

Taxi Driver

by

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TRAVIS BICKLE

Age 26, lean, hard, the consummate loner. On the surface he appears good-looking, even handsome; he has a quiet steady look and a disarming smile which flashes from nowhere, lighting up his whole face. But behind that smile, around his dark eyes, in his gaunt cheeks, one can see the ominous stains caused by a life of private fear, emptiness and loneliness. He seems to have wandered in from a land where it is always cold, a country where the inhabitants seldom speak. The head moves, the expression changes, but the eyes remain ever-fixed, unblinking, piercing empty space.

Travis is now drifting in and out of the New York City night life, a dark shadow among darker shadows. Not noticed, no reason to be noticed, Travis is one with his surroundings. He wears rider jeans, cowboy boots, a plaid western shirt and a worn beige Army jacket with a patch reading, "King Kong Company 1968-70".

He has the smell of sex about him: Sick sex, repressed sex, lonely sex, but sex nonetheless. He is a raw male force, driving forward; toward what, one cannot tell. Then one looks closer and sees the evitable. The clock sprig cannot be wound continually tighter. As the earth moves toward the sun, Travis Bickle moves toward violence.

TRAVIS GETS A JOB

Film opens on...

EXT. MANHATTAN CAB GARAGE

Weather-beaten sign above driveway reads, "Taxi Enter Here". Yellow cabs scuttle in and out. It is WINTER, snow is piled on the curbs, the wind is howling.

INSIDE GARAGE

Are parked row upon row of multi-colored taxis. Echoing SOUNDS of cabs idling, cabbies talking. Steamy breath and exhaust fill the air.

INT. CORRIDOR

Of cab company offices. Lettering on ajar door reads:

"PERSONAL OFFICE

Marvis Cab Company
Blue and White Cab Co.
Acme Taxi
Dependable Taxi Services
JRB Cab Company
Speedo Taxi Service"

SOUND of office busywork: Shuffling, typing, arguing.

PERSONAL OFFICE is a cluttered disarray. Sheets with heading "Marvis, B&W, Acme" and so forth are tacked to crumbling plaster wall: It is March. Desk is cluttered with forms, reports and an old upright Royal typewriter.

Dishelved middle-aged New Yorker looks up from the desk. We CUT IN to ongoing conversation between the middle-aged PERSONNEL OFFICER and a YOUNG MAN standing in front on his desk.

The young man is TRAVIS BICKLE. He wears his jeans, boots and Army jacket. He takes a drag off his unfiltered cigarette.

The Personnel Officer is beat and exhausted: He arrives at work exhausted. Travis is something else again. His intense steely gaze is enough to jar even the Personnel Officer out of his workaday boredom.

PERSONNEL OFFICER (O.S.)
No trouble with the Hack Bureau?

TRAVIS (O.S.)
No Sir.

PERSONNEL OFFICER (O.S.)
Got your license?

TRAVIS (O.S.)
Yes.

PERSONNEL OFFICER
So why do you want to be a taxi driver?

TRAVIS
I can't sleep nights.

PERSONNEL OFFICER
There's porno theatres for that.

TRAVIS
I know. I tried that.

The Personnel Officer, though officious, is mildly probing and curious. Travis is a cipher, cold and distant. He speaks as if his mind doesn't know what his mouth is saying.

PERSONNEL OFFICER
So whatja do now?

TRAVIS
I ride around nights mostly. Subways, buses. See things. Figur'd I might as well get paid for it.

PERSONNEL OFFICER
We don't need any misfits around here, son.

A thin smile cracks almost indiscernibly across Travis' lips.

TRAVIS
You kiddin? Who else would hack through South Bronx or Harlem at night?

PERSONNEL OFFICER
You want to work uptown nights?

TRAVIS
I'll work anywhere, anytime. I know I can't be choosy.

PERSONNEL OFFICER
(thinks a moment)
How's your driving record?

TRAVIS
Clean. Real clean.
(pause, thin smile)
As clean as my conscience.

PERSONNEL OFFICER
Listen, son, you gonna get smart, you can leave right now.

TRAVIS
(apologetic)
Sorry, sir. I didn't mean that.

PERSONNEL OFFICER
Physical? Criminal?

TRAVIS
Also clean.

PERSONNEL OFFICER
Age?

PERSONNEL OFFICER
Twenty-six.

PERSONNEL OFFICER
Education?

TRAVIS
Some. Here and there.

PERSONNEL OFFICER
Military record?

TRAVIS
Honorable discharge. May 1971.

PERSONNEL OFFICER
You moonlightin?

TRAVIS
No, I want long shifts.

PERSONNEL OFFICER
(casually, almost to himself)
We hire a lot of moonlighters here.

TRAVIS
So I hear.

PERSONNEL OFFICER

(looks up at Travis)

Hell, we ain't that much fussy anyway. There's always opening on one fleet or another.

(rummages through his drawer,
collecting various pink, yellow and
white forms)

Fill out these forms and give them to the girl at the desk, and leave your phone number. You gotta phone?

TRAVIS

No.

PERSONNEL OFFICER

Well then check back tomorrow.

TRAVIS

Yes, Sir.

CUT TO:

CREDITS

CREDITS appear over scenes from MANHATTAN NIGHTLIFE. The snow has melted, it is spring.

A rainy, slick, wet miserable night in Manhattan's theatre district. Cabs and umbrellas are congested everywhere; well-dressed pedestrians are pushing, running, waving down taxis. The high-class theatre patrons crowding out of the midtown shows are shocked to find that the same rain that falls on the poor and common is also falling on them.

The unremitting SOUNDS of HONKING and SHOUTING play against the dull pitter-patter of rain. The glare of yellow, red and green lights reflects off the pavements and autos.

"When it rains, the boss of the city is the taxi driver" - so goes the cabbie's maxim, proven true by this particular night's activity. Only the taxis seem to rise above the situation: They glide effortlessly through the rain and traffic, picking up whom they choose, going where they please.

Further uptown, the crowds are neither so frantic nor so glittering. The rain also falls on the street bums and aged poor. Junkies still stand around on rainy street corners, hookers still prowl rainy sidewalks. And the taxis service them too.

All through the CREDITS the exterior sounds are muted, as if coming from a distant room or storefront around the corner. The listener is at a safe but privileged distance.

After examining various strata of Manhattan nightlife, CAMERA begins to CLOSE IN on one particular taxi, and it is assumed that this taxi is being driven by Travis Bickle.

END CREDITS

CUT TO:

WE MEET TRAVIS

Travis's yellow taxi pulls in foreground. On left rear door are lettered the words "Dependable Taxi Service".

We are somewhere on the upper fifties on Fifth Ave. The rain has not let up.

An ELDERLY WOMAN climbs in the right rear door, crushing her umbrella. Travis waits a moment, then pulls away from the curb with a start.

Later, we see Travis' taxi speeding down the rain-slicked avenue. The action is periodically accompanied by Travis' narration. He is reading from a haphazard personal diary.

TRAVIS (V.O.)

(monotone)

April 10, 1972. Thank God for the rain which has helped wash the garbage and trash off the sidewalks.

TRAVIS' POV of sleazy midtown side street: Bums, hookers, junkies.

TRAVIS (V.O.)

I'm working a single now, which means stretch-shifts, six to six, sometimes six to eight in the a.m., six days a week.

A MAN IN BUSINESS SUIT hails Travis to the curb.

TRAVIS (V.O.)

It's a hustle, but it keeps me busy. I can take in three to three-fifty a week, more with skims.

Man in Business Suit, now seated in back seat, speaks up:

MAN IN BUSINESS SUIT

(urgent)

I Kennedy operating, cabbie? Is it grounded?

On seat next to Travis is half-eaten cheeseburger and order of french fries. He puts his cigarette down and gulps as he answers:

TRAVIS

Why should it be grounded?

MAN IN BUSINESS SUIT

Listen - I mean I just saw the needle of the Empire State Building. You can't see it for the fog!

TRAVIS

Then it's a good guess it's grounded.

MAN IN BUSINESS SUIT

The Empire State in fog means something, don't it? Do you know, or don't you? What is your number, cabbie?

TRAVIS

Have you tried the telephone?

MAN IN BUSINESS SUIT
(hostile, impatient)
There isn't time for that. In other words, you
don't know.

TRAVIS
No.

MAN IN BUSINESS SUIT
Well, you should know, damn it, or who else would
know? Pull over right here.
(points out window)
Why don't you stick your goddamn head out of the
goddamn window once in a while and find out about
the goddamn fog!

Travis pulls to the curb. The Business Man stuffs a dollar bill into the
pay drawer and jumps out of the cab. He turns to hail another taxi.

MAN IN BUSINESS SUIT
Taxi! Taxi!

Travis writes up his trip card and drives away.

It is LATER THAT NIGHT. The rain has turned to drizzle. Travis drives
through another section of Manhattan.

