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ABOVE THE LINE

An Original Screenplay
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Story
By
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&
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INT. LIVING ROOM – BLACK & WHITE – NIGHT

We are in an old movie from the 1940s. A handsome male ACTOR and a beautiful blonde siren named SHEREE are doing a dramatic scene in a living room.

SHEREE

I'm telling you, after work he stops for a drink every night in the same bar, then takes the same route home.

ACTOR

And you'd bet your life on that?

SHEREE

I *am* betting my life on it.

The Actor nods thoughtfully, then exits the living room. Sheree sits down on the couch and crosses her lovely long legs. Suddenly, Sheree gets an odd look on her face, then slowly turns and looks directly into the lens . . .

INT. MOVIE THEATER – DAY

Sitting all by himself in the front row center seat of a large old movie theater is AARON BROOKS, a handsome 29-year old man with dark curly hair. He is watching the movie and is slightly taken aback as Sheree in the movie seems to be looking directly at him. Sheree looks back toward the other room where the Actor just disappeared, then returns to looking right into the lens. She grins.

Aaron grins.

Sheree stands up from the couch, straightens her skirt and stockings, then walks forward, toward the lens. Suddenly, Sheree steps out of the screen and is actually standing on the stage in the theater, but she's still in black & white.

Aaron is amazed at the special effects. She really seems to be there.

Sheree steps forward, hikes up her skirt and seats herself on Aaron's lap, her arms around his neck. She pulls his head forward and gives him a long, luscious kiss. As Aaron's hands slide up Sheree's back and begin unzipping her dress Sheree's hand slides down to Aaron's crotch and . . .

...Aaron groans and has his orgasm. His eyes slowly open as he turns and realizes...

INT. AUTOMOBILE – DAY

...that he is in the front seat of a car bumping down a patch of bad road. Aaron gasps and coughs as he realizes that the driver is a bored-looking middle-aged MAN, seemingly oblivious to his wet dream.

Aaron glances down at his crotch.

AARON
(hesitantly)
Uh... Could we pull over at a gas station?

The man doesn't look over.

MAN
Sure.

Aaron looks out the window, blinks several times and shakes his head.

DISSOLVE:

EXT. RURAL COUNTRY ROAD – DAY

Aaron walks up the road with his backpack on. Green rolling hills surround him. He passes a sign that says, "MORRISTOWN, TENNESSEE." The sign is full of buckshot holes. Looming up from behind a hill is the parapet of a castle! Aaron's eyes light up. Soon the entire enormous stone castle is visible rising fifty feet into the air. It is three hundred feet wide.

As Aaron comes up to the castle he sees that it is just a facade, a flat, with wooden supports. A carpentry crew is pounding nails into the back securing it in place. Aaron sees a tall, blond-haired fellow, just wearing shorts, barking orders to everyone with an Australian accent. He also sees a gorgeous, dark-haired girl in tight silk shorts listening

to the orders. She turns to a another girl, a strangely scowling, very pretty blonde and says something. They all go back to work.

As Aaron banks the next hill he sees a twenty foot crane glide past with a gold Chevy Impala swinging from the end of it.

And then Aaron comes upon an entire motion picture FILM CREW—lights, trucks, lots of people, confusion. Aaron walks right into the center of it.

A thin, tall kid wearing shorts and a utility belt with a walkie-talkie steps up to Aaron. He is a production assistant, or P.A.

P.A.

Can I help you?

AARON

No thanks.

Aaron walks right past him. The P.A. steps back into Aaron's path.

P.A.

Need some help?

AARON

Nope.

P.A.

You can't go this way.

AARON

Oh yes I can.

Aaron walks right past the kid again and up to where the shooting is going on. There are thirty people, all in shorts, crowded around four cameras. At the center of everything is the crane with the Impala swinging from the end.

The director, BEN STONE, a swirling mass of energy with unruly hair and a viewfinder around his neck, runs all over the place.

The production manager, ACE, a big guy with a pot belly and a baseball cap, spots Aaron.

ACE

Bubbles. What're you doing here?

AARON

My big part's coming up.

(Ace puts his arm around
Aaron's shoulders)
How's it going?

The P.A. skulks away.

ACE
Like shit. We're behind schedule and
over budget.

AARON
So what else is new?

ACE
We're almost done. It's the only thing
that keeps me from quitting.

AARON
Yeah? Bullshit. You'll never quit.

ACE
Ain't that the truth.
(something catches his
attention)
What the fuck're you doin' there?

Ace runs off.

Aaron sneaks up behind Ben. He taps him on the opposite shoulder so he'll turn the wrong way. Ben doesn't turn at all. Aaron rolls his eyes.

AARON
Ben.

Ben turns and looks at Aaron and takes a second to recognize him.

BEN
Pal.

AARON
No, not pal. Aaron. Remember, we've
known each other since we were little
kids.

BEN
Yes, I know that. I'm just busy. What was

your name again? Just kidding. Aaron,
you made it.

AARON

I couldn't miss my big part, could I?

BEN

No way. What part are you playing, by
the way?

AARON

Knight Number Three.

BEN

(nods)

Right. That's a good part.

AARON

No dialog.

BEN

You don't need dialog to bring that
part to life. It's you.

(stands; shouting)

Everybody ready?

A chorus of "readys" and "yeahs" come back.

BEN

Okay. Roll cameras.

All four camera operators reply...

CAMERAMEN

Rolling.

BEN

One, two, three, *ACTION!*

The crane operator hits a switch, a charge on the cable holding the Chevy Impala
explodes and the car drops twenty feet. It lands in the dirt with a crunching thud.
Dust rises up around it.

BEN

(shouting)

Cut! Perfect. That's a wrap for

the day. I'm going to have a script conference with the author of this despicable piece of trash. We'll be at the hotel.

(Ben puts his arm
around Aaron)

Come on, pal. Let's go talk.

Aaron and Ben get into a car and drive away.

The P.A. turns to the gorgeous dark-haired girl in the silk shorts.

P. A.

How am I supposed to know he's the damn writer? He looks like a bum.

The pretty dark-haired girl watches the car go.

INT. BEN'S CAR - DUSK

Ben offers Aaron a cigarette. They both light up.

BEN

So, what've you been up to?

AARON

I've been hitch-hiking for the last four days.

BEN

Why didn't you fly, or take the bus?

AARON

I couldn't afford it.

BEN

What about what you got paid for the script?

AARON

Ben, that was only twenty-five hundred dollars and it was six months ago. I spent it.

BEN

Haven't you made any money since

then?

AARON

Yeah, I got a thousand bucks for a rewrite.
That's it. And that's long gone, too.

BEN

What's with all this writing anyway? I
thought you were a director.

AARON

(adamant)

I am, I think. That's all I've wanted my
whole life. I'm just trying to use the writing
as a route into directing.

BEN

Why don't you put the money together
independently like we did?

AARON

For which script? I've got that African
mercenary one, but it can't be done for
less than three million.

BEN

(shakes his head)

Naw, that's too much, it's the wrong
script. Get another idea.

AARON

I know, I know. That's part of the reason
why I'm hitch-hiking around the country—
I need a new idea.

BEN

Why don't you write another horror movie?

AARON

(desperately)

I just wrote one. I need something new to
do. Something real. Something I can believe
in and get behind. Something I can attach
myself to as director.

BEN

Horror movies sell. Particularly scary ones.

AARON

I know. The only script I've ever sold is a horror script.

BEN

And I bought it.

AARON

Right. It pays to have friends in the business. You just need to make more movies.

BEN

And hire you as director? You're going to be waiting a long time. Take my advice, write another horror movie.

AARON

(frowns)

I'll think about it.

BEN

Seeing any chicks?

AARON

(sighs)

Girls in L.A. are weird. They're basically just unfriendly. I can't figure it out.

BEN

What's to figure out, you haven't got any money. Besides, you're in Tennessee now. Here you're a big-shot Hollywood movie-maker.

AARON

(lights up)

Yeah, that's right.

BEN

You bet that's right.

EXT. LINCOLN MOTEL – NIGHT

The Lincoln Motel is an average roadside hostelry with two floors facing in toward a swimming pool.

As Aaron and Ben walk through the motel they see many crew members with "The Dead Don't Die" t-shirts, tans, work gloves, wind-blown hair and all talking and animated. Ben stops at a motel room door, and knocks.

BEN

Let's see what the producer's up to?

VOICE

(from inside)

Come in.

INT. TOM'S MOTEL ROOM

Ben and Aaron enter. They find TOM KIDD, thirty-three years old with red hair, sitting at a desk covered with papers. He is staring down at one of them.

AARON

Hiya, Tom.

TOM

(looking up)

Aaron. What brings you down here?

AARON

My big part's tomorrow.

TOM

Oh, yeah. Mine, too.

BEN

Me, too. We're all going to be in the scene together—the producer, the writer and the director.

AARON

(to Tom)

So? What're you doing?

Tom lifts a sheet of paper.

TOM

This is the cast and crew list. They're all bad people and I'm thinking of bad things to do to them.

AARON

(smiling)

Do I fall into that category?

TOM

Yes. But you already screwed me. These people are screwing me now. A contingent of the crew came to me yesterday and said that morale is low. I said, if you want morale they should go join the army.

AARON

That's very understanding of you, Tom.

TOM

I thought so. And another thing. You can't trust any southerners. They'll all stab you in the back.

AARON

Well, I'm glad to see things are going well.

TOM

As well as can be expected.

A really dynamite blonde girl steps into the room. It is SHEREE. Aaron's eyes widen in shock. It's the same girl that was in his wet dream.

BEN

Aaron, this is Sheree. She's the star. This is Aaron, he's the writer.

Sheree and Aaron shake hands and smiles at each other.

AARON

Hi.

SHEREE

Hi.

(to Tom)

I need to talk to you.

BEN

We were just leaving.

AARON
(to Sheree)
It was nice meeting you, Sheree.

SHEREE
And you.

Aaron and Ben leave.

EXT. LINCOLN MOTEL – NIGHT

Aaron and Ben walk to the bar.

AARON
I had a dream with her in it.

BEN
I've had a few myself.

EXT. GRAVEL PIT - DAY

Mayhem. Horses rearing. Dust. One hundred knights in full armor and chain mail carrying broadswords and shields are running around. Twenty horses gallop past them. In front of this pandemonium is the film crew. They are in a huge dusty gravel pit. The castle flat is visible in the distance. The action reaches a crescendo and... An ASSISTANT DIRECTOR (A.D.) speaks through a megaphone.

A.D.
Cut!

Ben lifts his visor, which has a one inch slot to see out of, and waddles over to the camera in his armor. The camera is on a crane.

BEN
How did it look?

The CAMERA OPERATOR shrugs.

CAMERA OPERATOR
It looked like mayhem.

BEN
That's what we want.

CAMERA OPERATOR
That's what you got.

BEN

Good. Let's do it again.

Aaron and Tom have their visors up. They are both in full armor, too. They are gasping for air and blinking back sweat.

A.D.

(through megaphone)

Back to one.

All of the actors and horses turn around and walk back to where they started.

AARON

I'm dying in here. I've never been this hot in my whole life. And my mom won't even know it's me.

TOM

But we will, and that's what counts. Anyway, tomorrow'll be better.

AARON

(skeptical)

Oh yeah? Why?

TOM

Because at least you'll know what you're in for.

EXT. GRAVEL PIT – DAY

Lunch is served in a big open army tent (like in "M*A*S*H"). Flies swarm everywhere. It's blazing hot.

Aaron waddles over to a shady spot beside a bus in his armor, his helmet, sword and shield in his hands. He drops all of his stuff on the ground, drops his body back against the bus and slides himself down to a sitting position. He sighs deeply and wipes his face with a bandanna.

The A.D. walks by.

A.D.

Want some salt tablets?

AARON

Yeah. Please.

He is handed two pills which he tosses into his mouth and swallows. The A.D. leaves and someone else steps up. Aaron squints at them. It's the pretty dark-haired girl with the silk shorts. Right now, however, she is just a silhouette in the glaring sun.

FEMALE VOICE

So you wrote this movie, huh?

AARON

Yeah.

FEMALE VOICE

I like your script. I read it late at night and it scared me.

AARON

Thanks.

Ben appears in his armor and sits down next to Aaron

BEN

How's it goin', pal?

AARON

Swell. I'll bet I've already lost five pounds.

The girl in silhouette slowly walks away as Aaron and Ben keep talking.

EXT. GRAVEL PIT – DAY

The cast and crew, including Aaron, are assembled in front of the castle flat. A dark-haired actor, LOREN McCAY, stands on a pedestal dressed in shredded rags, a bloody sword in his hand.

Ben addresses the assemblage.

BEN

All right, everyone. This is the big scene. This is the scene where Wilkes...

(indicating the actor
on the pedestal)

...looks into his soul and sees pure evil. This is going to be the most frightening scene ever filmed. What we are creating here is raw, grueling

terror. When the audience sees this they will be quaking in unmitigated fear. Everybody got it?

EVERYONE

Yeah.

BEN

Good. Let's shoot it.

Ben seats himself on the camera crane.

BEN

Roll sound.

A man with headphones sitting in front of a reel to reel tape recorder replies. He is the SOUND MAN.

SOUND MAN

Rolling.

BEN

Roll camera.

CAMERA OPERATOR

Rolling.

SLATE PERSON

Mark!

BEN

And... Action!

Loren looks up in anguish then drops to his knees.

LOREN

(bellowing)

Noooooo...!

The warriors and the horsemen all raise their swords, let out wild war screams and charge up the hill, past the anguished actor, toward the castle.

The camera soars into the air...

EXT. THE HOLLYWOOD HILLS – DAY

Our view is now of the Hollywood Hills and we go swooping upward. Our view stops on an apartment building perched on the side of a hill.

