all the information I've got.

BETH

We've only got today to get this thing done, it's not funny.

CHUCK

Maybe National Motors really doesn't exist, I've never seen one of their cars.

A DELIVERY MAN enters with "National Motors" printed across the chest of his cover-alls.

DELIVERY MAN

Well I have and the lousy piece of
junk is stalled a mile up the road.
The only way you'll get that hunk
o' scrap in here is to tow it in.

* * *

INTERIOR - SOUNDSTAGE-

Everyone is gone except RUTH, who sits on a chair off
to one side reading a magazine, and BETH and RICHARD
who are seated on the camera dolly (RICHARD in the seat,
BETH leaning against his legs).

RICHARD

You don't seem a bit fazed that
the car's not here.

BETH

Goof-ups are bound to happen in
this nutty business, you know that,
besides, I feel too good to get
upset.

RICHARD

Good about what?

BETH

Well, us I guess.

RICHARD

Oh? What about us?

BETH

I'm just happy that things finally
worked for us, that's all. It sure
took long enough.

RICHARD

How do you mean?

BETH

Well, we're both unencumbered,
rational adults now and we've
gotten back together. Of course
it is something of a problem that
you live in Chicago and I live in
L.A., but that's only logistics,
we'll work something out.

RICHARD

And to think that this all began last night.

BETH

No, it didn't begin last night, it began nine years ago, we just got back together last night.

RICHARD

Right. I've got an appointment pretty soon so I've gotta run, what are you doing tonight?

BETH

This'll probably run sort of late, but afterwards I haven't got a single dance on my card.

RICHARD

Then let's get together, okay?

BETH

I'd love to.

They both stand, embrace and kiss. RICHARD keeps his eyes open and peers over BETH's shoulder, catching RUTH's glance. Both look away quickly and RICHARD leaves. A moment later the huge delivery doors in the back swing open and CHUCK, TED, MIKE and the DELIVERY MAN push the car in. There is a terrifically large dent in the passenger door. They push the car in front of the process screen.

BETH

Oh my God, what happened?

TED

It heard it was going to be on T.V. and tried to jump off an over-pass.

DELIVERY MAN

I gotta run, good luck.

CHUCK

Good luck? I'm not sure I've ever heard that expression before, what does it mean?

The DELIVERY MAN exits.

BETH

No really, what happened?

CHUCK

You won't believe this; the tow-truck hit it, but it's okay, he towed it in for free.

TED

He just felt that making commercials wasn't real work, so he decided to help us earn our money.

BETH

So, how are we going to film it?

TED

With great difficulty.

They all approach the car and begin to circle it, each one running their hand over the dent as they pass it.

RUTH

This is the ugliest car I've ever seen.

TED

You know what they say, beauty is transitory, but ugly will never go away.

CHUCK

Well, I guess I'll go call National Motors and see if they have another new model somewhere near by that we can get out hands on.

BETH

They don't. They haven't begun manufacturing their new line yet, this is the prototype.

CHUCK

That exhausts all of my ideas for the day, what do you think, Ted?

TED

I think if I owned this car I'd take the bus. Piece of drek!

TED gives the tire a sharp kick and the antenna falls off.

TED
Oh no, oh no. Now you've gone
too far! Mike, did you bring
your tool-box?

MIKE
Sure.

TED
Get it. You are now going to get
the rare privilege of watching
a great display of plastic surgery.

BETH
Ted, this is not our car.

TED
Don't be insane, I'd never do
anything like this to my car.

MIKE has returned with a large tool-box and TED thrusts
out his hand.

TED
Hammer.

MIKE takes out a large claw hammer and slaps it into
TED's hand.

MIKE
Hammer.

TED
You pig, you've broken my hand!

BETH
Ted, please don't destroy the car!

TED
I won't destroy it, I'll just put
the fear of God into it. I'll
send it down the righteous path
to salvation.

TED opens the dented passenger door and it squeeks
loudly.

TED
Stand back!

TED slams the claw of the hammer between the interior
panel of the door and the metal, then yanks the whole
panel off (which includes the inside door handle and
the arm rest) and throws it to one side.

Everyone watches in awed silence as TED gets to his knees, grabs the top of the door with one hand and smashes his fist into the door frame with a yell.

TED

Bonsai:

With a thwack most of the dent pops out and the door looks relatively okay. TED grabs his hand in pain and gets to his feet.

TED

All right, Mike, you think you can light this thing so I can't see any of this minor damage?

MIKE

Sure, I'll just take out all the bulbs.

TED

That's great, you do what you have to do. Chuck, Beth, one of you get lunch, I'm starving. Ruth, find some rags and you and I will shine this baby up so it gleams. Come on, let's make movies!

Everybody begins moving.

INTERIOR - BETH'S APARTMENT-

There is a knock at the door and BETH comes out of the bathroom in a robe and a towel around her head and answers it. RICHARD enters looking a tad dishevelled. BETH gives him a kiss on the cheek.

BETH

You're early, I'm not nearly ready. Want a drink?

RICHARD

Please. Scotch.

BETH goes to the kitchen to fix it and RICHARD follows.

