

# BACK TO OCEAN CITY

A Screenwriter's Journey



Eric Moyer

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For Miss Picone,  
Frank Heying,  
George Emery,  
Wesley Moyer  
and MGM...

**In•spi•ra•tion:** a person, place, experience, etc., that makes someone want to do or create something.

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## FOREWORD



I hated school. I never worked at it. I basically did what was needed to pass; through grade school, middle school, high school and even into college. I was plain and simple, an uninterested student.

The only thing I was ever passionate about was music; listening to it and playing it.

I left college after my second year and headed for Hollywood with intentions of becoming Doc Severinsen's drummer on The Tonight Show. Needless to say, it never happened. Along the way, playing gigs here and there, I started taking an acting class. I thought it would help with my shyness.

It was in that acting class that I found the person who inspired me. Her name was Peggy Feury and she was amazing. She was the kind of teacher that made you want to do your best, one of those rare people who made everyone feel special and that you were her favorite - everybody felt that way about her.

I started reading plays - always the classic writers; Hemingway, Shaw and Chekhov. She encouraged me not just to read one play, but all of that author's work to really understand the men and women behind the writing.

I would go there five days a week and evenings just to listen to her tell stories and talk about the process of acting. She was a little gray-haired woman who dressed in a skirt and sweater or blouse and always wore a string of pearls.

She was magical, one in a million, and not just for me. All of her students felt the same. It was a wonderful time in my life. I was reading and working on all the classic plays with a teacher who had a masterful grasp on the process of acting.

When Peggy died in a car crash on November 20, 1985, all of her students were lost. We would never find a teacher so nurturing, who made us want to learn and absorb everything she had to offer. I looked for a long time, but never found that again.

Some of the other students in my class at the time included Sean Penn, Meg Tilly, Nicolas Cage, Eric Stoltz, Lily Tomlin and Michelle Pfeiffer. The list goes on and on, and everyone in town wanted to study with this great teacher. I'm forever thankful that I got to work with her for eight extraordinary years.

And then there's my favorite place in the world...Joe's Pond in West Danville, Vermont.

I've been going there since I was about eleven years old. In my mind it's a tranquility base. Every summer, for the first two weeks in July, my family would rent little cottages around the pond. We'd take turns entertaining each other and doing pot luck dinners. On average, there used to be about thirty people and it was always a great reunion to look forward to.

There were three little ponds that all connected. We stayed on the big pond, and as a kid, it was a place to be Tom Sawyer, always barefoot. Fishing, swimming and water sports were the activities of the day. While I learned how to water ski, canoe and fish, it was also a place where I learned about family and its importance.

One of my favorite things, even as a youngster, was to all pile into our little boat and cruise along at a snail's pace close to shore and pick out the camp I thought one day I'd like to own. This is a dream I still hold onto. My other favorite thing was to hike up the hill. It was a couple of miles and at the top was a small cemetery filled with graves dating back to Civil War times. As you stood in the cemetery and looked out west over the horizon, you could see the green mountain range colored by beautiful sunsets. I would think about the old gravestones and the life the people must have endured during the long and very cold Vermont winters. Many graves were of children and entire families stricken down by disease or the elements.



In my later years, Joe's Pond became my quiet place to go and reflect on life. The older folks are all gone, the crowd is much smaller and I don't water ski anymore. It's much harder to recover from those wipeouts than it used to be. I simply enjoy sitting on the porch with my fishing pole and guitar with the fabulous memories of my family.

I still dream that one day I'll own a little place and spend more time there, but for now, I'm happy with those first two weeks in July and spending time with what family members and cousins are still left. I told my kids, when my time is up, I'd like my ashes to be spread up on that mountain top by that cemetery where it looks out at Vermont's green mountains colored by those beautiful sunsets.

I'd like to see that every evening...

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Robert Romanus". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the printed name.

Robert Romanus  
Los Angeles, CA

Robert Romanus is an American actor and musician who has starred in film and television. He is best known for his role in the 1982 comedy *Fast Times at Ridgemont High* as ticket scalper Mike Damone. Over the years, he has appeared on the soap operas *Days of Our Lives* and *The Young and the Restless*, as well as the television shows *Fame*, *CHiPs*, *21 Jump Street*, *MacGyver*, *Will & Grace* and many more. He currently lives in Los Angeles where he owned and operated Bob's Espresso Bar. He has three children and continues to act in films and play music with his band, Poppa's Kitchen. [www.poppaskitchen.com](http://www.poppaskitchen.com)

[www.backtooceancity.com/robert-romanus.html](http://www.backtooceancity.com/robert-romanus.html)

## ABOUT THIS BOOK

This book is about inspiration.

It is not a memoir. It might appear as a biography...but it's not. There's no dirt or wild tales from my life. Everything in this book can somehow be connected to my love for movies. I included some personal stories here and there, but only if they had an influence on my writing.

I included portions of all the screenplays I have ever written, some of which I don't even remember writing. Luckily, I saved all of my scripts, essays, rejection letters and student films in boxes. Additional content, such as links to video files, can be found at the end of each chapter and on the official website at [www.backtooceancity.com](http://www.backtooceancity.com). You can also visit my personal website at [www.ericmoyer.com](http://www.ericmoyer.com).

So how did I get here?

When I was in grade school, I was obsessed with a book series called *Choose Your Own Adventure*. At the bottom of each page, you had to make a decision on the direction of the story. For example, turn to page 81 to climb the ladder or turn to page 39 to go down the chute. There were so many different ways the story could end; some good, some bad.

There was one book in particular that I will never forget. It was called *Inside UFO 54-40* by author Edward Packard. It came with a disclosure about a planet of paradise called Ultima. It explained that many never get there and couldn't be found by making choices or following instructions. The warning ended, "There is a way to reach Ultima. Maybe you'll find it." As a young reader, I was determined to choose the adventure that led to Ultima. I read the book countless times, but struggled to find the elusive ending. I questioned whether the ending even existed.

And then it happened. Page 101. I don't remember how I got there. It read, "You did not make a choice, or follow any directions, but now, somehow, you are descending from space, approaching a great, glistening sphere. It is Ultima, the planet of paradise."

I still think of that mysterious page to this day.

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## ABOUT THE SCRIPTS

All of the scripts are presented in chronological order, each with an introduction. This is the first time some of them are being read by anyone. They cover various genres and are unique to their inspirations.

I was always told to write what you know. Most of my early scripts were very personal and my later ones ventured into new territory, but there is one strong connection to them all. They were heavily influenced by movies from a very specific time in my life, primarily the eighties, but more on that later.

The scripts are presented as close to original form as possible, but I did remove any inappropriate language to keep this book suitable for all ages. There is something else that I found all over my early work. I had the tendency to use words ending in "-ing." For example, I would often say, "He is standing at the door." I corrected it to say, "He stands at the door." It just flows better.

Other than that, the scripts are exactly as I wrote them, but there is one more thing readers will notice: the absence of technology. Most of the scripts in this book were written twenty years ago, so there were no cell phones or internet. A lot of plot twists would be much different if a character carried a cell phone, so these scripts would need to be modernized.

Some of the excerpts are long, so please remember that you can access the table of contents at any time and jump to the next chapter.

[\*The Last Pilgrimage\*](#): A college student travels through time and gets a chance to save his grandfather.

[\*Safely Home\*](#): A brain transplant brings two friends together again.

[\*Capital Punishment\*](#): Lawyers. Guns. Money. Time travel.

[\*Cracking Heads\*](#): *The Outsiders* meet the *Boyz N the Hood*.

[\*Dead on the Fourth of July\*](#): A woman confesses to a grisly crime as a race for hidden money begins.

*The Missing Years*: Two childhood friends are reunited after high school.

*The Fest*: Multiple lives intersect in one weekend at a music festival.

*The Breathing Sequel*: After suffering a head injury, an actor confuses his movies with reality.

*Younger & Younger*: Divorcing couples travel to a magical island where they become kids again.

*The Good Life*: *The Breakfast Club* meets *Goodfellas*.

*Beer Goggles*: After falling into a vat of beer as a child, a college student discovers he has super powers when he turns twenty-one.

*A Halfway House Christmas*: A spoof of reality television set in a halfway house during the holidays.

*My Little Trainwreck*: When a movie star arrives in a small town, she is assigned a "babysitter" to keep her out of trouble.

*School Spirits*: *The Sixth Sense* in a high school.

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## ABOUT OCEAN CITY



When I was a kid, my grandparents rented a house on the beach in Ocean City, NJ, for two weeks every August. There are some obvious things that separate Ocean City from nearby beach towns. You have to pay to go on the beach and a staff walks around and checks for tags. The other big difference is that Ocean City is a dry town. There are no bars, beer distributors or liquor stores and you can get a fine for drinking in public.

I have lots of memories of Ocean City. My uncle Mark dug large holes in the sand and would bury my brother and I to our necks. My grandmother packed lunches for the beach with sandwiches, peaches and plums. I was terrified of stepping on a jellyfish, and on the boardwalk, there were scary monsters that ran around on the roof of the Playland amusement park. I'll always remember eating ice cream and watching the ocean at the music pier, and of course, walking by the arcades on the boardwalk just to hear the sounds of dozens of Pacman and Donkey Kong video games being played.

Most important, Ocean City is where I saw *Back to the Future* for the first time in the summer of 1985. It set me on a course that would have ripple effects throughout my own time space continuum.



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## HOW ABOUT A NICE GAME OF CHESS?



*“Pop” is on the far left. My grandfather is standing beside him.*

During World War II, my grandfather, Wesley Moyer, was declared “missing in action” after his plane was shot down over China. I found this manuscript that he wrote about his experience:

### *A Tribute to Pop*

JULY 29, 1944:

“A DAY TO REMEMBER, A DAY I SHALL NEVER FORGET”

WORLD WAR II-CBI THEATRE (20TH AIR FORCE)

MISSION: ANSHAM MANCHURIA

After four hours of flying, we were forced to leave formation, due to engine trouble. We could not make the secondary target, but the last resort, a Japanese airfield, was within reach. On the first run, our bombardier could not get the target in his sights. On the second run, he failed to do so again.

By then, the Japanese were on to us. We were hit by anti-aircraft and Japanese planes. We were flying at 18,000 feet, but with only one engine operating, we



were rapidly losing altitude and we were forced to bail out at 2500 feet, thirty miles from the enemy airfield in occupied China.

I landed on top of a barren mountain, hid my parachute and waited. Within one hour, I met Ben, our tail gunner. Since we were on the top of a mountain, we saw a small village in the valley. On our way down, we met Petersen, our bombardier, and we went to the village.

One of the men immediately hid us in a cave. About five hours later, our co-pilot and flight engineer came to join us. Now there were five of us. For three nights, they took us up a mountain, and then before dawn, they took us back to the cave. We found out later they did not know what to do with us. The United States government offered \$500 per man, and the Japanese offered the same. It was easier for them to go 30 miles than to take us 300 miles to safety.

On the fourth night, they took us to another village, as we only traveled by night so we could not be seen by the enemy. This was a large village and we dodged behind a number of houses until we finally went into one.

It was then that I first saw him. He was sitting on the ground floor, a distinguished looking man, dressed in white denims. A lady was there and she spoke perfect English, and she told us he was to be our leader, and we would travel at night and sleep during the day. He kept looking at me and smiled all the time.

After the lady told us what was ahead, crossing enemy lines, etc., she asked if we had any questions. After she answered a few, I asked why he was looking at me all the time. She then spoke to him in Chinese, and he answered her. She smiled and said he never saw a person with red hair before.

Whenever we stopped to rest in the nights that followed, he always wanted to sit by me. Since my last name is Moyer, he called me Moyea, and because he was older, I called him "Pop," and that is how it was for the next three weeks. We had no change of clothes, as we slept with them on, always ready to move if we were seen by the enemy. We didn't smell that good and got very sticky and I used to have him scratch my back.

On the eighth night, we stopped to rest and met two more of our crew, Joe and Ted. Now there were seven of us. There were eleven on our crew. They told us that three were killed, and we wondered which of the four were still alive. The next two weeks were about the same: sleep by day, walk nights. Sometimes we slept under the stars, sometimes in a house. The family moved out and we moved in and we always slept on the floor. One day we slept in an old fort, with three walls still standing.

One afternoon, they woke us up at 1:00PM and were very excited. They told us we had to move quickly and they took us off the beaten path, as there were no roads in the mountains. About two hours later, four of the Chinese men came back grinning, holding up one hand, then went through the motions of slashing their neck and said, "Five Japanese." The Japanese were on our trail with a patrol of five men. The Chinese slew the Japanese without firing a shot.

Pop was a heavy smoker. He smoked three cigarettes, one right after the other. He would go for about one hour and then smoke three more. One night as we were crossing the lines, they ran out of cigarettes, and we stopped to rest. Two of the Chinese men left us, waited until one of the Japanese got near the tree they were in, jumped on him, and killed him. Soon they came back, each with an armful of cigarettes. How they got them, I will never know.

On the 23rd day, we were in friendly territory and we walked during the day. We saw a nice size town or small city ahead of us. Pop then ordered all of us to stop. He started to undress, and one of the Chinese men came with a uniform and Pop put it on. Through our interpreter, we came to find out he was a General in Chiang Kai Shek's army. Imagine a Sergeant having a General scratch his back.

As we entered the city, people were lined up along the street. We were in a parade and they considered us heroes, but we sure didn't feel like heroes. We stayed there for two days, saw a native play and had a thirteen-course banquet. It was here that we were met by an American Sergeant who told us to get onto the back of his truck.

As we were driving away from our friends, we waved our good-byes and saluted Pop. He then saluted back and I could see tears in his eyes.

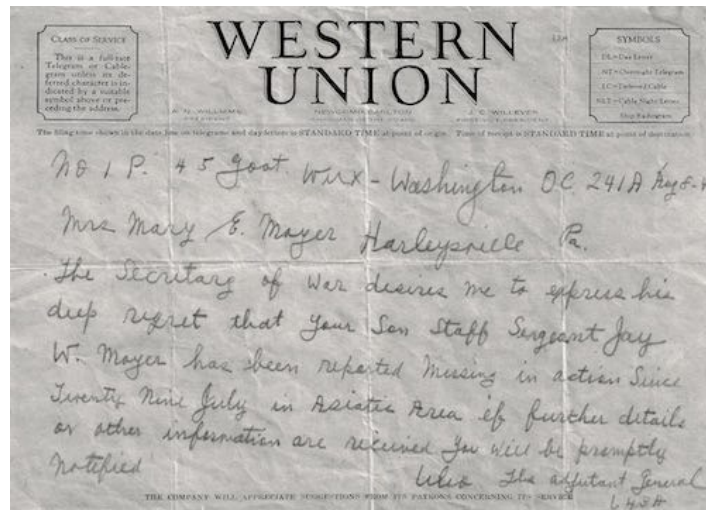
We then went to a small outpost consisting of five men. Chills ran up my back when I saw the American flag. It was here that we met Lieutenant Scandrett, who was taken out of enemy territory by another group. He followed the same trails we took, only he was two days behind.

We were there four days when a C47 escorted by two fighter planes arrived. We boarded the plane, engines still running, and they took us back to our base in India.

During our travels with Pop, we were given straw hats, so at night we looked like the Chinese. I have that hat hanging in my bedroom, and each night as I go to sleep, and each morning as I wake up, I thank God for sending Pop to take us back to safety.

Yes, Pop, I think of you often, and I pray that somehow, wherever you are, you will know your red-haired friend is thinking of you.

-Written by Wesley Moyer



*My great-grandmother received this telegram on August 4, 1944.*

Wesley Moyer met my grandmother, Eileen (Enright) Moyer, and they had seven children, thirteen grandchildren, and as of this writing, seven great-grandchildren. He passed away on February 26, 2003, after a fourteen-year battle with Parkinson's Disease.

I often think of my grandfather's "missing in action" story. While the Chinese General saved the lives of these soldiers, he also saved the lives of their children, grandchildren, great-grandchildren and many generations to come. Somewhere out there are the grandchildren of the Chinese General, and wherever they are, I would like to thank them for what their grandfather did for mine.

My grandfather had a unique influence on my work. He was also a filmmaker, but in a different way. He filmed hundreds of hours worth of 8mm movie footage of our family and the community. After he passed, I converted most of the home movie footage to video and distributed it to family members. I also converted the footage he shot of his hometown of Harleyville, PA, and posted it on a dedicated youtube page.

There are references to my grandfather's war experience in my first film *The Good Life*, and I hope to someday turn his "missing in action" story into a movie script.

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## THE DREAM IS ALWAYS THE SAME



My parents, Philip Moyer and Cathy Emery Griffiths, are responsible for leading me down the filmmaking path.

I was a goofy kid. Anyone that went to school with me will tell you that, but there were also a lot of signs that I was going to do something with movies.

For whatever reason, it all started with saving things, which would be a trend throughout my life. The first thing I ever saved was the weekly TV Guide magazine. I always made sure we had the new issue the day it came out and added it to a growing stack. Eventually, my parents made me throw them all away.

Sometime in 1984, I started a scrapbook. This was not an ordinary scrapbook. I clipped movie ads from the newspaper and glued them to blank pages. I went from saving TV Guides to saving movie ads. Again, my parents didn't understand why I was doing this, but I never threw it away. I still have it, as you can see from the picture above.

In May of 1988, my collection got even bigger and more serious when I purchased my first issue of Premiere magazine. I remember it featured Kevin Costner and Susan Sarandon to promote the film *Bull Durham*. The final issue of Premiere was released in 2007 with Will Ferrell on the cover. I had every issue they released over those twenty years. Shortly after the magazine ended, I nearly threw them all away, then stopped myself at the last minute. While no one would want the entire twenty-year collection, I thought maybe there would be interest in specific issues, so I put some on ebay, listed them at \$1 and sold a handful.

Like most other guys my age, the *Star Wars* films were a huge part of my life. After seeing the second installment, *The Empire Strikes Back*, I was very upset about Han Solo being frozen in carbonite and held the character of Boba Fett fully responsible. He was the bounty hunter who captured Solo and turned him over to Darth Vader and Jabba the Hutt. I took my prepubescent anger out on my Boba Fett action figure and encased him in clay. When I finally let him out, I was never able to completely clean it off of him. I still have that Boba Fett action figure with traces of clay.

On August 1st, 1981, a new cable station called MTV went on the air for the first time. As a nine-year-old, MTV was a huge influence on me, but it was a different channel back then. They played music videos twenty-four hours a day. Nothing else. No television shows. I played MTV in the background every morning while I got ready for school. Some of my favorite music videos of that era were "You Might Think" by The Cars, "The Heart of Rock 'n' Roll" by Huey Lewis and the News, "The Reflex" by Duran Duran and "Thriller" by Michael Jackson.

As I grew older, my dad took me to record stores where I quickly discovered the soundtrack section. My dad always knew he could find me there when he was ready to leave. The first soundtrack I ever bought was for *National Lampoon's Vacation*. At the time, I never heard of Lindsey Buckingham or Fleetwood Mac. All I wanted was Lindsey's theme song called "Holiday Road." My second soundtrack was *Risky Business*. I didn't know who Bob Seger was, but I loved his song "Old Time Rock 'n' Roll." Soundtracks were always important to me: in the films I watched and the ones I directed. Some people even told me that my first film, *The Good Life*, felt like one long music video.

MTV was also a nickname given to a style of film editing that used fast cuts. In college, I took a class about addiction and learned about an eye study that connected film editing and addiction. The eyes that watched long shots with no cuts tended to drift and were easily distracted. The eyes that were shown quick cuts stayed fixated and wanted more. I took on this style of editing many times over the years, but have since fallen in love with the long tracking shot, which I didn't fully appreciate until I saw the 1997 film *Boogie Nights*. I also

recommend watching the opening tracking shots of *Touch of Evil*, *The Player* and the entire film *Children of Men*.

Then came the biggest battle of my childhood. My love for movies would be interrupted by an alphabet letter when I was not allowed to see R-rated movies. I lost every fight over this and couldn't get my parents to budge, although compromises were made. For some R-rated movies, they sent my brother and I out of the room during inappropriate scenes. There were three movies where I specifically remember leaving the room for certain scenes: *The Terminator*, *Revenge of the Nerds* and *National Lampoon's Vacation*. On several occasions, my parents let their guard down and forgot to send us out of the room and quickly panicked, like with *The Terminator*. But little did my parents know that I already saw most of these movies uncut at a friend's house and pretended I was watching them for the first time.

In seventh grade, my library teacher gave all of the students a test to determine what you wanted to be when you grew up. Days later, I got back a computer generated sheet that said I wanted to be a screenwriter, so I started telling everyone I was going to make movies. When I got to high school, not many people owned a video camera. The technology was new and they were very expensive. One alternative was to rent one from a local video store, so that's what I did. For Mr. Timmer's anthropology class, my final project was about Stonehenge, the prehistoric monument in England. Using a rented camera, my friend Tony and I made a very unconventional video about the origins of Stonehenge. Being 1991, there was a lot of *Twin Peaks* footage incorporated into it, as well as my favorite music at the time.

Of course, editing was also an issue back then, so the entire project was shot in order. I remember asking the television production guys at school to help clean up a few spots, but for the most part, the final product was exactly what I shot. This was the first time I ever filmed something and showed it to people. My classmates loved it and Mr. Timmer played it a second time. In retrospect, the video was not very good, but it was ambitious and went above and beyond what was expected for the assignment. Some classmates still remind me of that video to this day.

The Stonehenge video got heavy television play at family functions and I felt slightly awkward at first, but eventually got used to it. Later that year, my parents bought me a video camera for my high school graduation present, which I took with me to Temple Film School.

Around the same time, I did something that would help my films many years later. I walked into the Broad Movie Theater in Souderton, PA, and asked for a job. I told them I wanted to make movies and thought it was important for me to work at a movie theater. They hired me that week and it didn't take long for me to become a manager and projectionist. I stayed in touch with the owner

throughout college and the theater premiered my first two films, *The Good Life* and *A Halfway House Christmas*.

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## CATTLE QUEEN OF MONTANA

The movies I saw between ages ten and twenty-five seemed to have the most influence on me. In my case, I turned ten in 1982, and it began with *E.T. The Extra-Terrestrial* and *Poltergeist*, and peaked in 1994 with *Pulp Fiction* and *The Shawshank Redemption*. Sure, there are some additional films here and there such as *Boogie Nights* and *The Sixth Sense*, but I already developed my taste in movies and it was more difficult for a film to influence me as I grew older. The movies I watched during these years are the types of movies I continue to enjoy, and more importantly, the types of movies I tend to write.

Where are the *Star Wars* and *Indiana Jones* films? Of course they influenced me, but they are too obvious for this list, so I left them out. This is not a list of my favorite films. That list would be too long. These are the ones you can find traces of in my scripts.

***A Clockwork Orange*** - One film forever changed the way I looked at filmmaking. It happened after high school when I accidentally discovered *A Clockwork Orange*. I say "accidentally" because I can't even remember why I watched it in the first place. All I know is that I ended up with my own VHS copy and tried to get anyone I could to watch it. I was completely overwhelmed by the film. All the installments of *Friday the 13th* and *A Nightmare on Elm Street* couldn't prepare me for this. Nothing could. Director Stanley Kubrick took so long to make movies that he was completely off my radar at the time. Maybe it was Kubrick's use of visual imagery or his twisted use of classical music and the song "Singin' in the Rain." Regardless, *A Clockwork Orange* affected me in a way that no other film ever did, and its imprint is all over my second script, *Safely Home*.

***Twin Peaks*** - I know this is not a movie, but I was never more obsessed with a television show, and nothing has ever compared to it. My first introduction to David Lynch was the movie *Dune* in 1984. Since it was marketed as another *Star Wars*, I had high expectations as a twelve-year-old and remember being very disappointed and confused by the movie. Little did I know that six years later, David Lynch would become one of my favorite directors and I quickly became a huge fan of his films *Eraserhead*, *Blue Velvet* and *Wild at Heart*. David Lynch's influence can be seen throughout my short films and scripts. Starting with my



high school project *Stonehenge*, I found myself trying to imitate him. The biggest example can be found in my first feature film *The Good Life*, particularly in the experimental editing. *Twin Peaks* is still my favorite show of all time. I would even pick up a dozen donuts or a cherry pie when it was on. If you watch the show, you'll understand. I could easily re-watch the entire series at any time and always try to turn the show on to potential new fans. I was extremely disappointed when it was canceled and even more upset after the final episode. It left so many unresolved cliffhangers, especially the final scene with Agent Cooper. I was determined to write a fan fiction script called *Return to Twin Peaks*, but literally as I was working on this book, David Lynch and Mark Frost announced a third season of *Twin Peaks* to debut in 2016. Can't wait!

***The Silence of the Lambs*** - Without spoiling the film for those who haven't seen it, all I can say is an ambulance ride and the ringing of a doorbell made me rethink the possibilities of storytelling. Some friends and family members will remember my brief obsession with the FBI, clearly a result of *Twin Peaks* and *Silence of the Lambs*. My scripts for *Safely Home* and *Capital Punishment* are loaded with FBI agents.

***Risky Business*** - I had to sneak-watch this when I was a kid. Most of the story went over my head, but this was one of my favorite eighties films. The opening dream sequence influenced several scripts, particularly *The Last Pilgrimage*. It was also my first introduction to Curtis Armstrong, who would later have a connection to my film *A Halfway House Christmas*. In 2004, director Luke Greenfield released a film called *The Girl Next Door*, which paid tribute to *Risky Business* in a way that I always wanted to do. For some reason, I hoped for a sequel to *Risky Business* and Luke's film was the next best thing.

***Superman 2*** - I was lucky enough to see this in a movie theater when I was ten-years-old. While Gene Hackman is always good as Lex Luthor, the definitive Superman villain for me is General Zod, and every bad guy I've ever written has some kind of Zod influence. I wrote a script called *The Breathing Sequel* which was inspired by General Zod and the actor who portrayed him, Terence Stamp.

***The NeverEnding Story*** - When I first saw this film, I was close in age to the two main characters, Bastian and Atreyu. While I was never really into fantasy films, there was something about this film that connected with me. It was also scary and upsetting at parts, even though it was aimed at kids. Who could forget Gmork the wolf? Or The Nothing, the antagonist without a face? In the end, it managed to be uplifting and was one of those movies I watched countless times.

***The Goonies*** - I like to describe *The Goonies* as *Indiana Jones* with kids. You would think there would be countless imitations over the years, but I can't recall other treasure hunt movies with kids. I always wanted to try to write something like this. *The Goonies* was another influence on my unfinished script for *Younger & Younger*.

**Midnight Madness** - And if I ever finish that script for *Younger & Younger*, it will feature a scavenger hunt similar to the one in *Midnight Madness*, but with kiddie cars and bicycles. This was also Michael J. Fox's film debut. There's nothing deep here, but it's a whole lot of fun. This is the only film on my list that was given the BOMB rating from film critic Leonard Maltin.

**Stand By Me** - This is the definitive coming of age movie for me. When this came out, I was the same age as the four main characters. I don't think the studio marketed it right and it should have been a bigger hit in theaters. It did catch on with home video though, which is how I discovered it. I remember the original artwork for the videocassette didn't appeal to me either, but I'm glad I gave it a chance.

**Sixteen Candles/The Breakfast Club/Weird Science** - I call this the John Hughes trilogy. It's hard to pick a favorite, as I quoted lines from all three of them, but *The Breakfast Club* comes out on top. It's amazing what writer/director John Hughes was able to do with one location and such a small cast. Normally the attention span of a kid would resist something like this, but I watched it repeatedly. There's something for everyone in all three movies.

**Clue** - I was always obsessed with endings and this movie was released in theaters with three of them. Not to mention, I was a huge fan of the board game the movie is based on. *Clue* was written and directed by Jonathan Lynn, who wrote a letter in support of my film *School Spirits*.

**Fast Times at Ridgemont High** - This was another movie I wasn't allowed to see, but found a way to watch anyway. Sean Penn is billed as the star, but this is Robert Romanus' movie all the way. Along with *The Breakfast Club*, this is one of the best high school comedies ever made, and has its fair share of drama too.

**Clerks** - A black-and-white independent film shot for \$27,000 by a first time director with unknown actors that made over 3 million in theaters? Inspiration doesn't come much better than that.

**Poltergeist** - The clown and that tree! If you saw this movie, you know what I'm talking about. This is the first movie that really frightened me as a kid. While the clown and tree scenes were scary, there is another one that stands out, filmed in one take. The camera shows the mother straightening the kitchen chairs and follows her as she opens a cabinet. When we return to the chairs, they are impossibly stacked on the table. Sometimes the scariest things are what we don't see, something I tried to do in my script for *School Spirits*.

**Dreamscape** - I was always fascinated with dreams, so dream sequences appear in many of my scripts. I even wrote a term paper about dreams as a teenager. The movie *Dreamscape* was one of the first movies to be rated PG-13. It was

about the ability to enter another person's dream, a plot device that was similarly used in the recent film *Inception*. There are also elements of *Dreamscape* in my script for *School Spirits*.

**WarGames** - I saw this in theaters when it came out and it was my first real introduction to suspense. I thought I was going to see a movie about video games and got so much more than that. The game of Tic-Tac-Toe would never be the same for me.

**Commando** - I was introduced to Arnold Schwarzenegger in *The Terminator*, but I think I watched this Mark Lester film more and there are so many great one liners. I wrote my script *Capital Punishment* as an homage to *Commando* and the Arnold films of the eighties. I always wished there was a sequel and eventually learned there were originally plans for one. When Arnold couldn't commit, the script was rewritten and became *Die Hard* starring Bruce Willis.

**Total Recall** - This is another Schwarzenegger influence, but mainly for the plot twist, and is closely related to the film *Shattered*. The idea of a character not being who they thought they were was a new concept to me and is something I used in one of my own scripts.

**Shattered** - Similar to *Total Recall*, this film pulled a jaw-dropping switch with the identity of the main character. *Shattered* was not a box office hit and wasn't liked by critics, but many discovered it on video like I did. The multiple twists in the story changed the way I planned out my endings, which shows in my script for *Capital Punishment*.

**National Lampoon's Christmas Vacation** - If you watch the opening credits to *A Halfway House Christmas*, you might notice some similarities in the animation to *National Lampoon's Christmas Vacation*. In my script, the tree even caught on fire in another homage to the film. However, burning a Christmas tree in my house had logistical problems, so I removed that scene.

**A Christmas Story** - I remember watching this back in 1983 before it was ever considered a Christmas classic. Who would have thought at the time that they would run a 24-hour marathon of it every year? I always wanted to make my own Christmas movie, and I did, with *A Halfway House Christmas*. The antlers worn in my film is a very subtle nod to *A Christmas Story* and a certain 1985 film starring John Cusack.

**Better Off Dead** - This is still one of my favorite comedies of all time. I still can't believe that John Cusack hates this film and stormed out of the premiere twenty minutes in. What movie was he watching? There are so many quotable lines, starting with, "I want my two dollars." Directed by Savage Steve Holland, *Better Off Dead* felt like a dark variation of a John Hughes film.

**Boyz N the Hood** - This inner city drama came out the year I graduated from high school and a year after *New Jack City*. I often describe my script *Cracking Heads* as a cross between *The Outsiders* and *Boyz N the Hood*.

**La Bamba** - This was the first time that I wanted to see a biographical film in the theater, most likely because the title song performed by Los Lobos was a number one hit. Regardless, it helped me develop an appreciation for these types of movies, particularly about rock stars, which led to my obsession with writing a script about Layne Staley from Alice in Chains.

**Streets of Fire** - The film declared itself "A Rock & Roll Fable." The opening scenes where fictional rock star Ellen Aim is kidnapped while performing on stage helped me develop my own music video sequences in my student film projects and in *The Good Life*. This is a very underrated film by director Walter Hill that I strongly recommend. It even stars Willem Dafoe and Rick Moranis in supporting roles.

**Twilight Zone: The Movie** - When I saw this as a kid, I didn't know about the tragic helicopter crash that took Vic Morrow's life. I was always partial to the third segment about the little boy who gets anything he wishes for, but the Steven Spielberg portion called *Kick the Can* became the inspiration for my script *Younger & Younger*.

**Strange Brew** - I'll never forget when one of the McKenzie brothers jumped in a vat of beer, drank it, then had to pee so bad, he was able to put out a fire. Did you know that you can get a free case of beer if you find a mouse in a bottle? This movie clearly inspired my script for *Beer Goggles*.

**Pulp Fiction** - Back in 1994, I took a girl out on a date to the movies. I already saw *Pulp Fiction* and was raving to her about how good it was and how she had to see it. I remember not being sure if *Pulp Fiction* would be a good movie for a first date, but the other choice was *The Brady Bunch Movie*, and I was afraid that could backfire as well. I chose *Pulp Fiction*, and she sat completely silent through the entire thing. It was a quiet ride home and that was the end of our potential relationship. I later wondered what would have happened if I chose *The Brady Bunch Movie* instead. An interesting side note to this story is that many years later, she admitted to me that she was very turned off by the movie, but after she watched it a second time, and a third, and many more, it somehow became one of her favorite movies. Go figure. But back to the actual film, *Pulp Fiction* showed me that a story could be told out of order in a non-linear fashion and still make sense. I have not used that technique in any of my scripts yet, but Tarantino's films definitely had an influence.

And then there is...

***Back to the Future*** - It was the summer of 1985 in Ocean City, NJ. My brother and I were at the shore for the week with our grandmother, Eileen Moyer, and *Back to the Future* was playing at The Strand movie theater on the boardwalk. We walked past that marquee every night and constantly reminded our grandmother that we wanted to see it. She finally broke down and took us.

The movie was everything I expected and more. As we walked out of the movie theater, I tried to engage my grandmother in conversation about the film, but something seemed wrong. She couldn't answer any of my questions. Finally, she confessed that she fell asleep. I couldn't believe it. I told her we had to go back, that she had to see the movie, but she had no interest.

When the movie was released on home video, I was able to watch it whenever I wanted, and it quickly became my favorite movie of all time. I saw both of the sequels in the movie theater and even spoiled the second installment for myself by reading the novelization that came out weeks before the movie's release.

There are diehard fans out there who have much more memorabilia, but I have the basics, starting with the 30th anniversary DVD box set. There's a movie poster in my office along with three different miniature replicas of the DeLorean. I have a tattoo of the flux capacitor on my arm and I gave a speech at my brother's wedding that referenced *Back to the Future* while the DJ played "The Power of Love."

The time travel in *Back to the Future* clearly influenced my scripts *The Last Pilgrimage* and *Capital Punishment*, but more importantly, played a part in my decision to write films. I look forward to the day when I can watch *Back to the Future* with my daughter, and I can tell her, "If you put your mind to it, you can accomplish anything." Hopefully she will enjoy the film as much as I did.

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## HOLA, MISS PICONE



Miss Picone. Indian Valley Junior High School. Ninth grade.

My first class of every day was English with Miss Picone, and as fate would have it, she was also the teacher of my second class, Spanish. There was one other student that received the same awkward schedule as me, and that was Tony J, who would go on to become my best friend, but more on that later. I couldn't believe I had to start every day with two classes by the same teacher. I was not looking forward to it.

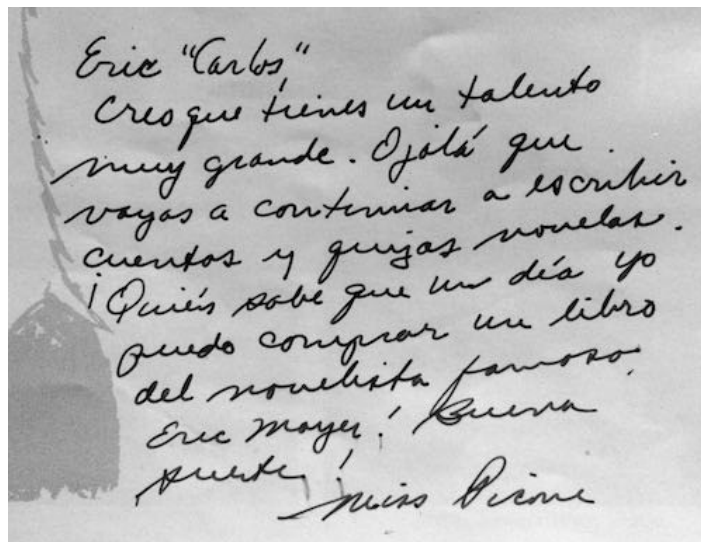
Miss Picone was somewhat feared. She was overweight and some students referred to her as one of the meanest teachers at the school. Sometimes they teased her about her weight, but never in front of her. They also called her "Miss Pine Cone." I have to say that sometimes she was a tough teacher, but she never let a student cruise through her class, and was never mean. She was one of the kindest people I ever met, and I always look back at her as the best teacher I ever had. Miss Picone ran her English class with creative writing exercises, and

this was my first real opportunity to put my ideas on paper. We kept a daily journal and she often had us write entries that she called "streams of consciousness."

After a few weeks, my double stacked schedule with Miss Picone was the highlight of my day. She was the first teacher to show interest in my writing. It started with the journal entries and continued with larger exercises. For one assignment, she instructed us to write a short story about anything, so I wrote a piece called *Paperboy*. Not only did I get an A+ as a grade, she read my story out loud to the class - twice. I wasn't used to that kind of attention, but it made me want to write more and more.

Miss Picone inspired me in a way that changed my life forever. During my first year of college, I stopped by her classroom at the end of a random school day and surprised her with a visit. I gave Miss Picone a copy of my first screenplay and thanked her for the support she gave me as my teacher. She began to cry and said I didn't know how much that meant to her. I would go on to visit her many more times, until one day, a substitute teacher was in her room. I found out she became very sick and passed away.

When I went looking through an old yearbook for her picture, I found this note she wrote to me, in Spanish, from 1988. Thank you, Miss Picone. I think of you often. This is the book you spoke of in your note.



Here is the original short story I wrote for her English class titled *Paperboy*:

My name is Johnny Schmid. I had just "inherited" my neighbor's paper route for two weeks while the true owner of it, Pete Leonard, relaxed on the sandy beaches somewhere on the eastern coast of Florida. The pay was twenty-five dollars per week and the paper was to be delivered every day. In order to display

to Pete the difficulty of completing this task, I have written the following, which is an account of how smoothly each day had gone.

#### DAY 1

The first day of my paper delivering career went fantastic. The immense bundle of forty-seven papers were piled onto my front porch. I folded them and carefully stacked them in Pete's paper bag. I had some trouble riding my ten-speed bicycle with a bulky bag by my side at first, but I got used to swaying side to side, swerving into the road and getting beeped at by every car that passed me. I delivered to all the houses on the list which are scattered throughout two roads and an apartment complex.

#### DAY 2

Today I learned my first lesson in why papers shouldn't be thrown. First, I lost control of my arm and slung a paper straight at an elderly man, who was lounging on a beat-up chair on his porch. He didn't see it coming, it slammed into his forehead and he rolled over. An ambulance was called by a feisty woman across the street who witnessed the incident. He was conscious by the time it arrived and there was nothing wrong with him. I apologized for the situation and handed him the paper. It was getting late and dark, so I really had to hustle through. I was in such a hurry that the strength of my arm had increased a great deal and I was beginning to throw the papers harder, faster and farther. I first noticed this when my ear was pierced by the shattering of a window. Nobody was home, so I pedaled down the road, all red and shaking.

#### DAY 3

My pay of fifty dollars at the end of the two weeks was suddenly decreased to twenty dollars. I became aware of this when I received a complaint along with a slip of paper reading, "minus thirty dollars off pay for broken window" which was stuck in my bundle of papers. Besides this, the day went okay.

#### DAY 4, 5, 6, 7, and 8

This seemed, to me, the first time it ever rained for five consecutive days. This meant it was time to get out the plastic baggies that Pete gave to me for rainy days. It started to rain after I delivered the papers on day four. There was no sign in the sky that there would be a thunderstorm. I got many complaints on day five and another slip reading, "minus five dollars for soggy papers."

#### DAY 9

Today was the worst day yet. After resolving to stepping off my bicycle and setting the paper at front doors, I was targeted by a drooling, full grown German Shepherd lunging at me. I ran through gardens, bushes and high grass until I came to an unlocked cellar door somewhere down the street. I slung it open and darted inside while losing my balance, and the door slammed behind me. I tumbled down the stairs and forced a locked door open which triggered a burglar alarm to go off. I immediately stood up in shock and in pain as a flashing



red light and roaring siren went off. The police came to my rescue and understood what had happened as well as the owners of the house did. I returned to the house of the dog only to find that my bicycle had been stolen and I now had to deliver approximately thirty chewed up papers in a torn apart bag. I kept myself from crying, but a single tear fell down my cheek out of anger.

#### DAY 10

I was now walking the paper route while delivering in a large Glad trash bag. Today I also received another "minus five dollars for ripped papers" and I am now down to earning ten dollars. Today I delivered backwards by starting at the top of one of the four story buildings. I couldn't bear to carry the heavy load of papers up the stairs, so I took one paper, set the trash bag down and made my way up the stairs. When I came back down, I started to become dizzy and light headed, for my Glad trash bag full of papers had vanished. I slowly stepped outside to see a garbage truck pull out of the parking lot.

#### DAY 11, 12, and 13

My mom did the paper route in her car the next three days while I stayed home with every symptom of the flu and common cold. She handed me a pile of complaints which I had no desire to look at and a slip reading "minus ten dollars for not delivering forty-six papers." I got nausea just at the sight of it. Now, instead of receiving fifty dollars, I owe the company five dollars.

#### DAY 14

I was feeling better, but my mom drove me around just in case I should feel sick to my stomach. It was easier and I refused to collect the money from the customers. I left that for Pete. Besides, why would I have the desire to collect the money when I was already out five bucks?

#### DAY 15

(Day 15 should not be listed here because Pete Leonard has returned from Florida, but I find it unique to make this day notable).

I gave Pete back his torn apart paper route bag, the remaining four plastic baggies, the list he gave me and a black eye.

*It is important for me to mention that the last line of the short story is the original ending. When I talked about sending it out to magazines, Miss Picone suggested that I change the ending from a "black eye" to "an IOU for five dollars."*

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## DADDY GEORGE AND THE LAST PILGRIMAGE



I never got the chance to meet my other grandfather, George Emery. He passed away from a sudden brain aneurysm when my mother was sixteen years old, two years before I was born. My mom was one of six children, with the youngest being eight years old.

As I grew older, I became very interested in learning more about my grandfather. As a senior in high school, I made a twenty minute documentary about him called *Daddy George*. This was a very important step for me because it eventually became the subject of my first screenplay, also titled *Daddy George*, later renamed *The Last Pilgrimage*.

My aunt Rita, who coincidentally married an unrelated Moyer, wrote this short story about my grandfather:

*Dad Never Did Like Cats*

Dad never did like cats...or so he said. It was a matter of record around our house that no being, other than human, was permitted access through or about the premises. That's not to say we didn't try to bend the rules here and there. With six children under one roof, the subject of acquiring a pet was bound to come up rather frequently. And we all wanted a cat.