EXT. AARON'S APARTMENT BUILDING – DAY

Through a picture window we can see Aaron seated inside looking out.

INT. AARON'S APARTMENT – DAY

Aaron's apartment is small. On his walls are two movie posters: "THE TEXAS CHAINSAW MASSACRE" and "THE SOUND OF MUSIC." A Murphy bed is folded up into the wall.

Aaron is seated in front of a desk with a computer, monitor and printer. He is facing out the window overlooking the city of Hollywood. He is wearing gym shorts, sneakers and a University Of Michigan T-shirt. He is drinking a cup of coffee, smoking a cigarette and talking on the telephone.

AARON

(into phone)

...So what you're saying is that Paramount's passing on the script even though the coverage was great. Well, that makes just about every single studio in town that's passed on this script. I guess we could start with foreign companies. Maybe the Israelis or the South Africans might want it?

A gravely female voice responds. She is SANDY.

SANDY (O.S.)

Look, that's how it goes. Write another script.

AARON

Get me a development deal so I don't have to write on spec. I can't pay my rent.

SANDY

Development deals are very difficult to get. Write a great script and I'll get you a development deal.

AARON

(rolls his eyes)

Write a great script? What do you think I tried to do with the last one?

SANDY

It wasn't great enough.

AARON

So, who says if I spend two or three months writing another script on spec it'll be great enough?

SANDY

No one.

AARON

It's a vicious circle. Have you got any suggestions for this great script?

SANDY

Yeah. Write a romantic comedy. That's what they're looking for right now. Good characters, strong female, make it contemporary. Make it funny.

AARON

Anything else?

SANDY

Have it done by Tuesday.

AARON

Oh, sure. A romantic comedy? What do I know from romance? Why can't a subject I know come into vogue?

SANDY

Like what?

AARON

Like despair.

SANDY

Move to Sweden. See ya.

AARON

Bye.

(Aaron hangs up and
it immediately rings)

Hello?

It's the voice of Ace, the production manager.

ACE
Bubbles.

AARON
Ace, how ya doin'?

ACE
Great, and you?

AARON
I'll live.

ACE
Live until Friday night, I'm havin' a party.

AARON
Great. What's the occasion?

ACE
It's Keith Richards' birthday, man, pay attention.

AARON
Sorry, I forgot.

ACE
So you'll be there?

AARON
Absolutely. Will it be a blow-out?

ACE
Absolutely.

AARON
Far out.

INT. ACE'S LIVING ROOM – NIGHT

Aaron sits bleary-eyed in a chair in a large living room with two other people—a guy with long hair and a black leather jacket who is asleep and snoring, and a pretty blonde girl who is absolutely scowling at the floor.

Aaron is half-crocked and takes a slug of a Corona. The sound of people partying can be heard coming from the backyard. Aaron glances over at the blonde and makes a face like, "She's not bad," but she won't look up. He shrugs and looks away.

And then a really great looking girl comes walking in the front door. Long black hair, black leather jacket, black leather skirt, high heels and radiating a wildness, a drunken abandon.

She steps into the living room and scans the premises. She and the scowling blonde look right at each other, but neither says a word. They just stare. The blonde finally looks away and continues to scowl.

The dark haired girl turns her gaze on Aaron who is looking right at her. They look into each other's eyes, daring one another to look away. Slowly they both begin to grin. Aaron finally blinks, but doesn't look away.

She steps forward until she is looming over him and she's only 5'2". She swings one of her feet over his legs and is now standing directly over him, all the while holding his gaze. She slowly lowers herself onto his lap. She is CATHY ANDERSON.

CATHY

Remember me?

AARON

Sure.

She leans closer to his face, smirking.

CATHY

From where?

AARON

Marseilles, during the war. You wore blue,
the Germans wore gray.

She smiles and leans even closer. Their noses are touching.

CATHY

You have no idea.

AARON

Burton Elementary School?

She moves her face slightly back and forth, indicating "No."

AARON

(shrugs)

Who cares?

He kisses her. It's a pretty long kiss. Their lips separate, but their faces remain together.

CATHY

You still don't know who I am?

AARON

Would the kiss have reminded me?

CATHY

No.

AARON

(shrugs again)

I'll never forget you from here on out.

Cathy shakes her head.

CATHY

It was in Tennessee making the movie. I was assistant production designer. We talked when you were down there playing the warrior. Don't you remember?

Aaron is completely blank and can't hide it.

AARON

...Wait a minute, yeah, now I remember. You were wearing shorts, weren't you?

CATHY

(amazed)

You still don't remember.

AARON

There were lots of people and I was only there two days. But I'm really glad we met again. It was fate.

CATHY

I don't usually walk up to strange men at parties and sit on their laps.

AARON

You're just starting tonight?

CATHY

I want to go out with you.

AARON

Good. Let's go.

CATHY

Another night. I've got somewhere to go now.

(she glances over at
the scowling blonde,
then back)

This week.

She takes a napkin off the side table, pulls Aaron's pen out of his pocket, puts the napkin against his chest and writes while saying into his face...

CATHY

Catherine Anderson. Four-six-four oh-eight-one-one.

(she draws two stick people)

These are two people dancing.

She shows him her drawing.

AARON

It's beautiful.

CATHY

Goodbye, Aaron Brooks. See, I know your name.

AARON

Goodbye, Catherine Anderson. See you soon.

CATHY

(stands)

Call me.

AARON

I will.

CATHY

I mean it.

AARON

Me, too.

CATHY

Okay. Bye.

She turns and walks right out of the party. In her tight dress it quite apparent that she has a fine ass, too. Aaron takes a deep breath, sighs and smiles happily. He turns and the scowling pretty blonde is looking right at him.

AARON

(smiling)

How about you, beautiful. What are you doing tonight?

SCOWLING BLONDE

(she finally smiles & points)

Your pen is leaking.

Aaron looks down and indeed it's true. Cathy put the pen back in pocket the wrong way. There's a black stain on his shirt.

AARON

Oh, shit!

INT. AARON'S APARTMENT - DAY

Aaron sits at his computer staring out over Hollywood. From the table beside him he picks up the napkin with her name, number and two dancers. He picks up the phone, pauses, then quickly dials. It rings half of one time and is answered.

CATHY

(O.S.)

Hello?

AARON

Cathrine?

CATHY

Yes. Who is this?

AARON

This is Aaron.

CATHY

(surprised)

...Hi. You called.

AARON

You didn't think I would?

Aaron lights a cigarette.

CATHY

You didn't remember me from Tennessee.

AARON

Yes, well, nobody's perfect. But I did call, and rather promptly, too, I might add. So, would you like to get together?

CATHY

I already said I did. What are you doing Friday?

AARON

Going out with you.

CATHY

Listen to what it is first. It's business for me. I designed the lobby of a theater for this tribute. It's for some guy named Nunnally Johnson.

AARON

Nunnally Johnson. He's dead.

CATHY

You know who he is?

AARON

Sure. He wrote the screenplay for "The Grapes Of Wrath."

CATHY

How could you know that? Nobody knows who he is.

AARON

This isn't just my business, baby, it's my life.

CATHY

I see. So, you wanna go?

AARON

Absolutely. What time and where?

CATHY

Seven o'clock, Friday, the Music Hall on Wilshire.
You've got to wear a suit and tie.

AARON

I think I can handle that. See you then.
(he hangs up and nods)

EXT. MUSIC HALL THEATER – NIGHT

The Music Hall is a nice older theater on Wilshire Blvd. in Beverly Hills. Aaron steps in front of the theater in his suit and tie and he looks very good. There's no line and there's no one in the ticket booth. Aaron opens the glass door and goes inside.

INT. MUSIC HALL THEATER – NIGHT

The lobby is decorated in black and white. The floor is checkerboard. There are pillars and mirrors. It's done in an extravagant old Hollywood style and it's very good. A woman in an EVENING GOWN steps up to Aaron.

EVENING GOWN

May I help you?

AARON

Well, uh... I'm Cathrine Anderson's date.

The woman looks at him blankly. Aaron waves his arms about the room. The woman lights up.

EVENING GOWN

Oh, Cathy. I'll get her.

Aaron puts his hands in his pockets and strolls the length of the lobby. A man wearing a TUXEDO steps up.

TUXEDO

May I help you?

AARON

I'm Cathy Anderson's date.

TUXEDO

(eyes widening)

Oh... I'll get her for you.

AARON

A woman already went for her, thank you.

TUXEDO

(conversationally)

So, you're Cathy's date. Have you two been going out long?

AARON

Tonight's our first date.

TUXEDO

Really? That's so sweet. Well, she certainly is beautiful. And a hard worker, too. She was here all night long decorating this foyer.

Aaron turns and there is Cathy coming down the steps in a tight black evening gown, putting on her earrings. She looks really stunning.

CATHY

I just this minute finished.

AARON

You look great.

He kisses her cheek.

CATHY

Thanks.

She walks right past him and goes to where some crepe bunting isn't hanging correctly and fixes it. She then goes over to the man in the tux.

CATHY

So, we're all set then? `

TUXEDO

Completely, dear. Don't worry.

CATHY

(nods)

Right.

She crosses back to Aaron and gestures around the lobby.

CATHY

So, what do you think? Do you like it?

AARON

Yeah. You did a great job. It looks fantastic.

CATHY

Thanks. You're sweet. You look really good in a suit and tie.

AARON

Thank you. So who's going to be speaking tonight?

CATHY

Oh, let's see... Bette Davis, Lauren Bacall, Charlton Heston, people like that.

Aaron's eyes are wide.

AARON

Oh, just people like that, huh? Pretty impressive line-up.

Cathy isn't listening. She is looking outside where people in evening wear are leaving the restaurant across the street and streaming toward the theater.

CATHY

(shakes her head)

Ready or not, here they come.

INT. MUSIC HALL THEATER – NIGHT

People jam the lobby for the champagne reception. Aaron goes to the refreshment table and gets two glasses of champagne. When he returns to where he left Cathy she's not there. He looks all around but can't see her. He sighs and drinks both glasses of champagne. He feels lost.

A voice comes through the crowd.

TERRY

Aaron!

Aaron perks up and pushes his way through the people to find a tall, attractive, butch, short-haired woman named TERRY calling his name. Aaron is pleased to know someone.

AARON

Terry, hi.

Terry is standing beside a short, dour, black-haired woman. She is MAUREEN.

TERRY

Aaron, this is Maureen. Maureen, Aaron.

(they shake hands)

What are you doing here? You never go to these kinds of things.

AARON

I'm here to pay posthumous tribute to Nunnally Johnson.

TERRY

By yourself?

AARON

No, I'm actually here with a date, although where she is right now I can't say.

TERRY

(surprised)

I've never seen you with a date before. I wasn't sure you did that kind of thing.

AARON

What? Date women?

TERRY

No, date anybody. I thought you just went to the movies, hitch-hiked around, and wrote.

(to Maureen)

Aaron's a screenwriter. He just had a script produced.

MAUREEN

(interested)

Oh, really? What's it called?

AARON

"The Dead Don't Die." It's a horror film.

Maureen's interest has instantly evaporated.

MAUREEN

(flatly)

Oh.

TERRY

(grins)

Are you really here with a date? I'm not sure I believe you. Point her out to me.

Aaron looks around the crowded lobby. He finally spots Cathy talking to four men.

AARON

That's her.

TERRY

Well... She's very attractive. Is she an actress?

AARON

No. She's a production designer. I met her on the movie. She did this room.

TERRY

Well, well. Could this be something serious?

AARON

(shrugs)

This is our first date and we haven't exchanged ten words yet, so it's not real serious. She's probably wondering where I am, so...

(to Maureen)

It was nice meeting you.

MAUREEN

And you.

TERRY

(winks)

Good luck.

AARON

Thanks.

Aaron goes back to the refreshment table and gets two more glasses of champagne. He makes his way through the crowd to Cathy and the four men, all of whom are paying complete attention to her. He steps up to her.

AARON

Hi.

Cathy glances back.

CATHY

Oh, hi.

(she takes a glass of champagne)

Excuse me a second, would you, this is business.

AARON

Oh. Okay. Sure.

Cathy goes back to talking to the men. Aaron stands there, a step behind her, invisible. After a minute she turns back to him.

CATHY

Look, there's still a few things I've got to take care of.

(she hands him a ticket)

Why don't you get our seats and I'll meet you in a minute.

AARON

All right.

Cathy turns back to the men and Aaron becomes invisible again. He walks away.

INT. AUDITORIUM – NIGHT

Aaron gets a program and takes his seat. He watches as the seats fill up around him. All except the seat right next to him. He glances through the program.

The auditorium is almost entirely full now. All except the seat beside Aaron. He looks around nervously. The show's about to begin. He shrugs helplessly.

The lights go down and the tribute begins. An older man steps up to the podium and reminisces about Nunnally Johnson. He then lists off the evening's speakers: Bette Davis, Charlton Heston, Lauren Bacall, Ruby Keeler, Robert Cummings, on and on. Finally Cathy appears. She steps down the row and drops into the empty seat beside Aaron.

CATHY

I'm exhausted. I'm sorry I just left you, but...

AARON

That's okay.

CATHY

Are you having a good time?

AARON
Great. I can't wait to see Bette Davis.

Cathy takes his arm and kisses his cheek.

CATHY
You're sweet.

Aaron relaxes and glances up at the stage. He turns back to Cathy and she's asleep. Her head drops against his shoulder. Aaron sighs and watches the stage. A second later Cathy's head drops back over the edge of the seat and she starts snoring, loudly. Everyone in a ten seat radius looks at her. Aaron is embarrassed. He grabs her arm and shakes her lightly. No reponse. She continues snoring like an untuned chain-saw. Aaron is really embarrassed. He gives her a hard shake.

