

INT. PREVIDI'S RESTAURANT - NIGHT

MR. FORD sits, reading the newspaper, in a booth at the back of Previdi's. He is in his early fifties, wearing a white suit resembling Ricardo Montalban's Fantasy Island getup.

It is after midnight. Only he and an older waiter, ALBERT, are in the closed establishment. Albert places chairs on top of tables. Mr. Ford closes the paper and picks up five Tarot cards, which he slowly shuffles.

ANGLE ON:

The front door of the restaurant opens. WE SEE a limousine parked outside. The limo door is opened by a CHAUFFEUR. Out steps a MAN.

EXT. PREVIDI'S - NIGHT

Four other limos idle outside, five total, parked in a straight line. Out of each limo steps one FIGURE. All five walk toward the open front entrance of Previdi's.

INT. PREVIDI'S - NIGHT

They stand before Mr. Ford, staring quietly at him.

FREDDIE HAUS

Handsome, tired. A man whose life is worth only as much as he spends on hookers. A man that if given the chance to touch greatness, for even one moment, would somehow tarnish it.

MORGAN "LANDO" JOHNSON

Black. Wipe away the smile, a back-the-fuck-up demeanor.

KATRINA D.

Sexy, powerful. Wearing a half suit, half skirt deal. Katrina plays it real mellow. Inside though, her mind is a caged rat.

DEREK SHEPARD

Young, constant sugar rush. Derek Shepard has no friends, family, or future. A warrior without a war.

MANNY PARATORE

Super-Italian, funny. Manny seems to be constantly living his life right out of the movie 'Goodfellas.' Probably has a shrine to DeNiro in his house.

Mr. Ford shuffles the cards one final time before laying them out one at a time. Each card, faced down, toward one member of the crew before him. We don't see the cards clearly right now.

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As the last card drops he speaks.

MR. FORD
 Good evening all. Albert, some drinks for our guests. Please make yourselves comfortable.

ALBERT
 (to Lando)
 What can I get -- ?

MR. FORD
 (interrupting)
 A Kahlua Sombrero, two Jacks, one Bud in a bottle... and an ice water. I'll have another one of these too. Go.

Albert is perplexed. Lando smiles at him to say and nods.

LANDO
 I'm the Bourbon man. While you're back there would ya be a friend an bring me a snack of some kind? Pretzels, chips. Thank you.

ALBERT
 Sure. Can I get anyone anything else from the back?

Nobody responds.

ALBERT (cont'd)
 Alright. Be right back.

Albert exits. There is a strong silence until Mr. Ford speaks. He talks in a direct manner, yet seems excited about his meeting with these individuals.

MR. FORD
 Two hundred thousand dollars. A sum that would ignite interest. Guess I did well. You all showed. This is going be a real thrill ride. Yes. I bet my right eye on it. So, who will break the ice and be tonight's first guest speaker?

Lando steps forward. All he needs is a spotlight and he's the star of his own late night talk show.

LANDO
 Folks, my name is Morgan 'Lando' Johnson. Lando, after the coolest motherfucker in the galaxy, Lando Calrissian.
 (MORE)

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LANDO (cont'd)

Smooth with the ladies, well respected business man, a true gambler, an one hell of a snazzy dresser. Now, like yourselves, I am here to find out why the fuck *I am* here. My interest was peaked when I received this invitation, which reads as follows.

He reaches inside his suit jacket and pulls out a gold invitation.

LANDO (cont'd)

'Mr. Morgan 'Lando' Johnson. You have been chosen, along with four other, yet unnamed, individuals to participate in 'Thieves Fortune.' Enclosed is your ticket, first class, to JFK airport. A limousine will pick you up and take you to an undisclosed location. It is here that your opportunity to earn two hundred thousand dollars will be clarified. *The rules* will be explained upon arrival. *The fun begins* when you play with your new found friends. Be well in your travels... Mr. Ford.'

Albert returns, places a drink and some pretzels in front of Lando.

LANDO (cont'd)

I thank-you, son.

Everyone takes their drinks off the tray as he goes around the room. Albert then places Mr. Ford's drink on his table, again he exits. Outside DISTANT SIRENS can be heard. They quickly fade away.

[*NOTE: Whenever 'DISTANT SIRENS' appears in the script, one member of the group will always be observed reacting to having heard them.]

Freddie suspiciously steps forward.

FREDDIE

Free drinks, free trip to New York. Very generous, but no offense, what the fuck is this about? 'Thieves Fortune?' Who are you? How d'ya know us?

MANNY

This does in fact smell like a batch of freshly cooked horse shit. I gotta say. I do, I gotta say it. I'm putting it out there.

LANDO

Sir, if I may, could ya please elaborate on the who, the what, and the why?

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CONTINUED: (3)

Mr. Ford looks around at the crew. Katrina sits smoking a cigarette. Derek checks her out. They exchange a smile, flirting.

MR. FORD

My name, as you now know, is Mr. Ford. I am a collector of the rare. Always gathering nicks and knacks. When I was young I use to play with trains. I loved trains. Steam trains, passenger trains. I even had a futuristic looking model train with an extra terrestrial conductor named Klayrax. He had little light up eyes. Train looked like a bullet. Red and silver, very sharp. I had so many. Too many to even list. Today I still take'em out from time to time. I don't play with them, no, just like to look.