Dad would listen patiently while we took turns pleading our case, insisting he would not even know the cat was around. He received six promises to care for and feed the proposed cat and several whole-hearted guarantees to clean and empty the litter box. He silently shook his head when we suggested that even he would benefit from the presence of a cat.

After all our begging, Dad would sit us down and, with all our arguments exhausted, quietly tell us, once again, that the answer was no because he didn't like cats and didn't want one in his house. In an effort to pacify his six brooding, catless children, Dad went out and bought a huge aquarium. We all crowded into the local pet shop to pick out a few exotic fish. He had to peel us away from the kitten window to choose the fish but, eventually, we filled the aquarium.

The fish were okay for minimal amusement, but they got pretty boring after a while. Then, one of my brothers brought home a large, shimmering black fish and, the next day, all the other fish were gone. So much for the aquarium.

We were back to pleading for a cat and Dad was getting tired of hearing it.

It was around then that our family spent the day visiting another family who lived on a farm. They just happened to have a cat with several fully weaned kittens. We took turns all day spending time with the kittens. The overall favorite was a cute little calico colored with alternating stripes of pale gray and orange. Her playful antics entertained everyone throughout the day. Dad pretended not to notice.

Towards the end of our visit, the begging and pleading began anew. This time, with the tiny kitten nestled in my sister's arms, Dad could not refuse. Amid squeals of delight, we journeyed home with our new pet. The entire drive back to the city was spent trying to choose a name for our kitten. After several emotional debates, we all agreed on the name Sylvia.

Sylvia was spoiled rotten from that day on.

Since the effort to acquire our cat had been so great, the pleasure of having her around was incredible. Sylvia was a queen and we, her loyal subjects. Except for Dad. Sylvia seemed to know he didn't like her and she stayed clear of him most of the time. Occasionally, Sylvia would saunter up to Dad and try to win him

over, but he would only shoo her away. He was never mean to Sylvia, just discouraging. After all, he made it very clear. He didn't like cats.

That was all my brothers and sisters and I ever saw of the relationship between our father and our cat.

It was many years later, long after both Dad and Sylvia were gone, that my family sat reminiscing about the old days and our very first cat. When the conversation turned toward Dad's intolerance of cats, my mother revealed a startling and very well kept secret. It seemed, after years of declaring how he didn't like cats, Dad was annoyed to find he'd developed a genuine affection for the kitten we brought home from the farm. Unwilling to listen to an eternal chorus of "I told you so" from his kids, Dad kept his newly found friendship to himself and swore my mother to secrecy.

Each night, with all his children tucked safely in their beds, Dad would settle down to watch a little television. Taking this as her cue, Sylvia would cuddle up close to Dad and bask in the gentle love and attention he would give her only when no one else was around. Mom laughed as she recalled how, by day, they ignored each other, but at night, they were inseparable.

Yes, Dad and Sylvia had a very special relationship...even though he never did like cats.

-Written by Rita Emery Moyer

In my senior year of high school, I took a mass media class taught by Mr. Ahern. He wanted us grouped into pairs, but I approached him about working by myself on a personal project. He originally shot me down, then compromised and assigned another student to work with me.

It was a short documentary called *Daddy George* about my grandfather. I interviewed my mother, grandmother, aunts and uncles while they talked about the circumstances surrounding his sudden death from a brain aneurysm and the effects it had on them.

I watched each interview over and over and made extensive notes about which clips to use and where to place them. This was my first real experience with editing. A local videographer, Jay Delp, kindly donated his time and helped me edit the video in his studio.

I got an "A" for the project, but more importantly, I learned about my grandfather and found myself wondering what things would be like had he lived. This inspired me to write my first screenplay, *Daddy George*, which I eventually re-titled *The Last Pilgrimage*.

I was only eighteen years old when I started writing the script. I attended a two-day screenwriting seminar in Philadelphia hosted by author Michael Hauge and it gave me the confidence and motivation to finish the script.

Looking back, this screenplay was poorly written and a blatant ripoff of many films, mostly *Back to the Future*. In addition to a time-traveling train, there were similar lines of dialog, such as a scene where an authority figure calls the main character a loser and tells him that he'll never amount to anything. There is even a moment where the main character is asked what he wants to do with his life.

The story centered around a college student, essentially myself, returning home from college for the Thanksgiving holiday. He takes a train that travels back in time to the day his grandfather passed away. He meets his grandfather and also young versions of his parents, another nod to *Back to the Future*. He gets a brief chance to save his grandfather, but a time paradox stands in the way. Did I mention similarities to *Back to the Future*?

A friend of mine, Stan Cohen, owned a local video store called Salford Video. He had a cousin, Mitch Goldman, who was a top executive at New Line Cinema. Stan personally mailed my script to Mitch, who made sure it was read by someone at the studio. They passed, but were kind enough to send me the coverage notes, which was exciting because it featured the company letterhead and came in a big envelope from New Line Cinema.

The beginning of *The Last Pilgrimage* features a tailgating incident that really happened to me, with references to *Risky Business*, *National Lampoon's Vacation* and *The Twilight Zone*. The main character also plays a Led Zeppelin 4 audio cassette in the car, which is a tribute to Damone from *Fast Times at Ridgemont High*. Little did I know that fifteen years after writing this, the actor who portrayed Damone, Robert Romanus, would appear in one of my films. This opening sequence can be read on the book's website.

For the first script in the book, I felt it was fitting to start with the scene where the main character meets his grandfather after traveling back in time. He also fights a character that is very similar to Biff Tannen from *Back to the Future*. I even made the mistake of having my main character beaten up in the first act, leaving him with a black eye and a swollen lip for the rest of the movie! Who would attempt to film that?

I made all the mistakes of a first-time writer and learned from them. While *The Last Pilgrimage* is not my best work, it was an important first step, and not just for my writing. It gave me the chance to meet my grandfather in my own creative way. Between my short documentary *Daddy George* and the screenplay that followed, I felt like I knew my grandfather, and that somehow, he knew me.

INT. TRAIN - DAY

David is suddenly awakened by the train coming to a stop. He quickly stands up and looks around him. There is no one else on the train. He reaches for his duffel bag, but it's gone. A look of frustration comes over him.

DAVID

Wonderful. That's all I needed was for someone to steal my bag.

The conductor walks back onto the train.

TERRENCE

This is going to have to be your stop. You need to wait here for an hour while we take care of some things and then we'll come back to get you.

DAVID

An hour? What's the hold up?

TERRENCE

Technical work. I promise we'll be back.

DAVID

Whatever. But do you have any idea what happened to my duffel bag? It was sitting right next to me!

TERRENCE

It probably got lost in the mix-up. In the next hour, I'm sure I can locate it for you, so don't worry about it for now.

DAVID

I like to worry. That's what I do best.

As David steps out of the train, he pulls a pair of sunglasses out of his jacket and puts them on.

EXT. CHESTNUT HILL TRAIN STATION - DAY

There are several people walking by David. There is a sign with the town's name: Chestnut Hill. He stops and takes a look around. He tilts his sunglasses down and takes a better look. He turns back to the train and waves at Terrence, who keeps an eye on him.

DAVID

This is the place I was telling  
you about. It's my stop. There's  
the sign right there.

David points to the Chestnut Hill sign.

TERRENCE

Are you sure this is the Chestnut  
Hill you remember?

DAVID

I'm positive.

David continues to look around, then pushes his  
sunglasses back up.

DAVID (CONT'D)

Kind of. It does look a little  
different, but I haven't been here  
in a while.

TERRENCE

I will be back regardless. Keep  
that in mind.

DAVID

You better. You have my bag.

Terrence steps back onto the train as it starts moving.  
He hangs part-way out the door.

TERRENCE

Whatever you do, don't panic. I'm  
sure you will figure things out.

Terrence nods at David as the train leaves the station.  
The crowd is gone except for a man sitting on a park  
bench in the distance. His face cannot be seen because he  
is holding a newspaper in front of him.

David mumbles to himself.

DAVID

I could have sworn this was all  
built-up. There used to be a mini-  
mart, a restaurant. They tore it  
all down.

As David reflects on his memories of the area, Brad  
sneaks up behind him. Brad limps in pain and it takes a  
while to reach David, who doesn't see or hear him. When  
he finally does make it to David, he taps him on the  
shoulder.

As David turns around, his face is met by Brad's fist.  
David falls onto the railroad track.

BRAD  
Where the hell am I?

A trickle of blood drips from David's nose as he sits up. Brad climbs down and hovers over him.

DAVID  
Chestnut Hill.

BRAD  
Don't lie to me. That wasn't an ordinary train. I saw some crazy things back there. Now tell me what's going on. I'm not kidding around.

DAVID  
I don't know.

BRAD  
I fell off of a moving train. Do you know what that's like?

DAVID  
You shouldn't have been on it in the first place.

BRAD  
My leg is broken!

DAVID  
That's your problem, not mine.

David tries to get up, but Brad pushes him back down.

BRAD  
I would love for a train to come by right now, but I want the pleasure of hitting you myself.

David stares Brad down, then kicks the leg he was limping on. Brad groans and falls to the ground. David leaps up off the tracks, but Brad grabs him by the foot. David falls head first into the dirt. Brad climbs on top of him and they wrestle. Brad lands a barrage of punches to David's face.

BRAD (CONT'D)  
You should have stayed away from Charlotte.

Brad reaches into his pocket and pulls out David's hacky sack.

BRAD (CONT'D)  
Remember this?



Brad clenches the sack in his fist and punches David in the stomach. David gasps for air as Brad launches another heavy blow to the face.

BRAD (CONT'D)

I'm enjoying my holiday. How about you?

David spits blood out of his mouth as Brad continues to beat him until he is unconscious. At that moment, a hand pulls Brad off of David.

EXT. TRAIN STATION - MINUTES LATER - DAY

David lies face up on a bench at the station. GEORGE, a well-dressed man in his forties, kneels by his side and pats him on his cheek. David slowly opens his eyes.

GEORGE

There you are. Are you okay? You took quite a few blows to the head.

David sits up with his hand to his face. He lets out a moan.

GEORGE (CONT'D)

I know it hurts.

David takes a look all around him. His face is terribly beaten and he has blood stains on his jacket. David looks down at his Led Zeppelin shirt and his white jeans, covered with dirt and grass stains.

DAVID

Look at me, I'm a mess. It even hurts to talk.

David feels his jaw as he looks around.

DAVID (CONT'D)

Where is he?

GEORGE

Don't worry about him. I sent him on his way. He hobbled off down the street somewhere.

David looks intently at the man who rescued him. He stares past the glasses and into his eyes. The man gives David a comforting smile that makes him feel safe.

DAVID

Thanks. I think you saved my life.

GEORGE

It was nothing. I just pulled him off you is all.

DAVID

He could have hurt you, too.

GEORGE

I acted as any other citizen would have.

David extends his arm out to George.

DAVID

My name's David.

They shake hands as David returns the smile.

GEORGE

You can call me George.

David sits up and brushes off some of the dirt.

DAVID

This is not how I wanted to show up for dinner.

GEORGE

Where are you headed?

DAVID

My grandmother's house. My whole family's going to be there.

GEORGE

My son Bill is on holiday leave from the navy and was scheduled to arrive on your train.

George looks at his watch.

GEORGE (CONT'D)

I suppose he'll be on the next train in an hour.

David's mouth drops wide open as he realizes who George may be.

GEORGE (CONT'D)

I was only going to sit here for the next hour and read the newspaper, but I'd hate to see you have to show up to Thanksgiving dinner looking like that. I only live down the street. You're more than welcome to get cleaned up there if you like. I'm sure my

daughter could find you a change  
of clothes in Bill's room.

David, whose face shows tremendous disbelief, once again  
stares into George's eyes. But this time, he doesn't just  
see a courageous man who helped him.

He sees a grandfather he had been longing to meet all his  
life; a man who didn't get the chance to know his  
grandchildren.

And suddenly, a missing part in both their lives is  
filled.

[www.backtooceancity.com/daddy-george.html](http://www.backtooceancity.com/daddy-george.html)

## SWAMPS OF SADNESS



When I was a teenager, I became best friends with a classmate and neighbor named Tony Jozefowski. His mother, Maggie, or Mags as everyone called her, was like a second mom to me. After Tony and I graduated from high school, I headed to Temple University. During the week, I lived in the city. On weekends, I returned home and hung out with Tony.

In May of 1992, I finished writing my first screenplay, *Daddy George*, renamed *The Last Pilgrimage*. Tony was going to be the first to read it, but he wasn't home when I made a surprise appearance at his house. However, his brother Jamie was home, so I asked him to read it on the spot. The next day, I came back and Tony read it in one sitting before I returned back to college for final exams. Tony and Jamie both liked the script, but were more impressed that I actually finished such a large project.

That week, I called Tony and told him that one of my finals was rescheduled and I would be home for the summer a day later than planned. It would be the last time I ever spoke to him.

On May 6, 1992, Tony passed away in a tragic accident. I'll never forget getting the phone call. A friend I hadn't talked to in a while called me at college. She asked me if I was sitting down and then told me that Tony was dead. I remember thinking at first that she had to be mistaken, so I hung up the phone and called Tony's house. It was true. He was gone. Everything after that is kind of a blur.

The image of Tony in the casket sticks with me to this day. I try to think about all the good times, but the memory of Tony's funeral still haunts me. When he died, my only previous experience with death was with great-grandparents, so I had no idea how to handle it. In the months following the funeral, I spent most of my time at Tony's house. I lost my best friend and Jamie lost a brother and we ended up becoming close friends.

Since Tony passed away at the same time that I finished my first screenplay, I was unable to separate his death from the script. I was young, naive, and like many new writers, overly confident in my first draft. I was anxious to share it with the world. I was filled with so many emotions and on a very unstable path.

I sent out dozens of query letters to agents. Back in those days, we sent actual letters in the mail. There was no such thing as email yet. I even typed the name and address of each agent on the envelope using a good old-fashioned typewriter.

I told the agents about my script, but also spoke of my friendship with Tony and how he passed away just days after reading it. Looking back, over twenty years later, it may have been too personal of a letter. I recently found a copy and it was difficult to read, just as this chapter is difficult to write. I almost included it here, but decided to put it back in the box where I found it.

I sent that letter to some very high profile agents at CAA and ICM, two of the biggest talent agencies in Hollywood. It was common knowledge that these agencies did not read unsolicited material, but that didn't stop me. I learned at a very young age that it never hurts to ask, a habit I continue to practice to this day.

Sure enough, two of those powerful agents responded and requested to read my script. The first was Jay Moloney from CAA. Jay was one of the agencies' "Young Turks," a nickname given to a group of agents that founder Michael Ovitz hand-picked for the eventual changing of the guard. At the time, Jay represented Steven Spielberg, Martin Scorsese, Mike Nichols, David Letterman and Dustin Hoffman. I was a teenage first-time screenwriter, and one of the biggest agents in

Hollywood agreed to read my script. This was huge for me and came at a time when I really needed some positivity.

Days later, I got a request to read the script from the office of Ed Limato at ICM. Ed also represented some of the Hollywood elite, including Denzel Washington, Richard Gere, Steve Martin, Nicolas Cage, Mel Gibson and Michelle Pfeiffer. Both Jay and Ed passed on my script, and of course I was disappointed, but the fact that they were willing to give it a chance kept me motivated. I still have the original letters I received from them.

Ed Limato passed away in 2010 from lung disease while Jay Moloney committed suicide in 1999 after a battle with drug addiction. He was 35 years old. If Ed and Jay were still alive, I would write each of them a second letter, thanking them for the encouragement they gave me during the most difficult time in my life.

In addition to becoming best friends with Tony's brother, I also started hanging out with a mutual friend of ours, Pete Chrysczanavicz. We were both pallbearers at Tony's funeral and knew each other for years. We became much closer after Tony's death and spent a lot of time reminiscing, and before I knew it, we were the best of friends as well. He also read my first two scripts and shared his movie ideas with me. There was one idea of his that I'll never forget. He wanted me to write a movie based on the Eagles song "Hotel California." Maybe I will.

Becoming friends with Jamie and Pete helped me get through the rest of 1992, but 1993 turned out to be another bad year right from the start.

On January 16th, 1993, Jamie and I went to Pete's house. Pete asked us if we wanted to go with him to a party down the street. I can't explain it, but something didn't feel right, and neither Jamie or I were interested in going. Pete had a roommate we were also friends with, so it was not unusual for us to stay behind and hang out with him instead.

Pete told us to stop by the party if we got bored and that he hoped to see us there. Around midnight, Jamie and I left Pete's house and drove by the party. We slowed down and thought about stopping in, but we kept going and went home.

At around 2:00AM later that night, now January 17th, a fight broke out at that party. There were various accounts of what happened and I still don't know exactly what went down, but it is generally understood that the host pulled out a shotgun. When Pete intervened, he was shot in the face and killed.

Just nine months after Tony's death, I lost another close friend and was a pallbearer again. Pete's parents used to tell me about how he came into this world. Pete's mom had one of those rare unknown pregnancies. She was in her forties and only thought she was sick. She called Pete's dad into the room and said "I think I'm having a baby." Mr C. delivered Pete himself. They said he was a

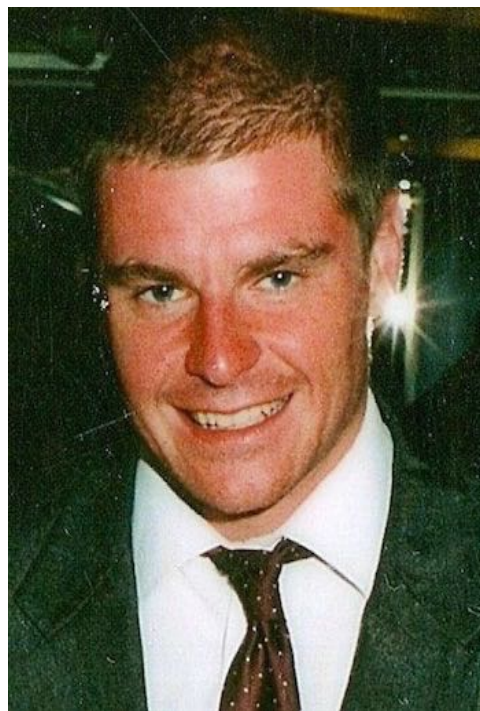
miracle baby. Whenever they told me this story, they always said he was taken from them in the blink of an eye, the same way he arrived. Because Pete was shot in the face, it was a closed casket funeral, and I didn't have the same closure I got from Tony's viewing. It never quite felt like Pete was gone.



I can't say I ever recovered from these two deaths and it's still something that I think about on a regular basis. Here are some other important people in my life that I have lost over the years:



Pete's brother, Mark Chryszanavicz, passed away in 2009. He lived in Connecticut, but we often spoke on the phone and always made sure to meet up whenever he was in town. He was a New York Yankees fan, so every time they lost in the playoffs, I always called him right as the game ended to give him a hard time. In 2008, I recorded a prank phone call with him that was going to be for a web series about tattoos. He flipped out when I asked him if he would consider getting a Boston Red Sox tattoo for my show. After he passed away, I did the right thing and got a Yankees tattoo, even though I am a Phillies fan. It was only fair.

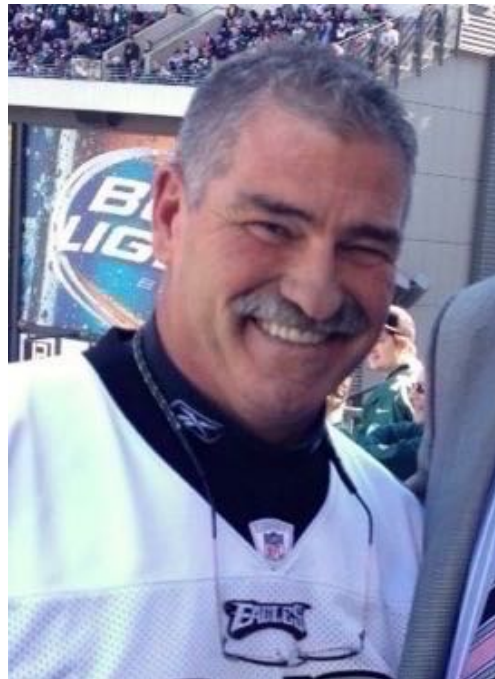




Chad Stankunas was a very good friend who starred as Walter in my first film *The Good Life*. He passed away on March 10, 2006.



My aunt, Evonne Moyer Tanner, passed away on July 6, 1994. She lived in California and I always looked forward to seeing her when she came home. Just over ten years later, we lost her son, my cousin Christopher Tanner, on August 16, 2005.



I once worked for Mike Linko, but he was more like a dear friend or family member. He passed away after a sudden two week battle with cancer on January

8, 2014, while I was writing this book. This was the first time we had to explain to my daughter that a person went to heaven.

There are others who are mentioned elsewhere in this book.

[www.backtooceancity.com/swamps-of-sadness.html](http://www.backtooceancity.com/swamps-of-sadness.html)

## SAFELY HOME

This was not an easy script to revisit.

Before Tony passed away, I had this idea for a script called *Brain Dead*. It was in the very early stages, but the main plot revolved around a brain transplant. I even shared this idea with Tony months before he died. After the funeral, I secluded myself with the exception of visiting his mom and brother. Back in those days, I wrote my scripts on DOS computers and saved them to floppy disks.

When I started to write the actual script, *Brain Dead* no longer seemed like an appropriate title. While trying to rename it, I remembered the prayer cards from Tony's funeral, which included this poem, written by Anonymous:

I am home in Heaven, dear ones;  
Oh, so happy and so bright!  
There is perfect joy and beauty  
In this everlasting light.

All the pain and grief is over,  
Every restless tossing passed;  
I am now at peace forever,  
Safely home in Heaven at last.

I couldn't get that last line out of my head, and named the script *Safely Home*.

I wrote for long periods of time, sometimes for twelve hours straight. I was depressed and in a very dark place and it shows in this script. It always remained a first draft and I never had an interest in rewriting it. More than twenty years later, it was tough to read and brought back lots of memories.

When I originally wrote it, the rock band Faith No More just released their album *Angel Dust*, and it was the only music I listened to. The album was on audio cassette, which meant I had to flip the tape every time a side was over. Just like *Angel Dust*, the script for *Safely Home* is brutal and disturbing. The singer for Faith No More, Mike Patton, recently received praise for an original

score he composed for the film *The Place Beyond the Pines* starring Ryan Gosling and Bradley Cooper. In a way, Mike also composed the score for *Safely Home*, in my mind at least. I would love the opportunity to work with him on a project someday.

In the script for *Safely Home*, there are two separate groups affected by the brain transplant. There is politician Paul Powers, who is murdered to make it look like a suicide. Then there is Tom McCallum, who dies in a car accident the same night. The Tom character represents Tony and his best friend in the script, Scott, represents me. Other than some similarities with Tom's personality and the friendship, the rest of the story is completely original.

The script dealt with the idea of never seeing someone again after they died. But what if you could? In a scene from *Safely Home*, the main character is visited by Tom in a dream, something that happened to me often after Tony died. The dream was always the same. Tony was back as if nothing happened. He explained that the whole thing was just a misunderstanding, that he wasn't really dead. My recurring dream appears as a scene in *Safely Home*.

The story revolves around the transplant of Tom's brain into Paul's body and the ripple effect it has on everyone involved. When Paul's murderers think he is still alive, they make a second attempt to kill him. This allows the main character, Scott, to team up with Paul to help save his life, and in turn, save Tom, and in my mind, save Tony. Sorry if this is confusing. Everyone deals with death in their own way, and this was how I did it.

Both of the scenes included in this book are difficult to share. The first scene is when Scott learns of Tom's death and intercuts with Paul's wife learning of the brain transplant.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

Scott sleeps on the hospital bed. His face is bruised in several places. Kelly sits beside him, rubbing his head. She cries as Scott slowly opens his eyes.

SCOTT

Kelly?

KELLY

I'm right here, Scott.

She grabs his hand.

SCOTT

What happened?

KELLY

You were in a car accident, but  
you're going to be alright.

SCOTT

How's Tom?

Kelly doesn't answer and continues to cry.

SCOTT (CONT'D)

What's the matter, Kel? Why are  
you crying?

KELLY

I'm sorry, Scott.

SCOTT

What are you talking about?  
Where's Tom?

KELLY

I'm sorry. He passed away.

SCOTT

What? Stop talking like that. I  
don't believe you.

Kelly kisses Scott on the forehead and leaves the room.  
When she is gone, Scott covers his eyes and sobs.

INT. HOSPITAL OFFICE - DAY

Tricia Powers is alone in one of the offices. She wanders  
around the room and looks at the various certificates and  
newspaper articles hanging on the wall.

All the articles have one thing in common: studies of the  
brain.

She walks to the window, where a human brain in a jar  
gets some sun.

DR. HARRIS enters the room and she turns around to greet  
him.

DR. HARRIS

Mrs. Powers?

TRICIA

Yes.

DR. HARRIS

My name's Dr. Harris. I'm a  
neurosurgeon here at the hospital.  
Could you come with me please?

They leave the room.

INT. ELEVATOR - DAY

Tricia steps to the back of the elevator as the doors close. Dr. Harris slides a key into a slot.

DR. HARRIS

There's a lower research level in this hospital that people don't know about.

Tricia seems confused, but doesn't say anything.

INT. RESEARCH LEVEL HALLWAY - DAY

Tricia and the doctor walk out of the elevator and into a small circular room with three doors. He opens the middle door.

DR. HARRIS

Mrs. Powers, the room we are about to enter contains your husband.

TRICIA

Why are you keeping him down here?

DR. HARRIS

Everything will be explained.

The doctor walks in, while Tricia stays at the doorway, hesitant to look inside.

INT. OPERATING ROOM - DAY

Tricia slowly looks up to see her husband, Paul, lying on a table in the center of the room. He is hooked up to a machine.

Tricia walks to his side.

TRICIA

How is he? Will he be alright?

DR. HARRIS

Mrs. Powers, your husband had a lot of drugs and alcohol in his system tonight. With those factors in mind, when the bullet lodged in his brain, it virtually exploded. With the brain stem intact, he was still able to breathe, but not for very long. I'm sorry, but your husband is brain dead. The only thing keeping him alive is this machine.

Tricia begins to cry. At that moment, a door in the back of the room swings open and three men in suits and sunglasses file in.

They are AGENT DICKERSON, LAWFORD and WINTER.

DR. HARRIS (CONT'D)

They're going to take over from here. This is Special Agent Dickerson, Agent Lawford, and Agent Winter. They will tell you more about the project.

AGENT DICKERSON

Thank you, doctor. Mrs. Powers, your husband has the chance to participate in a very important project for this country. Agent Lawford?

Agent Lawford reaches underneath the table and pulls out several large, sealed plastic bags containing evidence.

AGENT LAWFORD

A gun. A bottle of whiskey. Various drugs. And a suicide note. Your husband tried to kill himself, Mrs. Powers.

TRICIA

I don't understand. He would never do something like that.

AGENT LAWFORD

He obviously held it all in until now.

Agent Winter steps up to Tricia.

AGENT WINTER

The key word is "tried." Your husband "tried" to kill himself. But, with the help of Dr. Harris and years of research, we're not going to let him do it.

TRICIA

I don't understand.

AGENT WINTER

Your husband is a very important political figure. It's our opinion that a suicide attempt would be an embarrassment to his family and the country.

TRICIA

What does all this mean?

AGENT DICKERSON

It means that in return for your authorization, all the evidence you see here will be destroyed and no one will ever know a thing.

TRICIA

But don't people already know he's here?

AGENT DICKERSON

Everything is taken care of.

Agent Lawford hands her a pen and a clipboard with a document.

AGENT LAWFORD

Just sign on the dotted line.

Tricia hesitates.

TRICIA

Wait. Hold on. I want to know more about what you're doing first.

Agent Dickerson motions to Dr. Harris.

AGENT DICKERSON

Doctor, could you bring in Mr. McCallum please?

Dr. Harris leaves the room and comes back with a man on a stretcher covered by a white sheet. He wheels him up against Paul so they are side by side.

Dr. Harris removes the white sheet, revealing Tom.

AGENT DICKERSON (CONT'D)

Mrs. Powers, this is Tom McCallum. He was in a very bad car accident tonight. He suffered internal injuries and died. We would like to remove his brain and place it in your husband.

Tricia looks even more confused.

TRICIA

But why would you do that? He won't be my husband anymore. He'll have another man's thoughts and memories.

AGENT DICKERSON

With the help of a new drug, it will only seem like he's suffering from amnesia. He won't remember a thing.



AGENT LAWFORD

He'll be like a child at first,  
but eventually he'll be just the  
way you remember him.

TRICIA

And what about this other man's  
family? Are they in favor of this?

AGENT LAWFORD

His family will never know.

Tricia looks at the clipboard.

TRICIA

How do you know this will work?

AGENT WINTER

We don't. But what do you have to  
lose, Mrs. Powers?

Tricia signs the document and hands the clipboard back to  
Agent Lawford.

AGENT DICKERSON

You made the right decision. Agent  
Winter will escort you out of the  
hospital. We have a lot of work to  
do and not much time. We must  
start the operation immediately.  
Mr. McCallum's funeral services  
must also be prepared. We'll call  
you when Paul awakens, which won't  
be for at least a couple of days.

Agent Winter escorts Tricia out of the room.

INT. HUNTER HOME - COMPUTER ROOM - MORNING

It is two days later. Scott wears a suit and sits at the  
computer. Kelly walks in wearing a black dress. She puts  
her hand on his shoulder.

KELLY

What are you doing?

SCOTT

I'm printing out another copy of  
my book.

KELLY

When do you want to leave? We  
should get there a little early  
since you're a pallbearer.

SCOTT

I'll be ready in a few minutes.

Kelly leaves the room as the pages start printing.

INT. FUNERAL HOME - VIEWING - DAY

Scott approaches the front of the room where Tom's casket sits. It is surrounded by flowers and the room is filled with mourners.

As soon as Scott sees Tom's face he turns away. He waits a few moments and regains his composure the best he can.

Scott opens an envelope and removes a stack of papers. He walks slowly toward Tom's casket. Once there, he stares at Tom.

Scott can't fight the tears as he places the pages of his book inside the casket with Tom.

The second scene is the ending. Yes, the ending. Just like my own dream about Tony's return, I knew the story in *Safely Home* had to end with reality. We always wake up, so there was no happy ending, or could there be? The happy ending is the title of the script.

EXT. ????????????????????

Scott stands along the shore of a beautiful crystal blue sea. A blinding bright light causes him to squint his eyes.

VOICE

Scott.

The voice echoes.

VOICE (CONT'D)

Scott.

Scott turns around to see Tom and Paul standing side by side under a tree. They wear golden robes. Scott approaches them.

SCOTT

Tom? Is that you?

TOM

Yes. And this is Paul. He has something he would like to say to you.

Scott looks at Paul.

PAUL  
Thank you.

SCOTT  
For what?

PAUL  
Setting us free.

An old man on a rowboat paddles his way toward the shore where he stops and waits.

TOM  
Scott, I need you to do something for me.

SCOTT  
Anything.

TOM  
Tell my son about me.

SCOTT  
Your son?

TOM  
Yes. Nora will give birth to a boy. Tell Nora I love her and that I will see her again someday.

SCOTT  
You're not coming back?

TOM  
I can't.

SCOTT  
Am I going with you?

TOM  
No. It is not your time.

Tom reaches out his hand.

TOM (CONT'D)  
Best friends forever.

Scott reaches his hand to Tom for one last traditional handshake.

SCOTT  
Best friends forever.

A single tear runs down Scott's face as Tom and Paul walk toward the old man in the boat. Scott stands beneath the tree as Tom and Paul climb onto the boat.

The old man turns the boat around and it cascades gracefully across the water until they become one with the bright light.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

Scott sleeps on the hospital bed while Kelly sits beside him and rubs his head. Scott's eyes slowly open.

SCOTT

Kelly?

KELLY

I'm right here, Scott.

She squeezes his hand.

SCOTT

What happened?

Kelly opens her mouth and tries to explain, but Scott can't focus on her words.

SCOTT'S NARRATION

As I laid there, listening to Kelly, it sounded like the same thing all over again. It was like she was telling me Tom died for the first time. I kept thinking, was this all just a hallucination? My mind's way of dealing with Tom's death? But it was all too real. I wasn't recovering from a car accident. I had bandages on my chest from a stab wound.

Scott places his hand on the bandages on his chest.

INT. HUNTER HOME - COMPUTER ROOM - DAY

Scott types away on the keyboard at his computer.

SCOTT'S NARRATION

As it turns out, the police could not figure out who killed Jack and Sid since they were fugitives. It was like they didn't exist. Agent Dickerson used Sid's gun to shoot Paul, but the F.B.I. said they have no record of an Agent Dickerson and Dr. Harris' body was never found. Someone covered the whole thing up. But Tricia, Nora and I knew the truth, and that's all that matters.

Scott hits a button on the computer and pages start printing out.

EXT. CEMETERY - DAY

Kelly and the kids wait by the car.

Scott sits in front of Tom's gravestone with Nora who holds a toddler, SCOTTY.

He reads from a book.

SCOTT  
(reading)  
It's been almost two years now  
since Tom died. I can't wait until  
Scotty gets older, so I can tell  
him about his father, my best  
friend, who is now, and forever  
will be, safely home.

Scott gently closes the book. The cover reads: "Safely Home" by Scott Hunter.

Scott and Nora stand up and lead little Scotty by his hand back to the car.

Scott looks up at the sky.

FADE OUT:

DEDICATED TO THE MEMORY OF

ANTHONY C. JOSEFOWSKI

MY BEST FRIEND WHO DIED MAY 6, 1992

[www.backtooceancity.com/safely-home.html](http://www.backtooceancity.com/safely-home.html)

## I ASSURE YOU WE'RE OPEN



*The cover from my short film called The Last Laugh.*

I dropped out of college to try to pull myself together. I finished *Safely Home* and was working on the next script, but was living with my parents and didn't have a job. It was time to get back to normal, whatever that was.

When I was sixteen, I worked at a local pharmacy called Rann Drugs. They had a very small video section, but it was the main reason I worked there. Months after Tony's death, I came across a help wanted ad for a local store named All Star Video, owned by Sam Dilisio. Since I already had some video store experience, it seemed like a perfect fit.

I applied for the job sporting a mullet and leather jacket, but they hired me on the spot. I started with a couple nights a week and before I knew it, I was Sam's

assistant manager. I was surrounded by movies all day long. For me, it was the best job ever.

This was an “old school” video store. While it sometimes got very busy, customers usually came in one or two at a time, so I often walked out into the aisles and helped them choose a movie. Sam let me decide which movies to order and how many copies of each to bring in. Sam had to approve, but for the most part, he went with my suggestions, and I convinced him to stock many independent films that he normally wouldn't have carried.

I even made a special copy of *The Wizard of Oz* that replaced the film's audio with Pink Floyd's album *Dark Side of the Moon*. This alternate experience of watching the film was known as *Dark Side of the Rainbow*. I designed a cover and it was offered as a free rental.

Since I opened the store every morning, I had a key, which came in handy late at night. Sometimes I brought dates to the video store in the middle of the night to pick out a movie. It was like a scene right out of the movie *True Romance*. Of course, I asked Sam's permission first.

Sam eventually went on to produce my feature film *The Good Life*, but first starred in two of my short films for a class at Temple University. Our first collaboration was called *The Video Store Nightmare*, shot with a Bolex 16mm camera on black and white film with no sound. I wasn't able to cut and splice film yet, so the editing was done completely in-camera. This meant I had to film each shot in order and in one take. I was constantly moving lights around. It was tricky, but I found a way to make the final product look like it was edited.

There wasn't much of a story for *The Video Store Nightmare*. Sam falls asleep at the counter while a customer comes in and starts throwing *Nightmare on Elm Street* movies out of the adult room. We used a plastic gun as a prop. After screening it in class, I added music from the band Faith No More so that it wasn't a silent film when showing it to friends and family.

Our second project, *The Last Laugh*, was based on an incident that actually happened to Sam. I'll never forget when he ran into the video store with his hands on his head. He was out of breath and in a state of panic and kept asking me if I saw a guy. Without giving specifics, he just kept asking me if I saw anything. Sam's wife was trailing behind asking questions, but he quickly left the store and she followed. It turned out that Sam was robbed, but not in the traditional way. He was the victim of a flim-flam artist who was hitting local florists and card shops with the scam.

The incidents appeared in the newspaper and Sam gave me the details of how the scam unfolded. I thought it would make an interesting short film, so I turned it into a project for a computerized editing class. It was called *The Last Laugh*

and was an exact depiction of how it happened to Sam. He even played the role of the victim himself, so it was more of a re-enactment. I played the role of the scam artist.

Since it was edited on a computer in the mid-nineties, the technology was in the very early stages and the quality of the video was poor and pixelated. Still, I was very proud of our work and received an "A" for the film and also for the class. Weeks later, I created a custom VHS label and box art and made two copies available as a "free rental" at All Star Video. I quickly learned that everyone likes "free" things and both copies were checked out by hundreds of customers. We received lots of positive feedback and it was the first opportunity I ever had to show my work to the public. *The Last Laugh* was featured in a local newspaper and directed readers to the free rental at the video store. Hundreds more watched it.

About a year later, my next short film, *Dad Never Did Like Cats*, was also offered as a free rental at the video store. It was based on the story my aunt Rita wrote from earlier in this book. The film starred Dan, Liz and Elisabeth Emery. Years later, I edited the film with brand new narration from Rita along with music that didn't violate any copyrights.

Shortly after I started working at All Star Video, a film called *Clerks* was released. Written and directed by Kevin Smith, this film inspired me in several ways. It was a low budget breakthrough from an unknown director with his friends as the main stars and depicted the life of a video store clerk. Kevin Smith interacted with fans through his website and message board at [www.viewaskew.com](http://www.viewaskew.com), and often answered questions. He even responded to a couple of my comments including one where I accused him of being jealous of director Chris Columbus. He took offense, so I replied that at least he will remember me someday. He said, "Yeah, as the idiot who accused me of being jealous of Chris (censored) Columbus." My user name on the View Askew message board was Mopak. Kevin, if you ever read this, I apologize...again.

I met many people working at that video store and made lots of friends that I still stay in touch with. This type of video store was one of the last of its kind in our area. Unfortunately, Blockbuster Video came into town and carried hundreds of copies of the new releases, something the smaller video stores could not do. It was impossible to compete. Sadly, All Star Video closed its doors in 1997.

Who would have thought that karma would come back to get Blockbuster Video? They eventually went out of business with the arrival of online streaming and Netflix. Currently, there are no video stores in my area. There are self-serve kiosks such as Redbox, but I suspect those won't last much longer either.

I often think of All Star Video and how the store helped me get through a very difficult time in my life.



[www.backtooceancity.com/i-assure-you-were-open.html](http://www.backtooceancity.com/i-assure-you-were-open.html)

## CAPITAL PUNISHMENT

When I went back and read all of my old scripts for this book, *Capital Punishment* was the one I enjoyed the most. I was twenty years old when I wrote this and it was the first time I kept my private life out of my scripts. After writing *The Last Pilgrimage* and *Safely Home*, this was a much needed escape from reality.

*Capital Punishment* is my tribute to the Arnold Schwarzenegger films of the eighties, starting with the title. Only a couple of people ever read this, and as I look back, it's the one script I wish I would have rewritten and sent to Hollywood.

The plot mixes government conspiracies with time travel and moves at a breakneck speed with all kinds of twists and turns. I included the first act of the script which gets the reader to a very specific plot twist.

FADE IN:

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

JANET, a young woman in her early thirties, sleeps on the queen-sized bed, as NATHAN quietly gets dressed in front of a mirror.

After zipping up his pants, he stares at his upper body and flexes his muscular arms.

Nathan opens the closet door and kneels down to an old pair of sneakers. He reaches inside the left shoe and pulls out a wad of hundred-dollar bills. He shoves two bills into his pocket, then sticks the rest back in the shoe.

Nathan tiptoes back to the bed and gently lifts the mattress. He wraps his fingers around a small handgun and pulls it from the hiding place.

Suddenly, Janet sits up in the bed and grabs her pregnant belly. Nathan quickly slides the gun into his pants.

Half asleep, Janet gazes up at him.

NATHAN

I'm sorry. I didn't mean to wake you.

JANET

You didn't. The baby is kicking again.

Nathan walks to her side of the bed, lifts up her shirt and places a hand on her bare stomach.

NATHAN

He sure is.

JANET

Or she!

As Nathan pulls his hand away, she grabs it.

JANET (CONT'D)

Where are you going?

NATHAN

To the store.

Janet glances over at the digital clock on her nightstand.

JANET

At one in the morning?

NATHAN

We're out of milk. And I need cigarettes. I can't sleep.

Nathan grabs a shirt out of his closet and hurries out of the bedroom.

EXT. MINIT MART - NIGHT

An old, rusty dented-up station wagon pulls into the parking lot of the twenty-four hour convenience store. The car stops in a parking space below the window.

Through the glass, there is a blurry image of someone looking out.

INT. STATION WAGON - NIGHT

Nathan holds the gun in his lap.

NATHAN

You better not play games with me  
tonight, Jimmy.

Nathan checks outside in all directions, then opens the  
car door.

INT. MINIT MART - NIGHT

JIMMY, a greasy punk with a spider web tattoo on his arm,  
works alone behind the register. As Nathan swings through  
the doors, Jimmy flashes a toothless smile and lets out a  
sinister laugh.

JIMMY

Yo what's up, Nate? It's about  
time you got your ass in here. I  
thought you were coming right  
down.

NATHAN

Jimmy, you know I have to wait for  
the wife to fall asleep.

JIMMY

Hey man, you've got to tell her  
to-

Nathan cuts him off.

NATHAN

Not tonight, Jimmy.

Nathan heads to the back of the store and grabs a half-  
gallon of milk from the cooler. He takes it up to the  
register and places it on the counter.

Jimmy drops the milk into a brown paper bag, then types a  
price into the register.

JIMMY

Two twenty-seven.

NATHAN

What? You told me on the phone one  
seventy-five!

JIMMY

Yeah, well, prices went up.

Nathan clenches his fist as his face turns red.

NATHAN

You do this every time.

JIMMY

You keep coming back.

Nathan lowers his hand.

NATHAN  
Never again.

JIMMY  
Come on, Nate. I'm just messing  
with you.

Nathan reaches into his pocket and pulls out his wad of cash.

NATHAN  
One hundred and seventy-five  
dollars. That was the deal.

JIMMY  
And two dollars for the milk. That  
comes to one seventy-seven.

Nathan hands over the money. Jimmy reaches into the drawer and gives Nathan his change.

NATHAN  
Expensive milk.

JIMMY  
But it's well worth it. You'll  
see.

Nathan lifts the brown paper bag off the counter.

NATHAN  
You mind if I use your bathroom?

JIMMY  
You know I don't like it when  
people hang around.

NATHAN  
I'll only be a minute.

JIMMY  
It's open. But make it quick!

Nathan hurries to the narrow hallway at the back of the store.

INT. BATHROOM - NIGHT

The grimy bathroom is covered with dirt and cobwebs. Nathan closes the toilet seat and places the brown paper bag on top.

A noise can be heard in the store, but he ignores it.