TRAVIS (V.O.)
I work the whole city, up, down, don't make no
difference to me - does to some.

STREETSIDE: TRAVIS' POV

Black PROSTITUTE wearing white vinyl boots, leopard-skin mini-skirt and
blond wig hails taxi. On her arm hangs half-drunk seedy EXECUTIVE TYPE.

Travis pulls over.

Prostitute and John climb into back seat. Travis checks out the action in
rear view mirror.

TRAVIS (V.O.)
Some won't takespooks - Hell, don't make no
difference tom me.

Travis' taxi drives through Central Park.

GRUNTS, GROANS coming from back seat. Hooker and John going at it in back
seat. He's having a hard time and she's probably trying to get him to
come off manually.

JOHN (O.S.)
Oh baby, baby.

PROSTITUTE (O.S.)
(forceful)
Come on.

Travis stares blankly ahead.

CUT TO:

TRAVIS' APARTMENT

CAMERA PANS SILENTLY across INTERIOR room, indicating this is not a new scene.

Travis is sitting at plain table writing. He wears shirt, jeans, boots. An unfiltered cigarette rests in a bent coffee can ash tray.

CLOSEUP of notebook. It is a plain lined dimestore notebook and the words Travis is writing with a stubby pencil are those he is saying. The columns are straight, disciplined. Some of the writing is in pencil, some in ink. The handwriting is jagged.

CAMERA continues to PAN, examining Travis' apartment. It is unusual, to say the least;

A ratty old mattress is thrown against one wall. The floor is littered with old newspapers, worn and unfolded streets maps and pornography. The pornography is of the sort that looks cheap but costs \$10 a throw - black and white photos of naked women tied and gagged with black leather straps and clothesline. There is no furniture other than the rickety chair and table. A beat-up portable TV rests on an upright melon crate. The red silk mass in another corner looks like a Vietnamese flag. Indecipherable words, figures, numbers are scribbled on the plain plaster walls. Ragged black wires dangle from the wall where the telephone once hung.

TRAVIS (V.O.)

They're all animals anyway. All the animals come out at night: Whores, skunk pussies, buggers, queens, fairies, dopers, junkies, sick, venal.

(a beat)

Someday a real rain will come and wash all this scum off the streets.

It's EARLY MORNING: 6 a.m. The air is clean and fresh and the streets nearly deserted.

EXT. OF TAXI GARAGE

Travis' taxi pulls into the driveway.

TRAVIS (V.O.)

Each night when I return the cab to the garage I have to clean the come off the back seat. Some nights I clean off the blood.

INT. OF TAXI GARAGE

Travis pulls his taxi into garage stall. Travis reaches across the cab and extracts a small vial of bennies from the glove compartment.

Travis stands next to the cab, straightens his back, and tucks the bottle of pills into his jacket pocket. He lowers his head, looks into back seat, opens rear door and bends inside.

He shakes a cigarette out of his pack of camels and lights it.

SLIGHT TIMECUT

Travis books it at garage office. Old, rotting slabs of wood are screwed to a grey crumbling concrete wall. Each available space is covered with hand-lettered signs, time schedules, check-out sheets, memos. The signs read:

"BE ALERT!
THE SAFE DRIVER
IS ALWAYS READY
FOR THE UNEXPECTED"

"SLOW DOWN
AND GAUGE SPEED TO
ROAD CONDITIONS
YOU CAN'T STOP
ON A DIME!"

ALL NIGHT DRIVERS
HAVING PERSONAL INJURY ACCIDENTS
MUST PHONE IN AT ONCE TO
JUDSON 2-3410
AND MUST FILE A REPORT PROMPTLY
AT 9 AM THE FOLLOWING MORNING AT
43 W. 61st."

A half dozen haggard cabbies hang around the office. Their shirts are wrinkle, their heads dropping, the mouths incessantly chattering. We pick up snatches of cabbie small talk:

1ST CABBIE

... hadda piss like a bull steer, so I pull over on 10th Ave, yank up the hood and do the engine job.

(gestures as if taking a piss into the hood)

There I am with my dong in my hand when a guy come up and asks if I need any help. "Just checking the battery", I says, and, meanwhile...

(takes imaginary piss)

2ND CABBIE

If he thinks I'm going up into The Jungle this time of night, he can shove it.

3RD CABBIE

(talking into pay phone)

Fuck that Violets First. Fucking saddle horse. No, no, the OTB. Fuck them. No, it was TKR. TCR and I'da made seven fucking grand. Fuck them too. Alright, what about the second race?

4TH CABBIE

Over at Love, this hooker took on the whole garage. Blew the whole fucking joint and they wouldn't even let her use the drinking fountain.

Travis hands his trip sheet to a CAB OFFICIAL, nods slightly, turns and walks toward the door.

OUTSIDE

Travis walks pleasantly down Broadway, his hands in his jacket pockets. The sidewalks are deserted, except for diligent fruit and vegetable VENDORS setting up their stalls. He takes a deep breath of fresh air, pulls a white pill from his pocket, pops it into his mouth.

Travis turns a corner, keeps walking. Ahead of him a 24-hour PORNO THEATRE. The theatre, a blaze of cheap day-glow reds and yellows, is an offense to the clear, crisp morning air. The permanent lettering reads, "Adam Theatre, 16mm Sound Features". Underneath, today's feature are hand-lettered: "Six-Day Cruise" and "Beaver Dam".

Travis stops at the box office, purchases a ticket, and walks in.

INT. PORNO THEATRE

Travis stands in the aisle for a moment. He turns around, walking back toward the concession stand.

CONCESSION STAND

A plain dumpy-looking GIRL sits listlessly on a stool behind the shabby concession stand. A plaster-of-Paris Venus de Milo sits atop a piece of purple velvet cloth on the counter. The SOUND of the feature drones in the background.

CONCESSION GIRL

Kin I help ya?

Travis rests his elbow on the counter, looking at the Girl. He is obviously trying to be friendly - no easy task for him. God knows he needs a friend.

TRAVIS

What is your name? My name is Travis.

CONCESSION GIRL

Awh, come off it, Pal.

TRAVIS

No, I'm serious, really...

CONCESSION GIRL

Ya want me to call da boss? Huh? That what you want?

CONCESSION GIRL

No, no, it's alright. I'll have a big Coca-Cola - without ice - and a large buttered popcorn, and...
(pointing)
... some of them chocolate covered malted milk balls... and ju-jukes, a box. They last.

CONCESSION GIRL

We don't have ju-jukes. We don't have Coca-Cola. We only got Royal Crown Cola.

TRAVIS
That's fine.

CONCESSION GIRL
That's a dollar forty-seven.

Travis lays two dollar bills on the counter.

INT. THEATRE AUDITORIUM

Slight TIMECUT to Travis sitting in theatre, drinking his Royal Crown Cola, eating his popcorn and milk balls. His eyes are fixed on the screen. A MALE VOICE emanates from the screen:

MALE MOVIE VOICE (O.S.)
Come here, bitch. I'm gonna split you in half.

Male Voice yields to Travis' monotone narration.

TRAVIS (V.O.)
Twelve hours of work and I still cannot sleep. The days dwindle on forever and do not end.

FADE TO:

WE MEET BETSY

EXT. CHARLES PALANTINE CAMPAIGN HEADQUARTERS

The Headquarters of the "New Yorkers for Charles Palantine for President Committee", located at the corner of 50th Street and Broadway, are festooned in traditional red, white and blue banners, ribbons and signs.

One large sign proclaims "Palantine". Another sign reads "Register for New York Primary, July 20.". The smiling middle-aged face of Charles Palantine keeps watch over the bustling pedestrians.

It is LATE AFTERNOON.

INSIDE HEADQUARTERS

A variety of YOUNG WORKERS joke and chatter as they labor through stacks of papers. The room is pierced with the sound of ringing phones.

Seen from a distance - the only way Travis can see them - those are America's chosen youth: Healthy, energetic, well-groomed, attractive, all recruited from the bucolic fields of Massachusetts and Connecticut.

CAMERA FAVORS BETSY, about 25, an extremely attractive woman sitting at the reception desk between two phones and several stacks of papers. Her attractions, however, are more than skin deep. Beneath that Cover Girl facial there is a keen, though highly specialized sensibility: Her eyes scan every man who passes her desk as her mind computes his desirability: Political, intellectual, sexual, emotional, material. Simple pose and status do not impress her; she seeks out the extraordinary qualities in men. She is, in other words, star-fucker of the highest order.

Betsy, putting down the phone, calls TOM, a lanky, amiable and modishly long-haired campaign workder over to her desk:

BETSY

Tom.

Tom is pleasant and good-looking, but lacks those special qualities which interest Betsy. He gets nowhere with Betsy - yet he keeps trying. Just another of those routine office flirtations which pass the hours and free the fantasies.

BETSY

Tom, come here a moment.

(he walks over)

I think this canvas report is about ready to go out. Check it out with Andy, and if he okays it, have a copy made for the campaign headquarters in every county.

(a beat)

And don't forget to add the new photo releases.

TOM

The senator's white paper is almost ready, Bets. Should we wait for that?

BETSY

Andy usually just sends those to the national media. The local press doesn't know what to do with a position paper until UPI and AP tell them anyway.

TOM

I think we should try to get maximum coverage for this new mandatory welfare program. Push the issues.

BETSY

(as if instructing a child)

First push the man, then the issue. Senator Palantine is first of all a dynamic man, an intelligent, interesting, fascinating man.

TOM

You forgot "sexy".

BETSY

No, I didn't forget "sexy".

TOM

Just didn't get around to it, huh?

BETSY

O, Tom, please.

TOM

Well, for Christsakes, you sound like you're selling... I don't know what... cars... not issues.

BETSY

Have you ever wondered why CBS News has the highest ratings?

TOM

More people watch it.

BETSY

Alright, forget it if you're not going to be serious,

TOM

No, c'mon, I'm listening. I was just...

BETSY

Just what?

TOM

Kidding around... you know, fun.

Betsy looks toward the street, then back at Tom.

BETSY

Maybe if you'd try thinking once in a while, you'd get somewhere.

TOM

With who?

BETSY

Alright, now. You want to know why CBS has the highest ratings? You their news is any different from NBC, ABC? It's all the same news. Same stories. Same order usually. What, you thought they had good news for people, right? You thought that's why people watched CBS? I'll tell you why people watch CBS. Cronkite. The man. You got it? Not the news, not the issues, the man. If Walter Cronkite told people to eat soap, they'd do it. We are selling cars, goddamn it.

Betsy's attention is being distracted by something she sees across the street. She puts on her glasses and looks out across the street again.

TOM

Well, if Cronkite's so great, why don't we run him instead?

BETSY

That's the last. The finish. Period. Some people can learn. Some people can't. And you wonder why we never get serious...

TOM

Sure we could run him. You realize he's already of his block association.

BETSY

(looks across street again)

Have you been noticing anything strange?

TOM
No, why?

BETSY
Why's that taxi driver across the street been
staring at us?

TOM
What taxi driver?

BETSY
That taxi driver. The one that's been sitting
here.

TOM
How long has he been there?

BETSY
I don't know - but it feels like a long time.

Travis' cold piercingly eyes Stare out from his cab parked across the street from Palantine Headquarters. He is like a lone wolf watching the warm campfires of civilization from a distance. A thin red dot glows from his cigarette.

Tom exchanges Travis' gaze.

TOM
(determined)
Well, I'll go out and ask him.

As Tom walks toward front door Betsy's eyes alternate between him and the position where Travis sits.

EXT. PALANTINE HEADQUARTERS

Tom strides out the front door and walks briskly across the street toward Travis' taxi.

Travis spots Tom walking toward him and quickly stares up his cab, then squeals off in a burst of billowing exhaust.

Tom watches the speeding taxi quizzically.

Travis' taxi continues down Broadway.

CUT TO:

FURTHER THOUGHTS

INT. TRAVIS' APARTMENT

He lies on his mattress at the ceiling. He is fully clothed and appears deep in thought.

Near his mattress rest several medications: A large bottle of vitamin pills, two smaller bottles of pills, a bottle of peach-flavored brandy.

TRAVIS (V.O.)

All my life needed was a sense of direction, a sense of someplace to go. I do not believe one should devote his life to morbid self-attention, but should become a person like other people.

ANOTHER DAY - LATE AFTERNOON

Travis' taxi is driving down Broadway with the "Off Duty" sign on.

POV TRACKING SHOT down Broadway. CAMERA stops at Palantine Campaign Headquarters. A few WORKERS remain in the office. Betsy's desk is vacant.

FIFTH AVENUE - THE SAME AFTERNOON

CAMERA TRACKS with crowded mass of MANHATTANITES as they ooze through the sidewalks toward their various destination. Individuals are indiscernible: It is simply a congested mass.

TRAVIS (V.O.)

I first saw her at Palantine Campaign Headquarters at 58th and Broadway. She was wearing a yellow dress, answering the phone at her desk.

Suddenly: Cut of the congested human mass, IN SLOWING MOTION, appears the slender figure of Betsy in a stylish yellow dress. The crowd parts like the Red Sea, and there she is: Walking all alone, untouched by the crowd, suspended in space and time.

TRAVIS (V.O.)

She appeared like an angel out of this open sewer. Out of this filthy mass. She is alone: They cannot touch her.

INT. TRAVIS' APARTMENT

He is at the table, writing in his diary.

CLOSEUP - His stubby pencil rests on the word "her".

CUT TO:

SMALL TALK IN A GREASY ROOM

It is 3:30 IN THE MORNING in a bacon-shaped all night WEST SIDE REATAURANT. The thick smell hangs in the air - fried grease, smoke, sweat, regurgitated wine.

Whatever doesn't flush away in New York at night turns up in places like this. A burly grease-stained COOK stands over the grill. A JUNKIE shuffles from one side of the door to another. Slouched over the small four-person formica tables are several WELL-DRESSED BLACKS (too well-dressed for this time and place), a cluster of STREET PEOPLE and a lost OLD COOT who hangs onto his cup of coffee as if it were his last possession.

The restaurant, brightly lit, perfectly conveys the image urban plasticity - without the slightest hint of an accompanying cleanliness.

Toward the rear of the restaurant sit three cabbies: WIZARD, a worn man about fifty, DOUGH-BOY, younger family man, CHARLIE T., fortyish Black.

Wizard is telling Dough-Boy a story. Charlie T., his elbows popped against table top, is not listening. He stares silently down at a plate of cold scrambled eggs and a Racing Forum. His eyes may not be open.

WIZARD

First she did her make-up. You know, I hate it when they do that. I mean she does the whole works, the mascara, the eye-shadow, the lipstick, the rouge...

DOUGH-BOY

Not rouge. Blush-On, they call it.

WIZARD

The kind with a brush.

Travis appears at the door. He has to push aside the JUNKIES to enter without making physical contact - something Travis would not relish. He may be repulsed with these people and this place, but he is too much a part of this to let his feelings rise to the surface.

Wizard gives Travis a perfunctory wave.

WIZARD

Travis.

TRAVIS

Hey Wizard.

Travis straddles a seat at the table. Dough-Boy gives Travis something between a wink and an eye-twitch saying:

DOUGH-BOY

Yeah, that's Blush-On. My wife uses it,

WIZARD

(ironic)

Ask Travis. He's the ladies man.

Travis shrugs and motions for a cup of coffee.

WIZARD

(continuing)

Well, whatever the fuck it is, she used it. And then the spray perfume. You know, the real sweat kind - and, on top of that, get this, right when we're crossing the Tri-boro bridge - she changes her pantyhose!

DOUGH-BOY

No.

Travis turns his head. He appears not to be interested, but is.

WIZARD

Yeah.

DOUGH-BOY

Could you see anything?

WIZARD

Well, she was trying to keep her skirt down, sort of, you know. But it was pretty obvious what she was doing. I mean, Christ, it was rush hour and the traffic's practically standing still.

DOUGH-BOY

What did you do?

WIZARD

Threw on the emergency, jumped the seat and fucked her brains out - What do you think!

(they laugh)

What do I have to do? Draw you a picture?

DOUGH-BOY

Yeah.

WIZARD

What was I supposed to do? I was watching in the rear view. You know, just checkin' traffic.

(to Travis)

So howsit?

TRAVIS

(w/o inflection)

Some fleet driver for Bell just cut up. Just heard it on the radio.

DOUGH-BOY

Stick up?

A WAITRESS brings Travis' coffee and a glass of water. He asks for a cheeseburger.

WIZARD

Sure. What do you think? She wanted to get out of the cab. I said "Look, you're in the middle of the fucking bridge..."

DOUGH-BOY

You said that?

WIZARD

Well, I said, "Lady, please, we're on a bridge..."

DOUGH-BOY

And what happened?

Travis awaits Wizard's answer.

WIZARD

She stayed in the cab, what's she gonna do? but she stiffed me. A real skunk.

DOUGH-BOY
A real skunk.

Wizard realizes Travis and Dough-Boy may not have met.

WIZARD
(paternal)
Travis, you know Dough-Boy, Charlie T.?

Charlie T. nods sleepily. Travis indicates he knows Dough-Boy.

DOUGH-BOY
Yeah. We went to Harvard together.
(laughs)

WIZARD
We call him Dough-Boy cause he likes the dollars.
He'll chase a buck straight into Jersey.

DOUGH-BOY
Look who's talking?
(gestures around table)
Who else would stay up all night to catch the
morning rush hour?

Travis sips his coffee. Charlie T.'s eyelids slip shut.

TRAVIS
No, just some crazy fucker. Cut have his ear off.

DOUGH-BOY
Where.

TRAVIS
In the jungle. 122nd.

Travis' eyes turn toward the restaurant's other patrons.

POV: THREE STREET PEOPLE sitting at a table. One GUY, stoned, stares straight ahead. A raggedly attractive GIRL rest her head on the shoulder of the other, a heavily bearded YOUNG MAN with a headband. They kiss and tease each other, momentarily lost in their separate world.

Travis watches the hippie couple closely, his feeling sharply divided between cultural contempt and morose jealousy. Why should these people enjoy the love and intimacy that has always eluded him? He must enjoy these schizoid emotions, because his eyes dwell on the couple.

DOUGH-BOY
(changing the subject)
You run all over town, don't you, Travis?

WIZARD
(referring to 122nd St.)
Fuckin' Mau Mau land, that's what it is.

Travis turns back to his companions.

TRAVIS
Huh?

DOUGH-BOY

I mean, you handle some pretty rough traffic, huh?

TRAVIS

(catching on)

I have.

DOUGH-BOY

You carry a piece? You need one?

TRAVIS

Nah.

(a beat)

I suppose not.

Waitress slaps down smudge-marked glass of water, and a cheeseburger plate that looks more like a shrunken head on a serving platter.

DOUGH-BOY

Well, you ever need one, I know a feller that kin getcha a real nice deal. Lotsa shit around.

WIZARD

The cops and company raise hell they find out.

Travis drops two Alka-Seltzer into his glass of water.

DOUGH-BOY

Truck drivers bring up Harlem Specials that blow up in your hand. But this guy don't deal no shit. Just quality. If you ever need anything, I can put you in touch.

WIZARD

For a fee.

DOUGH-BOY

For a fee.

WIZARD

I never use mine. But it's a good thing to have. Just as a threat.

DOUGH-BOY

(getting up)

well, if there's this many hackies inside, there must be lots of hares outside. And I'm gonna hustle 'em.

WIZARD

What ya gonna do with all that money, Dough-Boy?

DOUGH-BOY

Support my kids. Can you dig it?

(pause)

nice to meet ya, Travis. So long, Wizard. Say hello to Malcolm X for me.

(nods to Charlie T.)

Charlie T. remains unmoved: He is sleeping.

Dough-Boy exits. Travis smiles perfunctorily, then looks back at Wizard. They really don't have much to talk about, and the Wizard doesn't care to manufacture any more conversations.

Travis scans the greasy spoon: The scene is unchanged.

CUT TO:

BETSY MEETS TRAVIS BICKLE

EXT. PALANTINE HEADQUARTERS - ANOTHER DAY

Traffic passes.

INT. PALANTINE HEADQUARTERS

Tom and Betsy are talking. She takes out a cigarette. He takes out matches to light it.

BETSY
Try holding the match like this.

TOM
This is gotta be a game, right?

BETSY
(putting on glasses)
This I gotta see.

TOM
(burning fingers)
Ouch!

BETSY
(giggling)
Oh, are you all right?

TOM
I'm great. Always set my fingers on fire. If you want to see another trick. I do this thing with my nose.

BETSY
No. I just wanted to see if you could light it that way. The guy at the newsstand can.

TOM
Ah, yes, the guy at the newsstand, Mr. Asbestos...

BETSY
He happens to be missing fingers. I first noticed when -

TOM
Is he Italian?

BETSY
No, why?

TOM

You sure he's not Italian?

BETSY

He's Black, OK?

TOM

Well, If he had been Italian, they could have been shot off. Sometimes the mob does that to teach guys a lesson, If they blow a job or something.

BETSY

As I said, he isn't Italian. Besides, I thought they just killed them.

TOM

Don't be naive. They can't kill everybody. They have different punishments for different things. Like, if they kill a stool pidgeon, they leave a canary on the body. It's symbolic.

BETSY

Why don't they leave a pidgeon instead of a canary?

TOM

I don't know. Maybe they don't leave a canary. Don't be technical. What I'm saying is if this newsstand guy's Italian and his fingers are gone, maybe he's a thief.

BETSY

First, he's not Italian. Second he's not a thief. I noticed the fingers when he was getting my change - the right change. Two of his fingers are missing. Just stubs. Like they were blown away. I was putting my change in my purse when I saw him get out a cigarette. I couldn't help watching. I was dying to see how he'd light it.

TOM

With the other hand, right?

BETSY

No, stupid. With the stubs. That's the whole point.

TOM

I know that guy. His hand looks like a paw. An old Black guy, the newsstand at -

BETSY

No, this is young - well, I'm never sure how old Black people are - but, anyway, he isn't old. That's for sure.

TOM

Show me how he did that again.

EXT. ACROSS THE STREET FROM HEADQUARTERS

Travis is striding briskly across Broadway toward the Palantine Headquarters.

He is dressed the best we have seen him; his pants (not jeans) are pressed, his boots shined, his hair combed. Under his Army jacket he wears a freshly laundered shirt and ivy league tie. He drops his cigarette, steps on it and walks in.

Watching Travis enter Palantine's Headquarters, we are surprised to realize that Travis is really quite attractive. His deformities are psychological, not physical. He believes he is cursed, and therefore he is.

Travis walks briskly into the office, and heads toward Betsy's desk. Tom walks over to greet him, but Travis ignores him.

TRAVIS
(at Betsy's desk)
I want to volunteer.

As the CAMERA examines Travis' face more closely, one can see the hollowness wrought by lack of sleep and sufficient diet.

TOM
(at Betsy's desk)
If you'll come this way.

Travis elbows Tom off.

TRAVIS
(to Betsy)
No. I want to volunteer to you.

TOM
(under his voice)
Betsy.

Betsy is momentarily taken back, but pleased. Travis' presence has a definite sexual charge. He has those star qualities Betsy looks for: She senses there is something special about the young man who stands before her. And then, too, there is that disarming smile. He is, as Betsy would say, "fascinating".

BETSY
(smiling)
Is that so?
(pause)
But what do you think of Charles Palantine?

TRAVIS
(his mind elsewhere)
Who mam?

BETSY
Charles Palantine. The man you want to volunteer to help elect president.

TRAVIS

Oh, I think he's a wonderful man. Make a great, great president.

BETSY

You want to canvass?

TRAVIS

Yes, mam.

Betsy is interviewing Travis back a bit. He obviously doesn't have the slightest idea what Palantine's stand on welfare is, in fact, he doesn't have any idea about politics whatsoever. Travis thinks a moment, then improvises an answer:

TRAVIS

Welfare, mam? I think the Senator's right. People should work for a living. I do. I like to work. Every day. Get those old coots off welfare and make 'em work for a change.

Betsy does a subtle double-take: This isn't exactly Palantine's position on welfare. She remain intrigued by Travis.

BETSY

Well, that's not exactly what the Senator has proposed. You might not want to canvass, but there is plenty more other work we need done: Office work, filing, poster hanging.

TRAVIS

I'm a good worker, Betsy mam, a real good worker.

BETSY

(gesturing)

if you talk to Tom, he'll assign you to something.

TRAVIS

If you don't mind, mam, I'd rather work for you.

BETSY

Well, we're all working tonight.

TRAVIS

Well, Betsy mam, I drive a taxi at night.

BETSY

Well, then, what is it you exactly want to do?

TRAVIS

(bolstering courage)

If you don't mind, mam, I'd be mighty pleased if you'd go out and have some coffee and pie with me.

Betsy doesn't quite know what to make of Travis. She is curious, intrigued, tantalized. Like a moth, she draws closer to the flame.

BETSY

Why?

TRAVIS

Well, Betsy mam, I drive by this place here in my taxi many times a day. And I watch you sitting here at this big long desk with these telephones, and I say to myself, that's a lonely girl. She needs a friend. And I'm gonna be her friend.

(smiles)

Travis rarely smiles, but when he does his whole face glows. It is as if he is able to tap an inner reserve of charm unknown even to himself. Betsy id completely disarmed.

BETSY

I don't know...

TRAVIS

It's just to the corner, mam. In broad daytime. Nothing can happen. I'll be there to protect you.

BETSY

(smiles)

All right.

(relents)

All right. I'm taking a break at four o'clock. If you're here then we'll go to the corner and have some coffee and pie.

TRAVIS

Oh, I appreciate that, Betsy mam. I'll be here at four o'clock exactly.

(pause)

And... ah... Betsy...

BETSY

Yes?

TRAVIS

My name is Travis.

BETSY

Thank you, Travis.

Travis nods, turns and exits.

Tom, who has been watching this interchange with a pseudo-standoffish (actually jealous) air, steps over to Betsy. His manner demands some sort of explanation of what Betsy was doing.

Betsy simply shrugs (it's really none of his business) and says:

BETSY

I'm just going to find out what the cabbies are thinking.

CUT TO:

COFFEE SHOP RENDEZVOUS

Travis is pacing back and forth on Broadway just beyond the Palantine Headquarters. He checks his watch.

TRAVIS (V.O.)
April 26, 1972. Four o'clock p.m. I took Betsy to
the Mayfair Coffee Shop on Broadway...

INT. COFFEE SHOP

Travis and Betsy are sitting in a booth of a small New York Coffee Shop. They both have been served coffee; Travis is nervously turning his cup around in his hands.

As Travis speaks VOICE OVER, WAITRESS brings their orders: Apple pie for Travis, fruit compote for Betsy.

TRAVIS (V.O.)
I had black coffee and apple pie with a slice of
melted yellow cheese. I think that was a good
selection. Betsy had coffee and a fruit salad
dish. She could have had anything she wanted.

Betsy's conversation interrupts Travis' VOICE OVER.

BETSY
We've signed up 15,000 Palantine volunteers in New
York so far. The organizational problems are
becoming just staggering.

TRAVIS
I know what you mean. I've got the same problems.
I just can't get things organized. Little things,
I mean. Like my room, my possessions. I should get
one of those signs that says, "One of these days
I'm Gonna Organezizied".

Travis contorts his mouth to match his mispronunciation, then breaks into a big, friendly, infectious grin. The very sight of it makes one's heart proud.

Betsy cannot help but be caught up in Travis' grin. Travis' contagious, quicksilver moods cause her to say:

BETSY
(laughing)
Travis, I never ever met anybody like you before.

TRAVIS
I can believe that.

BETSY
Where do you live?

TRAVIS
(evasive)
Oh, uptown. You know. Some joint. It ain't much.

BETSY
So why did you decide to drive a taxi at night.

TRAVIS

I had a regular job for a while, days. You know, doin' this, doin' that. But I didn't have anything to do at night. I got kinda lonely, you know, just wandering around. So I decided to work nights. It ain't good to be alone, you know.

BETSY

After this job, I'm looking forward to being alone for a while.

TRAVIS

Yeah, well...

(a beat)

In a cab you get to meet people. You meet lotsa people. It's good for you.

BETSY

What kind of people?

TRAVIS

Just people people, you know. Just people.

(a beat)

Had a dead man once.

BETSY

Really?

TRAVIS

He'd been shot. I didn't know that. He just crawled into the back seat, said "West 45th Street" and conked out.

BETSY

What did you do?

TRAVIS

I shot the meter off, for one thing. I knew I wasn't going to get paid. Then I dropped him off at the cop shop. They took him.

BETSY

That's really something.

TRAVIS

Oh, you see lots of freaky stuff in a cab. Especially when the moon's out.

BETSY

The moon?

TRAVIS

The full moon. One night I had three or four weirdoes in a row and I looked up and, sure enough, there it was - the full moon.

Betsy laughs. Travis continues:

TRAVIS

Oh, yeah. People will do anything in front of a taxi driver. I mean anything. People too cheap to rent a hotel room, people scoring dope, people shooting up, people who want to embarrass you.

(a bitterness emerges)

It's like you're not even there, not even a person. Nobody knows you.

Betsy cuts Travis' bitterness short:

BETSY

Com'on, Travis. It's not that bad. I take lots of taxis.

TRAVIS

I know. I could have picked you up.

BETSY

Huh?

TRAVIS

Late one night. About three. At the plaza.

BETSY

Three in the morning? I don't think so. I have to go to bed early. I work days. It must have been somebody else.

TRAVIS

No. It was you. You had some manila folders and a pink bag from Saks.

Betsy, realizing Travis remembers her precisely, scrambles for a polite rationale for her behavior:

BETSY

You're right! Now I remember! It was after the Western regional planners were in town and the meeting went late. The next day I was completely bushed. It was unbelievable.

TRAVIS

If it wasn't for a drunk I would have picked you up. He wanted to go to the DMZ.

BETSY

The DMZ?

TRAVIS

South Bronx. The worst. I tried to ditch him, but he was already in the cab, so I had to take him. That's the law. Otherwise I would have picked you up.

BETSY

That would have been quite a coincidence.

TRAVIS

You'd be surprised how often you see the same people, get the same fare. People have patterns. They do more or less the same things every day. I can tell.

BETSY

Well, I don't go to the Plaza every night.

TRAVIS

I didn't mean you. But just ordinary people. A guy I know - Dough-Boy - met his wife that way. They got to talking. She said she usually caught the bus so he started picking her up at the bus stop, taking her home with the flag up.

BETSY

That's very romantic. Some of your fares must be interesting. See any stars, politicians, deliver any babies yet?

TRAVIS

Well, no... not really... had some famous people in the cab.

(remembering)

I got this guy who makes lasers. Not regular lasers, not the big kind. Little lasers, pocket sized, small enough to clip your belt like a transistor radio, like a gun, you know. Like a ray gun. Zap.

BETSY

(laughs)

What hours do you work?

TRAVIS

I work a single, which means there's no replacement - no second man on the cab. Six to six, sometimes eight. Seventy-two hours a week.

BETSY

(amazed)

You mean you work seventy-two hours a week.

TRAVIS

Sometimes 76 or 80. Sometimes I squeeze a few more hours in the morning. Eighty miles a day, a hundred miles a night.

BETSY

You must be rich.

TRAVIS

(big affectionate smile)

it keeps ya busy.

BETSY

You know what you remind me of?

TRAVIS

What?

BETSY

That song by Kris Kristofferson, where it's said
"Like a pusher, party truth, partly fiction, a
walking contradiction".

(smiles)

TRAVIS

I'm no pusher, Betsy. Honest. I never have pushed.

TRAVIS

I didn't mean that, Travis. Just the part about
the contradiction.

TRAVIS

(more at ease)

Oh. Who was that again?

BETSY

The singer?

TRAVIS

Yeah. Yes. I don't follow music too much.

BETSY

(slowly)

Kris Kristofferson.

Travis looks at Betsy intently and they exchange smiles.

CUT TO:

INCIDENT IN A RECORD SHOP

Travis is walking confusedly around SAM GOODY'S at MIDDAY, obviously
unable to locate what he desires.

Travis is lost among the hip, young intellectual type that populate the
store. He watches the stylish, attractive female help, unable to come
right out and requests what he desires.

A young SALESGIRL sees his plight, walks over and asks if he needs any
help. Travis INAUDIBLY says a name to her, although the name is obviously
Kris Kristofferson.

The Salesgirl digs out Kristofferson's "Silver-Tongued Devil" album for
him.

Travis says something additional to the Salesgirl and she goes off to
gift-wrap the album.

Travis emerges from the RECORD STORE, the brightly gift-wrapped album
proudly tucked under his arm.

CUT TO:

A NIGHT BEHIND THE WHEEL

A lengthy POV SHOT from Travis' vantage point behind the wheel.

We see the city as Travis sees it. The front windshield is a little dirty, the lighted meter just up at the low right screen. The intercom crackles with STATIC and MESSAGES.

The light turns green; we take off with a start. A short first gear - quick shift - a long second gear. The cab eases to the right of the street, checking out prospective fares.

Our eyes scan the long lines of PEDESTRIANS. The regular - bums, junkies, tourists, hookers, homosexuals, hippies - they mean nothing now. They only blend into the sidewalks and lighted storefronts.

Our eyes now concentrate on those that step away from the curb - is that man hailing a cab or scratching his head?

In the next block there are perhaps three, four fares - quick gas-up through this yellow light - brake sharply - check the action. The first: Tourist, nickel tipper - let the next guy pick them up. Let the second go also, the third - there's a live fare. Middle-aged LOCAL WOMAN: Short fare to the East Side, good tip.

We pull to the curb, waiting for her to get in. It is a long wait - a Black STREET WALKER crosses in front of the cab. We focus on (as Travis would) a YOUNG COUPLE embracing in the distance.

As we travel, we hear Travis' random thoughts about selecting fares and tips:

TRAVIS (V.O.)

You work at night, you get an instinct. You can smell them. The big tippers, the stiffes, the trouble makers. Quarter is good tip for Manhattan. Queens is better, Brooklyn is best. go for the guys with suitcases. The rich are the worst tippers, hooks are lousy. Spooks are okay, but they don't live at Park Ave after all.

The meter is activated: \$.60 registers. Tick, tick, tick. A quick glance shows the woman is now seated. She says softly, "192 East 89". We take off with another jolt. Cross back up 9th Ave, then cut through the park.

We're zooming up 9th Ave - how many green lights can we string together? Somebody steps out to hail the cab, but quickly steps back again. The meter is up \$.90. It'll be a \$1.40 fare.

Now through the park and we're almost there. Check the numbers - 134 - 140. End of the block. Fare=\$1.40.

Check back mirror - she's getting out two bills. Two quarters and a dime change. Tip'll be either .25 or .35.

The tip comes back: 35 cents - good tip. Good lady. We take off again with a jolt.

This is Travis' world: Dark side streets, garish glaring main streets, quick glances, quicker evaluations - a dozen instantaneous decisions a minute. Are these people, are these objects?

EXT. TRAVIS' TAXI

Speeding down darkened street.

Travis lets off a fare and pulls into line at the Plaza.

TRAVIS (V.O.)

I called Betsy again at her office, and she said maybe we could go to a movie together after she gets off work tomorrow. That's my day off. At first she hesitated, but I called her again and she agreed.

(pause)

Betsy. Betsy what? I forgot to ask her last name again. Damn. I've got to remember stuff like that.

Travis' thoughts are with Betsy, as THREE MEN enter Travis' cab. He activates the meter and pulls off.

MAN'S VOICE

St. Regis Hotel.

Travis checks the mirror. Scanning across the back seat, he recognizes the middle passenger. It is CHARLES PALANTINE, candidate for President. He must have left the Hotel shortly after Betsy.

Tom, seated on the jump seat, checks his watch and speaks deferentially to Palantine:

TOM

It's 12:30 now. You'll have fifteen minutes before the actual luncheon begins.

Palantine nods as his assistant picks up the thread of an earlier conversation.

PALANTINE ASSISTANT

I don't think we have to worry about anybody until things start coming in from California.

Travis recognizes his passenger. He puts out his cigarette.

TRAVIS

(interrupting)

Say, aren't you Charles Palantine, the candidate?

PALANTINE

(only mildly irritated)

Yes I am.

TRAVIS

Well, I'm one of your biggest supporters. I tell everybody that comes in this cab that they should vote for you.

PALANTINE

(pleased; glances to check Travis' license)

Why, thank you Travis.

TRAVIS

I'm sure you'll win, sir. Everybody I know is going to vote for you.

(a beat)

I was going to put one of your stickers on my taxi but the company said it was against their policy.

PALANTINE

(pleasant)

I'll tell you, Travis, I've learned more about this country sitting in taxi cabs than in the board room of General Motors.

TOM

(joking)

And in some other places too...

Palantine, his Assistant and Tom all laugh. Palantine, quickly reassuming candiorial mien, speaks to Travis:

PALANTINE

Travis, what single thing would you want the next President of this country to do most?

TRAVIS

I don't know, sir. I don't follow political issues much.

PALANTINE

There must be something...

TRAVIS

(thinks)

Well, he should clean up this city here. It's full of filth and scum. Scum and filth. It's like an open sewer. I can hardly take it. Some days I go out and smell it then I get headaches that just stay and never go away. We need a President that would clean up this whole mess. Flush it out.

Palantine is not a Hubert Humphrey-type professional bullshitter, and Travis' intense reply stops him dead in his tracks. He is forced to fall back on a stock answer but e tries to give it some meaning.

PALANTINE

(after a pause)

I know what you mean, Travis, and it's not going to be easy. We're going to have to make some radical changes.

TRAVIS

(turning the wheel)

Damn straight.

EXT. BARCLAY HOTEL

Travis' taxi pulls up in front of the Barclay Hotel.

Palantine and Aide get out of the cab. Second Aide stays in back seat a moment to pay Travis.

Palantine looks in front window of cab momentarily and nods goodbye to Travis.

PALANTINE
Nice talking to you, Travis.

TRAVIS
(calling back)
Thank you, sir. You're a good man, sir.

Travis' taxi departs.

Palantine and Aides walk up carpet to the St. Regis.

CAMERA CLOSES IN on Palantine as he stops, turns back and watches Travis' departing taxi.

Palantine turns back and ascends the hotel steps with his Aides.

DATE NIGHT

EXT. MANHATTAN STREET - EARLY MORNING

Travis, dressed to the teeth, walks brightly down the sidewalk. His face is freshly shaved, his hair combed, his tie straightened.

He pauses in a store window to check his appearance.

Under his arm he carries the gift-wrapped Kristofferson record album.

OUTSIDE PALANTINE HEADQUARTERS

Betsy, smartly dressed, waves goodbye to another CAMPAIGN WORKER and walks out the door to greet him.

A SHORT WHILE LATER, Travis and Betsy are walking down Broadway toward Times Square. Betsy does not let their bodies touch as they walk although Travis contemplates edging closer to her.

Betsy has opened the package and is admiring the record - or, rather, Travis' sentiment behind giving it.

Travis looks around himself with pride: This is a moment in his life - one of the few.

BETSY
You didn't have to spend your money - ?

TRAVIS
(interrupting)
He'll, what else can I do with it all?

Betsy notices that the seal on the record has not been broken.

BETSY
Travis, you haven't even played the record?

TRAVIS
(evasive)
Yeah, well my stereo player is broke. But I'm sure
the record is OK.

BETSY
Your stereo broke? God, I could hardly stand that.
I live on music.

TRAVIS
I don't follow music much. I'd like to though.
(second thought)
Honest.

BETSY
(pointing to album)
So you haven't heard this record yet?

TRAVIS
No.
(sly smile)
I thought maybe you could play it for me on your
player.

Betsy's face backtracks a bit. Maybe she was wrong to go out with this
fellow she doesn't know.

She makes a polite laugh.

LATER

Travis and Betsy are in TIMES SQUARE, turning the corner from Broadway to
42nd Street. Travis carries the album under his arm.

They approach the garish marquee of a large midtown porno theatre
advertising "The Swedish Marriage Manual". The box office is flanked on
both sides by glass cages filled with explicit publicity stills.
Offending portions have been blocked out with black tape.

Travis steps over to the window and buys two \$5 tickets. Betsy,
befuddled, watches him. She doesn't know what to say. Travis returns with
the tickets.

Betsy still has not fully comprehended what is happening:

BETSY
What are you doing?

TRAVIS
(innocent)
I bought a couple of tickets.

BETSY
But this is a porno movie.

TRAVIS
No, these are the kind that couples go to. They're
not like the other movies. All kinds of couples
go. Honest. I've seen them.

Travis seems confused. He is so much part of his own world, he fails to comprehend another's world. Compared to the movies he sees, this is respectable. But then there's also something that Travis could not even acknowledge, much less admit: That he really wants to get this pure white girl into that dark porno theatre.

Travis makes an awkward gesture to escort Betsy into the theatre. Betsy looks at the tickets, at the theatre, at Travis. She mentally shakes her head and walks toward the turnstile. She thinks to herself: "What the Hell. What can happen?" She's always been curious about these pictures anyway, and - like all women, no matter how intelligent - she's been raised not to offend her date. A perverse logic which applies even more in offsetting circumstances like these.

INSIDE THE THEATRE

Travis escorts Betsy to an empty center row. Travis was right. Couples do go to films like this. There are at least six or seven other MEN with their bewigged "DATES".

Travis settles into his familiar porno theatre slouch. Betsy looks curiously from side to side.

ON SCREEN, a conservatively-dressed middle-aged woman is speaking in Swedish about importance of healthy sex life in a happy marriage. Subtitles translate her words. Then, without warning, there is a direct CUT to a couple copulating on a sterile table-like bed.

Travis watches intently. The color, however, is slowly draining from Betsy's cheeks. One thought fills her mind: "What am I doing here?"

TRAVIS
(to himself)

Damn.

BETSY
What's wrong?

TRAVIS
I forgot to get the Coca-Cola.

That does it. Betsy just looks at him for a moment, then gets up and starts to leave. Travis, confused, hustles after her.

He follows her out of the theatre.

ON THE SIDEWALK

Travis catches up with her.

TRAVIS
Where are you going?

BETSY
I'm leaving.

TRAVIS
What do you mean?

Betsy looks at Travis, trying to understand him:

BETSY
These are not the kind of movies I go to.

TRAVIS
Well, I don't follow movies too much...

BETSY
You mean these are the only kind of movies you go to?

The TICKET GIRL watches expressionlessly from the booth.

TRAVIS
This is sort of high class...

BETSY
I mean porno movies.

TRAVIS
(hesitant)
Well... mostly...

BETSY
My God!

TRAVIS
We can go to another movie if you like, I don't care. I got money. There's plenty...

Travis gestures toward the long row of 42nd Street marquees, but is interrupted by Betsy:

BETSY
If you just wanted to fuck, why didn't you just come right out and say it?

Travis is flabbergasted by Betsy's blunt language. His arm still gestures toward the marquees, his lips continue to move, but words do not come out.

Unable to respond to Betsy's question, Travis picks up where he left off:

TRAVIS
... there's plenty of movies around here. I haven't seen any of them, but I'm sure they're good.

BETSY
No, Travis. You're a sweet guy and all that, but I think this is it. I'm going home.

TRAVIS
(interrupting)
You mean you don't want to go to a movie?
(a beat)
There's plenty of movies around here.

BETSY
No, I don't feel so good. We're just two very
different kinds of people, that's all.

TRAVIS
(puzzled)
Huh?

BETSY
It's very simple. You go your way, I'll go mine.
Thanks anyway, Travis.

TRAVIS
But... Betsy...

BETSY
I'm getting a taxi.

She walks to the curb.

TRAVIS
(following her)
What about the record?

BETSY
Keep it.

TRAVIS
Can I call you?

Betsy looks for a cab.

TRAVIS
(tender)
Please, Betsy, I bought it for you.

Betsy looks at his sad, sweet face and relents a bit.

BETSY
All right, I'll accept the record.

Betsy accepts the record, but quickly turns and hails a taxi.

BETSY
Taxi!

A taxi quickly pulls up.

Travis feebly protests to no one in particular:

TRAVIS
But I got a taxi.

Betsy gives instructions to CAB DRIVER, looks briefly back at Travis,
then straight ahead. Taxi speeds off.

Travis looks around helplessly: A cluster of PEDESTRIANS on the crowded
street has stopped to watch the argument. Travis looks back at the woman
in the porno theatre box office who has also been following the argument.

CUT TO:

PHONE CALLS AND FLOWERS

INSIDE TRAVIS' APARTMENT

Travis is sitting at the table. There are some new items on the table: His giant econo-sized bottle of vitamins, a giant econo-sized bottle of aspirins, a pint of apricot brandy, a partial loaf of cheap white bread.

On the wall behind the table hang two more items: A gag sign reading "One of These Days I'm Gonna Get Organezizied" and an orange-and-black bumper sticker for Charles Palantine.

TRAVIS (V.O.)

May 8, 1972. My life has taken another turn again.
The days move along with regularity...

CLOSEUP of notebook: Travis is no longer sitting at the desk. The pencil rests on the open notebook.

LATER THAT DAY

Travis has pulled his straight-backed chair around and is watching his small portable TV, which rests on the upright melon crate.

A cereal bowl partially filled with milk rests in his lap. Travis pours a couple shots of the apricot brandy into the bowl, dips folded chunks of white bread into the mixture, and eats them.

Travis is watching early evening NEWS PROGRAM. TV background SOUND.
Charles Palantine is being interviewed somewhere on the campaign trail.

TRAVIS (V.O.)

... one day indistinguishable from the next, a
long continuous chain, then suddenly - there is a
change.

Betsy is walking down a midtown street when Travis suddenly appears before her. He has been waiting.

Travis tries to make conversation but she doesn't listen. She motions for him to go away and keeps on walking.

Travis, protesting, follows.

CUT TO:

INT. BUILDING - DAY

Travis speaks intensely into a wall pay phone.

TRAVIS (V.O.)

I tried to call her several times.

We hear Travis' Voice on the phone.

TRAVIS

(smoking a cigarette)
you feeling better? You said you didn't feel so
good...

TRAVIS (V.O.)
But after the first call, she would no longer come
to the phone.

Travis holds the receiver in his hand. The other party has hung up.

TRACKING SHOT across interior lower wall of TRAVIS' APARTMENT. Against the stark wall there is a row of wilted and dying floral arrangements. Each one of the four or five bouquets is progressively more wilted than the one closer to the door. They have been returned.

TRAVIS (V.O.)
I also sent flowers with no luck. I should not dwell on such things, but set them behind me. The smell of the flowers only made me sicker. The headaches got worse I think I've got stomach cancer. I should not complain so. "You're only as healthy as you feel."

INT. PALANTINE HEADQUARTERS

A drama is acted out at PALANTINE HEADQUARTERS: Travis, groggy and red-eyed from lack of sleep, walks into the campaign headquarters about NOONTIME.

Betsy is standing near the rear of the office; she ducks from sight when she sees Travis enter. Travis' path is cut short by Tom's large-framed body. There is no live sound.

TRAVIS (V.O.)
I realize now how much she is like the others, so cold and distant. Many people are like that. They're like a union.

Travis tries to push his way past Tom but Tom grabs him. Travis says something sharply to Tom and the two scuffle. Tom, by far the taller and stronger, quickly overcomes Travis, wrenching his arm behind his back.

Travis kicks and protests as Tom leads him to the front door.

ON THE SIDEWALK

Travis' efforts quickly subside when Tom motions to a nearby POLICEMAN. Travis quiets down and walks off.

CUT TO:

THE PUSSY AND THE .44

EXT. STREETS

Travis is again making his way through the garish urban night. He stops for a PASSENGER on Park Ave. A middle-aging professorial executive.

CLOSEUP TRAVIS - His face is expressionless. The man makes himself comfortable in the back seat.

PROFESSIONAL PASSENGER
Jackson Heights.

Travis has no intention of driving out to Jackson Heights and coming back with a fare.

TRAVIS
I'm off duty.

PROFESSIONAL PASSENGER
You mean you don't want to go out to Jackson Heights?

TRAVIS
No, I'm off duty.

PROFESSIONAL PASSENGER
Then how come your "Off Duty" light wasn't on.

Travis switches on the "Off Duty" light.

TRAVIS
It was on.
(gesturing toward top of taxi)
it just takes a while to warm up. Like a TV.

Travis doesn't budge. Professional Passenger curses to himself and exits cab. Travis takes off.

POV as Travis' eyes dwell on the young HIP COUPLES coming out of a East Side movie house.

LATER THAT NIGHT

Travis pulls over for a young (mid-twenties) MAN wearing a leather sports jacket.

Travis eyes his passenger in rear-view mirror.

YOUNG PASSENGER
471 Central Park West.

EXT. STREETS

Travis' taxi speeds off.

LATER

Travis' taxi slows down as it approaches 400 block of Central Park West.

Travis checks apartment numbers.

YOUNG PASSENGER
Just pull over to the curb a moment.

Travis turns the wheel.

YOUNG PASSENGER
Yeah, that's fine. Just sit here.

Travis waits impassively. The motor ticks away.

After a long pause, the passenger speaks:

YOUNG PASSENGER
Cabbie, ya see that light up there on the seventh
floor, three windows from this side of the
building?

CAMERA CLOSES IN on 417 Central Park West:

TRACKING UP to the seventh floor, it moves three windows to the right.

TRAVIS (V.O.)
Yeah.

A young WOMAN wearing a slip crosses in front of the light.

YOUNG PASSENGER (O.S.)
Ya see that woman there?

TRAVIS (O.S.)
Yeah.

YOUNG PASSENGER (O.S.)
That's my wife.
(a beat)
But it ain't my apartment.
(a beat)
A nigger lives there.
(a beat)
She left me two weeks ago. It took me this long to
find out where she went.
(a beat)
I'm gonna kill her.

CLOSEUP YOUNG PASSENGER'S FACE

It is gaunt, drained of blood, full of fear and anger.

Travis does not respond.

YOUNG PASSENGER
Huh?
(a beat)
What do you think of that, huh?

Travis shrugs, gesturing toward meter.

YOUNG PASSENGER
I'm gonna kill her with a .44 Magnum pistol.

CAMERA returns to SEVENTH FLOOR WINDOW. Woman is standing in the light.

YOUNG PASSENGER (O.S.)
Did you ever see what a .44 can do to a woman's
face, cabbie?
(pause)
Did you ever see what it can do to a woman's
pussy, cabbie?

Travis says nothing.

YOUNG PASSENGER (O.S.)
I'm going to put it right up to her, cabbie. Right
in her, cabbie. You must think I'm real sick, huh?
A real pervert. Sitting here and talking about a
woman's pussy and a .44, huh?

CAMERA CLOSES IN on Travis' face: He is watching the woman in the seventh
floor window with complete and total absorption. It's the same glazed-
over stare we saw in his eyes as he watched the porno movie.

FADE TO:

THE TRAVELING SALESMAN

BROOKLYN STREET CORNER - DAY

Travis stands near the corner wearing his boots, jeans, western shirt and
army jacket.

He pulls his aspiring bottle out of his pocket, shakes three or four into
his palm, pops them into his mouth and chews.

An "Off Duty" taxi pulls up to the curb. Travis gets in.

INSIDE TAXI

Dough-Boy leans back from the wheel and greets Travis as he enters.

DOUGH-BOY
Hey Travis. This here's Easy Andy. He's a
travelling salesman.

In the back seat, beside Travis, sits ANDY, an attractive young man about
29. He wears a pin-striped suit, white shirt and floral tie. His hair is
modishly long.

ANDY
Hello Travis.

Travis nods as the taxi speeds off.

Dough-Boy slows down near an economy hotel. Not a flop house, but not do
fancy they care what the guests do in the privacy of their rooms.

ANDY
This is fine, Dough-Boy
(to Travis)
Pay Dough-Boy here.

Travis pulls a twenty out of his pocket and gives it to Dough-Boy.

TRAVIS
20 bucks?

DOUGH-BOY
(takes bill)
Yeah. Hey thanks. That's real nice, Travis.

Travis and Andy get out of the cab and walk toward the hotel. Dough-Boy pulls away.

As they enter the hotel, they pass a JUNKIE, stoned out and spread-eagled across the hood of a derelict old blue dodge.

INT. HOTEL

Travis follows Andy up the worn carpeted stairs and down the hallway . Andy unlocks the door to one of the rooms.

The HOTEL ROOM is barren and clean; there's no sign anyone is staying in it. The fire escape is appropriately near.

Andy locks the door behind them, steps over to the closet, unlocks it and pulls out two grey Samsonite suitcases - the kind you can drive a truck over.

ANDY
Dough-Boy probably told you I don't carry any Saturday Night Specials or crap like that. It's all out of State, clean, brand new, top-of-the-line stuff.

Andy places the suitcases on the white bedspread. The suitcases are equipped with special locks, which he quickly opens.

Andy opens the suitcases: Stacked in grey packing foam are rows and rows of brand new hand guns.

TRAVIS
You got a .44 Magnum?

ANDY
That's an expensive gun.

TRAVIS
I got money.

Andy unzips a cowhide leather pouch to reveal a .44 Magnum pistol. He holds it gingerly, as if it were a precious treasure. Andy opens the chambers and cradles the long eight-inch barrel in his palm. The .44 is a huge, oversize inhuman gun.

ANDY
(admiringly)
It's a monster. Can stop a car - put a bullet right into the block. A premium high resale gun. \$350 - that's only a hundred over list.

Easy Andy is a later version of the fast-talking, good-looking kid in college who was always making money on one scheme or another. In high school he sold lottery tickets, in college he scored dope, and now he's hustling hand guns.

Andy holds the Magnum out for Travis' inspection. There's a worshipful CLOSEUP of the .44 Magnum. It is a monster.

Travis hefts the huge gun. It seems out of place in his hand. It is built on Michelangelo's scale. The Magnum belongs in the hand of a marble god, not a slight taxi driver. Travis hands the gun back to Andy.

ANDY

I could sell this gun in Harlem for \$500 today - but I just deal high quality goods to high quality people.

(pause)

Now this may be a little big for practical use, in which case I'd recommend the .38 Smith and Wesson Special. Fine solid gun - nickel plated. Snub-nosed, otherwise the same as the service revolver. Now that'll stop anything that moves and it's handy, flexible. The Magnum, you know, that's only if you want to splatter it against the wall. The movies have driven up the price of the Magnum anyway. Everybody wants them now. But the Wesson .38 - only \$250 - and worth every dime of it.

(he hefts the .38)

Throw in a holster for \$10.

Travis hefts the nickel-plated .38, points it out the window.

ANDY (CONT'D)

Some of these guns are like toys, but a Smith and Wesson, man, you can hit somebody over the head with it and it will still come back dead on. Nothing beats quality.

(pause)

You interested in an automatic?

TRAVIS

I want a .32 Revolver. And a palm gun. That .22 there.

ANDY

That's the Colt .25 - a fine little gun. Don't do a lot of damage, but it's as fast as the Devil. Handy little gun, you can carry it almost anywhere. I'll throw it in for another \$125.

Travis holds the .32 Revolver, hefts it, slips it under his belt and pulls his shirt over it. He turns from side to side, to see how it rides in his waist.

TRAVIS

How much for everything.

ANDY

The .32's \$150 - and you're really getting a good deal now - and all together it comes to, ah, seven eighty-five for four pieces and a holster. He'll, I'll give you the holster, we'll make it seventy-five and you've got a deal - a good one.

TRAVIS

How much to get a permit to carry?

ANDY

Well, you're talking big money now. I'd say at least five grand, maybe more, and it would take a while to check it out. The way things are going now \$5.000 is probably low. You see, I try not to fool with the small-time crap. Too risky, too little bread. Say 6 G's, but if I get the permit it'll be as solid as the Empire State Building.

TRAVIS

Nah, this'll be fine.

ANDY

You can't carry in a cab even with a permit - so why bother?

TRAVIS

Is there a firing range around?

ANDY

Sure, here, take this card, go to this place and give 'em the card. They'll charge you, but there won't be any hassle.

Travis pulls out a roll of crisp one hundred dollar bills and counts off eight.

ANDY

You in Nam? Can't help but notice your jacket?

TRAVIS

(looking up)

Huh?

ANDY

Vietnam? I saw it on your jacket. Where were you? Bet you got to handle a lot of weapons out there.

Travis hands Andy the bills. Andy counts them and gives Travis a twenty and five.

TRAVIS

Yeah. I was all around. One hospital, then the next.

ANDY
(through counting)
It's he'll out there all right. A real shit-eatin'
war. I'll say this, though: It's bringing a lot of
fantastic guns. The market's flooded. Colt
automatics are all over.
(pockets the money)

TRAVIS
(intensely)
They'd never get me to go back. They'd have to
shoot me first.
(pause)
You got anything to carry these in?
(gestures to pistols)

Travis is like a light switch: For long periods he goes along dark and silent, saying nothing; then suddenly, the current is turned on and the air is filled with the electricity of his personality. Travis' inner intensity sets Andy back a bit, but he quickly recovers.

ANDY
Sure.

Andy pulls a gym bag from under his bed. He wraps the gun in the sheet in the bag and zips it up. An identical gym bag can be partially seen under the bed. He hands Travis the bag.

ANDY
You like ball games?

TRAVIS
Huh?

ANDY
I can get you front and center. What do you like?
I can get you Mets, Knicks, Rangers? He'll, I can
get you the Mayor's box.

TRAVIS
Nah. I ain't interested.

Andy closes and locks the suitcases.

ANDY
Okay, okay.

Travis turns to leave.

ANDY
Wait a second, Travis. I'll walk you out.

CUT TO:

TRAVIS GETS ORGANIZED - SEVERAL WEEKS LATER

The face of Travis' apartment has changed. The long, blank wall behind the table is now covered with tacked-up charts, pictures, newspaper-clippings, maps. CAMERA does not come close enough to discern the exact contents of these clippings.

Travis is in CLOSEUP in the middle of the floor doing push-ups. He is bareback, wearing only his jeans. There is a long scar across his left side.

TRAVIS (V.O.)

May 29, 1972. I must get in shape. Too much sitting has ruined my body. Twenty-five push-ups each morning, one hundred sit-ups, one hundred knee-bends. I have quit smoking.

Travis, still bareback, passes his stiff arm through the flame of a gas burner without flinching a muscle.

TRAVIS (V.O.)

Total organization is necessary. Every muscle must be tight.

INT. FIRING RANGE

The CRACKING SOUND of rapid-fire pistol shots fills the musty air of the firing range. The walls are heavily soundproofed, and sawdust is spread over the floor.

Travis stands rock solid, firing the .44 Magnum at an arm's length. With each blasting discharge from the Magnum, Travis' body shudders and shakes, his arm as if each recoil from the giant gun was a direct attack on his masculinity.

Travis fires the Magnum as quickly as he can re-set, re-aim and re-fire. The Magnum is empty, he sets it down, picks up the .38 Special and begins firing as soon as he can aim. After the .38, comes the .25: It is as if he were in a contest to see how quickly he can fire the pistols. After all the guns are discharged, he begins reloading them without a moment's hesitation.

Downrange, the red and white targets have the black outline of a human figure drawn over them. The contour-man convulses under the steady barrage of Travis' rapid-fire shots.

INT. APARTMENT

Travis, now wearing an unfastened green plaid western shirt, sits at the table writing in his diary. The vial of bennies rests on the table.

TRAVIS (V.O.)

My body fights me always. It won't work, it won't sleep, it won't shit, it won't eat.

LATER

Travis, his shirt still open revealing his bare chest, sits on his straight-backed chair watching the TV. The .44 Magnum rests on his lap.

The TV is broadcasting "Rock Time", a late afternoon teenage dance and rock show. On screen YOUNG TEENYBOPPERS are dancing, and the TV CAMERAMAN, as any devotee of the genre knows, is relentlessly ZOOMING IN ON their firmly young breasts, fannies and crotches - a sensibility which reflects Travis' own. These supper-hour rock dance shows are the most

unabashedly voyeuristic form of broadcasting the medium has yet developed.

The HARD ROCK NUMBER ends, and the TV CAMERA CUTS TO the local DISC JOCKEY, a hirsute plastic-looking man about 35. FIVE scrumptious TEENYBOPPERS are literally hanging on his shoulders and arms, their faces turned up to him in droolish awe. Out of his mouth comes an incessant stream of disc jockey blather. He is the complete asshole; I don't know who is currently performing this function in New York, but in Los Angeles his name is Real Don Steele.

TV DISC JOCKEY

Freshingly, fantastic, freaked-out dance time. Can you dig it? Dig on it. You got it, flaunt it.

Travis watches the show, his face hard and unmoving. He is, as the Scriptures would say, pondering all these things in his heart. Why is it the assholes get all the beautiful young chicks? He takes a swip of peach brandy.

TO BE CONTINUED...