

TALL
(a tale)

by
Dylan Dawson

Cast of characters

WILL ROGERS – 6ft 4in

STEPHANIE – 6ft 2in

DANIEL – 6ft 4in

MICHAEL – 6ft 5in

ALBERT – 6ft 3in

AMANDA – 5ft 3in

DR. HAUER

JEFF GOLDBLUM – star of *Tall Guy* and *Law & Criminal: Criminal Intent*

NORMA

IRV

AGENT

OLD CRUSTY

CAIN

CALIGULA

DOUCHEBAG

DOUCHEBAG'S GIRLFRIEND

SHORTY ZOMBIES

LITTLE BOY

MOMMY

ELDERLY WOMAN

NURSE

PERFORMANCE HISTORY:

TALL (A TALE) was performed as part of the Naked Angels reading series, “First Mondays.” It featured: **Lucas Kavner, Sarah Steele, Lonny Ross, Charlotte Booker, Scott Brown, Charlie Hewson, Patrick Husted, Dawn Luebbe, Clifton Duncan, Henry Vick**, and of course, **Will Rogers** as himself.

Original music was written and performed by **Justin Levine**.

Directed by **Davis McCallum**.

It was performed again as part of Studio 42's “Unproducible” series under the direction of **Laura Savia**.

The following is based on a true story.

PROLOGUE.

Lights up on WILL. The sounds of a park. Will speaks out to the audience, a little too intensely.

WILL.

I just want to say first off that I never meant to do what I did. And I know that doesn't justify what happened. *I know that.* It's just...you people don't know what it's *like* for someone like me. Someone...so...so...

Will stops. The distant sound of a motorized toy plane can be heard. He waits for the sound to disappear, continues.

WILL.

Someone so *afraid*. You ever been afraid, buddy? I mean you ever been *afraid*, man? Like *really afraid*, buddy? Like really really really *afraaaaid*, man? Like...
What, no, that can't be...

Will pulls out some sides from his back pocket and reads them out loud, without dramatic inflection.

WILL.

"You ever been afraid, buddy. You ever been afraid, man. Like really afraid, buddy? Like really really really afraid man."

Huh, yeah. Okay.

(puts the sides away, reciting quickly to memorize)

Afraid, buddy. Afraid, man. Really afraid, buddy. Really really really afraid, man. Buddy, man, buddy, man. Three really's. Fucking *patterns*. Okay.

The motorized plane again, closer this time. Will freezes, more nervous now. He waits for it to disappear, and continues.

WILL.

Cause it's *hard*, Detective Fiorentino. It's real *hard*. And sometimes it gets so *hard* that you can almost touch it. So *hard* you just want to wrap your hand around it and choke and choke and choke it til it's dead, you know what I mean, Detective?

(pulling out the sides)

Wait no I don't. My *fear* gets hard or...?

Will's cell phone rings. He answers.

WILL.

Hello this is Will Rogers.

Oh hi! Crazy, I'm actually in the park right now working on the Cold Case sides you gave...

Yeah well, there's not enough space in my apartment for me to really get my body fully into the mo...

The weather? I dunno, it's a little overcast but the sun is just starting to...oh.

(sighs)

The weather's fine...up here.

(brightens)

Really?

I did!?

I did?

I will!

I will.

...um, I won't, no.

No no no no, I will will, I didn't mean that. It's cool, I will.

Great!

Great!!!

Thanks, my agent!

He hangs up the phone and pumps his fist. Beaming, he goes back to his sides, grinning through them, really invested. Music, Cold Case music, plays.

WILL.

Well listen Detective Fiorentino, I'm not *afraid* anymore! I know who I am. I couldn't hide from it even if I wanted to. So you may have your dirty words for it in your cold case factory, but I'm proud to say what I am. And what. I. Am. Is-

A motorized plane comes roaring in, crashing into Will's head with an explosion. He screams. A "little boy" enters with a remote control.

LITTLE BOY.

My plane! My plane! My-

Will turns towards the boy, revealing a severely bleeding right side of his head. He moans in agony. The little boy screams!

LITTLE BOY.

Giant!!! GIANT!!!!

Mommy!!!!!!!!!!

Mommy enters.

MOMMY.

It's okay, sweetie, it's just-

She sees Will.

MOMMY.

-a horrible *GIANT!!!!*

Mommy!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

An “elderly woman” enters, smiling.

ELDERLY WOMAN.

“Mommy”? Well *Diane*, you haven’t called me *mommy* in thirty seven y-

She sees Will, clutches her chest.

ELDERLY WOMAN.

AGGHHH!!! My heart’s exploding!!!!!!

GIANT!!! GIANT!!! MOMMY!!!!

A nurse wheels on what looks like the crypt keeper.

NURSE.

Now now you know it’s dangerous to excite your poor old -

(sees Will)

HORRIBLE HORRIBLE GIANT!!!!

Everyone screams in horror, shielding their eyes, weeping. Crypt keeper flatlines.

Police sirens and flashing red lights.

The sounds of a helicopter flying overhead, along with distant screams and cries of the innocent.

A spotlight shines on Will, who drops to his knees, putting his hands behind his head. He’s been through this before.

We hear whoever’s in the helicopter on a megaphone telling Will to make no sudden movements or he WILL be shot.

LITTLE BOY.

YOU TOLD ME THERE WAS NO SUCH THING AS MONSTERS, MOMMY!!!

YOU PROMISED!!!!

MOMMY.

I LIED!!! OH GOD I LIED!!! I LIIIIIIIEED!!!!!!

As everyone screams and cries, the lights go out except for the spotlight on Will.

The sound of the flat line sets up the melody for the OPENING CREDITS song/sequence.

*Title card (projected): **TALL. (A TALE).***

SCENE ONE.

Spotlight comes back up on Will on the floor, his hands behind his head as before. Lights come up full as he wakes up screaming.

WILL.

I am *not* a giant!!!!

When the lights come up full they reveal DANIEL, standing nearby in his pajamas and watching Will.

DAN.
Yes you are.

WILL.
Oh Jesus. Daniel. How long have you been standing there?

DAN.
(doing a Hannibal Lector voice)
Long enough.
(back to normal)
No seriously though, a while. I'm just glad you don't dream about fires the way you –
AAGH!

Dan sees ALBERT who appears just behind him, eating yogurt really slowly.

DAN.
Goddammit.
Albert, let's creep it down a notch, okay? It's the middle of the night. I'm susceptible.

Albert has another slow spoonful, then slowly backs offstage, never taking his eyes off Dan.

DAN.
God, my cousin is gonna get arrested in so many parks.

WILL.
Parks...Daniel, I had that dream again.

Daniel says nothing, wanting to go back to sleep.

WILL.
Yeah, no I'm fine.

DAN.
(turns to go)
Good. Good night.

Dan exits.

WILL.
It's just...

We hear Dan sigh audibly offstage, before returning, visibly annoyed.

WILL.
Yeah, fine, no /never mind. Good night.

DAN.

No, what? I wanna hear. Okay good night.

Dan turns and goes, leaving Will alone.

Somewhere echoing we hear the Little Child from his dream.

LITTLE CHILD.

(VO, echoing)

Giant! Giant! Mooooommmmyyyy!!!!

Lights out.

SCENE TWO.

At Legitimate Casting Offices.

Will's agent, a small man, sits at a desk that is slightly smaller than a normal desk. He stares catatonically at nothing. After several moments we hear his inner voice.

AGENT.

(VO)

If I were taken hostage in a shoot out, I'd be the hostage who says to the guy holding the gun to my head "Shoot me! I don't care! Come on, *shoot me!* Do for me what I can't do myself! Come on you fucking *pussy!* *DO IT!!*" And then the release. The sweet blind release that only death can -

Will enters.

AGENT.

Will! Will Rogers! Come in! Come in! Sit down. Great to see you!

Will sits down uncomfortably in the too small chair at the too small desk. Agent leans back and throws a tennis ball up in the air.

So, you're probably wondering why I – aagh!!

The tennis ball hits him in the face and rolls away. He composes.

So you're probably wondering why I called you in for a face to face.

WILL.

Actually yeah, I-

AGENT.

Well Will Rogers, I brought you down here to talk about your future as my biggest client. And by biggest I mean tallest. Which is a problem.

WILL.

A /problem?

AGENT.

As you know, your contract with us is up at the end of this month.

WILL.

Oh, right, well no I didn't know /that...

AGENT.

And as you know, your success rate in landing roles has as of lately fallen a little, how should we say...

WILL.

Listen, I –

AGENT.

How should we saay...fallen a little...how would you sayyy....

WILL.

...short?

AGENT.

Ahahaha. That's fucking fantastically hilarious. Short, yes. Say it again! Say that word again!

WILL.

...short.

AGENT.

AAAGGGHAHAHAHAHA!!! Just you saying the word is funny. It's like me saying "joy" or "kindness" or "filled with a sense of self worth." AHAHAHAHA!! "Short" ahhh... What was I talking about?

WILL.

Um, my-

AGENT.

You being dropped as a client, that's right, that's right. Will. I have some bad news.

WILL.

I'm being dropped!?

AGENT.

Oh God. Thanks for not making me have to say it. Yes. Yes, I'm afraid so.

WILL.

But I make you money!

AGENT.

Not *enough* money.

WILL.

I'm a very specific type!

AGENT.

Tell me about it.

WILL.

My appearance on Law & Order: Criminal Intent airs *tonight!* Jeff Goldblum took a shine to me. That's the word he used. Shine!

AGENT.

Kid, if every snot-nosed Tisch undergrad who landed a roll on Law & Order made it big, there'd be so many famous people in the world that...that the *unfamous* people would *become* the famous people...because...because simply by elimination there'd be more famous people than unfamous...there'd be like maybe five or six unfamous people as opposed to five or six million...Goldblum's a fucking drunk is what I'm saying!

WILL.

I can't believe this is happening.

AGENT.

Don't worry about it, kid. You got a bright acting career ahead of you.

WILL.

THEN WHY ARE YOU DROPPING ME??

Agent sighs, takes out a small remote control and points it at the back wall.

AGENT.

I put together a little video that I hope will illustrate my point.

The lights dim. On the back wall, we see a montage video of Will doing various commercial screen tests, except his face is cut out of frame from the nose up in each one.

WILL.

I don't understand. Why didn't they just tilt the camera dow- ?

AGENT.

Ssshshshhshushshush. Just watch the film.

Suddenly the screen test shots of Will are interspersed with footage of Will walking around New York aimlessly. The Schindler's List soundtrack underscores.

WILL.

Wait, *what?*...who's filming this??

AGENT.

My nephew. He put this whole thing together. He's using it to apply to film school.

WILL.

He was *following* - ??

AGENT.

Ahhbupbup. Watch. This is what won him Best Short at the Appalachian Film Festival.

Onscreen, Will, not paying attention is struck in the face by a low hanging tree branch. This is repeated over and over in slow motion to the music. Credits roll.

Agent brings the lights back up.

AGENT.

I hope you understand.

WILL.

(standing)

I don't. Jeff Goldblum is easily 6 foot 4 and he seems to be doing fine.

Long beat.

AGENT.

Is he?

WILL.

Yes! And you know what? I *do* shine! I'm like *so shiny*, you don't even know!

Will exits in a huff.

AGENT.

(calling after him)

Will!

Will re-enters immediately and eagerly.

WILL.

Yes?

Agent pulls out a DVD, offers it.

AGENT.

Here. I had my nephew sign you a copy.

Will stares in disbelief, then takes the DVD anyway and goes.

Lights out.

SCENE THREE.

Will and Daniel's apartment.

Michael and Daniel blow up party balloons.

MICHAEL.

And so this kid looks up at me, right? And he's really annoying, this guy, like really adorable. And he looks up at me and asks, "How tall are you?"

DANIEL.

Right.

MICHAEL.

Which, fine, okay, he's a kid so I'll forgive him, but doesn't that drive you crazy? When someone's like, "How tall are you?" and you're like "six five" or whatever, and they're like/ "Whoooooaaaaa!!"