Nathan stares at himself through the filmy mirror, then reaches inside the bag and pulls out a miniature bag of white powder.

There's already a razor blade on the sink.

INT. MINIT MART - NIGHT

Jimmy squirms on the floor behind the counter with a foot on his back and a gun to his head.

JIMMY  
Who the hell are you guys?! I know  
you're not cops!

A badge falls onto the floor in front of Jimmy's face.

JIMMY (CONT'D)  
Nathan! Flush it down the toilet,  
man! Now!

Jimmy spits out blood.

INT. BATHROOM - NIGHT

Nathan inspects his nose through the mirror and wipes away any trace of powder. He takes a couple of deep sniffs.

JIMMY'S VOICE  
(muffled)  
Get out of there Nathan!

A gunshot is followed by silence. Nathan puts his ear up to the door.

NATHAN  
Jimmy?

The doorknob jostles as Nathan backs up against the wall. He pulls out his gun and aims it at the door.

NATHAN (CONT'D)  
Jimmy, what's going on?!

As the door is kicked open, two more gunshots ring out.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

The doorbell wakes Janet up. She looks at the clock which reads 2:15AM. She slowly climbs out of bed and puts on a robe.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Two POLICE OFFICERS hold Janet down as she kicks and screams.

JANET

No! No! No! Where is he?!

POLICE OFFICER #1

He's in the hospital with a gunshot wound, but he'll be alright. I'm afraid that after he recovers, he'll be going away for a while.

Janet breathes heavily and stops fighting back.

JANET

Oh my god! Oh my god! My baby! I'm going to have my baby!

Janet holds her stomach as she tries to catch her breath.

POLICE OFFICER #2

I'll call for an ambulance.

As the police officer reaches for the phone, DONOVAN, ten years old, runs down the stairs in his pajamas with tears streaming down his face.

FADE TO:

20 YEARS LATER

INT. POLICE STATION - OFFICE - NIGHT

Donovan, now a grown, burly man in his thirties, sits across the desk from DETECTIVE ROBERTS. Donovan's hair is neatly slicked back and he sports a three-piece suit. Detective Roberts closes a file.

ROBERTS

Donovan?

Donovan's eyes are dazed.

ROBERTS (CONT'D)

Donovan?

Donovan snaps out of it.

DONOVAN

Huh?

ROBERTS

Are you alright?

DONOVAN

Yeah. You just brought back some bad memories, that's all.

Donovan stands up.

DONOVAN (CONT'D)

I didn't come here to talk about my father. You told me to come right down, that it was very important.

ROBERTS

Donovan, we arrested your brother tonight for armed robbery.

DONOVAN

Brent? No, it can't be. He straightened out.

ROBERTS

Apparently not.

Donovan shakes his head in disbelief.

DONOVAN

This has to be a mistake.

ROBERTS

I'm afraid it's not. We're also charging him with murder.

DONOVAN

What?!

ROBERTS

I'm sorry, Donovan.

Donovan takes a deep breath.

DONOVAN

Where is he?

ROBERTS

Follow me.

Detective Roberts swings a key chain on his finger as he leads Donovan out of his office.

INT. POLICE STATION - INTERROGATING ROOM - NIGHT

BRENT, who is in his twenties, is secured to a chair at the end of a large table. His dirty, long hair is pulled back in a ponytail.

Two men in black suits hover over Brent. They are AGENT FIELDING and AGENT BOCHNER.



Beside Brent is an attractive young woman, AGENT YOST, who writes in a notebook.

FIELDING

Why did you have to kill him,  
Brent?

BOCHNER

Trying to be more like your  
father?

Brent spits in Agent Bochner's face. He wipes his face with his sleeve. He walks away, but quickly returns and strikes Brent on the jaw.

BOCHNER (CONT'D)

You have no idea what's going on here, kid! Your life is in my hands now. Keep up that attitude and you'll be spitting on your own grave!

Brent holds his jaw and shakes off the pain.

BRENT

I'm not talking until my brother gets here!

FIELDING

Your brother's a good lawyer, but there's nothing he can do to help you. We live in an age of "an eye for an eye." Murder carries a mandatory death penalty.

BOCHNER

This is the end of the line, Brent. Live like your father, die like your father.

The door swings open and Donovan follows Detective Roberts into the room.

BRENT

Donovan! Get me out of here, man!

DONOVAN

Don't worry Brent, I will.

Detective Roberts points to the different agents.

ROBERTS

Donovan, I'd like you to meet Agent Fielding.

Donovan shakes Fielding's hand.

DONOVAN  
A federal agent?

FIELDING  
That's correct.

Donovan shoots Detective Roberts a confused look.

DONOVAN  
What the hell is the bureau doing  
here? Did I miss something?

ROBERTS  
They will explain everything.

Roberts motions to Agent Bochner.

ROBERTS (CONT'D)  
This is Agent Bochner. He's in  
charge of the case.

As they shake hands, the woman sitting beside Brent  
stands up. Donovan focuses his attention over to her.

ROBERTS (CONT'D)  
And this is Agent Yost.

Donovan approaches her.

YOST  
Hello, Mr. Miller.

DONOVAN  
Donovan. Call me Donovan.

She smiles at him as he checks her out.

YOST  
Nice to finally meet you.

DONOVAN  
You've heard of me?

YOST  
I guess you could say that.

Donovan looks down at his brother.

DONOVAN  
Could I have some time alone with  
my brother?

BOCHNER  
I'm sorry, but we can't allow  
that.

DONOVAN

Remember, I'm not just his brother, I'm his attorney. He has his rights.

BRENT

Donovan, they're saying this has something to do with Dad. They keep asking me questions about him.

DONOVAN

They were asking me questions too.

Donovan glares at Detective Roberts.

DONOVAN (CONT'D)

Our father has nothing to do with this!

Bochner steps in front of Detective Roberts.

BOCHNER

Oh yes, Donovan, I'm afraid he does. He has a lot to do with it.

Detective Roberts unlocks Brent from his chair and drags him across the room against his will.

BRENT

What are you doing?! Let go of me!

Bochner and Fielding each grab one of Donovan's arms to hold him back.

DONOVAN

Would somebody please tell me what is going on?!

The door slams shut as Brent and the detective disappear into the hallway.

BOCHNER

Sit down.

Donovan hesitates, then sits down at the table.

DONOVAN

All I want is some answers.

BOCHNER

You'll get them. Agent Fielding? Fire away.

Agent Fielding turns on a television monitor and inserts a videotape as the other agents find their seats.

The television shows the inside of a liquor store where a masked gunman walks up to the CLERK behind the counter. There are several other masked gunmen by his side.

FIELDING

Your brother enters the liquor store with some of his buddies.

The first masked gunman reaches across the counter and grabs the manager by the throat. A scuffle breaks out.

FIELDING (CONT'D)

The manager tells him that he can't open the safe, but Brent doesn't believe him.

DONOVAN

That man is wearing a mask. How do you know it's my brother?

FIELDING

Just watch.

During the struggle, the manager pulls off the mask, revealing Brent's face. Brent immediately aims his gun at the manager's head and fires a round.

FIELDING (CONT'D)

The clerk died instantly.

The clerk drops out of view as Brent empties the cash register, grabs some bottles of whiskey and disappears out of the camera's sight.

FIELDING (CONT'D)

He's a cold blooded killer, Donovan.

Agent Fielding turns off the videotape. Donovan looks away as Fielding reaches under the table and pulls out a cardboard box.

FIELDING (CONT'D)

We searched your brother's car and found these items.

He places a small handgun on the table.

FIELDING (CONT'D)

The gun from the video, registered in his name.

He tosses a handful of miniature vials onto the table.

FIELDING (CONT'D)

Crack cocaine vials.

He drops a needle onto the table.

FIELDING (CONT'D)  
And a needle with traces of  
heroin.

Donovan stares at the evidence.

DONOVAN  
I know my brother has some  
problems, but...

BOCHNER  
But it looks like he has even more  
problems than your father did.

Donovan stands up and shoves Agent Bochner up against the  
wall by his neck.

DONOVAN  
My father's problems are done and  
over with. I'm sick of hearing  
about it. He paid for what he did.  
He paid with his life.

Agent Bochner pushes Donovan away from him.

BOCHNER  
You try that again Donovan, and  
you'll be sitting in a jail cell  
next to your brother.

FIELDING  
Regardless of your feelings about  
the past, we are here to tell you  
that your brother's situation is  
relevant to your father's.

DONOVAN  
Why? Because my brother could get  
capital punishment just like my  
father did?

FIELDING  
It's far more complex than that.  
You see, we believe that it was in  
your brother's genes to be like  
your father; a criminal, a  
murderer.

DONOVAN  
I've heard enough!

Bochner laughs at Donovan.

BOCHNER  
We've already proved it in another  
case, and we're about to prove it  
again. Ever hear of something  
called nature vs. nurture?

DONOVAN

Yes I have, but what about me? Why haven't I killed anybody yet?

Bochner and Fielding look at each other for the answer. Bochner shrugs his shoulders.

BOCHNER

It's simply not in your genes. Maybe you take after your mother.

Donovan heads for the door.

DONOVAN

This is crazy.

FIELDING

Donovan! Wait! We want to offer your brother a second chance.

Donovan stops and turns around.

DONOVAN

You're letting him go?

BOCHNER

Not exactly.

DONOVAN

Then what's your idea of a second chance?

Fielding points to a chair.

FIELDING

Please sit back down. I assure you that this is worth it.

Donovan sits back down.

BOCHNER

Your turn, Agent Yost.

Agent Yost stands up and approaches Donovan. He glances down at her long legs and short skirt.

YOST

We will be giving your brother a new life.

DONOVAN

Rehab again?

YOST

No.

DONOVAN

What else can you do?

YOST

Exactly what I said. We're going to give him a new life. The catch is, he won't look or act anything like the brother you remember. He will be totally different.

DONOVAN

I get it. You want him to be a guinea pig for one of your experiments. That explains why the feds are here. It's another one of your classified government operations, am I right?

YOST

Like Agent Bochner said, the first half of this project has already been proven a success. Your brother is not a guinea pig. We've done this before.

DONOVAN

What are you going to do to him?

YOST

Of course, that's the classified part.

Agent Bochner leans over into Donovan's face.

BOCHNER

Come on, Donovan, you know as well as I do that your brother has no defense. You know he'll get capital punishment. What do you have to lose? Your law books don't mean anything right now. This is the only chance you have to save your brother.

Donovan stands up in front of Bochner.

BOCHNER (CONT'D)

What do you say?

Donovan swings the door open and stares everyone down.

DONOVAN

I'll see you in court.

Donovan slams the door behind him.

BOCHNER

(shouting)

You have no idea what you're up against, Donovan!

Bochner grins at Agent Yost.

BOCHNER (CONT'D)  
Proceed as planned.

Agent Yost smiles back as she stands up, then hurries out the door.

INT. DONOVAN'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM

The front door unlocks and Donovan walks in and throws his keys on the cluttered coffee table. Dirty dishes and piles of laundry are scattered throughout the room. A cat runs out to Donovan, meowing and hugging his leg.

Donovan sorts through a pile of mail. He stops at an envelope with a return address in bold print: Divorce Court.

He throws the envelope across the room and storms over to a collection of pictures on the wall. He removes a picture of himself with a young woman, SANDRA.

He holds the picture in his hands, gazing sadly at the memory.

DONOVAN  
Thanks!

Donovan throws the picture across the room into the front door. It smashes to pieces. He leans up against the wall and closes his eyes.

KNOCK. KNOCK. KNOCK. Donovan reopens his eyes and approaches the front door.

Donovan swings the door open and is surprised to see Agent Yost standing in the hallway. Without asking, she walks right into his apartment and closes the door behind her.

YOST  
We need to talk.

DONOVAN  
I already told you. I'm not interested in your deal.

YOST  
Neither am I. You have to listen to me. I'm here to help you.

DONOVAN  
Can you release my brother from jail?



YOST  
Not exactly.

DONOVAN  
Then I'm not interested.

YOST  
But that could happen,  
technically.

Agent Yost kneels down and picks up the broken picture of Sandra.

YOST (CONT'D)  
Is this your girlfriend?

DONOVAN  
Wife.

Agent Yost looks up at Donovan, somewhat disappointed.

YOST  
I didn't know you were married.

DONOVAN  
Not for long. She's my soon to be  
ex-wife.

YOST  
I see.

Agent Yost smiles at Donovan as she drops the picture back on the floor. She notices more pictures above a bookcase across the room and kicks through a pile of dirty clothes to get to them. She points to a picture of a young, teenage Nathan.

YOST (CONT'D)  
Is that the father I've heard all  
about?

DONOVAN  
That's his high school graduation  
picture.

Donovan's face suddenly appears agitated.

DONOVAN (CONT'D)  
Why does this keep going back to  
my father?

YOST  
I'm sorry, but the only way I can  
help you and your brother is for  
you to answer my questions.

Donovan takes a deep breath.

DONOVAN

Fine.

YOST

On the night that your father was arrested for the murder of a federal agent, you were ten years old. Correct?

Donovan stares at the floor.

DONOVAN

Yes.

YOST

And your mother was pregnant with your brother?

DONOVAN

Yes. My father survived a gunshot wound and he was arrested at the hospital. The stress sent my mother right into labor. Brent probably wouldn't have been born for another couple of weeks. I always felt bad for Brent, having that happen on his birthday. No wonder he's all screwed up. I would be too.

YOST

You still love your father, regardless of what he did?

Agent Yost has struck an emotional chord in Donovan. His eyes light up.

DONOVAN

He's my father. Of course I do.

YOST

And you love your brother?

DONOVAN

Yes.

Agent Yost moves closer to Donovan.

YOST

Than you have to come with me now, before it's too late.

DONOVAN

Too late for what?

ANDREA

To save your brother.

Agent Yost holds her hand out to him.

INT. SPORTS CAR - NIGHT

Agent Yost drives a red sports car. The interior is sleek and expensive-looking. Donovan sits quietly in the passenger seat. As Agent Yost shifts gears, Donovan puts on his seatbelt.

DONOVAN

Agent...Agent...

YOST

Agent Yost, but please, just call me Andrea.

DONOVAN

Okay, Andrea, where are we going and why are you in such a hurry?

ANDREA

I already told you. We're saving your brother's life. Wait until we're on the elevator and things will start to make sense. Maybe.

Andrea shifts again and goes even faster.

EXT. FEDERAL BUILDING - NIGHT

The sports car races into the entrance of the federal building and stops at a guarded gate.

Andrea flashes an identification card and speeds through the gate when it opens.

INT. FEDERAL BUILDING PARKING LOT - NIGHT

The sports car pulls into the first available parking space. The lights and engine shut off.

INT. SPORTS CAR - NIGHT

Donovan glares at Andrea, shaking his head.

DONOVAN

The Federal Building? Yeah, right. Turn around. Why would I want to go in there?

ANDREA

It's the only way.

DONOVAN

Forget it.

ANDREA

I already told you. I'm here to help you. It's us against them.

Donovan grabs her by the arm.

DONOVAN

You're lying! This is your job we're talking about here. You're a federal agent. Why would you risk your job to help me?

ANDREA

I don't agree with what they're doing to you...or me.

Donovan senses something in Andrea's voice and slowly loosens his grip on her arm.

DONOVAN

Keep talking.

ANDREA

There's no time. You'll figure out the rest on your own.

Donovan eases back as Andrea climbs out of the car.

INT. PARKING LOT - NIGHT

Donovan looks closely at the red sports car. It features scattered dents, rusty spots and a faded paint job.

DONOVAN

I see you take care of your things.

ANDREA

She's been through her fair share of car chases.

DONOVAN

Must be an exciting job.

ANDREA

You're about to see for yourself.

Andrea places an identification badge on Donovan's sport coat. He checks it out.

DONOVAN

What's this?

ANDREA  
For security purposes, you are now  
Special Agent Lynch.

DONOVAN  
Who's that?

ANDREA  
Don't know. I made it up.

Donovan looks at his picture on the fake identification card as they head across the parking lot.

INT. FEDERAL BUILDING - NIGHT

It is quiet inside the federal building as several agents casually cross their path.

A grey-haired security guard, MAXWELL, guards the lobby. As Donovan and Andrea pass through a metal detector, Maxwell smiles at them.

MAXWELL  
How do you do, Miss Yost? Working  
late again?

Maxwell has an Australian accent.

ANDREA  
It never ends.

Maxwell pushes a button that turns off a beeping metal detector. Andrea leads Donovan to a wall of a dozen elevators.

She stops at the very last one and pulls a key out of her pocket. Donovan presses the buttons continuously to try to get the door to open.

ANDREA (CONT'D)  
You can press them all you want.  
It won't do a thing. It needs a  
key.

Andrea inserts her key into a slot, then turns it. The door immediately opens and they both step into the elevator.

INT. ELEVATOR - NIGHT

The elevator door closes and Andrea walks straight to the back. With the same key, she opens a small console on the wall. Donovan watches as she types something into a miniature keyboard.

DONOVAN  
What are you doing?

A few seconds later, she closes the box and turns around.

ANDREA  
Ten seconds.

Donovan points to the display of buttons corresponding to the different floors. It ranges from first floor to twelfth floor.

DONOVAN  
Which floor?

ANDREA  
It doesn't matter. Pick one.

DONOVAN  
I don't know where we're going.

ANDREA  
Our floor isn't listed on there.

Andrea holds her hand out to Donovan as the elevator begins to shake.

ANDREA (CONT'D)  
Take my hand.

DONOVAN  
I'll be fine.

Suddenly, the elevator moves at breakneck speed, but is it going up or down?

The ceiling lights flicker as the elevator moves even faster. Donovan holds onto a railing along the wall.

DONOVAN (CONT'D)  
Why is it going so fast?

ANDREA  
It's not even moving. It just seems like it is.

Donovan tumbles around the elevator, while Andrea stands perfectly still.

Seconds later, the elevator abruptly stops.

INT. FEDERAL BUILDING - NIGHT

Donovan picks himself off the floor and follows Andrea out of the elevator. He takes a confused look around and they appear to be getting off on the floor they got on at.

DONOVAN

We didn't even go anywhere.

ANDREA

Oh yes we did.

There is the usual amount of traffic inside the federal building.

Donovan and Andrea approach the same security guard, Maxwell, but this time from the opposite side.

Maxwell stands by the metal detector. His hair is no longer grey and he has a much younger, muscular appearance.

MAXWELL

How do you do, Miss Yost? Working late again?

Maxwell has the same Australian accent.

ANDREA

It never ends.

Maxwell pushes a button as they pass through the metal detector. Donovan stares Maxwell down. He points at Maxwell and opens his mouth as if about to say something, but Andrea jerks him by the arm and pulls him along.

ANDREA (CONT'D)

Relax, Donovan.

As they exit the building, Donovan keeps turning around and looking at Maxwell.

INT. PARKING LOT - NIGHT

Donovan and Andrea approach the parking space where they left her car. Andrea pulls out a remote and points it. A loud beep rings out. As Andrea opens the driver's door, Donovan stops and checks out the car.

DONOVAN

This is not your car.

The multiple dents and scratches are gone. The glossy red paint looks brand new.

ANDREA

Of course it is. Now hurry up and get in. We don't have much time.

Donovan opens the passenger door and climbs inside.

INT. SPORTS CAR - NIGHT

Andrea starts the car and pulls away. Donovan holds his forehead.

DONOVAN

I feel like I'm burning up.

ANDREA

That's normal. It'll go away. Just relax. You'll be fine.

Donovan leans back in the passenger seat and stares out the window, sweat running down his face.

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

The red sports car moves quickly down the street. Only a few other cars are out in the night. Suddenly, the car pulls over to the side of the road.

INT. SPORTS CAR - NIGHT

Andrea turns off the headlights, but leaves the engine running.

DONOVAN

Now what are we doing?

ANDREA

First of all, I'm going to tell you something. I don't want you to get caught up in it. Just accept it and move on.

DONOVAN

What?

ANDREA

Your brother's about to be born. Do you know what I'm saying? What it means? Where we are?

Donovan wipes the sweat from his face and laughs.

DONOVAN

At this point, I'm prepared for anything.

ANDREA

Good. Now let's move on to specifics. Later tonight, your mother's going to be arriving at the hospital, along with Agent Bochner and Agent Fielding. Know what they're going to do?



DONOVAN  
Something with my brother?

ANDREA  
They're going to switch babies.  
They're going to give you a whole  
new brother altogether.

DONOVAN  
Why are they doing this?

ANDREA  
Research. It's just research. And  
money. It's always about money.

DONOVAN  
But why my brother? Why my family?

ANDREA  
Why anybody? They want to see how  
he turns out, to see if he turns  
into a criminal like your brother  
did.

Donovan punches the dashboard. Andrea grabs his hand.

DONOVAN  
How can they get away with this?

ANDREA  
They've been controlling lives for  
years.

DONOVAN  
You're telling me all this and I'm  
supposed to trust you?

ANDREA  
I'll give you one reason.

Andrea points to a convenience store across the street.

ANDREA (CONT'D)  
Look familiar?

DONOVAN  
Yeah. That's where my father  
killed that FBI agent.

ANDREA  
Do you know what time it is? It's  
shortly after one in the morning.

Donovan watches a car turn into the convenience store.

EXT. MINIT MART - NIGHT

An old, rusty dented-up station wagon pulls into the parking lot of the twenty-four hour convenience store. The car stops in a parking space below the window.

Through the glass, there is a blurry image of someone looking out.

INT. SPORTS CAR - NIGHT

Donovan seems as if he's in a trance.

ANDREA  
Your mother went into labor from  
the shock, right?

DONOVAN  
Yeah.

ANDREA  
If you stop your father, then your  
brother won't be born yet. They  
can't switch the babies tonight if  
he's not born.

DONOVAN  
I always thought about what I  
would do if I could go back in  
time and prevent my father from  
doing this. It's like a dream I've  
always had.

ANDREA  
This is your chance. Make it come  
true.

With a dedication in his eyes, Donovan climbs out of the car.

INT. STATION WAGON - NIGHT

Nathan holds the gun in his lap.

NATHAN  
You better not play games with me  
tonight, Jimmy.

Nathan checks outside in all directions, then opens the car door.

EXT. SPORTS CAR - NIGHT

Andrea leans out her window where Donovan is standing. She motions for him to come closer, so he does.

ANDREA

I'll be waiting here for you. Good luck.

Andrea grabs Donovan by his collar and pulls him into a brief, but passionate kiss. Donovan turns and hurries across the street.

INT. MINIT MART - NIGHT

Nathan hands over the money. Jimmy reaches into the drawer and gives Nathan his change.

NATHAN

Expensive milk.

JIMMY

But it's well worth it. You'll see.

Nathan lifts the brown paper bag off the counter.

NATHAN

You mind if I use your bathroom?

JIMMY

You know I don't like it when people hang around.

NATHAN

I'll only be a minute.

JIMMY

It's open. But make it quick!

Nathan hurries to the narrow hallway at the back of the store.

EXT. MINIT MART - NIGHT

Donovan slows down as he sees a dark figure hanging around the entrance to the store.

Donovan stops as soon as the man's face is visible. It is Agent Fielding.

FIELDING

It's about time, Donovan. We've been waiting for you.

DONOVAN

You set me up.

FIELDING

I didn't.

Suddenly, an arm wraps around Donovan's neck and chokes him. It is Agent Bochner.

BOCHNER

But I did.

Bochner pulls a gun and holds it to Donovan's head as he drags him into the store behind Agent Fielding.

INT. BATHROOM - NIGHT

The grimy bathroom is covered with dirt and cobwebs. Nathan closes the toilet seat and places the brown paper bag on top.

Nathan stares at himself through the filmy mirror, then reaches inside the bag and pulls out a miniature bag of white powder.

There's already a razor blade on the sink.

INT. MINIT MART - NIGHT

Jimmy squirms on the floor behind the counter with a foot on his back and a gun to his head.

JIMMY

Who the hell are you guys?! I know  
you're not cops!

A badge falls onto the floor in front of Jimmy's face.

JIMMY (CONT'D)

Nathan! Flush it down the toilet,  
man! Now!

Jimmy spits out blood.

INT. BATHROOM - NIGHT

Nathan inspects his nose through the mirror and wipes away any trace of powder. He takes a couple of deep sniffs.

JIMMY'S VOICE

(muffled)

Get out of there Nathan!

A gunshot is followed by silence. Nathan puts his ear up to the door.

NATHAN

Jimmy?

INT. MINIT MART - NIGHT

Blood pours from Jimmy's head as Agent Fielding leaves him lying on the floor behind the counter.

At the end of the narrow hallway, Agent Bochner holds Donovan in front of the bathroom door.

BOCHNER  
Open the door.

Donovan tries to open the door, but it is locked.

INT. BATHROOM - NIGHT

The doorknob jostles as Nathan backs up against the wall. He pulls out his gun and aims it at the door.

NATHAN  
Jimmy, what's going on?!

INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT

Agent Bochner pulls Donovan a step back from the door.

BOCHNER  
Kick it open.

DONOVAN  
No!

Bochner presses his gun firmly against Donovan's cheek.

BOCHNER  
Kick it open!

Donovan kicks the door out of its hinges. Nathan extends the gun out in front of him, his arms trembling.

With one arm choking Donovan by the neck, Bochner uses his free hand to shoot Nathan in the shoulder. As Nathan is shot, blood splatters onto the mirror and he impulsively fires his gun.

The bullet tears into Donovan's chest as Nathan falls to the floor. He drops the gun and clenches his shoulder.

Donovan and Nathan look each other in the eyes, neither one quite sure what just happened. Bochner holds Donovan up, as he gets weaker with every second.

Donovan can barely keep his tearful eyes open as Agent Fielding pushes his way into the bathroom.

He turns Nathan on his back and handcuffs him.

As Donovan tries to speak, a mouthful of blood drips down his chin.

DONOVAN  
(raspy)  
Da-a-a-a-a-a-d.

Nathan looks over as Bochner releases his hold on Donovan. He collapses to the floor and loses consciousness.

[www.backtooceancity.com/capital-punishment.html](http://www.backtooceancity.com/capital-punishment.html)

## CRACKING HEADS

The screenplay for *Cracking Heads* returned to the dark tone of my first two scripts and featured a main character dealing with the death of a friend. The idea began as a short film starring my friends Chad Stankunas, Matt Witmer and Jamie Jozefowski. We shot it late at night in my grandparents' driveway with bright lights that drew the attention of the local police. Filmed entirely on a 16mm Bolex camera just like *The Video Store Nightmare*, I was not able to edit the footage, so it was shot in the scripted order, and we jumped back and forth between angles.

The script for my full-length version of *Cracking Heads* was my suburban *Boyz N the Hood*. In fact, whenever I pitched it to anyone, I described it as *The Outsiders* meet the *Boyz N the Hood*. The story follows a group of suburban misfits that tangle with inner city drug dealers. One of my Temple professors, Allen Barber, read the script and said there was something intriguing about the story of kids from the suburbs venturing into the city.

This script led to my first agent, Greg Jackson of The Pathways Agency. Greg was a really nice guy, but he wasn't based in Hollywood, which limited his access to talent. However, he claimed to have a connection to Jonathan Taylor Thomas from Home Improvement and said he gave him the script.

I would love to revisit *Cracking Heads* and modernize it. Like my other scripts, the story would play out completely different with the existence of cell phones. The drug dealers locate the main character because they find his video store membership card. Of course, the card was from All Star Video, but since there are no more video stores, this plot twist is outdated too.

The script for *Cracking Heads* also had major structural problems. One criticism I received was that I diffused every action scene too quickly. In addition, key events happen late in the script. After an earlier meeting, the main characters rob the inner city drug dealers at their corner in North Philadelphia, but this does not happen until page 95! Then the drug dealers track them down to their suburban neighborhood, all in the last ten pages!

The robbery should have happened around page 30, or page 60 at the latest, and the rest of the script should have built to the final confrontation in the suburbs.

Here is the original robbery sequence as it appeared in *Cracking Heads*.

EXT. STELLA AVENUE - NIGHT

Chaz's van cruises down the avenue through the familiar setting of cramped, boarded-up row homes and graffiti on the one-way street.

Snipers pace on the rooftops.

Two cars in front of the van cause them to wait. Rico and Jay-K approach each car.

Jay-K taps Rico on the shoulder as he takes money from the last car.

JAY-K  
Look who it is.

RICO  
These guys got some real guts to show their faces here again.

As the last car speeds away, the van pulls up next to Rico and Jay-K. Jesse is driving and Chaz is not in view.

JESSE  
Which one of you is Rico?

Rico's gun is already pointed at Jesse.

RICO  
I remember this van, but I don't remember you. What do you want?

JESSE  
Take a look in the back window.

RICO  
I don't take orders. Get out of here before I pop a cap in you.

JESSE  
Could you please look in the back window? I promise it's worth your time.

RICO  
(to Jay-K)



Go check it out.

While Rico keeps his gun pointed at Jesse, Jay-K walks around to the back of the van and glances in the window.

INT. CHAZ'S VAN - NIGHT

Marcella's hands are taped behind her back. Chaz has her head pulled back with the shotgun against her neck and his finger on the trigger.

EXT. STELLA AVENUE - NIGHT

Jay-K stares inside the van through his mirror sunglasses, then calmly walks back to Rico and talks softly into his ear.

JAY-K  
We've got a problem.

RICO  
I don't think so!

Rico prepares to fire his gun, but Jay-K knocks his arm down.

JAY-K  
You don't want to do that, man!

RICO  
What's the problem?!

JAY-K  
They got Marcella, man.

RICO  
What??

JAY-K  
Dude's got a shotgun to your sister's head.

Rico's face swells with anger.

RICO  
These guys must think they're pretty smooth.

Rico moves toward the back of the van and looks in the window for himself. He then returns to Jesse, trying desperately not to lose his temper.

RICO (CONT'D)  
You really think you can get away with something like this?

JESSE

Yeah.

RICO

Well, you're wrong.

Rico puts his gun to Jesse's head.

INT. VAN - NIGHT

Linda is also tied up. As her head lies on the floor, she notices some kind of card in front of her eyes. She maneuvers her body and grabs the card, clenching it in her hand.

EXT. STELLA AVENUE - NIGHT

Rico presses his gun firmly against Jesse's head.

JESSE

(nervously)

You shoot me, you're shooting her, man!

RICO

What do you want? Money? Drugs?

JESSE

Everything.

RICO

(laughing)

You want to make an even trade for my sister? That's it?

JESSE

Yeah.

Sweat starts to bead on Jesse's forehead.

RICO

Why don't you trade her for me instead? That's a better idea, isn't it? It's me you want. Let my sister go and I'll climb in your van and you can tie me up and hold a gun to my head.

Rico presses the gun harder against Jesse's face.

JESSE

Just give us what we want.

RICO

What if I said you can have my sister? Then what are you going to do? How fast can you drive?

JESSE

You wouldn't do that. She's your sister.

RICO

Yeah, but I'm crazy like that.

Jesse's fear shows through as sweat drips down his face. Rico wraps his fingers snugly around the trigger of the gun that is pressed into Jesse's cheek.

RICO (CONT'D)

I'll tell you what. I'll make you a deal. If you promise to take Marcella back where you found her, I'll let you just drive away. How does that sound? You're scared. I can tell. You're in over your head. You just want to get out of here alive.

Jesse puts his hand on the gear shifter, as if tempted to just drive away.

CHAZ'S VOICE

Don't listen to him! He's bluffing! It's a trick!

MARCELLA'S VOICE

Ricardo!

Marcella's voice is muffled by a hand over her mouth as she tries to scream.

CHAZ'S VOICE

I'll kill her, man! I swear to god I will!

CLICK! Rico pulls the trigger and Jesse's head snaps back. Jesse looks up in shock to see Rico loading his gun with bullets. The chamber was empty.

RICO

You're lucky I love my sister.

Rico shoves the gun back in his waist.

RICO (CONT'D)

How much do you want?

JESSE

I already told you. All of it.

Rico whispers something into Jay-K's ear. Jay-K then disappears into one of the row homes.

JESSE (CONT'D)

We'll let her out at the next street, as long as you don't try anything.

RICO

You let her out here!

JESSE

It has to be our way.

RICO

The next intersection isn't until Second and Stella!

JESSE

That's where you'll find her.

Jay-K reappears with an envelope and a large plastic bag.

Rico shows Jesse the countless hundreds, fifties and twenties, then shoves the money back in the envelope.

Rico then hands over the large plastic baggie.

The van immediately takes off down the street. Halfway down, the back doors of the van swing open and Chaz dumps Linda onto the road.

Linda's hands and feet are duct taped and her body blocks the street. Rico and Jay-K run to her.

EXT. INTERSECTION - STELLA AND SECOND - NIGHT

Marcella, her hands and feet also taped, is dumped onto the road at the next intersection. The doors to the van slam shut as it races down Stella Avenue.

INT. CHAZ'S VAN - NIGHT

Chaz returns to the front of the van, where Jesse is still trembling as he tries to drive.

CHAZ

Is anyone following us?

Jesse checks the side mirror.

JESSE

Nope. All clear. We did it! I can't believe it!

CHAZ

You had me worried for a minute back there. I thought you were going to drive away.

JESSE

I was pissing my pants the whole time dude. That was intense!

CHAZ

Let's celebrate.

Chaz starts to count the money.

EXT. STELLA AVENUE - NIGHT

Rico runs down the street until he reaches Marcella, who squirms around on the road. She yells and screams in Spanish. Rico rips the duct tape with a knife, breaking her free.

In the background, we see Jay-K helping Linda to her feet. She hands Jay-K something, then he runs to Rico and Marcella.

RICO

Are you okay, Marcella?!

Jay-K interrupts.

JAY-K

Rico! I think you should see this.

Jay-K hands Rico a card.

RICO

What is this? All Star Video?

As we look closer, we see that Rico is holding Greg's video membership card, the one that he loaned to Chaz.

JAY-K

It was in their van.

RICO

All Star Video. Souderton, Pennsylvania.

JAY-K

What do you think?

RICO

Jay-K, my man, it looks like we're taking a ride to good old Souderton. Get a map and meet me at my jeep.

Rico laughs.

EXT. ALL STAR VIDEO - NIGHT

Rico parks his blue jeep in front of the video store.

INT. VIDEO STORE - NIGHT

Rico casually strolls into the empty video store. He is immediately approached by the video store CLERK, who holds a key chain.

CLERK

Can I help you, sir? We're getting ready to close.

RICO

I'll only be a couple of minutes.

Rico grabs the closest movie box in reach, without even looking at it. The clerk locks the front door and turns the "open" sign over to "closed."

RICO (CONT'D)

I'm ready.

CLERK

That was fast.

The clerk takes the movie box from Rico and leads him to the side counter. The clerk looks at the movie box as he retrieves the actual videocassette. The film is "Little Women."

CLERK (CONT'D)

"Little Women," huh?

Rico calmly responds by pulling out the "All Star Video" membership card. The clerk takes the card and scans it through the computer. Rico leans in, but can't quite see the computer screen.

CLERK (CONT'D)

That will be three dollars. Would you like popcorn with your movie?

Rico is only interested in the computer screen. He strains his neck, hoping to get a glimpse of some information.

CLERK (CONT'D)

Excuse me sir.

Rico glares at the clerk, then catapults himself over the counter. He pushes the clerk to the floor.

CLERK (CONT'D)

Hey! You can't come back here!  
What are you doing?

Rico grabs a nearby pen and piece of scrap paper. He looks at the computer screen and smiles. He writes an address: 293 Oak Drive, Souderton.

Rico takes the piece of paper and the membership card, then throws the pen at the confused clerk.

RICO

Keep the movie. I've seen it.

Rico hops back over the counter and hurries to the front door.

Slam!

Rico ricochets off the door, forgetting that the clerk already locked it. Slightly disoriented, Rico pulls the gun from his waist.

RICO (CONT'D)

Open this door now!

The clerk stands up and runs to the door.

The keys jingle as the clerk's hands shake while he unlocks the door. Rico regains his composure, puts his gun away and disappears into the night.

[www.backtooceancity.com/cracking-heads.html](http://www.backtooceancity.com/cracking-heads.html)

## DEAD ON THE FOURTH OF JULY

This is the only script idea that wasn't my own.

When I worked at the video store, some of the customers knew I was in film school. I can't count how many times someone pitched me their idea for a movie. The reality is that I am so backed up with my own ideas, I don't have time to write someone else's. There was one exception.

A customer told me she had an idea based on a true story. She said the police turned her house into a crime scene overnight. Apparently, a woman walked into the police station and confessed to a murder she committed in that house ten years earlier and claimed there were still human remains buried in the basement.

The details of the murder were bizarre and took place on the Fourth of July. After the woman and her accomplice tried unsuccessfully to burn the victim's body, they purchased an axe at a local hardware store to finish the job, then returned it for a refund.

Because the crime took place on the holiday, I named the script *Dead on the Fourth of July*. I changed the names and some of the events. I also focused the story on the video store customer's family and how their lives were turned upside down when the police arrived.

I added some new twists and turns, but never got into it. I lost interest and never finished the script.

FADE IN:

JULY 2, 1984

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT



A loud buzzer rings throughout the house.

SHIRLEY, late twenties, rushes into the room and opens the smoke-filled oven. She grabs a potholder and removes a cookie sheet with crisp, black nuggets.

With a telephone nestled on her shoulder, she turns off the buzzer.

SHIRLEY

Damn! I forgot about Adam's stupid cookies!

EVAN'S VOICE

(on phone)  
Adam's cookies?

SHIRLEY

Yeah, he has this big poker game planned for the Fourth of July. It's bad luck for Adam to play cards without my chocolate chip cookies. At least that's what he says.

EVAN'S VOICE

Shirley, why do you even bother?

SHIRLEY

I don't know. There's still a little something in me that loves him.

Using a butter knife, Shirley scrapes the burnt cookies off the sheet and onto a plate.

EVAN'S VOICE

If you still love him, then we can't be together. We can call the whole weekend off right now.

SHIRLEY

Evan...

EVAN'S VOICE

I'm serious. I don't want to be your back up plan. Either you love him, or you love me. Which is it?!

SHIRLEY

Evan...

EVAN'S VOICE

I'm waiting...

Shirley inspects one of her cookies, then bites into it with a loud crunch. She closes her eyes and chews the cookie slowly.

SHIRLEY

You know what I'm in the mood for?

Shirley sits on the kitchen table.

EVAN'S VOICE

Don't try to change the subject.

SHIRLEY

It's too late, Evan, I just bit into chocolate.

EVAN'S VOICE

You know how you get when you eat chocolate! What did you go and do that for?!

Shirley unzips her pants.

SHIRLEY

You better get over here.

EVAN'S VOICE

When's Adam coming home?

SHIRLEY

I don't know. He's at the bar.

EVAN'S VOICE

You always pick the worst times!

SHIRLEY

Hurry!

EVAN'S VOICE

Did you look for the money today?

SHIRLEY

Evan, just get over here!

EVAN'S VOICE

We've got to find where he hid that money by tomorrow. It's in that house somewhere. I'm not going home until we find it. I'm on my way.

ADAM'S VOICE

Don't waste your time. You'll never find it.

Shirley quickly zips her pants back up and climbs off the table.

SHIRLEY

Evan, that didn't sound like you.

Adam's voice can be heard laughing through the phone.

EVAN'S VOICE

Shirley, get the hell out of there!

Shirley hangs up the phone and looks around the kitchen.

SHIRLEY

Adam?

Heavy footsteps approach the kitchen.

SHIRLEY (CONT'D)

Adam honey? Is that you?

ADAM, a burly man in his early forties, appears at the door. He clenches a half-empty beer bottle with an evil smirk on his face.

ADAM

I've been keeping an eye on you.

SHIRLEY

I'm sorry. I know I shouldn't call those 1-900 numbers.

ADAM

Don't lie to me. I know very well who you were talking to. He's a con artist. Evan just wants your money. I mean, my money! I just can't believe you don't see through his act. But most of all, I can't believe how you treat your own husband.

SHIRLEY

Evan treats me like no guy ever has. I feel alive when I'm with him. You make me feel like trash.

ADAM

Not anymore.

Adam pulls a handgun from his pants. He points it at Shirley as she begins to sob.

SHIRLEY

So now you're going to kill me?

ADAM

Maybe.

Adam lowers his gun and Shirley calms down.

SHIRLEY

All I want is to be loved on the Fourth of July. This is my Independence Day. I want to break

free, start over and live my life  
the way I want. Evan loves me for  
who I am, not for my money.

ADAM

It's my money.

SHIRLEY

Whatever.

ADAM

I think Evan's going to be dead on  
the Fourth of July.

Adam clenches the gun in his hand as car lights shine on  
him through the window.

ADAM (CONT'D)

There he is now!

SHIRLEY

Adam! No!

Shirley looks around for something to grab. She picks up  
the empty cookie sheet and holds it like a weapon.

SHIRLEY (CONT'D)

I'm not going to let you hurt him.

ADAM

What are you going to do, hit me  
with a cookie sheet?

SHIRLEY

I might.

Adam laughs as he points at the burnt cookies on the  
plate.

ADAM

You can't even make cookies with  
that thing.

As the anger builds inside Shirley, she winds back her  
arm, holding the cookie sheet like a frisbee.

As Adam continues to laugh, Shirley slices the cookie  
sheet into his hip.

Adam drops his beer bottle and it shatters on the floor.

He looks down in shock at the cookie sheet sticking out  
of his side, then stares at Shirley with puppy dog eyes.

ADAM (CONT'D)

I've got a cookie sheet in me.

SHIRLEY

I know.

Adam calmly sets his handgun on the counter, then uses his hands to gently tug on the cookie sheet.

EXT. PARKER STREET - NIGHT

The street consists of several rows of modern town homes.

EVAN, a young man in his early twenties, closes the door to his Monte Carlo, which is parked next to an old station wagon.

Evan hurries up the sidewalk and bangs on the door. The mailbox reads, "Dobson - 1156."

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

Both Shirley and Adam hear the banging on the door.

Adam glares at Shirley as she reaches in a drawer behind her and removes the first kitchen utensil she touches.

Adam's hand slowly reaches for the gun on the counter, but Shirley smashes his hand with a meat tenderizer.

Adam's bones are crushed. He shakes his hand in pain as Shirley uses the tenderizer to break the gun into pieces.

ADAM

Honey, I think you broke my hand!

Adam holds his hand up to the light. It is mangled.

ADAM (CONT'D)

You bitch!

Adam lunges at Shirley with his good hand and tries to strangle her.

As she struggles to breathe, she pounds Adam on the head with the meat tenderizer. The cookie sheet remains stuck in his side.

Suddenly, blood splashes on Shirley's face as the tenderizer lands in Adams's forehead and stays there.

He falls onto his back and moans in pain.

10 YEARS LATER - JULY 2, 1994

EXT. PARKER STREET - DAY

JEREMY, fourteen years old, rides a skateboard down the sidewalk of Parker Street.

His hair is shaved on the back and sides, but long in the front, with the bangs hanging over one eye.

He skates up to a door marked "McDaniel - 1156." The lawn is maintained with colorful flowers and neatly trimmed bushes.