AARON
(sharply)
Cathy!

CATHY
(loudly)
What?
(she looks around and realizes where she is)
Oh. Sorry.

Her head stays erect for about thirty seconds, then she passes out again. Her snoring picks up where it left off. People are getting annoyed. He explains to those around him...

AARON
She was up all night.

Aaron shakes her again.

AARON
(whispering)
Cathy!

CATHY
(snapping loudly)
What, Goddamnit!

AARON
(quietly)
You're snoring.

CATHY

I was? I've got to go home to bed.

AARON

But the show's just starting. Bette Davis is going to be on. And Lauren Bacall.

Cathy nods tiredly.

CATHY

Okay, we'll stay.

Her head immediately starts to tilt over and the snoring kicks back in. Aaron grabs her and she straightens up.

AARON

Let's go.

CATHY

Really? You don't mind?

AARON

No.

CATHY

But the show's just starting.

AARON

That's okay. Let's go.

CATHY

Good.

They stand and move down, the row.

The SPEAKER from the stage says...

SPEAKER

And now, ladies and gentlemen, two-time Oscar-winner, and first lady of the silver screen... Bette Davis!

Everyone rises to their feet for a standing ovation. Cathy steps out the door into the lobby. Aaron is caught not knowing whether to stay or go. He goes.

INT. LOBBY – NIGHT

Cathy is tiredly putting on her coat. She waves her hand around the lobby.

CATHY

All that work and tomorrow it'll be gone.

AARON

(philosophically)

Satisfaction's an ephemeral thing.

CATHY

(not listening)

What was that?

AARON

Here today, gone tomorrow.

CATHY

You really don't mind leaving, do you?

AARON

No. Not at all. I've seen all of these people in the movies anyway.

CATHY

You're mad, right?

AARON

No I'm not.

CATHY

Really?

AARON

Really.

CATHY

You're sweet.

Aaron opens the door and they leave the theater.

EXT. SIDE STREET – NIGHT

They arrive at Aaron's five year old Honda Civic. He opens the passenger door and Cathy gets in. He goes around to his door, gets in and finds her asleep and snoring.

INT. AARON'S CAR – NIGHT

He starts the engine, is about to put it in gear and throws up his hands.

AARON

Cathy.

(no response—
he speaks louder)

Cathy!

Cathy is startled awake.

CATHY

Jesus fucking Christ, what do you want?!!

Aaron is shocked and taken aback.

AARON

I don't know where you live.

CATHY

Oh. I'm really sorry. Eleven twenty-three Curson
at Santa Monica. You know where that is?

AARON

Yeah.

CATHY

Good.

She goes right back to sleep. Aaron puts the car in gear and drives away.

EXT. CATHY'S APARTMENT BUILDING – NIGHT

Aaron pulls up in front of her building and stops.

INT. AARON'S CAR – NIGHT

Cathy's just snoring away. Aaron turns to her.

AARON

Cathy.

No answer. He's about to reach out and touch her and stops, but shakes his head. He turns on the radio, then slowly turns it up loud. It wakes her.

CATHY
(sleepy)

Huh?

AARON

We're here.

CATHY

Where?

She looks around.

AARON

Your house.

CATHY

Oh. Wanna come in?

AARON

I'd like to, but why don't you just go to bed.

CATHY

That's a good idea. You're probably really mad at me, right?

AARON

No.

CATHY

Yes you are. I'm sorry. It was a bad first date.

AARON

No, it was interesting. I was in the same room as Bette Davis.

CATHY

You really are sweet. Let's go out tomorrow. I know about a party.

AARON

Yeah, sure. I'd love to.

CATHY

Great. About eight?

AARON

I won't be late.

She leans over and kisses him. It's a good short kiss.

CATHY

G'night.

She gets out of the car, crosses the street and goes through a gate into a courtyard. Aaron sighs.

AARON

Man, am I sweet.

He drives off into the night.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. AARON'S APARTMENT - DAY

Aaron sits in front of his computer in gym shorts, a Bruce Springsteen t-shirt and sneakers. He is smoking a cigarette, drinking coffee, and talking on the telephone. He speaks with his agent, Sandy.

SANDY

(O.S.)

Did you get the million dollar idea yet?

AARON

'Fraid not. How about the true story of a teenaged gangster? I've been researching it. There was this kid in the thirties—

SANDY

—This is a period piece?

AARON

That's when it really took place. It's a true story.

SANDY

Could you make it contemporary?

AARON

I guess, but the depression is really the catalyst for everything.

SANDY

We're in sort of a depression now, aren't we?

AARON

I know I am.

SANDY

Keep thinking, Butch. That's what you're good at.

AARON

Great. Thanks. Bye.

Aaron hangs up. He puts his hands on his face and rubs his eyes.

AARON

All right. There's this guy... What's he doing? He's going crazy. Why? Because he can't get a great idea. When? Now. Who? Me.

(Aaron jumps to his feet)

Yes, folks, it's time to run to Oxnard.

He jogs out the door.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. CATHY'S COURTYARD – NIGHT

Aaron comes through the gate and crosses the courtyard where eight apartments face in toward each other. He stops at Cathy's apartment door and knocks. The door is answered by the pretty scowling blonde from the party. She is SHAUNA.

AARON

Hi.

SHAUNA

(yells inside)

Cathrine! Your date's here!

She turns around and walks in. Aaron pauses for a moment, then walks in and shuts the door.

INT. CATHY'S APARTMENT – NIGHT

A large dalmation puppy with enormous feet pounces on Aaron and licks him profusely. Aaron pets it.

AARON

Hi, puppy.

He tries to get it off him. It keeps jumping back up. Cathy calls from the bedroom.

CATHY

(O.S.)

I'll be ready in a sec.

Aaron turns to Shauna.

AARON

What's the dog's name?

SHAUNA

What's the difference?

This stops Aaron pretty cold.

AARON

I was going to ask your name, too, but I guess it doesn't make any difference.

SHAUNA

Shauna.

AARON

The dog or you?

SHAUNA

That depends on how you want to look at it.

AARON

If you're intimating that you're a dog, I disagree. You're very pretty.

SHAUNA

Better hurry up out here, Cathrine, he's putting the moves on me.

Aaron rolls his eyes and sits down. The dog keeps its front paws on his lap and licks his face.

SHAUNA

So...

AARON

Yes?

SHAUNA

Are you as full of shit as you look?

Aaron's being pushed too far too fast.

AARON

Are you as out of your fucking mind as you act?

SHAUNA

(smiles)

Maybe.

Shauna sits down on the couch beside Aaron.

AARON

(nods)

Have you and Cathy been friends long?

SHAUNA

We grew up together in Wisconsin. We've known each other our whole lives. You haven't answered my question.

AARON

What? Am I full of shit? I don't think so.

SHAUNA

Ah... That proves it.

AARON

Oh, good.

SHAUNA

Does anything you write have any redeeming value?

AARON

Does anything you say have any redeeming value?

SHAUNA

Do you always answer a question with a question?

AARON

When I'm getting the third degree I do.

SHAUNA

So?

AARON

So what?

SHAUNA

Does anything you write have any social, moral, or philosophically redeeming values?

AARON

...Some of it.

SHAUNA

Like what?

Aaron can't believe this is still going on.

AARON

Like none of your fucking business.

Shauna smiles, turns and calls out.

SHAUNA

He's getting mad. Maybe you should get out here. I'll talk to you tomorrow.

Shauna stands, walks to the door and leaves without looking back. Aaron takes a deep breath and shakes his head. The dog licks his face. He looks around the apartment. It's twice as large as his place. All the furniture is over by the fireplace. There is a drafting table with lots of pens and pencils in holders. There is one small bookshelf. Aaron goes over and looks at Cathy's books: "Italian Folk Tales," possibly a thousand pages long, "The World According To Garp," "Less Than Zero," an old battered copy of "Romeo And Juliet" with Juliet's part highlighted in yellow and a rock collection filling three of the four shelves. The dog stays on him wherever he goes. Aaron keeps petting it and pulling its ears over its eyes.

Cathy finally appears and, as always, looks great. Aaron stands and smiles.

AARON

Hi.

CATHY

Hi. Have you met Harold?

She steps over and pets the dog.

AARON

Not formally.

CATHY

Aaron, this is Harold. Harold, this is Aaron.

She holds out Harold's paw. Aaron shakes it. Cathy lets go of the dog and Aaron takes hold of her shoulders and kisses her.

CATHY

(murmurs happily)

Mmmmm...

He kisses her again. This time they hug each other, too. It's a long passionate kiss. Their lips part and they stand holding each other. Cathy reaches her hand into Aaron's shirt and runs her fingers through the hair on his chest.

CATHY

(growls)

Grrrr... Good enough to eat. You know, you're really handsome.

She unbuttons one button on his shirt, puts her face into his chest and licks. Aaron is getting extremely turned on. He kisses the top of her head. She steps back, takes his hand and leads him into the bedroom.

INT. CATHY'S BEDROOM – NIGHT

It's a pretty big room with a double bed. She lets go of his hand and crosses the room to the closet.

CATHY

Help me pick out a pair of shoes.

AARON

(sighs)

Sure.

She takes out three pairs and holds them up.

CATHY

Which pair do you like the best?

AARON

The ones on the right.

CATHY

Then which?

AARON

The ones on the left.

She nods, chooses the pair in the middle and puts them on.

INT. AARON'S CAR – NIGHT

Cathy and Aaron drive through Hollywood in his car, not speaking. Finally...

AARON

Your friend Shauna is really something.

CATHY

What do you mean?

AARON

I don't think she likes me.

CATHY

No. That's just her way. She likes you. She told me so.

AARON

When?

CATHY

Before you got there.

AARON

But we hadn't met.

CATHY

She knew who you were. So, what's your next project?

AARON

I don't know. I'm searching for a great idea, which is presently eluding me. Why do you ask?

CATHY

(shrugs)

Just curious.

AARON

So, whose party is this?

CATHY

A friend of mine from A.F.I. That's the American Film Institute.

AARON

No shit.

CATHY

Of course you do. You knew who Nunnally Johnson was. You know everything.

AARON

Not everything. I don't know very much about you.

CATHY

What do you know?

AARON

Well... Your name is Cathrine Anderson. You're a production designer, you're from Wisconsin—

CATHY

—How do you know that?

AARON

Shauna told me.

CATHY

Oh. Go on.

AARON

Well, let's see. You must like dogs because you have a puppy that's going to grow into a horse, you like to read Italian folk tales, you played Juliet, probably in high school, and you collect rocks.

CATHY

You know everything about me.

AARON

(grins)

Yeah, sure. Everything. What do you know about me?

CATHY

Well... You're handsome, intelligent, and everyone thinks you're going to make it big.

AARON

(shrugs)

You definitely know everything about me.

EXT. HOUSE IN THE HOLLYWOOD FOOTHILLS – NIGHT

They arrive at a house in the foothills beneath the Griffith Observatory. There's already a lot of people there.

INT. AARON'S CAR – NIGHT

Before they get out of the car Aaron leans over and kisses Cathy. She runs her fingers through his hair.

CATHY

(sighs)

You're a good kisser.

AARON

So are you.

They kiss again, lightly touching each other's faces, then get out of the car.

EXT. HOUSE IN THE HOLLYWOOD FOOTHILLS – NIGHT

Cathy leads the way up the walk to the open front door. Behind Cathy's back, Aaron quickly and deftly rearranges the hard-on in his pants before going into the party.

INT. HOUSE IN THE HOLLYWOOD FOOTHILLS – NIGHT

There's about fifteen or twenty people at the party, all between the ages of twenty and twenty-five, talking in a rather subdued manner. The host is a preppy looking fellow that's about 6'3". He is RANDY. He bends down to kiss Cathy. Aaron watches, amused.

CATHY

Aaron, this is Randy. He goes to A.F.I.

Aaron shakes Randy's hand while looking at Cathy.

AARON

That's the American Film Institute, right?

Cathy smiles. Randy is taken aback.

RANDY

Haven't you heard of it? How long have you been in LA?

AARON

Twelve years. Is it a big place? I can't believe I missed it.

RANDY

It's right over here on Western.

CATHY

(cutting in)

He knows. He's a screenwriter. He wrote the horror movie I worked on.

Randy is now suspicious, slightly offended and interested all at the same time.

RANDY

Have you written any other films?

AARON

Many. But that's the only one that's been produced.

RANDY

And you know where the A.F.I. is?

AARON

Right over here on Western. I've been there.

Randy nods, then turns to Cathy.

RANDY

So, Cathy, what're you working on now?

CATHY

I'm up for a couple of things. What're you doing?

RANDY

I'm about to do my final film. If they don't like it
I don't get into second year.

CATHY

What's it about?

RANDY

I don't know yet. I'm looking for an idea.

Aaron nods in commiseration.

CATHY

What kind of idea are you thinking about?

RANDY

I'm not sure. I don't want to do anything that's
too much, y'know? I don't want to go too far in
any direction.

AARON

Why not?

RANDY

I don't know, that's just what I think. If it goes too
far then it's too identifiable as a genre.

AARON

Personally, I'd much rather go too far than not
far enough.

RANDY

(put off)

But that's you, not me.

AARON

That's true, but you do want it to be impressive
enough to get you into your second year, don't
you?

RANDY

Yes, but I don't believe that means that I have to
make a genre piece.

AARON

I think you're putting the cart in front of the horse.
Who cares if it's a genre or not, what's the story?

RANDY

I don't know, and I don't see why you're being so antagonistic. This is a party.

(to Cathy)

So, are you still working as an assistant, or have you made the big move?

CATHY

Both things I'm up for are as an assistant.

Cathy glances at Aaron, then continues talking with Randy. They start to walk away.