DANIEL.

"Oooohhh!!" right, awful.

MICHAEL.

Like did I suddenly grow a few inches now that you have specific measurements?

DANIEL.

Yeah it's like big boobs are big boobs, I don't need a cup size to help me understand.

MICHAEL.

Yes, well...yes, actually. But so this kid of course does that, freaks out, and then the next day asks me if I want to "ball" at recess.

DANIEL.

Whoa.

MICHAEL.

Me too, that's what I was like. But then I realized he meant *basketball*, to which I wanted to say, "Hey little dude, just because I'm tall doesn't mean I can 'ball.'" But figured if he heard me rhyme he'd suddenly think I was a *rapper* or something.

DANIEL.

So is that racist, him asking you to ball? I mean, I'm only saying because, just I mean, I'm *not* a racist so I don't always know when I *see* something like that if it's actually...or...is *that* /racist?

MICHAEL.

It's just annoying Daniel. That people automatically make assumptions about me based on whatever.

DANIEL.

Yeah, I don't know how you can teach. I'd like be punching kids faces all the time and what not.

MICHAEL.

Well what was worse is that I agreed to play a game of horse with a couple of these little bastards at recess.

DANIEL.

And?

MICHAEL.

(sighs)

Dude, I spelled "HORSE" faster than you can *say* "Horse," okay? And I'm talking five foot little rugrats here.

DANIEL.

Wow, sorry man.

MICHAEL.

There's more to me than my height, is all I'm saying. I hate basketball.

DANIEL.

I hear that. We've got a lot more to offer.

MICHAEL

Amen.

DANIEL.

I'm saying.

STEPHANIE enters with a banner.

STEPHANIE.

You guys mind hanging this banner way up there for /me?

DANIEL.

Yeah, sure.

MICHAEL.

Of course.

They take the banner from her and start unrolling it, while Stephanie tries to make a call on her cell phone.

DANIEL.
Any word?

STEPHANIE.
(worried)
No he's not answering.

DANIEL.
Is the cake ready?

STEPHANIE.
Yeah. Your terrifying cousin is putting candles on it right now. Really slowly.

DANIEL.
Yeah...

The banner reads, "Congratulations Are In (Law &) Order!"

STEPHANIE.
(to her phone)
This is so weird. He *always* picks up when I call. Maybe he's nervous.

MICHAEL.
Maybe he's too cool for us now that he's on TV.

DANIEL.
(to Stephanie)
Maybe he finally met a girl and is too ashamed to tell you because you guys have always been secretly in love but never knew how to deal with it openly because the risk of losing what you have as friends is far too great.

Beat.

Or the nervous situation you mentioned.

STEPHANIE.
It's starting in like five minutes. Can we record it? Do you even have that technology?

DANIEL.
Do we have the tech- Of course we do. We just need a VHS tape.

MICHAEL.
A VHS tape? Daniel, when was the last time you even recorded something?

DANIEL.

Oh I actually don't know how, we're going to have to ask Will to do it when he gets here.

An exasperated sigh from Stephanie. Daniel and Michael finish hanging the banner. They read it for a second.

DANIEL.
This confuses me.

MICHAEL.
Mm.

Will sulks in. He doesn't notice any of the decorations.

STEPHANIE/MICHAEL/DANIEL.
Heeeeyyy!
There he iiis!!
Atta boy!!

Albert enters with a cake covered in candles, walking with it as though it were sacred. Everyone starts singing.

STEPHANIE/MICHAEL/DANIEL.
Happy Law and Order: Criminal Intent appearance to youuuu!
Happy Law and Order: Criminal Intent appearance to youuuu!
Happy Law and Order: Criminal Intent appearance Will Rogerrrrs!
Happy Law and Order: Criminal Intent appearance to yooouu!!

STEPHANIE.
And many moooooore!!

WILL.
(just rude)
Yeah well, I die at the end of the episode so I *doubt that.*

A weird silence. Albert is still several feet away from Will, approaching him slowly with the cake as though they were still singing. Will doesn't rise to meet him. The other three just sort of watch this awkwardly for a few moments before finally...

DANIEL.
I got it.

Daniel moves to the cake and blows out the candles. He takes the cake from Albert and brings it to Will.

DANIEL.
Here man, congratulations. Why don't you cut yourself a- where's the knife?

Albert extends the butcher knife. It's covered in red frosting.

Daniel slowly takes the knife from Albert, never taking his eyes off him. He brings the cake and the knife back to Will.

DANIEL.

Come on man have a piece. I just risked my life for you.

WILL.

No thanks. Actually, if you guys don't mind, I'm going to go to my room.

Will rises.

I've seen enough of myself for one day.

He exits.

DANIEL.

I guess one of us should...

He trails off, looking to Stephanie. Another exasperated sigh as she follows Will into his room.

DANIEL.

So.

Let's eat this cake and watch Will die!

Lights out.

SCENE FOUR.

Will's bedroom. Will sits on his bed, humming to himself.

Stephanie enters.

STEPHANIE.

Hey. You mind if I come in?

WILL.

Yeah, no, come in, Steph.

She sits next to him. An extended awkward moment.

STEPHANIE.

Was that the Jurassic Park theme?

WILL.

What? Oh. Yeah. Yeah, it was.

Beat.

STEPHANIE.

You wanna talk about it?

WILL.

The Jurassic Park theme? Outstanding.

STEPHANIE.

No I mean...

WILL.

I know what you mean. Thanks, but no, it's nothing.

Beat.

STEPHANIE.

It is outstanding /though.

WILL.

Yeah, no, John Williams...

Offstage, Daniel and Michael sing along to the Law & Order theme song as the show starts.

STEPHANIE.

Also good.

WILL.

(nodding)

Mm.

Beat.

WILL.

Steph?

STEPHANIE.

Yeah?

WILL.

Do you ever feel too...tall?

STEPHANIE.

Excuse me?

WILL.

No I mean, I don't mean...I don't think *you* are. I think you're perfect, /it's just –

STEPHANIE.

Well I think you're perfect too.

WILL.

Well okay.

STEPHANIE.

Well good.

WILL.

Well fine.

STEPHANIE.

Well...well.

(beat)

You know how many people would *kill*, like actually *murder* for a couple more inches?

WILL.

Yeah, no-

STEPHANIE.

Is that what this pout parade is about? Your height?

WILL.

I just had a rough day and I think it's bringing me down. As it were.

STEPHANIE.

(rising)

Well, come on, get over it. I don't know if you noticed, but we're kinda psyched about this Criminal Intent thing, so...

She turns to go.

WILL.

How was your date last night?

STEPHANIE.

(spins back around)

Oh! I meant to tell you! Will, the guy was like five foot three, which like I'm not above, at least not mentally, but still, at first I was offended, like *(points to eyes)* "Up here buddy!" like the next thing he was gonna ask me was to slow dance so he could get a closer look. But then I worried about having to pay the guys chiropractic bills so I let it slide. Case in point, Will. Be happy with what you got. I'd be so lucky to find a guy as cool and classy and talented...and *tall* as you.

WILL.

Right.

A pause.

STEPHANIE.

But not *you*, /obviously, I mean...

WILL.

Right, no, obviously, haha...

DANIEL.

(offstage)

Will oh my god!!! You and Jeff Goldblum are saying words to each other, ohmygod!!!

STEPHANIE.

Right, well...

I'm gonna go watch you on TV. You should too.

WILL.

I will. Just...in a sec.

Stephanie starts to go again, then stops.

STEPHANIE.

But Will?

Yeah that guy was short last night? But he also smelled like food and couldn't stop talking about his ideas for T-shirt slogans, so I'm just saying, if *you* were five foot three...I'd like you just the same.

She exits.

MUSICAL POP INTERLUDE HERE (SUNG BY ALBERT):

“A Tree Branch of Love (Hit You In the Face)”

SCENE FIVE.

Lights up.

Daniel, Michael, Stephanie, and Albert watch actual footage of Will Rogers dying on Law and Order: Criminal Intent. It cuts to commercial. A stunned silence fills the room.

MICHAEL.

Daniel are you crying?

DANIEL.

It's just...no. I'm not.

He rises.

Who wants cake?

MICHAEL.

We ate all the cake.

DANIEL.

Well then I'll bake another one, Michael!

Daniel exits.

MICHAEL.

How's Will doing?

STEPHANIE.

I dunno...

MICHAEL.

Are *you* crying?

STEPHANIE.

(rising)

You know Daniel doesn't even *know* the first thing about cake baking!

Exiting.

The first thing!

Michael sits uncomfortably while Albert just watches him.

Finally he gets up.

MICHAEL.

Emotional exit!

He exits, leaving Albert.

Lights out.

SCENE SIX.

Lights up on Will in his room. He stares off into space as voices echo ominously in his head, overlapping.

STEPHANIE.

(VO)

If you were five foot three I'd like you just the /same...

AGENT.

(VO)

"Short!" Just you saying it is /funny!

LITTLE BOY.

(VO)

Giaaant!!!

DANIEL.

(VO)

He's gonna get arrested in so many /parks.

AGENT.

(VO)

Ahahahahahaha! /"Short!"

STEPHANIE.

(VO)

I'd like you just the same...

Jurassic Park theme, helicopters, madness echoes.

LITTLE BOY.

(VO)

Mooommyyyy!!! /Giaant!!! Giaant!!! GLAANT!!!! GLAAANT!!!

STEPHANIE.

(VO)

I'd like you just the same...like you just the same...the same...like you...you...the...I'd...

Will's cell phone rings, cutting out the voices. He answers it.

Lights up on JEFF GOLDBLUM.

WILL.

Hello?

JEFF GOLDBLUM.

Ahhh, hi, hello there, /ahhh...

WILL.

Who is this?

JEFF GOLDBLUM.

It's ahhh Jeff uhh Goldblum, yeah...

WILL.

Very good impression Daniel, well played.

JEFF GOLDBLUM.

Yeah, no it's uhhh, so yeah it's actually me, Jeff Goldblum here. Listen buddy, you really shined tonight on the umm...or ahh *shone*, if parlance is your...yeah.

Will, realizing it's actually Jeff Goldblum, stands in shock.

JEFF GOLDBLUM.

Will uhh, you still there buddy?

WILL.

Yes. Sorry I...wow, yes, sorry Mr. Goldblum.

JEFF GOLDBLUM.

Please. Will. Call me Bloom. Or Goldie. No, Bloom, call me Bloom. *Bloom* baby!

WILL.

Right.

JEFF GOLDBLUM.

Listen Will, I was ahhh yeah *wondering*-

WILL.

Yes.

JEFF GOLDBLUM.

Ahhh....?

WILL.

Just, whatever you're wondering...in regards to me I mean. The answer is yes, Mr. Bloom. Sir.

JEFF GOLDBLUM.

Well that's great to hear cause I was um wondering if you'd ahhh be willing to undergo some reconstructive surgery in which a specialist removes three or four inches from your shin bone so that you can appear less ahhh well, shorter, let's say...onscreen, I mean.

Silence.

Will? You, uh...you still there buddy?

Silence.

See I'm directing my first feature, titled *Ahhh Yeah So So So Ahhh Yeaah* and right now it stars Tom Cruise, Danny DeVito, that little kickball from Willow and ...some fourth short person of note . And, well, Will, I'd like you to appear in it as well.

WILL.

Reconstructive surgery?

JEFF GOLDBLUM.

I'll tell ya, everybody's doing it. Short people are the next big thing, as it were. I'm talking pirates zombies vampires big. I'm talking you and me on the ground floor of the next cultural phenomenon, buddy. Whaddya think?

WILL.

Well...why haven't *you* gotten the surgery, no offense.

JEFF GOLDBUM.

Will, buddy, when I first came to Hollywood I was seven feet two inches. The only job I could get was cleaning the sign, you know what I mean? But once I had myself shortened-

WILL.

Shortened...

JEFF GOLDBLUM.