He opens the mailbox and pulls out a skateboarding magazine and a handful of envelopes.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

The kitchen has been remodeled since we last saw it with new appliances, cabinets and flooring.

MAURA, a middle-aged woman, pours a glass of orange juice.

INT. DINING ROOM - DAY

Maura sits at the end of the table.

AMBER, who is sixteen, is already at the table eating a plate of food. An untouched plate waits at an empty seat across from her.

MAURA

I better fight this cold off or else I'm going to get booed off the stage on Saturday night.

AMBER

Mom, your jokes aren't funny. You're going to get booed off the stage anyway.

MAURA

Amber! Am I really that bad?

AMBER

I was just kidding, mom. You're hilarious.

MAURA

I hope so. There's going to be some talent agents in the audience. This could be my big break.

AMBER

What time do you want me there?

MAURA

Nine-thirty, but you should really get there at nine if you want a good seat.

They hear the front door slam shut.

AMBER

Gross. He's home.

MAURA

Jeremy, get in here and eat your dinner before it gets cold!

Jeremy slides into the room on his skateboard.

MAURA (CONT'D)

How many times do I have to tell you that skateboard's not allowed in the house! You've ruined the floor enough already!

Jeremy ignores her.

JEREMY

What's for dinner?

AMBER

Are you blind?

Jeremy gets in Amber's face with his eyes closed.

JEREMY

Amber?! Is that you, Amber?! I can't see. Where are you?!

Amber pushes him away.

AMBER

Oh. My. God. Have you ever brushed your teeth?

Jeremy intentionally blows his breath on Amber.

AMBER (CONT'D)

You're so immature.

Amber kicks Jeremy in the shin and he hobbles onto the chair across from her.

MAURA

That's enough, you two. Jeremy, leave your sister alone. I'm under a lot of stress getting ready for my show. The last thing I need is you two going at each other's throats. It's almost the Fourth of

July. Is a little peace and quiet  
too much to ask?

Jeremy kicks Amber under the table, but she lets it go.

INT. APARTMENT BUILDING LOBBY - DAY

Evan, who is now in his early thirties, has a full beard and mustache with long hair flowing down his back. His eyes are bloodshot and his arms are covered in needle marks.

Using a key from his pocket, he opens a small mailbox marked #95. Flipping through the mail, he stops at a particular letter.

EVAN

Shirley??? How long's it been? Ten  
years?

The return address is from Shirley Dobson. He rips open the letter and reads:

SHIRLEY'S VOICE

Dear Evan, I'm sorry it's been so long. We went our separate ways on good terms, so there is no reason I shouldn't have written you sooner. But when you finish reading this letter, you will probably wish you never heard from me. As I'm sure you remember, it has been exactly ten years since you and I killed my husband, Adam Dobson.

Evan stops reading and glances around him. He takes a deep breath and continues:

SHIRLEY'S VOICE (CONT'D)

I loved my husband, and just as much loved you. We both had problems, and at the time neither one of us understood what we had done. We committed murder, a horrible gruesome murder that went on for days. It makes me sick to even think about it. The guilt I've carried over the last ten years has finally gotten to me. As you read this letter, I will have already turned myself in to the police to confess to everything. Every detail. Please forgive me.

Evan stumbles as he clenches his hair with his fist.



EVAN

No! This isn't happening!

SHIRLEY'S VOICE

You still have time to run, and for the inconvenience, I've left you the enclosed map. It will tell you exactly where the money is. Yes, the money that Adam hid from me. It is still in a suitcase at 1156 Parker Street. I didn't find the map until recently and there is another family living there now. The map will give you instructions on how to retrieve it. I doubt the current occupants have found it. Good luck. All apologies, Shirley.

Evan looks at the enclosed map, then puts it in the envelope with the letter. He shoves it in his back pocket.

Paranoia has already set in as Evan looks out the front window of the lobby. He then hurries up the stairs.

EXT. BROOKSVILLE POLICE STATION - DAY

The police station is nestled in a cozy park setting with a pond, green grass and a nearby playground.

Shirley, now in her late thirties, steps off a bus and heads toward the entrance of the police station.

INT. POLICE STATION - DAY

Shirley appears thin and weak. Her hair is dirty and parted in the middle. She has a homely look, far from the beauty she once had.

Shirley approaches LISA, the receptionist.

LISA

Welcome to Brooksville. How may I help you?

SHIRLEY

Hi, my name is Shirley Dobson and I would like to confess to a murder.

Lisa's mouth hangs open, not sure how to respond. After an awkward moment of silence, Lisa composes herself.

LISA

Have a seat. Somebody will be with  
you shortly.

Shirley sits on a sofa and picks up a magazine.

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## THE MISSING YEARS

What if they made a sequel to *Stand By Me*? That was the idea that inspired *The Missing Years*.

When I grew up, the only neighborhood kids within walking distance lived in a large apartment complex next to my house. A few of them stayed for a long time, but for the most part, kids would come and go, sometimes disappearing overnight. It was difficult to make friends when they moved away so quickly.

*The Missing Years* is inspired by those friends from my childhood. What ever happened to the kids that passed through my neighborhood? Some of them were very good friends of mine, similar to the main characters in *Stand By Me*. What if they were reunited many years later?

This is another script I didn't finish, but the story had a lot of potential.

I started writing it after Tony and Pete passed away. Tony's brother, Jamie, agreed to co-write it with me. I was capable of finding my own time to write, but when you add another person into the mix, it becomes much more difficult. A huge positive you get from writing with someone is that it gives you instant feedback and the ability to bounce ideas around in a way you can't do when alone. This script is far more descriptive than my others, most likely from having a writing partner.

FADE IN:

EXT. MAPLE AVENUE - NIGHT

Scattered streetlights dimly illuminate the avenue of the snow-covered town of Harleysville, Pennsylvania.

Since the snow has stopped falling, a perilous, rusty station wagon attempts to inch its way down the icy road.

INT. STATION WAGON - NIGHT

The interior of the station wagon is certainly no improvement over its outer appearance, and neither is the driver of this hazard.

The portly fellow behind the steering wheel, HAROLD, operates a fine balancing act between eating a jelly donut and concentrating on the road.

The dirtiest element of the car would probably be BUTTONS, his homely pet chihuahua panting in the passenger seat.

HAROLD  
(playfully)  
You're my little Buttons, aren't you? Yes. You're my little Buttons.

Buttons lets out an annoying squeak, as Harold glances out his side window and observes a slice of life that exists outside of his vehicle.

HAROLD  
Oh look, Buttons! Look at the little kids playing in the snow. I wonder what they're doing. Are they making snow angels, Buttons?

As Harold gazes cheerfully at the children, the window by his face successfully deflects an oncoming barrage of snowballs.

Harold's head quickly swivels, then returns with a lifeless expression.

EXT. MAPLE AVENUE - NIGHT

Like a retreating foot soldier, the station wagon flees from the scene of the ambush.

Three ten-year-old partners-in-crime, GREG, NICK and MATT, take a moment to relish in their victorious attack.

NICK  
Did you see the look on that guy's face?

GREG  
Yeah. And did you see him stuffing it too?

MATT  
He didn't even know what hit him.

NICK

I don't think he cared anyway,  
guys. Did you take a good look at  
his car?

The mischievous young troops reload their snowball  
ammunition and poise themselves to fire at will on the  
next unsuspecting victim.

As the three snipers camouflage themselves along the  
bushes, another pair of headlights approach the  
battlefield.

An expensive luxury car appears within range and is  
immediately barraged by the icy projectiles. As if  
wounded, the vehicle staggers to a stop on the side of  
the road.

The attackers look at each other in search for a chain of  
command.

NICK

Oh crap!

GREG

What do we do?!

MATT

Let's get out of here!

NICK

To my house! To my house!

As the platoon evacuates their fortress, a dark, towering  
figure emerges from the disabled vehicle. The infuriated  
ANGRY MAN initiates a foot chase.

MATT

I'll catch up with you guys later!

Matt suddenly breaks away from his allies.

ANGRY MAN

You stupid kids!

The man continues to pursue Nick and Greg.

EXT. FRONT YARD OF HOUSE - NIGHT

Nick and Greg trample sluggishly through the snow in the  
front yard of a nearby house. Laughing all the way, Nick  
decapitates the head of a freshly-built snowman.

EXT. SIDE OF HOUSE - NIGHT

As the angry man closes in, Nick and Greg catapult themselves over some bushes, landing safely in the back yard of the house.

EXT. BACK YARD - NIGHT

Nick spills a trash can into the path of the man as they approach a wooden fence.

Nick throws himself gracefully over the fence, but Greg is suddenly pulled to the ground.

ANGRY MAN  
You stupid kids!

Greg's face is immediately swept over with fear as his eyes lock with those of his captor. Almost instantly, Nick leaps back over the fence and rejoins his fellow comrade.

Together again, Nick and Greg take a brief moment to comprehend the frightful mass of human flesh dancing violently in front of them.

However, what they don't see is the frustrated, well-dressed man before them.

ANGRY MAN  
You stupid kids!

Then, without further discussion, the angry man storms off in a frenzy, releasing his two prisoners from their short captivity.

With sighs of relief, Nick and Greg exchange eyes of astonishment.

GREG  
You think he might come back?

NICK  
Let's not stick around to find out!

They hurry over the fence.

EXT. NICK'S HOUSE - NIGHT

A "For Sale" sign decorates the front lawn of an old brick house. Nick and Greg race across the yard and up a ramp leading to the front door.

They pause for a moment to catch their breath. Nick slowly opens the door and peers into the house.

NICK  
(softly)  
Shhhhhh. I'm supposed to be  
upstairs packing.

They quietly slip into the house.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

The living room is crowded with cardboard boxes and is absent of any furniture except for a television set sitting on the floor.

Nick and Greg sneak to the staircase at the end of the room.

Creaking floorboards can be heard as FRANK SAVAGE rolls into the room on a wheelchair.

FRANK  
Nick!

Nick stops in his tracks.

NICK  
Yeah Dad?

As if they've done nothing wrong, Nick and Greg gaze innocently at Frank.

FRANK  
What are you doing? You think your room's going to pack itself up? We have to be out of here by tomorrow! You know I can't do anything by myself. Do you expect your sister to do everything? Show some responsibility around here!

Frank's long hair and beard can't hide the loss and pain that burns through his eyes.

GREG  
I still don't understand why you guys are moving.

FRANK  
Well maybe I'm not a successful lawyer like your father, Greg. I'm sorry.

Frank spins his wheelchair around and out of the room. Nick hangs his head and shuffles over to the stairs as Greg follows.

INT. UPSTAIRS BEDROOM - NIGHT

AMY, eighteen years old, tapes up a cardboard box as the door flies open and Nick and Greg stroll into the room.

NICK

Hey Amy, what are you doing in here?

AMY

What does it look like I'm doing you little brat?

NICK

You're packing my room for me? Thanks. You're the best.

AMY

Don't mention it.

Amy points to a box under the window.

AMY

By the way, your nudie books are in that box over there.

Nick's face turns red.

NICK

What nudie books?

AMY

As if you don't know.

NICK

They're Greg's. He left them here.

Greg's eyes light up.

GREG

What?!

Nick elbows Greg to keep quiet. Amy squints at Greg.

AMY

Greg, you little pervert. Walking in on me when I was in the shower that one time wasn't enough for you, huh?

GREG

Ummmmm...

Amy puts her arm around Greg.

AMY

You don't have to answer that. I know you were embarrassed. But hey, so was I.



GREG

All I saw was your shoulder.  
Honest.

NICK

Shoulder, breast. Same thing.

Amy glares at Nick.

AMY

Shut the hell up! What do you know  
anyway?

Amy notices that Greg is unconsciously staring at her  
breasts.

AMY

Greg likes them though, don't you  
Greg?

Greg snaps out of his trance and looks away.

GREG

Yeah, sure Amy.

Amy smiles at Greg, then kisses him on the cheek.

AMY

Hold on. I'll be right back.

Amy skips energetically out of the room. Greg eyes up  
Nick.

GREG

What did you go and say all that  
for?

NICK

I was just kidding. Come on. She  
loves it.

Greg agrees with a grin.

GREG

I know.

Amy trots back into the bedroom with an instant camera in  
her hand.

AMY

You've been best friends all your  
lives. How about one last picture  
before we leave?

Nick rests his arm on Greg's shoulder.

AMY

Wait a minute. Where's Matt?

NICK

He ran home early. He should be  
back later.

Amy looks through the camera.

AMY

Remind me to get a picture of him  
too. Say "cheese."

As they smile at the camera, Nick uses his hand to make  
rabbit ears over Greg's head.

NICK AND GREG

Cheese!

Amy takes a flash snapshot.

GREG

I'm really going to miss you guys.

A picture slides out of the instant camera, savoring a  
bittersweet moment in their young lives.

CUT TO:

8 YEARS LATER:

EXT. BALCONY - DAY

It's a beautiful summer day to be sunbathing atop the  
balcony on the third floor of the large house.

Greg, who is now eighteen, reclines on a lounge chair  
while he rubs suntan lotion onto his chest. His  
appearance is very clean and he sports a short, stylish  
hair cut.

KRISTIN, also eighteen, lies on her stomach in a pink  
bikini.

Greg looks up at the old brick house across the street.  
Since we last saw it, there has been an addition built  
onto the side.

GREG

Eight years, Kristin. Can you  
believe it? Nick and I haven't  
seen each other for eight years.

Kristin turns her back towards Greg.

KRISTIN

Can you do my back?

GREG

Yeah sure.

Kristin lies face down again. Greg leans over and squirts a blob of lotion on her already well-tanned body. He slowly rubs it in.

KRISTIN

So who called who?

GREG

Well, Nick called me, of course. It caught me totally off guard. He said that he was taking his girlfriend on a trip around the country. Is that romantic or what?

Kristin reaches behind and unties her bikini string.

KRISTIN

Whose idea was it for him to stay at your house for the weekend?

GREG

He said he would get a hotel room. Yeah right, like I would really let him do that. We were best friends since we could walk. I mean, we grew up across the street from each other. I want him to stay here, at my house, for the weekend. Besides, my parents are just as excited to see him as I am.

KRISTIN

They better not be weirdos, Greg. I will not be seen in public with a couple of weirdos.

Kristin slides her bikini bottoms down halfway.

KRISTIN

And I can't have any tan lines either.

Greg continues to rub in the lotion.

GREG

Relax, Kristin, I'm sure Nick is right up your alley. In fact, he's probably just like me.

Greg leans back into his chair, smiling at the thought.

EXT. HIGHWAY - DAY

An old, black-primered beat-up van missing all four hubcaps, barrels down the four-lane highway. With the windows rolled down, loud music blares out of the van.

INT. VAN - DAY

With a cigarette hanging off his lip, NICK, now eighteen, is in total control of the van.

As the heavy metal music grows louder, Nick bangs his head to the beat, with the wind blowing his long hair.

SABRINA, also eighteen, wears a black leather miniskirt and a mid-drift shirt revealing her belly. Her shoulder-length hair is dyed blonde with dark roots.

She throws her bare feet onto the dashboard and applies bright red nail polish to them, matching her lipstick.

[www.backtooceancity.com/missing-years.html](http://www.backtooceancity.com/missing-years.html)

## THE OWLS ARE NOT WHAT THEY SEEM



*Frank Heying (center) with Liz Matt and former student Bob Saget.*

Frank Heying taught me everything I know about film editing. I'll never forget the first day of his class. Frank proclaimed himself to be the instructor at Temple University who failed the most students. He went on to say that our first editing assignment would require fifty hours of work outside the classroom on our own time. He strongly advised anyone who couldn't handle that workload throughout the entire semester to drop the course. There were at least thirty students in the classroom that first day. For the second class, that number was cut in half. I remember looking around at all the empty seats. I was ready for the challenge and driven by Frank's expectations.

The first assignment was to edit a scene from the old television show *Gunsmoke*. Frank was not kidding about the fifty hours of work and I definitely put in more than that. He gave us the raw footage on actual reels of black and white film along with a razor and splicer for editing. We used a machine called a Steenbeck that played the reels through a monitor and speakers.

This was my introduction to the movie slate. For those experienced with film, my description of this process will seem obvious, but I can't remember how

many times I had to explain this to friends and family. Since the picture and sound were separate, the first thing I had to do was put them in sync. First, I found the frame where the movie slate was completely closed. Next, I listened to the audio and located the frame where I heard the sound of the clap. I lined the picture and audio up, locked the Steenbeck and the scene played in sync. This had to be done for every single angle and take. The film had numbers on the edge of the frames, so once everything was in sync, I wrote the corresponding numbers on the audio track to keep things organized while I edited.

I watched the footage dozens of times and took notes on the best takes. Once I had a rough edit of the footage in my head, I cut up the film and spliced it together. If I didn't like my edit, I peeled off the tape and tried a different version. The frames were the size of a fingernail, so it was very easy to misplace one. If I decided to use a frame I already discarded, I would have to dig through the bin of individual frames to find it. We had a wall of hooks to hang pieces of unused film and eventually the whole area looked like a spaghetti dinner.

I loved every minute of that class and learned so much from the experience. I asked Frank a lot of questions and he was always encouraging and could tell that I had a genuine interest in film editing. On several occasions, Frank visited me as I worked at the Steenbeck and offered his feedback on my work. Frank was a master at spotting bad edits, especially when switching angles. There are twenty-four frames in each second of film and Frank could tell if your picture and sound were out of sync by just one frame, a skill that I have picked up over the years thanks to him.

I went on to receive an "A" for the project, and also for the class, and each year Frank helped me with the annual American Cinema Editors student competition. I received raw film footage from a popular television show and had to edit together my own scene, similar to Frank's original *Gunsmoke* assignment. It gave me the opportunity to edit footage from the shows *ER*, *Law & Order* and *NYPD Blue*. While I never won the competition, each year's learning experience, combined with Frank's encouragement, took me to another level as an editor.

When I was in film school, digital editing was a brand new technology. I recall Frank saying that anyone can learn a computer program, not everyone can edit. At the time, Temple had only one computer editing system, not just for all the undergraduates to share, but for the graduate students as well. Time had to be scheduled on it, weeks in advance. There was also a limited amount of hard drive space.

There was an incident where a student deleted files to make room for his own. My entire project mysteriously disappeared. This was around the time the notorious Unabomber was in the news for sending bombs in the mail, so I made a "Who is the Unadeleter?" poster and taped it on the wall over the computer

editing system. My creative sign got people talking and I found out who deleted my project files. It was a graduate student and I confronted him in front of my other classmates. No more projects were deleted.

In one of the final assignments for Frank's class, he gave us footage of a local news report about Friday the 13th. We were allowed to edit it however we wanted as long as we included at least one clip from the news footage. I went above and beyond expectations for this exercise and made a three-minute compilation of horror movie clips edited together as a music video featuring a White Zombie song. Since I worked at the video store, I had access to all the films I wanted. I probably spent about twenty hours getting all the clips, but it was worth it. I later used the same technique to make two other compilation videos. The first was a *Star Wars* music video set to the song "On the Dark Side" performed by John Cafferty and the Beaver Brown Band. The second was a tribute to John Hughes using clips from *Sixteen Candles*, *The Breakfast Club* and *Weird Science* edited to a cover of "Don't You Forget About Me" performed by the band Life of Agony, originally performed by Simple Minds.

Frank was also my instructor for a television production class. Back then, Conan O'Brien was new to late night television and his sidekick was Andy Richter. My uncle Tom had a friend named Michael Shelinok who looked just like Andy Richter. For my final project, Michael came down to the television studio at Temple and filmed a short segment we wrote called *The Andy Richter Show*.

Temple Film School was the best learning experience of my life, but I was there when the movie industry was making the awkward shift from film to digital. Today's students have no idea how easy they have it with computerized editing. Just ask Frank Heying.



*Grandmom Emery with my daughter on Easter 2011.*

During my film school years, I stayed with my grandmother, Betty Emery, and my uncle, Tom Emery, in the Chestnut Hill section of Philadelphia. Grandmom and Tom both looked after me like I was one of their own. Not only did Grandmom give me motherly advice, she listened to every one of my movie ideas and watched all of my film school projects. We had many Scrabble tournaments, which I always won of course, but only because she had a habit of selecting vowels from the letter bag, or at least that's what she said. I often joked that Grandmom got me to watch the five o'clock news, the five-thirty news, the six o'clock news and the six-thirty news. That was followed by *Jeopardy* and *Wheel of Fortune*, and later that night, the eleven o'clock news and then *Nightline*. I could have done without the constant newsfeed, but there's one show Grandmom got me to watch that I never would have discovered on my own: *Columbo*, the detective series starring Peter Falk. Grandmom loved her mysteries.

Living with my uncle Tom was also quite an experience. Tom had a strange combination of clumsiness and bad luck. Who else would have three separate flat tires in one weekend? Who else would break his leg while trying to climb a pile of snow? The best was when I was talking to him at the kitchen table and noticed he was missing a lens in his glasses. When I told him, he reached his finger in to check and ended up poking his eye. But for every funny Tom story, there are countless ones where Tom also treated me like a son. Just like Grandmom, Tom looked out for me while I was going to college. He taught me how to ride the Philadelphia bus, train and subway systems while showing me around the city.

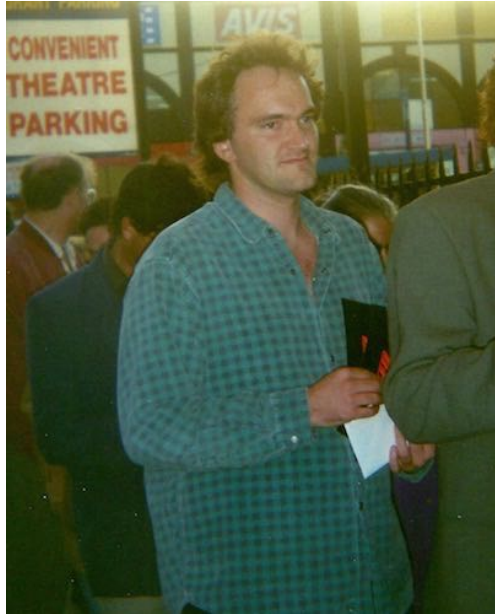
In 1994, Tom joined me on a five-day trip to Hollywood, California. We stayed at a hotel on Sunset Boulevard within walking distance to the Walk of Fame where I took lots of pictures of the names and handprints. We went to Universal Studios and saw every major Hollywood landmark along with some random celebrity sightings, including Weird Al Yankovic on Venice Beach.

One night, while wandering the Walk of Fame, smoke poured out of a bus that was parked across the street. It looked like it was on fire and a crowd gathered. Suddenly, a red carpet and celebrities appeared. The bus was a prop for the premiere of the movie *Speed* starring Keanu Reeves and Sandra Bullock. I took photos of Edward Furlong, Jane Seymour, Dermot Mulroney, Eric Stoltz and many others.

There was one celebrity that nobody recognized, but I did. He was the writer/director of an independent film called *Reservoir Dogs*. He just filmed *Pulp Fiction*. It wasn't publicly released yet, but already won the Palme D'Or at the Cannes Film Festival. Yes, Quentin Tarantino was standing in line right in front of me. I snapped a picture and was about to congratulate him on his award for *Pulp Fiction*, but the line started to move again. I always replay that moment in



my head and wish I had said something. Since he was somewhat under the radar at the time, there's a chance he might have remembered me.



*I took this pic of Quentin Tarantino at the premiere for Speed in 1994.*

Tom and I also visited the nightclub The Viper Room. It was owned by Johnny Depp and it was less than a year since River Phoenix died of a drug overdose on the sidewalk outside. We got there early to make sure we got in and the whole night was a surreal experience. I remember seeing actor Esai Morales as soon as we walked through the door. I recognized him from the movie *La Bamba* and Tom talked to him at the bar later that night. The club was packed beyond capacity and we stayed until closing. There is a scene in my script *The Breathing Sequel* that is inspired by my visit to The Viper Room.

Grandmom Emery passed away on July 17, 2011. I'm always thankful that she got a chance to meet my daughter. Tom passed away while I was writing this book on June 4, 2014.



*This is the last known picture of Tom, taken on Easter 2014.*

[www.backtooceancity.com/owls-are-not-what-they-seem.html](http://www.backtooceancity.com/owls-are-not-what-they-seem.html)

## THE FEST



*Tom Emery (left) at the 1991 Folk Fest with Tony Jozefowski and Dan Emery.*

I have volunteered at the Philadelphia Folk Festival for twenty-seven consecutive years. I started out on my uncle Tom's committee, Community Relations, and answered a rotary telephone inside the Executive Trailer. With the invention of cell phones, a landline was no longer needed and the committee slowly disappeared. In recent years, I volunteered for the Parking Committee, a great group of people to work with. After my first year with them, I made a series of instructional videos for new committee volunteers.

This was not the first time I filmed video at the folk fest. Shortly after high school, I went to the festival armed with my brand new VHS camcorder. I wanted to document the weekend, but after some early footage, my youth got the best of me and it was something I talked about doing ever since. While writing this book, a filmmaker named James Wallace accomplished his own goal of making a documentary about the fest. His film is titled *At Fest* and can be found at [www.atfestmovie.com](http://www.atfestmovie.com).

In the early nineties, I started to write a feature-length script set entirely in the campground. I kept the title simple and named it *The Fest*. Just like my documentary attempt, the script for *The Fest* remains unfinished. I recently found

the first thirty pages and my character notes that were based on real campers, including my uncle Tom.

After I graduated from Temple Film School, I shot several scenes from my first film, *The Good Life*, at the folk fest. Those scenes might seem out of place in the film, but I loved the footage and have wanted to film my script for *The Fest* ever since. I followed *The Good Life* with my folk fest trilogy of short documentaries. In 2003, I made *Drive-By Dotters*, about a controversy in the campground over dot stickers and the argument that one man's art is another man's trash. The following year, I shot *The Perki Turkey* which covered an unusual race in the Perkiomen Creek where the winner of the race was the person who came in last. The race made no sense, but was fun to watch...and film.

In 2007, I made *Born to Run*, also known as *The Topless Footrace Movie*. Despite the title, it's not what it sounds like, as there is no nudity in the film. The campground was covered with flyers that advertised a topless footrace on Saturday night, and just before the race, curious campers lined the main path expecting to see topless women. To their surprise, it was just a bunch of dudes running up the hill with their shirts off. Due to some unpublicized controversy, this short documentary is very hard to find, but it's out there if you look hard enough.

For my feature-length script, my plan was to introduce a bunch of characters whose lives intersect throughout the weekend and was inspired by real events from the actual Philadelphia Folk Festival. Here are the opening scenes from *The Fest*.

FADE IN:

EXT. FARMLANDS - DAY

The sun fights desperately to break through the looming gray clouds as a chubby, out of breath teenager, JIMMY, jogs unevenly toward a four-foot fence.

Beyond the fence, we see the festival campground:

It's a huge city of tents in the process of being set up. The condensed, multi-colored tents are separated by a main path in the middle, with smaller paths in between and along the perimeter.

As Jimmy closes in on the fence, he picks up some momentum. As his head bounces, his eyes scan all directions around him.

Moments before he reaches the fence, Jimmy leaps into the air and into...

EXT. CAMPGROUND - INSIDE PERIMETER - DAY

Jimmy's sneaker catches the fence as he belly flops into the mud, pulling a portion of the fence down with him.

He is in!

Along the path, a volunteer GUARD with a badge and walkie-talkie spots Jimmy and immediately relays a message into his radio. The guard quickly approaches.

Jimmy realizes he is busted. He wrestles his foot free from the fence and pushes himself up.

After locking eyes with the guard, Jimmy sprints in the opposite direction.

GUARD  
Hey! Get back here!

As Jimmy is chased up the hill, a SECOND GUARD appears ahead of him. He detours off the path and runs recklessly through the tents.

EXT. VARIOUS CAMPSITES - DAY

Unsure where he is headed, Jimmy bobs and weaves through various campsites. He passes by a mix of hippies and frat boys and is greeted with peace signs and high-fives.

Somewhere along the way, he ended up with a beer in his hand.

EXT. MAIN PATH - DAY

Jimmy reaches the main path at the top of the hill where a steady flow of campers pass by. He stops and lingers around. No sign of any guards.

Jimmy relaxes a bit and heads down the main path, blending in with the rest of the campers.

EXT. POTATO ROAD - DAY

One of the many roads leading to the festival is jammed with cars inching along. One car in particular is a very plain looking, olive-green Chevy Malibu.

These cars are usually restored with a hot-rod look, but this one looks like it did when it was driven off the lot in 1972, original hubcaps and all.

INT. CHEVY MALIBU - DAY

An elderly woman in her seventies, MRS. PLUMSTEAD, is behind the wheel of this relic. With no air conditioning, her windows are rolled down.

The humidity seems to be getting the best of her as she fans herself with a brochure for the folk festival.

EXT. EXECUTIVE TRAILER - DAY

TONY, sixteen years old, has a volunteer badge dangling around his neck. He walks up the steps and into the executive trailer.

INT. EXECUTIVE TRAILER - DAY

The trailer is bustling with activity.

KEVIN, also sixteen, sits in an uncomfortable metal chair underneath a telephone mounted on the wall.

Kevin is half asleep until Tony whacks him across the head with a newspaper. Kevin twitches, then looks at his watch.

KEVIN

You're late.

TONY

Like you really noticed.

Kevin hands Tony a blank pad of paper and a pen, then gives his seat to him. As Tony sits, he looks at the pad of paper.

TONY (CONT'D)

No calls?

KEVIN

Not yet.

TONY

Are you guys going to meet me at the campsite when I'm done?

KEVIN

We'll be there.

TONY

Cool.

KEVIN

Catch you later.

TONY

Later.

Kevin hurries out of the trailer as Tony opens his newspaper.

EXT. CAMPGROUND ENTRANCE - DAY

A handful of security volunteers are stationed around the main entrance to the campground. As Kevin passes through, he holds up his arm revealing a wristlet.

One of the volunteers checks the number on the badge hanging around Kevin's neck.

EXT. MAIN PATH - DAY

The main path leads up a very steep hill, with tents crowded together on both sides.

All you can hear are the sounds of labored construction, mostly tent stakes being hammered into the ground.

As Kevin starts the long hike up the hill, he passes by a man pulling a wagon full of camping gear.

Another person drops a sleeping bag that unravels down the path.

Near the top of the hill, Kevin turns left into a campsite. A banner in front of a tent reads, "Ovulating Sensitive New Age Girls."

EXT. OVULATING SENSITIVE NEW AGE GIRLS CAMPSITE - DAY

Kevin passes through this campsite of five young women in hippie dresses with flowers in their hair.

Kevin slips by them as they unpack their bags.

Just ahead, Kevin arrives at the neighboring campsite.

EXT. MOOSEHEAD CAMPSITE - DAY

A flag is tied to a long bamboo stick, high above a large blue tarp for shade. The flag is stitched with a Moosehead logo, with a list of years that are each crossed out.

A circle of tents wrapping from one end of the tarp to the other, gives way to a clearing in the middle where a pile of firewood is surrounded by lawn chairs.

CHRIS and JARED, two long-haired, tie-dyed teens, stop their conversation at the sight of Kevin, who glares at Chris.

KEVIN

Where were you last night?

CHRIS

Out.

KEVIN

Yeah, well, Mom was worried sick. You should call her and tell her you're not coming home. Especially being your birthday and all.

CHRIS

Come on, man, it's the fest.

KEVIN

I don't care, I'm still your brother.

Chris pulls out his car keys and jingles them in front of Kevin.

CHRIS

I'm out of here.

KEVIN

Now where are you going?

CHRIS

Uhhhhh.

JARED

Picking up a few supplies at the store.

CHRIS

Yeah, that's what we're doing.

Kevin squints his eyes and gives Chris one of those "I know you're lying" kind of looks.

KEVIN

Sure you are. Whatever. Just stay out of trouble.

CHRIS

Always do.

KEVIN

Stop by the house to see Mom. I think she'd appreciate seeing her son on his eighteenth birthday.



CHRIS  
I'll stop there on the way.

JARED  
Later, Kevin.

CHRIS  
We'll be back tonight.

KEVIN  
Later.

As Chris and Jared strut away, Kevin unzips a spacious cabin tent.

EXT. SPOT-A-POT AISLE - DAY

SCOTTY, a clumsy man in his mid-thirties, holds his nose as he enters the double-sided, skinny aisle of "Spot-a-Pots," also known as portable bathrooms.

With nearly twenty toilets on each side, this is the only feared spot of the festival.

Scotty opens the first Spot-a-Pot. He takes a quick peek inside, then steps away.

SCOTTY  
(to anyone that  
will listen)  
Aw, man, that one's nasty.

Scotty looks inside about a half-dozen other Spot-a-Pots before he finally chooses one he's okay with.

As Scotty locks himself inside the Spot-a-Pot, Jimmy steps out of one several doors down.

INT. EXECUTIVE TRAILER - NIGHT

Tony is startled by the sound of the phone ringing. He picks it up.

TONY  
(in phone)  
Community relations. This is Tony.  
How can I help you?  
(pause)  
No, I haven't seen Tom all day.

Suddenly, a short, middle-aged man, TOM, strolls into the trailer.

TONY (CONT'D)  
(in phone)

Wait! He just walked in. Here he is.

He hands the phone to Tom.

TOM  
(in phone)  
Hello.  
(pause)  
Don't worry about it. I'll take care of it. I'm sending one of my guys right now. Okay? Bye.

Tom hangs up the phone and looks down at Tony.

TONY  
What's going on?

TOM  
Remember when you asked me what we do besides answer the phone?

TONY  
Yeah.

TOM  
Well, you're about to learn why our committee is called Community Relations. Security and I agreed to send one guy from each team.

TONY  
Send us where?

TOM  
Apparently, this morning, an elderly woman showed up thinking this was a carnival. The heat got to her and she became disoriented and started wandering around the parking lot, forgetting where she was. Now, what I need you to do is drive her home in her car. A guy from security will follow you and bring you back. You think you can handle that?

Tony hesitates, thinks for a moment, then realizes he has no other choice.

EXT. PARKING LOT - NIGHT

BILLY, a scrawny eighteen-year-old security worker, sits with Tom and Tony on the hood of a long station wagon.

We can see Mrs. Plumstead's face as she waits patiently in the passenger seat of her Chevy Malibu several yards away.

TOM

It should only take a few hours.

TONY

I can't believe she came all this way for a carnival. That's a long drive.

TOM

(shrugging his shoulders)  
Maybe she has family nearby.

BILLY

Then maybe her family should drive her home.

TOM

Look, she's still a little out of it, but the medical tent said she'll be okay. She just needs to go home, get to bed, and get some rest.

TONY

Why can't she sleep here? We could find room for her in one of the tents.

Tom gives Tony a "you can't be serious" look.

TOM

She couldn't sleep if she tried with all the noise in the campground. You know that.

TONY

Come on, Billy, let's get this over with.

BILLY

I'll be right behind you.

Billy jumps into the station wagon.

TOM

Thanks Tony. I'll see you in a few hours.

TONY

Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Tony grudgingly approaches the Malibu as if there is someone pushing him along. He reluctantly opens the driver's door as Tom waves goodbye.

INT. CHEVY MALIBU - NIGHT

The interior of the car is a shade of green that matches the ugliness of the exterior.

As soon as Tony climbs into the driver's seat, his eyes lock with those of Mrs. Plumstead. They give each other a long, curious stare.

Tony's look is that of an innocent little boy, while Mrs. Plumstead looks deep into his wide eyes.

Suddenly, the prolonged silence is broken.

MRS. PLUMSTEAD  
You remind me of my grandson,  
George.

TONY  
My name's Tony.

MRS. PLUMSTEAD  
May I call you George?

TONY  
T-O-N-Y. Tony.

Tony starts up the car.

MRS. PLUMSTEAD  
(smiling)  
I'm going to call you George.

Tony lets it blow over and pulls an audio cassette out of his pocket. When he goes to stick the tape in the stereo, he is shocked to find there is no tape player, only an A.M. radio.

He turns on the radio, but there is no sound. He turns the volume control all the way up. Still, no sound.

MRS. PLUMSTEAD (CONT'D)  
That thing hasn't worked since  
1974.

Tony rolls his eyes as he turns on the headlights and drives off.

## THE BREATHING SEQUEL

I barely remember writing *The Breathing Sequel*. I wrote it in the nineties, just before the original Batman franchise tanked with *Batman Forever* and *Batman and Robin*. This was my twist on the superhero movie and revolved around an actor who plays a super villain in a popular movie series. After a mental breakdown, he confuses his movies with reality and goes after the actor who portrayed the superhero that defeated him.

If that sounds confusing, I came up with a cool way to describe it. Imagine if, in the 1980's, actor Terence Stamp went crazy and thought he really was General Zod and sought revenge on actor Christopher Reeve because of what happened in *Superman 2*. Or if Jack Nicholson woke up one day thinking he was the Joker and went after Michael Keaton because of 1989's *Batman*.

I had fun going back and reading this script. There's even a reference to a later screenplay with the character of Tony Steel from *My Little Trainwreck*. There are a lot of similarities between these scripts and they both poke fun at the movie industry. I once considered combining both scripts into one, or at least some of the characters.

Since I wrote this shortly after my first trip to Hollywood, the nightclub scene was inspired by my visit to The Viper Room. When my uncle and I were at the club, we saw a large mirror across one of the walls. The next day, we stopped by the club to pick up a t-shirt. The staff was cleaning so it was all lit up and every door was open. That was when I saw the VIP room that was hidden behind the mirror. It is described in detail in the script.

Stuntman! Bluejay! The Jackal! Here is what exists of *The Breathing Sequel*.

FADE IN:

EXT. CITY STREET - DAY

Both sides of the street are jam-packed with people trying to get a better view of the elaborate parade slowly making its way through town.

The parade has attracted all kinds: families, freaks, hot dog vendors and patriots waving the American flag.

The marching band plays a familiar tune as majorettes twirl and throw their flaming batons.

They are followed by the main attraction of the afternoon: the elegant float carrying COMMISSIONER GOLDMAN and his wife, MARIANNE.

With their forced smiles, they wave like programmed robots.

Fans and opposers push their way to the front of the crowd, snapping pictures and waving fists. A SEXY WOMAN blows kisses to the Commissioner.

SEXY WOMAN

We love you Commissioner Goldman!

A TEENAGE PUNK extends his middle finger.

TEENAGE PUNK

You suck, Goldman!

The Commissioner's float is followed by dancers in fancy, detailed costumes.

A helicopter hovers high above the Commissioner's float with a man hanging halfway out the door.

INT. HELICOPTER - DAY

BLUE JAY, a twenty-year-old man wearing sleek turquoise tights and a winged mask, is commandeering the helicopter with ease.

STUNTMAN, in his late twenties, is wrapped tightly in a mirror-reflective body suit. His bulging muscles and veins nearly burst through the chrome outfit.

His eyes and mouth are his only unmarked features. Stuntman dangles out of the helicopter by one hand and looks through binoculars with the other.

EXT. CITY STREET - BINOCULAR VISION - DAY

Through the binoculars, Stuntman watches one of the costumed dancers bobble and swirl out of sync with the rest. In fact, this dancer bumbles his way closer and closer to the Commissioner's float.

INT. HELICOPTER - DAY

Stuntman tosses his binoculars into the helicopter.

STUNTMAN

Blue Jay! Stay on top of the  
Commissioner's float. I think I  
spotted him. He's dressed as a  
dancer.

BLUE JAY

Should I radio security?

STUNTMAN

Just let them know I'm on my way  
down.

BLUE JAY

I'll be right behind you as soon  
as I land this bird, Stuntman.

Blue Jay lets out a high-pitched squawk as he picks up  
the receiver for the radio.

EXT. CITY STREET - DAY

The dancing suspect weaves around the others, slowly  
making his way to the Commissioner's float.

Suddenly, several fingers point to the sky, as a metallic  
body gracefully falls from the helicopter.

An OLDER WOMAN squints as the sun reflects off the  
plunging body.

OLDER WOMAN

Look! It's Stuntman!

The costumed dancer runs straight for the Commissioner's  
float.

SPLAT! Stuntman lands flat on his stomach, cracking a  
small pothole into the street.

The crowd is silent as Stuntman lies motionless in the  
imprint he just made.

Even the costumed dancer has stopped to turn around and  
check out the damage.

The parade stops as Commissioner Goldman's attention is  
fixed on the spectacle.

Seconds later, Stuntman stands up, but his body is  
deformed from the impact.

CRACK! In a series of quick, but smooth motions, Stuntman's dislocated joints and sockets snap back into place.

Once fully re-assembled, Stuntman turns and glares at the costumed dancer.

The dancer whips out a gun in each hand and fires away at Stuntman. Screams and confusion follow as civilians run for cover in all directions.

Bullets penetrate throughout Stuntman's body, but it does not affect him.

The costumed dancer throws down his discharged weapons as Stuntman launches into a flying somersault.

As Stuntman spins through the air, a muffled wolf's howl can be heard.

EXT. UNDERNEATH THE FLOAT - DAY

The howling continues as a dark figure moves around under the Commissioner's float.

EXT. CITY STREET - DAY

WHAM! Stuntman kicks the costumed dancer to the ground.

Stuntman, his suit covered with bullet holes, but no blood, immediately rips off the dancer's costume, revealing CLIFF, a disheveled man in his twenties.

STUNTMAN

What???

CLIFF

Expecting someone else?

STUNTMAN

You're not the Jackal, you're his brother!

Cliff laughs, and moments later, an earsplitting sinister laughter joins in.

Stuntman loosens his grip on Cliff as a dark figure emerges from underneath the Commissioner's float.

His face is painted dirty yellow and long black hair flows down his back. His golden outfit features light and dark stripes on each side and his teeth are sharpened fangs.

He is THE JACKAL.



The Jackal grabs Commissioner Goldman from behind and places a gun to his head.

JACKAL

Looking for me, Stuntman?

Commissioner Goldman smiles at the Jackal.

COMMISSIONER GOLDMAN

The question is, are you looking for me?

The Commissioner peels a layer of skin latex from his face, revealing that he isn't the Commissioner at all, but a decoy.

JACKAL

No!!!

The Jackal throws the decoy to the ground then shoots him in the chest.

Sensing a change in plans, Cliff climbs to his feet and leaps onto Stuntman's back and begins to strangle him.

Stuntman reaches behind and grabs Cliff by the hair.

While attempting to throw Cliff over him, Stuntman did not realize he was standing partially on one of Cliff's shoes. As a result, Cliff is accidentally beheaded.

Cliff's head catapults onto the float and rolls in front of the Jackal, who immediately drops to his knees. He begins to caress Cliff's head.

JACKAL (CONT'D)

My brother! Oh my god, my poor brother!

The Jackal weeps as Stuntman scratches his head, still not quite sure how he pulled that one off.

STUNTMAN

I'm sorry. That never happened before.

JACKAL

You killed my brother, Stuntman!  
Now you're going to pay!

The Jackal's cries transform back into his horrible laughter as he stands up and fires his gun at Stuntman, which of course, does not phase him.

Out of the crowd appears NIKKI NAYLOR, a blonde bombshell in her early twenties.

NIKKI  
Stuntman!

STUNTMAN  
Nikki?

