

IT'S A LIVING

written by

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Adapted to screenplay format for readability

Edgemar Theatre
2437 Main Street
Santa Monica, CA 90405

"The movie business has always been like the wild-cattling oil business. Everyone wants a gusher."

- Michael Eisner

"The TV business is uglier than most things. It is normally perceived as some kind of cruel and shallow money trench through the heart of the journalism industry, a long plastic hallway where thieves and pimps run free and good men die like dogs, for no good reason."

- Hunter S. Thompson

"I'd like to see a nature film where an eagle swoops down and pulls a fish out of a lake, and then maybe he's flying along, low to the ground, and the fish pulls a worm out of the ground. Now that's a documentary."

- Jack Handey

FADE IN:

OMINOUS MUSIC plays under a floating SCREENPLAY TITLE PAGE:

NALATHON

Written by Aleks Hurray & Gideon Fairbanks

CUT TO:

TITLE CARD: SPRING, 1999.

CUT TO:

EXT. PARAMOUNT STUDIOS - MAIN GATE - DAY

The familiar double archways glow in the California sun.

INT. PARAMOUNT - EXECUTIVE WAITING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Expensive furniture shines against perfectly painted walls. A ravishing assistant, BARBI, 22, leads two sweating, nervous guys into the room.

BARBI

Gentlemen, have a seat. I'm sure they won't be long.

GIDEON FAIRBANKS, 30, nebbish, pale, jumpy, uses his hands to "feel" the air. Speaks very quickly.

GIDEON

Great, this is very nice, good temperature in here. Nicely mild. Nicely "mild-ed", ha-ha. Very comfortable. Job well done.

The guys stand awkwardly. ALEKS HURRAY, 33, handsome, uncharacteristically anxious, squeezes a screenplay.

BARBI

Can I get you some water, or...

GIDEON

Just sit anywhere? Perfect. Thank you.

The guys sit in unison. Aleks works to create saliva.

ALEKS

Thank you, this is- ...thank you.

BARBI

So, okay for water...?

GIDEON

No, no, this is lovely, indeed. Comfortable, spacious, well maintained. The furniture looks new, very clean, very crisp. Have you updated lately? Remodelled?

BARBI

No... I'm pretty sure it's like this usually or whatever.

GIDEON

No? No remodelling? Just a very exclusive waiting area I suppose. Not many people just waiting around here, I'm sure. Probably for the best.

ALEKS

Very exclusive. Almost too exclusive.

GIDEON

Only way to keep it exclusive is to not have just everybody running around sitting everywhere. "The Esoteric Waiting Room" starring Gideon and Aleks.

Barbi scrunches her nose, looks at them sideways.

GIDEON (CONT'D)

And you! You! You would be the star-

ALEKS

No.

GIDEON

You can hardly say we would be the stars, it's only our first time!

BARBI

I've only been in here like once also or whatever. It's hardly used.

GIDEON

Really? Hardly used?

ALEKS

Just listen.

Gideon points at an adjoining door. Aleks is paralyzed.

GIDEON
But isn't that the big guy's office
there?

He consults a scrap of paper from his pocket.

GIDEON (CONT'D)
Yes, "meeting in Mr."-

BARBI
Mr. Shandel-

GIDEON
Yes, yes his office, I was told.

BARBI
His office has like three different
waiting rooms.

GIDEON
Really? And which is this?

BARBI
It's like the special one.

GIDEON
This is the special one?

ALEKS
No, no, no.

Gideon slaps Aleks on the back, hard.

GIDEON
Ha! He's a cut up.
(to Aleks)
Doing your thing, you character!
Too funny!
(to Barbi)
No, this is really great, we are
just laughing around. Joking around
to pass the time. It becomes
familiar, as I was saying. Old hat.
Just making jokes to pass the time.

Barbi backs toward the door they came through.

BARBI
I have to check messages, so...

Gideon "feels" the air.

GIDEON

My god, the temperature really is just perfect in here.

BARBI

I'm sure they won't be long.

GIDEON

Yes, of course, absolutely. Please, please, we'll be right here. It will be our perfect exclusive waiting habitat. "Waitus Erectus."

Aleks chokes.

GIDEON (CONT'D)

Osapien! "Waitus Erectus Osapien."

Barbi feels for the door knob behind her.

BARBI

I have to... the messages.

GIDEON

Yes, go on! Get out of here, you!

The guys hold frozen smiles. She doesn't take her eyes off them, slowly backs through the door. It clicks shut.

The smiles drop. Gideon leaps up, launches into Aleks.

GIDEON (CONT'D)

What do you mean "you don't have it"? There's no time for you not to have it!

ALEKS

Just be cool, man. Please, be cool.

GIDEON

What do you mean, what now?

ALEKS

Shit man, I can't breathe. Be cool, I'm freaking out.

GIDEON

Frightened? That's psycho-somatic. How can you be frightened? You assured me this was your forte. I wrote endlessly, I carried the weight. Did I nag? Pursue?

Aleks begins to wheeze slightly.

GIDEON (CONT'D)

What are you inducing? Is this about the draft?

ALEKS

Fuck dude! One more I said! I told you it wasn't ready.

GIDEON

That's not what you said two Thursdays ago. Two Thursdays ago you said we were fine. Full seal of approval you said.

ALEKS

I was drunk.

GIDEON

We were both drunk.

ALEKS

How does that improve? Our mutual toxicity?

GIDEON

That's all you do! Justification. We were on the same wavelength.

Gideon rips the script out of Aleks' hands.

GIDEON (CONT'D)

You know how hard I worked on this! Every word, every turn of phrase, the characters, the commas, the characters: revolutionary! The twins? You had one wife that would die, naturally at that.

ALEKS

Chill the fuck out, man! You're red-lining! Are you sound? You're freaking me out!

Gideon feverishly waves the script in the air.

GIDEON

This is sound! The writing is perfect. Of all Hollywood, this is perfect writing. But to get it made, but for the greenlight-

ALEKS

Then just leave it!

GIDEON

They won't read it! They don't read! We need the pitch! There's no time!

ALEKS

Gideon, we have to get out of here. I have to get out.

GIDEON

You don't time to get out. This is the special waiting room, we can't get out-

Barbi pokes her head into the room. The guys notice, instantly force casual, relaxed demeanors.

GIDEON (CONT'D)

Heeey you!

BARBI

They said they'll just be a minute.

GIDEON

They'll just be a minute? Yeah, no rush, no problemo. Just chillin'.

Gideon moves some air with his hands.

GIDEON (CONT'D)

Warmin'. Ha-ha. Just warmin' up.

ALEKS

(choking)

Thank a lot.

Barbi slowly retreats, the door clicks shut.

ALEKS (CONT'D)

(instantly)

You've got to cover this, I can't do this. I don't have it.

GIDEON

Why are you saying this?

Gideon flexes his hands, examines them closely.

GIDEON (CONT'D)

No, there's no time! My music! Did do all of this for my music not to be-

ALEKS

Gideon! Your music is not good. I'm flipping out. You know your music isn't good. We aren't ready. Do not fuck with me.

GIDEON

You're the Face-man! I wrote, sacrificed my music time, a thousand bars, a myriad of notes-

ALEKS

Fuck you, fuck you, fuck you! I didn't take this meeting! I take the fucking meetings!

GIDEON

Aleks! You said you had it. "I can get this made. I'll take care of the room, slam dunk." I'm like the white Satchel Paige you said. I can't believe you're folding. I did all the work-

ALEKS

I wrote the outline.

GIDEON

Eight lines on the back of a lunch receipt, that I paid for.

ALEKS

The kernel. It's my story.

GIDEON

"The pitch is my specialite"

ALEKS

I didn't take this fucking meeting!

GIDEON

Music doesn't wait, Aleks.

Barbi reluctantly enters. Gideon spins to face her.

GIDEON (CONT'D)

Howdy you!

BARBI

So, they're ready for you.

GIDEON

They are, are they? Ready for us?
Oke Doke. Just uno second, por
favor, my amiga.

ALEKS

(to Barbi)

Excuse me, sorry.

Aleks attempts to exit. Gideon grabs him, pulls him close, whispers despite Barbi standing within earshot.

GIDEON

Listen Aleks. You have to pull it
together, alright? I can do this.
Horribly, but I can do this. Just
don't be weird in there. You have
to pull it together.

ALEKS

(whispering back)

I can't do this. You have to go
alone. I can't go.

GIDEON

Listen to me Aleks. What have you
always taught me? Just fake it
until you make it. Right? It's what
you do. You're fine. Just fake it,
Aleks. That's what you do. That's
what you were made to do. Okay?

BARBI

I can hear you guys.

Gideon turns to her.

GIDEON

Sorry, sorry. Can you give us one
little second. Sorry.

Gideon lowers his voice even more.

GIDEON (CONT'D)

I believe in you, Aleks. I do. Now
believe in me. Yes, I pushed this
meeting. Because I knew you were
ready. We couldn't wait. Yes, your
brilliant story and the music words
I bring to it. Trust my structure.
Believe in my music. You've trusted
me before. Trust me now!

BARBI
 (whispering)
 I can totally still hear you.

They ignore her.

GIDEON
 Can you?

Aleks gazes into Gideon's eyes. Draws a breath.

ALEKS
 Okay. I can do this. This is what I
 do.

GIDEON
 This is who you are!

Aleks draws another, deeper breath, narrows his eyes with intensity. He watches Gideon do weak Kung-fu moves in the air.

BARBI
 They are like really waiting for
 you.

They look at Barbi in unison.

GIDEON
 Thank you for waiting.

ALEKS
 (to himself)
 "Let's roll."

Barbi leads them through the adjoining door.

INSIDE THE MAIN OFFICE

15 uptight, sharply-dressed EXECUTIVES sit in temporarily placed chairs facing a desk area. JUSTIN, 40, slick, 30 looking, jumps up to greet the guys.

JUSTIN
 Hey, hey, guys, hey!

GIDEON
 Hi, hello, hey everybody!

BARBI
 (introducing)
 Gideon Fairbanks, Aleks Hurray.

JUSTIN
Thanks Barb.

BARBI
Barbi.

She stares at Justin. He stares back. The guys stare at them.

JUSTIN
Yeah. Maybe waters?
(to executives)
Waters all around, yeah?
(to Barbi)
Yeah, waters.

Barbi rolls her eyes, exits.

JUSTIN (CONT'D)
Hey, guys, hey. First names, right?

Justin points at himself with double thumbs.

JUSTIN (CONT'D)
Justin.
(gestures to executives)
This is the gang.

Gideon recognizes an executive near the back. Points.

GIDEON
Hey you!

The executive doesn't like the pointing. Gideon regroups.

GIDEON (CONT'D)
Chilly out there. Outside today,
not in the waiting room. That's
nice. Warmed up. Amazing waiting
room, very exclusive. Is the heat
on? It's hot.

He looks to Aleks for help.

GIDEON (CONT'D)
It's warm. Nice in here.

Justin nods continually, slips back into his seat.

JUSTIN
So, what'ya got for us, guys?

ALEKS
Hello, friends.

Gideon double-takes at Aleks' "fake it 'till you make it" tone. Aleks smolders a stare. Justin keeps nodding.

GIDEON

Aleks?

Aleks just smolders, scans the executives' eyes.

GIDEON (CONT'D)

Okay, so what we have here is-

BARRY SHANDEL, 55, silver-fox handsome, pompous, clears his throat. He points "at" Gideon.

SHANDEL

How are the kids?

Gideon is confused.

GIDEON

How are the kids...? How are the kids? ... Uh, you mean for me?

ALEKS

He doesn't have kids.

GIDEON

I don't have kids. I mean I'd like to. I always thought it would be nice to "have" them, if they were older, but-

Shandel, irritated, shake-points "at" Gideon.