-I was fighting aliens and dinosaurs faster than you can say, "ahhh ha yeah no that's ahhh..."

WILL.

Boy, I don't know...

JEFF GOLDBLUM.

And you know what? The nightmares stopped too.

Ominous music.

Will's eyes go wide.

JEFF GOLDBLUM.

Yeah the nightmares. Where I'm in the park, minding my own business when all of the sudden...

The sounds of a motorized toy plane. It crashes, explodes.

JEFF GOLDBLUM.

And the screams Will...the screams...

The screams. It's like Nam or something. Suddenly they cut out.

JEFF GOLDBLUM.

Well, think about it! I'll be in ahh touch yeah...

Lights out on Goldblum as he hangs up the phone. Will stands there for a moment.

WILL.

Shortening...

Lights out.

SCENE SEVEN.

The Schindler's List music plays while Will takes a meaningful walk in the rain.

On the screen behind him we see a montage of images, clippings of various reviews from Will's actual stage performances, along with stills from those shows. With each critic's excerpt, there is a vocal narration of what's written.

CRITIC #1

(along with a still from "Chair")

...the ever lanky Will Rogers gives a studied performance in what it means /to be as ...

CRITIC #2

(along with a still from "From Up Here")

...as tall as he is, Will Rogers manages to remind us that it's the little /things that...

CRITIC #3.

(along with a still from "Creature")

...that make his acting so heightened, pun /intended, and...

CRITIC #4

(along with a still from "Columbinus")

...and even as he towers over the other performers, Will seems used to knowing where the light source is coming from at any given moment of the play, and making sure no one is shrouded in his elongated shadow...

The rain falls harder. Will rushes offstage. A movie theater marquee appears, reading:

A Kevin Bacon Retrospective.

Tonight: The Air Up There

Lights out.

SCENE EIGHT.

Inside the movie theater. Will takes a seat directly in front of a young couple, DOUCHEBAG and DOUCHEBAG'S GIRLFRIEND. They are immediately annoyed.

DOUCHEBAG.

Oh well that's just great. Of all the seats he had to go and sit right in front of us.

DOUCHEBAG'S GIRLFRIEND.

Honey, it's fine. We can sit over there if it's a problem.

DOUCHEBAG.

We were here first. Why doesn't *he* sit over there? I mean, he should know better.

WILL.

(turning to face them)

I can move.

DOUCHEBAG/D-BAG'S GIRLFRIEND

(overly playing it off)

Noo no no no no no no no no no nooooo....

DOUCHEBAG.

Don't worry about it.

DOUCHEBAG'S GIRLFRIEND.

Yeah really don't worry about it.

DOUCHEBAG.

I hear nothing important happens on that part of the screen anyway.

Man laughs uproariously at his own comment. Woman laughs too, but then scolds her husband.

DOUCHEBAG'S GIRLFRIEND.

Honey...

DOUCHEBAG.

Oh he's *fine*. He's lucky to be so tall. Aren't you big guy?

DOUCHEBAG'S GIRLFRIEND.

Seriously, don't worry about it.

Will turns back around, facing forward.

DOUCHEBAG'S GIRLFRIEND.

(whispering, but clearly audible)

Seriously though, what about those seats over there?

DOUCHEBAG.

Ssh it's starting. We'll just deal.

The "Please no talking during the show" announcement can be heard.

DOUCHEBAG.

God I love *The Air Up There*.

DOUCHEBAG'S GIRLFRIEND.

I can't believe I've never seen it.

DOUCHEBAG.

Just wait. Bacon really *shines* when juxtaposed against all those Talls.

DOUCHEBAG'S GIRLFRIEND.

Honey, don't call them that. It's "vertically unchallenged."

DOUCHEBAG.

Since when did you become so PC?

DOUCHEBAG'S GIRLFRIEND.

(gesturing to Will)

I'm just *saying*.

Will, upset, stands and starts to leave the theater. We hear a voice from somewhere.

VOICE.

Hey, big guy! Down in front!

WILL.

Sorry! Sorry everybody! Sorry.

Will exits, his voice breaking as he apologizes.

DOUCHEBAG.

Good. He can watch it on NetFlix. With all the other *Talls*.

Lights out.

Spot bumps up on Will in the rain. He's on his phone.

WILL.

Bloom? It's Will. Tell me where to sign.

Lights out.

**MUSICAL INTERLUDE (SUNG BY ALBERT):
"STRETCH MARKS THE SPOT"**

SCENE NINE.

Lights up on Daniel and Albert in the apartment. Daniel reads from a note.

DANIEL.

(reading)

"Gone to undisclosed location for experimental surgery for indeterminate amount of time."

Albert, do you know anything about this?

Albert shakes his head. Daniel pulls out a brochure.

What about this brochure I found for an experimental *shortening* facility outside of Hollywood, where “up and coming actors can become less up and more coming.” Do you know anything about that?

Albert shakes his head.

Do you know anything other than the best way to baste a human brain?

Albert just stares at Daniel.

Right, well I’m going to Hollywood to stop Will from ruining his life and I need to ask two things of you. One: *Don’t* tell Stephanie. Whatever Will’s up to I think qualifies in the “unforgivable” side of the budding love spectrum, so please. Say *nothing*.

Albert continues staring.

Exactly. Also: I really don’t want to come back and find some police tape and the cast of CSI keeping me out of my own home, so please don’t...just *don’t*. Whatever it is. Okay?

Nothing.

Great. Now, I just gotta find a way to *get* there before Will does something dramatic, seductive and *insane*.

Lights out.

SCENE TEN.

The seductive synth sounds of the Blade Runner soundtrack can be heard.

Lights up on an office.

Against the back wall, an enormous fish tank is projected. A short man stands before it, his back to the audience, his hands behind his back. He wears a silver suit with matching ponytail. The large desk and chairs in his office also match this aesthetic.

Will is ushered in by a young woman, AMANDA, also short.

AMANDA.

Welcome Will. And let us know if you need anything. Anything at all.

Amanda exits.

Will stands awkwardly for a moment before the man speaks, still staring up into his fish tank.

A shark swims by.

DR. HAUER.

Please Will. Have a seat.

WILL.

Oh....kay.

Will goes to the chair. It is large and fits him well. He marvels at how comfortable it is.

WILL.

Wow.

DR. HAUER.

(still to his tank)

Nice, isn't it? When furniture treats you like a human being and not some kind of freakgiant?

Dr. Hauer turns to face Will, grinning.

WILL.

Yeah. It's really comfortable. I've never been so comfortable. Hey, maybe I should just skip the surgery and buy this chair instead!

DR. HAUER.

Ha ha ha ha ha ha haaaa!! Very good Will. Mr. Bloom told me you were a man of great humor.

WILL.

Mr Bloom? Oh right, Jeff Goldblum ...

DR. HAUER.

After we're through with the procedure, I think you'll find that *every* chair will suddenly greet you with open arms. *Especially* armchairs.

WILL.

That sounds nice.

DR. HAUER.

It is.

(has a seat at his desk)

Tell me, are you an aquathusiast, Will Rogers?

WILL.

An aqua-

DR. HAUER.

Thusiast, yes.

WILL.

I'm...not sure how I feel about...that term-

DR. HAUER.

I love *all* aquamarinical entities. The *simplicity*. To exist horizontally rather than vertically. To have no arms and no legs and yet be always propelling yourself forward with molecular precision and with your *whole being* rather than a couple of –

WILL.

I think I'd call seahorses vertical.

DR. HAUER.

(slamming his desk in complete rage)

Seahorses are not *fish!! NOT TO ME!!!*

Weird silence. Hauer pops some sort of pill, then smiles at Will.

DR. HAUER.

So what brings you here? Why on Earth have you decided to make your life so utterly and completely *better?*

WILL.

Well it was a series of things I think, umm. I was having these nightmares, then my agent dropped me, then a few soul searching montages and a well timed phone call from Jeff Goldblum later, followed by a few more situations that really drove the problem home and well...here I am.

DR. HAUER.

(chuckles)

A tale as old as time, Will Rogers.

WILL.

Plus he's got a new film he needs me to shorten up...or *down* for, so-

DR. HAUER.

Ha ha ha ha ha haaaa! Of course he does! That's Bloom all over! Now, Will, before we proceed I just need you to just sign a few-

Dr. Hauer's intercom buzzes.

DR. HAUER.

Yes, Amanda what is it?

AMANDA.

(over the intercom, she sounds slightly panicked)

Excuse me Dr. Hauer, but they need you in the sub-basement. Immediately.

DR. HAUER.

Tell them to wait. I'm in the middle of something.

In the background of Amanda's intercom, there are screams and perhaps some gunfire.

AMANDA.

They said it's urgent, Dr. Hauer. Incredibly urgent. In fact I think you may need to bring the-

A loud explosion, followed by a loud static hiss. Dr. Hauer shuts off the intercom and smiles at Will.

DR. HAUER.

We've been having problems with our air conditioning units. If you'll wait here just a moment.

WILL.

...sure.

Dr. Hauer pulls a very large futuristic looking weapon out from his desk and starts to exit.

WILL.

Is everything...?

DR. HAUER.

I'll only be a moment. Why don't you take some time to get to know that chair a little better, hmm?

Dr. Hauer exits. Will, left alone, glances up at the fish tank. A shark swims by and eats a seahorse.

Lights out.

SCENE ELEVEN.

Lights up on Stephanie and Albert in the apartment.

STEPHANIE.

So you're telling me that Will has gone to Hollywood to have himself shortened in some wildly skeptical procedure? And that Daniel and Michael are on their way right now across the country to stop him? And that if I go after them you're insisting on coming with? And that nothing I say can talk you out of it? And that you don't understand why everyone assumes you're a child molestor simply because you have anxiety issues and are intensely shy?

Albert nods.

Boy, Albert, I'll tell ya. You don't talk a lot, but when you do, you deliver.

Albert shrugs.

Well what are we waiting for? Let's go!

Albert jumps up eagerly. He runs offstage. Stephanie speaks to the heavens.

Godammit, Will. If I can get you out of this, I promise I'll tell you my true feelings and we can finally be together. And if I can't stop you, well...I guess it wasn't meant to be.

Albert reenters. He wears an old timey football helmet, goggles and a strange holster. Stephanie surveys this.

STEPHANIE.

Anxiety issues, huh?

Albert nods.

Me too, buddy. Let's go.

They start to exit.

STEPHANIE.

Is that a taser?

Albert nods. Steph shrugs.

STEPHANIE.

You never know.

Lights out.

SCENE TWELVE.

Lights up on Daniel and Michael in a car. Michael drives. Both of their knees are basically in their faces as it's an incredibly small car.

DANIEL.

You know you'd think that rental car services would have vehicles on reserve that were for the six two and above set *exclusively*.

MICHAEL.

I know.

DANIEL.

Hey, did you get a sense that the guys at the garage were laughing at us as we drove away?

MICHAEL.

Yeah I did get that sense.

DANIEL.

Me too.

MICHAEL.

Especially when I saw them laughing at us as we drove away.

DANIEL.

Yeah, right?

So, is someone subbing for you with those kids while you're gone?

MICHAEL.

Man, *fuck* those kids! Buncha racists.

DANIEL.

That's what I'm *saying*!

MICHAEL.

So what's the plan?

DANIEL.

The plan is: we drive nonstop, one sleeping while the other drives, which should get us there in two days. Then we get to this Shortening Facility or whatever the fuck, get Will out of there just in the nick of time, punch him the face, bring him back home, make *him* pay for gas, and then finally start my band Don't Believe the Height! with you on bass, Steph on keyboards, Will on drums and me on guitar and lead vocal.

MICHAEL.

That's it?

DANIEL.

That's it.

MICHAEL.

Sounds like a plan to me.

DANIEL.

That's because it is one. Rock solid.

Silence as they drive.

DANIEL.

How long since we stretched our legs?

MICHAEL.

Twenty minutes.

DANIEL.

Let's pull over at this rest stop.

Michael cuts the wheel.

Lights out.

SCENE THIRTEEN.

Lights up.

Will sleeps in a big bed, wearing a strange silver hospital gown.

Amanda enters carrying a tray with some pills and cups of water on it.

AMANDA.

Good morning, Mr. Rogers!

Will comes too, groggy.

AMANDA.

And how are we feeling today?

WILL.

Oh. Good. I actually fit in this bed. My feet don't hang off the end or anything

AMANDA.

Well get used to it. Pretty soon every bed will be just as complying.

Amanda crosses to the other side of his bed, where there's a window with blinds. She sets down the tray and goes to open the blinds.

WILL.

Yeah, first chairs and now beds. It's all very- oh please don't open that.

She pulls open the blinds. Will instinctively shields his eyes from the light. But there is none.

AMANDA.

What's the matter?

WILL.

Oh...I just thought the sun was going to come pouring in.

AMANDA.

Well that's silly. We're four stories underground.

She takes out six of her own pills. They each take a cup of water from the tray.

AMANDA.
Cheers Mr. Rogers.

WILL.
Please. It's Will. Or Rog. Call me Rog. *Rog* baby!

AMANDA.
(laughs)
Cheers Rog. To new beginnings.

WILL.
And comfortable beds!

They take their pills and a sip of water. Both have trouble swallowing them down. Finally they do, a little out of breath from the effort.

WILL.
So...I take it you got shortened too?

AMANDA.
Guilty!

They laugh a little too hard.

WILL.
So has it been...a good thing?

AMANDA.
Are you kidding? Not only do I get to be the poster child for like the coolest mega-corporation on the block, but I can actually hug again without eating dandruff.

WILL.
Wow, I never even *thought* about hugging!

AMANDA.
Here, I'll show you.

She leans down and hugs Will. It's an extended hug that lasts a moment too long. Finally they pull apart.

AMANDA.
Well, you're lying down so I guess it's /not the same thing.

WILL.
Right, no right. Didn't really illustrate /your point. Not at all.

AMANDA.
But you get the idea.

WILL.
Yeah, no, I can't wait.

AMANDA.
Yeah...

They lock eyes. Will chuckles.

AMANDA.
What?

WILL.
No, nothing it's just...you remind me of a friend.

AMANDA.
Oh yeah?

WILL.
Yeah. Except she's a lot taller. Like. A *lot*.

AMANDA.
Oh.

WILL.
No I mean she'd be so much cooler if she was short like you! I don't think she'd ever do anything like this though. She's like proud of being super tall for some reason.

AMANDA.
Well. Her loss.

WILL.
Or mine.
(beat)
By about three inches!!!

They both laugh way too hard.

AMANDA.
Okay, let's get you out of this bed and into some drug tests!

WILL.
Yeah! Let's do it- wait *what?*

Lights out quickly.

Projected against the wall are a bunch of blood cells dancing around wildly. This turns into some kind of psychedelic visual as we go into our next musical interlude...

**MUSICAL INTERLUDE (SUNG BY ALBERT IN HELMET AND GOGGLES):
“GETTIN’ HIGH (ON GETTIN’ SMALL)”**

During this song, a montage of Will getting injected with different drugs by a bunch of different machines. Nightmare sequence as Will trips and is visited by famous tall people like Abraham Lincoln and Liam Neeson. To be elaborated...

SCENE FOURTEEN.

The sequence ends with Will back in his hospital bed, moaning and writhing while somewhere onstage a voice says...

VOICE.

Hey...hey big guy...hey big guy wake up...

Will snaps awake as the lights come up full onstage, revealing CHARLIE DANIELS sitting up in another hospital bed nearby.

WILL.

(snapping to)
...not a giant!

CHARLIE.

Whoa, easy big guy.

WILL.

You’re a big guy!!
(collects himself)
Sorry. Sorry I’m just...where am I? I don’t remember anything.

CHARLIE.

You’re about to be sweeping your shin splinters off the floor is where you are. Name’s Daniels. Charlie Daniels. I’m a patient in here same as you.

WILL.

Patient...
(everything floods back)
Oh...

CHARLIE.

And you’re right. I am a big guy. Six foot five and a half. Six six, if you’re a dick. And you are?

WILL.
Will. Will Rogers.

CHARLIE.
No man, I mean your height.

WILL.
Oh, um. Six four...ish.

CHARLIE.
(chuckles)
Ish. I hear *that*. And what's your story, Will Rogers? Why have you decided to make your life so utterly and completely *better*?

WILL.
...I'm actually starting to wonder...
(looks at Charlie, who is grinning at him optimistically)
What about you? What was your, umh...?

CHARLIE.
My height plight? That's what they call it here. Height plight. Ha! I love the way that sounds, don't you?

WILL.
Um, it rhymes, I guess..

CHARLIE.
Sure does! Height plight height plight height plight height p-

WILL.
Right, yes so what was it?

CHARLIE.
Well...I was a Goofy at Disneyland.

WILL.
Oh you're an actor? Me too!

CHARLIE.
Pfft, *actor*, God no, are you kidding?! I'm a Goofy.
At least I was...

WILL.
What happened?

CHARLIE.

See, I've been working at Disneyland since I was fifteen years old. Trouble is, when I got there I wasn't hardly tall enough to get on the big kid rides...a real late bloomer, you know? So they put me in a Dopey costume and had me patrolling Main Street, whatever, great. But then at sixteen, I bloomed. Like *bloomed*, baby. Like it was a medical miracle, you know? Before I knew it I was out of Dopey and into Pluto, paddin' around Big Thunder Mountain happy as an angel's shit. But I just. Kept. *Growing*. And *growing*. Funny how quickly a miracle can become a curse. Pretty soon, tall as I was, Goofy was my only option. Only the problem with getting taller is that the kids keep getting smaller, you know? And it's dark in that Goofy suit...

Lights dim to something more dramatic.

...and so hot...you get dizzy, disoriented...you step on a toy some kid's dropped, and before you know it you're stumblin' round like a drunk Uncle Mike...but since you're Goofy, no one thinks anything's wrong. They think you're putting on a show, and they come running right up to you to watch. Right under you. An' you try to cry out...

Distant sounds of kids laughing. More immediate muffled sounds of Charlie screaming "No! Stay away! I can't see you down there!"

...but no one hears you...all they see is that big goofy smile, those big goofy ears...everything but those big. Goofy. Boots.

The sounds of boot stomping, echoing loudly.

Strange...how quickly a child's laughter can transform...into a scream...

The children's laughter turns into bloodcurdling cries for mercy. While muffled we hear Charlie cry, "I'm sorry! Run away! Run awayyyy!" This all fades away as lights return to normal.

Eight children were trampled that day. There's a memorial in the Town Square. Below the names it reads: Perhaps it is *not* a small world...after all.

So. Here I am.

Beat.

WILL.

Wow. That's...insane?

CHARLIE.

Yeah. A real height pleight.

(Suddenly chipper)

Anyway, guy who played Mickey told me about this place. He's an actor like you! Just did a spot on Law and Order actually!

WILL ROGERS.

Wait...Did you say Law & Order?

CHARLIE.

Yeah, can you believe it? The big time!

WILL ROGERS.

Which one? Which Law & Order was he on?!

CHARLIE.

Boy, I don't know. I didn't even know I had different one's to choose from. Imagine that! Why do you ask?

WILL ROGERS.

I don't know. It's just –

Will is about to speak when Dr. Hauer enters (along with the Blade Runner soundtrack). Amanda trails behind.

DR. HAUER.

Mr. Rogers, I see you've come out of your drug tests unscathed!

WILL ROGERS.

Well, actually I-

DR. HAUER.

Hurray! Glad to hear it!

(turns his attention to Charlie)

And how's my other favorite patient doing? Ready to make the leap!?

CHARLIE DANIELS.

(leaps up from his bed)

Only it's a small one!

DR. HAUER.

Hahaha! Very good! Amanda, go and make sure everything is secure.

AMANDA.

Right away Dr. Hauer.

She privately waves at Will, who waves back nervously.

Amanda exits.

Charlie steadies himself, beams confidently.

CHARLIE DANIELS.

May I just say, Doctor, that you've been nothing but gracious to me during my stay here. It will be an honor to finally stand and look at you eye to eye.

DR. HAUER.

Oh, Mr. Daniels, you flatter me! The honor is *all* mine...

The Blade Runner music is especially ominous here.

Charlie turns to Will.

CHARLIE.

Nice ta' meet ya, Will Rogers!

WILL ROGERS.

You too Charlie. Take care of yourself.

CHARLIE.

Oh I will! Who knows! Maybe they'll take me back as Dopey! That was my real calling, you know.

WILL ROGERS.

(smiles too much)

I'm sure it was.

Charlie starts to go.

DR. HAUER.

One down. You to go. See you tomorrow...Rog.

Dr. Hauer exits, humming "It's A Small World" at half time.

Will lies for several moments, deeply unsettled.

Lights out.

SCENE FIFTEEN.

Lights up on Stephanie and Albert on the side of the road. Stephanie juts out her thumb while the sound of a car zooming by can be heard.

Albert sits, playing with his taser. A pretty little bird tweets by his head. He tasers it and it falls to the ground.

STEPHANIE.

Albert! It's this kind of psychotic behavior that got us kicked out of the last three cars. Could you *please* just cool it on the killing innocent creatures thing for like two seconds while I try and- Oh!

The sound of a large truck approaching.

STEPHANIE.

(waiving her arms)

Oh! Oh! Stop! Stop!!!!!!

The truck gets closer.

A bunny hops by, sniffing Albert. He tasers it and it collapses, dead.

The truck whizzes by, blowing its airhorn. Steph turns and sees the dead bunny. She charges Albert, taking the taser from him.

STEPHANIE.

Jesus! I mean fucking Jesus Christ man!

Albert looks up at her, blinking. Stephanie just crumples on the ground, her head in her hands.

STEPHANIE.

This is what I get for being compassionate and unemployed.

Albert stares at her for a second.

The sound of another car approaching is heard.

Albert stands and moves downstage, presumably in the middle of the road. He places his goggles ceremoniously over his eyes and puts one hand on his hip and the other hand out as if to say "Halt, car!"

The car honks and honks as it gets closer and closer.

Albert remains unmoving as the car barrels down on him.

Stephanie looks up at the last moment and jumps up quickly.

STEPHANIE.

Albert, no!!!!!!

Sound of screeching tires as the car swerves, just missing Albert, and comes to a stop.

Albert takes off his goggles and smiles at Stephanie before exiting off to the car. She smiles back despite herself as a bird flies towards her head. She tasers it and exits.

SCENE SIXTEEN.

A gas station.

Daniel and Michael are doing leg stretches. Michael is doing proficient stretching on a yoga mat, while Daniel is falling over trying to touch his toes.

DANIEL.

Do you bring that mat everywhere you go?

MICHAEL.

Doesn't seem so silly now, does it?

DANIEL.

No, it seems silly.

MICHAEL.

This has got to be it, okay? We can't stop anymore. Otherwise, we're never going to make it in time.

DANIEL.

If we're not too late already.

MICHAEL.

How far to Hollywood?

DANIEL.

Not far. We should get there tonight. Stretching our legs has only set us a day behind schedule and I doubt that the damage has yet to be done.

MICHAEL.

How do you figure?

DANIEL.

Michael, if movies have taught me anything about experimental surgeries at mysterious mega-facilities, it's that there's at least a three day period in which the victim is lured in to a false sense of security and calm before any real damage is done.

MICHAEL.

Ah.

DANIEL.

So if we fill up now and drive nonstop, we should get there just in time to –

An old crusty gas station attendant, appropriately named OLD CRUSTY, enters, washing a jar with a dirty rag.

OLD CRUSTY.

Can I help you boys?

MICHAEL.

Yes, hi, we just need to fill her up.

DANIEL.

And we're in a bit of a hurry so if you don't mind...

Old Crusty spits some chew into the jar he's supposedly also cleaning.

OLD CRUSTY.