NIKKI  
I love you!

STUNTMAN  
You do?

The Jackal is amused by the interruption.

JACKAL  
Look what we have here! It's Nikki  
Naylor, the Channel 6 news  
reporter. Finally, I've found  
someone that the Stuntman cares  
about!

The Jackal aims his gun at Nikki, but Stuntman is quick  
to react.

STUNTMAN  
No!!!

Stuntman flings himself at the Jackal, absorbing several  
bullets along the way.

BAM! Stuntman's foot kicks Jackal in the face.

CRUNCH! Stuntman lands a jab to Jackal's chest.

KAPOW! Stuntman connects one final uppercut onto Jackal's  
chin, sending him to the ground, where he stays.

The crowd cheers the Jackal's defeat as ambulances clear  
a path toward the bodies.

Nikki leaps into Stuntman's arms and kisses him as the  
Jackal's twitching body is placed onto a stretcher and  
into an ambulance.

JACKAL  
You are going to pay for this  
Stuntman. You hear me? You are  
going to pay!

The ambulance door slams shut as the screen cuts to black  
with complete silence.

Text fills a movie screen: COMING SOON: STUNTMAN 2.

Heavy metal music kicks in as scrolling end credits  
begin:

DIRECTED BY STEVE LUCAS

STUNTMAN.....Mark Reeves  
JACKAL.....Garrison Banks  
NIKKI NAYLOR.....Julianne Michaels  
BLUE JAY.....Dylan Dillon

INT. MOVIE THEATER - DAY

The heavy metal music continues to blare as the end credits roll up the movie screen. The house lights turn on and a sold-out crowd slowly makes its way out of the theater.

A thirty-year-old man sits in the back row with a seven-year-old boy. The man quickly puts on a baseball cap and sunglasses.

He avoids eye contact with the crowd and focuses his attention on the end credits.

This is GARRISON BANKS, the actor who portrays the Jackal. The little boy is DANIEL.

After the crowd is gone, Garrison stands up as a theater USHER approaches him with a broom and dustpan.

USHER

Well, nobody recognized you, Mr. Banks. I thought for sure somebody would.

GARRISON

Who would think that the star of the movie is sitting in the back row with his seven-year-old kid?

USHER

I'll have to remember to check the back rows more often.

GARRISON

Actors do it all the time. I've only been spotted twice.

USHER

So how many times have you seen the movie?

GARRISON

This was my third. I wanted to see it one more time before we start filming the sequel next month. I'm what you call a method actor. Just trying to get my head back into the Jackal.

Garrison howls with laughter just like he does as the Jackal.

USHER  
That's wild! What's the sequel about?

GARRISON  
(zipping his lips)  
My lips are sealed. Sorry.

USHER  
Whatever happens, I'm sure it'll be good. Can't wait to see it.

They shake hands. Daniel tries to pull his father along.

GARRISON  
Take care now. Thanks for not blowing my cover.

USHER  
No problem. It was nice meeting you, Mr. Banks.

Garrison leads Daniel out of the theater as the usher begins to sweep up the popcorn that is spilled all over the floor.

EXT. THEATER PARKING LOT - NIGHT

Garrison opens the passenger door of his red Ferrari and Daniel climbs into the seat.

EXT. CONVENIENCE STORE - NIGHT

Garrison's red Ferrari pulls up in front of the convenience store.

INT. FERRARI - NIGHT

Garrison notices that Daniel is falling asleep.

GARRISON  
Daniel? You awake?

Daniel mumbles and rubs his eyes.

GARRISON (CONT'D)  
You coming in?

Daniel nods his head.

INT. CONVENIENCE STORE - NIGHT

Daniel follows Garrison through the store.

When they reach the front counter, Garrison sets down a six-pack of beer, milk, pretzels and a newspaper.

A line suddenly forms behind Garrison.

It includes an OLD MAN with a coffee, a STONER DUDE with a handful of munchies, a HIPPIE CHICK with a cheese sandwich and a MIDDLE-AGED WOMAN with a roll of toilet paper.

The toothless, tattooed CLERK takes his time ringing up the items.

GARRISON

Do you sell baseball cards?

The clerk points to an area beneath a magazine rack.

Garrison and Daniel glance at the various tabloid newspapers.

One in particular features a blown up photo of Garrison on the cover, with the headline, "SEX, DRUGS, ROCK N ROLL - GARRISON BANKS REALLY IS A PARTY JACKAL!"

Daniel points at that tabloid.

DANIEL

Look Dad, it's you!

Garrison quickly grabs several packs of baseball cards and tosses them on the counter, ignoring Daniel.

The clerk squints at Garrison and starts to laugh.

CLERK

It is you! The Jackal!

GARRISON

I'm in a hurry, so if you don't mind...

As the clerk rings up his items, the hippie chick shows Garrison another tabloid paper while holding up a pen.

This one reads, "Garrison Banks Seen Leaving Trendy Nightclub With Supermodel."

HIPPIE CHICK

Wow, this is so cool. Can you sign this?

Garrison knocks the pen to the floor, takes the tabloid, then rips it in half.

GARRISON

I don't give autographs on  
tabloids. Sorry.

The middle-aged woman opens her roll of toilet paper and  
shoves it in Garrison's face.

MIDDLE-AGED WOMAN

Would you sign this?

Garrison shrugs and smiles, then signs his name across  
the roll of toilet paper.

The old man with the coffee taps his foot impatiently.

OLD MAN

I like my coffee hot.

The clerk grabs a brand new Polaroid camera package  
hanging on the shelf behind him. He opens it up and pulls  
out the camera.

CLERK

Could someone take a picture of me  
with the Jackal?

MIDDLE-AGED WOMAN

I will, if you'll take one for me.

CLERK

Yeah, sure.

As the clerk walks around to the front of the counter,  
the old man throws a handful of change at him and storms  
out of the store with his coffee.

The stoner is so hungry he opens his bag of chips and  
starts eating them.

The hippie chick lifts up her shirt.

HIPPIE CHICK

Would you sign these, Garrison?

Garrison reaches down to cover his son's eyes and sees  
that he is confused and scared by the commotion.

Garrison kneels down to his son, hugs him, then lifts him  
onto his shoulders. He throws twenty dollars onto the  
counter and collects his groceries with a free arm.

Unable to juggle everything, the milk falls and spills  
all over the floor.

The middle-aged woman throws her arm around Garrison to  
pose for a picture.

CLERK

Smile!

Garrison does not smile. Instead, his face swells with anger and frustration.

Garrison growls like the Jackal.

The middle-aged woman backs away from Garrison before the clerk has a chance to snap a picture.

Garrison growls even louder.

Like a wolf ready to attack, Garrison glares at the clerk, then reveals his teeth and takes a bite at the air.

The clerk drops the camera and it shatters.

Suddenly, Garrison's mouth curls into a smile and he bursts into the Jackal's trademark laugh.

GARRISON

Jackals aren't just scavengers. We hunt and kill our own prey. You know what I mean?

Silence.

The stoner with the munchies runs out of the store without paying.

The clerk quickly returns behind the counter.

The middle aged woman takes a few steps back.

The hippie chick flashes the peace sign.

EXT. BEVERLY HILLS MANSION - NIGHT

A security gate opens and the Ferrari enters the long driveway of a massive, secluded mansion.

INT. MANSION - DANIEL'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

AMANDA BANKS, mid-twenties, tucks Daniel in his bed and plants a kiss on his forehead.

DANIEL

Goodnight, Mom.

AMANDA

Goodnight, Daniel.

Amanda turns out the light and gently closes the door behind her.

INT. MASTER BEDROOM - NIGHT

Garrison dresses himself in front of a mirror. He puts on a sports jacket, then combs his long black hair.

Amanda stands at the doorway.

AMANDA  
What are you doing?

GARRISON  
Getting ready.

AMANDA  
For what?

GARRISON  
Going out.

AMANDA  
You go out every night. And you wonder why the tabloids...

GARRISON  
Don't start this again, Amanda!

Amanda takes a few steps closer.

AMANDA  
Oh, I didn't even start yet.

Garrison turns to leave the room, but Amanda blocks his path.

GARRISON  
Get out of my way.

AMANDA  
I want you to stay home with me tonight.

GARRISON  
Why?

AMANDA  
Why??? Maybe because I'm your wife, Garrison! We used to do things together. Do you even remember?!

GARRISON  
Who's going to watch Daniel?

AMANDA  
Why can't we just stay home?



GARRISON

You don't understand. I feel trapped in this house. I'm tired of hiding from the press. This is my life now.

AMANDA

Then quit the business and we'll move far away from all of this!

GARRISON

I can't do that. Acting is my life. I just don't like being a celebrity.

AMANDA

You could have fooled me. You seem to like it more than being a husband, that is, if you can call yourself a husband.

GARRISON

What are you talking about?

AMANDA

Come on, Garrison, you're a mess.

Amanda opens up the closet and pulls out a shoe box. She dumps the contents onto the bed.

There's a bottle of pills, razor blades, needles, notes with phone numbers and pictures of Garrison with other women.

He looks away.

AMANDA (CONT'D)

You're sloppy, Garrison. Every night you come home, you leave a trail behind you.

GARRISON

What do you want me to say?

AMANDA

You think I don't read the tabloids? You think my mother and my friends don't read the tabloids? You are embarrassing me! And your son!

GARRISON

I have to go. We can talk about this in the morning.

Garrison heads for the door.

AMANDA

Garrison, if you leave, don't come  
back. I'm not taking this anymore.  
I'm filing for divorce.

Garrison stops in his tracks as if about to turn around,  
but seconds later, he opens the door and leaves.

EXT. SUNSET STRIP - NIGHT

Garrison's red Ferrari speeds recklessly down Sunset  
Boulevard.

EXT. NIGHTCLUB - NIGHT

At the sight of Garrison, the DOORMAN unhooks a red,  
velvet rope, allowing him to pass through into the club.

INT. NIGHTCLUB - HALLWAY - NIGHT

A young girl collecting the cover charge at the end of  
the dark, eerie hallway, smiles and waves Garrison up the  
stairs.

INT. STAIRWAY - NIGHT

As Garrison slowly makes his way up the stairs, the  
grunge-style music grows louder as a strobe light  
flashes.

INT. MAIN ROOM - NIGHT

A band plays the stage as club-goers dance the night  
away.

As Garrison passes through the crowd, he nods and smiles  
at several familiar faces.

When Garrison reaches the bar, a drink is waiting for  
him. LAURA, the bartender, hands the drink to him.

GARRISON

Thanks, Laura.

AMBER, a young vixen in a tight skirt and fishnet  
stockings, throws her arms around Garrison and whispers  
something in his ear.

INT. V.I.P. ROOM - NIGHT

Nearly a dozen celebrities hang out in the small, hidden room. A two-way mirror allows them to see out into the club and watch the band.

Garrison and Amber slip in unnoticed.

The room features one fancy, long sofa, with many miniature round tables placed in front.

Two men and a woman openly take turns sniffing drugs on one of the tables.

Amber holds Garrison close to her as she pulls out a needle and rubs it seductively against her bright red lips.

Garrison closes his eyes as Amber holds his arm.

EXT. RESTAURANT - DAY

LARRY, a serious businessman, sits alone at a table in the crowded, industry hot spot. He reads a movie script while he waits.

Moments later, Garrison crash-lands at the table. Larry cringes at the sight before him.

Garrison is still wearing the same outfit from the night before. His hair is a wild mess and he can barely keep his eyes open.

LARRY

Garrison! You look terrible!  
What's going on?

GARRISON

It's over.

LARRY

What are you talking about?

GARRISON

My marriage. Career. Life. I'm  
done.

LARRY

Pull yourself together!

GARRISON

I don't want to be Garrison Banks  
anymore.

Larry glances at nearby tables to make sure no one is listening to them.

LARRY

Garrison, you're one of the best actors of our time. You can't just snap your fingers and make it go away.

GARRISON

Oh yes I can.

LARRY

We need to continue this conversation in my office. Not here.

Larry stands up and grabs his script and a red duffel bag from under the table.

INT. LARRY'S OFFICE - DAY

Larry leans back in his chair as Garrison continues to pace around the office.

GARRISON

If I keep the fame, I can never have a normal life. My son will never have a normal life. Or my wife.

LARRY

Every celebrity handles it differently. You'll get over it. I know I'm your agent and I take ten percent of your money, but I'm also your friend. I've handled some of the biggest stars in Hollywood and believe me, they all went through this at one point or another.

Garrison approaches the desk and picks up the script from the restaurant. The cover reads: "Stuntman 2."

GARRISON

Why didn't you tell me you had this? Is this the new rewrite?

LARRY

I just got it. Brandon Lubikino just finished writing it last night. The copies are numbered and you have to sign another nondisclosure form. You can't speak a word of it to anyone.

Larry slides a pen and paper across his desk. Garrison signs it.

GARRISON

Like I told my wife, I love acting.

LARRY

You've got two Academy Awards to show for it.

GARRISON

When do we start filming "Stuntman 2?"

LARRY

A week from tomorrow, so you better put your problems behind you and get your head back into the Jackal.

GARRISON

I've been in Jackal mode since the first movie. I still got it.

LARRY

You didn't forget about Letterman tonight, did you?

GARRISON

That's tonight?

LARRY

You can't back out of this one. They'll never let you back on.

He hands Garrison the red duffel bag.

LARRY (CONT'D)

I picked this up at the studio. Take it with you.

GARRISON

What is it?

LARRY

It's your Jackal suit and make-up. After Julianne Michaels comes out for her interview, they want you to come out in costume. Same with Mark Reeves. He's going to come out dressed as Stuntman.

Garrison takes the duffel bag.

EXT. WORLDWIDE MOVIE STUDIOS - DAY

Worldwide is one of Hollywood's largest movie studios, hidden by high walls and a security gate.

INT. EXECUTIVE OFFICE - DAY

The cool and collected JOE GREENE sits comfortably at his desk. He pushes a button on the intercom.

JOE  
Jennie, could you send Mark Reeves  
in please?

Seconds later, MARK REEVES, the actor who portrays Stuntman, strides into the office with STAN by his side.

JOE (CONT'D)  
Mark, Stan, sit down.

Mark and Stan sit across from Joe at the desk.

STAN  
May I take a look at the contract?

JOE  
Sure, but it won't do you any  
good.

STAN  
What do you mean by that?

JOE  
Worldwide Studios doesn't feel it  
needs to meet the twenty-million  
dollar demand of your client.

MARK  
But I'm Stuntman! There's no movie  
without me!

Stan holds Mark back from reaching across the table. Joe laughs.

JOE  
Garrison Banks as the Jackal is  
the star of this movie. Nobody  
cares who plays Stuntman. All they  
want is Garrison Banks, and we got  
him. All we care about is bringing  
back the Jackal. It's that simple.

STAN  
We're open to negotiate.

JOE  
It's too late. We've already cast  
another actor to play Stuntman.

Joe looks at his watch.

JOE (CONT'D)

And if you don't mind, your replacement should be here any minute.

MARK

Are you bluffing or is this for real?

JOE

I'm sorry, Mark. You were okay in the first movie, but you'll never play Stuntman again. Take your salary demands and your ego to another studio.

MARK

My ego?!

Mark reaches across the table and grabs Joe by his tie.

Stan pulls Mark from Joe and drags him across the room and out the door. Joe fixes his tie, relaxes back into his seat and presses a button on the intercom.

JOE

Jennie, could you send Dennis Kramer in to see me?

Seconds later, DENNIS enters the room with his agent, ROBERT.

JOE (CONT'D)

Congratulations, Dennis, you're the new Stuntman!

DENNIS

Thanks, Joe. I won't let you down.

ROBERT

Is the contract ready?

JOE

Give me a few days.

They shake hands.

INT. ED SULLIVAN THEATER - DRESSING ROOM - NIGHT

There is a knock at the door as Garrison zips up the red duffel bag. He is in full Jackal costume.

GARRISON

Come in.

A SECURITY GUARD peeks his head in.

SECURITY GUARD

I was told to tell you not to get dressed, but looks like I'm too late. Your skit has been canceled.

GARRISON

What?

SECURITY GUARD

Mark Reeves didn't show up. Dave won't do the skit without Stuntman. Sorry.

GARRISON

Why would Mark do that to me?

The security guard shrugs his shoulders and slips back out the door.

Garrison angrily grabs his street clothes and shoves them in the duffel bag.

INT. MAIN STUDIO - NIGHT

DAVID LETTERMAN flashes his gap-toothed smile at the television camera as he taps a pencil on his desk.

He throws the pencil over his head behind him. Glass shatters as he laughs.

DAVID

Ladies and gentleman, our first quest needs no introduction. She's only one of the biggest box office stars in the world. Fresh off her role as Stuntman's girlfriend, let's hear it for Julianne Michaels.

The crowd goes wild with applause as Dave stands up to greet JULIANNE MICHAELS, the actress who portrays reporter Nikki Naylor in Stuntman.

Julianne's silk outfit is so tight it looks like she glued it on. She waves to the audience and camera.

Dave kisses her on the cheek, then motions to a chair. Once they are both seated, the applause dies down.

DAVID (CONT'D)

Wow! What a year you've had! What did Stuntman make, like a billion dollars?

JULIANNE

Something like that.



DAVID

Who would have guessed that it would become the highest grossing motion picture ever?

JULIANNE

To be honest with you, I thought it was going to bomb, but Garrison Banks, wow, he's just incredible. I've never seen anyone get as into a character as he did with the Jackal.

DAVID

Last time Garrison was on the show, he told me that after he reads a script, he literally becomes the character.

JULIANNE

He's not making that up. He was definitely the Jackal, both on and off the set.

DAVID

So tell me about the sequel.

JULIANNE

Well, we start filming very soon.

DAVID

And?

JULIANNE

That's all I'm allowed to say. We're all sworn to secrecy.

DAVID

You've got to give us something.

JULIANNE

All I can tell you is that it picks up right where it left off. The Jackal wakes up in the hospital and it goes from there.

DAVID

I can't wait to see it.

JULIANNE

I think it's going to be even better than the first one. We've got the same writer, same director.

DAVID

So tell me, I have to ask, how's your husband doing? What's it like

being married to action superstar  
Tony Steel?

JULIANNE

I'm sworn to secrecy on that too.

Dave and the audience laugh.

JULIANNE (CONT'D)

But no, he's awesome. I love him  
so much.

DAVID

What's Tony working on? Is he  
filming a new action flick?

JULIANNE

Yeah, but I'm not sure what it's  
called.

Suddenly, a shirtless, muscular Tony Steel swings across  
the stage with a rope and lands in front of Dave's desk.

Dave jumps back in a fighting stance and waves his arms  
as if he knows karate.

The crowd goes nuts.

Girls scream at the sight of Tony Steel, while the guys  
cheer him on.

Tony scoops Julianne into his arms and carries her  
offstage as she waves goodbye to the audience.

Dave steps toward the camera.

DAVE

We'll be right back after this  
commercial break, folks.

Dave continues his uncoordinated karate strokes as they  
go to break.

EXT. TELEVISION STUDIO - PARKING LOT - NIGHT

Garrison's Ferrari is parked alone in the far corner of  
the lot. A dim interior light is on inside the car.

INT. FERRARI - NIGHT

Garrison sits in the driver's seat with the script for  
"Stuntman 2" on the steering wheel.

He is still wearing his Jackal costume and make-up.

The script is opened to page 75. He takes a swig from a half-empty bottle of whiskey.

GARRISON

They call this a rewrite? They didn't change anything!

Garrison throws the script onto the passenger seat and chugs more whiskey. He starts the engine.

EXT. PARKING LOT - NIGHT

The Ferrari hops a curb and heads for the security gate. The guard waves for the Ferrari to slow down, but he speeds up instead.

The Ferrari smashes through the security gate and exits onto the street.

EXT. HOLLYWOOD BOULEVARD - NIGHT

Garrison's Ferrari races past the Mann's Chinese Theater at about 85 miles per hour.

INT. FERRARI - NIGHT

Garrison's swollen, red eyes get heavy as he tries to focus on the road.

Images from the first Stuntman movie fill his mind.

EXT. CITY STREET - FLASHBACK - DAY

The parade carrying the Commissioner's float slowly makes its way down the street.

GARRISON'S VOICE

Stuntman...

As the costumed dancer gets closer to the Commissioner's float, Stuntman falls out of the sky.

GARRISON'S VOICE (CONT'D)

Killed...

Stuntman reaches behind him and grabs Cliff, the now unmasked costume dancer, by the hair.

GARRISON'S VOICE (CONT'D)

My...

Stuntman accidentally decapitates Cliff and hurls the spinning head at the Jackal.

GARRISON'S VOICE (CONT'D)

Brother.

The Jackal weeps as he cradles his brother's head in his arms.

GARRISON'S VOICE (CONT'D)

Now it's time...

The Jackal pays close attention to Nikki Naylor as she calls out to Stuntman.

At the hands of Stuntman, the Jackal is knocked unconscious to the ground.

GARRISON'S VOICE (CONT'D)

For Stuntman...

The ambulance lights from the end of the Stuntman movie fill the screen.

INT. FERRARI - NIGHT

Garrison erupts into the Jackal's trademark laugh.

Garrison

To pay!!!

His eyes close while his foot presses harder on the accelerator.

EXT. HOLLYWOOD BOULEVARD - NIGHT

CRASH! At 90 miles per hour, the Ferrari rips through a palm tree on the side of the road.

The car flips several times as Garrison is thrown through the windshield and lands on the road.

The script for "Stuntman 2" comes unbound. Scattered pages float down from the sky.

A puddle of blood forms around Garrison, as script pages fall around him.

FADE TO:

INT. TELEVISION SET - NIGHT

The television set is tuned to the show Entertainment Tonight. A photo of Garrison Banks is in the background as LEEZA GIBBONS reports.

LEEZA

And in movie news, production on "Stuntman 2" was delayed indefinitely yesterday as Garrison Banks remains in a coma. Studio executives won't comment on the possibility of recasting the role of the Jackal, but insiders predict that...

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - NIGHT

Amanda turns off the television set in the hospital room.

Garrison lies unconscious on the bed. His head is bandaged, his face covered with scrapes and bruises.

Amanda wipes a tear from her eye as Daniel stares at his father.

AMANDA

Give your father a kiss, Daniel.

Daniel stands on the tips of his toes and gives his father a kiss.

DANIEL

I love you, Dad.

[www.backtooceancity.com/breathing-sequel.html](http://www.backtooceancity.com/breathing-sequel.html)

## YOUNGER & YOUNGER

This is the script that I always felt had the most potential. I stopped writing it because the story needed a character that would threaten Derek's relationship with his wife. One of my ideas was to create a former boyfriend of Beth's who shows up in the second act to challenge Derek for her attention. When I started writing this script, I was in the middle of filming my first independent film *The Good Life*, so it was also a case of bad timing.

*Younger & Younger* was heavily influenced by 1983's *Twilight Zone: The Movie*, which featured four separate stories by four different directors. The second and third ones were always my favorites.

The second segment, directed by Steven Spielberg, was called *Kick the Can*. A group of elderly residents at a retirement home play a magical game of Kick the Can which turns them into little kids for the night. I really liked the story and always felt that so much more could have been done with the premise and theme of staying young at heart. My script for *Younger & Younger* follows a group of couples with marriage problems to a tropical island where they are magically transported back to childhood.

I would love to finish this script. Here are the first fifteen pages for *Younger & Younger*.

FADE IN:

EXT. SCHOOL PLAYGROUND - DAY

Swings. Jungle gym. Sliding board.

Children are playing.

There is a retirement home next to the school, where an elderly man watches the kids play from a third floor window.

INT. RETIREMENT HOME - DAY

The elderly man pulls himself away from the window and shuffles to his bed. He moves slow, with a slight shake, possibly from Parkinson's Disease.

He sits on his bed and opens a cardboard box. He pulls out a handful of pictures.

He flips through them slowly. Most of the pictures are of himself, and get younger in age as he goes through them. When he reaches a picture of himself as a young man in his twenties, he stops.

There's a glint in his eye, along with a smile.

Underneath that photo is an old, beat-up business card. The print is so faded that the only legible words are in the center, "Younger & Younger."

The elderly man stares intently at the card, then closes his eyes.

INT. OFFICE - DAY

The younger version of the elderly man, recognizable from the photo, sits at a desk. This is DEREK.

He holds up the same business card for "Younger & Younger," which is now fresh off the press. It is much clearer and also reads, "Marriage Counselors/Divorce Attorneys."

Across the desk sits Carl, a sharp-dressed man also in his twenties.

CARL

Derek, I know I'm a divorce attorney, but we've been friends for a long time. I was in your wedding. I can't represent you. I hope you understand that.

DEREK

So you're sending me to...Younger & Younger? You're the only lawyer I'll ever trust.

Carl nods in agreement.

CARL

I understand, but I need you to work with me here. Let's try something. Tell me the biggest problems you ever had. Start with the most recent and go backwards.

DEREK

Well, the first one is easy. Last month, when Beth and I found out we couldn't have kids.

CARL

Keep going.

DEREK

Last year, when I lost my job.

CARL

Don't stop.

DEREK

When my dad died.

CARL

What about college?

DEREK

When my best friend died in a car wreck.

CARL

Yeah, we both lost a friend that day.

DEREK

That time I got mugged. Losing my scholarship.

CARL

And high school?

DEREK

Now it's getting tougher.

CARL

That's my point.

DEREK

Hold on. Let me think. The prom?

CARL

Big deal.

DEREK

Not making varsity?

CARL

So what? That's nothing. What about childhood? And I'm not talking about losing a game of Candyland here. I want real problems.



Derek leans back in his chair, thinking back. A trace of a smile appears.

DEREK  
You know, I don't think I even  
knew what a real problem was back  
then. Everything's different when  
you're a kid.

CARL  
Exactly.

Carl points to the "Younger & Younger" business card.

CARL  
Trust me on this one.

Derek stares at the business card as he stands up.

EXT. DEREK'S HOUSE - DAY

A sports car pulls into the driveway of a suburban home. Derek steps out with a briefcase.

As he walks to the front door, he notices several children playing in the neighbor's yard. He slows down for a moment, waves at them, then continues into the house.

INT. DEREK'S HOUSE - DAY

BETH, also in her twenties, is talking on the phone. She hears Derek walk in.

BETH  
He's home. I'll call you later.

Beth quickly hangs up the phone. She is wearing sweatpants and a t-shirt. She shoots Derek a courtesy smile, then looks the other way.

DEREK  
Who was that?

BETH  
My mother.

DEREK  
What were you guys talking about?

BETH  
Things.

DEREK  
Oh yeah?

Derek sets his briefcase on the table.

BETH  
Did you find a job?

CARL  
No, I was hanging out with Carl.

BETH  
Golf? Again?

DEREK  
Actually, it was a business meeting.

BETH  
About what?

DEREK  
Things.

Beth refrains from looking at him.

BETH  
Oh really?

DEREK  
Carl went through this with Susan and...

BETH  
(interrupting)  
Went through what, Derek? Went through what???

Beth turns and stares him down. Now Derek can't look at her. He paces, rubs his eyes and takes a deep breath.

BETH  
What happened to you? To us?

DEREK  
We can fix this.

BETH  
I've been trying.

They finally make eye contact.

DEREK  
Counseling.

BETH  
What?

DEREK  
Kind of, but not really. Carl set it up. He said it's more like a

vacation. He and Susan are going.  
They want us to come along.

BETH  
The four of us? I don't know.

DEREK  
It's probably a cruise or  
something.

BETH  
Doesn't sound like counseling to  
me.

DEREK  
There's one catch though. We have  
to pass some kind of admissions  
test. Carl said it's a really  
exclusive club. He had to get  
permission just to tell me about  
it.

BETH  
Sounds weird.

DEREK  
Come on, it'll be fun. What do we  
have to lose?

Beth thinks for a moment, then nods in agreement.

EXT. CITY - NIGHT

Derek and Beth are both dressed to impress. They stand at  
the entrance of a high-rise building. Derek looks up.

DEREK  
Carl said it's on the top floor.

BETH  
Figures. Can you handle it?

DEREK  
As long as we don't have to climb  
out any windows, I'll be fine.

Derek opens the door and they walk in.

INT. BUILDING - NIGHT

Derek and Beth hurry across the busy lobby to an  
elevator. Derek presses a button.

Moments later, the elevator door opens. It is full of  
people, but they manage to squeeze in.

INT. ELEVATOR - NIGHT

Derek can't reach the buttons.

DEREK  
Top floor please.

Everyone goes silent. Suddenly, all eyes seem to be on Derek. Someone pushes a button and the elevator doors close and it starts to move.

Floor by floor, the elevator slowly empties out.

When they reach the 28th floor, Derek and Beth are finally alone and make themselves more comfortable. They smile at each other.

The elevator stops at the 29th floor. The doors open and an energetic, five-year-old LITTLE BOY slides into the elevator. Wearing a suit and carrying a briefcase, he also sports an earring and a slicked back ponytail.

LITTLE BOY  
Going up?

BETH  
Yes.

DEREK  
Where do you think you're going little guy?

LITTLE BOY  
Work.

Derek and Beth look at each other and laugh as the door closes.

INT. PLAYGROUND ROOM - NIGHT

The elevator opens revealing a large room that has been turned into a playground.

There's a swing set, monkey gym, sandbox and a see-saw with two little girls on it. The walls look like pages from a coloring book.

After the little boy hurries out of the elevator, Derek and Beth step out with caution.

DEREK  
Excuse me.

The little boy turns around.

DEREK  
Is this Younger & Younger?

LITTLE BOY

Yeah. Follow me.

The little boy walks past the swing set and across a hopscotch board, doing each hop along the way while holding his briefcase.

They pass a sign that says "Younger & Younger." A blinking arrow points straight ahead.

They arrive at a staircase where another blinking arrow points up, which leads to a large hole in the wall.

The little boy quickly climbs the staircase and waits at the top.

Derek and Beth stand at the bottom looking confused.

LITTLE BOY

What are you guys waiting for?

He disappears into the hole as Derek and Beth glance at each other.

BETH

This is a little strange, don't you think?

DEREK

And I hate ladders.

BETH

You mean heights.

DEREK

Same thing.

As Derek climbs the stairs, his fear of heights causes him to keep looking down. When he finally reaches the top, he looks at Beth and smiles.

DEREK

It's a sliding board!

Beth joins him at the top and sees the sliding board for herself. They can't see where it goes because it looks to be a long, enclosed tornado slide.

Derek grabs Beth and pulls her down the slide with him.

It's a fast, winding ride. They hold onto each other and both let out their best rollercoaster screams.

As the slide leads them down, they see a light at the bottom.

INT. WAITING ROOM - NIGHT

Derek and Beth come to a stop on a cushion. They get up to find themselves standing in what appears to be a waiting room for a doctor's office.

A five-year-old girl, MARISA, is the receptionist at the desk.

Marisa has wild curly hair and her glasses are too big for her face. She cracks the bubble gum in her mouth as she waves at Derek and Beth.

MARISA  
May I help you?

Derek and Beth seem confused, but are trying not to laugh.

DEREK  
Is your mother or father around?

Marisa giggles just as the phone rings. She quickly answers it.

MARISA  
Younger & Younger. This is Marisa.  
How may I help you?

While Marisa tends to the phone, they notice a little boy, TIMMY, sitting in a chair.

TIMMY  
Get out of my way!

Beth looks behind them and realizes they are standing in front of a television that is playing a cartoon. She moves and pulls Derek with her.

BETH  
We're sorry, buddy.

Derek and Beth sit down in chairs near Timmy.

DEREK  
What are you watching?

TIMMY  
Shhh!

DEREK  
Okay.

Derek makes an awkward face. There's some magazines on the desk. He picks one up and opens it.

Wham! Out of nowhere, Timmy punches Derek on the shoulder.

TIMMY

That's mine!

Derek slowly gives the magazine to Timmy, then holds his hands up in surrender.

Beth puts her arm around Derek and turns his head toward the cartoon on the television.

To get their attention, Marisa pops her gum so loud it sounds like a firecracker.

MARISA

Anthony will see you now.

Marisa points to a door near her desk.

INT. OFFICE - NIGHT

As Derek and Beth enter the office, they see ANTHONY sitting at a desk. Anthony is the well-dressed little boy from the elevator.

Anthony motions to the two chairs in front of his desk, which are covered with toys.

ANTHONY

Sit down.

As Derek and Beth sit down, they hear a beeping sound. Anthony looks at his pager and sighs.

BETH

You're the kid from the elevator.

ANTHONY

And you're the couple from the elevator.

DEREK

Is this Younger & Younger?

ANTHONY

I already told you!

DEREK

We have an appointment.

ANTHONY

I know. You're Carl's friends.

DEREK

You know Carl?

ANTHONY

He handles some of our legal work. Good guy. We owe him a few.

BETH

We were under the impression we were seeing a marriage counselor, then going on a trip.

ANTHONY

You are. Actually, you go on the trip first. Then, depending on what you two decide, you'll either see the marriage counselor or the divorce attorney. Mrs. Younger is the marriage counselor. Mr. Younger is our divorce attorney. Welcome to Younger & Younger!

Anthony holds up a pair of plane tickets.

ANTHONY

Your flight leaves tomorrow night.

DEREK

Tomorrow?!

BETH

I thought we had to pass some kind of test.

ANTHONY

You already did.

DEREK

Where are we going?

ANTHONY

I can't tell you that. It's a secret location and you'll have to sign some paperwork. You can't talk about the trip to anyone.

BETH

I'm not sure about this.

ANTHONY

We promise this will be the most fun you've had since childhood. Trust me. Carl and his wife are going too. This will be their third time. The plane leaves with or without you. And no luggage allowed. Just bring yourselves.

Anthony slides a non-disclosure agreement across the table.

EXT. AIRPORT - NIGHT

A car turns into the airport entrance.



INT. CARL'S CAR - NIGHT

Carl drives with SUSAN, mid twenties, in the passenger seat. Derek and Beth ride in the back.

DEREK  
So you're not telling us where  
we're going?

Carl laughs.

CARL  
I think it would be best if you  
enjoy the surprise.

Susan glances back at Beth and smiles.

SUSAN  
You're going to love it!

Susan then looks at Carl and gives him a kiss on the cheek.

EXT. AIRPORT RUNWAY - NIGHT

Tickets in hand, Derek, Beth, Carl and Susan stand in line to board the private plane. The Younger & Younger logo is splashed across the side.

Derek looks at all the other couples waiting to board. There are couples of all ages and race, even some children mixed in here and there.

Everyone is empty handed. No suitcases.

INT. AIRPLANE - NIGHT

Derek, Beth, Carl and Susan are all seated in the same row. Carl has the window and Derek has the end seat. Beth and Susan are sandwiched between them.

Derek notices a cute elderly couple sitting in the next row.

Everyone is fairly quiet except for some rowdy little boys jumping up and down in their seats near the front.

DEREK  
Can you at least tell me how long  
the plane ride is?

CARL  
We'll be there before you know it.

Carl gives Derek a thumbs up as a STEWARDESS picks up the microphone to address the crowd.

STEWARDESS

Welcome to Younger & Younger! I know everyone is anxious and excited to get the week started. The plane ride may seem a little strange at first, but hang in there. Everything will be fine. We are taking you to a very special place. If you have any questions, please ask, and thank you for choosing Younger & Younger.

The stewardess quickly disappears into the cockpit.

EXT. AIRPORT RUNWAY - NIGHT

The Younger & Younger plane takes off into the night.

INT. AIRPLANE - NIGHT

Once the plane is settled and on course, Derek leans back and closes his eyes.

Moments later, he coughs and reopens his eyes to see a dark mist forming around them.

He sits up and taps Beth on the shoulder. He keeps tapping, then realizes it's not her. There is now a five-year-old girl smiling at him in Beth's seat.

DEREK

You're not Beth! Who are you?  
Where did my wife go?

Derek is distracted by little kid voices all around him. The plane sounds like a school playground. In every row, there are kids jumping up and down in their seats.

He glances over to the elderly couple's seats. They are gone and have been replaced by a five-year-old boy and girl. They giggle at him.

DEREK

Beth, are you seeing this?

In Carl and Susan's seats are another little boy and girl. They wave at Derek.

YOUNG SUSAN

You slept the whole ride Derek.  
You missed all the fun!

Derek rubs his eyes, then looks at Susan again and makes sure he sees what he sees: a five-year-old girl.

Derek looks at the little boy next to her. He gives Derek a thumbs up.

DEREK

Carl???

Carl laughs.

DEREK

Where's Beth?

Carl points to the little girl next to him.

BETH

Derek?

Derek stares at her.

DEREK

Beth?! Is it really you?!

BETH

It's me!

Derek unbuckles his seat belt. He climbs out of his seat and into the aisle. Something is different. He is much shorter now and is the same height as the little girl.

BETH (CONT'D)

Look at yourself!

DEREK

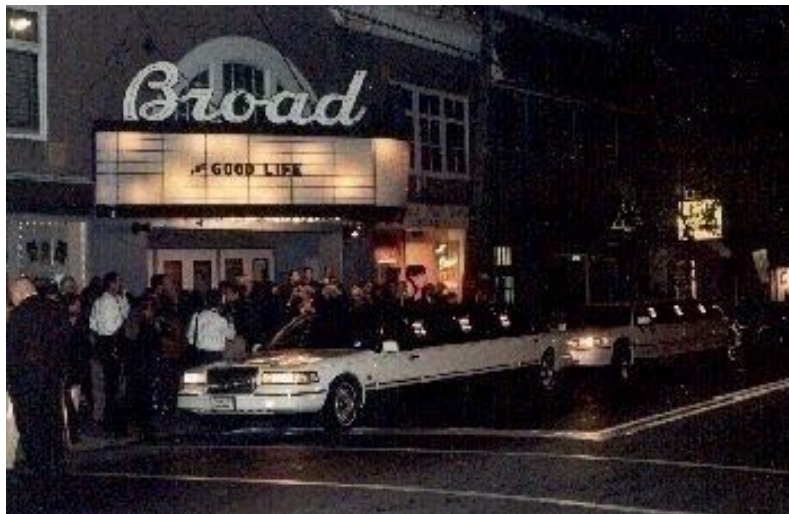
What?

BETH

We're young again!

Derek holds his tiny hands in front of him as he feels the plane start to land.

## THE GOOD LIFE



*The Breakfast Club* meets *Goodfellas*. That's how I described it. Four suburban friends stumble their way into being mistaken for mobsters. While that's what I intended, it didn't exactly play out like that. A lot of people, or maybe I should say almost everyone, did not like or "get" my first film *The Good Life*.

I was fresh out of film school and anxious to make a movie. At the time, I was obsessed with David Lynch films and just discovered Stanley Kubrick's *A Clockwork Orange* which wasn't exactly the best combination for a mainstream movie. While many were disappointed with the final film, we accomplished many things with this project:

-My producer Sam Dilisio and I made an ambitious ninety-minute feature film at a very low cost.

-I was a one man crew. Literally. No light guy. No sound guy. No assistants. Nothing. I held the camera and composed every shot.

-I edited the film myself on a Powermac G3 266MHz Apple computer with less than a gig of memory and about twenty gigs of total hard drive space. I used Adobe Premiere, After Effects and a film emulating program called Cinelook.

-It was one of the first films shot on the brand new Canon XL-1, and we were featured on several popular websites including Dark Horizons and the Canon XL-1 Watchdog.

-We had a ninety-second trailer for the movie transferred to 35mm film and attached it to the beginning of every movie that played at the Broad Theater in Souderton PA, including Mel Gibson's *Payback* and *Star Wars: Episode 1: The Phantom Menace*. The trailer opened with a street sign for the town of Souderton, which always stunned the crowd and received applause. Everyone in the area was aware of the film.

-We received tons of press, often on the front page of newspapers.

-In November of 2000, the movie premiered at the Broad Theater. We had a formal, invite-only event followed by a weekend of continuous showings to the public with decent ticket sales.

What went wrong? The answer is simple. I just wasn't ready. On top of that, I put a lot of pressure on my friends by asking them to act in the film. Some of the them were great. Some of them were mediocre, but nobody was terrible, and they all gave it 100%. The script was nearly 130 pages long. We only filmed about half of it, which made it feel disjointed in parts. The whole process was an important learning experience for me and if I had the chance to make the movie today, it would be completely different. Regardless of how the film looked, I have to say that it had an amazing soundtrack thanks to the contributions of many bands around the country.

Here are the opening pages from the original script, which barely resembles the movie.

FADE IN:

INT. CURLY'S BAR & GRILL - NIGHT

The guitarist starts a killer intro to a familiar rock tune. The drummer kicks in the beat. We pull back from the stage to reveal a dance floor packed with hot babes and guys trying to impress them.

The lead singer belts out his vocals. As we pull away from the dance floor, we see a couple making out in the corner. This place is a total meat market.

A waitress, PENNY, bobs and weaves through the crowd, holding a tray of drinks above her head.

Shot glasses are raised in the air, beer bottles are clanging and there's a line for the bathroom. It must be Saturday night.

The waitress makes her way to a quieter area of the bar where there are three booths. All of them have folded cards marked "reserved."

A nervous young man, JOEY, sits alone in the middle booth.

The waitress stops by and sets down a plate of fresh brownies on the table. She whispers something in Joey's ear.

PENNY

Joey, honey, Curly taped a gun  
under the table, just in case.

There is a crowd of BOUNCERS gathered at a nearby entrance. One of them, RANDY, whistles at Joey to get his attention.

Joey looks up in anticipation. Randy nods, as the rest of the bouncers stand back from the door.

The doors to the club swing open. Randy's eyes are fixed on the dark, suited figure coming through the door. No cover charge. They let the man right in. This is definitely SAL RUSSO.

We get a better look at Sal. He is pure Sicilian blood. He could be carrying anything in that large overcoat he's wearing. Nobody pats him down. He is feared and he knows it. His eyes are already locked on Joey.

Joey finishes the brownie.

Sal approaches the booth, and while never taking his eyes off Joey, slides in and makes himself comfortable.

We see under the table from the side view. We see Sal's very calm legs stretched out and Joey's knees shaking like leaves.

We take a closer look, and sure enough, there's a small revolver lightly taped underneath the table.

Sal reaches inside his jacket. Joey closes his eyes.

DISSOLVE TO: BLACK AND WHITE:

EXT. APARTMENT - NIGHT

A black Cadillac waits in front of an apartment building with its engine running and headlights on.

INT. APARTMENT - NIGHT

Joey, who is only eight years old, sits in a reclining chair watching television. We hear the sobs of a young woman crying. Joey hears her and turns around. Standing behind his chair is DEBBIE.

Debbie is in her thirties, but tonight she looks much older. There are bags under her eyes, her hair is a mess and her hands are trembling, but she still manages to smoke a cigarette.

We notice that while Debbie is very Italian, Joey has blondish hair and fair skin. It is obvious he looks more like his father.

JOEY

Why are you crying, Mommy?

DEBBIE

Daddy's been bad, Joey.

JOEY

Where is he?

Suddenly, LARRY, also in his thirties and of Irish-German descent, runs down the stairs with a suitcase in hand. Debbie tries to stop crying and wipes her eyes.