Freddie stands up, provoked.

MR. FORD (cont'd)

Freddie Haus of Los Angeles California. Born at Saint Agnes hospital in Fresno. Seven years old when your mother, Janice, passed away. Automobile accident. You were so sad Freddie. Lost. Your father, George Thomas Haus, retired from the Saint James church as minister after many, many years of spiritual hide n' seek. God stole her away. That is what he told you, right? God has a twisted side. Is that what he said? God was angry at the world. Disappointed with it. Disenchanted with all of us. This is the word of the alcoholic preacher. Thanks be to... God? He hurt you Freddie. You revolted, ran away...

Freddie is tense. He steps forward. Listening to the truth, yet dying to destroy it.

MR. FORD (cont'd)

Drugs paid you a visit around January of eighty-five. Tried to hush the thunder didn't you, son? On the streets of LA, that's where...

Mr. Ford and Freddie stare like a couple of gunslingers.

MR. FORD (cont'd)

Sit down Freddie. I think you will find this night to be of great importance.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

MR. FORD (cont'd)

Plus, if you leave the game is over before it has even begun. For all of us. Pity. Waste. Boo-hoo.

Katrina puts out her cigarette.

Freddie takes a step backward. His emotions are buried deep, for now.

Mr. Ford takes a sip of his drink. Loving the control.

LANDO

(intrigued)

Please, Mr. Ford, do continue.

MANNY

Yea, trains, that's where ya left off. You loved trains.

MR. FORD

Forget the train story. The point is this. 'Thieves Fortune' is a game. A friendly competition. The five best players are selected. You are my final picks. My starting line-up. My platoon! There's a better way to expound... (thinking) Derek Shepard.

Derek, now sprawled out in a booth, perks up.

DEREK

Yea?

MR. FORD

Are you familiar with a scavenger hunt?

DEREK

Ahhh, yea...? Shit. Yea, that's where ya get a list of things that ya hafta collect. Whoever finds all the stuff on their list first, wins.

Mr. Ford is delighted. Perfect explanation.

Manny does a golf clap.

MR. FORD

Derek, perfect! Could not have said it better myself unless I'd tried.

Derek, slightly cocky, leans back.

MR. FORD (cont'd)

What I have done is simple. Each of these five packets contains a list.

(MORE)

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CONTINUED: (5)

MR. FORD (cont'd)

(holds up one of the manila envelopes) On every list there are a series of, how should I say...? Missions. You accomplish your itinerary first, you get the cash. Only I'm feeling a little more generous tonight. Thought I'd raise the stakes. So now... it's fifteen million dollars. For you to do with whatever your little cardiovascular system desires.

The room takes on a whole new energy. All five players seem to be holding their breath. Derek licks his lips.

MANNY

Let me understand this. We take this list. We bang it out, check, check, check. The one that finishes first wins? Sounds too simple.

Lando laughs. He notices all eyes on him, pops a pretzel.

LANDO

This ain't no shopping list. Is it Mr. Ford?

MR. FORD

No. Hardly.

FREDDIE

What's on it then? Crimes? Assassinations?

Albert enters again. He stops and sees everyone looking at him. Bad timing. Goes back into kitchen.

MR. FORD

I enjoy collecting, Freddie. All I want for the money I am investing, is a little excitement. I love headlines. So you make headlines. I cut them out and hang them on my fridge.

KATRINA

Where is the money?

ANGLE ON:

A BRIEFCASE Mr. Ford is lifting up from beneath the table.

He pops it open and reveals a lot of green.

Freddie checks out the contents. Everyone does.

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CONTINUED:

FREDDIE
(off the money)

Why?

MR. FORD

I am a very rich man, people. My life has been filled with beautiful things. Anything I wanted I just purchased. Cars, homes, land, women, art, on an on.

He waves his hands around, as if to say, 'boring.'

KATRINA

I want the point.

MR. FORD

The point. *I love the headlines!* I love the fact that a lowlife, not worthy of the gum off the bottom of my shoe criminal, with all due respect of course, is honored nationwide! Big bold letters glamorizing their detestable behavior. Their ghastly achievements. IT'S SENSATIONAL! Well, some time ago I put together this idea. Came to me on a whim. Assemble the best at their illicit, unscrupulous, unconstitutional crafts, and let the games begin!

MANNY

In return, you get some freak like adrenaline rush, 'cause ya know that what the papers are writin' about, you're somehow manipulating. That's pretty twisted. I fuckin' love it! Fifteen mill, I'm in.

Derek can't contain his want.

DEREK

Game fucking on!

KATRINA

I'll play.

LANDO

(toasting Mr. Ford)
Sounds like a prolific business venture to me. Fuck-indeed.

Mr. Ford claps. Freddie just stares at him.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

KATRINA

How long does this contest last?

MR. FORD

Three weeks.

Closes and locks the case.

LANDO

Rules?

MR. FORD

Guidelines... All explained in these. Go ahead, take yours... Wait! (remembering) This is great! Each card, representing your envelope, is part of the Major Arcane.

KATRINA

Major Arcane?

MR. FORD

The Tarot. I have always found the tarot captivating. The history of these characters. Their lives and how we find our future in their pasts. I drew cards to see who got what packet. You are the Major Arcane.

Mr. Ford picks up each card one by one. He deeply enjoys the sight of every card, what they represent.

MR. FORD (cont'd)

Derek Shepard... 'The Fool.' Manny Paratore, 'The Magician.' The resplendent Katrina D., 'High Priestess.' Morgan 'Lando' Johnson, 'The Emperor.' Mr. Fredrick Haus (looks at the card; makes sad face) Oh, well, it's only a card...

The card is 'The Devil.' Freddie is motionless.

MR. FORD (cont'd)

Please, come one, come all! Step right up and seal your fate! Take your card and packet. I have included, in your prize package, a brief synopsis of what your card, or Arcane, means to you. A few other goodies too. Read them and I think you'll find it quite inspirational. (second thought) Derek remember... Even a fool can rule the world. It all depends on who he trusts, huh?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

Everyone steps forward and takes their envelope Mr. Ford hands to them.

All except Freddie.

MR. FORD (cont'd)
 Wait. One major rule. (beaming) Once ya open it,... the game has begun. You *can* not quit. No money back guarantees!

Derek is the first to open his. He reads fast and furious. Lando, Manny, and Katrina all follow. Their expressions are worthy of fifteen million words.

Freddie walks cautiously toward the table where Mr. Ford is looking on like Santa Claus. Glowing.

FREDDIE
 (whispers)
 How d'ya know so much about me?

MR. FORD
 I know, so much, about all of you Mr. Haus. I've 'collected' quite a bit of information, I have.

FREDDIE
 I don't need this.

MR. FORD
 Oh no Freddie, I think you do. You all do. It's part of why I chose you, my son. The need to win. Did you see how fast they all leaped into the unknown?

Mr. Ford face seems to change. He no longer seems like a man enjoying his power, he's basking in it.

FREDDIE
 (takes envelope)
 What happens when someone wins?

MR. FORD
 The rest lose.

Everyone is reading their itineraries. Freddie eyes the briefcase.

MR. FORD (CONT'D)
 I've come here for years. Best God damn food I have ever tasted. If you like authentic Italian. Heavenly. Not a very popular place though. Bad location. Too far from the main streets.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

MR. FORD (CONT'D)

People call it a hole in the wall. I like to take that phrase literally.

Mr. Ford gestures towards the wall on the left side of the room. Freddie turns his head, peers at a picture of Frank Sinatra.

ANGLE ON:

THE PHOTO. Next to it there is a SMALL HOLE. Looking around, there are many holes.

CU ON ONE OF THE HOLLOWES

We see that a gun barrel is pointing, ever-so-slightly, out.

MR. FORD

Let's not make a commotion. Don't want to rile the others up, cause a scene. That's the unfortunate thing about scavengers Freddie. Scavenger never obey the laws of nature. They eat their young, lay their own sisters. They defecate in their beds. Can you believe that? It is true. I watch the Discovery Channel. Love that wilderness junk.(beat) Play Freddie. Play and prove me wrong. Make me give the devil his due.

Freddie walks away looking at his packet. He glances around at everyone. They all need this. They're all scavengers.

He rips open his envelope, looks at his list. No reaction.

The mood in the room is altered. Five competitors are now sizing each other up.

A FLASH GOES OFF!

Mr. Ford has a camera and has snapped a photo.

MR. FORD (cont'd)

Just like Christmas. Little children opening their gifty's. Nothin' more beauteous.

Manny is reading. He stops and looks inquisitively.

MANNY

'Scuse me, Mr. F...? Question. (reading) Blah, blah, blah... 'Or the Bouncer may become involved. If so, you are to complete your objective despite the Bouncer's actions.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MANNY (cont'd)

If you do not complete the said objective, you have not successfully accomplished your mission.' Period. What's a Bouncer?

MR. FORD

Just a little something to keep you on your toes. The Bouncer, or referee, if I may, keeps tabs on who's bein' naughty an nice.

FREDDIE

Wait, what?!? This Bouncer person can interfere with our jobs?! What the fuck is that?

Mr. Ford stands. He walks around the table, places his hand on Manny's arm.

MR. FORD

The 'Thieves Fortune' is on. All you need is right there. Read your lists. I'll see one of you here at midnight, in exactly three weeks.

Mr. Ford walks to the front door.

MR. FORD (cont'd)

Be good kids. Don't get in any trouble.
(as he exits) Choo choo!

The room is dead silent. Albert walks in to clear Mr. Ford's table.

DEREK

I guess we start now, huh?

KATRINA

Yes.

Lando pulls out a gun and shoots Albert in the back of the head. The tray of glasses smash. Katrina whips out her own piece. Points it at Lando. So does Derek.

KATRINA (cont'd)

WHAT THE FUCK WAS THAT ABOUT?!?

Lando puts his gun away and looks down at his list. He looks up at the group, grinning.

LANDO

Looks like I'm in the lead.

FADE OUT.