Where you boys in such a hurry to?

DANIEL.

Hollywood. Our friend is getting “shortened” by an evil mega facility-

MICHAEL.

(hits Daniel)

Our *band* is playing a show tonight, and we’re running late. We’re called Don’t Believe the Height. Maybe you’ve heard of us?

Old Crusty spits again.

OLD CRUSTY.

Can’t say as I have. Then again, I don’t much listen to *your* kind of music. Tall people music, I’m sayin’.

DANIEL.

Right, well...if you could just fill her up we’d really appre-

OLD CRUSTY.

You boys sure do look tired. How about a couple cups of coffee for the road?

MICHAEL.

Really, just the gas is all we—

OLD CRUSTY.

(shouting off)

Cain! Caligula! Get on out here!

Two incredibly short Young Crusty’s enter, CAIN and CALIGULA, both cleaning jars with dirty rags. Perhaps the actors playing them have sneakers on their knees and waddle around on kneepads. Probably they are members of the band.

OLD CRUSTY.

These boys got a long drive ahead of em. Say they’re tryin’ to get to Hollywood to stop their friend from getting shrunk over at Dr. Hauer’s.

Cain and Caligula squint their eyes at Michael and Daniel. Ominous music as they spit chaw simultaneously into the jars they’re supposedly cleaning as well.

MICHAEL.

No, like I told you-

DANIEL.

Dr. Hauer...?

OLD CRUSTY.

(to his boys)

Why don’t you fix them up some coffee for the road?

Cain and Caligula waddle off.

MICHAEL.

(to Daniel)

Michael, let's go. I got a real bad feeling.

DANIEL.

(to Old Crusty)

He mister, you got it wrong. Like I said we're playing with our band...

OLD CRUSTY.

That's right, that's right.

Don't Believe the Height, you said?

DANIEL/MICHAEL.

Yeah..

Cain and Caligula re-enter, brandishing shotguns.

OLD CRUSTY.

Well.

My sentiments exactly.

Daniel and Michael raise their hands, held hostage.

Lights out.

SCENE SEVENTEEN.

Lights up on another car, this one driven by IRV, a kindly old man in his seventies. His sweet wife, NORMA, sits in the passenger side. They're so nice. Stephanie and Albert sit in the back seat.

IRV.

Sorry bout almost killin' you there friend. Way my eyes and mind are, figured you for some kind of hallucination or somethin.

STEPHANIE.

(looking at Albert)

Yeah well that's an honest mistake. Thanks so much for picking us up though. I was about to give up.

NORMA.

Oh sweetie, it's our pleasure. Irv and I used to do a bit of hitchhiking when we were your age, isn't that right Irv?

IRV.

If you say so, Norma.

NORMA.

Irv's mind is so gone, he'll believe anything I tell him.

(to Irv)

Hey Irv, I talked to your brother last night. Fred just had another baby!

IRV.

That's great!

NORMA.

(back to Steph, whispering)

Fred died horribly in a tour bus hijacking years ago.

STEPHANIE.

Oh...that's /awful.

IRV.

So where are you kids headed in such a hurry?

STEPHANIE.

Hollywood.

NORMA.

Ohh! Off to make it on the big screen, huh?

STEPHANIE.

Not quite.

A long pause.

NORMA.

Pornography?

STEPHANIE.

Not pornography, no.

Aaron giggles.

NORMA.

Well that's good.

IRV.

I love pornography!

NORMA.

No you don't Irv. You spent many years of your life trying to get it censored.

IRV.

I did? Good for me!

NORMA.

So why on Earth head to Hollywood, my dear?

STEPHANIE.
Honestly?

Norma beams at her. How can you lie to that face?

We're trying to save our friend from getting a violent procedure where he's shortened by some sort of-

NORMA/IRV.
Dr. Hauer!!!!

Irv slams on the brakes. Everyone flies forward.

IRV.
Even *I* could never forget Dr. Hau-

NORMA.
(through tears)
Don't say his name again Irv! Oh God, we already said it once!!

STEPHANIE.
What?! Who's Dr. Hauer?

Norma lets out a wail. Ominous music as Irv tells a story.

IRV.
It was eight years ago this May. Our daughter, see she was always abnormally tall, much taller than the other girls. Of course we didn't care. Like we always told her, everyone ends up the same height in the end anyway. Look at your mother and I, we told her. I used to be six foot two, and Norma here was five foot three. Now we're an even five foot six.

STEPHANIE.
That doesn't make any se-

IRV.
But of course she didn't listen. She saw it as a flaw of the soul, that she was nothing more than some sort of horrible horrible freakgiant. Plus, she was in Junior High and children can be so *cruel* at that age. And then came the school dance. The "Traumatic Social Enchantment Under the Stars" dance.

Another wail from Norma as a banner for the dance appears behind them.

IRV.

Our daughter was terrified, refusing to go. But we insisted. Norma even bought her a pair of high heels, as if for her to say, “Not only am I sure of myself, but I’m comfortable enough to *up* the ante.”

NORMA.

(through sobs)

As it were!!!!!! Oh /God!!!!!!

IRV.

“As it were,” right. Well, the night of the dance came...we were chaperones.

A disco ball spins on. The sounds of Journey’s “Open Arms” echoing like a bad dream.

IRV.

And our daughter is the belle of the ball. *All* the boys want to dance with her, some of the girls too. There’s a line forming of people just waiting to get close to her. And our girl, our poor sweet girl, couldn’t be happier. But then, all of the sudden, she sees a group of boys in the corner, all the boys she’s just been dancing with. And they’re laughing...and pointing...at *her*....

Echoing howls of boys laughing, along with silhouettes of them pointing.

IRV.

...and looking down at the boy she’s dancing with, suddenly she realizes...

STEPHANIE.

Oh no...

IRV.

Oh yes. See, she had grown in other ways as well. And this boy’s face. It was buried...just *buried*...in her...in her...Oh GOD!!!

The boys laughter grows until it’s the entire Junior High. The music grows too. The disco ball spins like it’s Dante’s Disco Inferno. Norma sobs. Irv seems about to.

Then suddenly it all cuts out. We’re back in the car. Irv gathers himself.

IRV.

The next day she was gone. All we found was a business card for this Dr. Hauer, Professional Shrink. At first we were like, oh good, she’s taking emotional initiative. But then we made some phone calls and discovered what “shrink” actually meant. And when we tried to stop her, we were too late. And she was so different after, not just shorter but...*different*, somehow. And nothing we could say could bring her back. No cop, judge, or jury would listen to us. Whoever this Dr. Hauer is, he’s got very...*high* connections. And so we went home...without our daughter. Without our sweet sweet, abnormally tall baby girl.

A pause.

STEPHANIE.

What was her name?

NORMA.

Amanda!!! Amanda!!! OH AMAAAANDAAAA!!!!

Lights out.

SCENE EIGHTEEN.

A spot bumps up on Amanda, staring strangely into space. She looks at her pills, about to take them. At the last moment, she decides against it.

Will enters, in his hospital gown. He sees Amanda and immediately tries to hide, unsuccessfully.

AMANDA.

Will! You're not supposed to be out of bed! The procedure is this afternoon! You need to be resting.

WILL.

No, hey Amanda! I know, I was just...um...

AMANDA.

Trying to escape?

WILL.

What? No! Escape? I'm not trying to escape I'm trying to leave. Escape? Escape from what?

AMANDA.

Settle down Will. It happens all the time. People tend to get cold feet just before. Don't worry. You're head won't seem bigger after the procedure. You're hands and feet either.

WILL.

(looks at his hands)

My hands...I hadn't even thought about my...No, no! I just have a bad feeling is all. Like a dark and foreboding kind of feeling. Like my agent saying he sees me as a Ryan Stiles type kinda feeling.

AMANDA.

That's all part of the process. Have you been taking your /pills?

WILL.

Last night. I couldn't sleep. And I thought I heard...
Where's Charlie, Amanda? What happened in surgery?

AMANDA.

(her voice shakes)

Charlie's fine, Will! It was a successful procedure. He was fitted with some new pants and discharged this morning. It's the drugs, Will. They...they play tricks on your mind.

WILL.

Just tell me, Amanda. If I ask to leave, will they let me go?

Amanda doesn't say anything.

WILL.

Amanda, please, *will they let me go!?*

Amanda shakes her head, not looking him in the eyes.

AMANDA.

I...I can't...

WILL.

Can't what? This is my height we're talking about here!

Talk to me!

AMANDA.

(whispers)

Oh god, Rog. They're going to take...

They're going to take your-!

Dr. Hauer enters. The Blade Runner soundtrack enters with him.

DR. HAUER.

Will! What are we doing out of bed? Amanda, what is Will doing out of bed?

WILL.

It's not her fault. I was trying to find a...vending machine and got lost.

DR. HAUER.

Aha. Well you shouldn't be eating today anyway.

(a look to Amanda)

Or walking around, for that matter. I'll have someone escort you back to your room.

WILL.

No I'm fine.

Actually Amanda was just about to tell me-

AMANDA.

I was just about to tell him the side effects of the drugs. *Aural hallucination* being one of them.

DR. HAUER.

Ah, very true. I sometimes still hear the soothing synth sounds of the Blade Runner soundtrack wherever I go.

(a beat, filled with synthscape)

Well! Amanda, dear, would you please come with me? I believe we have another situation with the...air conditioning units.

AMANDA.

Right behind you, Doctor.

DR. HAUER.

And you, Will.

(puts his arm around Will)

It's probably best you sleep until the surgery starts.

Here. This will help.

In a quick motion Dr. Hauer injects will with a giant syringe.

AMANDA.

No!

WILL.

What?

DR. HAUER.

Amanda, get the device ready *now*. Before he gets another chance to escape.

WILL.

(totally groggy)

...escape.

Amanda runs off, upset.

Dr. Hauer pulls out his walkie talkie.

DR. HAUER.

(back into the walkie talkie)

Send a few men up here to carry Will to the Shrinking Chamber, right away.

VOICE

(crackles through the walkie talkie)

Yes, Dr. Hauer.

Will collapses, drugged.

DR. HAUER.

(to Will)

That's right. Just take a little nap until the procedure begins.

I'll be with you... *shortly*. AHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHA!!!

Dr. Hauer exits, laughing. The laughter echoes in Will's head as he tries to stand again but fails. He collapses and passes out.

Lights out.

SCENE EIGHTEEN.

Lights up. Daniel and Michael are tied up behind the gas station. Cain and Caligula guard them with shotguns.

DANIEL.
Michael?

MICHAEL.
Yes Daniel?

DANIEL.
I just want you to know, in case we don't make it out of here-

MICHAEL.
Don't talk like that Daniel!

DANIEL.
No, let me say this! I just want you to know that when I first met you, I thought you were really good at basketball too. I just assumed it!

MICHAEL.
It's okay Daniel-

DANIEL.
(crying)
It's not!! It's not okay! I'm a racist! And I'm going to die a racist! Oh God!!!

MICHAEL.
We're not going to die, Daniel. We'll think of something...

Daniel whimpers.

MICHAEL.
I'll think of something.

Old Crusty enters, holding Daniel's brochure, reading from it.

OLD CRUSTY.
"At our Shrinking Facility, patients are given the incredible chance to reinvent themselves from the *ground* up by allowing them to exist closer to the *ground*, thereby *grounding*

themselves in a new world in which they can look at those around them and finally discover a common *ground*.”

(to Cain and Caligula)

Whaddya say boys? You discovered a common ground with the folks around you?

They nod.

Present company excluded of course.

They nod. Crusty talks to Michael and Daniel.

See, my boys here were lucky enough to meet good ol' Dr. Hauer a while back. Showed them the light, didn't he boys?

They nod.

Yessir. Lot more to life than being incredibly proficient at basketball, isn't that right boys?

They nod, a little less so though.

See, Cain and Caligula was some of the best basketball players around these parts. And the college scouts wanted to offer them all sorts of scholarships so that they could run off and be big ol' fancy athletes at big ol' fancy schools, instead of operating this here gas station with their Pop, where they belong! Isn't that right boys?

They just stare at him.

Yessir. Common ground is right!

So you see we can't have you running off and bothering ol' Dr. Hauer, can we? No sir, not when he's given me, that is to say *us*, so much *assistance* over the years.

Michael starts to laugh. Quietly at first, then louder, until finally it's almost maniacal.

OLD CRUSTY.

Now what's so funny son? What you got to be laughing about?

DANIEL.

Yeah, dude. You're freaking me out.

MICHAEL.

(through laughter)

It's just...oh man...you're telling me that Short and Shorter here know their way around a *basketball* court? Baahahahahahaha!!

Cain and Caligula glare super hard at Michael.

OLD CRUSTY.

(to Daniel)

Hey, maybe you wanna tell your friend there to keep his mouth shut, before I have my boys shut it for him.

DANIEL.

Hey Michael, the scary man holding us hostage says for you to keep your mouth shut before he has his boys shut it /for you.

MICHAEL.

I bet the only dribbling the two of you do is on your pillow when you cry yourselves to sleep at night. AHAHAHAHAHA!!! BURN!!

Cain and Caligula aim their shotguns at Daniel and Michael.

DANIEL.

Oh man, not funny, Michael, *not funny*.

MICHAEL.

Does it count as travelling when you have to take the elevator up for a dunk?
/AHAHAHAHA!!!!

DANIEL.

Okay, that was pretty funny.

Michael keeps laughing. Cain and Caligula are about to fire.

OLD CRUSTY.

Now hold on minute!

For your information, mister, even though my boys aren't big enough to get accepted on no fancy college teams and taken away from *me*, doesn't mean they still couldn't wipe the floor with *you*!

MICHAEL.

(stops laughing, suddenly very serious)

Let's find out.

Daniel gasps. Cain and Caligula lower their guns.

OLD CRUSTY.

What do you mean?

MICHAEL.

I mean Stuart Little and Stuart *Smalley* here versus me and just me. If I win, you fill up our tank and we promise to turn around and drive back where we came from. And if you wipe the floor with me, well then, you can wipe the floor with me. Literally.

DANIEL.

Michael, no! It's suicide! You *suck* at-

MICHAEL.

Whaddya say, old man!?

Old Crusty looks at his sons. They smile each other, then at him. They nod.

OLD CRUSTY.

It's a deal. Not much of one for you I'm afraid. Untie them, boys.

Cain and Caligula do.

OLD CRUSTY.

So what's your poison, kid? Half court standard? Twenty One? King of the Court?

MICHAEL.

Those are all great games.

But I was thinking more along the lines of...*HORSE!!*

Choral music!

A rusty old basketball hoop is lowered from the ceiling, lit by a spot.

OLD CRUSTY.

Horse it is.

Lights out.

SCENE TWENTY.

Lights up on Will, strapped into the Shrinking Device. Lots of blinking lights, bleeps and bloops. We hear his voice over as he contemplates what to do.

WILL.

(VO)

Alright Will Rogers. This isn't even the most absurd situation you've been in. Remember that Redi-Whip commercial you auditioned for where you had to dress up like a can of whipped cream with a red Devo hat on your head and the only thing you could say was "Rrrrrready!" And the actress at the audition was like, "Hm, I wish this giant cookie tasted less like a cookie and more like a synthetic cream like substance." And you popped up behind the couch and screamed "Rrrready!" right in her face. And the actress at the audition cried she was so embarrassed for you? Remember that? Yeah, I'll bet you do. This? This is nothing. This is like an eight on the absurdity scale. What was Amanda going to tell you, I wonder? What could they possibly take other than my shins? My equity card?

Will's inner monologue is cut off by nearby moans. Scary nearby moans.

WILL.
(VO)
Who's that? Who's there?
Oh yeah.

He speaks out loud.

WILL.
Who's that? Who's there?

*Nothing, except for a few bleeps and bloops.
Then...a shadow flies by! Along with another louder, more nearby moan.*

WILL.
(VO)
What was that? Shit! I mean, gaagh! That was definitely real! Maybe this has something to do with the air conditioning units.

Another moan, another shadow.

WILL.
(VO)
Fucking shit fuck!! Get me out of here! *Get me out of-*

Three approaching shadow loom larger and larger. Then three shapes enter, all incredibly short (again shoes on knees maybe). They moan and move like zombies.

SHORTY ZOMBIES.
Killlll usssss!!! Killlllll usssssssss!!!!

WILL.
(VO)
AAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAGGGGGGGHHHHHHHHHHH!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!
I mean...

Out loud this time.

AAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAGGGGGGGHHHHHHHHHHH!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

Lights out.

SCENE TWENTY TWO.

Lights up on Irv and Norma's car. They're driving again, faster now. The suspenseful music from the previous scene should carry over into this scene.

STEPHANIE.

How much longer until we get there?

IRV.

At the speed we're goin', I'd say by nightfall.

STEPHANIE.

God, I hope we're not too late.

NORMA.

It's all right honey. The facility doesn't perform the surgery until three days after the patient is admitted. Gives the doctors time to lure their victims into to a false sense of security and calm before any real damage is done. How long since your friend disappeared?

STEPHANIE.

Three days.

NORMA.

Faster, Norm. You were a racecar driver remember?

IRV.

Do I!!

He really steps on it. The projected highway lines speed by at a blur.

STEPHANIE.

Albert, I'm giving you back your taser, okay?

Albert nods, excited.

Now, you ever used this on a non-helpless creature before?

Albert shakes his head, ashamed.

Well today might be your lucky-

She sees something out the window.

WAIT! Stop the car!!!!

Irv slams on the breaks. Everyone flies forward.

There, at that gas station. Next to that tiny rental car! That's Michael's yoga mat!!!

NORMA.

Honey, we really can't afford to-

Stephanie starts to get out of the car.

STEPHANIE.

Five minutes. That's all I ask.

Michael would *never* leave his yoga mat unattended.

She's gone. An awkward moment between Irv, Norma and Albert.

NORMA.

(to Albert, offering)

Fig Newton?

Albert accepts. Eats it really slowly. Norma watches him eat. Then, to Irv...

NORMA.

(whispers)

Did she say he had a taser?

Lights out.

SCENE TWENTY TWO.

Lights up on Will and the Shorty Zombies. They wear hoods, and approach Will slowly.

WILL.

Who are you? Oh God, WHAT are you?

SHORTY ZOMBIE #1.

We were once...like yooouuu!!!

SHORTY ZOMBIE #2.

Tall men and women promised a brighter, shorter future!

SHORTY ZOMBIE #3.

Brighter! Shorter!

WILL.

Oh god.

SHORTY ZOMBIE #1.

First they gave us comfortable chairs!

SHORTY ZOMBIE#2.

Then they put us in comfortable beds!

SHORTY ZOMBIE #3.

Chairs! Beds!

No!

CHARLIE DANIELS.
Yes! Servant to the master!

SHORTY ZOMBIE #2.
The master!

SHORTY ZOMBIE #3.
Aster!

WILL ROGERS.
What master? Charlie! Come on. *Get me out of here!!*

CHARLIE DANIELS.
Only if you kill us!!

SHORTY ZOMBIE #2.
Kill uuss!!

SHORTY ZOMBIE #3.
Not mee! I can adjuuust!!!

WILL ROGERS.
No...no...

They all reach up to grab Will.

CHARLIE DANIELS.
Please Will. Kill usss! Killl ussss!!!!!!!

Will screams.

Suddenly there's a piercing siren sound causing the Shorty Zombies to cover their ears.

Amanda enters, carrying the large futuristic weapon Dr. Hauer was brandishing before. It emits the wail that's sent the Shorty Zombies reeling.

AMANDA.
Get away from him, you mindless Hobbit freaks!!

They exit, moaning.

WILL.
Oh God, is it true Amanda? Are you going to turn me into...into one of *them*?

Going to him.

AMANDA.

Not anymore. I'm gonna get you out of here.

Will just stares at her, betrayed, while she starts to free him.

WILL.

How could you, Amanda? I trusted you. And was developing a non-threatening crush on you.

AMANDA.

I had no choice! It was either this or become one of those *things*. Plus, once my unpaid internship is up, I'm pretty sure I'll be up for a small salary job with health insurance.

WILL.

But-!

AMANDA.

Ssh! Listen!

They listen. The distant sounds of the Blade Runner soundtrack getting closer and closer.

AMANDA.

He's coming! We don't have much time! God, why does this machine have to be so secure!?

WILL.

Actually, I'd be a little nervous if a machine for a procedure like this wasn't top of the /line.

AMANDA.

Shut your face. He'll be here any minute, and then it will be - .

DR. HAUER.

Too late?

Will and Amanda scream, startled.

DR. HAUER.

I'm afraid too late has come and gone. The time for surgery...

He reveals some giant, horrible device, half blade, half jack hammer. Let's call it a bladehammer.

...is now.

He calls offstage.

Charlie!

Charlie enters.

Take her away.

Charlie grabs her, but not without a struggle. Amanda knocks him down and is about to get her sonar scream gun, but he subdues her before she can, dragging her off.

DR. HAUER.

It's a shame, Amanda. We have *such* a strong health insurance plan.

AMANDA.

NO!!!! DON'T HURT HIM!!! ROG, SAVE YOURSELF!!!!

WILL.

I CAN'T!!!

He struggles.

I LITERALLY CAN'T!!!!

But she's gone.

Dr. Hauer grins at Will.

DR. HAUER.

Let's begin.

He turns on his bladehammer, which makes a loud and terrifying whirring sound.

Lights out.

SCENE TWENTY THREE.

MUSICAL INTERLUDE (RAPPED BY ALBERT): "Just Because I'm Tall (Doesn't Mean I Can Ball)"

Albert's song is performed over the following sequence.

Lights up behind the gas station, where the game of Horse between Michael and the Young Crusty's is underway. The sequence is done in montage format to the song, with the lights coming up and down on various quick moments of Michael really sucking, while Cain and Caligula do more and more hilariously involved shots. Old Crusty keeps score on some dusty old chalkboard. Each time the lights come up, a new letter has been added to Michael's tally. Finally when it gets to H-O-R-S on Michael's side, the song comes to an end, the montage ends, and the scene begins proper.

Daniel and Michael have a powwow. Michael is painfully out of breath.

MICHAEL.

Don't worry, dude. I got these guys right where I want them.

Daniel just stares at him for a moment.

DANIEL.

You're kidding / right?

MICHAEL.

Of course I'm kidding! We're totally fucked!

DANIEL.

I know, I know. I've been thinking though, and I've got a back up plan.

MICHAEL.

What's that?

DANIEL.

I think...we're going to have to seduce Cain and Caligula.

MICHAEL.

What?

What the fuck?

What the fuck is wrong with you?

What the fuck is wrong with you /Daniel?

DANIEL.

Shushushush. Be cool, be cool.

Daniel waves over Michael's shoulder at Cain and Caligula, who are looking at them suspiciously.

DANIEL.

(to Cain and Caligula)

Don't worry, just a little pep talk going on over here! You fellas are playing exceptionally well by the way. It's an honor to watch you boys in motion. Truly. I mean that-

MICHAEL.

Stop flirting with them!

DANIEL.

They really are quite extraordinary-

MICHAEL.

Daniel, we need to think of another option.

DANIEL.

No, *you* need to think of another option. I'm not the one who challenged the long lost brothers of the Shining twins to a game of */Horse!!*

MICHAEL.

Well I'm not the one who insisted we stretch our legs every twenty */minutes!*

DANIEL.

Well I'm the one with the stupid yoga mat!

MICHAEL.

Well I'm not the one who's a dirty racist!

DANIEL.

Well I'm not the one who can't beat the lollipop guild at a simple game of */Horse!*

MICHAEL.

Well *I'm* not the one with the stupid plan to save stupid Will from his stupid *self!* Maybe he deserves to get his legs chopped off!!

DANIEL.

Whoa, dude.

MICHAEL.

No...no I didn't mean that. Sorry.

A silence.

DANIEL.

Well. At least we've determined what we're not.

OLD CRUSTY.

Hey! Is this a pep talk or a town hall meeting!?! Let's finish this thing so we can get the *real* fun started!

DANIEL.

Let's just get it over with.

MICHAEL.

I just...I wish Stephanie was here. She'd know what to do.

Stephanie enters.

STEPHANIE.

Michael! Daniel!

MICHAEL/DANIEL.

Stephanie!!!

DANIEL.

Whoa.

(closes his eyes)

I wish I never had to look at Albert's creepy face ever again.

Albert enters.

DANIEL.

(up to the Heavens)

Really?

MICHAEL.

(to Stephanie)

What are you guys doing here?

STEPHANIE.

We're on our way to stop Will, like you...

Surveys the scene.

...supposedly.

What are *you* guys doing *here*?

DANIEL.

You know, Michael's just playing some B Ball. I'm getting held hostage. Whatever.

STEPHANIE.

But Michael, you *suck* at-

MICHAEL.

Yes, thank you.

DANIEL.

He's horrible, yes.

OLD CRUSTY.

(seeing Steph and Albert)

Weeeeelll, if you kids haven't gone and multiplied. It's a regular freak convention, isn't it boys?

Cain and Caligula nod, laugh.

OLD CRUSTY.

(to Stephanie)

Glad to meet ya.

Old Crusty points his shotgun at her and Albert.

I'd give you all name tags, but I don't think I can reach that high. Although I wouldn't mind a slow dance with *you* pretty lady.

Stephanie makes a move to charge Old Crusty. Daniel and Michael stop her.

DANIEL.

No, Stephanie, no. These people are evil backwoods stereotypes. You don't want to provoke them.

MICHAEL.

He's right, Steph. Nothing we can do can change the way they look at us. We just have to try and beat them at their own game and-

STEPHANIE.

Their own game? THEIR own game? When was the last time you guys looked at yourselves in the mirror?

MICHAEL.

Like eight or nine /minutes ago...

DANIEL.

There was a reflective puddle I was able to make do /with...

STEPHANIE.

Have you forgotten why we're all here? Our friend is about to turn his back on not only what makes him so special, but on what makes *all of us* special. We were born into this world different, (*looks at Albert*) some maybe even more so than others. Sure we weren't given a choice, but that doesn't mean we should make what we are a *curse*. Without tall people, who would change our lightbulbs, grab things off of high shelves for old ladies, and get paid incredible amounts of money to model the latest fashion trends and play in the NBA?

DANIEL.

Not Michael.

STEPHANIE.

Maybe not. But does that mean we should let *them* take it all away from us?

"Dramatic speech" music underscores the following.

This is your chance Michael. To reclaim what Will is so foolishly trying to have taken away. This is for all the people who live day to day at six foot two and above - maybe six foot, six foot one if you're lanky enough. This is for every person whose height is the first thing mentioned when they're described by other people, instead of their smile, their mind, or their soul. This is for every one who's felt the burning eyes of those standing behind them at a rock concert. This is for every time someone is asked how the weather is "up there!" This is for every man who gets called "big guy" by strangers in the street.

This is for every kid who has to play “Tree #2” in the school play even though she possesses more dramatic talent in her pinky than Mrs. Bradley’s entire third grade class combined! Well I don’t know about you! But I’m *sick* of being sort of pushed around. Today is our day! So, let’s take back what’s *heightfully* ours! Starting here. Starting NOW!

Music is still building. Daniel is crying proudly. Michael is intensely introspective, nodding to himself.

OLD CRUSTY.

Come on! Let’s finish this thing! I got other unrelated hostages back at the house that need attending to!

STEPHANIE.

Come on Michael. For the kids.

Michael rises slowly, dramatically. The music abruptly becomes a suspenseful hum.

MICHAEL.

Fuck the kids.

He turns to Cain and Caligula, nods.

MICHAEL.

Let’s go.

They throw Michael the basketball. He dribbles it slowly. With each dribble, a timpani drum rings out. Over his dribbling, projected on the screen are slow motion close ups of Stephanie, Daniel, Albert, and Kevin Bacon (from the final scene of The Air Up There) watching him nervously.

Michael stops dribbling. Suspenseful hum cuts out. He closes his eyes, mutters something to himself and then quietly makes a small sound that quickly becomes a slow motion roar as the “dramatic final sports play” music comes in. Michael reaches his arm up and moves to the basket as though he were flying through the air, primed to dunk. In actuality he’s just taking enormous slow motion strides. It takes an appropriate build of dramatic tension for him to get to the basket, and when he finally does he just reaches up and drops the ball in, pretending to dunk, even though his feet never leave the ground.

There’s a moment of silence. Then an eruption of cheers from Steph, Daniel, and Albert. They run to Michael, hugging him as though he just won the NBA finals. Triumphant music plays throughout. After a bit more celebration, the four ecstatic friends run off, waving at their captors as they go!

STEPHANIE/MICHAEL/DANIEL.

Bye!!!

Yeah bye, that was fun!!

We’ll stop by on the way back for a rematch!

They exit, taking the triumphant music with them, and leaving Old Crusty, Cain and Caligula standing there, deeply confused.

OLD CRUSTY.

Well now, he didn't give you boys a chance to shoot, did he?

Beat.

Also, that would have scored him just an "H," not won him the whole game or nothin'.

Beat.

Also, am I crazy or did his feet never leave the ground that whole time?

Beat.

Well what are you standing there for, go after them, you good for nothin' four foot sacks of -

Cain and Caligula have picked up their shotguns and point them at Old Crusty. Crusty stares at them for a loooong time. Finally...

OLD CRUSTY.

(suddenly very sincere and tragic)

Well what are you waiting f-!!!

Gunshots as lights shift .

SCENE TWENTY FOUR.

Lights up on Irv and Norma's car. Daniel, Michael, Stephanie and Albert are all crammed in the back seat, all of their knees are up in their faces.

NORMA.

Are you sure you're all comfortable back there? I don't know why these seats don't go up any further.

DANIEL.

No this is fine.

STEPHANIE.

(very worried)

How much longer until we get there?

NORMA.

Any minute now. Come on Irv.

IRV.

I'm going as fast as I can. Say, did I ever tell you kids about my days as a racecar driver?

NORMA.

(to the backseat)

Now, what sort of weapons do you kids carry on you nowadays?

DANIEL.

Weapons?

NORMA.

Yeah, in Irv and I's day it was brass knuckles and dirty shivs, or *shanks* if you prefer.

MICHAEL.

Yeah no, we don't carry weapons.

STEPHANIE.

Albert has a taser!

DANIEL.

Why does Albert have a taser?

Daniel looks over at Albert, who just stares back blankly.

Never mind.

NORMA.

Well, I guess that will have to do. And this.

Norma pulls a large pistol, seemingly out of nowhere. She checks its cartridge like a Navy Seal might.

DANIEL/MICHAEL/STEPHANIE.

Whooooaaaa!

NORMA.

This ain't your mother's mega-facility, kids. I'm talking top of the line security. Guard dogs, invisible lasers, disposable henchmen, and...*(shivers)* you kids don't even got a shank?

STEPHANIE.

Oh God, what if we don't make it in time?

MICHAEL.

Don't think like that Stephanie.

DANIEL.

Yeah, right about now Will is probably in a state of perfect ease, completely unaware of the horrors that await him.

Lights out.

SCENE TWENTY FIVE.

Lights up on Dr. Hauer whirring his bladehammer and laughing maniacally. Will screams in horror.

DR. HAUER.

Don't worry, Will! You won't feel a thing...once you black out from the horrible, blinding pain!

WILL.

Please! I changed my mind! I don't want to be a mindless Hobbit freak! Pleeaase!!

DR. HAUER.

Sorry! I couldn't hear you over this incredibly loud and painful medical instrument!

Dr. Hauer laughs maniacally some more. Suddenly the whirring bladehammer stops whirring.

DR. HAUER.

Oh come on thing. Just give me a second while I recharge this.

Dr. Hauer goes to an iPod adaptor plugged into the wall. He plugs it into the bladehammer, which makes the same "ding" sound an iPod makes when you plug it into a charger.

DR. HAUER.

This will only take a few minutes.

Awkward silence.

You know, everyone's going on about all this new technology, but if you don't charge something for one night it's like, forget about it.

Awkward silence.

How about those drugs we gave you, huh? Those are pretty great, right?

Awkward silence.

Yeah...Liam Neeson. Good actor. Consistent.

Awkward silence.

Okay! I think that should be long enough to-

WILL.

Wait! Stop!

There must be something I can do! What about that unpaid internship? Seems like you guys just opened a slot.

DR. HAUER.

I'm sorry Will, but it's not up to me.

WILL.

Not *up* to you!!? You're the evil head of this operation!

DR. HAUER.

Evil *head*? Ha, I *wish*.

WILL.

What? Then who's in charge then?

Dr. Hauer's phone rings. He holds a finger up to Will and answers it.

DR. HAUER.

Yes, what is it?

Uh-huh.

Yes, uh-huh.

Well if that happens there should be a big red button under your desk that sets off the alarm, okay? Is that all?

Yes, fine, what else?

What do you mean security breach?!!

If there'd been a security breach I would have heard the-

An alarm goes off. Lights flash. A woman's voice says "Security Breach. Security Breach."

Yes, *that* button, very good, Brandon.

(to Will)

Ugh, my sister's kid.

(back on the phone)

Yes, I'll be right up.

He hangs up his phone, starts to exit.

Now don't go anywhere, Will. Ha! "Don't go anywhere," what is *wrong* with me today?

Dr. Hauer exits, but almost immediately re-enters, backing onstage with his hands up. Norma follows him in, pointing her pistol at him. Irv, Stephanie, Daniel and Michael enter behind her with Albert bringing up the rear, taser out, ready for action.

WILL.

Stephanie! Daniel! Michael!...um, Albert! What are you guys doing here?!!!

STEPHANIE.

(running to him)

Oh Will! What have they done to you?

WILL.

Don't look at me, Stephanie. *Don't look at me!!*

STEPHANIE.

Shut up, and let me get you out of here.

She tries but can't.

WILL.

It's a really well crafted piece of equipment-

NORMA.

(to Dr. Hauer)

Get him down from there. NOW, you monster!

DR. HAUER.

(going to Will)

Okay, okay. Geez. 'Monster' seems a little /hyperbolic.

NORMA.

Just get him down!!

Muttering, Dr. Hauer gets the clamps off. Will jumps down from the device and immediately embraces Stephanie.

STEPHANIE.

Oh what were you thinking Will!?

WILL.

I wasn't thinking, Steph. I wasn't thinking. Except for in those last few moments, when all I could think of...was you.

NORMA/IRV/MICHAEL/DANIEL.

Awwwwww!

DANIEL.

Yeah, nice.

WILL.

Let's go.

DR. HAUER.

Wait. You all don't actually think you'll make it out of here do you?

Norma grabs Dr. Hauer, holds the gun to his head.

NORMA.

Maybe with you as a human shield we might.

DR. HAUER.

Oh yeah? Shoot me! I don't care! Come on, *shoot me!* Do for me what I can't do myself! Come on you fucking *pussy!* *Do it!!! DO IT!!*

Shots are fired, but not by Norma. Dr. Hauer collapses.

DR. HAUER.

...release...sweet blind...*release...*

He dies. Everyone looks at Norma.

NORMA.

Don't look at me. I've never shot a gun in my life. I don't even know where I got this thing.

We hear a voice from offstage.

VOICE.

Generally when a man asks to be shot...

Jeff Goldblum enters, brandishing a gun of his own.

JEFF GOLDBLUM.

...I ahhh...oblige.

Everyone gasps.

EVERYONE.

Jeff Goldblum!!

DANIEL.

The Fly!!!

JEFF GOLDBLUM.

(like a Bond villain)

Please. Call me *Bloom*.

WILL.

It was you! You're the evil head!

JEFF GOLDBLUM.

That's not very nice, Will. There's much more to me than my head. Much much more.

Charlie enters, dragging on Amanda, followed by the other Shorty Zombies.

IRV/NORMA.

Amanda!!

DANIEL.

The Fly!! Oh, no, sorry.

AMANDA.
Mom! Dad!

Norma fires at Charlie. It hits him in the gut. He goes down.

CHARLIE.
Oh god! If I hadn't been shortened this wouldn't be a killshoooooot!

He dies. The other Shorty Zombies grab Amanda.

Norma points her gun at Goldblum.

NORMA.
Let her go YOU monster!!!

Norma fires off the rest of her round at Jeff Goldblum. It does nothing.

JEFF GOLDBLUM.
Monster? Ahhh, not quite.

WILL.
What...what are you?

JEFF GOLDBLUM.
That's a very good question. You see this body of mine is just a vessel. My true form is something very similar to one of your planets ahhh aquamarinical entities, or *fish*, if parlance is your ahh...yeah.

WILL.
You're...an alien?

JEFF GOLDBLUM.
You really do *shine*, Will Rogers. Yes, an alien. I crash landed on this planet many decades ago, and quickly possessed the body of a young, tall, out of work actor, much like yourself.

WILL.
...I get work.

JEFF GOLDBLUM.
But it wasn't long before my striking height and signature quirkiness began to weaken and wain. I went from *Jurassic Park* and *Independence Day*, to *Holy Man* and *Cat's & Dogs* in a matter of months. I was dying, Will. And I realized that in order to sustain myself as this "Jeff Goldblum" I'd need a little...assistance. So I set up this facility, where I'd lure young men and women to willfully donate me those bits and pieces that would keep me alive. A little shin for the height. A slight lobotomy for the quirk.

WILL.

So...there was never any film? You just used me for my height?

JEFF GOLDBLUM.

I'm afraid so. You see recently I found the perfect field from which to harvest my crop. A place where a seemingly endless supply of fresh faced, eager youths are at my disposal, ready to do almost anything to please me, anything that gets them that next big *break*. I'm talking of course about Law & Order...*Criminal Intent!*

DANIEL.

I knew it!

MICHAEL.

Shut up, we all knew it.

JEFF GOLDBLUM.

And that's just what I do. I give em the biggest break of their life. Just. Below. The knees.

WILL.

You're sick!

JEFF GOLDBLUM.

(puts his gun in the pocket of his suit)

Yes, I am.

He moves to the bladehammer, picks it up.

But lucky for me, I have you to make me better.

He's about to move towards Will with the bladehammer. Stephanie moves in between them.

STEPHANIE.

You'll have to get through me first!

Michael moves next to Stephanie.

MICHAEL.

And me!

Daniel moves next to Stephanie and Michael.

DANIEL.

And me! (I love your work)

JEFF GOLDBLUM.

(grinning)

Well..this should get me through the next two seasons!

Will moves in front of his friends.

WILL.

No guys. This is something I have to face alone.

JEFF GOLDBLUM.

Oh don't worry. There'll be time for all of you when I'm through. Ahahahahahaha!!!

He whirs the bladehammer, and starts to approach Will with it. Just as he's about to reach him, however, he gets caught to the wall by the iPod charger.

JEFF GOLDBLUM.

What the...?

Suddenly, Albert screams out...

ALBERT.

Will!!! Catch!!!!!!!

Everything goes slo mo again as Albert mimes throwing his taser. Projected on the screen is the taser flying through the air in slow motion. Will reaches up for it, and suddenly there's a taser in his hand. The moment he catches the taser everything returns to regular speed as Will zaps Goldblum with it. Goldblum convulses horribly.

JEFF GOLDBLUM.

Tasers!!! My species' only weakness!!!

Everyone backs away from Goldblum as he continues convulsing more and more violently (electrical currents should be projected for cheesy effect). Goldblum convulses his way to behind the Shortening device, where he starts to sink.

JEFF GOLDBLUM.

I'm shrinking!!! I'm ummm shrinking!!! What a yeahhh, I mean, world!!! Umm yeaaaahh...!!!!

He disappears behind the machine. A weird puddle oozes out from it.

The Shorty Zombies moan.

SHORTY ZOMBIES.

Freeedom! Freeeeeeeedom!!!!

They release Amanda and scatter off. Amanda runs to her parents, embraces them in a group hug.

NORMA.

Oh my baby girl!

AMANDA.

I missed you! I missed you both so much!

IRV.

We missed you too darling! It's been hell without you. Absolute hell.

NORMA.

(through happy tears)

Now what are you talking about, Irv. Amanda's been with us the whole time and it's been the happiest, most memorable years of our lives.

IRV.

It sure has, sweetheart. It suure has!

NORMA.

Now come on everybody! Let's move out!

Everyone starts to exit. As they're leaving...

DANIEL.

Hey Albert, that was totally awesome what you did back there. Do you play an instrument?

Everyone's gone except Will and Stephanie. They smile at each other for a moment. Amanda lags behind, then moves to Will quickly, kissing him on the cheek.

AMANDA.

Thanks Rog.

WILL.

Yeah, you too.

She smiles at him before exiting. Stephanie stares hard at Will for a long moment.

STEPHANIE.

Rog?

WILL.

Yeah I dunno...

She just keeps staring at him.

WILL.

What!? Are you jealous?

STEPHANIE.

No!

WILL.
You're jealous!

STEPHANIE.
I'm not, it's just...
Remember when I said I'd like you just the same if you were five foot three?

WILL.
Yeah.

STEPHANIE.
Total bullshit.

They almost kiss, when a little alien pops up from behind the machine, wearing Jeff Goldblum glasses. It screeches horribly and looks kind of like a deformed seahorse. With a warrior's scream Stephanie grabs it and throws it on the ground behind the machine. She steps on it and steps on it. Goo should fly. The alien screeches finally die out. Stephanie turns back to Will and takes him by the hand, leading him out.

STEPHANIE.
Seriously though. Rog?

WILL.
It was just...whatever, it was a weird time for me. Can we just drop it and like maybe get on with our lives?

She kisses him. Music!

STEPHANIE.
Sure thing big guy.

They run off.

STEPHANIE.
(exiting)
...I've never been on tippie toes before!

The alien arm extends from behind the machine, holding Goldblum's broken glasses, and collapses, dead. Dramatic flourish of music.

SONG: NOT SURE, BUT POSSIBLY TITLED "JEFF GOLDBLUM WAS THE BIG HEAD THE WHOLE TIME"

Lights out.

EPILOGUE.

Lights up on Will, dressed in a tuxedo. The sounds of a park: children playing and laughing. Will stands for a moment, staring out, focused, thinking. He looks down for a second. When he brings his head back up, he's grinning.

WILL.

I just want to say first off that I never meant to do what I did. And I know that doesn't justify what happened. *I know that.* It's just...you people don't know what it's *like* for someone like me. Someone...so...so...

Little Boy enters, cutting Will off.

LITTLE BOY.

Hey big guy?

WILL.

Me?

LITTLE BOY.

Yeah, you, big guy, *stupid!* Aren't you that guy from that movie?

WILL.

Which movie?

LITTLE BOY.

You know, that movie you star in that was both a big critical and commercial success?

WILL.

(incredibly modest)

Oh, hah, yeah. In fact I was just working on my Oscar speech, you know...*(crosses fingers)*
just in case.

LITTLE BOY.

Hey mommy! Mommy! It's a giant!! A giant movie star!!

"Mommy" enters.

MOMMY.

Now sweetie, I'm sure he's not a-

Sees Will.

-an absolute delight on stage and screen! Sir, you are one of my heroes.

WILL.

Oh, um, thank you, /wow.

MOMMY.

(calling off)
Mommy!! Mommy!!

Elderly Woman enters.

ELDERLY WOMAN

“Mommy”? Well Diane you haven’t called me that in thirty seven y-

Sees Will, clutches her chest fondly.

My heart’s just *exploding!* With *joy!* You, sir, are an inspiration.

WILL.

Oh, well now I wouldn’t-

ELDERLY WOMAN.

(calling off)

Mommy!! Mommy!!

Nurse enters wheeling in what looks like the crypt keeper.

NURSE.

Now now you know it’s dangerous to excite your poor old-

She sees Will.

-Delightful and *wonderful* man!

She whispers to the crypt keeper.

Look old woman! Look who it is! It’s Will Rogers!

Crypt keeper flatlines.

ELDERLY WOMAN.

Oh well, at least she died happy.

Everyone laughs.

Will’s agent enters, dressed as a bum.

AGENT.

Got any change? Spare some change? Got any-?

He sees Will.

Will? Will Rogers?

WILL.
Yeah, that's me.

AGENT.
Well shit on my face, Will Rogers! Remember me! I was your agent, remember!?

WILL.
Oh yeah, yeah...sort of.

AGENT.
Well would you look at that? Saay, how's the weather up there?

A motorized plane comes buzzing in. Will ducks and it hits his agent in the face. Agent collapses to the ground. Will stands up again, smiling.

WILL.
The weather's just fine. Just fine.

Everyone laughs way too hard, including the agent on the ground, bleeding. This goes on for a few moments until Daniel enters.

DANIEL.
Hey Will!!

Everyone disappears except Daniel. Will snaps out of his daydream.

WILL.
...I'm a giant movie star!

DANIEL.
What? No you're not.

WILL.
Huh? Oh.
How long have you been standing there?

DANIEL.
I haven't been standing here. I've been too busy dealing with all those idiots out there. God I'm nervous, are you nervous, cause I'm nervous. I've never played in front of this many people before.

WILL.
Yeah well I've never gotten married in front of this many people anymore.

DANIEL.

Dude, no offense, but that's like so much easier. Are you ready though cause I think they're all ready. Except me, by the way. I'm not ready. We only got like three days of practice for the reception, and there's no time to do a sound check because of your stupid ceremony and like... *I'm freaking out here man, I don't think I can go through with this, okay!? I'm freaking OUT!*

WILL.

You'll be fine. Could you give me a second though? I'm going over my, um...

DANIEL.

Yeah, yeah.

(leaves, muttering)

He gets to go over his vows but I can't even go over my setlist, fucking bullshit...

Will looks forward, composes himself. Then delivers his vows like it was an episode of Cold Case – at first, at least.

WILL.

You ever been so happy, buddy? You ever been happy, man? Like really happy, sweetheart? Like really totally and completely happy, man?

He pulls out his vows, reads over them.

“You ever been so happy, buddy? You ever been happy, man? Like really happy, buddy? Like really totally and completely happy, man?”

Puts the sides away, reciting quickly to memorize.

Happy, buddy. Happy, man. Really happy buddy. Really totally completely happy, man. Buddy, man, buddy, man. Fucking *patterns*. Okay.

He continues. The beat and hook of “A TREE BRANCH OF LOVE (HIT YOU IN THE FACE)” kicks in.

Cause that's how you make me feel. Real *happy*. And I know it's a simple word, but it's the only word. Sometimes I get so *happy* I can almost touch it. So *happy* I just want to wrap my arms around it and hug it and squeeze it until we're old and dead. And *short*. Because in the end, we all get down to the same height anyway.

And Stephanie? I can't wait to get short with you.

But for now, let's just stay the way we are.

Goddamned *giants*.

Will grins at his cheesy vow. Lights out on him.

Daniel enters, with a mic.

*The band comes out onstage, tuning up. Daniel takes the mic and introduces Don't Believe the Height and its singer (to be improvised). Albert enters, dressed like Ziggy Stardust or something equally freaky and sings a funky as shit **REPRISE OF "TREE BRANCH OF LOVE."** Michael even raps. It's awesome.*

A big dance number from the cast that really utilizes those long limbs.

And while Albert sings and everyone dances, wedding photos are projected on the back wall. Will and Stephanie's faces are cut off from the nose up. But no biggie.

End of play.