Joey jumps out of his seat and hugs his father's leg. Debbie reaches out and hugs the rest of him.

LARRY

I'm sorry. You know I love you both.

Joey tugs on his father's pant leg.

JOEY

Where are you going, Daddy?

LARRY

I have to go away for a while. You'll see me again someday. I promise.

Larry kisses Debbie as if for the last time.

DEBBIE

Let me know if anything changes.

LARRY

It won't.

Joey runs to a window and pulls the curtain open. He sees the headlights of the black Cadillac.

EXT. APARTMENT - NIGHT

Larry hurries out the front door with the suitcase. He looks back once. He sees Joey in the window. Larry smiles and waves, then climbs into the backseat of the car with the suitcase.

We get a closer view of Joey standing at the window. There are tears in his eyes.

The Cadillac slowly drives off into the darkness. Joey closes the window curtain.

FADE TO:

OPENING CREDITS: "THE GOOD LIFE" - BACK TO COLOR:

The filmed version can be viewed at this link:

<https://vimeo.com/113868502>

While *The Good Life* received lots of press, it wasn't always positive.

We filmed at a bar in Pottstown called The Point Spread which was owned by my neighbor, Anthony Moscardelli. In exchange for letting me film at his bar, all he asked for was a small speaking role, so I gave him the part of Detective Dubrow, named after Kevin Dubrow, the lead singer of the rock band Quiet Riot.

Anthony was pleasant to work with and had a great sense of humor. While editing *The Good Life*, I received news that he was arrested and charged with distributing drugs. This came as a shock to me, as I was unaware of any illegal activity involving Anthony or his bar. Months later, the bar closed down. Anthony maintained his innocence and was sentenced to sixteen years in state prison. At the time of this writing, he is scheduled to be released within a year.

Anthony gave what I felt was one of the best performances in the film. Here are the script pages for his big scene in *The Good Life*.

EXT. CURLY'S - PARKING LOT - MORNING

As Joey leaves the club, he notices that there are policemen gathered along the edge of the woods. There is yellow tape along the trees.

Joey hurries to his car. But...



Detective Dubrow is leaned up against Joey's car, waiting patiently for him.

DUBROW

We found another body in the woods, Joey.

JOEY

Really?

DUBROW

Funny thing happened though. The bullet that killed this guy matches a bullet that was pulled out of some girl's foot last night.

JOEY

They must be from the same gun.

Detective Dubrow pulls out a piece of paper and dangles it in the air.

DUBROW

You know what this is?

JOEY

What?

DUBROW

It's a warrant for your arrest.

Joey isn't surprised. But then Detective Dubrow rips the arrest warrant to shreds.

JOEY

Huh?

DUBROW

I'm not going to do you any favors, Joey. You're a dead man out here. You know it. I know it. Why would I give you the protection of a jail cell?

Detective Dubrow steps away from Joey's car.

DUBROW (CONT'D)

And your grandfather? He's a goner. In fact, today's newspaper points to him as your boss. I made sure of that. I wouldn't be surprised if they knock him off first.

Joey swings open his car door.

JOEY  
Oh my god! Pop-Pop!

Detective Dubrow laughs as Joey speeds off.

INT. POP-POP'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

We hear footsteps creeping through the kitchen. We can't see the person, but we follow with their point of view as we sneak through the house.

INT. POP-POP'S HOUSE - HALLWAY - DAY

The footsteps slow down as they near a bedroom door. A hand slowly nudges and opens it. We can hear Pop-Pop's voice from inside the room.

POP-POP  
Who's there?

FADE TO:

INT. FUNERAL HOME - DAY

There are a couple dozen mourners in the funeral home. You can hear people crying as Joey approaches the closed casket.

There is a picture of Pop-Pop near the beautiful flower arrangements. Joey fights back tears and sets the now framed "Missing in Action" certificate on top of the casket.

Joey closes his eyes.

The filmed version can be viewed at this link:

<https://vimeo.com/113868500>

[www.backtooceancity.com/good-life.html](http://www.backtooceancity.com/good-life.html)

## BEER GOGGLES

While *Beer Goggles* might seem like a completely immature title and script, the story actually has a message about alcoholism. I don't remember exactly how I came up with the idea, but it was almost called *Beer Muscles*.

The script begins with a brief history of beer, then shows a young Lance Logger falling into a vat of beer at a brewery. On his twenty-first birthday, Lance learns that the beer he fell in was chemically altered and exposed to radiation, leading to some very interesting side effects. A spoof of superhero movies, this unfinished script would have featured a battle between Lance and his arch nemesis, The Barfly.

After going back and reading it, I found a subtle connection to my personal life that I did not notice before. Throughout the story, Lance tries to reunite his divorced parents. My parents got divorced when I was in my early twenties, so maybe that's what inspired some of the storylines in both *Beer Goggles* and *Younger & Younger*.

A quote opens the screenplay, which is something to avoid, but I like this one, so I'm leaving it. Here are the opening scenes from *Beer Goggles*.

"Always do sober what you said you'd do drunk. That will teach you to keep your mouth shut." -Ernest Hemingway

FADE IN:

We are watching an old black-and-white newsreel film. Along with the scratches, trapped hairs and jittery frames, we see the words, "The History of Beer," followed by a traditional sounding narrator.

NARRATOR

In the year 1620, a group of 102 Pilgrims boarded a ship called the Mayflower in a quest to form a new colony.

The Mayflower sails across the ocean. On the ship, we see Pilgrims dancing, eating and drinking beer out of wooden mugs.

One Pilgrim falls near the edge of the ship while others rush to his aid and pat him on the back.

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

Soon, the journey began to take a toll on its passengers. Time was running out...and so was the beer.

The Mayflower pulls into Plymouth Rock. A few Pilgrims stumble off. One of the first things they remove is a barrel of beer.

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

Upon close inspection of the Mayflower's log, it is revealed that the Pilgrims quickly chose Plymouth Rock as not to waste any more beer looking for another spot.

A loud belch is heard as we fade into the countryside of England.

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

In medieval England times, beer was commonly served with breakfast.

We are shown the kitchen of an English family. A mother and father are seated at the ends of the table, with a son and daughter in between.

They are eating eggs and toast and each have a sparkling glass of beer to wash it down.

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

And before 1850, beer wasn't sold in bottles.

A townsman hands the bartender a bucket, who begins to fill it with beer.

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

If you wanted take-out, you had to bring a bucket or pot to the local tavern, have it filled and carefully walk it home.

Outside the bar, the townsman struggles to keep the overflowed bucket from spilling beer onto the sidewalk.

Suddenly, from out of an alley, a thief runs out and snatches the bucket.

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

But the most important moment in beer history happened when a young Lance Logger visited the famous Schmitz Beer Brewery at the age of seven.

As we see the outside of the brewery, the black-and-white newsreel breaks and color returns to the screen.

CUT TO:

EXT. SCHMITZ BEER BREWERY - DAY

It is a beautiful summer day. The parking lot is full and a long line of people wait to get inside the building.

INT. SCHMITZ BEER BREWERY - DAY

Seven-year-old LANCE LOGGER is carried on the shoulders of his father, the disheveled and beer-bellied LESTER LOGGER.

They are on a tour of the brewery with about ten other people.

We can barely hear the guide as Lester seems to be giving his son his own tour.

Lester points to one of the many huge vats of beer.

LESTER

This is where the magic happens.

LANCE

Can you swim in the beer Daddy?

LESTER

If nobody was watching, I'd go for a dip. That right there is a hot tub from heaven.

Lance climbs down from Lester's shoulders as he laughs.

LESTER (CONT'D)

I'm getting thirsty just thinking about it.

Lester rubs his beer gut as Lance peers over the ledge.

Lance stares at the vat of beer, entranced by its golden bubbles. It's almost as if the beer calls out his name.

BEER

Lance...Lance...Lance...

Lance checks to see if anyone is looking. His father switches his attention to the tour guide. Would anyone notice if...

LANCE  
Cannonball!

Lester and the rest of the tour look over, but it is too late. They are all splashed with beer from Lance's sudden jump into the vat.

Lester licks the foam from around his mouth, then suddenly realizes that Lance has jumped into the pool of beer.

LESTER  
Lance!

Within seconds, an alarm is sounded. Lester and the rest of the tourists surround the railing.

Lance flops around in the suds of beer. He swallows a mouthful. His arms flail as he sinks to the bottom of the vat.

LESTER (CONT'D)  
Lance! I'm coming in!

Lester holds his nose and struggles to get his huge body over the railing. The tour guide tries to stop him, but fails.

As Lester falls into the vat, the tourists back up. The splash is enormous.

Just as Lester enters the vat, a team of security officers rush the area. An inner tube with the Schmitz logo is thrown into the vat.

Lance twitches and kicks his legs. Bubbles cling to his body and absorb into his skin. The suds of beer violently swarm him like a bad chemical reaction.

Lance's skin turns a tint of yellow. His eyes and mouth are wide open.

Steam rises from the vat.

Lester swims to the bottom and pulls Lance to the top. Two security guards jump in and assist in the rescue.

CUT TO:

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

Lance lies unconscious on a bed. Various tubes are hooked into his arm. His mother, MARY, joins Lester by his side.

A fifty-year-old man, SEYMOUR SCHMITZ, stands by the bed.

SEYMOUR

I feel terrible. Nothing like this  
has ever happened at my brewery.  
My thoughts and prayers are with  
him.

Lance slowly opens his mouth real wide. Lester begins to notice and stands up toward the bed.

LESTER

Lance?

Lance's mouth stays wide open.

LESTER (CONT'D)

Mary! Look!

Mary takes notice and joins Lester at the bedside. She puts her arm around her husband, then suddenly...

Lance lets out a raw, piercing beer belch. Lester is shocked and taken aback. Mary waves her hand to clear the air.

Seymour Schmitz smiles ear to ear.

LESTER (CONT'D)

He's okay!

They hug and cry.

A NURSE hears the commotion and rushes in.

NURSE

I could hear that one all the way  
down the hall!

Lance opens his eyes.

The following scene takes place on Lance's twenty-first birthday when he receives a mysterious package in the mail.

INT. LANCE'S BEDROOM - LOGGER HOME - MORNING

The bright sun shines through the window. The sheets are on the floor. Lance is sound asleep on his bed wearing just tighty-whities.

Crushed potato chips are scattered all over the bed.

Ding-Dong. The doorbell rings. Lance shows some signs of life. He moves the pillow revealing a bunch of empty beer bottles that roll off the bed.

The doorbell rings again.

Lance suddenly sits up, holding his head in pain. Noticing he's not dressed, Lance grabs a bathrobe.

Smooosh. He steps in a container of onion dip. He wipes his foot on the carpet and reaches for his door, but...

Yikes! There is a huge pink bra hanging on the doorknob.

LANCE

Oh no.

He takes a deep breath, but the door swings open on its own, revealing FRANNY, who is wearing one of Lance's heavy metal t-shirts, which barely fits.

Thankfully she is wearing her own pants.

FRANNY

Good morning birthday boy! There's a delivery man at the door with a package for you. He says you're the only one that can sign for it.

Lance hurries out of his room.

INT. LIVING ROOM - MORNING

A UPS GUY waits at the front door holding a small box and a clipboard.

Lance ties his bathrobe shut and tries to straighten his hair.

UPS GUY

Sorry to wake you sir. Are you Lance Logger?

LANCE

Yes I am.

UPS GUY

You need to sign for this.

He hands Lance the clipboard and a pen. Lance signs it and exchanges it for the package.

UPS GUY (CONT'D)

Have a good day.

LANCE

Thanks.



Lance closes the door behind him and sits in his father's recliner chair. He stares at the cardboard box.

FRANNY  
Must be a birthday present. Are you going to open it?

Her voice makes Lance twitch.

LANCE  
Can I ask you a question?

FRANNY  
Sure.

LANCE  
Did you come home with me or my father last night?

Franny bounces seductively over to the chair. She sets the package on the floor and sits on Lance's lap.

FRANNY  
You don't remember?

She pulls her shirt over his head. Moments later, Lance comes out for air and respectfully moves her off him.

LANCE  
No, I'm sorry, I don't. It was my twenty-first birthday and...

Lance stops talking to wipe a white creamy substance from his face. He smells the white glob on his fingers.

LANCE (CONT'D)  
Onion dip?

FRANNY  
Really? You don't remember that either?

Lance stands up and gags.

LANCE  
Is my mother here?

FRANNY  
She left for work.

LANCE  
She met you?

FRANNY  
Real nice lady. She tried to wake you though.

LANCE

Oh god! What about my father?

FRANNY

He's asleep. But he said to tell you if anyone comes to the door, that he's been in bed with the flu all night.

Lance picks the package up off the floor.

LANCE

I guess I should open it.

Franny giggles like it's Christmas as Lance opens the box.

Buried in styrofoam peanuts is a strange pair of high tech goggles.

It is modified to look like sleek sunglasses, but it's definitely a pair of goggles.

FRANNY

What is it?

LANCE

I don't know. It looks like a pair of racing goggles or welding glasses or something.

Lance looks through the styrofoam and pulls out an old Schmitz Brewery beer coaster. He flips it over revealing a note.

It reads: Beer + Goggles = ???

FRANNY

What does it say?

LANCE

It says, "Beer plus goggles equals," and that's followed by question marks. I don't get it.

The doorbell rings again. Franny heads for the door, but Lance quickly stops her.

LANCE (CONT'D)

No. No. No. I'll get it.

Lance calmly opens the door revealing a police officer. It is the same one who pulled Lester over the previous night.

OFFICER

How are you doing this morning?  
We're looking for a Lester Logger.  
May we speak with him?

LANCE

I'm sorry. He's been in bed with  
the flu all night. I'd hate to  
wake him.

OFFICER

Oh really?

LESTER

Is it important?

The officer glances down the driveway and up the street.

OFFICER

Where's his car?

Lance looks outside, but doesn't see it.

LANCE

It must be in the garage.

OFFICER

May I see it please?

LANCE

Sure. I'll meet you around front.

Lance closes the front door and hurries through the  
hallway.

INT. GARAGE - MORNING

Lance opens the inside entrance to the garage, then  
closes his eyes in disbelief.

Parked in the garage is a police cruiser with its lights  
still flashing.

Franny peeks her head over his shoulder.

FRANNY

How did that get there?

LANCE

Well, I don't think my dad got me  
a police car for my birthday.

Lance pushes a button raising the outside entrance to the  
garage. Now there are six police officers waiting as the  
door opens.

LANCE (CONT'D)  
Can you do me a favor?

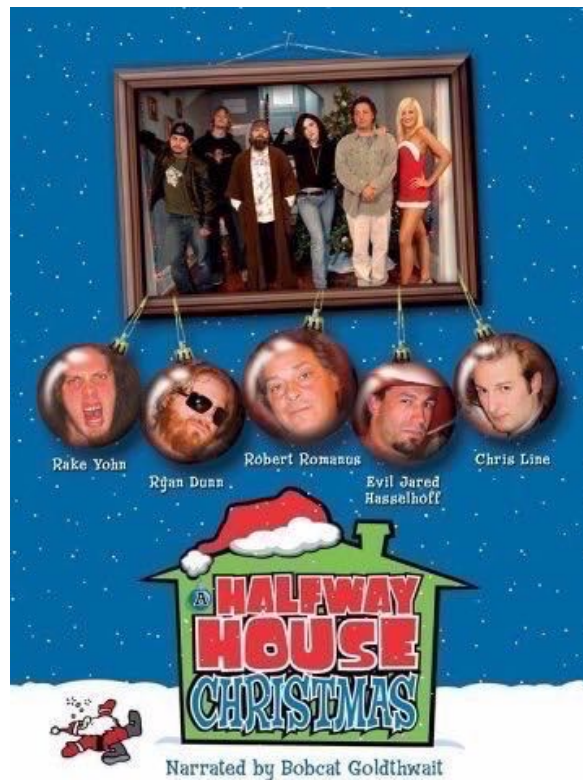
FRANNY  
What?

LANCE  
Wake up my dad.

The police officers enter the garage.

[www.backtooceancity.com/beer-goggles.html](http://www.backtooceancity.com/beer-goggles.html)

## A HALFWAY HOUSE CHRISTMAS



It started as a script called *Halfway House*.

On a rewrite, I decided to turn it into a holiday film and *A Halfway House Christmas* was born. Originally planned as a twenty-five minute short film, the final running time was nearly an hour which qualified it as a feature.

With a budget similar to *The Good Life*, producer Frank Carney and I had a different strategy and spent the majority of the money on the actors. We flew in actor Robert Romanus (Damone from *Fast Times at Ridgemont High*) for just three days of work and scheduled all of his scenes accordingly. For the film's narration, we arranged for comedian Bobcat Goldthwait (Zed from the *Police Academy* series) to visit a recording studio in Los Angeles for a couple hours to lay down his audio tracks. The entire film was shot in ten days spread out over three weekends.

A fellow Souderton High School graduate, Evil Jared Hasselhoff from the rock band The Bloodhound Gang, agreed to be in the film before the script was even finished. He was friends with Ryan Dunn and Rake Yohn from MTV's *Jackass* and *Viva La Bam* and quickly brought them on board with him.

While Robert Romanus was my first choice to play the counselor Daryl, he originally passed. I was a big fan of *Fast Times at Ridgemont High* and posted on an IMDb (Internet Movie Database) message board that I was looking for him. Someone pointed me in the direction of his manager, Melanie Sharp. I contacted her, but she said he was not accepting film roles at the moment while he was tending to a personal matter.

My next choice was Curtis Armstrong, who played Booger in *Revenge of the Nerds*. Curtis was fairly easy to track down. If you looked hard enough, you could find his personal email online. It took a few times, but eventually Curtis responded. I sent him the script and he said yes. This would have been a reunion of Curtis and Bobcat from the film *One Crazy Summer*, but technically they would not appear in any scenes together.

As I assembled the rest of the cast and crew, Curtis appeared in several critically acclaimed films including *Ray* and *Akeelah and the Bee*. This led to a dreaded call from Curtis. He was getting busy and I knew what was coming. As much as I tried to convince him to stay, Curtis dropped out of my film, but was very nice and apologetic about it.

The search was on for a new star and time was running out. Naturally, I tried to go in a direction connected to Curtis and Bobcat. For example, I contacted Donald Gibb who played Ogre in *Revenge of the Nerds*, but something didn't seem right. I also contacted Michael Winslow, the sound effects guy from *Police Academy*, but he wanted too much money. The rest of my casting ideas were stuck in the eighties. I contacted agents for actors ranging from Ralph Macchio (*The Karate Kid*) and Judd Nelson (*The Breakfast Club*) to Robert Hays (*Airplane*) and Corey Feldman (*Stand By Me*).

Meanwhile, I still pictured Robert Romanus in the role. It had been a while since he originally passed for personal reasons, so I sent his manager a follow-up email to see if anything changed. Sure enough, he was accepting film roles again and within a couple months he was on a plane to Pennsylvania to film my movie.

Robert Romanus, who goes by the name Bob, was an amazing actor to work with. I'll be the first to admit that I was nervous at first, but Bob had a way of making everyone around him feel comfortable. Since we didn't have a trailer for Bob, we prepared a private area of the house we were filming in, but he didn't want to separate himself from the rest of the cast and crew and opened the area

up for everyone. I consider Bob a friend and we remain in touch. When Frank Carney and I took a trip to Hollywood the following year, we met up with Bob at his house and took him out to dinner. I wrote a part specifically for him in my script *School Spirits* and look forward to working with him again soon.

Originally, I wanted Ryan Dunn to play a version of himself which is why there is a character named Ryan. Whenever I used real names, they were just temporary place holders, but I got used to them and left them in. Ryan Dunn could only commit to a smaller role, so I cast him as Buzz, and approached Casey Fosbenner for the role of Ryan. Casey is known to many in the Philadelphia area as Caseyboy from the Preston and Steve show on 93.3 WMMR. When Caseyboy passed due to his radio schedule, I approached some locals before finally casting musician Brian Walsh in the role of Ryan. He ran away with the part and it was always fun to edit his scenes. It was even Brian's idea for his character to wear the winter hat and brown bathrobe.

Evil Jared Hasselhoff had an RV that we parked in my driveway for make-up and meetings. However, when Jared was on set, it was his personal trailer for the day. Speaking of Jared, there was always lots of slapping going on when he was around, mostly on Tweak. They were all real slaps and Jared showed no mercy. All of the slap outtakes are a bonus feature on the DVD and can be watched on the website.

Chris Line played the part of Brett, the network executive. I originally approached the manager for The Bloodhound Gang, Brett Alperowitz, but he passed due to his work schedule. I really wanted Brett for this part because I thought he looked like film producer Brian Grazer, but radio disc jockey Chris Line did a great job with the role. In yet another connection to The Bloodhound Gang, I wanted their lead singer, Jimmy Pop, to play the part of Barry, the replacement counselor who shows up near the end. I could never get a response from Jimmy, so the part went to Matteo LeCompt, who knocked it out of the park. I'll never forget Matteo's audition. He showed up as Barry and never left character. The outfit he wore in the movie is the same outfit he wore to the audition. I later found out that he took the train and walked several miles to my house to get the part.

Other cast members included Rod Sellers (lead singer of the band American Nightmare), Charles Moffit, Kelly Kunik and Marisa Kettering. The crew included Nelson Carlson, Keith Krick, Terreyl Kirton, Dawn Troccoli, David Nash, Christopher Niemeyer, Dunia Kravchak and James Marengo. The original score was composed by Albert Chang and the opening and closing animation was done by John Bell.

I have to mention the feline cast member, Wilber, who portrayed Wreather the cat. The name Wreather was based on a funny story my friend Pete told me before he died. Back when he lived with his parents, he named the family cat

Reefer. When his mom questioned the name, Pete explained that the name was Wreather, like a Christmas wreath. She accepted his explanation and continued to call the cat Reefer long after Pete passed away.

We premiered the film at the Broad Theater to a packed house of nearly 500 people, then opened it to the public the following week. The film was listed in The Hollywood Reporter as placing in the top ten of their "per screen average" chart.

On the night of the premiere, we had an after party at Finn McCool's tavern in Hatfield, hosted by the bar's owner, Joseph Canazaro. About a year later, Joe tracked me down and said he wanted to finance my next film, but more on that in the *School Spirits* chapter.

Some people really enjoyed *A Halfway House Christmas*, while others didn't, but everyone agreed it was a huge step forward from my first film *The Good Life*. I was proud of the progress I made between the two projects. Since this film was intended to be the first part of a series, a teaser for *A Halfway House Summer* was shown before the end credits. It was imagined as an eighties beach movie set in Ocean City, NJ.



*Ryan Dunn on the set of A Halfway House Christmas.*

*A Halfway House Christmas* was one of the few rare film appearances that Ryan Dunn made outside of the *Jackass* films. Sadly, on June 20th, 2011, Ryan was killed in a car accident in West Chester, PA. Just two days before his death, Ryan and I exchanged text messages about his participation in my next movie, *School Spirits*. He was always supportive and encouraging of my projects.

Here are the opening pages of the script for *A Halfway House Christmas* that features John Bell's animated titled sequence.



FADE IN:

Our Christmas story opens with cartoon animation:

Santa's sleigh recklessly speeds through the sky. He holds a beer can in one hand and uses the other to try to guide his sleigh. Pages from his naughty and nice list fly everywhere.

The reindeer are all over the place. Santa's cartoon eyes are represented with drunken X's.

Finally, Santa and his reindeer crash onto the rooftop of a house.

End Animation.

INT. HALFWAY HOUSE - NIGHT

A drunken narrator begins to speak:

NARRATOR  
(slurring)  
Twas the night before Christmas,  
when all through the mouse...

Everything seems calm in the house. We see the flashing lights of a Christmas tree blinking in the hallway.

NARRATOR  
Not a creature was stirring...

We see RYAN, a long-haired, fully-bearded stoner, passed out in front of the television.

NARRATOR  
Not even the house.

A cat sleeps contently on the chair.

NARRATOR  
The stockings were hung by the  
swear jar with care...

We pass by a row of six stockings bearing names.

NARRATOR  
In hopes that Santa Claus soon  
would be there.

KNOCK! KNOCK! KNOCK! The pounding on the door is followed by a scream and the sound of a car crashing into the house.

CUT TO:

EXT. HALFWAY HOUSE - NIGHT

This cozy three story home looks more like a fraternity house with a balcony that stretches across the second floor. It is the same house we saw in the opening animation.

We hear various male and female voices alternating in the opening narration while a theme song plays softly.

NARRATION

This is the story of six relapsed drug addicts...all with court charges pending...picked by the D.A. to live together...and have our lives taped...with hopes of avoiding jail time...find out what happens...when people stop being real...and try to stay sober.

ONE WEEK EARLIER

INT. HALFWAY HOUSE - MEETING ROOM - NIGHT

DARYL, a reformed, but still dazed drug and alcohol counselor, reads from a piece of paper.

We see a camera mounted in a top corner of the room.

DARYL

Before we get started tonight, I've got a surprise. It seems the producer of the show is getting into the holiday spirit and got the house an early Christmas present.

ROD, a punk rocker in his late twenties, laughs.

ROD

Is he finally going to fix something around here?

DARYL

No, but he's letting us have a cat in the house.

Tweak, an extremely burnt out junkie, leans forward.

TWEAK

I refuse to clean the litter box.

DARYL

Tweak, we are all going to have to chip in and take care of this cat.

It's another responsibility you  
can earn points for.

RYAN, the resident stoner, raises his hand.

RYAN  
Can I name the cat?

DARYL  
If everyone agrees, yes Ryan, you  
may name the cat.

PATTY, scraggly thin and aged beyond her years, jumps in.

PATTY  
As long as you don't name it  
something stupid like "Kittie" or  
"Cat."

The filmed version can be viewed at this link:

<https://vimeo.com/113868501>

The next scene is one of my favorites and features Robert Romanus and Rod Sellers. There are some noticeable differences between the script and film, as the actors ad-libbed some of their lines on set.

EXT. WOODS - MORNING

Rod is asleep on a log in the middle of the woods. He is surrounded by empty beer cans and a puddle of vomit.

A nearby animal scurries by and rustles some branches and leaves.

Rod opens his eyes and sees a view of the sky partially blocked by the trees. He slips off the log, then slowly stands up, realizing where he is.

He notices the empty beer cans near him and kicks a couple of them, muttering obscenities under his breath.

It's a struggle, but he regains his strength and starts heading in what he hopes is the right direction.

EXT. HALFWAY HOUSE - DRIVEWAY - DAY

In the distance, Rod comes out of the woods and heads toward the house.

INT. HALFWAY HOUSE - HALLWAY - DAY

Daryl strategically places a piece of paper in the burnt out hole of the Christmas tree. He picks up a suitcase by his side just as Rod enters the room.

DARYL

Rod? Where have you been?

ROD

I got lost in the woods.

Daryl lets out a very fake laugh.

DARYL

I have some bad news. Tweak's in the hospital.

ROD

What?!

DARYL

He overdosed on all kinds of drugs. But don't worry. Tweak's fine. I just saw him. In fact, he should be home in a couple of hours.

ROD

I thought Tweak was doing good.

DARYL

Well, it seems that our producer, Brett, thought that ratings would go up if everyone relapsed and fell off the wagon. I'm sure he's the one that planted all the drugs around the house.

ROD

I guess he put the case of beer at the front door too.

DARYL

I've seen it all, Rod. I've had enough.

Rod glances down at the suitcase he is holding.

ROD

Where are you going?

DARYL

I'm sorry. This isn't for me anymore. I've been clean and sober for almost eight years and for the first time I really, really feel like going out and getting drunk. All because of this house and this

stupid show. I should have never  
agreed to do it.

ROD  
You can't leave. Tonight's  
Christmas Eve.

Daryl shakes Rod's hand and smiles.

DARYL  
Merry Christmas, and good luck in  
the new year. I left a note on the  
tree for the rest of the gang.  
Make sure they read it, alright?

ROD  
So you're just leaving us here  
unsupervised?

DARYL  
No. They're sending someone over  
to replace me. So long.

Daryl slowly walks out of the room, suitcase in hand.

INT. HALFWAY HOUSE - HALLWAY - LATER THAT DAY

Rod sits on the staircase while playing his guitar and  
humming a Christmas tune.

Patty pushes Tweak through the front door on a  
wheelchair. The rest of the gang follow behind them. Rod  
stops playing at the site of the crippled Tweak.

ROD  
Tweak! They didn't tell me you  
were paralyzed!

TWEAK  
I can walk. It's just my body's  
very weak and this was the only  
way they'd let me out for  
Christmas.

Rod points to a piece of paper hanging on the tree.

ROD  
Daryl left us. There's the note.

EVERYONE  
What?!

Tweak wheels himself over to the tree, grabs the note and  
reads it out loud.

INT. LOCAL BAR - DAY

Daryl sits alone at the bar. There are random customers spread throughout.

TWEAK (V.0.)

Dearest Friends: I'm sorry, but I can no longer stay in this house. The network has used each one of us to further their agenda for higher television ratings.

The bartender places a full mug of beer in front of Daryl.

TWEAK (V.0.)

A halfway house is supposed to be a safe haven for all of us, including myself. It is a place to find support for our addictions, not a devious trap created by a mad scientist trying to bring us all down just for money.

Daryl stares at the foamy mug of beer in front of him.

TWEAK (V.0.) (CONT'D)

I have struggled for many years to stay sober, but yet I have never felt so wasted and useless as I do right now.

Daryl picks up the mug of beer.

TWEAK (V.0.) (CONT'D)

Please forgive me. I will miss you all. Merry Christmas. Your friend, Daryl.

He holds the mug of beer inches from his lips, staring at the suds, but still thinking it through.

INT. HALFWAY HOUSE - HALLWAY - NIGHT

Tweak crumples up the note and tosses it into the other room. Wreather, the cat, chases it across the floor and starts to play with it.

TWEAK

He left us here by ourselves?

ROD

Not exactly.

We hear footsteps coming down the stairs. Everyone looks to see who it is. It is Brett.

Brett fixes his tie and flashes them all a fake smile.

BRETT

Wonderful. You're all here. Since your trusted counselor decided to quit on Christmas Eve, you're stuck with me until your replacement gets here.

Brett looks at his watch.

BRETT (CONT'D)

Your new counselor, Barry, should be here in the next hour or so. In the meantime, I'll be taking care of some paperwork, so I'd appreciate some peace and quiet around here. Believe me, I don't like hanging around you lowlives any more than you do.

The filmed version can be viewed at this link:

<https://vimeo.com/113877743>

So what are the actors up to these days?

Robert Romanus continues to act in films and performs in his band Poppa's Kitchen.

Bobcat Goldthwait has directed films such as *World's Greatest Dad*, *God Bless America* and *Willow Creek*.

Rake Yohn is married with a son and is growing genetically modified bacteria for the benefit of mankind.

Chris Line has a son and continues to be a DJ on the radio.

Evil Jared Hasselhoff is currently under investigation by the Russian Bureau of Investigation for rubbing a Russian flag on his butt at a concert in Odessa, Ukraine. If convicted, he faces five years in a Siberian labor camp. This isn't a joke, they are seriously trying to lock him up for five years for twerking a flag.

The rest of the cast and crew are doing well and I remain in contact with most of them.

The shooting location for *A Halfway House Christmas* was a house that I shared with roommates for more than ten years. The house was so big, it was like everyone had their own separate apartment. Counting the third floor, there were eight bedrooms and four bathrooms and the property sat on nearly twenty acres of land.



I moved in shortly after I finished my first film *The Good Life*. My roommates included my brother and two of the stars from that film, Chris Murphy and Steve Wise. Other roommates came and went over the years, including Stephanie Doyle, Dan Krolikowski, David Kinion and Mike Lagnese.

I always joked about the prospect of buying this house someday or even having blueprints made to rebuild the house from scratch. In addition to *A Halfway House Christmas*, it was also used as the location for my children's web series *Wilber the Cat*.

While on the subject of Christmas movies, a friend just released a documentary called *I Am Santa Claus*, which follows the lives of five real-life Santas year round. Check out the website for Tommy Avallone's film at [www.iamsantaclausmovie.com](http://www.iamsantaclausmovie.com)

[www.backtooceancity.com/halfway-house-christmas.html](http://www.backtooceancity.com/halfway-house-christmas.html)



## THE SKY BELONGS TO THE STARS

I was always a huge Alice in Chains fan. The lead singer, Layne Staley, died on April 5th, 2002, from a heroin and cocaine overdose. In 2006, I read the only biography that existed about Layne. The book was very thin and most of the content was already public knowledge, but it appeared that the author had some kind of access to Layne's family and childhood photos.

I contacted this author and asked if anyone was working on a film based on Layne's life. I was very interested in writing a screenplay about Layne, and to make a long story short, this author wanted me to write a film adaptation of her book. I made it very clear that there wasn't enough original material from her book, but she promised to put me in touch with a woman who was in a relationship with Layne during his final days, which I later learned was not true.

I was so immersed in Layne's life and music that I even read a book called *The Bad Place* by Dean Koontz, which was rumored to have scared Layne into a cold-turkey quit of heroin while recording the album *Dirt*.

Next thing I know, my name is on a press release that announced my involvement in a movie about Layne Staley based on the book. This press release was published worldwide on music websites and was talked about on radio stations. To this day, I still receive random emails from Layne's fans asking about the status of the movie. I always kindly state that I am not involved and direct them to the Layne Staley Memorial Fund at [www.THS-wa.org](http://www.THS-wa.org). If you do a web search for "Eric Moyer Layne Staley," you will find hundreds of these links about my alleged involvement, which was sadly a publicity stunt by the author and publisher to sell more copies of the book.

My heartfelt apologies go out to Layne's family for the confusion, and I even reached out directly to clear this up. I will always be a Layne Staley fan and would love the opportunity to write this screenplay someday, but only with their blessing.

Please support the Layne Staley Memorial Fund that was set up by his mother to help others with addiction. More information can be found at [www.layne-staley.com](http://www.layne-staley.com).

[www.backtooceancity.com/sky-belongs-to-the-stars.html](http://www.backtooceancity.com/sky-belongs-to-the-stars.html)

## MY LITTLE TRAINWRECK

I'll never forget when I got the idea. I was listening to the Preston and Steve radio show in my car one morning and they were talking about actor Luke Wilson. He was spotted at a bar in Philadelphia and someone called in to report that he had a "sitter" with him. Obviously short for babysitter, this person's job was to keep Luke from getting too drunk, or embarrassing himself in public. Basically, keep him out of trouble.

My next script came to me just like that. What if Tara Reid, Lindsay Lohan or Paris Hilton had a sitter? What if the actress hated her sitter, but ended up falling in love with him? I thought it was the perfect project for Adam Sandler and Drew Barrymore, who've worked together before. I started writing the script that night and reached out to Ember at Drew Barrymore's production company, Flower Films. She was kind enough to respond to me, but insisted I had to go through Drew's agents, who would not return my emails. It didn't matter anyway because I was jumping the gun. I didn't have a finished script to show them.

My next idea was a casting stunt. I contacted Tara Reid's reps, but was told she needed a "pay or play" deal. In Hollywood, that meant I had to pay her a portion of the money up front, which she kept whether I made the movie or not. The door was left open, so I wrote the script with Tara in mind. I didn't include anything that was too close to her personal life. Instead, I made the character a combination of all the famous "trainwrecks" making headlines on TMZ and Perez Hilton.

The original title of this script was *The Sitter*, which ended up being the name of a 2011 comedy starring Jonah Hill, which was basically a remake of the 1987 film *Adventures in Babysitting* and had no connection to my idea at all.

I wrote the script in a couple of months and immediately set my sights on a list of actors. Back in 1993, a friend of mine put me in touch with his cousin in Hollywood, an actor named Christopher McDonald. At the time, he was best known for playing Goose in *Grease 2* and Geena Davis' husband in *Thelma and Louise*. A few years later, he appeared opposite Adam Sandler as Shooter McGavin in *Happy Gilmore*. In 1994, while on the Hollywood trip with my uncle Tom, I told Chris that I was writing screenplays and that someday I would

write a role specifically for him. He agreed to read the script, whenever it was ready.

Christopher McDonald made good on that promise almost fifteen years later. I wrote the part of Victor Cashman in *My Little Trainwreck* for him. While on my second trip to Los Angeles with producer Frank Carney, I gave him the script.

A couple of months went by when I got a surprise phone call from Chris. He loved the script and thanked me for writing the part of Victor for him. He offered to clear his schedule to do the film, but I told him I was still in the early stages of development. He asked who I had in mind for the female lead of Laura Summer and I told him Rachael Leigh Cook. He responded that she was a wonderful choice and would be great in the role. He also informed me that he portrayed her father in a film called *The Eighteenth Angel* and would love to work with her again.

With Christopher McDonald onboard, things moved quickly, but I still couldn't get the script to Rachael Leigh Cook. Her manager, Randy James, was a super nice guy, but he had a strict policy that he would only entertain offers for fully financed films.

I mentioned earlier that I stayed in touch with Ryan Dunn after filming *A Halfway House Christmas*. I sent him a text message about the progress of *My Little Trainwreck* and said I had a role for him. I told him that Christopher McDonald was already attached and that I was trying to get the script to Rachael Leigh Cook. In a strange coincidence, Ryan replied that he was in Louisiana shooting a movie called *Blonde Ambition* with Jessica Simpson and...Rachael Leigh Cook. He gushed about how great of a person she was both personally and professionally. I had no idea Ryan was filming a new movie, let alone with Rachael. Everything seemed to come together, like it was meant to be. I never asked Ryan to go around Rachael's manager to get her the script. I simply asked him to let her know about the project and have her manager keep an eye out for it. I always respected Randy for protecting Rachael, but he didn't budge and I was forced to consider other options.

The IMDb Pro website was my best resource during this time. You can type in an actor's name and instantly get the contact information for their agent, manager and publicist. One of the actresses on my radar was Kaley Cuoco. Her agent, Ro Diamond of SDB Partners, agreed to pass the script on to her. Kaley was best known for playing Bridget in the John Ritter sitcom *8 Simple Rules for Dating My Daughter* and Billie in the show *Charmed* co-starring Alyssa Milano.

About a month later, I got an email from Ro on a Sunday afternoon saying that Kaley just read the script, thought it was great, and wanted to do it. I also found out that Kaley and Christopher McDonald shared the same manager, Danny Sussman from Brillstein Entertainment Partners. I already had an LOI (short for

Letter of Intent) from Chris and now I had one from Kaley Cuoco. They were both officially attached to star in my film.

Everything snowballed from there. I attached Robert Romanus and Rake Yohn from my previous film, Anna Chlumsky from *My Girl* and Curtis Armstrong from *Revenge of the Nerds*. I even got a commitment from Barry Williams (forever known as Greg Brady from *The Brady Bunch*) to cameo in the opening flashback scene as a sitcom dad.

I pursued veteran actor and Oscar winner Ernest Borgnine to play the Aaron Spelling influenced role of Laura's father, Seymour Summer. I was told that Ernest had a home in Philadelphia because his wife did a lot of work at the QVC network, so it seemed like a perfect fit for a couple days of work. Ernest's manager gave me a ballpark figure of what he would cost, but said he never signed LOI's. The manager was confident we would be able to work something out and encouraged me to get back to her once the movie had a start date. Unfortunately, Ernest Borgnine passed away in July of 2012. Other considerations for Laura's father included Christopher Lloyd from *Back to the Future*, Bruce Campbell from *The Evil Dead* and Wallace Shawn from *My Dinner With Andre* and *The Princess Bride*.

Just when everything seemed too good to be true, things got complicated. When I received the letter of intent from Kaley Cuoco, I was told she had a television pilot under consideration at CBS. It was a little unknown show called *The Big Bang Theory*, which got picked up for series and went on to become one of the highest rated television comedies in years. Kaley entered into a holding deal with CBS and her availability for *My Little Trainwreck* became nearly impossible.

Once again, I needed to cast the star of the movie, so I bounced around some names including Alicia Silverstone, Amanda Seyfried, Elisha Cuthbert, Ali Larter and Brittany Murphy. There was even a time when I was told Ashley Olsen was seriously considering the project, but she ultimately passed. I even made another attempt to get the script to Rachael Leigh Cook's manager.

And then something really strange happened and everything came full circle. Tara Reid agreed to star in the film.

Tara's brother, Tommy Reid, was also in the movie business. He directed *Strike* (formerly known as *7-10 Split*) and *Screwball: The Ted Whitfield Story*. When I approached him, Tommy was producing a film called *Kill the Irishman* starring Val Kilmer and Christopher Walken. I asked Tommy to come onboard *My Little Trainwreck* as producer and director with his sister Tara as the lead actress. After months of emails and phone calls, that is where the project stands, although there has not been any activity in the past couple years.

The role of Laura's boyfriend, Tony Steel, was inspired by Steven Seagal. My first choice to play him was comedian Joe Rogan, but I couldn't get a response from him. I also went after Eric Christian Olsen and even tried to stunt cast the part with Corey Haim, which obviously would have taken the role in a different direction. I also tried to get the script to Johnny Knoxville, who I thought would make a great Tony Steel, but was never sure if he ever saw it. Right now, I would love to see Vinnie Jones play Tony Steel.

The first actor I tried to get for the male lead of Scott was Mike Vogel, who grew up near me in Pennsylvania. I also went after Shawn Hatosy, Shane West, James Van Der Beek, Jamie Kennedy and two stars from *American Pie*, Chris Klein and Eddie Kaye Thomas. Recently, I thought about trying to get the script to Dan Fogler.

For the role of Laura's brother, I wanted Jason Mewes (from Jay and Silent Bob fame) and came very close to convincing his manager to attach him to the project. I also considered Steve-O from MTV's *Jackass* as well as comedians Jim Breuer and Jim Florentine. For the role of the mother, Sophia, I thought about getting the script to Sheryl Lee, who played Laura Palmer in *Twin Peaks*. My idea was to have the mother and daughter look more like Hollywood sisters. In another coincidence, Sheryl Lee also had Danny Sussman as her manager.

There have been many investors who came very close to making this movie, and even more producers wanted to try, but there was always one thing that got in the way. The script was about the movie business and word was that Hollywood doesn't like to make movies about itself. Every time somebody passed, I heard the same thing. "It's a good script, but it's about the movie business."

I would love to see this film get made someday, whether it is with Tara, Rachael or Kaley. I think each of them would be amazing in their own unique way. The same goes for Lindsay Lohan, Cobie Smulders, Sarah Michelle Gellar, Amber Heard, Kristen Stewart, Selena Gomez, Amber Benson, Megan Fox, Anna Kendrick and Chloe Grace Moretz. The list goes on.

There's one actress I can't leave off that list: Anna Faris. As Samantha James in *Just Friends*, she stole the movie from Ryan Reynolds. I always thought *My Little Trainwreck* could be converted into a spinoff of *Just Friends* and just follow the Samantha James character. Anna Faris would knock it out of the park as Laura Summer. I did reach out to Anna's reps, but they told me she had a similar project in development. Anna currently stars in the sitcom *Mom*.