Aaron walks around the party. There are clumps of people here and there, balloons and a keg in the kitchen. Aaron sees a really beautiful black girl in a skin tight suede dress talking to a huge black dude that might be a football player. No other pretty girls. Aaron gets two glasses of beer and walks up to Cathy, who is still talking to Randy and also two other guys.

AARON

Hi.

CATHY

Hi.

Cathy keeps listening to one of the guys discourse on film production—its perils and pitfalls from the point of view of a student. Aaron holds out a beer.

AARON

Here.

Cathy holds up a plastic glass filled with white wine and turns her attention back to the diatribe. The STUDENT goes on at length.

STUDENT

The most difficult aspect of production must be the lighting...

AARON

(mumbles, rolling his eyes)

Oh, Christ.

Cathy gives Aaron a quick disapproving glance, then looks back to the orator. Aaron walks away. He drinks her beer, then starts on his own. He sees the knock-out in the suede dress talking to a white punk in camouflage and a blond Mohawk that comes down his back in a pony tail. All in all the party is pretty dull.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. HOUSE IN THE HOLLYWOOD FOOTHILLS – NIGHT

It's the same dull party, just a little later. Aaron steps up beside Cathy. She is still listening to Mr. Production.

AARON
Hi.

CATHY
Hi.

She doesn't even turn around.

AARON
What's going on?

She points at the speaker, still not turning around. Aaron is shocked at her behavior. He walks away. He goes to the front door and walks out.

EXT. HOUSE IN THE HOLLYWOOD FOOTHILLS – NIGHT

Aaron walks away from the house and goes to his car.

INT. AARON'S CAR – NIGHT

Aaron opens the glove box and goes through the tapes. He finds what he's looking for.

AARON
Ah ha.

INT. HOUSE IN HOLLYWOOD FOOTHILLS – NIGHT

Back in the party, if you can call it a party, more like a gathering, Aaron goes to the stereo and puts on his tape. The box is marked, "Dance Tape." Before the music has started he cranks the volume up pretty high. He steps away from the stereo and watches.

Low rumbling bass notes fill the bottom end of the room, too low to catch anyone's full attention. Unconsciously, however, people's feet begin to tap and their hands pat out the beat on their legs. Aaron snaps his fingers. By the time Marvin Gaye breaks out singing, "Ooooh-oooh, I guess you wonder how I knew..." everyone is hooked. The big black football player dances into the room holding an imaginary microphone and singing. Aaron jumps up and just starts dancing. In two seconds ten people are dancing, including the

knock-out in the suede dress. No one is dancing specifically with anyone else, everybody with each other.

Halfway into the song fifteen people are dancing, three-quarters of the party. But not Cathy. Aaron catches occasional glimpses of her talking and drinking white wine in the other room every time he dances past the door. She sees him, too. The song ends. The KNOCK-OUT turns to all assembled.

KNOCK-OUT

It better be something good next.

AARON

(smiles)

It is.

She folds her arms and looks at Aaron, her expression: "Show me." From the stereo Aretha Franklin screams, "What'choo want? Baby, I got it! What'choo need? You know I got it! All I'm askin's for a little respect!... Just a little bit, just a little bit..." Everyone starts dancing again. The knock-out smiles at Aaron.

KNOCK-OUT

It's good.

Aaron nods and dances with her.

AARON

The whole tape is good.

KNOCK-OUT

We'll see.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. HOUSE IN THE HOLLYWOOD FOOTHILLS – NIGHT

Aaron and the knock-out are still dancing. There are still six diehard dancers with them. Aaron catches Cathy's eye and motions her to dance, but she doesn't. She just keeps drinking white wine and talking to the film students.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. HOUSE IN THE HOLLYWOOD FOOTHILLS – NIGHT

When Eddie Grant finishes singing "Electric Avenue" and the tape runs out, all that remain dancing are Aaron, the Knock-out, the football player, and a new wave white girl. They are all soaked with sweat and out of breath. Aaron puts the tape in his pocket.

FOOTBALL PLAYER

Good tape, man.

He slaps Aaron five.

AARON

Thanks.

(he turns to the knock-out)

Wanna'go outside and get some air?

She is waving her hand to fan her face.

KNOCK-OUT

Yeah.

She and Aaron step out the front door. Cathy watches from the other room.

EXT. HOUSE IN THE HOLLYWOOD FOOTHILLS – NIGHT

The Knock-out and Aaron sit down on a porch swing and enjoy the cool night air.

KNOCK-OUT

That's a wonderful tape.

AARON

Thanks.

(he holds out his hand)

I'm Aaron Brooks.

She shakes his hand.

KNOCK-OUT

Blake Whitney. Nice to meet you.

AARON

What a great name. Blake Whitney. Sounds like a character in a story.

KNOCK-OUT

(smiling)

Thank you.

Just then Cathy comes staggering out the front door. She is smashed. She sees Aaron and Blake on the swing and steps in front of them.

CATHY

Excuse me, I don't mean to interrupt.

AARON

That's all right. Sit down.

CATHY

No, no, no. I don't want to interrupt.

(Cathy leans over to confide
in Blake, although she speaks
in a normal tone of voice)

He's not my date. He's my ride.

KNOCK-OUT

Excuse me?

CATHY

He's not my date, he's my ride.

Aaron is flabbergasted, yet amused.

AARON

Really? Do you want a ride home?

She wobbles back and forth.

CATHY

Yes, please. As long as I'm not intruding.

AARON

You're fine.

(he stands and turns to Blake)

It was a real pleasure meeting you, Blake
Whitney.

She shakes his proffered hand.

KNOCK-OUT

It was a pleasure meeting you.

Aaron takes Cathy's arm and walks her down the porch steps.

CATHY

If you want to go back to the party, I'll find a
ride home somewhere.

Aaron lets go of her arm and turns around.

AARON

Okay.

Cathy wobbles by herself.

CATHY

Huh?

Aaron turns back around smiling.

AARON

Just kidding.

She smiles back. He puts his arm around her waist and holds her up as they walk to the car. She melts into his side.

INT. AARON'S CAR – NIGHT

He places her in the car. She folds her hands in her lap and looks up at him forlornly like a little girl as he shuts the door. He gets in and they drive away. They drive through Hollywood.

CATHY

I drank a lot of wine.

AARON

I saw.

CATHY

I saw you, too. You're not drunk at all, are you?

AARON

Nope. As a matter of fact I feel very awake and alert.

CATHY

You wanna go back to the party, don't you?

AARON

No. I'd rather be with you.

This surprises her.

CATHY

Why?

AARON

Because I like you.

CATHY

Really? Why?

AARON

Well... Because you like me and you're beautiful, intelligent, and sexy.

CATHY

How do you know I like you?

AARON

Because you remembered me from Tennessee and you sat on my lap and you kissed me.

CATHY

You kissed me.

AARON

Oh, that's right. Maybe you don't like me.

Aaron stops at a red light. Cathy leans over and puts her arms around his neck. She puts her tongue in his ear. She whispers right into his ear.

CATHY

But I do like you.

Cathy turns his face around and kisses him. A real hot long kiss. The light changes to green, but they don't see it. A car behind them honks. Aaron puts it in gear and drives forward. Cathy stays right next to him, licking his neck and chewing on his ear.

At the next red light she kisses him again. For the entire length of the red light. His eyes are open however and he drives ahead when it changes to green, even though they're still kissing.

EXT. OLD COLUMBIA STUDIOS - NIGHT

Aaron's Honda goes past the old Columbia Studios on Gower Street near Sunset Blvd.

INT. AARON'S CAR – NIGHT

Cathy is all over him. She's wild. She has her hand in his shirt and is squeezing his pecs. Then she slides her hand down his front and into his lap and squeezes.

CATHY

Mmmmmm...

She moans into his ear.

EXT. OLD COLUMBIA STUDIOS – NIGHT

Aaron swerves off of Gower onto Delongpre, into a red zone on the side of the street and screeches to a halt.

INT. AARON'S CAR – NIGHT

Aaron pulls up the parking brake, hits the switch lowering his seat and pulls Cathy on top of him. She has her knees on either side of him, forcing her dress to slide up. She leans forward and kisses him. Aaron has his hands on both of her stockinged thighs. He slides her dress up to her waist and slips his hands under her pantyhose so he's holding her butt. She quickly unzips his fly. With their faces right together, eye to eye, she yanks his pants and underpants down with a single move. Aaron pulls her pantyhose down until they stop against his legs. He pulls her body flat against his, then pulls her hose all the way down and off. She sits back up and reaches around behind her, repositioning herself and then she shimmies down onto him.

They both gasp. He slips his hands up along her thighs under her dress. She places her hands flat on his chest. They move together, up and down, back and forth as car lights wash over them, first one way, then the other...

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. CATHY'S APARTMENT BUILDING - NIGHT

They pull up in front of Cathy's building.

INT. AARON'S CAR – NIGHT

Aaron's hair is tousled and his clothes disheveled. Cathy is asleep. He leans over and kisses her neck. She nuzzles against him.

CATHY

Are we home?

AARON

Uh-huh.

CATHY

Wanna come in?

AARON
Can I stay the night?

CATHY
(hesitant)
Well, yeah... But I've got to get up pretty early.

AARON
That's okay. Next time.

CATHY
Yeah.

They kiss. Cathy opens the door and steps out. Aaron starts to get out and she stops him.

CATHY
I'll be fine. G'night.

AARON
Goodnight. I had an excellent time.

CATHY
Me, too. Call me.

AARON
I will.
(as she's shutting the door he says...)
Wait.

CATHY
What?

He reaches behind the seat and hands Cathy her pantyhose.

AARON
Here.

CATHY
(smiles)
Thanks. Bye.

She stuffs the hose in her purse, crosses the street and unlocks the gate. She turns back and waves. He waves back and she goes in.

Aaron glances in the rearview mirror. He sees his own reflection, hair sticking in all directions. He grins devilishly and straightens his hair a little. He puts the car in gear and starts to sing.

AARON
(singing)
High on a hill is a lonely goat-herd/
layee-yodel-ayee-yodel-aheooo...

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. AARON'S APARTMENT – DAY

Aaron sits at his computer in gym shorts, a "Raging Bull" baseball shirt and sneakers, smoking a cigarette and drinking coffee. He glances down at the napkin with Cathy's name, number and the two dancers. He whistles "The Lonely Goatherd" song. He picks up the phone and dials. He gets Cathy's answering machine. At the beep he says...

AARON
Hi, Cathy. This is Aaron. Remember me?
Last night was the highlight of my year so
far. What're you doing tonight? Let's get
together. Gimme a call at four-six-four-oh-
three-oh-two. Bye.

He hangs up.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. AARON'S APARTMENT – DAY

Aaron picks up the telephone. He is sitting in exactly the same place wearing the same outfit, but now he's got a Paramount Pictures t-shirt on. He dials, it rings, he gets Cathy's answering machine again. Aaron frowns.

AARON
Hi, Cathy, this is Aaron again. Where are
you? It's been four days. Anyway, I want
to see you again. Please call me, okay. Bye.

He hangs up and shakes his head. He finishes his cup of coffee and goes into the bathroom.

INT. BATHROOM – DAY

Aaron stands at the toilet and begins to urinate. His face twists in pain and he stops.

AARON

Jesus! It feels like I'm pissing broken glass.

After a moment of indecision he chooses pain over not peeing. He starts to urinate again and grimaces painfully.

INT. DOCTOR'S WAITING ROOM - DAY

Aaron sits in a doctor's waiting room. There are a few other people. He looks through the pile of magazines on the table beside him: "Guns And Ammo," "Sports And Field" and "Tennis Magazine." Aaron shrugs, picks up "Guns And Ammo" and begins reading a comparison report between the 9mm Baretta and the .45 caliber Colt.

From behind a little window the female MEDICAL RECEPTIONIST looks up.

RECEPTIONIST

Aaron Brooks.

(Aaron goes to the window.

She hands him a form)

Please fill this out.

(Aaron begins filling out the form)

What's the problem?

AARON

Uh... I think I have a bladder infection.

RECEPTIONIST

Is it painful to urinate?

Aaron glances back at the others in the waiting room. He can't tell if they're listening or not. He keeps his voice down.

AARON

Yes.

RECEPTIONIST

Is there a discharge?

AARON

Yes.

She nods knowingly and writes something down.

RECEPTIONIST

Doctor will be with you in a moment.

INT. EXAMINATION ROOM – DAY

Aaron is now seated in a small white examination room. He doesn't even have "Guns And Ammo" to read, so he reads the back of a box of gauze. A very serious looking black DOCTOR steps in. He leaves the door open and Aaron can see two cute female nurses standing in the hall.

DOCTOR

You do not have a bladder infection, Mr. Brooks.

AARON

Oh, good.

DOCTOR

You've got a venereal disease.

Both cute nurses turn and look at Aaron. Aaron tries to look away, but there's nowhere to look.

DOCTOR

It's called Clamydia. It's the most common and easily treatable form of venereal disease.

AARON

That's good, I guess.

DOCTOR

I'll prescribe a drug that will probably clear it up within ten days.

AARON

Okay.

DOCTOR

Do you happen to know the name of the person you got this from?

AARON

Yes.

DOCTOR

You'll have to contact them—

The two nurses are just standing there and looking at him.

AARON

—Her.

DOCTOR

Her. And anyone you've had sex with since her.

AARON

Okay. That's easy enough. Anything else?

DOCTOR

Try using a condom.

Aaron smiles weakly.

INT. AARON'S APARTMENT - DAY

Aaron sits at his computer wearing gym shorts and no shirt. He picks up a cup of coffee, looks at it and sets it back down. He lights a cigarette and dials the telephone. He gets Cathy's answering machine.