SHANDEL

My kids, right there.

GIDEON

Oh. Your kids...

Gideon looks to Aleks, to Justin, back to Shandel still shake-pointing. He twists around, notices a framed photograph of children sitting on the desk behind him.

GIDEON (CONT'D)

Oh. Yeah. Right there. There they are.

He picks up the photo, turns it over, pretends to examine it.

GIDEON (CONT'D)

Yes, this is a great photograph. These kids are really good. Really fine children there.

Aleks takes the frame, doesn't look, replaces it on the desk.

ALEKS

Thanks for showing us. Good kids.

Gideon gazes at the frame on the desk, lost.

GIDEON

That is a solid photograph. Really beautiful. A solid family.

ALEKS

You're proud. I would be. A proud family man. Respect.

Aleks "pounds" his heart. Gideon jumps back in.

GIDEON

Yes, then. A family man. And all of you, family or no, respected "brokers of the power." A full house. Very well presented, each of you. A who's who of nobility in here. Wonderful textiles, your suits, your ties.

He points at the executive he recognized earlier.

GIDEON (CONT'D)

Even without a jacket! How does your shirt stay so crisp? You're like a Saudi heir.

Gideon realize he's pointing again. Stops.

ALEKS

Does it really mean a thing?
Another question: are you prepared?

GIDEON

I'm sure they're prepared! "Beyond the second waiting room." That should be our pitch! Wonderfully assembled. "The Inner Sanctum" starring you, the noble ones-

ALEKS

It's your pitch. But are you locked and loaded prepared? Cuz I am.

Gideon's not sure who Aleks is talking to.

GIDEON

No, no, the very nature of preparedness. Everything here. The gates, the staff all around, the special waiting room...

A few executives shift uncomfortably in their seats.

SHANDEL

What do you have for us today?

GIDEON

What do we have for you today?

ALEKS

We have what you want. Here, now. This is what you want. Know it.

GIDEON

Yes, indeed. We have what you want that we wanted to give to you-

ALEKS

I want to give it to you.

Gideon freezes. Takes a breath.

GIDEON

And now we are. Aleks?

Aleks just smolders. Gideon licks the roof of his mouth.

GIDEON (CONT'D)

Okay! A guaranteed niche market blockbuster! I don't have to tell you about the business side of things. The book said not to "talk business." That's what you do! I am here to tell you a story-

ALEKS

We are here. And we are sure of it.

Gideon pinches his nose, "pops" his ears. A deep breath.

GIDEON

"Never-ending Story 2: The Next Chapter" meets "Sophie's Choice."

Silence.

Barbi enters with an armful of plastic water bottles, begins distributing them one by one to the executives. Uncomfortable small sounds. Justin gets the last bottle.

JUSTIN

Thanks Barb.

BARBI

Barbi.

She exits. Aleks smolders. Gideon dry-swallows.

GIDEON

We set our tale in a re-imagined antiquity right here on our very own planet earth. Like the book "Lord of the Rings Part One: The Fellowship of the Ring" but without Hobbits or trolls or living trees. Walking, talking, living trees. The trees wouldn't be dead. There are plants. Ents. No Ents, from the Rings. Normal trees: our planet earth!

ALEKS

There will not be accents.

GIDEON

No accents. Unless you wanted one! Some. Accents. I mean if we had Meryl Streep learning a language, well why not, right? Ha-ha. I really see Meryl in the "Nan" role.

ALEKS

No accents.

Gideon licks his teeth.

GIDEON

An ancient time, a simpler time. The world has been evolving for eons and as testament the continents of the planet are lush and magnificent. Humans are the sparkling rubies set in the high surpassing glory of the natural world. One continent stands above all others in magnificence and accomplishment: Natura. There we find the small town of Longington Quay and meet our hero Jakeon-

ALEKS

Very much a "Marvel" character, but without super powers.

The executive's ears prick up. Gideon whispers to Aleks.

GIDEON

What do you mean no powers? He merges with the Green Crystal in act two.

ALEKS

(full volume to the room)
Jakeon maintains his humanness yet still overcomes.

Gideon shakes his head, "clarifies" to the executives.

GIDEON

We're pretty sure on the Green Crystal transformation. You'll love it. Inexpensive CGI, big light show, very encouraging-

ALEKS

HUMAN POWER!

GIDEON

Is the air on?

Aleks begins a low, intense hum. Builds in volume.

ALEKS

MmmAHH! I reject the power of the Green Crystal. I choose to set my destiny by my own power and BY MY WILL!

He drops to a knee, bows his head.

ALEKS (CONT'D)

I am Jakeon and I am your hero.

Gideon massages his kidneys.

GIDEON

Ladies and gentlemen, Jakeon: the youngest son of Longington Quay's elder statesman, and village clown, there will also be some light comedy, Samuel Osiris. Jakeon, from his privileged position, although not without the challenge of living up to the standards of his seven older brothers, must face the impossible: choosing which of his two wives will die by the hand of the Evil Dark Lord Sarulimannanon.

Aleks effects the form/voice of a hobbled, elderly wise-man.

ALEKS

Once every thousand generations there must be a terrible price to pay. The youngest son of Natura's leadership must lose his very heart to appease the dark urges that live in all of us. I see a terrible shift upon the new day's breaking horizon: this time, in the unbroken cycle of sacrifice reaching endlessly back through millennia, the Green Crystal will be of no use.

GIDEON

(to Aleks)

But that's a page one rewrite! The Green Crystal is integral to the legend of Nalathon and its redemptive power is the basis of the first act, right up to plot point one.

Aleks doesn't break character.

ALEKS

Just because the Green Crystal saves the Baker boy and initiates the final quest of Nalathon does not mean it must power Jakeon's ascension and thrust into act two.

Gideon forgets the audience.

GIDEON

That could work if it loses power, then through sheer dedication, Jakeon is able to-

SHANDEL

What's this business with the Nan role?

GIDEON

The Nan role? Uh, well she's like the matriarch to the royal family, a "Queen Mum" to Natura, but not by blood, more by holy decree.

(MORE)

GIDEON (CONT'D)

Every couple hundred years there's a vast search throughout the land for the female child with the "Green Eyes of Nalathon." Like a Dalai Llama kind of thing, but female-

Aleks drops the character, stands straight up.

ALEKS

And sexy.

GIDEON

Yes, yes, very attractive. The child grows and you know you've got the right one when, at 40, her hair instantly turns a radiant white. That's when you know she's the one and she'll live for two hundred years at which point the cycle resets and the search is again-

ALEKS

Meryl will love it. Power, wisdom, grace, sexiness. And an accent.

Gideon double takes yet doesn't miss a beat.

GIDEON

Sure, yes, Meryl would be marvelous, really. I'm sure she would inform the role with an intelligence and authority that one can't buy. Not that she'd come cheap, I mean we're talking about "The Streep." But she could work up an accent and really bring a dimension-

ALEKS

We'll make it crazy sexy cool. The accent. Sweet Meryl perfection.

Silence.

GIDEON

The "Nan" role. It's a good one. Debra Messing would be great too.

SHANDEL

Well that's just great.

Justin leaps out of his seat, nods.

JUSTIN
Great, great. That's just great.

GIDEON
Great? Debra is great?

SHANDEL
Great idea.

JUSTIN
Great idea.

GIDEON
Oh, great idea? Okay, so you're good?

SHANDEL
We're good.

JUSTIN
We're great.

GIDEON
Well that is great, then. Good, good, great.

Aleks nods in time with Justin. Gideon jumps a little.

GIDEON (CONT'D)
Did we mention the wives are twins, sisters born of the highest-

SHANDEL
We're good.

JUSTIN
We got it.

GIDEON
Oh, okay. So we're done? You got it?

Aleks wraps an arm around Gideon.

ALEKS
We're done for now, not for long and always forever!

He raises a victory fist, pops off a couple of winks.

GIDEON
Oh! I forgot to mention the Falahan Monster. Very gruesome.

ALEKS
 (to Gideon)
 No, no Gman.
 (to executives)
 He wrote some of it, so...

Gideon blushes.

GIDEON
 I really did write most of it. The Falahan Monster eats only the royal young, sometimes even the "Green Eyes of Nalathon" where then and entire cycle will be without the grace of the divine feminine, a tragedy in what is ostensibly a matriarchy, so I'm sure you can see how the dramatic tension-

Aleks pulls Gideon toward the door.

ALEKS
 Always forever, y'all!

BACK IN THE WAITING ROOM

Aleks gently closes the door behind them. Gideon burns red.

GIDEON
 What the hell was that? What is this? Absurdity!

ALEKS
 Hey, what's the problemo? We're cool, things are groovin' sugar.

GIDEON
 You're calling me sugar? I feel faint, nauseous. Very concerned.

ALEKS
 Listen G-man, you've just got to-

GIDEON
 I don't believe I have to anything!
 I have met my mark, good sir. My music... !

ALEKS
 Can't you feel it, baby? We've got this. C'mon now. Your music is on, sugarcube.

GIDEON

How can you...? No, no. I won't be brought to believe your charms. Everything I laid down, I focussed, I compromised my playing time all in the hopes, no, with the understanding, do you see? With the firm knowledge-

ALEKS

This is all a bit dramaturge-

GIDEON

Dramaturge?

ALEKS (CONT'D)

-wouldn't you say? We've got this, sweetness.

GIDEON

I did all the work! For my music, for my true... my truth. My musical truth.

Barbi enters.

ALEKS

Uh-oh, here comes trouble.

He pops a big wink.

ALEKS (CONT'D)

What's shakin', lollipop?

BARBI

They read it.

ALEKS

They read it?

GIDEON

They read it?

BARBI

Yeah, they like loved it.

ALEKS

They read it and loved it?

Gideon double-takes.

GIDEON

How could they read it? It was 15 seconds.

Aleks gets in Barbi's personal space.

ALEKS

Oh, hey now, how could they read it
in mere seconds?

BARBI

I don't know, they skimmed it.

GIDEON

They skimmed it?

BARBI

They loved it.

ALEKS

They skimmed it and loved it?

GIDEON

They skimmed it and loved it!

Aleks spins to Gideon.

ALEKS/GIDEON

They loved it!

GIDEON

(to himself)

They love us.

(to Aleks)

What happened? What happened?

Aleks spreads his arms.

ALEKS

Come here, Gmoney.

Gideon throws himself against Aleks. Aleks holds him close.

ALEKS (CONT'D)

And now? Huh? Who gets their music
money? Huh? Who's going to play
guitars for the world?

Barbi stares at Aleks.

GIDEON

I always hoped. I had always hoped.

Gideon mists up. Aleks holds him a little closer.

ALEKS

Come here. Shh, shh. Your guitar
symphony for the world, just like I
said.

Aleks rocks Gideon gently.

BARBI

Um, are you guys okay for water?

Aleks twists a look over his shoulder.

ALEKS

Oh, hey darlin'. We'll be out of here in a couple minutes.

He pops a wink. Barbi blushes, touches her hair.

EXT. CAA TALENT AGENCY - DAY

The gleaming marble-sided building sparkles at high noon.

INT. CAA - DAY

Row after row of assistant's desks guard agent's offices. The machine churns away.

INT. VARIOUS OFFICES - MONTAGE - DAY

Various AGENTS and MANAGERS make and take phone calls.

INT. CITY NATIONAL BANK - BOARDROOM - DAY

12 SUITS, 40's, stand around glad-handing as a LOAN OFFICER signs a document on the boardroom table.

INT. DAILY VARIETY - NEWSROOM - DAY

A REPORTER, 30, types away at her desktop computer.

EXT. LE PETIT FOUR - SUNSET PLAZA - DAY

A tanned HANDSOME MAN, 40, reads a copy of Variety. The headline reads "PAR MOUNTS 'NALATHON' - PREXY GREENLIGHTS FANTASY TENTPOLE."

INT. CASTING OFFICE - DAY

A stressed out CASTING DIRECTOR, 50, handles a phone call while her ASSOCIATE, 24, knocks over a tower of headshots.

EXT. POOLSIDE - DAY

PATRICIA BROOKS, 32, a barely-aging starlet, sultry, intense, flips through a script. Bored, she tosses it on a pile of a dozen others, adjusts her bikini top.

A shirtless STUD, 28, shuffles out, hands her a portable phone. Patty's face lights up as she listens to the caller.

EXT. "A DOG'S LIFE" RED CARPET - NIGHT

Patty stands next to DANIKA OLSON, 22, a younger, fresher duplicate of her. Patty's in a gown, Danika's in jeans. A celebrity REPORTER interviews them as paparazzi flash away.

PATTY	DANIKA
Thank you! So excited to see this.	Thank you! Stoked to be here.

REPORTER
Who are you wearing?

Patty rushes to answer before Danika.

PATTY
O'rouke and O'rouke. Red label.

She does a little spin.

PATTY (CONT'D)
I feel like a princess.

DANIKA
You look amazing, Patricia. Just like a fairy tale queen.

REPORTER
Danika, who do you have on?

DANIKA
Oh, this? It's just two tops I found in a thrift shop downtown and, you know, threw 'em together.

Danika executes a care-free laugh, Patty's eyes flash sparks.

REPORTER
Super chic. So young-hollywood.

Patty displays a lavish diamond Tennis Bracelet.

PATTY
 (re: bracelet)
 Rico House!

REPORTER
 Classic. Patricia you worked with
 Jasper Connors twice, Danika you
 star in this. What should we expect
 from "A Dog's Life"?

PATTY
 Well Jasper and I are super-close.
 I think this is a new page for him-

DANIKA
 Spoiler alert! The Chihuahua
 swallowed the key!

REPORTER
 Oh no!

PATTY
 Danika!

DANIKA
 Seriously, see this movie even if
 you don't love talking dogs as much
 as Patricia does!

PATTY
 Well, I can't wait to see you
 acting opposite them!

REPORTER
 You two are hilarious. Perfect
 casting for the sisters in
 "NALATHON."

Patty swings an arm around Danika.

PATTY
 I know! We go to camera in, what is
 it Danny?

Danika pulls Patty even closer.

DANIKA
 Just under three weeks, Patty.

PATTY
 So exciting!

EXT. PARAMOUNT SOUNDSTAGE - DAY

CREW stand around trucks and gear, eating, smoking, working.

A RED LIGHT "rolls" above the STAGE DOOR.

INT. SOUNDSTAGE - CONTINUOUS

RICHARD HOLDEN, 26, handsome, shirtless, stupid, kneels on an elaborate set in front of a massive Green Screen. Stark lighting casts shadows across his ripped body.

RICHARD/JAKEON

For millions of years we have stood strong, an alliance of many nations, ideas, passions, dreams, but one people. One tribe united in the glorious truth of our being, indivisible and continuing. What peace have we mightily enjoyed with the knowledge of our being?

SLOWLY PUSHING IN. Flickering light suggests soft flames slowly building, reflecting across JAKEON'S face.

RICHARD/JAKEON (CONT'D)

We, a shining example through all the many universes, a leading edge on the expansion of all realms, lifting evermore steadily through greater heights of grace. Blessed we have been, by Creator, Nature and our own hand! We have fought the battles raging within until a truth was won and maintained in sheer momentum. Our inertia is blessed! Our being, blessed! And how?

Creeping closer, dramatic, intense. The fire increases.

RICHARD/JAKEON (CONT'D)

How have we achieved equanimity among myriad worlds constantly struggling for balance, advancing a century here, falling a century there, never lost yet sometimes succumbing, dark, light, dark again, ever yearning for that final day in the sun? How do we stand immovably in the daylight, our night an evermore distant memory! HOW DO WE CHEAT REALITY?

The fire-lighting rages across Jakeon's super-tight CLOSE UP.

RICHARD/JAKEON (CONT'D)
 BY OUR LIES! By the one lie that
 even our gods will not admit.

DAVID PETERS, 28, bearded, tense, watches Richard's performance on a monitor. He mouths along with the words.

RICHARD/JAKEON (O.S.) (CONT'D)
 We, lowly servants to that one dark
 blight upon the mighty sun, that
 sun so very blighted, the dark
 blight burning into a funeral pyre.
 The reek of death moving along
 every ray, black smoke tendrils
 reaching ever deeper into noses of
 unwashed revelers, they, happy to
 see their dying king burned for
 power, for conformation of new
 leadership spreading a sickly
 banquet of sweet things, poison
 lacing, burning, the burning kiss
 of the sun's rays, our dark,
 darkest point.

A CREW MEMBER makes a sandwich at the craft service table. He CLINKS his knife against a Cheez-Whiz jar, freezes, looks sideways. Continues to slowly spread.

RICHARD/JAKEON (O.S.) (CONT'D)
 Our terrible concession upon the
 surface of fire that gently births
 the wheat grain amid the field or
 warms the maiden's toes beneath a
 clear lake's surface. This sunlight
 is black. On my maidens.

A frustrated P.A. mimes "don't move" as a SUIT holds eye contact, slowly continues opening the soundstage door.

RICHARD/JAKEON (O.S.) (CONT'D)
 The beauty of a thousand queens
 distilled and brought forth from
 the highest of royalties and then,
 even then, too much for one mere
 mortal, twins in the womb, the
 magnificence contained just barely
 by two, yet one glorious soul, my
 soul, my wives.

HAIR/MAKE-UP GIRLS sit in a long row, flip through magazines.

RICHARD/JAKEON (O.S.) (CONT'D)
 How am I to reconcile this wretched
 fate, this dark marriage to that
 blackest spot not spoken of? This
 wholesale fearing of a worthless
 overlord, oh flimsy Sarulimannanon!

Five GRIPS play a card game atop a spool of cable.

RICHARD/JAKEON (O.S.) (CONT'D)
 What terms would sacrifice to this
 weakling, this mere underlord? I
 can not! I will not choose
 sacrifice! A wife to appease our
 million year whoring?

The BOOM OPERATOR is asleep on his feet, jerks awake.

RICHARD/JAKEON (O.S.) (CONT'D)
 I would rather shatter the Green
 Crystal and all its holy powers to
 hell, in broad sight, than live
 this betrayal, hidden and seething
 in unholy shame.

Back to the CLOSE UP. Fire dances in Jakeon's eyes.

RICHARD/JAKEON (CONT'D)
 Green Crystal, I reject your
 Dominion! Save us from Black
 Sarulimannanon? Green
 Sarulimannanon! One and the same,
 oh Black Crystal, one and the very
 same! One Force, One Lie, One
 Death!

Richard sustains intensity, waits for something. Breaks
 character slightly, glances sideways. Gazes forward again.

RICHARD/JAKEON (CONT'D)
 One force, one lie, one death!

His eyes dart to the side. He completely drops character.

RICHARD
 CUT! Cut it. Come on.

DAVID (O.S.)
 CUT!

DARYL (O.S.)
 That's a cut!

The soundstage bell RINGS, work lights come up to reveal the full film set: Panavision camera on a dolly, "video village" grip equipment everywhere, cast chairs, craft service.

The crew glide about resetting the shot. Hair and makeup girls flit around Richard.

RICHARD
 God damn bullshit! Where is the
 fucking Green Crystal?
 (to hair/makeup)
 Are you good, do you have it,
 happy? How's my hair?

HAIR ASSISTANT
 Good.

RICHARD
 No, not is it good.

The Hair Key rushes in, edges her assistant out of the way.

HAIR KEY
 It's great, Richard.

RICHARD
 It is great, right? Okay, walking
 away.

Hair steps back, Makeup continues blending some foundation.

RICHARD (CONT'D)
 Walk away!

The Makeup Key instantly backs away.

RICHARD (CONT'D)
 Hey, hey!

MAKEUP KEY
 Yep?

RICHARD
 We don't have to worry about the
 fire washing me out, do we?

She quickly finishes blending in his foundation.

MAKEUP KEY
 No way. It's perfect.

RICHARD
 Okay, okay, okay.

Richard shrugs away, crosses to the craft service table.
David comes up behind him.

DAVID

Richard...

Richard "ignores" him, grazes at the table.

RICHARD

No, no... I don't think so...

David, exasperated, maintains a saintly patience.

DAVID

Richard...

Richard spins around dramatically.

RICHARD

Goddammit man, where is the Green
Crystal? Is this a joke?

DAVID

No, no-

RICHARD

I spend all day, from afternoon sun
to dark-down yesterday, working
this goddamn monologue. I say it,
that's a lot of bullshit words too,
green crystal, green crystal,
ballet eyes, blah, blah universes,
fire in the eyes, BAM! Green
Crystal! That's the big payoff
right? Jesus Christ, man.

DARYL, 40, stiff, professional, steps in. David waves him
away.

DAVID

Richard, we're putting it in later.
In post, remember? I have to ask
you not to say cut. Please.

RICHARD

Why didn't anyone tell me?

DAVID

I've been asking you to not say cut
for-

RICHARD

About the no-show on the Green
Crystal!

(MORE)

RICHARD (CONT'D)

You think it's so easy to work without it? I'm faking then. A faker.

DAVID

We discussed it at call this morning. What time is it?

(checks watch)

It's still morning, we discussed it two hours ago.

RICHARD

When?

DAVID

At blocking.

(indicates the set)

You were standing right there, I went over it with the whole crew. "No Green Crystal, we're putting it in later." Green Screen.

RICHARD

First thing in the morning? That's when you make these huge changes? Imperative to my character. I was on the script for hours man, slaving my mind to the bone.

DAVID

Richard, there have been memos for weeks, we've had a dozen conversations about it.

RICHARD (CONT'D)

And you go and make these life changing announcements. Before anyone is even awake.

David pulls a callsheet out of his back pocket.

DAVID

Here, look. "Plains of Nalathon - Day. GREEN CRYSTAL CGI INSERT." Look at all the asterisks, there's asterisks all around it.

RICHARD

I read that! I read that last night! How do you think I knew what to rehearse? Magic, man? I am familiar with how a callsheet works, thank you so much though. Fuck, man. Really?

DAVID

Green Crystal CGI. CGI insert!

RICHARD
Yeah, crystal green inserted.

David takes a deep, cleansing breath.

DAVID
Crystal green inserted? Did you
think CGI stands for crystal green
inserted?

The entire crew is ready and waiting, watching. Richard realizes he is past the point of no return.

RICHARD
In this case, yes. Absolutely. Of
course. What else do you think I
could be talking about?

DAVID
Have you ever seen CGI on another
callsheet? Maybe on a production
that didn't have a green crystal?

RICHARD
55 episodes on network television
doesn't generate a couple of
callsheets? Oh shit, I forgot about
my last feature! There was some
callsheets up in that bitch.

David feels the crew's eyes on him.

DAVID
So what did it stand for on the
other callsheets?

RICHARD
Come on. You think I don't know?

DAVID
Oh no, I know you know. I just
wonder if I know. On the same page.

Richard uses a stage whisper.

RICHARD
Computer's graphics something.
Indicator or something. That's
funny that you don't know.

DAVID

Right. Okay. So why, when you read this callsheet, did you think that CGI didn't stand for computer generated, I mean graphics indicated, computer's graphics indicator?

RICHARD

Context, son. I don't see any other green crystal movies around.

DAVID

So for all the other films it means one thing and "crystal green insert" for this one.

RICHARD

It doesn't mean the same thing, it's many things.

Richard thinks of an example. Nothing comes up.

DAVID

Can you not call cut anymore? Don't call cut please. It's my job.

RICHARD

What am I supposed to say? Stop? That's really unprofessional.

Richard gets a big laugh from the crew.

DAGGER (O.S.)

WHY AREN'T WE SHOOTING?

DAGGER SOLZMAN, 70, pompous, heavy-set, uses a cane to make his way onto the set. His eyes gleam with unfocussed power.

DAGGER (CONT'D)

Where's the shooting and the rolling?

(to David and Richard)

Here's my babies. Where's the brilliance making? Why all the standing and talking, huh? Action, it's exciting, the movie business. Where's my making the days, Davey? I thought we had an understanding that we would not be missing any more time for any reasons, huh?

Daryl is right there, David waves him off.

DAVID

We're just resetting. I've got it flying today. I'm shooting the Jakeon monologue in one shot, we just need-

RICHARD

One shot! We aren't going in for coverage on this?

DAVID

That's why you can't cut in the middle of the scene. Camera has to float onto the green-screen five seconds after the monologue. You don't cut, I cut, I'm the cutter.

DAGGER

Action and cut Ricky, everything in between is you.

(stage whisper)

And just between us, everything outside is about you too, baby. Huh?

(back to volume)

Huh? Let's have my babies make some magic! What do we say?

RICHARD

No, no, no, no, no Green Crystal, no coverage-

DAVID

There is Green Crystal! Amazing CGI crystal green!

RICHARD

One take! How can they see my eyes? With the fire dancing across them? How will the fans see my shining eyes without the coverage, man? Are you kidding?

DAGGER

We go right away and we make some coverage, no Davey? Huh Richard? Everyone gets a little, we all get happy. We get some movie time in, we make a movie, presto, huh?

RICHARD

We do the coverage. We really get in there on my eyes. That's what we do!

David turns to Dagger.

DAVID

I scheduled this day for a oner on the monologue, then we move into the sisters in the tower and get the staircase fight by lunch. It's a tight schedule.

Daryl appears by David's side.

DARYL

It's a tight schedule.

David waves him away.

RICHARD

I've got the eyes ready to go, right now. Let's do this!

DAGGER

(to Richard)

We get the eyes.

(to David)

We get the eyes, huh? We go right away. We're happy! Okay, I'm not here. Richard, I love you, you're brilliant, I love you, you're my baby.

Dagger shuffles away backwards.

DAGGER (CONT'D)

Davey, you are my captain, I salute you, I would die for you. I'm not here. I was never here.

He's gone. David takes a big breath.

DAVID

Okay. Okay, Richard, we shoot the oner. Then we move in, we get a great shot of your eyes. Just your eyes. Tight, intense, your burning eyes. Good?

RICHARD

We'll see the fire in my eyes. My soul is made of fire, man.

DAVID

Daryl?

Daryl appears out of nowhere.

DARYL
Ready, David!

DAVID
Okay. WE SHOOT! Let's go Daryl.

DARYL
Let's lock it up! Final touches.

The stage bell RINGS, lighting shifts. Hair and Makeup flit about as Richard takes his mark. David focusses.

DAVID
Very quietly now. Okay, Richard. A thousand years your people have lived in peace and prosperity and a thousand more if only you choose to sacrifice one of your wives.
(to Daryl)
Roll it.

DARYL
Roll sound!

DAVID
You love them both, but will one be enough?

SOUND MIXER (O.S.)
Speed.

2ND ASSISTANT CAMERA
86 apple, take 17.

The A.C. claps the slate softly in front of Richard's face.

DAVID
How can you know? You can't know!
You can't know.

CAMERA OPERATOR (O.S.)
Set.

David crosses to his monitor. Richard is in the zone.

DAVID
Quietly now. And... ACTION!

PANAVISION ANGLE: Richard in the scene.

RICHARD/JAKEON

For millions of years we have stood strong, an alliance of many nations, ideas, passions, dreams, but one people. One tribe united in the glorious truth of our being, indivisible and continuing. What peace have we mightily enjoyed with the knowledge-

From the darkness, Dagger slowly inches into the shot.

DAVID (O.S.)

Cut it. Cut please.

DARYL (O.S.)

That's a cut.

The stage bell rings, lights shift.

RICHARD

Yeah, there you go. That's your cut, man. Good, good, great stuff.

DAVID

Sorry, sorry Richard. That's great stuff.

David makes a diplomatic approach to Dagger.

DAVID (CONT'D)

Sorry, Dagger? You're kind of getting in the shot there.

DAGGER

We're not on the coverage?

DAVID

We're getting the oner.

DAGGER

I though it was a long lens.

RICHARD

Are we getting the eyes?

DAGGER

I'm not here. We're getting the oner. Richard, beautiful eyes. David, I'm not here.

He shuffles back out of view.

RICHARD
Let's just get this, okay?

DAVID
Daryl, let's go.

DARYL
Lock it up, roll sound!

Bell rings, lights shift. Hair and makeup flit.

DAVID
Richard, you're the man. This one
is all you.

SOUND MIXER (O.S.)
Speed.

2ND ASSISTANT CAMERA
86 apple, take 18.

CAMERA OPERATOR (O.S.)
Set.

DAVID
And... action!

PANAVISION ANGLE

RICHARD/JAKEON
For millions of years we have stood
strong, an alliance of many
nations, ideas, passions, dreams,
but one people-

DAGGER (O.S.)
Cut! Cut it Daryl.

Daryl looks at David. David flops his hand "go ahead."

DARYL
That's a cut.

Bell, lights.

DAVID
Dagger? Why are you cutting? Why is
everyone cutting? I'm the cutter!

RICHARD
What Dags, is it me? I could feel
my eyes burning. It's not me, is
it?

DAGGER

Who does the fire? Why is there no fire?

DAVID

The fire? The fire is later. The fire isn't until "how have we cheated reality?"

RICHARD

That's why my eyes aren't burning, there was no fire. I could feel them burning, but you're not going to see it if there's no fire-

DAVID

The fire is a slow build, there can't be fire when there isn't fire.

DAGGER

I'm missing the fire. I'm not here, but I'm not seeing the fire. Can we have a little fire?

Richard uses his hands to illustrate the shot for David.

RICHARD

We should be on my eyes seeing the fire. My eyes are burning and slowly, so slowly we pull out, we see me in the fire, my soul is burning, I'm on fire and BAM! We're back on my eyes, they're shining. My diamond eyes.

DAGGER

I like it.

DAVID

We shoot the oner. The fire is on "cheating of reality." We punch in on those fire eyes.

(to Dagger)

Can I shoot? Can I shoot this?

(to Daryl)

What time is it?

(to Dagger)

Can I shoot this? Can we get this?

DAGGER

I'm not here. I'm liking a lot of fire off the top, but I'm not here.

He shuffles away.

RICHARD

I know it's not me. I know I'm
bringing it.

He shakes his head, bulges his eyes a bit.

RICHARD (CONT'D)

Check these eyes out.

DAVID

Perfect. Honestly Richard, you are
perfect. I just want to get your
eyes, they're amazing. They're
burning right now. Your eyes are
burning, man. They look like two
burning diamonds.

RICHARD

Fire-diamonds, son.

DAVID

Okay, Daryl.

Makeup and Hair.

DARYL

Lock it up, roll sound.

Bell, lights.

DAVID

Okay, quiet now, let's go again,
quietly now.

SOUND MIXER (O.S.)

Speed.

2ND ASSISTANT CAMERA (O.S.)

86 apple, take 19.

DAVID

Quietly now. There they are, those
shining diamonds.

RICHARD

(intense)
They're burning me.

DAVID

Use it!

CAMERA OPERATOR (O.S.)
 Didn't get it. Tilt it down.

The A.C. adjusts the slate.

RICHARD
 (in pain)
 Ahh, come on, fuck.

CAMERA OPERATOR
 Right there. Hit it.

2ND ASSISTANT CAMERA
 Second sticks.

DAVID
 Okay, Richard...

CAMERA OPERATOR (O.S.)
 Set.

DAVID
 ACTION!

PANAVISION ANGLE

RICHARD/JAKEON
 For millions of years-

DANIKA (O.S.)
 CUT!

Richard paws at his eyes as if they physically burn.

RICHARD
 Ahhh, my eyes!

DAVID
 No, no, no, no, no, no, no, no...

Danika enters dressed in an ornate gown. She is crying.

DANIKA
 David! David!

DAVID
 Daryl!

DARYL
 That's a cut.

Bell, lights.

DAVID

Danika! What? Please! What, Danika, what? Why are you cutting? People don't cut! I am the cutter. I'm the cutter, I'm the cutter.

Danika holds out script pages.

DANIKA

Have you seen this? Have you seen what's been done to me? Look at me, I'm a mess. How can I shoot the tower scene like this? I can't shoot.

DAVID

What's happened? Danika?

DANIKA

It's that new writer! Mr. Script Doctor has ruined my scene.

She sucks it up, flirts with Richard as he passes.

DANIKA (CONT'D)

Hi Richard.

Richard juts his chin at her, sulks.

DAVID

New writer?

Dagger limps in.

DANIKA

Oh my god, Mr. Solzman. Thank goodness you're here.

She waves the pages.

DANIKA (CONT'D)

Have you seen this?

DAGGER

Now, now my dear.

DAVID

(to Dagger)

New writer? Who's this new writer? What is she talking about?

RICHARD

You know, I'm going to rest my eyes. They're really burning.

He starts to sulk away.

DAGGER

Ricky, baby, where are you going?
Let's shoot you, you're on fire.
Your eyes are magnificent right
now.

DAVID

Dagger, what writer? Richard, take
five.

DAGGER

Davey, let's make our day, huh? We
shoot, we're making days, there's
the performing on fire, huh? Ricky
baby. Let's stay on track. Let's
keep a hustle, yes?

DAVID

What writer, Dagger? How can I do
this? How can I keep this together
if I don't know what's happening?
You're making changes? What's
happening now?

RICHARD

Hey, look, am I on? I'm peaking. My
eyes aren't going to last forever.

DANIKA

My lines, Mr. Solzman. What are we
doing with these lines? You can't
make me small, you know that.

Daryl steps up right behind David.

DAVID

Will somebody get Richard on a ten?
Danika, I am not changing anything.
Let me just talk to Dagger-

DAGGER

There are some changes.

Daryl ushers Richard away.

DANIKA

My changes! I don't want to have my
changes!

DAVID

What are the changes? Dagger, what
are the fucking changes?

DANIKA

Oh my god, David!

DAGGER

My boy! Let me tell you some things. One thing is that we are here to do my job. I'm the big boss and it's my joint so let me tell you the things. The shooting, the lighting, the blocking and the film being exposed. Capish? Let's set it up, huh?

David snaps.

DAVID

Okay! Fair enough! Let's get this going! Daryl, let's set it up!

Daryl is right there. Dagger waves him away.

DAVID (CONT'D)

We're good! We're ready to go! All we need, all we need to get is that little tiny monologue, wait five seconds and float right up onto the green-screen. That's all! That's it! Then we can take a look at the changes and have a little look-see. Or fuck it! We don't need to see the changes, we'll just get 'em in there! So ready? Let's shoot! Dagger, don't worry about Richard, he's good to go, right Richard? No, no he's good to go, he's got his lines down and we finally got through it once there, so I'm sure he's ready and fired up-

DAGGER

Now, David-

DAVID

No, no. He's ready, certainly he's ready, ready to go!

Richard appears out of nowhere.

RICHARD

Let's go! Let's knock this shit out, right here yo!

DANIKA

BUT THE CHANGES! I am not doing another single thing, that's it!

RICHARD

O-ly shit. Danika...

DANIKA

I am not joking around. I have a contract and obviously you must read it, for you know little of my rights. I am not kidding, for sure.

DAGGER

Now, what's this about?

DANIKA

I am not going to call anyone a b-i-t-c-h in front of their face but there is a theft of lines and I am not kidding anymore. I have 17 speeches and it is in my contract.

RICHARD

You know, it's cool. I have not felt respected by this process, but I am willing to take a knee. I'm mannin' up here. I'm showing up. I'm a part of the dance. Y'all take care of what you have to. I'm gonna hit my trailer and Imma stay ready.

Richard deliberately looks into each of their eyes, exits.

DAVID

You were saying, Dagger? The shooting? Shall we commence?

DAGGER

Alright, that's it. Daryl, put it on sticks. Get the monologue.

Daryl appears out of nowhere, looks at David.

DAVID

(to Daryl)

He's literally running to his bong, isn't he?

Daryl speaks into his radio.

DARYL

Lise, is Eagle 4-20?

LISA
 (over radio)
 Uh, he's just..
 (to Richard)
 Richard, can we get you back to-

RICHARD
 (out of breath, over radio)
 I just have to-

LISA (over radio)	RICHARD (CONT'D) (over radio)
We just have to get you back on set real quick, just for a sec-	Yeah, one sec, I just have to get into my trailer real quick...

Daryl avoids Dagger's glare. David checks his watch.

LISA
 (over radio)
 Uh, Daryl? 10-4. Eagle is 4-20.

DAVID
 Uh Dagger, you might need to wait a
few minutes there.

DANIKA
 I will not be heard! I will not not
be heard!

DAGGER
 Alright! Daryl, put everyone on a
half hour, right now.

Daryl backs away cautiously, speaks into his radio softly.

DARYL
 That's lunch. Lunch, lunch, lunch.

The Crew instantly drop what they're doing. Mass exodus.

DAGGER
 Danika, my dear, I of course value
your contribution immensely. Let's
sit down and discuss it?
 (sternly)
 David. Let's have a chat as well.

Dagger and Danika sit, David remains standing.

DAGGER (CONT'D)
 Here it is. I have hired a new
writer. Now, this monologue is not
bad. We'll get it.
 (MORE)

DAGGER (CONT'D)
 Tomorrow new pages for everybody,
 and that's how it will be.

DANIKA
 Good pages for me? And new lines?

DAGGER
 The very best ones.

DANIKA
 (in a baby voice)
 The best little new ones?

DAGGER
 The very same.

DANIKA
 The best new ones.

David stares into the middle-distance, mumbles, nods.

DAVID
 New pages. New pages? New pages.
 Changes. Pages-changes...

PATTY (O.S.)
 Why don't you just let him know
 anyway, Dags?

Patty leans seductively against a ladder, vamps toward them.

PATTY (CONT'D)
 It's a comedy now, David. PG,
 massive zany ad campaign. A kid
 friendly yuk-fest.

DAVID
 What?

Dagger nervously gets to his feet.

DAGGER
 Not for kids, not for the kids. 18-
 34, prime territory. The best,
 really.

DAVID
 What? A comedy? For the best?

DANIKA
 I will be the funny one!

PATTY
 Yes, indeed.

Dagger tries to comfort David.

DAGGER

The market. It's the best one, with the 18-34. Prime territory.

DAVID

Dagger, a comedy? Are you kidding? Are you serious? You can't be serious.

DAGGER

These are top-level changes. I don't do a thing. The writer is the best in the business, we don't have to reshoot a thing-

David snaps a double-take.

DAVID

We'll use what I've already shot in the comedy? This is what we'll do?

He paces in a little circle, muttering. Looks to Patty.

DAVID (CONT'D)

Patty. Why didn't you tell me...?

PATTY

Why ask me for clarification? You're the director. You're the one making the big choices.

Richard strolls in, super baked.

RICHARD

Hey yo, everyone's here! Dave-o? You guys ready to shoot this thing? What's the deal?

He looks at David, then to Dagger. No response.

RICHARD (CONT'D)

Dags? Am I still on a fiver?

DAVID

Don't worry about me. You don't have to ask me anything.

RICHARD

I just asked you to shoot this. I just asked you, man.

Patty sheds some heat.

PATTY
Hey Richard.

Danika won't be outdone.

DANIKA
Richard! Hi.

DAGGER
Perhaps Richard is right. Perhaps
we could go on to the shooting once
again.

RICHARD
Let's make the call!

DANIKA
What about our meeting, though? I
think now is the most appropriated
time to get to the basics of this.
And everybody's here-

David moves off.

DAVID
I'm done.

RICHARD
Done what?

DAGGER
DAVID NO!

David stops short.

DAGGER (CONT'D)
We just have to re-jigger a little
of our shebang. Yes, there is shake-
ups, yes we have the catching up,
but this is still our magical
world! Your world!

David turns to face him.

DAVID
Dagger, how did this get so out of
hand? Why are we not at an office
table right now?

David turns to Patty.

DAVID (CONT'D)
P? What happened?

RICHARD

What's goin' on peeps? I'm in the loop here, don't let me down.

PATTY

I'm taking a walk.

She throws a look to Richard. He notices.

DAVID

What is this, Patty? What is going on, please?

Patty abruptly spins to glare at David, holds back tears.

PATTY

Why don't you tell me?

She spins away, exits.

DANIKA

Why don't you go with her Richard? I'm sure you want to.

DAVID

What?

DAGGER

Now, my dear?

RICHARD

Huh?

Danika struggles to hold back tears of her own.

RICHARD (CONT'D)

Alrighty... I'll just tell Daryl I'm going on lunch then.

Daryl appears out of nowhere.

DARYL

Got it.

RICHARD

Cool...

Richard looks everyone over as he exits slowly.

DAVID

Can we-

DANIKA

I'm taking a break.

DAGGER

What break?

DAVID
Can we please discuss my life?

DANIKA
Oh my god! Your life? Whatever
David! I'm just going to cool off.

DAGGER
What's the matter? DD?

Dagger struggles to follow, but she's gone.

DAVID
Can we discuss-

Dagger waves Daryl away.

DAGGER
It's open and shut. The foreign
money doesn't think it's working.
The studio has a genius script
doctor and he's seen the rushes and
he's going to make it into a comedy
and everybody loves it, the studio
and the foreign money love it. You
get the money and we shoot and
we're fine.

David's heart breaks.

DAVID
(quietly)
Dagger. It's not a comedy. I didn't
shoot a comedy.

DAGGER
Nobody's laughing, son. Nobody's
laughing.

Dagger gazes off, somber. David's head hangs. Silence.

RICHARD (O.S.)
Holy Fucking Shit!

Richard bursts in from nowhere.

RICHARD (CONT'D)
I just heard the news! Is it true?

DAVID
Did one of the girls tell you it's
a comedy now?

RICHARD

Oh my fucking god! That is so awesome! So I just start playing it for real now, right? Raising the stakes, playing it life or death, right? Fuck yeah! It's going to be brilliant.

DAGGER

There we go, up on our feet! Okay! All together now, that's the spirit, my boy.

Dagger leads Richard away, looks back at David.

DAGGER (CONT'D)

David...

David gazes over the quiet set, forlorn. He turns to exit, Daryl startles him out of nowhere.

DAVID

Jesus, Daryl.

DARYL

Should we stay on lunch?

DAVID

Yeah? Yes. Sure.

DARYL

Copy that.

Daryl moves to leave, David catches his shoulder.

DAVID

Daryl. Did you know it was going to be a comedy.

DARYL

Yeah.

DAVID

Since when?

DARYL

Couple weeks? Thought everyone...

DAVID

Everyone knew?

DARYL

(yes)
No. No.

David starts rocking a little. Daryl backs away. Danika carefully approaches as David slumps into his chair.

DANIKA
Hey you... Watcha doin'?

David looks up, just stares.

DANIKA (CONT'D)
I'm sorry if I was bossy before. Oh my god, I was just so riled up, you know?

She pulls up a cast chair, sits closely.

DANIKA (CONT'D)
You're thinking about the news not getting to you. Or about my lines? What do you think of my work on this project?

DAVID
(broken voice)
Your work is very good.

DANIKA
Oh my god David, thank you!

She takes his hands, gently holds them.

DANIKA (CONT'D)
He loves you, you know? Like a son. That's why you didn't know. He was protecting you.

David raises his head to look into her eyes.

PATTY (O.S.)
Exactly.

Patty stands there, out of nowhere as usual.

PATTY (CONT'D)
We all were. But I guess you don't need me to tell you that. You've got your very own little support system there, so...

David realizes Danika is holding his hands, pulls away.

DAVID

What? Is that what this is?
Everybody was protecting me, and
then you thought, I what? With
Danika?

Patty holds back tears.

DAVID (CONT'D)

Oh no. Not me, Patty, no thank you!

Patty's tears break through.

PATTY

And now it's a comedy!

David take her in his arms.

DAVID

It's okay! I didn't know you were
protecting me, and Dagger-

PATTY

Yes! Oh, David.

Patty smirks at Danika who storms off. David is oblivious.

PATTY (CONT'D)

And you never?

DAVID

Oh, darling. Of course not! Only
with you.

PATTY

Only with you, my love. And now,
what will you do?

The wind is back in his sails.

DAVID

I do nothing. I continue to shoot
my film as I know it to be.

PATTY

But the comedy. How can it work?

DAVID

My darling. The audience will
decide. Only then.

PATTY

Will it still be the film you
promised me?

DAVID

And more.

PATTY

For meeeee.

Dagger enters. Danika hangs from his arm, glares at Patty.

DAGGER

Hear, hear now. Did Daryl come through?

Daryl appears out of nowhere.

DARYL

We're still on lunch.

Dagger waves Daryl away.

DAGGER

Alright then. David? Right on track, not a problem at all, yes? No worries as they say.

David drops Patty's hand, moves to Dagger. Danika smirks.

DAVID

Thank you for protecting me, Dagger. For caring.

Dagger pulls away from Danika. Patty smirks.

DAGGER

Right back on track then?

DAVID

I'm your "good man". You can count on me.

DAGGER

Well then.

Dagger wraps an arm around David.

DAGGER (CONT'D)

On to the magical dreams crazy business, yes! All's well that ends well, no?

DAVID

Yes! Daryl?

DAGGER

Yes, indeed! Daryl?

DARYL
Have you seen David?

RICHARD
Uh, no? What's the deal, son? We
still on lunch?

DARYL
Yeah, so far, yeah. Gotta find the
bosses.

Daryl starts off.

RICHARD
Yo, you seen one of the girls?

DARYL
Patty or Danika?

Richard's fire-diamonds gleam.

RICHARD
I dunno, either one.

EXT. HOLLYWOOD SIGN - TIME LAPSE - DAY INTO NIGHT

A new day's sun dawns, crosses the sky; shadows shift across
the sign's letters. As night descends the lights of Los
Angeles sparkle to life, stretch on to forever.

INT. VIP ROOM - BEVERLY HILLS FOUR SEASONS HOTEL - NIGHT

The NALATHON wrap party in full swing. Danika and Patty drape
from Dagger as he pours champagne onto a tower of glasses.

DAGGER
More champagne! For all my
beautiful babies! For the glory of
NALATHON.

David lurches toward them, extremely drunk.

DAVID
Yes! More champagne or tequila or
vodka or whiskey or champagne for
everybody! All the winners of the
world. Everybody here is a winner!
Drink it!

PATTY
Oh, David.

DANIKA
David, you.

DAGGER
 Fair enough, my boy, fair enough.
 We are winners!

Dagger raises a toast to the room.

DAGGER (CONT'D)
 To all of us here, in our special
 room, our special place! To the
 film of the decade!

David goes over the top, screams to the room, frat-boy style.

DAVID
 To the champion winners of the
 world!

Justin and Shandel step up.

JUSTIN
 Hey, hey guys. Dagger, Patty,
 Danika.
 (To David)
 Hi.
 (double thumbs)
 Justin.

DAGGER
 Shandy!

Shandel steps in, offers his hand to David.

MR. SHANDEL
 Barry Shandel.

David shakes his hand like a tough guy.

DAVID
 David fucking Peters, world
 champion. How do you do?

Dagger crosses to Shandel. David tries to hug Patty, fails.

DAGGER
 Shandy, my good man. Barry Barry
 Shandel. We're going to make a
 fortune on this!

AT A TABLE

Richard leans into MYERS FITZPATRICK, 42, slightly over-
 weight, balding, morose. Myers eyeballs the room, searching.

RICHARD

So, when you came onto this, it was like, what, instant? Did you have to audition? Or what do you call it?

MYERS

Pitch. I made a pitch.

RICHARD

But you're like the best, right? You don't have to audition, right? Like I just get offers, I never audition.

MYERS

Yes, I suppose. I still need to give them my take on the material, the project.

RICHARD

Like what you envisualize, right? So kick ass. And you never have to write anything from scratch?

MYERS

I did, a lot. I had to write a lot from scratch. To get here.

RICHARD

Yeah, yeah. But now you only have to do rewrites, right?

Myers looks at him for the first time, sad. Sighs.

MYERS

Yeah.

JOE (O.S.)

Christ Blimey. I'll never, never care!

JOE and ROSE CARMICHAEL, 36, slick, expensive, cross-by. Joe is Australian, Rose is bored.

ROSE

Just listen to yourself. Once. For once.

Myers' eyes light up as he watches Joe take Rose in his arms.

JOE

Listen to this, Possum.

Joe whispers in Rose's ear, squeezes her ass. Rose giggles.

RICHARD
 (still leaning eagerly)
 So how many hours a day to you
 write? Like when do you do it?

Joe takes Rose's hand, pulls her away. Myers stands to follow. Aleks intercepts, slaps Myers on the shoulder.

ALEKS
 Fitz! How are you buddy?
 (double thumbs)
 Aleks.
 (to Richard)
 What's up, Holden?

Barbi, dressed to the nines, hangs from Aleks' arm.

ALEKS (CONT'D)
 You guys know my lady, right?
 "Barbi". Don't laugh, it's stupid I
 know, but it's true. Right babe?

Barbi laughs.

BARBI
 Right.

ALEKS
 Anyway, I gotta get a VIP drink.

He leaves Barbi standing there. Richard is all over her.

RICHARD
 Why haven't I seen you before?

Myers take his opportunity, bolts off after Joe and Rose.

BARBI
 (with attitude)
 Um, I don't know. Maybe because I
 haven't been in front of your face?

Gideon, dressed like a cheesy Rockstar, pulls up.

GIDEON
 Barbi! Come on! You guys left me
 out there! That outside room is too
 big, all the crew and the grips.
 The guy at the door almost didn't
 let me in here. I had to shout out
 to Justin like a million times.

Gideon notices Richard. Barbi uses the chance to flee.

GIDEON (CONT'D)
Richard Holden!

RICHARD
Yeah, man. I don't have a pen,
so...

GIDEON
No, no. Gideon Fairbanks. I wrote
this, so... So hey, you jam, right?
I totally have my music thing on,
so... We should jam! I heard you
jam on the axe.

ANOTHER TABLE

David sits, too drunk to stand, head rolling a little. Patty
sits impatiently next to him

DAVID
I can't hate you.

PATTY
Is that all you wanted to say?
We're over, David.

DAVID
No, I get it. Everybody wins.
Everybody gets the love they need.

He tries to look at Patty, needs to look sideways to
compensate for the double vision.

DAVID (CONT'D)
I want you to be happy with Dagger.
He's good for you. And I'll be too
busy with "Factions" anyway, so...

Patty double-takes, super interested.

PATTY
You're doing "Factions"?

David's head drops. Dagger limps in.

DAGGER
Hear, hear, now. Patricia?

Patty ignores Dagger, tries to find David's eyes.

PATTY
David. Who's playing the lead?

DAGGER
Patricia, come along now.

Shandel enters, followed by Danika and Justin. Danika laughs, tugs on Justin's lapel. Dagger notices.

JUSTIN
Hey, hey guys.

David snaps awake. Shandel offers his hand.

SHANDEL
Barry Shandel.

David shakes, can't really see.

DAVID
Did I just black out? I think I'm
blacking out.

David takes a drink with his free hand.

AT THE BAR

Aleks and Barbi make out. Myers pounds a scotch, watches them. Aleks notices, stops kissing her.

ALEKS
Smoking hot, right?

MYERS
Uh. Yes. Yes, totally.

Aleks winks and goes back at it. Myers turns to move away, Richard is there out of nowhere.

RICHARD
So I have a script. Well that I
want to write. Like do a polish on
if someone just bangs it out.

Myers resigns himself to the conversation.

MYERS
Well, sure, you can pay someone.
Writers are easy to pay for. What's
the pitch?

RICHARD
It's like a journey about an
action.

Myers waits for more. Nothing.

MYERS

What's the story?

RICHARD

Okay. This guy is so fucking bad ass, like a full-on killer but he hates to kill, right? So he's running from roof top to roof top and this helicopter is chasing him. But get this. There's like a SWAT team on the helicopter and they're all pointing machine guns with laser sights at him. So this guy has all these fucking lasers dancing on him. Like just passing across his head, not long enough to get the shot off, but like a fucking laser ballet.

Richard smiles. Chews his gum really hard. Myers blinks.

MYERS

Okay, but what's it about?

RICHARD

Whadya mean? The guy!

MYERS

Sure, but that's more something happening. What's the story about?

Richard is stumped, shakes his head.

MYERS (CONT'D)

What's the logline?

RICHARD

Which line?

Myers signals the bartender for another triple.

MYERS

Once sentence that tells me what the story is about.

RICHARD

Fuck yeah, right! Okay, check it: "When you can't run... hide."

MYERS

Yeah. That's more of a tagline.

RICHARD

Holy shit, Professor detective.
Whatevs.

Joe and Rose pass by. Myers instantly peels off, follows them. Richard is left watching Barbi make out with Aleks.

RICHARD (CONT'D)

Fuck that noise, son. Where my
ladies at?

Richard turns to move away, Gideon is there out of nowhere.

GIDEON

I'm not really playing live
anywhere, I've just been too
incredibly busy in the studio.
Working on my guitar symphony.
"Symphony for 24 guitars in A
Major." I was originally going to
go with 12 twelve-strings, but
that's really hard on the fingers.
Always good to find a little time
to jam, though. Get out of the
"office."

Justin and Shandel step up.

JUSTIN

What's up, Ricky?
(to Gideon, double thumbs)
Justin.

GIDEON

I know. It's Gideon. You just let
me in.

Shandel offers Gideon his hand.

SHANDEL

Barry Shandel.

Aleks overhears, breaks in. Richard flees.

ALEKS

Jbean and Count Shandella!

He hits Justin with a bro-shake. Re-adjusts for Shandel, a formal shake.

ALEKS (CONT'D)

Sir. How's biz on your side of the
lot?

Gideon switches over to stand next to Barbi. She cringes.

MR. SHANDEL

Fine, fine. Nicely done on bringing whosamacallit in on the rewrites. Nice development.

ALEKS

Oh, hey I don't know, the foreign money had a lot to say on that.

JUSTIN

Nicely done on that. Nicely done.

ALEKS

Sure, sure. I mean, you know when it's not working. You take a look, see a little opening there, go for the yuk - BAM.

SHANDEL

It's what you do.

GIDEON

(to Barbi)
Drink? Or Anything?

Barbi scrunches her nose.

ALEKS

It's what I do.

GIDEON

(to Barbi)
I know you're with, you know- I just ask as-

JUSTIN

It's what you do!

Barbi flees. Aleks and Justin High five. Gideon looks around.

NEAR THE VIP ENTRANCE

Myers stand awkwardly grouped with Joe and Rose. They sniff a lot and don't notice him.

ROSE

I just want to dance!

JOE

Just stay in here. All the grips and the PA's!

(MORE)

JOE (CONT'D)

Christ and a Foster's, there's day-players out there.

MYERS

Hello!

They are completely unaware of Myers.

ROSE

Not tonight, okay? I want to have fun for once.

JOE

We are having fun! Why don't you want to be together?

ROSE

I do want to be together! I want to dance!

JOE

Let's just talk a bit. Let's connect. Let's just have a sit and talk.

ROSE

Yeah, no, we don't have to go dance. Let's just stay right right here. Big Joe wants to say things!

Justin and Shandel roll over. No one notices Myers.

JUSTIN

(thumbs)

Hey, guys! Justin

Shandel extends his hand to Rose.

SHANDEL

Barry Shandel.

ROSE

Barry, everyone in this room knows who you are.

(to Justin)

Who are you? Never mind. I'm dancing. I'm dancing!

She takes off into the other room. Joe sniffs. Extends his hand to Shandel.

JOE

Joseph Carmichael.

Joe shifts to Justin, gives himself double thumbs.

JOE (CONT'D)

Joe.

Myers just stands there, a foot away, invisible.

JOE (CONT'D)

Anyway. Christ Blimey. Have to go
mingle with the crew now! Tough
shot, that one.

Justin and Shandel share a knowing chuckle as Joe exits. They
move on. Myers glares at his dirty white sneakers.

AT DAVID'S TABLE

Aleks pitches David, who keeps nodding off and jolting awake.
Aleks, encouraged, nods as well.

ALEKS

Yeah, yeah. I know, right? Shit
hot. It'll be like "Ultra-
Factions." Am I right? Yeah!

Patty strokes David's limp arm. Dagger stands over them.

PATTY

It sounds so good, David. You're
going to do such a great job.

DAGGER

Patricia. We should be ready to go
soon. DD? Danika? We should go.

Danika stares at Richard as he flexes for Barbi.

RICHARD

You can't be serious. I mean, what?
What?

BARBI

You're like prettier than me.

RICHARD

Yeah, I know. I'm like a skin-jaw
Dicaprio. I'm like a good looking
Leo.

Gideon watches Richard with admiration. Myers wanders over.

GIDEON

(to Myers)

Pretty rockin' party, right?

(MORE)

GIDEON (CONT'D)

How fucking cool is Richard though?
Do you call him Ricky? Do his
friends call him Ricky?

MYERS

I don't know. I don't know.

Justin and Shandel roll up. Justin looks at Myers.

JUSTIN

(thumbs)
Hey, hey. Justin.

Shandel offers his hand to Myers.

SHANDEL

Barry Shandel.

Myers shakes, positively beams with joy.

MYERS

Myers. Myers Fitzpatrick. I wrote
this.

Gideon double takes.

GIDEON

You? Wrote this?

MYERS

Yes, yes, sure. Mostly. Sure.

GIDEON

(to Justin and Shandel)
No, you remember me. Remember me?

David suddenly stands bolt upright, absolutely blackout
drunk. Commences introducing himself to anybody he can.

DAVID

(shaking hands, hugging,
back slapping)
David. David Peters. I direct. I'm
a filmmaker. David Peters. David.
David. Davey. Davey Peters. I'm a
goddamn fucking champion filmmaker
director. I just directed a comedy
that's going to make a billion
dollars.

David proceeds to fall flat on his face. Everyone stares at
him lying there, sip their drinks in unison.

EXT. LOS ANGELES CITY STREETS - MONTAGE - DAY

Hollywood, city of angels, entertainment capital of the world... absolutely buried in NALATHON marketing.

Billboards, sides of buildings, bus stops, posters... an airplane writes NTHON across the clear blue sky.

CUT TO:

TITLE CARD: FALL, 2001.

CUT TO:

INT. VAN NUYS MOVIE THEATRE - NIGHT

Dramatic music thrums away as Rose and Joe grimace at the screen. Myers, the only other audience member, sits two rows behind. He shoots furtive glances between them and NALATHON.

RICHARD/JAKEON (O.S.)

And now, forever certain, eternally
decided, ultimate, final, restfully
complete, at last. I AM NALATHON!

JOE

ROSE

No!

Oh god!

Straining music. Light shifts as end credits roll. Myers watches Joe avoid Rose's eye contact. Finally:

ROSE (CONT'D)

What did you think?

Joe squints at a distant wall.

ROSE (CONT'D)

What. Do you. Think?

He snaps a look toward her.

JOE

There's only two of us in this
theatre is what I think!

ROSE

Don't give me tone. I just asked
you what you thought.

JOE

I'm with the tone, now am I?

ROSE
I'm not going to do this.

JOE
It should bloody well be full up to
the gills in here!

Joe buries his face in his hands.

JOE (CONT'D)
It's not going to happen.

ROSE
You don't think it's going to
happen?

Joe can't look her in the eye. Rose is suddenly concerned.

JOE
Eight million Friday, nine for the
weekend. Against a hundred seventy
five?

ROSE
There's still the ten.

JOE
I'm going to have to rep TV actors.

ROSE
Hey you! Don't say that! Don't you
say that!

JOE
I don't know. I just... Couldn't
you have done the "net" thing?

ROSE
Wait. What?

JOE
Maybe if you used the internet-

ROSE
You represent Richard Holden! You
packaged it!

JOE
Why couldn't you sell it?

ROSE
You are just amazing. I'm not going
to do this, you fuck.

ROSE
He doesn't look like an actor.

JOE
He could be character. In classes.

Rose takes another peek.

ROSE
He probably doesn't think he's character. God, how old is he? He probably thinks he has a shot.

JOE
I'll bet he's waiting for me.

ROSE
Knows who you are. Talk to him.

JOE
What?

ROSE
Talk to him. Disarm him.

JOE
Why? Let's just go-

ROSE
Just talk to him!

Joe spins around, shouts.

JOE
What did you think there, mate?
(to Rose)
Happy?

Rose slinks out of her seat. Joe follows.

MYERS
I thought it was interesting.

Joe bristles, stops up, indicates the screen.

JOE
What, NALATHON?

MYERS
Sure. The whole experience, really.
Just being here.

Rose makes to leave. Joe stands. Rose stops.

JOE

Listen here, mate. I have the uncomfortable notion you're having a laugh. Is there some kind of problem?

MYERS

No, no, of course not. I'm just dazed by what I witnessed.

ROSE

What you just-

JOE

What you witnessed?

MYERS

NALATHON! Really got under my skin.

ROSE

You liked that?

JOE

It's ass backwards.

MYERS

I don't know. I think the critics really have something there. Did you read the reviews?

ROSE

The reviews!

JOE

There's only three of us in the place, mate.

DANIEL SANDERS, 33, handsome, insecure, pokes in, unseen by the others. He instantly retreats, commences eavesdropping.

MYERS

The critics loved it! Mostly. Does it really matter what the audience thinks now? The reviews said it.

ROSE

The reviews!

MYERS

"Subversive", "Bold", "Deftly manufactured insinuations abound."

ROSE

Insinuations abound!

MYERS

They love it, mostly.

JOE

Who are you mate? You memorize reviews for a living?

MYERS
No, no. I love the cinema-

ROSE
Cinema!

MYERS
I love to see good films, good work. The critics got me, so I'm here.

ROSE
It's a joke!

MYERS
Well, there may be something uneven in the execution, but you really have to say the bones are there.

ROSE
The bones are there?

MYERS
The writing is there. It's undeniable. To take the high concept fantasy, weave the satiric element, nurture the essential comedy.

JOE
It's a laugh alright.

ROSE
It's laughable!

MYERS
No, no. A detached, layered reveal of the essential humor. The critics all said it, mostly. "A fantastic view of the essential human comedy."

ROSE
(to Joe)
He wants in, I can smell it.
(to Myers)
You want to talk reviews? Do you even know what marketing is?

Rose glares. Joe tries to pull her toward the exit.

JOE
Now, Rose. Let's not-

She doesn't budge, locked onto Myers now.

ROSE
 Seriously dude. Critics don't just say. Reviews don't just happen, Okay? I'm very good at what I do.

MYERS
 Do...? I don't know that PR has much effect on critical reviews-

JOE
 Oh, christ.

ROSE
 PR? I knew it. Oh, come on, dude. You know who we are.

MYERS
 I don't know that I-

ROSE
 I can just smell it. Actor?

MYERS
 Oh, no. Ha! No, no acting for me. I would never have a shot.

JOE
 Have you thought about going character?

ROSE
 No. You know us. I've seen you. Reporter?

Myers squirms.

MYERS
 Do I? Maybe...? Oh! Sure, okay. Yes, okay, nice to meet you. The Carmichaels, right?

ROSE
 I knew it. Two-bit Valley reporter.

Dan peeks in. Mouths "Carmichaels?"

ROSE (CONT'D)
 You want your headline? The studio paid for those reviews. I basically wrote them.

JOE
 Jesus, Rose.

MYERS

What do you...? You wrote?

JOE

Her staff. Metaphorically.
Influence and all. Off the record
though, mate.

Myers is shell-shocked.

MYERS

You wrote... your influence? The
critics didn't all love it? Mostly?

ROSE

Joseph, it's time to leave.

(back to Myers)

I hope you enjoyed your little
voyeur show there, dude.

Rose moves to exit, Joe follows. Dan ducks out of sight.

MYERS

WAIT! JUST WAIT!

They stop, stare back at his outburst. Dan peeks back in.

MYERS (CONT'D)

How could you...? The reviews.

JOE

Come on now, mate. Let's not have a
scene.

MYERS

Do you know what this means? Deftly
manufactured... Do you have any
idea? I came here to see you two.

ROSE

Knew it. Just knew it.

MYERS

I TOLD EVERYBODY! For the first
time in my life. I thought this was
it. All the critics, mostly.

Myers holds back tears, gazes at Joe.

MYERS (CONT'D)

I told my mom I signed with your
agency.

Rose softens. Joe, disgusted, tries to push her out.

JOE
Okay, Possum, go, go.

ROSE
You told your mom?

MYERS
I believed. In both of you. That's why I came. New agent, new publicist. The Carmichaels and Myers Fitzpatrick. Daily Planet, page one.

ROSE
Myers Fitzpatrick? The writer?

JOE
More of a script doctor, though.

She rushes over to him, Joe reluctantly follows.

ROSE
(joking)
Why aren't you wearing a ballcap?

MYERS
I thought the reviews... the executives would see me...

ROSE
You thought the reviews were real. Oh, sweetie, I didn't know you wrote this.

JOE
Just the revisions though, mate. You're not even credited. Our names aren't up there.

MYERS
You know they are, Joseph Carmichael. Our names are all over it. But maybe... Is the agency...?

Awkward silence. Myers makes puppy dog eyes.

JOE
(uncomfortable lying)
...We're not really signing right now... all this NALATHON business...

Myers stares into space. Silence. Joe winks at Rose.

JOE (CONT'D)

Listen, mate. Growing up I had it rough, living hand to mouth, hustling on the streets of Sydney. Emotionally. Mentally. Always trying to keep up with the next kid. But I had a dream. I knew that I could be better than everyone if I truly worked for it. If I gave it everything I had. Success came quickly with television down there, but when I got to Los Angeles... the accent.

Joe thinks for more obstacles. Nothing comes up.

JOE (CONT'D)

Well the accent was a big one. Couldn't be taken seriously.

ROSE

It's true.

JOE

And then the Crocodile Hunter hit the US screens in '97. Oh sure, Dundee was around miles before, but just as a joke, you know. '97 was when it all happened.

Myers looks around like he's in a bad dream.

MYERS

Are you saying I'll get my crocodile hunter? My crocodile hunter will come through?

JOE

I don't know, mate. We all have to overcome. I get an actor in something better. You do a Sundance script or whatever.

ROSE

See, I told you. You're a super-agent. Silly accent and everything.

JOE

It is kind of silly, isn't it? Strewth Blimey, I could use a drink. Let's get dinner.

Joe sets off. Rose leans into Myers, just a little.

ROSE

You do have money, right? You don't need him. I'm very sure I can get you where you want to be. "Daily Planet page one."

Rose holds her card out. Myers doesn't take it.

ROSE (CONT'D)

We don't want to let your mother down... anymore than she has been already.

He slowly takes the card. Rose blows a kiss, spins, exits. Myers sits devastated.

Dan appears out of the opposite entrance, takes a deep breath. Makes a decision. Strides up to Myers.

DAN

Excuse me sir, we need to clean the theatre for the next showing.

MYERS

What? Ah... I have a ticket for the ten.

DAN

You have a ticket? How did you get in just now?

MYERS

No, I bought two earlier. I wanted to see this a couple of times.

DAN

You wanted to see this a couple of times? Can I see your ticket?

MYERS

I, uh...

Myers, dazed, moves to exit. Dan's hand moves to his radio.

DAN

Hey there! I'm going to need to see your ticket right now.

MYERS

What? My-?

DAN
You don't want to do this, pal.
Believe me. What did you do? In
through the exit?

MYERS
No, no, I-

DAN
Don't make me call this one in.
Attendance without a ticket is
shoplifting.

He speaks into the radio.

DAN (CONT'D)
Colleen, is Monty still on two?

Myers produces his ticket.

MYERS
Here, here.

RADIO VOICE COLLEEN
Why don't you walk up there and
find out?

Dan hurriedly mutes his radio. Checks the ticket.

DAN
This is an llam showing.

MYERS
Yes.

DAN
What did you do? Did you theatre
hop?

MYERS
No, just this one.

DAN
What did you see?

MYERS
Only NALATHON. I didn't hop. I
wouldn't.

Dan waves the ticket.

DAN
What's this all about, man?

MYERS

I was just waiting...

DAN

You know what this does to the numbers?

MYERS

I wrote it! Mostly.

Dan looks at Myer's footwear. His balding head. His eyes.

DAN

Really?

MYERS

What?

DAN

And you're at a theatre in Van Nuys?

MYERS

That's what it is now. We're going deep, getting gritty. Civilian style.

DAN

This is just crazy.

MYERS

I know. Okay?

DAN

Hey, sorry for the rough-up. Just the numbers, you know?

MYERS

Yeah, box office. No. You're right.

Myers holds back tears.

DAN

I'm sorry.

MYERS

No, it's not... Oh, shit.

DAN

Hey. Hey... What?

MYERS

I thought it was better. The reviews...

DAN

And you watched four showings in a row.

MYERS

I was waiting for the Carmichaels. I didn't want to miss them.

DAN

Sure. I know about the Carmichaels.

MYERS

Their nanny said they'd be here, today, I didn't know when, I just-

Myers stops himself. Looks Dan over.

MYERS (CONT'D)

Why am I telling you-?

Dan sits down, gazes up at the screen.

DAN

Sometimes you just need to let it out, man.

Myers stares at the screen. Dan peeks over, looks back away.

MYERS

My mother always believed in me. She pushed me.

Dan nods, peeks over. Myers catches his look.

DAN

I'll bet she's proud of you...?

Myers fights those tears, stares back at the screen. Sits.

MYERS

We were poor. Every three weeks we'd rent a Betamax, get as many movies as we could. She just loved 'em. She wanted me to write. I'd say a little prayer before we watched, she'd say "make it better." She had me make different prayers, different little ways. I wanted to make her proud.

DAN

You wrote this.

MYERS

Mostly.

DAN

You wrote this, man!

Myers looks Dan over again.

MYERS

Why do you care?

Dan gazes around the space. Stands up, takes a deep breath.

DAN

This is what I do. This is my theatre. No one above me but corporate. I even do revivals.

MYERS

Here?

DAN

No, at my friend Larry's. But I just love it, the whole process. I'll tell you: I used to be in front of the camera.

MYERS

Professionally?

DAN

Yeah, I made some money. "Facts of Life", "Thirtysomething", "Family Ties."

MYERS

"Thirtysomething."

DAN

Huge guest star. Almost got an arc. Tested for "Baywatch". I was ripped. I'm still in pretty good shape, but I was ripped.

MYERS

Why'd you stop?

DAN

I had a good run but I never broke.

MYERS

But you look like Cary Elwes.

DAN

I took my power back, man. I saw through the casting process. No one ever got anywhere because of what they did. It was always how they were. It didn't matter what I did. It was how I am. Too unique. Too rare.

MYERS

And now?

DAN

I'm here. Watch 'em all. Still touching the magic.

MYERS

That's it, isn't it?

DAN

Yeah, I think so.

Myers stares at the screen. Dan speaks into his radio.

DAN (CONT'D)

Col, how much time we got before the ten?

RADIO VOICE COLLEEN

Maybe just check your watch?

MYERS

Anybody here for the next showing?

DAN

No, but we have to show it anyway. Corporate.

MYERS

So you just play it... for nobody?

DAN

We skip the trailers, straight into the feature. Get it over with.

Myers slumps deeper into his seat. Face in hands.

MYERS

Ah, man. Oh, man.

Dan reaches out to touch him. Stops himself.

DAN

I'm, uh... I'm here for you.

Myers snaps a look to him.

MYERS

I only wrote the bits. The work-ups
and a couple of bits. I didn't even
write it. It's not my fault.

DAN

It's not your fault!

MYERS

I live in Brentwood. I eat Whole
Foods Hot Bar everyday. I have a
sick Porsche, a truck, two jet skis
that I never use...

DAN

It's not what you do, but how you
are! It's not your fault, man. No
way. Not your fault.

Myers looks lost. Dan just gazes at him.

MYERS

So what now?

DAN

This is it. Right here. All there
is, man. Right now.

Myers takes a big breath. Really looks Dan over.

MYERS

Who are you?

DAN

Just a guy. But I'm here for you.

MYERS

This isn't even weird. It's so
weird.

DAN

I know. I know.

MYERS

So pure. You're pure.

DAN

I don't know...

MYERS

I've just been doing work-ups,
writing bits. You're doing this.
Everyday. Always on.

DAN

I only run four shifts a week.

MYERS

Sure, sure. And the revivals!

DAN

Yes...yes.

MYERS

When do you plan them? On the
weekends?

DAN

In the office. On my shifts. But I
screen them at Larry's on Sundays.

MYERS

Keeping it holy. You are a holy
man.

Myers looks him over once more. Stands. Offers his hand.

MYERS (CONT'D)

I'm Myers.

Dan takes his hand.

DAN

Dan.

They hold the shake extra-long.

MYERS

I'm going to tell my mother about
you.

DAN

Wow.

MYERS

She has to know. She'll be proud.

DAN

Really? No. Why?

MYERS

You just set me straight.

DAN

I...?

MYERS

I don't forget stuff like this. The revivals! Can I come?

DAN

I don't know.

MYERS

What?

DAN

This is happening pretty fast.

MYERS

I'll bring snacks. I could bring scotch.

DAN

We don't eat when we watch.

MYERS

Ah, you wouldn't drink. You don't drink either, do you?

Dan looks Myers over, sits.

DAN

I, uh... I drink. I drink a lot.

MYERS

So do I! I drink a lot!

DAN

See? I'm not better than you.

MYERS

(mostly to himself)

Did I say you were better-?

DAN

We're just equals.

MYERS

...No. No... You're so pure. You are better than me.

Dan leaps up, turns away.

DAN

I'm not pure, Myers.

Myers starts to go to him. Stops himself. Sits.

DAN (CONT'D)

I'm not pure at all. I plan my revivals when I should be cleaning. I lock myself in that office and tell my staff I'm doing "reports." Larry is the only one at my revivals. We watch old LaserDiscs on his system and get drunk.

MYERS

That doesn't matter.

DAN

I'm a liar. A fraud! I never wanted to quit the acting.

He turns to Myers, eyes moist.

DAN (CONT'D)

I never broke! Why didn't I break? I always thought I'd make it. Why didn't I hit? I was never a name.

MYERS

It doesn't matter. That's not what it's about! You're here now.

Dan gazes at Myers, hard.

DAN

What about the children?

MYERS

The children?

Dan spins away.

DAN

Never mind, never mind.

MYERS

No, no. What about the children?

Dan looks at his feet. Myers stands, uncomfortable, unsure.

MYERS (CONT'D)

Is it bad? Is it bad? It's bad, isn't it?

DAN

It's bad.

MYERS

It's bad?

DAN

I'm a bad person.

MYERS

Oh no. No, no. What?

DAN

I can't.

Myers slowly reaches out, touches Dan's shoulder. Dan tenses.

MYERS

What is it? You have to. You have to be pure. You must!

DAN

I can't, I can't. Oh god, I'm a fraud.

MYERS

Once chance. Right here. This is your chance. I'm in my heart. I can help you.

Dan slowly looks to Myers.

DAN

You can...?

MYERS

I need to help you, don't you see? Why else could we be here, so deep in the Valley? Van Nuys? This is what we're here for.

DAN

Would you write about it?

MYERS

You don't want me to write about it?

DAN

No, would you? If you could write about it, I could be free. Maybe I could act in it.

MYERS

Well, that's not really my department.

DAN
No, you could write it and tell
them it's me. I could act it!

Myers is a little nauseous.

MYERS
I don't know, Dan. It's children.

Dan searches Myers' expression. His eyes go wide.

DAN
No, no. It's not that bad. You
didn't think...?

MYERS
I don't know.

DAN
NO! NO! God no! Of course no! NO!

MYERS
What then? What is it?

DAN
You could write it.

MYERS
I don't know. What?

Dan composes himself, takes a deep breath. Myers sits.

DAN
I worked the concession. Best on
the floor, every shift. I started
closing. At first it was a little
popcorn, sometimes a soda. Then I'd
take the milk duds, a combo meal.
Soon enough I was eating the dark
chocolate. Six bucks a bar. I'd eat
it quick and hide the wrappers in
the middle of the trash. Made
assistant then got manager. Got
cocky. I'd take a whole box of
bars, fudge the inventory. Box
wasn't even open.

Dan looks Myers in the eye. Another breath.

DAN (CONT'D)
I started packing the corn out.
It's just thrown out, you know?
Nobody would use it, such a waste.
(MORE)

DAN (CONT'D)

I started bringing a little out here and there, for the revivals.

MYERS

You said you don't eat at the revivals...!

Myers looks away. Dan looks at this feet.

DAN

I started selling it. Who would buy it? The kids would. Here and there. I had a couple kids from the neighborhood that moved it. Nothing big, but the prices kept going up at the counter. Eight bucks for a large! It was easy to get a dollar or two. It started adding up. Soon it was me taking the buckets out. I'd sell them separately. It got bad.

MYERS

(morbid curiosity)
What happened?

DAN

It just got too easy. I started letting the staff toss it out. I'd pick it up from the bins out back. At first I was careful, only the double wrapped bags. All sealed up. I'd pick and choose. Then I got lazy. I'd just grab everything in the bin. Didn't matter if the bag was sealed. I couldn't see myself, scooping loose kernels out of the bin, stuffing them back into bags. I couldn't see myself.

Dan searches Myers' eyes. They both look away.

DAN (CONT'D)

A kid got sick. The authorities traced the corn back here. So far I've been playing both sides, pretending I'm my superior on the phone. Corporate doesn't know yet, but they will. They'll find out.

Myers is beside himself. Livid, judgmental, disgusted.

MYERS

That's it.

DAN
 Would you write it? Like Rupert
 Pupkin - I could come out of this.

MYERS
 No. I don't think so.

DAN
 No?

MYERS
 You're just like the reviews. You
 aren't pure. What would my mother
 say?

DAN
 She knows I made a mistake. We
 could change it. You could write, I
 could act. I know this from the
 inside.

MYERS
 No. It's a bad story.

DAN
 It's not a good story?

MYERS
 No. No, it's not, Dan.

Myers storms off, stops short, turns back.

MYERS (CONT'D)
 I might write it, but you could
 never be in it.
 (condemning)
 You sell used popcorn to kids.

DAN
 The revivals. We could do snacks.

MYERS
 I don't think so, Dan. I don't
 think so.

Myers stares hard into Dan's eyes. Snaps away, exits.

Dan stares after him. Slowly punches his thighs.

DAN
 What did you do? What did you do?
 What did you do?

He woozily fumbles for his radio.

DAN (CONT'D)
 (into radio)
 Col, let's just wrap it out, call
 it night. Kay? Kay?

His eyes dart around the theatre.

COLLEEN
 (over radio)
 Uh, No way! Corporate is totally
 hearing about this one. Idiot.

He spins, glares at the screen for a long, quiet moment.

DAN
 I always saw myself on you. And now
 I do. I see myself now.

He gazes around the theatre. Back to the screen. Stares.

DAN (CONT'D)
 I sell trash popcorn to little
 children.

He slumps into a seat. Hardly breathing. Frozen. Pained.

JOE (O.S.)
 Oy, mate, you didn't see a Valet
 ticket lying around did you?

Dan jumps up, a deer in headlights. Joe barrels up to him.

JOE (CONT'D)
 The wife can spend a hundred-fifty
 at the Hamburger Hamlet across the
 street but we can't get out of here
 with a ten dollar lost ticket fee.
 Bloody women, right?

Joe suddenly squints, studies Dan's face.

DAN
 I don't think... I didn't see...

JOE
 Hold on a second. Daniel Sanders?

DAN
 What? Why? Did someone-?

JOE
 Come on, mate! I know you! You're
 bloody Daniel Sanders.

DAN
I'm not sure that-

JOE
Just saw you on "Thirtysomething."
Strong spot there. Surprised you
didn't get an arc off that one.

Dan warms up.

DAN
"Thirtysomething"? How...? That was
years ago.

JOE
Ah, yeah. Thanksgiving back in Oz.
Really only got a couple stations
down there.

Joe gives himself double thumbs.

JOE (CONT'D)
Joe Carmicahel.

DAN
Yeah, yeah. I know. I just thought-

JOE
You don't work here, do you?

Dan casually hides his radio.

DAN
What? No. No. Checkin' out
NALATHON. For a laugh.

JOE
Bloody hell, that. Listen, big fan.
You still got the chops?

DAN
Yeah...yes. Riding a bike.

The lights dim for the 10pm showing.

JOE
(re Nalathon)
Ah fuck.
(to Dan)
You never broke, did you?

DAN
No, no. I never broke.

Joe thrusts a business card at him.

JOE

Give Ally a call there, drop by the office. No promises. Hip pocket and all that, but worth a shot at some young dad roles, eh?

DAN

Yes, yes. I could...

NALATHON music begins. Joe glances at the screen.

JOE

Christ! No valet ticket and this all over again.

He gives Dan a good once-over.

JOE (CONT'D)

Bloody "Thirtysomething"! Give us a call. And get some pushups in this week.

Joe rushes out. Dan stares after him.

He looks at the card in his hands. Around the theatre. Flexes his hands, cracks his neck. Gets a little taller.

He slowly turns to the screen, gazes up at it. Fire-light reflects on his face. He nods, stares at the screen.

Dramatic music builds. Dan makes slow, steady, nods.

DAN

I see you. I see you.

ON THE SCREEN

The GREEN CRYSTAL explodes into a million shards, reveals the shimmering intensity of the MAIN TITLE CARD:

NALATHON

FADE OUT.