In the script there is a specific song that the main characters slow dance to that appears twice in the movie. In the script, it is simply referenced to as "their song," but I did contact singer Billy Vera about using his eighties ballad "At This Moment" in the film. Many would recognize it as the song that Michael J. Fox

and Tracy Pollan danced to in the television show *Family Ties*. My intention was to have a modern rock artist cover the song and update it.

I recently heard that director Judd Apatow has a new film in the works simply titled *Trainwreck*, but I'm still not sure what his project is about.

Here is the first act of the script for *My Little Trainwreck*.

FADE IN:

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

A YOUNG BOY eats a bowl of cereal at the kitchen table, while his MOTHER flips pancakes on the frying pan.

The FATHER of the household opens the door and waves in a five-year-old girl, TARA, who wears pigtails and her best Sunday dress.

FATHER  
I want you to meet Tara.

MOTHER  
Tara?

FATHER  
It stands for Technologically  
Advanced Robotic Adolescent.

YOUNG BOY  
Cool.

FATHER  
(to Tara)  
Say hello to your brother.

TARA  
(in a monotone robotic  
voice)  
Hello to your brother.

MOTHER  
Honey, what have you done?! She's  
a real child!

The father spins Tara around and opens a compartment just below her neck revealing flashing lights and dangling wires.

The scene fades into close-ups of the little girl as a female VOICE begins to speak.

VOICE

Coming in at number 68 on our  
countdown is former child star  
Laura Summer, best known as the  
adorable, but not quite human Tara  
in the hit sitcom, "My Little  
Robot."

We see various pictures of an older, teenage Laura.

VOICE (CONT'D)

After a brief stint on "Venice  
Beach, 90291," also produced by  
her father, and starring her  
notorious brother Ricky Summer,  
Laura took a break from acting.

We see more pictures of Laura: with different boyfriends,  
at nightclubs, dancing on a table, falling over drunk, a  
blurred panty-less photo and a police mug shot.

VOICE (CONT'D)

During that time, the press  
labeled her a Hollywood trainwreck  
and printed photos of her hard  
partying ways on a weekly basis.

We see a recent picture of Laura with a large, bulky man,  
but we can't see his entire face because his hand is  
blocking the camera.

VOICE (CONT'D)

Recently, she has been  
romantically linked to straight-  
to-video action star Tony Steel.  
Laura is attempting a comeback  
this year and is considering  
several scripts, hopefully in a  
movie that's not produced by her  
father.

We fade from a picture of Laura to:

INT. AIRPLANE - NIGHT

Laura is comfortably seated in first class with her  
mother SOPHIA, a slinky, still sexy woman in her fifties.  
Heavy make-up and years of plastic surgery have paid off.

They each hold copies of a movie script in front of them.  
The title page reads, "Pretty Ugly - Written by Jimmy  
Corn."

LAURA

Mom, this is really good.



SOPHIA

This is a wonderful move for you dear. A revelation, a showcase role.

Laura smiles and laughs to her herself as she reads.

EXT. VICTOR'S BAR AND GRILL - NIGHT

The bar resides on a well-lit street in a quiet neighborhood. A neon sign flashes "Victor's Bar and Grill."

INT. VICTOR'S BAR AND GRILL - NIGHT

A homemade sign stretches above the bar announcing "Welcome Drew Barrymore." Another sign reads, "Welcome Cast and Crew of Pretty Ugly."

The bar is fairly busy, but there are some seats available.

SCOTT, mid-twenties, enters the bar sporting a "staff" shirt and carries a stack of flyers and a roll of tape.

He heads to the corner of the bar where a well-dressed man in his fifties, DENNIS, sits by himself reading a newspaper. He sees Scott, then looks at his watch.

DENNIS

You're early.

SCOTT

It's my last day as an employee.

DENNIS

Trust me, you have no idea how much work owning a bar really is.

SCOTT

You bust your ass here.

DENNIS

Just be thankful I gave you first crack at it.

The bartender, ALISON, a young goth girl with dark hair and heavy black makeup, notices Scott.

SCOTT

I'm going to make a lot of changes around here, starting with the name of the place. The loan is a lock.

DENNIS  
Hope you get it, Scott.

SCOTT  
Don't worry.

Scott sees Alison approach them.

SCOTT  
(very loud for Alison to  
hear)  
But the first thing I'm going to  
do is get rid of that bartender,  
Alison.

ALISON  
You wouldn't fire your own sister.

SCOTT  
I can't. You're going to be my new  
manager, right?

ALISON  
I practically manage your house  
and your life. I can handle your  
bar. Just make sure I get a part  
in this movie.

Scott takes one of the flyers and tapes it to the wall.  
It reads, "Be an Extra in Pretty Ugly. See Scott for  
Details."

INT. TERMINAL - NIGHT

Laura and Sophia are at the baggage claim. Laura waves  
her hand and sniffs the air while looking at Sophia.

LAURA  
Mother, what is that perfume  
you're wearing?

SOPHIA  
It's a new fragrance I got in a  
gift bag last week.

LAURA  
I love it. Can you get me a  
bottle?

A WOMAN taps Laura on the shoulder.

WOMAN  
Are you Laura Summer?

LAURA  
Yes.

WOMAN

Can I get a picture?

SOPHIA

(whispering to Laura)

Please...your fan base, dear.

LAURA

(reluctant with a fake  
smile)

Sure.

The woman leans her head into Laura and holds a camera out in front of them.

WOMAN

I loved "My Little Robot." I used  
to torture my parents with your  
"robot dance."

With the words "robot dance," Laura's smile disappears just as the picture is taken.

Sophia hands an itinerary list to Laura as they keep walking.

SOPHIA

Remember, rehearsal and a radio  
show on Thursday. Hotel,  
directions, rental car over there.  
I'm taking a cab to meet Victor  
for dinner. Tah-tah.

LAURA

But Mom...

Sophia plants a kiss on Laura's cheek.

SOPHIA

You'll be fine. I love you angel.

Laura waves to her mother as she rushes away, a little frightened.

INT. VICTOR'S BAR AND GRILL - NIGHT

Scott has plastered the entire bar with the flyers about movie extras.

SCOTT

I'm telling you, "Pretty Ugly" is  
going to turn this place into a  
local tourist attraction.

DENNIS

As long as it's a good movie.

SCOTT

With Jimmy Corn directing? Are you kidding? An instant classic.

DENNIS

There's just one thing I don't understand. Jimmy Corn makes all those violent action flicks, right?

SCOTT

"Blunt Drama" is one of my all-time favorites.

DENNIS

Why make a romantic comedy?

SCOTT

I was wondering the same thing. I'll ask him when he gets here.

DENNIS

You don't want to upset that guy. I heard he's a lunatic on movie sets.

SCOTT

Don't believe everything you read.

A handful of customers have gathered around some of the flyers Scott posted.

EXT. CITY STREET - NIGHT

The brakes screech as a red sports car whips around a corner. Other cars beep their horns.

INT. RENTAL CAR - NIGHT

Laura dances around in the driver's seat while slapping the steering wheel to the beat of the music. She squints as she tries to read the road signs.

Her cell phone rings. She turns down the music and answers it.

LAURA

(in phone)

Hi Tony...I miss you.

(pause)

What?...

(pause)

What are you doing in Budapest?

(pause)

On Bloody Ground Part 3? Tony! You weren't even in part 2!

(pause)  
What about my birthday?! Don't you  
hang up on me!

Laura tosses the phone on the front seat and turns the music back up.

INT. VICTOR'S BAR AND GRILL - NIGHT

Dennis is still seated with the newspaper, working on the crossword puzzle. Alison pours drinks for customers, with Scott helping her out.

The bar is quiet as the jukebox changes songs.

The door to the bar swings open, and as Laura walks in, a popular rock song blasts out of the jukebox. Some customers notice her, some don't.

Scott is pouring a beer when he sees her and is immediately smitten. The glass overflows with beer, as he is hypnotized by Laura's beauty: her hair, eyes, lips, makeup, her outfit. Everything about her is perfect.

TROY, the muscle-head door man, stops Laura.

TROY  
Can I see some ID, miss?

While Laura rummages through her purse, Alison turns off the beer tap and punches Scott on the shoulder.

ALISON  
Hey! Isn't that...

Scott is still staring at her.

SCOTT  
I knew she looked familiar.

ALISON  
Oh my god!

SCOTT  
Laura Summer.

ALISON  
What's she doing here?

SCOTT  
She's probably friends with Drew Barrymore or something. It's happening already. Ka-Ching!

As Laura hands Troy her driver's license, Scott leaps over the bar and rushes to her side. He snatches the ID out of Troy's hand and gives it back to Laura.

SCOTT  
That won't be necessary.

LAURA  
(smiling at Scott)  
Thank you.

Scott extends his hand out to Laura. She does the same, and while they shake hands, they stare into each other's eyes.

SCOTT  
I'm Scott. I'm the manager here.  
Actually, tomorrow I'll be on my way to being the new owner.

LAURA  
I'm Laura.

SCOTT  
I know. It's great to meet you.  
Come in and sit down.

Scott leads her to an uncrowded area of the bar near Dennis. As Laura sits down, Scott sprints around the bar until he is directly across from her, bumping Alison out of the way.

SCOTT  
Whatever you want is on the house.

DENNIS  
My place still, junior.

SCOTT  
(to Laura)  
Ignore that guy.

LAURA  
Water with lemon please.

SCOTT  
Yes. On the way. No tap. Spring...

LAURA  
That's fine.

Scott clumsily pours a glass of water as Alison nudges her way in.

ALISON  
He's star struck, Laura.

Laura smirks at Alison, then stares rudely at all the black makeup on her face.

LAURA

Is this a funeral parlor? Did somebody die?

Alison quickly turns away and stares at the wall. After a few moments, Alison disappears from behind the bar and heads for the ladies' room.

Scott places the glass of water in front of her.

LAURA

What is her problem?

SCOTT

A couple of years ago, her fiancée...

LAURA

(interrupting)

Whatever. Nobody cares.

Scott's excitement is gone and he seems to be holding himself back from saying something.

SCOTT

So...

Laura takes a sip of her water.

SCOTT

So...what brings you to town?

LAURA

I'm in the movie. Why else would I be here?

SCOTT

Oh really? You're in the movie too? I didn't know that. Who do you play?

LAURA

I play Nicole, the lead character. The bartender.

SCOTT

(laughing)

Drew Barrymore is playing the bartender.

LAURA

Wrong.

SCOTT

Since when?

LAURA

Don't you read Daily Variety?

SCOTT

Daily what?

LAURA

Drew Barrymore dropped out like a week ago. Me! I'm the star!

Scott is completely caught off guard. He looks over at Dennis who overheard the whole thing. Dennis shrugs his shoulders.

Laura takes her glass of water, wiggles off her seat and dances her way to the jukebox.

Scott hurries over to Dennis.

SCOTT

What's going on?

DENNIS

I talked to Victor, but he didn't mention it.

SCOTT

Can you call him please?

DENNIS

And say what?

SCOTT

You're friends with the man! You named your bar after him! He'll listen to you.

DENNIS

Victor helped me buy this place twenty years ago. I'm not going to complain about anything. Be thankful he's shooting his movie here at all. What's it matter who the star is?

Scott points at Laura as she selects songs from the jukebox.

SCOTT

That girl is trouble. She will ruin the movie and she'll ruin this bar. My bar.

DENNIS

You're over-reacting.

Alison wipes tears from her eyes as she walks out of the bathroom. She passes by Laura at the jukebox and they exchange dirty looks.



Alison stops by Scott and Dennis on her way behind the bar.

ALISON  
You can wait on her.

Scott looks at a large black-and-white picture of a middle-aged man hanging a bit crooked on the wall. It is autographed with the name "Victor Cashman."

SCOTT  
Is he in town yet?

DENNIS  
I think so, but I still haven't heard from him.

Scott straightens the picture as we fade out on a close-up of the smiling man.

INT. HOTEL CORRIDOR - NIGHT

VICTOR CASHMAN, a slick Hollywood producer in a suit, holds a bottle of wine in his hand. He pounds on the door as if he has been waiting for someone to answer.

Finally, the door creeps open. Victor looks both ways down the hallway, then sneaks in.

INT. SOPHIA'S HOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

SOPHIA closes the door behind Victor. He makes himself comfortable on the bed, then looks around.

VICTOR  
Your daughter's not here, is she?

SOPHIA  
No, she went down to that bar to do some "research" on her part.

VICTOR  
At a bar?

SOPHIA  
Stop it, Victor.

Sophia sits next to him on the bed.

VICTOR  
And she's by herself?

SOPHIA  
She's doing good. She has a sponsor now and goes to meetings. AA is working wonders for her.

VICTOR

I don't want any trouble. She better behave herself.

SOPHIA

She'll be fine. She wants this to work. She needs this for her career.

VICTOR

And if she goes over the edge? I heard about what happened last month in Bel Air.

SOPHIA

Yes, she had a little incident, but she's back on track.

VICTOR

I will pull the plug. I swear. I can replace her with one phone call.

Sophia covers his mouth with her hand.

SOPHIA

(removing her hand)  
There won't be a problem. Okay?  
(with a sexy smile)  
Can we talk business over breakfast?

Sophia snatches the bottle of wine out of Victor's hand while he unbuttons his trousers.

INT. VICTOR'S BAR AND GRILL - NIGHT

Scott stands by Dennis while Alison continues to bartend. She tries her best to ignore Laura, but notices that Laura is obsessively staring at her.

Finally, enough is enough, and Alison smacks the bar right in front of Laura, startling her. It gets the attention of most of the patrons, especially Scott and Dennis.

ALISON

What are you staring at? Do you have a problem?

Scott stays put, unsure what to do.

LAURA

I'm watching you bartend because I am playing a bartender in this movie. It's my job.

Alison purposely knocks over Laura's glass, spilling water all over her lap.

LAURA (CONT'D)

What the...?

ALISON

There's your first lesson. That's how you spill a drink on somebody you don't like.

LAURA

You stupid bitch!

Scott quickly intervenes and pulls Alison aside.

SCOTT

Alison, how about you call it a night?

ALISON

Yeah. Good idea. I'm out of here.

Scott pats her on the back as she exchanges one more dirty look with Laura. Alison grabs a few things and quickly hurries out the door.

Laura lets out a sigh of relief as Scott places a new glass of water in front of her.

LAURA

Thank god. It felt like "Night of the Living Dead" in here. You should seriously fire her.

SCOTT

Watch it. She's my sister and after tomorrow...

LAURA

(interrupting)

Can you take down the Drew Barrymore sign?

Scott waits, then reluctantly reaches up and tears down the "Welcome Drew Barrymore" sign. It drops to the floor as Laura claps her hands.

Something clicks in Scott's head. A fuse is lit. A bomb is ticking.

SCOTT

How's your father?

LAURA

What?

SCOTT

Is he producing your movie?

LAURA

What's that supposed to mean?

SCOTT

He got you on TV, on his shows.  
It's good to be the princess.

LAURA

I had to audition for those parts!

SCOTT

The lines for auditions were fake.  
You already had the part.

LAURA

I worked hard on those shows! I  
paid my dues!

SCOTT

Bartending is a real job. No limo.  
No craft services. No agent. Just  
a day's work.

(tossing a washcloth at  
her)

Why don't you come over to this  
side of the bar and do your  
research? No, you might mess up  
your manicure.

Laura reaches across the bar and grabs Scott's arms,  
pulling him right across the bar, over her seat and onto  
the floor. Her glass of water shatters.

Laura pulls Scott to his feet.

LAURA

You've got nothing to say now, do  
you?

Scott is still in shock that she pulled him to the other  
side of the bar that quickly.

She follows with a right hook to his face.

Dennis jumps out of his chair and stands between Laura  
and Scott, who clenches his mouth. Other customers  
gather.

DENNIS

Get out!

Laura points to the door while looking at Scott.

LAURA

You heard the man!

DENNIS

Not him! You! Leave now!!!

Laura swings her arm around, causing Dennis to flinch, but only grabs her purse.

LAURA

Fine. This place is a dump anyway.

Laura throws her purse around her arm, runs her hand through her hair, then takes one last look around the bar, ending on Scott.

Laura takes the first step to leave, but she slips on the water from the broken glass and hits her face on the edge of the bar. Scott rushes to help her, but Laura pushes him away.

As tears stream down Laura's cheek, she turns and runs out of the bar.

The remaining customers erupt with applause, while Scott returns to work, clearly shaken. Dennis notices a cell phone lying on the floor. He picks it up.

INT. SOPHIA'S HOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

Victor and Sophia make strange noises, but are hidden beneath the covers of the bed.

Suddenly, the door to the room flies open and Laura bursts in, crying hysterically. She slams the door behind her and drops to her knees.

LAURA

Mommy!

Victor and Sophia stop moving beneath the covers.

LAURA (CONT'D)

Mom?

SOPHIA

(from under the covers)  
Not right now, Laura! Go back to your room. We'll talk in the morning.

Laura punches the floor in a temper tantrum.

LAURA

Now!

SOPHIA

How did you get a key to my room?

LAURA

The front desk knew who I was. I  
would have called you,  
but...but...

(more crying)

I left my cell phone at the bar.

Sophia peeks her head out from under the covers.

SOPHIA

Oh my god, Laura, have you been  
drinking?!

LAURA

No!

Laura pulls herself together and climbs onto the bed, but  
quickly realizes there is someone else under the covers.  
She backs away.

LAURA (CONT'D)

Who is that?

Victor pops his head out from under the covers.

LAURA (CONT'D)

Victor?

VICTOR

Hi Laura.

Laura kicks the bed.

LAURA

Mom! What are you doing?! God!

SOPHIA

We're not having this conversation  
again, Laura. What happened to  
your face? Did you get into a  
fight?

VICTOR

(to Sophia)

The first shot is Monday and she  
has a black eye.

Laura covers her face and runs out of the room. Victor  
and Sophia look at each other, stunned.

VICTOR

She's going to need a lot of  
makeup to cover that.

SOPHIA

We'll deal with this in the  
morning.

Sophia disappears under the covers, then pulls Victor under with her.

INT. HOTEL RESTAURANT - MORNING

Victor and Sophia are fully, and very nicely dressed as they share breakfast at a small table in the hotel's restaurant.

VICTOR

She's here one night and already caused trouble. I'm having an anxiety attack here, Sophia, you told me...

SOPHIA

(interrupting and very loud)

I can't watch her twenty-four hours a day.

(much calmer)

I have to go back to LA.

VICTOR

No! You're her manager! Manage her!

SOPHIA

I have other clients, deals to make, contracts to sign. You know this. I can't stay here with her. I'll talk to Laura. We'll make it work.

VICTOR

She needs a full-time manager. I have work to do. I can't produce this picture and babysit your little darling.

SOPHIA

Then get somebody who will!

VICTOR

I already planned on it.

Victor tries his best to regain his composure and goes back to eating his breakfast.

EXT. BANK - MORNING

Scott is dressed in a suit. He carries a briefcase with him as he enters the bank.

INT. HOTEL ROOM - MORNING

Laura, in pajamas, sleeps on the bed of her luxurious hotel suite. A spoon and melted pint of ice cream lie next to her.

Knock. Knock. Knock.

Laura doesn't move. The knocks continue. Then the knocks turn to pounding on the door.

She flinches, slowly sits up, and looks around in a daze.

LAURA  
Who is it?

She jumps up.

SOPHIA (O.S.)  
Laura, it's me. Open the door!

VICTOR  
And Victor...

Laura briefly freezes in a panic, then runs over to the mirror and stares at her face.

LAURA  
Oh no...

She grabs some makeup off the dresser and makes an attempt at smearing it over the scratches, but it doesn't work.

VICTOR  
Laura, we don't have all day.

Laura looks at the clock, then back in the mirror. She wipes the makeup off.

LAURA  
Coming...

Laura hurries to the door, then stops. With the flick of a switch, tears roll down her cheek.

She cries louder and moans as she opens the door. Victor rolls his eyes at her as he slips into the room.

Sophia immediately hugs her.

SOPHIA  
Oh you poor thing! What happened?!

Victor slams the hotel door.

VICTOR  
I'm sorry, Laura. You're a wonderful girl, but this film is important to a lot of people. You



just got out of rehab. You need more time to adjust. Go back home and get some rest.

LAURA  
You're firing me?! I wasn't even drinking yet!  
(to Sophia)  
Mom! Do something!!!

Sophia doesn't know what to do as Victor turns for the door.

LAURA (CONT'D)  
Victor! Wait! Please!

Victor pauses, and without Laura seeing, he winks at Sophia.

LAURA (CONT'D)  
Just give me a chance.

VICTOR  
If we work this out, you're going to have to follow some rules.

LAURA  
Whatever it takes.

VICTOR  
You're getting a manager.

LAURA  
Mom is my manager.

SOPHIA  
I'm going back to LA, honey.

LAURA  
Mommy!

SOPHIA  
We're going to get you help.

LAURA  
Help?

VICTOR  
A bodyguard. Somebody to help you get through the day.  
(pause)  
Now...I'm going over to the bar to do some damage control.

LAURA  
No!

VICTOR  
What did you say to me?

LAURA  
(in a more polite, softer  
voice)  
Can we film it somewhere else? I  
don't like it there.

VICTOR  
Laura, I believe in you. So I need  
you to believe in me. Let me  
produce and I'll let you be the  
star. Are we on the same page?

Laura is speechless as Victor opens the hotel room door.

LAURA  
Victor! Wait!

VICTOR  
What?

LAURA  
If you're going to that bar, can  
you get my cell phone? I left it  
there last night. I'm sure someone  
found it. I need it soooooo bad.

VICTOR  
For you, my dear, anything.

Victor smiles at Laura, then at Sophia and leaves the  
room.

EXT. BANK - MORNING

Scott sits in his car expressionless. He repeatedly  
punches the dashboard, then finally starts the car.

INT. VICTOR'S BAR AND GRILL - MORNING

Dennis removes stools from atop the bar and arranges  
them. As he places the last seat down, Scott walks in,  
still wearing his suit and carrying the briefcase.

Scott hangs his head, tosses his briefcase onto the bar  
and takes a seat in the corner. Dennis waits for a  
response.

DENNIS  
Well?

Scott takes a very long, deep breath.

SCOTT  
They turned me down.

Dennis looks disappointed, then sits down next to Scott.

DENNIS  
Did they tell you why?

SCOTT  
Not enough collateral. The house  
isn't enough.

DENNIS  
I have another buyer, Scott.

SCOTT  
Can you give me some time to come  
up with more money?

DENNIS  
Four weeks. That's the best I can  
do. That gives you until the movie  
crew leaves.

We hear the sound of a door opening.

VICTOR (O.S.)  
Hey! Where is everybody?!

Scott and Dennis turn around to see Victor standing in  
the doorway. Dennis climbs out of his seat as Victor  
approaches.

DENNIS  
Victor!

VICTOR  
Dennis!

They shake hands as Scott looks back and forth between  
Victor and his picture on the wall.

DENNIS  
This is my manager, the future  
owner, Scott.

VICTOR  
Nice to meet you Scott.

SCOTT  
Good to finally meet you. I love  
your movies, sir. "Deer in  
Headlights" was awesome.

They shake hands.

DENNIS

Thanks again for bringing the production here. It means a lot to me, and the whole community.

VICTOR

This is my hometown. Besides, you did name the place after me. How could I film a movie about a bar somewhere else?

(pointing fondly at a bar stool)

My first beer was in that seat right there.

DENNIS

How are things going?

VICTOR

Actually, I heard you had a little trouble with Miss Summer last night.

SCOTT

Did she really replace Drew Barrymore?

VICTOR

There's no guarantees in show business.

DENNIS

I hope last night didn't affect your decision to film here.

VICTOR

No, not at all. But I was hoping you could do me a favor. I need help.

DENNIS

Sure. Anything.

VICTOR

A bodyguard. Someone to watch over Laura. I'm in a bind here.

Scott and Dennis look at each other.

SCOTT

Are you serious?

VICTOR

Absolutely. I need someone to keep her out of trouble, get her to the set, keep her from harming herself. More like babysitting.

SCOTT

My sympathy goes out to whoever takes that job. She's a piece of work.

Victor hands Scott a business card.

VICTOR

If you think of someone, give me a call. We are budgeted for this. It's very good pay.

Scott suddenly perks up.

SCOTT

How much money are you talking about?

VICTOR

I don't know. Like a couple grand a week.

DENNIS

Excuse us Victor.  
(to Scott)

How much more cash do you need for the loan?

SCOTT

They told me I was short by about twenty grand.

DENNIS

(to Victor)  
Is that in the budget?

VICTOR

Depends. I need assurances, and you must be reliable.

DENNIS

Scott's been my best employee for years. Never calls out. Never late.

SCOTT

I'm your guy Victor. I can do this.

Victor looks like he's about to decline, but he looks at Dennis and senses the urgency.

VICTOR

Done. It's a deal.

SCOTT

Can you give me some kind of guarantee? She wasn't exactly

friendly with me. I don't think she'll go for this.

VICTOR

She has no say. I do the hiring and the firing.

SCOTT

Count me in. How hard can it be?

Scott shakes Victor's hand.

INT. SOPHIA'S HOTEL ROOM - DAY

Sophia tosses some clothes in a suitcase as Laura watches.

LAURA

Mom, I don't understand why you can't stay.

SOPHIA

Honey, we've been through this over and over again.

LAURA

I'm bored. I don't know anyone here.

SOPHIA

Not for long. Victor already hired the bodyguard for you.

LAURA

(shocked)

He did? That was fast!

SOPHIA

He's sending him to pick you up at six for dinner. You'll be meeting Victor somewhere. Don't be late.

LAURA

Who is it? Do you know? Is he from LA? Is he hot?

SOPHIA

I don't know anything about him.

LAURA

Please don't tell Tony.

SOPHIA

Why would I do that? You said he was out of the country anyway.

LAURA  
(frowning)  
Tony would freak out if he found  
out about this.  
(smiling)  
What should I wear?

SOPHIA  
Behave yourself.

LAURA  
I'll try.

SOPHIA  
And Victor said he picked up your  
cell phone and will send it with  
the bodyguard.

LAURA  
Thank god. I need to call my  
psychic.

SOPHIA  
And don't forget to pick your  
brother up from the airport  
tomorrow.

LAURA  
Ricky?

SOPHIA  
Didn't I tell you? Jimmy has a  
small cameo for him in the film.

LAURA  
Mom! This is my movie! Mine! And  
I'm trying to stay sober. He  
drinks like a fish. He'll ruin  
everything!

SOPHIA  
Be nice to your big brother. He's  
trying very hard, just like you.

Sophia closes her suitcase and plants a kiss on Laura's  
cheek.

INT. HOTEL LOBBY - NIGHT

Scott walks through the hotel lobby with a cell phone and  
a single rose.

He stops at the elevator.

INT. HOTEL CORRIDOR - NIGHT

Scott finds room 217, takes a deep breath and knocks on the door.

We can hear someone running around the room inside, while Scott patiently waits.

The door slowly opens to reveal Laura. Her hair and makeup look like she's attending a movie premiere and she squeezed herself into a tiny, sexy black dress.

Her seductive smile lasts only a few more seconds. She squints her eyes.

LAURA

You!!!

SCOTT

Good. You remember me.

LAURA

Why are you here?!

SCOTT

Victor sent me. I'm your bodyguard.

She slams the door in his face.

We hear screams of anger coming from behind the door. But then it stops and Laura peeks out.

LAURA

Do you have my cell phone?

SCOTT

Right here.

Scott hands her the cell phone. Laura snatches it and slams the door in his face again.

SCOTT (CONT'D)

Trust me, I'm only doing this for the money.

She screams again, followed by silence. Then more screams. We can hear her talk to someone on her cell phone, but can't understand what she's saying.

Another round of silence and the door opens. After Laura gives Scott a death stare, he shows her the rose.

SCOTT (CONT'D)

I'm willing to forgive and forget if you are.

She yanks the rose from his hand, breaks off the bud, tosses it to the floor and squashes it with her high heel. She hands the decapitated stem back to him.



LAURA

Let's go meet Victor so you can tell him you're not taking the job. Okay?

SCOTT

Sorry, I need the money.

LAURA

What's he paying you?

SCOTT

Obviously not enough.

LAURA

I'll double it. Just walk away.

SCOTT

He said you would try something like this and promised to match your offer.

Laura slams the door behind them and walks briskly ahead of Scott. He tries to keep up.

INT. HOTEL RESTAURANT - NIGHT

Scott and Victor sit on one side, while Laura coldly stares at Victor from across the table.

LAURA

(pointing at Scott)

He's not even a bodyguard. Why did you pick him? How am I supposed to feel safe?

VICTOR

Here's the rules: Scott will drive you. Everywhere you go, he goes. If you must go to a bar or a club, you leave when he says. When you are out in public, you listen to him. Scott will be staying in a room right next to you. Do not leave that hotel without him.

LAURA

I don't get it. Why?

VICTOR

Because that's the only way I can trust you on this movie. Understand?

LAURA

Are you going to tell Tony about this?

VICTOR

That's your decision, but I wouldn't recommend it. I don't want that lunatic showing up here.

SCOTT

I used to be a huge Tony Steel fan. "Above Justice" and "Under Attack" were...

LAURA

(interrupting)

Nobody cares what you think.

VICTOR

Laura, you're going to be spending a lot of time with this guy, so get over it.

(stands up)

Now, I'm going to leave the two of you alone. Try your best to get along and don't kill each other.

After Victor leaves the table, Laura glances around the restaurant as if Scott doesn't exist.

Seconds later, Victor returns.

VICTOR (CONT'D)

And don't forget about rehearsal in the morning and then you have that interview on the Kidd Chris show. Don't be late for either one.

(pointing at Scott)

Make sure she's there.

SCOTT

No problem.

LAURA

I still don't understand why I'm going on that show.

VICTOR

Publicity. It's in your contract.

SCOTT

Have you ever listened to Kidd Chris?

VICTOR

No. Why?

SCOTT

She's going to need me to coach her on this. I listen to the show

and there's these games called  
"Nail..."

LAURA  
(interrupting)  
I'm not five. I can handle an  
interview.

VICTOR  
Good.  
(to Scott)  
Call me if there's a problem.

Victor finally leaves them alone and the awkward silence begins again. Laura plays with her phone as Scott taps his fingers on the table. It annoys her, so she kicks him.

LAURA  
You have no idea what you got  
yourself into.

Laura stands up to leave as Scott picks up the tab and follows.

INT. HOTEL HALLWAY - NIGHT

Scott sits in a chair strategically placed outside Laura's door. He watches her doorknob slowly turn, followed by a slight creaking of the door.

Laura, wearing a disguise in the form of a long, brunette wig and dark, wraparound sunglasses, closes the door behind her. She quickly heads down the hallway and doesn't even notice Scott, who gets up and follows her.

SCOTT  
Where do you think you're going?

Laura freezes. She turns around, lowers her sunglasses and glares at Scott.

LAURA  
For a walk. Do you mind?

SCOTT  
Sounds great. I could use some  
fresh air.

LAURA  
No, that's okay. I'll be alright.

SCOTT  
You know I have to follow you.

Laura takes a deep breath.

LAURA  
I want to go out.

SCOTT  
I thought you quit drinking.

LAURA  
I did. I just want to go dancing.

SCOTT  
We can do that. I know a place.

LAURA  
Then let's go.

SCOTT  
Nice outfit by the way.

Scott struggles to keep up with the fast walking Laura.

INT. NIGHTCLUB - NIGHT

Laura keeps herself a short distance from Scott as they walk into the nightclub. She sits in the first open seat, which conveniently doesn't have an empty one next to it. Scott stands behind her.

A DJ spins records from a booth overlooking the crowded dance floor.

SCOTT  
Let's move across the bar. There's two seats over there.

LAURA  
I'm fine right here. You can go over there if you like.

SCOTT  
I don't mind standing.

LAURA  
Would you please sit over there?

SCOTT  
No thanks.

LAURA  
I don't want people to think we're together. You know what I mean?

SCOTT  
I'll step back a few feet. Okay?

The BARTENDER approaches them.

BARTENDER  
What can I get you?

LAURA  
Club soda.

The bartender nods and starts making the drink.

SCOTT  
(sarcastic to the  
bartender)  
Nothing for me. Thanks.  
(to Laura)  
So it's going to be like this?

LAURA  
Go away. Please. Or I will.

When Scott doesn't budge, Laura grabs her soda and makes her way to the dance floor.

Scott watches as she bobs and weaves to the music into the flashing lights, then finds her groove near the center of the dance floor.

It's his job to watch her and Scott can't take his eyes off of her.

[www.backtooceancity.com/my-little-trainwreck.html](http://www.backtooceancity.com/my-little-trainwreck.html)

## WILBER THE CAT



I was just joking around with a friend when I argued that I could make a short film about anything. Minutes later, it became a challenge and I agreed to make a short film about my cat.

In January of 2008, I posted a sixteen-second clip of my cat, Wilber, where he looked at the camera and burped. Of course, it wasn't a real burp. All I did was remove his meow and replace it with a sound effect, but there was something else people fell in love with. Wilber sits like a person. He does it all the time, so it was very natural to have footage of this. The clip quickly generated a couple thousand views, which motivated me to keep working on the actual short film.

I recruited my cousin's husband, Erik Bortz, as the voice of Wilber and Vroom the Vacuum Cleaner. I did the voice of Ralph Mouse. My cousin, Sara Berret, later voiced the character of Tulip as well as some supporting characters. Sara and Erik's daughter, Ava Bortz, appeared at the beginning of every episode and yelled Wilber's name. Evil Jared Hasselhoff was kind enough to let us use his recording studio, Disgraceland, and musician Mike Mallon worked the sound board.

For music, I approached DJ Q-Ball, also a member of the rock band The Bloodhound Gang, and he provided tunes from his side project with Troy Walsh

called Federal Moguls. At the time, their entire album was available as a free download, but is only currently available for purchase in the iTunes Store. Troy Walsh also performed the *Wilber the Cat* theme song that plays at the beginning of every episode.

The following month, on February 28, 2008, I released the actual short film. I almost called it *Wilber & Friends*, but eventually settled on the self-titled *Wilber the Cat* and an internet star was born. *Wilber the Cat* got about 20,000 views in the first weekend and a special thanks goes out to Cory Williams of SMP Films who helped spread the word to his Mean Kitty fans.

Everything snowballed from there. It was a complete accident. I never expected Wilber's videos to generate millions of views on YouTube. The first episode wasn't even supposed to be an "episode," just a stand-alone short film. Once it crossed 50,000 views in the first couple weeks, I knew I had to make a second one. But how could I top the first?

I decided to make the second episode about a trip to the veterinarian. I had a feeling Wilber wouldn't cooperate, but it was worth a try. After calling several local vets, Indian Valley Animal Hospital allowed me to come in and film the episode. Dr. Trish Curran agreed to appear and the plan was to have her lecture Wilber about his weight and diet before giving him his shots. There wasn't much of a script, but some unexpected magic happened while we were there. As expected, Wilber was difficult, but we stumbled upon something that would appear in future episodes: Catnip Squirrel.

Dr. Curran gave Wilber the toy to try to calm him down. It worked, maybe a bit too much. He became obsessed with it. I never gave Wilber catnip before, so this was brand new to him. Somehow Catnip Squirrel ended up in Wilber's travel box and I found it when we got home. I called the office the next day and they told me to keep it, so I filmed more footage of Wilber and Catnip Squirrel at home and almost the entire story unfolded in the editing process.

*Wilber Goes to the Vet* was released on May 22, 2008 and featured actor Robert Romanus as the guest voice of Scar the Cat and Wilbur the Pig, a reference to *Charlotte's Web*. Erik, Sara and I had fun voicing the various animals at the vet and Stewart's Bird Farm. The video was briefly featured on YouTube and the Wilber craze continued, so I kept making new episodes. There have been a total of eleven official episodes with dozens of random videos between them.

Several episodes featured music from Parry Gripp of the band Nerf Herder. Parry is also the creator of the jingle for the annual WaWa Hoagiefest. Musician Pete Droge also gave us special permission to use one of his songs, as did many other recording artists over the years, including Lisa Loeb.

In the early days, I set up a post office box where Wilber received gifts and cards from his friends around the world. Parents often sent emails and thanked me for providing something on YouTube that they could watch with their children.

Wilber also made some famous friends, including Adam Rifkin, who wrote many popular films including Disney's *Mousehunt* and *Underdog*. Adam also directed a favorite film of mine called *Detroit Rock City*. To quote Adam, "I know house pets and trust me, Wilber is hilarious! I eagerly await each new Wilber adventure, not only to enjoy myself, but to immediately forward to all my friends." Adam can be found on Twitter at [www.twitter.com/adamrifkin](http://www.twitter.com/adamrifkin).

The series also got the attention of ICM agent Josie Freedman and I have to thank her for believing in the project. While we received serious consideration from companies like Disney and Nickelodeon, the show did not get picked up by a network. I pitched it as an animated series that would follow Wilber on adventures across the planet and even to the moon. I had one executive tell me that he thought the series was working fine just the way it was. I still hope to develop this show for a network.

Cartoonist David Magliocco created the logo for the show and programmer John Hogan coded the mobile app for iOS and Android devices. Designer Amy Reimers created the poster for Wilber's Presidential campaign.

The episodes of *Wilber the Cat* still receive lots of daily views even with no promotion or new videos and he was recently featured on the Animal Planet network and ranked as one of America's Cutest Cats. I have been waiting for my daughter to reach a point where I can include her in new videos and that day is coming soon. Stay tuned for new episodes! In the meantime, I launched a Vine channel for Wilber at [www.vine.co/wilberthecat](http://www.vine.co/wilberthecat).



[www.backtooceancity.com/wilber-the-cat.html](http://www.backtooceancity.com/wilber-the-cat.html)



## SCHOOL SPIRITS



I found early drafts of *School Spirits* dating back to the year 2000. The original title was *Student Bodies* and was intended to be a social commentary on school shootings. My mind wandered through various scenarios for a high school ghost story and after many rewrites over the years, the school shooting was entirely removed from the story. Instead, it focused on a ghost that lurked in the hallways and made contact with students when they fell asleep in class. In a nod to my earlier script *Safely Home*, I wrote the majority of *School Spirits* while repeatedly listening to a specific album: *Disintegration* by The Cure.

*School Spirits* was very close to being made. The premiere party for my last film, *A Halfway House Christmas*, was held at a local bar called Finn McCool's Tavern owned by Joseph Canazaro. Shortly after, Joe sought me out and said he wanted to finance my next film. In 2009, I showed Joe an early draft of the *School Spirits* script and he agreed to come on board as the investor and Executive Producer. Later that year, I found out I was going to be a father, so the delays were partially my fault as I focused on my family. In addition, Joe was having some health

issues and even called me from a hospital in Las Vegas after he collapsed outside of his hotel.

After my daughter was born, I shifted into gear and got the script into the hands of some actors. Just as I did with *My Little Trainwreck*, I attached actor Christopher McDonald to the project as the school principal. Shortly after, I attached actress Mischa Barton from television's *The O.C.* in the lead role which generated some publicity in the Philadelphia Daily News.

I described the film as *The Sixth Sense* in a high school and since Mischa Barton had a small role in that film, I thought it would be cool to attach Haley Joel Osment as the male lead. In an ironic twist on *The Sixth Sense*, Haley would have played a ghost, but I was unable to get the script to him.

After Joe recovered from his health issues, he asked me to be patient just a little longer while he was in divorce court over custody of his children. In the meantime, he asked me to assemble a film crew and look for locations. From day one, I had my eyes on my alma mater. I graduated from Souderton Area School District and they just built a brand new high school, which left the old building, the one that I attended, vacant and unused.

Someone from the district arranged a walk-through of the old building with me and my crew from KPhat Productions. However, the night before the tour, I received an email from the school district that they were denying me access for both the walk and the film shoot, citing liability issues. I was told this was an order straight from the district's new superintendent, Frederick Johnson.

I already had the support of various teachers and administrators, as well as the former superintendent, so it was time to formally introduce myself to Frederick Johnson. Here is the email I sent to him:

*Dear Dr. Johnson*

*My name is Eric Moyer, a graduate of Souderton High School Class of 1991. I also attended Temple University's Film School and have been pursuing a movie career since.*

*You may have heard that I was requesting access to the old high school for a movie shoot this summer. This has been in the works for quite some time, as I have talked to past and present staff including (name redacted), (name redacted), and most recently, (name redacted), who has been very helpful in the past year.*

*After speaking this week with (name redacted) and (name redacted), I understand that the district does not want anyone in the old building, let alone a*

*film crew. I know there have been break-ins and vandalism since its closure and assume its appearance is not how the district would like it remembered.*

*That said, I would still like to let you know what my intentions were, as I probably should have been in contact with you from the start.*

*Here is what I am proposing:*

*-A film shoot ranging from 1-2 weeks*

*-Compensate the district for utilities and an extra amount to be determined*

*-I would have full liability insurance and would provide documents releasing the district from all liability*

*-Would like to get several students involved (seniors) as production assistants, great for their resume*

*-Arrange a meet and greet with some students with the actors including Robert Romanus and Christopher McDonald from the popular film Happy Gilmore*

*-Designate points on the back end that would go into a trust fund to set up a Film and Media Arts scholarship for students*

*One final point I would like to make is that the story involved ghost hunters in an abandoned high school. If the building was still in very good condition, I would have used a combination of special effects and creative set design to make it look more "abandoned." Basically, nobody would be able to tell the difference between what was there and what I "set designed" regardless of the current condition of the school.*

*I would also like to add that the film would most likely get a PG-13 rating. It does not contain any sex, nudity or profanity.*

*I understand my request was denied, but just wanted to make sure you knew exactly what I was offering and trying to do.*

*I also have an interest in someday working with kids to help them film and edit videos. I know there are many budget issues right now, but would like to keep the door open should someday the district decide to expand their media electives.*

*Thanks for taking the time to consider this.*

*Sincerely,  
Eric Moyer*

And here is the email he wrote back:

*Eric,*

*Thank you for the information. I understand your sincere intentions, but the liability of having non-school individuals in the building is just too much of a risk for the district. Good luck to you in the future.*

*Dr. Frederick Johnson  
Superintendent  
Souderton Area School District  
760 Lower Rd  
Souderton, PA 18964-2311  
www.soudertonsd.org*

Joe and I couldn't believe it. That was it? Mr. Johnson did not even grant us a phone call or a face to face meeting.

Initially, Mr. Johnson claimed his denial was due to liability concerns, but Joe and I countered that our production would carry the required million-dollar liability insurance. We guaranteed, as all film shoots do, that the Souderton Area School District would not be liable for anything that occurred while filming in the location. One reporter told me that when asked what dollar amount would allow me to film there, Mr. Johnson replied there was no amount high enough and that he will never allow me in there.

Conspiracy theories were rampant. There were even rumors of homeless people living inside. I was contacted by school district employees who I didn't know, telling me, off the record, how disgusted they were by Johnson's decision. I was told that the building was not being cleaned up after the break-ins and that the conditions inside the school were "deplorable" and "embarrassing." I also learned that on the final day of classes, students were allowed to vandalize and destroy the hallways.

My opinion was that Frederick Johnson did not want anyone to see the building, let alone film inside it. I waited a few months and Johnson probably thought I gave up and quietly went away, but I started an email campaign and contacted the media. I was told that Johnson was flooded with emails in support of the film and fielded phone calls from newspaper reporters. Johnson even received some emails from celebrities.

Here is a letter from acclaimed film director Jonathan Lynn addressed to Johnson and copied to every member of the school board. The title of his email was "Precedent:"

*Dear Mr Johnson:*

*I read the article in the Reporter Online about Eric Moyer's film. It quotes you: 'A veteran school administrator, Johnson was concerned that if permission were granted for a project such as this, it could potentially open up the floodgates and cause logistical problems, such as diverting staff from their normal duties. "And then where would it stop?" '*

*What you seem to be saying is that precedent is the reason for every decision. You're saying that you can't do the right thing now because you might have to make a similar decision later, whether it is right or wrong in that hypothetical case.*

*Decisions should be made on their merits. Isn't that what you teach? Or should teach?*

*I'm also puzzled as to why the school board was not allowed to vote on this, since that is what they are elected for.*

*And I'm even more puzzled by the notion that you denied permission to film without even hearing Mr Moyer's case. Apart from the lack of due process (once again, isn't the need for due process what you teach in your schools?), shouldn't the board have the right to say 'yes' to possible income?*

*I am a film maker. My credits are below. I look forward to your reply with interest.*

*Sincerely,  
Jonathan Lynn*

Jonathan included a two-page biography that listed his credits and highlights from his career. He is the director of many popular films including *My Cousin Vinny*, *The Whole Nine Yards*, *The Distinguished Gentleman*, *Clue* and many more.

Mr. Johnson also received a letter from Pennsylvania State Representative Bob Godshall:

*Dear Superintendent Johnson:*

*I have received an e-mail from Mr. Eric Moyer pertaining to the refusal of his request to film a movie at the former Souderton High School.*

*I think it is a shame that the decision was made to turn his project down. I am sure that one staff person could have been found to accompany the film crew if that was essential. I am not sure why the school board was not involved in this*

*decision which I believe would have been a good image situation for the Souderton school system.*

*Sincerely,  
Robert W. Godshall  
State Representative  
53rd District*

Actress Alyssa Milano (*Charmed, Who's the Boss, Mistresses*) wrote this letter to Johnson:

*Dear Superintendent Johnson:*

*I recently became aware of Eric Moyer's plight to gain permission to film a movie at the former Souderton High School. I was saddened to hear that his request was denied by you and that the school board was not allowed to vote or weigh in on this decision.*

*The fact that the abandoned school is just sitting there costing tax payers' money in this down economy is heart-wrenching. Mr. Moyer offered to rent the building, cover all costs, get the students involved and even start a film and media scholarship for future graduates. Still his request was denied. I feel what Mr. Moyer is trying to do to get the kids involved is an important part of their education.*

*I hope that you reconsider and at least hear what Mr. Moyer has to say.*

*Thank you for your understanding.*

*Sincerely,  
Alyssa Milano*

Members of the community forwarded me the responses they were getting back from Johnson. Many replies had only these words, "Thanks for your input." Friends and family also sent emails, including this one from my uncle Joe and aunt Betsy, which I felt summed things up nicely:

*Still trying to prove to your students that creativity, hard work, taking a chance and commitment mean nothing if you graduate from Souderton. Again, shame on you! So sad for your district. It is, unfortunately, becoming a national story.*

Indeed, it was becoming a national story. A former classmate of mine, Michael Rubinkam, is a journalist at The Associated Press and they picked up the story from the local paper and published it around the country. Another classmate of mine, Jennifer Riley, is an attorney and offered to help out with her legal services. She found a loophole where they could not deny me the opportunity to

rent school buildings if they allowed others to do the same. However, the school district's attorney found a policy that technically excluded the former high school from rentable buildings because it was permanently closed. Everyone knew that there was no liability issue, and when pressed by the attorney, the new "official" reason for the denial was that the building was for sale and they did not want to jeopardize its potential purchase.

Around this time, a teacher and film producer in New Jersey, Frank Williams, approached his school district about filming there. They ultimately approved, but during the waiting period, I realized it simply did not look like an abandoned school. I sincerely appreciated Frank's efforts, but it was the wrong direction for the film. In addition, that school was located in New Jersey, and we would have forfeited our Pennsylvania tax credit and that did not go over too well with Joe.

Months later, it came to our attention that the SyFy network was planning to film and broadcast their own reality television show about ghosts called...*School Spirits*. It was being produced by producer Mark Burnett, who was behind the hit shows *Survivor*, *Shark Tank* and *The Voice*. Their series was about students at colleges who experienced paranormal activity. There was no real comparison to my film except in the title and I never once believed they stole my idea. However, I was working on the script of my version of *School Spirits* for years before their project was announced and I wanted to protect my right to use the title, so I enlisted the legal services of copyright attorney Joseph Maenner.

Again, I never thought they stole my idea or script. My only objective was to make the first move so they were aware of my film. I felt this would prevent them from accusing me of using their title at later date. It worked. They did exactly what I wanted them to do and distanced themselves from my project and insisted there were no similarities. Mission accomplished. I could keep the title.

The search was back on to find an abandoned school for our location. It broke my heart to think about filming at any other building, but as long as Johnson was superintendent, I didn't have a chance at Souderton. There was another local school I looked at, but just as I prepared to pursue it, something completely tragic and unexpected happened.

On the morning of January 18th, 2013, I read a breaking news story about a home invasion robbery that happened minutes away from my house. When I saw pictures of the home involved, I got chills. I was certain it was Joe's house and then reports quickly surfaced that it was a deadly home invasion. Someone was killed. I checked all the other local news websites as information slowly trickled in. Hours later, it was confirmed. The Executive Producer and investor of *School Spirits*, Joseph Canazaro, was murdered.

After the funeral, things got strange. Reports surfaced about Joe's private life and that he owed a lot of people money, including various casinos. Some estimates

had his debt at ten million dollars, but how could this be? He was living large in a million-dollar mansion. I remember seeing a Mercedes, a Lexus and a Hummer in his driveway. Something just wasn't adding up.

And then I remembered a specific time when I was at his house. We were going over some details about the film's budget and I told him that we really needed to add an extra \$50,000 for the actors. He resisted, but after I argued my point, he said something very interesting. "If you want \$50,000, I can give it to you right now. Do you want me to pull \$50,000 from the safe?" He caught me off guard and I later wondered, if he told me about the money in his safe, who else did he tell and who did those people tell? If he was able to easily remove \$50,000 from the safe, how much more was really in there? One year after Joe's murder, a newspaper article mentioned unsubstantiated rumors of a van full of cash in the garage and potential financial activity overseas, which seemed to indicate he was hiding money in various ways. I started to wonder if that was why he wanted to invest in the movie business.

Regardless of Joe's past, it doesn't change the fact that he had a long-time girlfriend and two teenage boys from a previous marriage, one of whom was home and tied up during the ordeal. Those boys lost their father and his girlfriend lost her future husband.

The killers fled Joe's house with his truck which was later found about a half hour away behind a shopping center. Eventually, police released surveillance video of the killers unloading the contents of the truck into a red 2004 to 2008 Nissan Maxima or Altima, with discoloration on the front right fender. Below is a picture of the Nissan taken from the video.



As of this writing, the murder is still unsolved. Anyone with information about the case is encouraged to contact Hilltown Police at 215-453-6011 or 267-517-9119.

Through everything, I have to thank the guys at Kphat Productions, Roy Koriakin and Joseph Hennigan. Their website can be found at [www.kphat.com](http://www.kphat.com). I was in



touch with Roy during the early days of writing the script and he always believed in the project. We had another thing in common. We both wrote films that starred our mutual friend Ryan Dunn. Roy wrote and produced the film *Living Will*. Roy also previously worked with actress Ashley C. Williams from *The Human Centipede* and I hope to cast her in a future project as well.

I'm not sure what the future holds for *School Spirits*. Since Joe's death, I rewrote the script and took it in a slightly different direction that I feel improved on the story. I hope to find a new investor to pick up where Joe and I left off, and if the old Souderton High School is still standing, well, anything is possible. Maybe the time is right for a crowd funding campaign on a website like Kickstarter or IndieGoGo.

In an interesting side note, I named one of the characters Principal Johnson long before Frederick Johnson became superintendent of Souderton School District. It was just a coincidence and was meant as a tribute to John Hughes by naming him Hugh Johnson. Here is the first act of the script for *School Spirits*.

FADE IN:

INT. HIGH SCHOOL - HALLWAY - NIGHT

The hallways are dark and quiet. Two average teenagers, JAKE and LISA, sleep on the floor in front of a locker.

Glass shatters in the distance. Jake opens his colorless eyes. No pupils, just pure white.

Seconds later, Lisa awakens, same ghostly eyes.

They disappear together.

INT. CLASSROOM - NIGHT

The moon lights a deserted classroom. A thuggish teenage boy, NELSON, carefully helps his preppy girlfriend, MOLLY, through a broken window. She carries a pillow.

Nelson weaves around the scattered desks.

NELSON

Are you sure you want to do this?

MOLLY

I told you. I'm not scared.

Jake appears in the room with them.

Nelson passes right through him like a cloud of smoke. He stumbles, coughs and struggles to catch his breath.

INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT

Nelson shakes it off as he follows Molly into the hallway. He looks up and down at the closed lockers.

Suddenly, a cell phone rings and vibrates.

INT. SECOND FLOOR HALLWAY - NIGHT

The sound of many people breathing echoes through the hall. Loud. Deep. Asthmatic. Struggling.

It's coming from Room 218, the door nailed shut with a single piece of wood.

INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT

The cell phone continues to ring. Lisa draws closer, in a trance.

JAKE

Lisa! No!

As Molly looks at her phone, the nearest locker whips open. She ignores the call for a second and takes a step back.

Combination locks spin wildly and then all of the lockers start to open and close. Papers, pencils and books fly through the air.

Nelson grabs Molly by the arm, but she pushes him away.

NELSON

What are you doing? Let's get out of here!!!

Nelson ducks back into the room where they came, while Molly stays put, embracing the chaos. Her phone continues to ring.

INT. SECOND FLOOR HALLWAY - NIGHT

The door to Room 218 shakes and the piece of wood buckles. Nails shoot out one by one, until it falls to the floor.

The door slowly creaks open as the breathing grows louder.

INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT

Molly walks into the swirling papers. The phone stops ringing. Lisa snaps out of it and backs away.

Buzzzzzz! A piercing alarm blasts through the school. It's the former class buzzer.

Jake and Lisa freeze as papers fall around Molly.

LISA  
He's coming!!!

JAKE  
We can't just leave her here!

As Jake looks around, Lisa vanishes. Moments later, a dark figure appears at the end of the hall.

Jake jumps in front of Molly, but she cannot see or hear him.

JAKE (CONT'D)  
Go! Get out of here!

As Jake looks down the hall again, the dark figure moves closer.

Jake waits as long as he can, but the dark figure steps into a beam of moonlight, his face hidden by a dark, distorted mask. Jake quickly disappears.

INT. SECOND FLOOR HALLWAY - NIGHT

The screams of the girl fill the school as the heavy breathing in Room 218 speeds up.

INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT

Molly is nowhere to be seen. Her cell phone glides across the floor.

It bounces recklessly around the corner and up a flight of stairs, where it starts ringing again.

INT. SECOND FLOOR HALLWAY - NIGHT

The cell phone shoots across the floor and into Room 218. The heavy breathing stops. The door slams shut.

FADE TO:

TITLE SEQUENCE

Newspaper clippings with various headlines: MERSHER HIGH SCHOOL CLOSES, FORMER HIGH SCHOOL BUILDING FOR SALE, FORMER MERSHER HIGH SCHOOL SOLD, SCHOOL SCHEDULED TO BE DEMOLISHED.

EXT. HIGH SCHOOL - MORNING

Overgrown grass. Patches of moss. Boarded-up windows. The entrance to the former Mersher High School reveals a real estate sign with a SOLD sticker.

Across the street, a surveyor aims a camera at the building. Several bulldozers are parked nearby.

INT. HIGH SCHOOL - LOBBY - MORNING

Jake and Lisa watch the surveyor through the window.

JAKE  
We knew this day was coming.

LISA  
How many years have we been here?

JAKE  
(confused)  
Has it been years?

LISA  
I don't even know any more.

Lisa lowers her arm until her hand touches Jake's. She clenches his hand tight.

A distant, muffled voice can be heard. Jake turns and looks.

JAKE  
There it is again. Do you hear it?

LISA  
No. What?

JAKE  
That voice.

LISA  
I don't hear anything.

JAKE  
It's coming from...

Jake disappears, followed by Lisa.

EXT. FOOTBALL FIELD - MORNING

Jake stands over a patch of dead grass on the football field.

Lisa appears next to him as he gazes out into the distance. The mysterious voice grows closer.

JAKE  
You can't hear that?

LISA  
No.

Jake takes a step forward. And then another. Suddenly, he finds himself beyond the patch of dead grass and the voice becomes clearer. It is the voice of an older woman.

WOMAN'S VOICE  
Jake. I know you can hear me.

Lisa tries to reach out to him, but she falls to the ground. She is weak and barely able to move.

Jake looks down at his feet and realizes where he is standing. He looks at Lisa as she holds her hand out to him. A cloud of smoke rises from the patch of dead grass.

LISA  
You're on the other side.

Jake looks back and forth between Lisa and where the voice is coming from.

WOMAN'S VOICE  
I love you, Jake. Follow my voice.

Jake smiles, closes his eyes and absorbs the voice.

JAKE  
It's my mom!

Jake re-opens his eyes and takes another step forward.

JAKE (CONT'D)  
I don't remember my mom, but I know it's her. I can't explain it. I just know!

Jake takes another step toward the voice as it grows louder and clearer. And another step.

For the first time, he sees a light beyond the school.

He stops and looks back at Lisa. She is disoriented and struggles to her feet.

Jake hesitates for a moment, glancing back and forth between Lisa and the light. He makes a quick decision to return to Lisa's side.

The voice abruptly stops and the light fades away.

As Jake pulls Lisa to her feet, she embraces him and they disappear together.

INT. HIGH SCHOOL - CLASSROOM - NIGHT

MISS REYNOLDS, a homely teacher in her forties, sits quietly at a desk. Jake and Lisa stand before her, as if they are students.

MISS REYNOLDS  
Are you sure?

JAKE  
Yes.

LISA  
I saw it myself. He was on the other side of the grass.

MISS REYNOLDS  
You need to keep going! See what's out there! You can bring back help!

Lisa doesn't share her excitement.

LISA  
What if he can't come back?

MISS REYNOLDS  
But what if he can?!

Jake is torn, in the middle.

LISA  
But Miss Reynolds!

MISS REYNOLDS  
No! This is a sign! They're going to tear this building down. If we don't find a way out soon...

Miss Reynolds stands up at her desk.

MISS REYNOLDS (CONT'D)  
Do you want to be trapped in a pile of...

JAKE  
(interrupting)  
I'll go.

LISA  
(shocked)  
What???

JAKE  
Miss Reynolds is right. I have to  
try, before it's too late.

Lisa takes a step back.

LISA  
I'll never see you again.

JAKE  
Don't say that!

Jake steps back up to her and and looks straight into her eyes.

JAKE (CONT'D)  
I promise I'll do whatever I have  
to do to come back for you. For  
both of you. I mean that. You have  
to believe me. There's nothing out  
there that can stop me.

Just as Jake leans in to kiss Lisa, Miss Reynolds shoots her arm between them, pointing out the window.

MISS REYNOLDS  
We have visitors.

On the street below, a man walks up the sidewalk as an old, beat-up black van slows down and parks near him.

EXT. HIGH SCHOOL - NIGHT

PRINCIPAL JOHNSON, fifties, well-dressed with a tie, approaches the black van.

CHASE, a scruffy, middle-aged man in jeans and a t-shirt, jumps out of the driver's side with the excitement of a little kid. He smiles at the school, greeting it with his eyes.

The back door slowly swings open and CRYSTAL, late twenties, stumbles out with a duffel bag. Bored and uninterested, her mind is somewhere else.

Principal Johnson greets Chase with a handshake.

PRINCIPAL JOHNSON  
Well, well, well. Chase the  
"Spirit Chaser." In person!

CHASE  
And you must be Hugh Johnson.

PRINCIPAL JOHNSON  
Great to finally meet you. My wife  
and I watched your show every

week. Shame you're not on TV anymore.

Crystal laughs.

CRYSTAL

Why don't you tell him why you got cancelled, huh Dad?

Awkward silence.

CHASE

Principal Johnson, this is my lovely daughter, Crystal. She's staying with me this summer.

Crystal sighs rudely.

CRYSTAL

(monotone)

Yay.

CHASE

Helping me out in exchange for moving back in.

PRINCIPAL JOHNSON

Well, you're going to need all the help you can get around here.

Principal Johnson glances at the school.

CRYSTAL

Ooooooh. You really think this place is haunted, don't you?

Principal Johnson steps up to Crystal, right in her face.

PRINCIPAL JOHNSON

You think we spent millions of dollars building a brand new Taj Majal high school for nothing?

Principal Johnson laughs and backs away from her.

PRINCIPAL JOHNSON (CONT'D)

You'll see...

Crystal has nothing left to say, but Chase smiles.

CHASE

If there's something in there, I'll find it.

PRINCIPAL JOHNSON

I hope so. We don't want anything following us over to the new school if you know what I mean.



Principal Johnson points to the entrance then tosses Chase a set of keys.

PRINCIPAL JOHNSON (CONT'D)

You've got two weeks before demolition. Until then, the place is yours. Do whatever you have to do.

Principal Johnson waves, then hurries down the sidewalk.

Chase notices a dark car across the street. Someone watches them from the driver's seat.

Chase acknowledges the person with a nod, then leads Crystal to the door.

INT. HIGH SCHOOL - FRONT HALLWAY - NIGHT

Chase and Crystal carry equipment into the school. Chase takes each step with awe and wonder.

Crystal couldn't care less, completely uninterested.

The dark halls. Empty lockers. Holes in the walls. Broken glass. The school is much creepier from this perspective.

Chase stops at a wall covered in graffiti. He stares intensely at its pattern of unique symbols.

Chase pulls out his camera phone and snaps a picture of the unusual markings. The flash of the camera reveals Jake, Lisa and Miss Reynolds standing behind him.

Chase walks up a staircase, as Crystal reluctantly follows.

INT. SECOND FLOOR HALLWAY - NIGHT

Chase leads Crystal to room 218, which is once again boarded-up. He pulls a screwdriver out of his bag and starts to pry the piece of wood.

CRYSTAL

What's so important about this room?

CHASE

This is where it happened.

CRYSTAL

What's "it?"

CHASE

I tried to tell you...

CRYSTAL

Dad! Just tell me what happened!

Snap! The piece of wood falls to the ground. Jake, Lisa and Miss Reynolds all watch from a guarded distance.

JAKE

They can't go in there!

LISA

They're going to wake him!

Jake runs to the door, passing through them and waving his arms. Chase and Crystal both cough.

As Crystal struggles to catch her breath, Chase quickly opens the door. Jake retreats back to the others.

INT. ROOM 218 - NIGHT

Chase enters the classroom, with Crystal a few steps behind. They both clear their throat a couple of times.

Some desks are pushed aside, others are knocked over.

Papers and books are scattered and a world globe is broken into several pieces.

The words "HELP US" are written in chalk on the blackboard.

Yellow police tape is strewn across the teacher's desk and a faded white outline of a body can still be seen on the floor.

Dozens of cell phones are piled in the corner.

Crystal stops at the body outline, then takes a step back.

CRYSTAL

Somebody died in here???

Chase grabs a nameplate off of the messy desk and shows it to Crystal. It reads, "MISS REYNOLDS."

CHASE

A teacher.

Chase smiles at Crystal as she glares at him.

CRYSTAL

Why didn't you tell me about this?

CHASE

Now you know.

CRYSTAL

Yeah, thanks.

CHASE

Don't worry about it. We've got work to do.

Chase hurries out of the classroom. Crystal lingers, and approaches the chalkboard where "HELP US" is written. She uses her hand to erase the words, leaving a big white blur of chalk.

As Crystal leaves the room, she doesn't see the man in the distorted mask standing in the corner or the words re-appearing on the chalkboard.

INT./EXT. HIGH SCHOOL - MONTAGE - NIGHT

Crystal and Chase unload various equipment from the van and place them in the second floor hallway.

The area becomes cluttered with ghost hunting gadgets, camera bags, space heaters and long, rectangular mirrors.

Then pillows, blankets and bags of food and drinks.

INT. HIGH SCHOOL - ROOM 218 - NIGHT

Chase plugs in a space heater and turns it on, cranking the dial to the hottest setting. He then opens an energy drink and pours a trail of it on the floor.

INT. SECOND FLOOR HALLWAY - NIGHT

Chase dumps the rest of the energy drink into the middle of the hallway, leaving a puddle.

Jake, Lisa and Miss Reynolds continue to watch his every move as Crystal approaches him.

CRYSTAL

What are you doing?

Chase takes the last sip of the energy drink and tosses the empty can over his shoulder.

CHASE

An old trick. They love sugar. Whatever's in that room is coming out.

Chase strategically props the long mirrors up against the wall, surrounding the puddle of energy drink.

CRYSTAL

Mirrors?

CHASE

They can't handle their own image.  
Stuns them.

Crystal tries to make eye contact with him, but he's busy making small adjustments to the mirrors.

CRYSTAL

You really believe all this?

Chase ignores her.

CRYSTAL (CONT'D)

If you don't need me anymore, I'm going to find a place to crash.

Chase places the video camera on a tripod while Crystal grabs a pillow and blanket.

CHASE

Be careful.

Crystal turns to walk away.

CHASE (CONT'D)

Hey, did you turn your cell phone off?

CRYSTAL

Yes, Dad!

CHASE

The signal messes with the equipment.

CRYSTAL

Whatever you say.

CHASE

Are you alright?

CRYSTAL

I'm fine.

Crystal flashes a fake smile, puts her headphones on and cranks up her iPod. She heads down the hallway and unknowingly passes through Miss Reynolds.

Crystal coughs lightly as she turns the corner. Miss Reynolds points in that direction.

MISS REYNOLDS

Follow her! I'll stay here and keep an eye on this one.

Jake nods, then disappears.

LISA  
What about me?

MISS REYNOLDS  
Go with Jake.

LISA  
But the mirrors...

MISS REYNOLDS  
I know. I'll be fine.

Lisa disappears.

INT. STAIRCASE - NIGHT

Once out of view, Crystal bursts into tears and crumbles to the floor.

INT. SECOND FLOOR HALLWAY - NIGHT

Chase reaches into his duffel bag and pulls out a framed portrait of a much younger Miss Reynolds. He places it on the floor between all the mirrors.

Miss Reynolds sees the picture and takes a step back.

CHASE  
(looking all around)  
Angela Reynolds. I know you're here.

Miss Reynolds opens her mouth to respond, but nothing comes out. She slips into a trance, fascinated by the photo of herself.

She takes a step forward as Chase reaches for his EVF meter, the needle fluctuating.

INT. STAIRCASE - NIGHT

Crystal stands back up and wipes the tears from her eyes. She takes a deep breath and a moment to compose herself.

She heads down the stairs, music blaring in her ears. Jake and Lisa appear behind her.

Crystal stops and looks back up from where she came, as if directly at Jake.

Crystal lowers the volume of her music.

CRYSTAL

Dad?

She waits a moment, then turns the music back up.

INT. MAIN HALLWAY - NIGHT

Crystal tosses her pillow and blanket on the floor and dances seductively to the music.

While dancing, she pulls a tiny pill out of her pocket and places it in her mouth. She grabs a small bottle of water from her purse and washes it down.

Jake and Lisa appear near the pillow and blanket.

JAKE

It's been a while since we had a sleeper.

LISA

Are you thinking about going in?

JAKE

We may never get another chance.

LISA

But last time...

JAKE

You don't have to remind me.

They follow Crystal as she dances down the hall.

INT. SECOND FLOOR HALLWAY - NIGHT

In the corner, the video camera records the hallway, its red light blinking.

Chase holds the EMF detector tightly in his hand. He spins around the hallway as the needle randomly fluctuates.

Miss Reynolds takes another step toward her picture and the mirrors.

INT. MAIN HALLWAY - NIGHT

Crystal pulls out her cell phone, goes into settings and turns the signal back on.

She sets the ringer to silent, then dials a number and paces.

CRYSTAL

(on phone)

I know its late, but call me when you get this. My dad's crazy. I don't know how much more of this I can take. I want to come home. Please.

Crystal ends the call and drops to the floor. She lies on her back and props her head up with the pillow.

The phone falls to her side as she stares at the ceiling. Her eyes get heavy with long blinks. The pill kicks in as Jake and Lisa approach.

JAKE

She's almost asleep.

Crystal's cell phone lights up. Someone is calling her, but the ringer is silent.

LISA

Her phone!

Jake looks around.

JAKE

We don't have much time.

The phone continues to ring and light up.

INT. SECOND FLOOR HALLWAY - NIGHT

Chase hears the loud classroom buzzer as Miss Reynolds stares at one of the mirrors.

INT. MAIN HALLWAY - NIGHT

Crystal is sound asleep.

JAKE

I'm going in!

LISA

You're going to be stuck there until she wakes up.

JAKE

Don't worry about me! Stay with Miss Reynolds!

LISA

No! I'm not going to let you do this again!

JAKE  
Just do it! Go!

Jake charges at Crystal. When he is several feet away, he dives head first and disappears into her.

At the same time, Crystal's phone begins to slide across the floor.

INT. SECOND FLOOR HALLWAY - NIGHT

Miss Reynolds is completely still, almost frozen. Her eyes lock with her own reflection through the mirror.

Chase follows the EMF meter right to her. He knows he has a catch.

INT. VARIOUS HALLWAYS - NIGHT

Crystal's cell phone bounces from hallway to hallway, recklessly turning each corner. The cell phone's screen is still lit from ringing and gives off an eerie glow.

INT. MAIN HALLWAY - NIGHT

Crystal walks down the hallway and passes a classroom. She sees something out of the corner of her eye and takes a few steps back.

Something draws her into the classroom.

INT. ART CLASSROOM - NIGHT

Crystal carefully steps into the cluttered classroom. Creepy artwork is everywhere. All of the desks are overturned except for one.

This particular desk has a shiny red apple sitting on it.

INT. SECOND FLOOR HALLWAY - NIGHT

Chase watches the cell phone slide across the floor. He notices something familiar about the phone and quickly realizes it is Crystal's.

CHASE  
Oh my god!

Chase drops his gear by the mirrors. Miss Reynolds continues to gaze at herself, unaware of what is happening.



CHASE (CONT'D)

Crystal!

He runs down the hallway as the cell phone enters room 218. The door slams shut while the needle of the EMF meter on the floor spins out of control.

INT. ART CLASSROOM - NIGHT

Crystal grabs the apple and looks at it for a moment as papers swirl in the background.

Just as she is about to take a bite, Jake appears in the doorway.

JAKE

Don't!

Crystal is startled and jumps back. She takes a deep breath and looks down at the apple, which is now rotten and covered with bugs. A closer look reveals a tooth where someone tried to take a bite.

The apple falls to the floor and splatters, sending hundreds of bugs crawling across the room.

Jake extends his hands to Crystal.

JAKE (CONT'D)

Please! Don't be afraid!

CRYSTAL

Who are you?

JAKE

You have to help us.

CRYSTAL

What do you mean?

JAKE

Tell people we're here. Miss Reynolds. Lisa. And me, Jake.

CRYSTAL

Miss Reynolds? You mean the teacher my dad was talking about?

JAKE

Yes!

CRYSTAL

I don't believe in...

JAKE

You will.

They are interrupted by a scream that only Jake can hear.

LISA  
(in the distance)  
Jake!

Jake turns and runs down the hallway.

INT. SECOND FLOOR HALLWAY - NIGHT

Miss Reynolds is oblivious to everything around her.

Lisa is doing whatever she can to try to free her from the mirror.

Lisa sees Jake turn the corner.

LISA  
They got Miss Reynolds! Break the mirror!

Jake hurries to the mirror she is staring into and swings at it. He seems surprised that nothing happens and tries again. Still nothing.

JAKE  
I should be able to break it! I don't know what's going on?

LISA  
Is she still sleeping?

JAKE  
What?!

LISA  
The girl! Part of you is still in her dream! You have to wake her!

Jake knows she is right. He takes another look at Miss Reynolds then heads back the way he came.

INT. ART CLASSROOM - NIGHT

Crystal is standing by the window as Jake hurries back into the room.

JAKE  
Wake up!

Crystal turns around and smiles at him.

CRYSTAL  
I didn't tell you my name yet.  
It's Crystal.

JAKE  
Just wake up! Now! Please!

CRYSTAL  
How can I wake up? I'm not even  
sleeping?

Crystal sees someone standing behind Jake. It is the man with the distorted mask. She screams.

Jake turns around, but can't see him. Only Crystal can. She moves away from the window and slides along the wall.

JAKE  
What is it? What do you see?

The man in the distorted mask takes a step toward them.

INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT

Chase finds Crystal asleep in the hallway.

CHASE  
Crystal!

He shakes her, but she is in a very deep sleep.

CHASE (CONT'D)  
Wake up!

Chase continues to shake her.

INT. ART CLASSROOM - NIGHT

As the man in the distorted mask moves closer to Crystal, she slowly disappears. Once she is completely gone, the man in the distorted mask appears to Jake.

They stare each other down for a moment, then the distorted man disappears. Jake soon follows.

INT. MAIN HALLWAY - NIGHT

Crystal suddenly wakes up and Chase gives her a hug. She is confused.

CRYSTAL  
Dad?! What's going on?

CHASE  
Things are happening.

Crystal rolls her eyes. She stands up and looks all around her.

CRYSTAL (CONT'D)  
Where's my phone?

CHASE  
Don't worry about it.

CRYSTAL  
There was a guy here. Where is he?  
Did he take it?

CHASE  
What guy?

CRYSTAL  
He said his name was Jake.

Chase stares at her for a moment, then helps her grab her things.

INT. SECOND FLOOR HALLWAY - NIGHT

Jake appears just outside the circle of mirrors to see Lisa slumped to the ground. Miss Reynolds is nowhere to be found.

JAKE  
Where is she?

Lisa can barely look up at him.

LISA  
She's gone.

JAKE  
What do you mean she's gone?

Lisa points to room 218.

LISA  
He took her.

JAKE  
Who?

LISA  
You know.

Jake punches the mirror and it shatters.

JAKE  
Miss Reynolds!

Light bulbs flicker randomly throughout the halls.

LISA  
I told you. She's gone.

As Lisa sobs, Jake looks out the window and sees the football field light up.

JAKE

There's only one thing left to do.  
It's time.

Jake holds his hand out to Lisa as Chase returns with Crystal.

EXT. FOOTBALL FIELD - NIGHT

Jake and Lisa appear at the patch of burnt grass. He looks back at the school. It looks like a lightning storm inside the building as flashes of light appear in random windows.

Jake and Lisa gaze into each other's eyes.

They hold each other. They kiss. They hug. Neither wants to let go.

Finally, Lisa pushes him away.

LISA

Before it's too late!

JAKE

I'll be back for you. I promise.  
No matter what it takes.

Jake takes one step backward beyond the dead patch of grass.

His mother's voice returns. He can hear it.

He takes a final look at Lisa, then takes one more slow step backward. And another. And then another.

Each step is a little faster. He keeps his eyes locked on Lisa until she is too far away to see anymore.

Then...

Everything fades to white.

Jake turns around and looks at the world before him, which is also white, but he sees an even brighter spot. He starts to run to it.

As he runs faster and faster, we begin to hear a heartbeat. He tumbles, drifting through the air, weightless.

Suddenly, he falls through clouds as if he is skydiving, looking up, with his arms extended outward.

He feels his heart beating, louder and louder. His pale, white skin fills with color, and we can see veins appearing on his arms and neck, as blood begins to flow.

As his lungs fill with air, he takes what feels like his first breath.

He squeezes his fists, getting stronger as he continues to free-fall through the white air.

We see the roof of a building below him. He is heading straight for it.

His body passes through the roof and continues to pass through floor after floor. His eyes are closed, and we can hear random sounds, particularly a beeping noise, which grows louder until...

Jake lands in a hospital bed, tubes connected to him, hooked up to a monitor.

He opens his eyes to see his mother, SUSAN, by his bedside. She cries tears of joy as she hugs him.

Something is very different though. Jake is slightly older, with longer hair and a beard.

[www.backtooceancity.com/school-spirits.html](http://www.backtooceancity.com/school-spirits.html)

## DAD-DAD-DADDY-O



8-9-10. August 9th, 2010. My life changed forever. Michelle Grace Moyer was born. Her initials are MGM and her sign is Leo which is cool because the mascot for MGM studios is Leo the Lion. Her birth was announced on Dan Gross' entertainment column in The Philadelphia Daily News.

Before she was born, I made a promise to myself that I would make a video of every day of her life. As a filmmaker, I have no excuse. So far, nearly five years later, I have kept my word and have over one hundred gigabytes of footage. I know Michelle may never get the chance to see every single day's video, but they are there for her, stored in dated folders. Maybe she will want to watch the day she came home from the hospital as a newborn. Or her first birthday and Christmas. Or videos of herself with relatives who are no longer with us.

I've worked very hard since she was born, sometimes juggling two jobs along with other projects like movie scripts and writing this book. There never seemed to be enough time in the day and I probably suffered from exhaustion, but everything I did was for her. No matter how difficult or odd the job was, I made sure my family was well taken care of.

This may have affected the momentum I had with my writing and directing, but now that things have settled down and Michelle is getting older, I'm determined to get it back. Michelle has inspired me in ways I can't put into words and I can't imagine what I'd be doing right now if she hadn't come into my life.

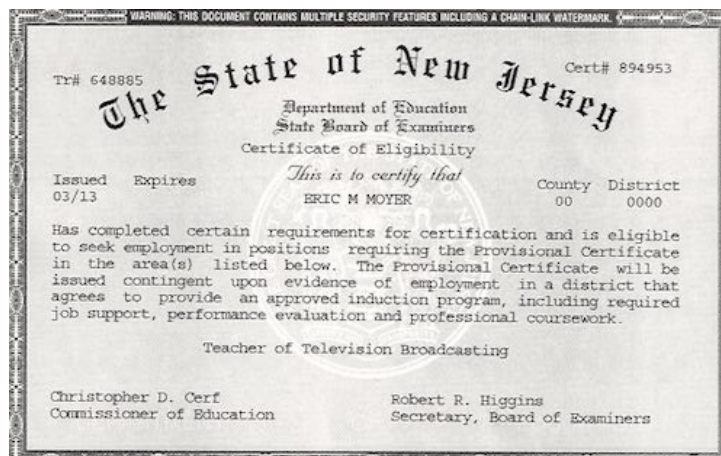
To get these daily videos for Michelle, I had to be behind the camera. I will be the voice she always hears but never sees, so these pages are for her. There will come a day when I am gone, and while there may not be much video footage of me to look at, she will always be able to pick up this book and know that I am smiling down at her. I love you Michelle Grace Moyer.



[www.backtooceancity.com/dad-dad-daddy-o.html](http://www.backtooceancity.com/dad-dad-daddy-o.html)



## ALOHA, MR. MOYER



I already mentioned Miss Picone and Frank Heying.

Mr. Ahern gave me the assignment that led to my first documentary about my grandfather called *Daddy George*. For three years in high school, Miss Wroblewski (now Mrs. Wright) helped me appreciate fine art. Mr. Kralik taught the creative writing class where I wrote a spec script for the television show *The Wonder Years*. Mr. Timmer's anthropology class led to my first short film *Stonehenge*. Professor Allan Barber showed me how to analyze film in new ways and Eran Preis helped me develop my short film *Dad Never Did Like Cats*.

Teachers played such an important role in my life that it was only natural for me to become one. No matter how successful I could ever be at filmmaking, I will always have an underlying passion for teaching. If I could somehow inspire kids the way my teachers inspired me, that is more important than writing a successful movie.

Shortly after my daughter was born, I looked into various teaching programs at local universities. Online classes were not an option when I first attended college, so the idea of going back to school became much more realistic, but I quickly found out that Pennsylvania is one of the strictest states in the country as far as the requirements for a teaching certificate. It would have cost me \$30,000 over 3 years of additional classes to get a certificate to teach in Pennsylvania.

However, with a Bachelor's Degree, it is fairly easy to get a teaching certificate in the state of New Jersey. The only stipulation is that your initial degree must be in the subject area that you want to teach, which in my case, would be video and television production.

Six months later, after spending a small amount of money on state fees and one online course, I received my Certificate of Eligibility to teach in New Jersey. I can apply for teaching jobs, but if I am hired, I will be assigned a mentor and must go through a probationary period. If I teach in New Jersey for three years, my certificate can be transferred to any other state in the country, including Pennsylvania.

Right now, I am happy with my regular job and the field that I work in. However, if the day should ever come, I have lots of ideas to bring to a school district and already have many lesson plans prepared.

Preferably for a school district near Ocean City.

[www.backtooceancity.com/aloha-mr-moyer.html](http://www.backtooceancity.com/aloha-mr-moyer.html)

## MY DENSITY



I mentioned earlier that my grandmother, Eileen Moyer, took my brother and I to see *Back to the Future* in Ocean City, NJ. The theater was called The Strand, located at Ninth and Boardwalk. In addition to her falling asleep during the movie, I'll never forget the word she used to describe the movie: slaphappy. I didn't even know what that meant! My brother recalls that she said Michael J. Fox a very nice boy.

Regardless, she is the one who took us to see *Back to the Future*, so I thought it would be neat to get a picture of my grandmother and I in front of The Strand movie theater and include it in this chapter. She recently turned ninety-four years old, but is still able to walk up and down that boardwalk with ease.

I was already there for the week, so my aunt Anne drove her down to meet us for the day. It almost didn't happen. It was rainy the day before and my grandmother wasn't sure if a day trip was a good idea. I called her up and reminded her that I was really hoping to get the picture and she promised to be there.

On September 17th, 2013, she arrived just after 11:00AM with my aunt. The plan was for my girlfriend Allison, my mom, and stepdad Al, to tag along and take as many pictures as possible of my grandmother and I in front of the theater. When we arrived at The Strand, we stood under the marquee and everyone snapped pictures with their cameras. *The World's End* and *We're the Millers* were the movies that were playing. While the historical ticket booth is still there, the entrance is now located on the side of the building. The Strand's original lobby is now rented by Rita's Water Ice.

I asked Allison to take a few pictures with me too. Once the cameras were rolling again, I looked at her and asked if she really thought this was all for a picture. I reached into my pocket, pulled out a small box and revealed a diamond ring. She never suspected a thing. My grandmother didn't even know what I was up to. She really thought she was there for a picture, which I still intended to use for the book anyway.

Allison, you are my density.

By proposing at The Strand, the *Back to the Future* connection came full circle in Ocean City.



*Allison and Michelle in Ocean City, NJ, a month after her birth.*

[www.backtooceancity.com/my-density.html](http://www.backtooceancity.com/my-density.html)

## SEE YOU AT THE FINISH LINE

There are so many dream projects I would love to work on...

A remake of *Back to the Future*? I never want to see it, but I if they insist on remaking it, I'd be more than happy to write it. The only way to relaunch the franchise is to send a modern Marty McFly back to the eighties instead of the fifties.

For some reason I've always wanted to remake the 1977 film *Rollercoaster*. I remember seeing it as a kid and it scared me, but not enough to keep me away from rollercoasters. I would love to remake the 1980 film *Midnight Madness* with Jay Baruchel as Leon. I had this really strange idea for *Commando 2* starring Alyssa Milano as Jenny Matrix, now a Navy Seal on a mission to rescue her missing father. Of course, I'd like to make my summer beach movie, whether it is *A Halfway House Summer* or an original idea I have like *Senior Week*. Oh yeah, and *Airplane 3*.

For fans of Wilber, not only do I have my pitch for the television show, I have a plan for a *Wilber the Cat* feature film.

If Lorne Michaels would give me the chance, I have a really cool idea for a film franchise that is centered around Saturday Night Live called *Die Laughing*. I might make that my next script.

In addition to a biopic about Layne Staley, I would also love the opportunity to write a movie about musician Benjamin Orr of the group, The Cars, who passed away in 2000 from pancreatic cancer.

I had a bunch of web series I started to develop. *Hangover* was a show that *School Spirits* producer Joe Canazaro and I were going to work on. We even filmed part of an episode starring Tweak Moffit from *A Halfway House Christmas*. Each episode, we planned on filming a different person getting drunk at the bar, followed by the hangover the next morning. This was long before the movie *The Hangover* came out.

*Cold Pizza* was a spoof of the Kiefer Sutherland television show *24* about a pizza delivery guy. Each episode represented one pizza delivery and all the episodes of the season added up to one night for the driver.

*Weekend at Ozzy's* was going to be a spoof of *Weekend at Bernie's* that featured heavy metal singer Ozzy Osbourne being found dead by a couple of his roadies. In the spirit of *Weekend at Bernie's*, they trick all of Ozzy's friends and relatives into believing he is still alive. Actually, the final joke was going to be that Ozzy was really alive.

I would love to work in a writer's room at a television show. While no show will ever come close to *Twin Peaks* for me, other favorite recent shows of mine include *Breaking Bad*, *The Walking Dead*, *Weeds* and *Entourage*. I was so disappointed in the series finale for *Entourage* that I edited my own alternate ending for the show and posted it online.

[www.backtooceancity.com/see-you-at-the-finish-line.html](http://www.backtooceancity.com/see-you-at-the-finish-line.html)

## WHEREVER YOU ARE, THAT'S THE PLACE TO BE

By the time you are reading this, what will have changed?

Did I find a new investor for *School Spirits*? Are there new episodes of *Wilber the Cat*? Am I teaching video production at a high school in New Jersey? Are Allison and I married yet? Do I have more children? Did someone else close to me pass away? Am I even still alive?

As I think about the endless possibilities, it brings me back to the *Choose Your Own Adventure* book *Inside UFO 54-40* and the search for Ultima.

How did I get here?

I'm not really sure how. There was no direct path, but everything I mentioned in this book played a part in how I got here. I found my Ultima. Even if I never make another feature film, that's okay, because the only movie footage that really matters to me is the daily video I make of my daughter. And nobody can ever take that away from me or give it a bad review.

I'll always remember showing Michelle the ocean. She looked at it with such awe and wonder. As she held my hand, and we looked out into the horizon, I thought about what lies ahead, not just for me, but for her. There's something special about seeing the ocean for the very first time. When Michelle is older, she can watch this video and will always remember it, every time she goes back to Ocean City.

[CLICK HERE](#) to watch the video.



[www.backtooceancity.com/wherever-you-are.html](http://www.backtooceancity.com/wherever-you-are.html)

**fin•is:** the end; the conclusion; used at the end of books, films, etc.



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You don't know how you got to this page, but you are here. At 144 feet high, you are on one of the largest ferris wheels on the east coast. You are descending into Wonderland, a place of inspiration for all ages, and can see the ocean, boardwalk and entire town of Ocean City, NJ.