AARON

Hi, this is Aaron. We really have to talk. It's very important—

Suddenly Cathy picks up the phone.

CATHY

(O.S.)

Hi, Aaron. What is it?

Aaron is a bit taken aback that she's actually there and wasn't going to take his call.

AARON

Uh... Long time, no talk.

CATHY

Yeah. I'm really busy. What's so important?

AARON

Can I come over?

CATHY

Can't you tell me on the phone?

AARON

I'd rather not. Can I come over now?

CATHY

All right, but it's got to be quick. I've got tons of work to do.

AARON

Okay. Fine.

INT. CATHY'S APARTMENT – DAY

Aaron sits on Cathy's couch with Harold between his legs nuzzling his crotch. He pushes the dog away and he comes right back. Cathy wears her tight silk shorts and stands beside her drawing board fiddling with a pencil.

CATHY

What is it?

AARON

Why haven't you called me back? It's been a week.

CATHY

I got a job. I've been really busy. Is that it?

AARON

Yeah, well...

Aaron looks very uncomfortable. He pushes Harold away and he comes right back.

CATHY

What is it?

AARON

(hesitant)

Well... I've got a venereal disease.

That gets her attention. She stares at him with a frozen blank expression, then slaps Harold to get him out from between Aaron's legs.

CATHY

How do you know?

AARON

I went to the doctor.

CATHY

(slightly angry)
So what're you saying? That you gave me V.D.?

Her anger causes Aaron to become indignant, no longer mincing his words.

AARON
No. More likely *you* gave *me* V. D.

CATHY
Oh, yeah? What makes you say that?

AARON
Because the only time I've had sex in the last four months was with you. Can you say the same thing?

CATHY
That doesn't prove anything.

AARON
It doesn't? Three days after we have sex it's like I'm pissing razor blades. You don't think there's a connection there?

CATHY
But I don't even know that I have it.

AARON
So what do you think? I got it from my hand?

CATHY
(pissed off)
Is that why you wanted to come over? To accuse me?

AARON
(flatly)
No. I just wanted to tell you about it and suggest that you go to the doctor.
(he stands and crosses to the door)
I also wanted to know why you didn't call me back, but I guess that doesn't really matter.
(Cathy starts to say something, but stops. Aaron opens the door)
See ya later.

Aaron exits.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. AARON'S APARTMENT/ KITCHEN – DAY

Aaron is talking on the telephone and pouring boiling water from a kettle through coffee grounds into a drip coffee pot. He pours a little water, watches it drip, then pours a little more. His agent, Sandy, is speaking.

SANDY

(O.S.)

So, did you get that million dollar idea yet?

AARON

(sharply)

Let's just knock it off with this million dollar idea shit, okay? If I had it I'd be sure to call you.

SANDY

Aaron, don't panic. Relax.

AARON

Fuck relaxing! Fuck Hollywood! It's filled with little people with little ideas and right now I can't even get one of those.

SANDY

Cool out. Let's talk about something else. How's your love life?

AARON

(laughs sardonically)

You would ask that. It sucks! It couldn't be worse. Lets go back to talking ideas.

SANDY

All right fine. Shoot.

AARON

...All right. How about this—aliens come to Earth clandestinely to study us. The thing that interests them most is our dreams. And they have a way to record them. And they start selling them back on their own planet as entertainment. And they're a big hit. Our lead character is a guy who has a rotten life, but great

dreams. So, he becomes a star on this other planet.
What'dya think?

SANDY
Not bad. Write a treatment.

AARON
Okay.

SANDY
And now you've got something to do. Get to work.

AARON
Roger. Ten-four.

SANDY
Over and out.

Aaron hangs up. He pours himself a cup of fresh brewed coffee, adds a little milk, half a package of Sweet & Low and stirs it.

INT. LIVING ROOM – DAY

Aaron sits down in front of his computer and switches it on. It beeps and clicks and the monitor fades in. He takes a big slug of coffee, lights a cigarette, cracks his knuckles, poises his fingers over the keyboard, then sighs and throws his hands in the air.

AARON
I don't even remember what I pitched her.
(the phone rings)
Saved by the bell.
(he answers)
Hello?

CATHY
(O.S.)
Aaron?

AARON
(brightening)
Cathy. How are you?

CATHY
Fine. How're you?

AARON

Fine.

CATHY

How are you really?

AARON

What'dya mean?

CATHY

I mean... Medically?

AARON

Oh, that. Better. It's gone. How about you?

CATHY

Fine. I went to the women's center and they prescribed some pills and I'm taking them. Apparently, it's much harder to diagnose in a woman.

AARON

Uh-huh.

CATHY

Anyway, what're you doing right now?

AARON

Ostensibly writing, but nothing really. Why?

CATHY

Wanna go to the beach?

Aaron glances at his blank monitor, the cursor flashing.

AARON

Sure.

CATHY

Great. I'll come and get you right now.

AARON

Terrific.

CATHY

See ya in a few minutes.

Aaron hangs up. He reaches over and switches off the computer.

EXT. BEACH – DAY

Aaron and Cathy stroll up the beach with Harold on a leash. They both wear sweaters. The sky is turquoise and cloudless, seagulls caw and swoop and waves crash against the rocky breakwater. It's calm and peaceful. Harold pulls against the leash and stops every two seconds to sniff things.

CATHY

I'm sorry I've been so mean to you over the last week, I just wasn't sure I wanted to get involved.

AARON

But we're already involved.

CATHY

I know. You see, I just broke up with a guy I was going with for over a year.

AARON

The Australian production designer from the movie?

CATHY

Yeah. How do you know?

AARON

It's not a secret. Everybody on the movie knew, and I know everybody on the movie.

CATHY

Oh, yeah, right. Well, anyway, it ended very badly. He turned out to be a real creep.

AARON

What happened?

CATHY

Well... Among other things, he slept with my best friend who happened to be my assistant. How am I supposed to handle that?

AARON

Dump him. Get rid of him. It wasn't meant to be.

CATHY

But how do you know if something's meant to be?

AARON

I don't. But I guess you know when it's not meant to be.

Cathy steps up to the water's edge. She watches the waves slide up to her toes, then roll back.

CATHY

Like us?

AARON

What'dya mean?

CATHY

I mean, maybe we weren't meant to be. We sure got a sign.

Aaron waves his hand.

AARON

Anything that ten pills can cure can't be that big a deal.

CATHY

That's one way of looking at it.

AARON

Sure it is.

Aaron picks up a stick and begins drawing in the wet sand. He writes, "Cathy + Aaron" and draws two stick figures dancing. She smiles. He puts his arms around her and hugs her. Cathy and Aaron kiss. Two lone figures on a vast empty beach. Harold tugs at his leash.

CATHY

But history just keeps repeating itself.

AARON

It doesn't have to, not if we don't want it to. We're the masters of our own fate.

CATHY

(smiles)

Are we?

She takes Aaron's hand and leads him toward the scrubby hills that run parallel to the beach. They begin following a little path into the hills.

AARON

Where are we going?

CATHY

I know a secret place.

Aaron's eyes widen. This has happened before. It's just like his wet dream in the car.

EXT. HILLS – DAY

Cathy leads Aaron to a grassy open area not visible from the beach. Cathy sits down and pulls Aaron down beside her. She lets go of Harold's leash and he wanders a few steps away. She takes off her sweater revealing a tight, semi-transparent cotton tank top beneath. Her nipples are visible through the sheer material. She lays the sweater on the ground behind them. Aaron takes off his sweater revealing his "Raging Bull" baseball shirt. He lays his sweater beside hers. They lean back and kiss. After a moment of passionate kissing and groping, Cathy reaches down and begins undoing Aaron's jeans.

AARON

Aren't you a little bit concerned?

CATHY

Uh-uh. We both have so many antibiotics in us that nothing impure could survive.

Aaron pulls off her tank top exposing her perfectly proportioned breasts. He brings his mouth to one of her nipples and runs his tongue over it. She reaches both hands into his open jeans.

EXT. BEACH – DAY

Harold runs as fast as he can up and down the beach by himself, the leash trailing behind. He stops every now and then to challenge the crashing waves, then runs off.

White foamy salt water covers "Cathy + Aaron" and the two dancing stick figures in the sand. As the water recedes the sand is washed clean.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. AARON'S APARTMENT – DAY

Aaron sits on the couch talking on the telephone. As always, he's talking to Sandy.

AARON

You know, Maybe I could write a romantic comedy now.

SANDY

(O.S.)

Oh, Really? What makes you think so?

AARON

I don't know. I just feel like I understand it now.

SANDY

You're in love. I can hear it in your voice.

AARON

(shrugs)

Maybe I am. I sure feel good.

SANDY

It's certainly a pleasure to hear you this way. How's the science fiction story going?

AARON

What science fiction story?

SANDY

The one with the aliens and the dreams?

AARON

Oh, that. I haven't written a word.

SANDY

Then get on it. Or get on this romantic comedy.

AARON

Right. Talk to you tomorrow.

Aaron hangs up and there is a knock at the door. He opens the door and it's Cathy. She looks worried and forlorn. Aaron is very happy to see her.

AARON

Cathy! What a surprise. I'm so glad you came over.

CATHY

(flatly)

Can I come in?

AARON

Of course. Welcome to my humble abode. You've never been here before. Let me show you around.

(he leads her into the apartment)

This is the living room, office, and bedroom and that...

(he points)

...is the kitchen. What'dya think? Spacious yet compact, huh?

CATHY

I'm pregnant.

The wind goes right out of Aaron's sails. He stands at the center of the room utterly depleted.

AARON

What?

CATHY

I'm pregnant. I just got back from the doctor. It's for sure.

Aaron's mouth hangs open. His arms dangle limply at his sides. He looks like he's had a lobotomy.

CATHY

Don't get too happy.

AARON

(stuttering)

I... I... I...

CATHY

Yeah?

AARON

I don't know what to say.

CATHY

That's obvious. You could say, "Let's keep it."

AARON
(shocked)

What!?

CATHY
I guess not. Don't worry about it, I've already scheduled an abortion. It's next Tuesday at eleven A.M. Will you drive me? I hate to bring this up, but it's going to be three hundred dollars. Will you pay half?

AARON
Of course. I'll pay the whole thing.

CATHY
That's not necessary. Could I get it now?

AARON
Yeah. I'll have to write you a check, though.

CATHY
That's fine.

Aaron gets his checkbook. He writes out a check and hands it to her. She puts it in her pocket. Aaron reaches out to touch her arm and she pulls away. She turns and walks to the door.

CATHY
Thanks.

AARON
Hey, wait a minute. That's it?

She turns and faces him.

CATHY
Aaron. Some things were just never meant to be. This is one of them.

She opens the door and leaves. Aaron slowly lowers himself into his desk chair. He glances at the flashing cursor on the monitor. After a moment he reaches over and switches the computer off. The cursor disappears.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. CATHY'S APARTMENT BUILDING – DAY

Aaron pulls up in front of Cathy's apartment.

INT. AARON'S CAR – DAY

He glances at the digital clock on the dashboard. It's 10:30. He steps out into the warm sunshine and crosses the street.

EXT. CATHY'S COURTYARD – DAY

When he arrives at her apartment door he finds a note taped there. It says, "Aaron, Shauna is driving me. Cathy." Aaron's eyes grow steely. He tears the note from the door.

AARON

Unfuckingbelievable!

He crumbles the note and throws it on the ground. He hears Harold bark inside the apartment.

AARON

Adios, Harold.

Aaron walks away.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. HIGHLAND AVENUE – DAY

Aaron and Ben, both wearing soaked sweats, jog up the palm-lined median at the center of Highland Ave. in Hollywood. They pass many other joggers. Most of them wear walkmen, oblivious to the world.

AARON

...And then I get to her apartment and there's a note on the door that says Shauna drove her. Can you believe that?

BEN

Yep.

AARON

(surprised)

You can? How?

BEN

'Cause I worked with her for twelve weeks. She's

probably still caught up on Patrick Foley.

AARON

(he shakes his head)

She's only treated me like shit, but I can't stop thinking about her. And she really turns me on.

BEN

Maybe she wasn't really pregnant. Maybe she just needed the money.

AARON

(shocked)

What?

(waves his hand)

Naw, she makes way more money than me and she works all the time. Besides, I offered to pay the whole thing and she only took half.

BEN

Ya know, it's actually pretty funny. You have sex twice, and the first time you get the clap, and the second time she gets pregnant. It might make a good script.

AARON

You think so? Doesn't it seem kind of heavy and depressing?

BEN

Make it funny.

AARON

But she's not a very likable character.

BEN

I don't know that she has to be. I mean, she is beautiful.

AARON

(frowns)

It still seems depressing.

BEN

So give it a happy ending.

AARON

But it doesn't have a happy ending.

BEN

So make it one. This isn't a documentary.

Aaron considers this.

INT. AARON'S APARTMENT – DAY

Aaron is on the telephone listening.

CATHY

(O.S.)

Hi, this is Cathy. I'm not home right now and I may never return, but please leave a message anyway. Bye.

AARON

Hello, Cathy. Remember me? We met on the set of "The Dead Don't Die." Well that same motion picture happens to be premiering next Friday. Would you like to go with me? I'm hoping that this may actually compel you to call me back this time. So, uh, I'll talk to you later. Bye.

He hangs up.

EXT. THE PARAMOUNT THEATER – NIGHT

On the marquee of the Paramount Theater on Hollywood Blvd. it reads, "KROQ Radio presents THE DEAD DON'T DIE, World Premiere." In front of the theater is a KROQ van, a KTLA van, two spotlights, and an ambulance. Waiting at the door is a long line of extreme-looking punks and bikers. There are also people dressed like zombies, people with fake cuts, people covered with fake blood, people with fake cleavers and knives stuck in them. A TV video crew is going through the line interviewing people.

