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THE BRIDGE CAR SHOW IN THE HAMPTONS



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classic *Shampoo*, and he had bought a house in Bel Air in order to have a bi-coastal presence in the movie colony.

Lester was a short, mustachioed, dynamic, often oft-putting man, sometimes charming—within my earshot but never to me—somewhat loud (when he wanted to be), a man who cultivated friendships with authors and artists and socialites. CZ Guest, her daughter Cornelia Guest, “Bubbles,” the Vicountess Rothermere, and Truman Capote (as well as the whole Studio 54 gang) were among his frequent acquaintances. Off-stage, away from the socializing, Lester exercised no charm and as an employer, no social friendship. He was not quite a screamer, in a world full of them, although he was barely courteous with me, usually gruff and abrupt, at times condescending and supercilious. Because there was

very little to do, working for him was a drag. A much needed salary and a drag.

However, in the course of what turned out to be my brief encounter as Lester’s employee, one morning in September, he informed me that “Mr. Truman Capote” would be coming to LA for a few days and that I was to pick up the author Friday afternoon at LAX and take him to the Beverly Wilshire Hotel, where he would be staying.

Life in this movie producer’s office where everything was either “in development” or “in turnaround,” and not in production was deadly dull, so the prospect of meeting Capote was exciting even if only to satisfy curiosity: What was he re-

ally like?

Friday morning a light drizzle covered the sweeping view of the city that could usually be seen from the terrace of Lester’s house. I couldn’t help wondering if the writer were still coming.

The poolman was knocking at the back door. He needed to see Mr. Persky to show him something.

“In this weather?” Lester whined over the intercom from his bedroom.

A few moments later, Lester, wrapped in a Burberry, leather slippers flapping against his milk white stocking-less heels, scurried out to the poolside. “This better be interesting,” he warned the poolman.

The poolman lifted the lid off

the filter, exposing a bloated, floating carcass of a drowned rat—muddy brown and about eight inches in length, excluding the tail.

Lester grimaced and recoiled. “Is this someone’s idea of a joke?”

“He musta come for a drink, fall in, and drown,” the poolman said.

“But what was he doing here for a drink in the first place, in the middle of *Bel Air*, California?”

“Probably because it’s the closest water...”

“You mean they *live* around here?!” Lester was incensed.

“Oh sure, these hills are full of ‘em. You can even see them in the trees sometimes,” the poolman laughed at the thought.

“You mean they will always come for a drink in my pool?” Lester asked in exasperation.

“Unless you ‘sterminate.”