BETH

So, what'd'ya want to do tonight? Have you eaten?

RICHARD

No, just drinking.

BETH has now become cognizant that something is wrong.

BETH
Oh, how come?

RICHARD
I'm leaving tonight.

BETH
I thought you planned to stay until
Wednesday.

RICHARD
I was going to, but there's been
some complications.

BETH
Oh really, like what?

RICHARD
You. That's not perfectly accurate,
it's really more me, but I guess
when you get right down to it it's
both of us.

BETH
I think that covers everyone in
the vicinity, what are the com-
plications?

RICHARD takes a big slug of scotch.

RICHARD
Are you in love with me?

BETH
(Quietly)
Yes.

RICHARD
Why?

BETH
Why not?

RICHARD
...Because I'm married.

BETH
But you and your wife are seperated.

RICHARD

No we're not.

BETH

But you said...

RICHARD

I lied. It was a deceitful, rotten thing to do, I know that. I just figured that I get into L.A. five or six times a year, and, like...

BETH

But how does my being in love with you change anything? So you wanted me as someone you could be with when you were in L.A., well I'll admit that's not my idea of a perfect relationship, but it doesn't sound that awful either. The fact remains that I love you and if I only get to see you five or six times a year, I guess that'll have to do.

RICHARD

That's not the problem, Beth. The problem is, I'm falling in love with you. I messed this up in college and it's too late now. I don't want to leave my wife and kids, but if we keep this up that's just what would happen. I can see it coming and I don't want to do it.

BETH

(Sighing)

Will I see you again?

RICHARD

I don't know. It would be so easy to stay and then I'd never go back.

BETH

Well...this has been the most amazing relationship I've ever had in two days.

RICHARD goes to the door.

RICHARD
Not two days, nine years.

BETH
Yeah. And the cheerleader wins
out again.

RICHARD opens the door.

RICHARD
But the football player loses
again. Goodbye Beth.

BETH
Goodbye Richard.

He leaves.

INTERIOR - THE OFFICE OF WISEMAN/O'MALLEY PRODUCTIONS-
There is an outer office with a couch, chairs, a desk,
a typewriter, but no secretary. The inner office is
very large, has two desks, a conference table, a pro-
jection VTR/T.V. set, a moviola and lots of other left-
over things.

RUTH is asleep on the couch, CHUCK and BETH sit at
the desks talking and TED and MIKE sit at the confer-
ence table playing chess, at the same time MIKE also
reads AMERICAN CINEMATOGRAPHER.

TED
For Godsakes anyway, will you pay
attention. How can you read and
play chess at the same time?

MIKE
You only think I'm reading, actually
I'm meditating. Will you move!

TED
Awright, fine.

TED takes one of MIKE's pawns and dubs in it's scream
as he knocks it over, then he continues to dub in the
pawn's moans and groans as he squeezes it's head and
bangs it on the table.

Meanwhile, BETH and CHUCK are talking.

CHUCK
So, have you heard anything from
Richard yet?

BETH
No. Not a thing.

CHUCK
Pretty darn strange the way he just
up and left.

BETH
Yeah. What time is it?

CHUCK
Five to three. Our commefcial
will air in approximately seven
minutes.

BETH
I'll go wake Ruth up.

Back at the chess game, MIKE is still reading.

TED
You're driving me crazy.

MIKES makes a move.

MIKE
That's the point. Check.

TED
(Mad)
Do one or do the other, but don't
do both!

TED moves with a vengeance, then sits back sneering.
MIKE moves quickly and casually.

MIKE
Fine, check-mate. Now I'll just
read, does that make you feel
any better.

TED is checking all the moves that were just made.

TED
In one second you're going to be
burping up that magazine!

BETH turns on the projection T.V. and sits at the con-
ference table. CHUCK does the same and RUTH walks
in rubbing her eyes.

* * *

We can see the warped T.V. screen past the silhouettes of everyone at the table watching.

The commercial begins and we see the same car as they were filming majestically sitting in front of the Swiss Alps (through the magic of very obvious superimposition). A narrator's voice is heard.

NARRATOR V.O.

Do you want to be loved, respected and wealthy? National Motors can show you how; drive the all new, 1980 National Motors GRANOLA. The natural car.

The camera moves down the drivers side of the car and dissolves to an interior shot of the seat that look about three blocks long.

NARRATOR V.O.

Feel that elegant upholstery.

A hand comes hesitantly into frame.

NARRATOR V.O.

Go on, feel it.

The fingers sink deep into the seat as though it were jello.

NARRATOR V.O.

Feels good, huh? That's because it's made of all-natural poly-vinyl urathane that will conform to every bottom no matter what the dimensions.

The shot dissolves back to the exterior of the car and now we can see people skiing on the slopes behind.

NARRATOR V.O.

The lines of a classic and the luxury of a thirty-six room mansion.

A fellow wearing ski clothes, goggles and carrying a pair of skis walks into frame and leans his arm on the roof of the car. He removes his goggles and we see that it is CHUCK.

CHUCK

(French accent)

I drive it to the slopes every day. Zee GRANOLA ees excellent.

He kisses his fingertips.

* * *