A limousine pulls up in front of the theater. Everyone in line turns and watches as Tom, the producer, wearing a tuxedo, gets out of the limo with a woman in an evening gown. A voice comes through the P.A. system.

ANNOUNCER

(O.S.)

Just arriving is Thomas Kidd, producer of "The Dead Don't Die."

The people in line clap rather halfheartedly. The limo drives away.

EXT. SIDE STREET – NIGHT

The limo turns down the side street beside the theater. It stops and picks up Loren McCay, the dark-haired star of the movie, who is also wearing a tuxedo, and his girlfriend. The limo then goes around the block.

EXT. PARAMOUNT THEATER – NIGHT

The limo pulls up in front of the theater.

ANNOUNCER

Now arriving is Loren McCay, star of "The Dead Don't Die."

The punks, bikers and zombies clap twice as hard for Loren. He waves as he goes into the theater. The limo drives away.

EXT. SIDE STREET – NIGHT

The limo picks up Ben and Sheree, the blonde female star. Ben is also wearing a tuxedo.

EXT. PARAMOUNT THEATER – NIGHT

The limo pulls up in front of the theater.

ANNOUNCER

And now, Ben Stone, the director, and Sheree Williams, the star of "The Dead Don't Die."

Everyone in line is clapping, whistling and screaming. Ben bows to them and his glasses drop out of his pocket, hit the cement and break.. He scoops them right up, takes Sheree's arm and escorts her into the theater.

EXT. SIDE STREET – NIGHT

Aaron and Cathy watch as the limo approaches. Aaron wears a big-shouldered white suit. Cathy wears a very sexy tight black dress with sections of the midriff cut out and black and white polka dot high heels that look like Harold.

CATHY

Is this necessary?

AARON

It's the opening of my first movie.

CATHY

It seems silly.

AARON

Life is silly. Why not give the people what they want?

CATHY

I really want to talk to you after the movie. Could we go out by ourselves somewhere?

AARON

There's a party afterwards.

CATHY

(nods)

Yeah. Of course.

They get into the limo.

EXT. PARAMOUNT THEATER – NIGHT

The limo pulls up in front of the theater.

ANNOUNCER

And finally, Aaron Brooks, the writer of "The Dead Don't Die."

The people in line scream and applaud. One PUNK turns to another and says loudly.

PUNK

Who's gonna pull up next? The extras and the grips?

Aaron and Cathy smile expansively as they enter the theater.

INT. PARAMOUNT THEATER – NIGHT

They are greeted by Ben, Tom, Loren, Sheree and the other two women. Everyone kisses and shakes hands and slaps each other on the back. Tom turns to Aaron.

TOM

How come you're not wearing a tuxedo? Ben, Loren and I are.

AARON

I bought this suit and I've never had a chance to wear it.

As the people stream in, Loren sits behind a table and signs posters and gives them away. The poster, which is on the wall behind Loren, is of him with a skull instead of a head. Several people comment, "It looks just like you."

Aaron is stopped by the production assistant from the beginning who tried to stop him from getting on the set.

P.A.

You're Aaron Brooks, right? You wrote this film. Congratulations.

AARON

Thanks.

INT. AUDITORIUM – NIGHT

The filmmakers all sit in the same row, halfway down. They are joined by several other members of the crew, including Ace, the production manager. The theater is filled to capacity. Ben stands up in front of the audience and they quiet down.

BEN

Thank you for coming to the world premiere of "The Dead Don't Die."

(applause)

What you are about to see is the ultimate experience in grueling terror. For those of you with weak hearts we have supplied, free of charge, an ambulance to take you directly to the cardiac ward at the hospital. I hope none of you have just eaten, that way you won't have anything to lose. And now... The Movie!

The audience clap and cheer. The lights go down and the film begins.

On screen: The title, "The Dead Don't Die," appears in red on a black background. The letters drip down like blood. Fade in on Loren. He is wandering alone through the woods. The ground beside him cracks open, a hellish red light glows and noxious fumes spew out and engulf him. When the smoke clears he is possessed with evil—he howls in pain, his forehead grows and throbs with a pretty good bladder effect, his teeth sharpen to points and steam begins pouring out of his ears.

The audience begins to howl with laughter, whistling and hooting.

On screen: Loren begins repeatedly pounding his own head against a tree. The audience can't stop laughing. It's like they're watching a slapstick comedy. Aaron, meanwhile, is amazed at the response the film is getting. He keeps looking at the people all around him convulsed in hysterical laughter. He turns to Cathy and she is scowling. She whispers in Aaron's ear.

CATHY

What's going on?

Aaron shrugs.

DISSOLVE TO:

On screen: At the end of the movie, Loren stands on the pedestal in front of the castle, dressed in rags, a bloody sword in his hand, surrounded by all of the extras and horses in armor, and looks into his soul and sees pure evil.

The audience thinks this is the funniest thing of all.

On screen: All of the warriors go charging up the hill toward the castle. The shot swoops into the air taking in the full expanse of the scene and fades out. The credits roll.

The audience stands and applauds, cheering and whistling. Cathy has a truly awful expression on her face. She turns to Aaron.

CATHY

Let's get out of here.

AARON

Don't you want to see your name in the credits?

CATHY

No!

She stands and Aaron follows her out into the lobby.

INT. LOBBY – NIGHT

Cathy shudders.

CATHY

I feel like I've been raped. I feel soiled and dirty.

AARON

What are you talking about?

CATHY

(really intense)

What do you mean what am I talking about? I thought this was supposed to be a horror film. A scary movie. They laughed all the way through it. It turned out a fucking comedy! And I'm completely sure that most of those laughs were not intended! Did you write it as a comedy?

AARON

No, but—

CATHY

—But nothing! They were laughing at us! This is the most humiliating night of my life.

AARON

But the audience loved it.

CATHY

Who cares? If you mean one thing and they think you mean something else, it's a failure!

At that moment the auditorium doors swing open and the sound of applause and cheering fill the lobby. Cathy winces. Aaron shrugs.

AARON

It sure doesn't sound like a failure.

The video camera crew is waiting as Ben, Tom, and Loren, all in their tuxedos, step into the lobby. The camera, a bright light and a microphone are shoved in their faces. They have dazed expressions. The INTERVIEWER asks...

INTERVIEWER

This is the funniest horror parody I've ever seen.
What inspired you?

Ben, Tom and Loren all look at each other in bewilderment. Tom and Loren look mortified. Ben smiles.

BEN

Well... When we decided to make the film a parody, we thought to ourselves, what're the funniest aspects of horror films? And that's what we got.

INTERVIEWER

This could be the comedy sleeper of the year. What do you think?

BEN

Well... What we intended to make was a true comedy, a pure comedy, a comedy of grueling terror.

Cathy is disgusted. She turns and walks out of the theater. Aaron watches as Ben, Tom and Loren, three long-stemmed glasses of champagne in their hands, toast for the camera. Aaron heads outside.

EXT. PARAMOUNT THEATER – NIGHT

Cathy is waiting beside the spotlights and the ambulance.

CATHY

(sneering)

They're very light on their feet.

AARON

At least Ben is.

CATHY

They could use this ambulance to take away the people that laughed themselves to death.

AARON

Hey! Worse things could've happened. They could've just sat there completely bored. They didn't. They had a good time. That's why they go to the movies.

CATHY

You're as bad as them. It's all rationale, excuses and lies.

(she walks away and Aaron follows)

Take me home.

AARON

What about the party?

CATHY

Fuck the party!

Aaron grabs her shoulder and turns her around.

AARON

What's wrong with you?

CATHY

(shakes her head)

I'm sorry. I overreacted. I just wasn't expecting that.

AARON

(angry)

What the hell is going on? Why are you acting like this?

CATHY

(frowns)

You don't know what I went through.

AARON

Went through about what?

CATHY

Maybe you don't recall, but I had an abortion two weeks ago.

AARON

And that's why you don't like the movie?

CATHY

(a pause)

I saw Patrick again. A couple of times, actually. We slept together.

AARON

(sarcastically)

I hope for your sake he's seen a doctor.

CATHY

Aaron, I just don't want to see you anymore.

Aaron's face drops.

AARON

Ever?

CATHY

I don't know about ever, but not for a while. It didn't work, can't you see that? We sleep together twice

and get the clap and I get pregnant. This relationship didn't work in a monumental way.

AARON

Only if you say so. If we say we have a chance then we have a chance.

CATHY

Then we don't have a chance. We crashed and burned. And that's all there is to it.

EXT. CATHY'S APARTMENT BUILDING - NIGHT

Aaron's car pulls up and stops.

INT. AARON'S CAR – NIGHT

Aaron and Cathy sit for a moment in silence. She reaches for the door handle.

AARON

Kiss me one more time.

CATHY

What's the point?

AARON

The point is that I asked you to kiss me one more time.

CATHY

I don't think it's a good idea.

AARON

(intense)

I don't care what you think is a good idea anymore!

He grabs her by the shoulders, pulls her to him and kisses her. And keeps kissing her. In a moment she starts kissing him back and brings her hands up around his neck. When they finish, Cathy runs her fingertips over his cheek and lips.

CATHY

Goodbye, Aaron.

AARON

Goodbye, Cathy.

Cathy opens the door and leaves. Aaron watches her cross the street and go through the gate.

SLOW DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. INTERNATIONAL CREATIVE MANAGEMENT – DAY

International Creative Management is located in a squat, ugly, ten story building on Beverly Blvd. in Beverly Hills.

INT. ICM LOBBY – DAY

Aaron sits on a couch in the reception area reading Variety. On the list of fifty top-grossing films "The Dead Don't Die" is listed at number fourteen. Aaron smiles and shakes his head.

A dark-haired woman of thirty wearing baggy pants and a sport coat comes walking in the front door. She sees Aaron, smiles and walks over. This is finally SANDY.

SANDY

Aaron.

Aaron drops the Variety and stands.

AARON

Sandy. Just the person I wanted to see.

They take each other's hands and peck each other on the cheek.

SANDY

What are you doing here? I mean, we didn't have an appointment I missed or anything, did we?

AARON

Uh-uh. I came to pitch you a story.

SANDY

Fabulous.

They step into the elevator.

INT. ELEVATOR – DAY

Sandy pushes ten.

SANDY

Your film is really doing well.

AARON

Number fourteen in the country. Not too shabby for a low-budget horror movie. Have you seen it yet?

SANDY

Yeah. I caught it at a midnight show on Hollywood Blvd. The audience screamed with laughter the entire time. You never told me it was a comedy.

AARON

(grins)

I wanted to surprise you.

SANDY

You did.

INT. SANDY'S OFFICE – DAY

The office is ten by twelve, has a good view of smoggy south LA and has a metal shelf covering the entire east wall completely filled with screenplays with their titles written in black magic marker on the bindings. Aaron's eyes automatically search out and find, "The Dead Don't Die." Sandy putters around with some papers on her desk, then abruptly looks up.

SANDY

So, what have you got? Shoot.

AARON

All right. It's a romantic comedy.

SANDY

(lighting up)

Fabulous.

AARON

It's about this guy who falls in love with a beautiful girl, but she's still hung up on her old boyfriend. Anyway, when they finally have sex, she gives him the clap...

(Sandy's eyebrows go up)

...They somehow get past that, have sex again and she gets pregnant...

SANDY

This is kind of heavy stuff.

AARON

It's contemporary.

SANDY

(skeptical)

Well... It could be good. It depends on how it's written.
Let me see the pages when you start it.

Aaron grins, opens his briefcase and takes out a script.

AARON

It's finished.

Sandy takes the screenplay with an impressed look on her face.

SANDY

Well, well, well, we've been a busy little beaver,
haven't we?

AARON

Absolutely.

Sandy looks at the cover page.

SANDY

"Above The Line." That's a pretty good title.
(she flips to the last page)
One hundred and ten pages. That's perfect.
(she sets it on a pile of scripts
on her desk)
I'll read it and let you know what I think.

AARON

Terrific.

Aaron stands and picks up his briefcase.

SANDY

You're the kind of client an agent loves—self-
motivated.

AARON

That's me.

INT. AARON'S APARTMENT – NIGHT

The lights of LA twinkle outside his window. He sits in front of his television set watching "The Bridge on the River Kwai" on video. Alec Guinness and Sessue Hayakawa follow a wire that's covered with sand. It leads around a corner to a plunger where a blond boy waits with a knife.

The phone rings. Aaron shrugs and freeze-frames on William Holden screaming, "Kill him!" Aaron answers the phone.

AARON

Hello?

SANDY

Aaron. This is Sandy. I just finished "Above The Line."

AARON

(eagerly)

Yeah? So?

SANDY

I didn't like it very much.

Aaron's smile fades.

AARON

Really? How come?

SANDY

Well, it's about Hollywood. Everyone knows that Hollywood stories don't sell. No one's interested.

AARON

But everyone's interested in Hollywood. I've always been interested in Hollywood.

SANDY

But no one in Hollywood is. They work all day in the business, they don't want to come home and have to read about it afterward.

AARON

Really? And I thought this was the best script I'd ever written.

SANDY

Some of the dialogue is very good, particularly with the agent. Did you have a tape recorder going while we were talking?

AARON

But you don't think you can sell it?

SANDY

I'll send it out to a few places. We'll see what the coverage is like. But first, one suggestion.

AARON

Okay. Shoot.

SANDY

His character is fine. I feel like I need to know more about her. What does she want?

AARON

I don't think she knows what she wants.

SANDY

Then maybe some more background. An intimate detail. Something from her childhood in Pennsylvania, maybe.

AARON

But I don't know any intimate details from her childhood.

SANDY

You're a writer. Make one up.

AARON

(shrugs)

All right. I'm really surprised you don't like it.

SANDY

I'm glad I can still surprise you. Talk to you later.

AARON

Bye.

Aaron hangs up. He puts his chin in his hand and thinks.

AARON

An intimate detail, eh?

He picks up the telephone and dials. In two rings he gets Cathy's answering machine. He frowns and hangs up. He thinks for another second, then picks up his phone book, finds what he's looking for and dials the phone.

AARON

Hello, Shauna? Hi, this is Aaron Brooks. Remember me?

INT. AARON'S APARTMENT – NIGHT

Aaron is dressed nicely and is just ready to leave when there is a knock at the door. He opens it and there stands Shauna—knee high leather boots, tight jeans, tight t-shirt—she's a hot babe, even if she is always scowling.

AARON

(surprised)

What're you doing here? I was just leaving to pick you up.

SHAUNA

I decided I wanted to see where you live.

She steps in past Aaron and begins walking around.

SHAUNA

Where's the bedroom?

Aaron points at the door in the wall.

AARON

This is the bedroom, and the living room, and the office.

Shauna lowers the bed from the wall, then pushes it back up.

SHAUNA

Where do you keep your dirty magazines? You can't keep 'em under the bed.

AARON

I don't have any dirty magazines.

SHAUNA

Bullshit.

She scans the room. Her view stops on the bookshelf which has a pile of magazines on the bottom shelf. She goes to it. They're mostly American Cinematographers. She goes right to the bottom and finds a Playboy. She holds it up and waggles her eyebrows.

SHAUNA

Who're you hiding it from?

AARON

(embarrassed)

I didn't even remember it was there.

SHAUNA

Sure. Do you lie all the time, or just to girls?

AARON

That is, I, uh—

SHAUNA

—Have you got any coffee?

AARON

Yeah. There's a pot on the stove.

SHAUNA

Can I have a cup?

AARON

Sure.

Shauna sets the Playboy on the top of the bookshelf and heads into the kitchen. Aaron follows.

INT. KITCHEN – NIGHT

As he turns on the stove to heat the coffee, she picks up the pot.

SHAUNA

I'll drink it cold.

AARON

It'll just take a second to heat.

SHAUNA

I like it cold.

AARON
(acquiescent)

All right..

Shauna begins opening all the cupboards and looking in. Aaron points.

AARON
That one.

SHAUNA
I'd've found it.

AARON
I'm sure you would have.

Shauna takes out a cup and fills it with coffee. Aaron gets the sugar.

AARON
Sugar? Sweet & Low?

Shauna drinks the cup of cold black coffee right down like water. She sets the cup in the sink.

SHAUNA
Thanks.

Aaron still holds the sugar.

AARON
No problem.

INT. LIVING ROOM – NIGHT

Shauna strolls back into the living room and Aaron follows. He has a baffled, amused expression on his face. Shauna picks the Playboy back up, sits on the couch and begins leafing through it. Aaron sits down on his desk chair facing her.

AARON
So. You're from Milwaukee, eh?

SHAUNA
(not looking up)
Uh-huh.

AARON
How long've you been out here?

SHAUNA

Two years.

AARON

And you and Cathy were friends back in Wisconsin?

SHAUNA

Since we were kids. You like watching girls fuck?

AARON

(shocked)

What?

Shauna holds up the Playboy. There is a lesbian pictorial.

AARON

(confessing)

I've only seen it in pictures, I can't tell you for sure.

SHAUNA

Would you like to see it for real?

AARON

(shrugs)

Yeah. Sure.

SHAUNA

You're weird.

AARON

Am I?

SHAUNA

Definitely. My first sexual experience was with another girl.

AARON

(interested)

It was? How old were you?

SHAUNA

Sixth grade. It was with Cathy.

AARON

(lights up)

Really?

SHAUNA

Uh-huh. We both had a boy named Bobby Light in her garage. We started kissing him and he got mad and left. We were both turned on so we started kissing each other.

AARON

Yeah?

SHAUNA

Yeah, what?

AARON

Then what happened?

SHAUNA

Are you getting turned on?

AARON

A little.

SHAUNA

You are weird. Have you got a nail clipper?

AARON

Well, yeah.

SHAUNA

Can I use it?

AARON

Sure.

Aaron goes to the bathroom and returns a second later with a nail clipper. Shauna takes it and begins clipping her fingernails into her lap. Aaron watches in amazement.

SHAUNA

Why did you call me?

AARON

Well... I think you're very attractive.

SHAUNA

Bullshit.

AARON

I don't think you're very attractive?

SHAUNA

You have ulterior motives.

AARON

(wary)

Do I? Like what?

SHAUNA

I don't know. That's why I came over. Do you mind if I wash my hair?

AARON

Now?

SHAUNA

No, a week from now.

AARON

Well, sure, if you want to.

SHAUNA

Are your towels clean?

AARON

I'll give you clean ones.

SHAUNA

Thanks.

Shauna steps over to the bathroom doorway and begins taking off her boots. Aaron goes to the closet and gets a clean towel. He hands it to her. She takes it and goes into the bathroom. She shuts the door but doesn't lock it. In a second he hears the shower go on.

AARON

(dumbfounded)

This girl is completely insane.

He stands for a moment in the bathroom doorway. He finally opens the door and goes in.

INT. BATHROOM – NIGHT

Aaron can see Shauna's incredible naked body through the pebbled glass shower door. Shauna's voice echoes from inside the shower.

SHAUNA

What took you so long?

Aaron doesn't answer. He quickly takes off his clothes and steps into the shower. Shauna turns to him.

SHAUNA

What do you think you're doing?

Aaron pushes her into the corner against the wall, pressing himself against her soapy slick body. Her arms are at her sides. She's looking at him with one eyebrow raised.

SHAUNA

I asked, what do you think you're doing?

Aaron puts his nose against hers and looks her right in the eye.

AARON

Just shut up, okay?

He kisses her. She just stands there. He keeps kissing her and after a minute her hands come up from her sides and take hold of Aaron's butt.

EXT. AARON'S APARTMENT BUILDING – NIGHT

Aaron's apartment is on Whitley, a block above Franklin. Aaron walks Shauna to her car. Both their hair is still wet.

AARON

Do you want me to call you?

SHAUNA

Do you want to call me?

AARON

Yeah.

SHAUNA

No you don't, you just want to fuck me.

AARON

Yeah, but I'm a polite guy. I'll call first.

SHAUNA

Do. Don't. Whatever.

An old black WINO comes wandering up.

WINO

Can you spare some change?

Shauna turns to him.

SHAUNA

For what?

The Wino is a little surprised.

WINO

For a bottle of wine.

SHAUNA

What kind?

WINO

Any kind. The cheapest.

SHAUNA

Where are you from?

WINO

Indianapolis. Where're you from?

SHAUNA

Milwaukee. Come on.

She starts to walk away and the Wino follows.

WINO

Where're we going?

SHAUNA

To get some wine. How old are you?

WINO

Sixty-eight.

Aaron is just standing there, all wet. He watches as Shauna and the Wino get into her car and drive down the hill into Hollywood. Aaron shakes his head in astonishment and goes back inside.

INT. AARON'S APARTMENT – NIGHT

Aaron comes back into his apartment and does right to his phone book. He looks up a number. His finger stops on, "Tom Kidd" and he dials.

AARON

Hello, Tom? Hi, this is Aaron:

TOM

(O.S.)

Aaron, how're ya doing?

AARON

Great.

(he walks over to the
computer and switches
it on)

I just finished my newest script. It's called "Above
The Line" and I'm really getting some good response
on it. Wanna read it?

TOM

Of course I do, I've read all your scripts. Besides,
I'm looking for a new project.

Aaron's eyes light up.

AARON

Really? How fortuitous.

TOM

What?

AARON

Nothing.

TOM

This script wouldn't happen to be a romantic
comedy, would it?

AARON

As a matter of fact it is.

TOM

Great. That's what's hot right now. I just met with someone that said they're looking for one. When can you get it to me?

AARON

How's tomorrow?

TOM

Perfect. I can't wait to read it. See ya tomorrow.

AARON

Right. Bye.

Aaron hangs up. He turns his attention to the computer and starts typing.

EXT. YAMASHIRO RESTAURANT – DAY

Yamashiro Restaurant is perched on top of a hill overlooking all of Los Angeles. It's a big Japanese structure.

INT. YAMASHIRO – DAY

Aaron and Tom, the producer, sit at a table by the big window and watch the sun set over LA. The waiter arrives with sake.

AARON

I don't think I want sushi. I want something cooked.

TOM

Sushi's my favorite. I'd eat it every night of the week but Jill won't let me.

(to the waiter)

We'll order in a minute.

The waiter leaves. They both drink sake.

AARON

So, Tom, why have you invited me out on this fine evening?

TOM

Uh, well, I'll tell you. I read your script...

AARON

And?

Aaron is slightly holding his breath.

TOM

I liked it. I particularly like my character.

AARON

(laughs)

Do you want to play it in the movie?

TOM

Uh, no. Dennis Quaid might be good, though. But, I'll tell you... I think it might make a good movie. And very easy and inexpensive to shoot.

AARON

I agree. What have you got in mind?

TOM

I don't want to go to the studios, it takes forever. I need to get another movie made right away.

AARON

Uh-huh.

TOM

So, I say we do it independently. Raise the money through private sources.

AARON

Such as?

TOM

Such as you leave that to me.

AARON

How much?

TOM

Two million, below the line.

AARON

(shrugs)

That's all right, I guess. How much above the line?

TOM
(smiling)
None of your business.

AARON
(nodding)
Uh-huh. How fast do you think you can put it together?

TOM
That's the thing. We'd have to start shooting in two months.

AARON
That's very soon. Hardly time to put a cast and crew together and go into pre-production.

TOM
I know. Life's rough all over. But I can get the money. Now. So how much do you want for the script?

Aaron sips his sake reflectively.

AARON
My agent says she might be able to get as high as a hundred to two hundred thousand dollars from one of the majors. And the lowest budget they'd make it for would be six million, with stars in it. Why should I do it independently?

Tom pours each of them more sake.

TOM
Because I can get my grubby paws on the cash tomorrow. For the moment I am a success.

AARON
(considers)
There's only one way I'd do this deal.

TOM
(wary)
And that is?

AARON

If I direct.

TOM

But you've never directed a feature.

AARON

I've directed a lot of shorts. You know that I know how to make a movie. If I'm going to take a reduced fee on the screenplay, I've got to direct.

Tom puts his hand under his chin and lowers his head.

TOM

Uh... That is, I... Uh... Well... I don't know.

AARON

It's my script. I already have it all envisioned. Who could do a better job than me?

TOM

Uh... Steven Spielberg, Francis Coppola, Sydney Pollack, Norman—

AARON

(cutting him off)

—All right, all right. But I can do a damn good job. And it's the only way I'll make this deal. Take it or leave it.

TOM

Uh... Okay. But if you fall two days behind schedule, I'll fire you, and don't think I won't.

AARON

(nods)

Okay.

Tom puts out his hand and Aaron shakes it. They both smile.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. HOLLYWOOD CENTER STUDIOS – DAY

Hollywood Center Studios is on Las Palmas and Santa Monica. It is made up of many enormous pink sound stages and offices. Cars are checked in at the gate. Actors with

scripts are lined up outside a casting office. A man from the prop department rides a bike down an alleyway between two sound stages.

INT. PRODUCTION OFFICE – DAY

It's a beehive of activity. In the main room there are eight desks with someone on the telephone at every one. There are at least ten other people in the office as well: a prop girl is sorting through a rock collection with the aid of a book, one person is making copies at a copier, several others are binding scripts. At one of the desks is Ace, the production manager.

A door opens to an adjoining office and for a flash Tom can be seen arguing with someone on the phone.

Aaron sits at a desk drawing storyboards and talking on the phone.

AARON

...I need someone good. It's got to look good. It's not going to be easy making LA. look good on film 'cause of all the smog. I'm not interested in these guys that've only shot music videos on a stage with bright red and blue lighting. It doesn't tell me anything...

While he's been talking Aaron has drawn a reasonably good rendering of the parapet of a castle jutting up from behind a hill. Aaron hangs up, picks up his notebook and script and heads out of the office. A dark-skinned Indian woman named SHARMILA with a British accent calls out to him.

SHARMILA

Where are you going?

AARON

I can't work here. I've got to get these storyboards done.

SHARMILA

That's fine. The first production meeting is at seven tomorrow morning. Please attend.

AARON

Of course I'll attend. So, is the director of photography the only major position left open?

SHARMILA

Yes, I believe so. You know you really ought to pay more attention to who is being hired on this picture.

They all represent you.

AARON

I should pay more attention to every aspect of this film, but there's no time. We start shooting in two weeks and I'm not storyboarded yet.

SHARMILA

Seven A.M.

AARON

Got it.

As Aaron is leaving he hears Sharmila say to some poor unsuspecting soul.

SHARMILA

Why are you just sitting there? If you don't get your fucking ass to work immediately then I'll get rid of you and I'll do my job and your job, too! And I'll do it better than you! Now move!

EXT. POINSETTIA PARK – SUNSET

Poinsettia Park in Hollywood is bathed in warm sunlight giving it a sepia hue. Three young men without their shirts play frisbee on the baseball diamond. Their girls sit on the bleachers and watch.

A blonde girl hits a tennis ball with a racket and a cocker spaniel chases it. The ball rolls near a park bench where Aaron sits drawing his storyboards. He has an intense look of concentration on his face and a cigarette between his lips.

He draws a hand holding a piece of paper. On the paper is written, "Carey Sanderson - 464-0801" and two stick figures dancing.

INT. PRODUCTION OFFICE – MORNING

Aaron walks into the production office in the morning with his notebook and script under his arm. There is as much activity as there was yesterday except several desks are empty. Everyone greets him and he greets everyone back while heading straight for the big five gallon coffee percolator. He pours himself a cup of coffee, adds milk; a half pack of Sweet & Low, stirs, sips and sighs.

Cathy comes walking through the door. She spots Aaron and approaches him. Aaron is surprised.

AARON

Hi. What are you doing here?

CATHY

I'm the production designer on the film. You knew, didn't you?

AARON

(scrambling)

Knew? Of course I knew. I know everything that's going on with this movie.

CATHY

Well, I'm really glad to be working on your film.

AARON

You're moving up in life. You're a full-fledged production designer now.

CATHY

Yeah, but Tom's getting me at the same price he paid me as an assistant.

AARON

Well, it's better than a sharp stick in the eye. Uh... Speaking of which, have you read the script yet?

CATHY

No, I'm going to read it tonight. It's not bloody, is it? I haven't gotten the Karo syrup out of my clothes from the last one.

Aaron holds up his hands and smiles.

AARON

Nope. No blood.

INT. AARON'S APARTMENT – NIGHT

Aaron is asleep in his Murphy bed. Suddenly there is a sharp knock at the door. Aaron's eyes pop open. He glances at the digital clock. It's 3:33.

AARON

What the...

Now there are many more knocks on the door, hard and loud. Aaron climbs out of bed wearing only sweat pants.

AARON

Jesus! You're gonna wake the neighbors.

He opens the door and there stands Cathy. She is absolutely furious and throws the screenplay right in his face as hard as she can.

CATHY

Are you out of your fucking mind!?

Aaron grabs his nose where the script hit him. He looks at his hand and his nose is bleeding. He can see his neighbors' doors opening. Cathy pushes him inside, steps in and slams the door shut.

AARON

So does this mean that you don't like the script?

CATHY

(intense)

Don't get cute with me you fucking asshole! You took my personal life—and the most intimate details of my personal life—and are putting them up on the big screen for everybody in the whole world to see!

AARON

No one knows it's you.

CATHY

(derisively)

Carey Sanderson? Gimme a fucking break.

(shakes her head)

I have never been so offended in my whole life. How dare you!

AARON

It's a good story. Everyone likes it.

CATHY

Shut the fuck up! I do not want to hear about everyone having read this! And another thing! How could you cast that slut Sheree Williams as me?!

AARON

I think she's sexy.

CATHY

You're out of your mind!
(her eyes really widen)
And where on Earth did you find out about me and
Shauna and Bobby Light, for God's sake? I never
told you that.

Aaron doesn't answer. He looks away.

CATHY
Where, Goddamnit?!

AARON
Well... Shauna told me.

Cathy's mouth drops open.

CATHY
Shauna told you? About my life?

AARON
It's her life, too.

CATHY
You went out with Shauna?

AARON
(shrugs)
Yeah.

CATHY
Did you sleep with her?

AARON
(evasive)
Well...

CATHY
You slept with her. You son of a bitch!

Aaron seizes the technicality.

AARON
We didn't sleep together.

CATHY
So you just fucked her. Maybe I should call

Milwaukee and check and see if you've fucked any of my other friends yet! Or my parents!

AARON

(becoming indignant)

Calm down, for Christ's sake already! I can sleep with whoever I damn well please. We're not going out.

CATHY

Fuck you!

(she stomps to the door)

I just hope I never see you again in my whole life!

She exits and slams the door.

INT. PRODUCTION OFFICE – DAY

Aaron is sitting in the production office the next morning when Cathy comes walking in. He smiles.

AARON

Never's a long time, baby.

CATHY

Up yours. I'm not losing a good job because you're an asshole. Just don't talk to me. I'll do my job, you do yours. Just stay away from me.

She walks past him. The people nearby look up like, "What did we miss?" Aaron smiles, shakes his head and goes into the next office.

INT. ADJOINING OFFICE – DAY

Tom is alone in the office and is on five phone lines simultaneously. Aaron walks right up to him.

AARON

Did you hire Cathy Anderson?

Tom looks up.

TOM

(into phone)

Hold on.

(he pushes hold)

Yeah. I hired her.

AARON

Why?

TOM

(shrugs)

Because she did a good job on "The Dead Don't Die." Besides, that's what you wanted, wasn't it?

AARON

That's what I wanted?

TOM

She said you asked for her.

AARON

She did, huh? Do you know who the character in the script is based on?

TOM

Which character? Mine?

AARON

No. Hers.

TOM

Cathy's? Which character is based on her?

Aaron just stands there.

AARON

...Forget it.

And then Ben comes walking in. He looks serious and doesn't smile. Tom waves, but continues talking on the phone.

AARON

Hi, Ben. What brings you here?

BEN

Could I talk to you in the hall for a second?

AARON

(wary)

Yeah. Sure.

INT. HALLWAY – DAY

Ben and Aaron step out into the hall. Aaron takes out his cigarettes and offers them to Ben. He takes one. Aaron lights them both.

AARON
What's up?

BEN
I read your script.

AARON
And?

BEN
And I think you're making fun of me.

Aaron is stopped for a second, then shakes his head.

AARON
I respect you too much to make fun of you. The audience did laugh. That's the way it was.

BEN
But why did you choose that event?

AARON
Because it was one of the funnier true life events that I've been involved in.

BEN
But why about me?

AARON
Ben, you happen to be a lead character in my life story. I showed the movie was a hit.

BEN
But you've got it being a hit in spite of me.

AARON
No, it's completely due to you. Had you done the script straight without all of your wild directorial touches I don't think it would be nearly the success that it is. People are paying

to see what you do as a director. I don't think they're paying for the script or the cast or the location. It's all what you brought to it. It wasn't meant to be malicious.

BEN

Really?

AARON

Yeah. Really and truly.

BEN

Well...

AARON

So... We're still friends?

BEN

How can we be anything else? We've known each other too long.

Aaron and Ben both finish their cigarettes and stub them out in the ashtray.

BEN

Don't fuck up, this is your big chance.

AARON

I won't.

BEN

Good luck. Put 'er there, pal.
(they shake hands)

To movies.

AARON

Right. To movies.

EXT. BEACH – DAY

A wave comes rolling into shore. A boy and a girl, both wearing jeans and sweaters, walk up the beach with a Dalmatian puppy. They stop walking and look out to sea.

AARON

(O.S.: yelling)

Cut!

Further up the beach is a film crew—thirty people with a 35mm movie camera, reflectors on stands, big HMI lights, and other movie paraphernalia. Aaron turns to the script girl, who holds a clip board.

AARON

Print one and three, please. Everyone else be careful of footprints in the sand near the actors.

The girl on the beach portraying Cathy is Sheree, the blonde star of "The Dead Don't Die." The boy resembles Aaron except that he's taller, more muscular and better looking. He is ERROL. Sheree turns to Aaron.

SHEREE

Was that okay, Aaron?

AARON

It was fine.

(to the crew)

Have we got a stick for them to write in the sand with?

Cathy steps forward holding a stick.

CATHY

Will this do?

AARON

That's perfect. Will you go over there, being careful not to leave footprints, and write in the sand what needs to be written, please?

CATHY

Sure.

Cathy goes over to the water with the stick. Aaron turns back to the camera crew.

AARON

Let's get the camera on the baby legs shooting up at the two of them, then we'll tilt down to the sand where he's writing and, of course, it'll already be there.

The director of photography (D.P.) and the camera crew start moving the camera.

D.P.

Right.

Aaron steps carefully around to where Cathy is drawing in the sand with the stick. What she's drawing doesn't look anything like it really looked. She has actually drawn the dancers with dimension and is now putting in cross-hatch shading.

AARON

What're you doing?

CATHY

(looks up)

What?

AARON

You've changed it. It wasn't like that.

CATHY

I'm improving it.

AARON

(firmly)

Don't improve it. Do it the way it was.

CATHY

Why? This isn't reality, it's a movie.

AARON

But it's a close representation of reality.

CATHY

No it's not. You've got a happy ending on this story. That has nothing to do with reality. So what's the difference?

AARON

(intense)

The difference is that I asked you to fix it.

CATHY

You get to change things, so why can't I change this?

AARON

Because I just told you to make it the way it was.

Tom comes walking up.

TOM

What's going on? The whole crew is just standing there. This is costing five hundred dollars a minute.

AARON

(to Cathy)

Are you going to fix it?

CATHY

I think it's fine.

AARON

(to Tom)

Cut her a check and get a new production designer!

(Aaron strides away yelling)

All right! Where are the actors? Let's get moving!

Everyone jumps to their feet and starts moving. Cathy watches Aaron walk away. She drops the stick in the sand and turns to Tom as if to say something, but words won't come. Aaron looks at the shot through the camera, then back to where Cathy was standing. She and Tom are walking away up the beach. Ace steps up behind him and begins roughly rubbing his neck.

ACE

How would you like a nice thick juicy hamburger for lunch?

AARON

(smiles)

That'd be great.

Ace pushes him.

ACE

Nice to want. It's cold-cuts.

INT. AARON'S APARTMENT – NIGHT

Aaron is asleep in his bed. There is a light knock at the door. One of Aaron's eyes pops open. He looks at the clock. 4:33.

AARON

(mumbling)

I need my sleep. I've got to have my sleep.

He crawls out of bed and staggers to the door. It's Cathy.

CATHY

I'm really, really sorry to wake you up. But I have to say this tonight or I'll never get another chance. I want to keep working on the movie. I'll do a really good job. You know I can...

Aaron shrugs.

AARON

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

She steps closer and looks up into his eyes.

CATHY

Please?

AARON

You lied. You told Tom I asked for you.

CATHY

That's because I really wanted the job. I still do.

Aaron looks at her and doesn't answer. She steps even closer to him.

CATHY

Please?

AARON

Well...

(she moves against him)

...Do you promise not to undermine my authority?

CATHY

I promise.

AARON

And to be happy in your work?

CATHY

I will.

Aaron hugs her.

AARON

Okay.

Cathy pecks him on the cheek, backs away and extends her hand.

AARON
(confused)

What?

She takes his hand and shakes it.

CATHY
You won't be sorry.

She walks away. Aaron drops his weary head against the doojamb, watches her go and sighs.

INT. CATHY'S APARTMENT – NIGHT

Sheree, dressed in tight silk shorts, moves around Cathy's apartment. She straightens this and moves that. The handsome actor portraying Aaron, Errol, walks up. He looks at Sheree's butt and sighs. She turns, sees him and smiles. He waves his hand around the room.

ERROL
It looks great. It's perfect.

SHEREE
(smiles)
You should see my apartment. It's empty.

Errol turns around.

ERROL
Where are the actors?

An ACTOR that resembles both Aaron and Errol steps up and an ACTRESS that resembles Sheree steps up with a Dalmatian puppy. Sheree walks out of sight. Errol turns to the two actors.

ERROL
All right. This is the last scene of the movie. I want to really feel it. Give me everything you've got. Any questions?

ACTRESS
Is there going to be an actual sound for the doorbell?

ERROL
No. I'll make the sound.

ACTRESS
Okay.

ERROL
All right. Everybody ready?

The actors, as well as many voices from behind the camera, all reply.

EVERYONE
Ready.

ERROL
All right. Let's do it.

Errol and the Actor step out of frame leaving the Actress and the puppy sitting on the couch.

ERROL
(O.S.)
Roll sound.

SOUND MAN
(O.S.)
Rolling.

ERROL
(O.S.)
Roll camera.

CAMERA OPERATOR
(O.S.)
Rolling.

A SLATE PERSON steps into view holding the clapboard.

SLATE PERSON
Mark.

He snaps closed the clappers.

ERROL
(O.S.)
And... Action.

The Actress pets the dog and glances at the silent TV set.

ERROL

(O.S.)

Ding-dong.

The Actress goes to the door and there is the Actor.

ACTRESS

Arnold. What are you doing here?

ACTOR

I was just passing by and I saw your lights on.
Can I come in?

ACTRESS

Look, Arnold, I don't think we should see each
other anymore.

ACTOR

Ever?

ACTRESS

Maybe not forever...

The Actor steps inside. The dog comes up and he pets it.

ACTRESS

...But definitely not for a while. It didn't work,
can't you see that? Everything went wrong. It
wasn't meant to be...

Our view has widened to the point revealing that Cathy's apartment is really a free-standing set on a sound stage. Lights, C-stands, and a boom microphone are visible. So is Errol, sitting in a director's chair, and Sheree standing beside him. They watch the scene.

ACTOR

But we got through the worst of it. I think now
we might actually have something that's worth
something.

ACTRESS

Arnold. We crashed and burned. This relationship
didn't work out in a monumental way. I don't think—

ACTOR

—Kiss me one more time.

The Actor steps up to her. She shakes her head.

ACTRESS

But I don't love you.

ACTOR

I don't care.

The Actor takes the Actress in his arms and kisses her.

Sheree and Errol, in the foreground, look away from the scene and into each other's eyes. Errol pulls Sheree to him and kisses her.

Our view widens further to reveal Cathy sitting on a box and watching the scene. Aaron stands nearby looking at her. She turns and sees Aaron staring at her. Cathy glances right into the camera and looks embarrassed.

A hand reaches up and opens the barn-door on one of the movie lights.

Soft light washes across Cathy's face. She laughs and looks at Aaron. Aaron gives her a "Why fight it?" shrug. Cathy stands. She walks over to Aaron. She puts her arms around his neck and kisses him.

We now have the Actor and Actress kissing, Errol and Sheree kissing, and Aaron and Cathy kissing.

Our view continues to pull back. Aaron and Cathy disengage their kiss just long enough for Aaron to look into the camera and call...

AARON

(smiling)

Cut.

CUT TO BLACK: