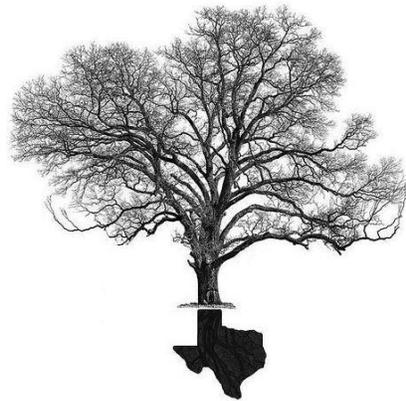


# Unsolicited Material

ALAN NAFZGER



Pecan Street Press

LUBBOCK • AUSTIN • FORT WORTH

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Amazon edition

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ISBN: 9781072241683

Unsolicited Material

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FADE IN:

INT/EXT. CONSTRUCTION COMPANY WAREHOUSE AND YARD - NIGHT

JOSEPH JEFFERSON (81) is an African American man still working in East Los Angeles. Joseph looks amazingly like Morgan Freeman. He is a uniformed overnight security guard. His hearing and eyesight are diminished, but he has a tiny Chihuahua, HERCULES, who assists him. Jefferson squints and wears reading glasses. There are noises outside and he doesn't respond until after the dog.

The Chihuahua rests in essentially a milk crate with a pillow in it. The Chihuahua seems alert and is ready to spring out of the box at any disturbance.

We see Joseph with his laptop at a desk inside the dark warehouse. The Chihuahua gives an alert bark. We catch a view of the title page..

---

RED LOTUS

Written by

Joseph Jefferson  
and  
Juan Rodriguez

---

The Chihuahua settles down and is quiet. So, Joseph scrolls down to a page that looks amazingly like this page - slugline, action lines and dialogue.

Joseph begins to type. Every once in a while, Joseph glances at a yellow legal pad.

JOSEPH

What a colossal waste of time. That damn kid thinks I can turn his lame brain adventure into a million dollar script. He's delusional.

(beat)

I'm delusional.

The dog looks up. There is a pause.

JOSEPH

It's a pie in the sky cluster fuck,  
if you ask me.

The dog remains looking up, trying to understand.

JOSEPH

Hercules, that is a very good  
question.

(beat)

Hell, I don't know why I'm doing it.

He and the Chihuahua rise and walk around the property. Joseph returns and writes another scene.

Joseph stops to eat. He opens a brown bag and he and the Chihuahua share a peanut butter and jelly sandwich. Joseph opens an antique thermos of cold milk. He and the dog share this as well.

Suddenly the dog goes ape shit and barks like there is a murder going on outside. Joseph pauses and listens. There is nothing audible. But Hercules persists.

Joseph reaches into his desk and pulls out an antique pistol. It is an inexpensive 1930s revolver. He puts it in his belt. He takes a large industrial flashlight and (with the dog) walks out into the construction yard.

Hercules stops and starts to growl. Joseph whispers.

JOE

You think someone's here, Hercules?

The two proceed slowly down a row of lumber piled high. Hercules begins to bark, then takes off around a corner.

Joseph zigzags through lumber following his dog.

Finally they reach the 6' chain link fence with the razor wire on top. The Chihuahua barks loudly, it would sound ferocious but it is coming from a 4 pound dog.

There are three black men drinking beer and shooting the shit across the street. They are harmless enough.

They look up and they see Joseph with the flashlight pointing to the ground. They see the dog just giving them hell through the fence.

BLACK MAN

Don't worry old man, we just chillin'.

JOSEPH

All right. Good night!

(to the dog)

Come on Herc. They aren't hurting anything.

The dog walks back to the warehouse with Joseph but turns and contemplates returning to the fence to bark more.

JOSEPH

Not to worry friend. Those guys are too lazy to steal anything from the yard.

The Chihuahua barks one last time.

JOSEPH

They would have to haul it off, first of all.

The Chihuahua whimpers as if trying to talk.

JOSEPH

I know I'm grumpy.

Again the Chihuahua whimpers.

JOSEPH

Look, I'm an old man. You are a young dog. Of course, I seem a bit irritable but you aren't starving to death. You have a nice warm bed. So why the fuck do you care about my mood?

The Chihuahua cocks his head as if trying to understand. Perhaps the dog is contemplating.

The Chihuahua settles back into his box and pillow. Joseph settles back into his chair. He places the pistol back in the desk.

Joe refers to the note pad.

JOSEPH  
Now where was I?

He scrolls down the laptop document and begins to type.

Time passes. It is 4 am and the alarm on Joseph's watch goes off. He packs up his laptop and with the dog and they move to a huge box of nails. It is 2' x 2' x 2' and full of roofing nails. He puts on a leather glove and places two heaping handfuls under the dog's pillow. The dog doesn't mind, in fact this might be a ritual to steal nails at the end of each night. There are millions of nails and he takes two handfuls.

Joseph arms the security system, locks and leaves the warehouse. In the parking lot he attaches the Chihuahua's box (with nails to the rear of his Moped. The eighty one year old man drives out of the parking lot.

EXT. STREETS OF EAST LOS ANGELES - 4:05 A.M.

We see Joseph cruising through the dark streets. There is no traffic and he seems to be making fairly good time for 35 mph. He is wearing a helmet and seems to be a good motorcyclist for a man over 80.

Joseph pulls out a book and seems to be looking up an address. He pulls out his phone and uses the GPS. The device says "18.9 miles and 45 minutes drive time". He drives west and times the lights just right.

Joseph is happy and smiles at the mostly empty city. He begins to slow at a red light and a lone prostitute think she will approach him. But the light turns green. He zooms past the prostitute who shouts at him.

PROSTITUTE  
(shouting)  
Stop that thing and let's party!

Joseph smiles and waves without looking back.

Joseph encounters three or four policemen at a convenience store robbery. And thirty blocks later there are police, an ambulance and a fire truck at a car accident. Joseph is unphased. He is relaxed and happy.

We assume he is going home, but he is not. He is entering the Century City area - office building and condominiums far over his pay grade.

EXT. NATIONAL ARTISTS AGENCY, LOS ANGELES - 5 A.M.

Joseph hits one red light and from a block away. The parking lot is all but empty as Joe approaches on his moped. He observes the night security guard just now leaving.

While the guard is leaving, Joseph drives into the alley and notices the dumpster it over flowing with paper. He stops and we get a better look. The papers are screenplays and there must be a thousand in the trash and at least 20 or 30 have spilled out onto the ground.

Joseph circles the block until the guard's vehicle is gone. Joseph looks left and right and the streets are empty.

Nearing the entrance to the lot, he reaches into his jacket and pulls out a box of ROOFING NAILS and opens the top. Passing the entrance to the lot, he dumps the nails in the entry lane side, some of which land "point up", then puts the empty box back inside his jacket.

JOSEPH

Have a nice day, ya bastards.

Hercules lets out a bark, seemingly in agreement.

JOSEPH

Okay, Herc. Let's go home.

Joseph pats the dog and pulls out into the street.

EXT. STREETS OF CENTURY CITY, LOS ANGELES - 5:25 A.M.

This time Joseph is headed east. Traveling back to East Los Angeles isn't as easy. There is increasing traffic and the stop lights don't cooperate. The city is just beginning to stir. More cars and more people. Joseph is increasingly nervous and seems intent to get back home before the city is

at its full rage. Cars zoom by him and he shudders. He doesn't enjoy this "defensive driving".

EXT. STREETS OF EAST LOS ANGELES - 6:35 A.M.

Sun is just beginning to lighten the sky. Joseph feels much better now that he is near home. It is a mixed Hispanic/Black area and the workers are just now leaving for work. Many wave to him. The mothers are sending their kids off to school. The sun will be up in 10 mins.

EXT. JOSEPH'S HOME, EAST LOS ANGELES - 6:45 A.M.

Just as the sun appears, Joseph pulls into his home. It is a very modest home, but there are a lot of security measures - bars on the windows and an alarm. There is a security fence that look as if it might have recently cost more than the house did originally. But also there is a landscaped yard - roses and palms. It is lush for the neighborhood. And it is clearly the home of a dog. There are toys in the yard and a tiny kiddie pool serves as the Chihuahua's swimming pool. Several dog toys are floating in the water.

INT. JOSEPH'S HOME, EAST LOS ANGELES

Joseph puts the dog in the yard and the dog pees. Joseph hesitates only a second or two at the door and the dog catches up to him. They enter the home. The furniture is old but neatly arranged.

There are shelves and shelves of VHS, DVDs, Blue Rays. Things seem to be in chronological order. There are even some 35 mm films in metal canisters and there is an antique projector in the corner. Remember when Tarantino was a clerk at a VCR rental shop? Well, this is the same type of guy, but Joseph is very old. But, he brings to the table films he has seen from the last 70 years.

ZOOM in on the titles, only the best - The Wizard of Oz (1939), The Third Man (1949), Citizen Kane (1941), Modern Times (1936), All About Eve (1950), Das Cabinet des Dr. Caligari. (1920), The Godfather (1972), E.T. The Extra-Terrestrial (1982), A Hard Day's Night (1964), Metropolis (1927).

We see a stack or two of old movie magazines from the 1950s and 1960s.

We see an old plaque on the wall. "Garfield High School Teacher of the year, 1968." There are photos of a young teacher with graduating long haired students from the 1960s. There is a photo of President Kennedy.

There is a second more impressive plaque "Garfield High School Teacher of the year, 1989." There are other photos of an older Joseph with conservative looking students from the 1980s. There is a photo of Ronald Reagan.

On an opposite wall there are screenplay awards. Some cheap old awards are hanging on the walls. They are from screenplay competitions. There are five or six of them - 1958, 1961, 1969, 1972 and 1981 and there they end.

On one portion of his shelving there are at least 40-50 sets of papers that appear to be unproduced screenplays. We hope he didn't write them all and NONE have been made, because the three movie posters obviously he didn't write.

There are three original movie posters framed - 1931 Frankenstein starring Boris Karloff, 1939 Gone With The Wind and 1998 The Big Lebowski.

The dog goes immediately to his bed. Joseph goes to the refrigerator and we see that the contents are sparse. There is a half pitcher of orange juice and a bottle of vodka. We see jars of jelly.

In the cabinet, Joseph sees there are tuna, Raman noodles and peanut butter.

In the trash, there are at least two Taco Bell sacks.

There is half a loaf of \$1 bread on the counter.

We learn that Joseph lives in a very small space and eats very economically, but he has a huge collection of movies.

Joseph drinks his O.J. and vodka and goes to bed.

EXT. EAST LOS ANGELES COLLEGE - DAY

JUAN RODRIGUEZ is a good looking kid. This is a scene something like John Travolta's walking down the sidewalk in Saturday Night Fever. Juan walks past hundreds of hot Hispanic

young women. Clearly he is in a type of paradise. He has a section of the newspaper, a notebook and freshman rhetoric textbook.

SOFÍA

Juan

JUAN

Sofía. You going to History?

SOFÍA

Ya. It's so boring.

JUAN

We going to the movies tomorrow night?

SOFÍA

Sure. I go with you every Saturday night. Regency Commerce 14.

JUAN

All right.

SOFÍA

Row twelve. Right in the middle. It's like your thrown.

JUAN

What do you want to see?

SOFÍA

I don't know, you pick.

JUAN

Okay, I'll research it. Read the reviews and all.

SOFÍA

Thanks.

JUAN

You are my number one lady. I can't waste any date with you on a bad movie. I just can't let that happen.

SOFÍA

So far so good. Actually, I'm impressed.

JUAN

Hey, You only see the best!

SOFÍA

I think you like me.

JUAN

I might I just might.

SOFÍA

You better.

JUAN

I will come get you about eight?

SOFÍA

I will be ready.

JUAN

Do that!

Juan has a charismatic smile and clearly Sophie is enthralled. We get the idea he might be the catch of the campus, he might be successful someday and he takes a girl to the movies every night of the week.

INT. CLASSROOM, EAST LOS ANGELES COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Juan enters and sits at a desk. A pretty latina, Isabella, makes eye contact with Juan. And of course he returns the eye contact. They know each other from the past.

He is about to talk to her, but the professor begins.

PROFESSOR

I've graded your first college papers and I will give them back to you at the end of the hour.

Juan ignores the professor. Juan takes out the folded newspaper's arts and entertainment section. Juan scans the movies.

PROFESSOR

In the mean time, we need to discuss  
some important issues facing  
freshman.

Juan picks a movie "Paint the Town Red". Circles the 8:15 show  
time. He writes "Tonight?" and tears the ad from the newspaper  
and hands it to Isabella. She smiles and nods.

PROFESSOR

Writing is the primary basis upon  
which your school work, your  
learning, and your intellect will be  
judged—in college. If you can't write  
(right or wrong) we will think you  
don't belong here.

STUDENT

How were the papers? You like them?

PROFESSOR

Some are better than others, but  
everyone can show improvement.

(beat)

I give this speech every semester.  
And I can't think of a more important  
topic.

PROFESSOR

Writing expresses who you are as a  
person. Writing is portable and  
permanent. It makes your thinking  
visible.

(beat)

The average person live 78 or 81  
years. But if you can write, you can  
live thousands of years. You can be  
famous long after you die.

(beat)

We know about Socrates because his  
student wrote about him.

(beat)

Shakespeare will never be forgotten.

(beat)

You know Lincoln's Gettysburg address  
was written. He didn't just bust out  
with rappin' that you know.

The students chuckle.

PROFESSOR

You live in a town that lives on the written word and the story. All movies begin with the written word.

(beat)

If you can't write, you don't belong in The School for Cinematic Arts or in Hollywood.

Suddenly, Juan perks up when he hears "Hollywood".

PROFESSOR

Let's just say you want to break into movies. You have to take this writing course seriously.

JUAN

Those Hollywood big dogs are overwhelmingly white and make white movies with white actors.

PROFESSOR

And it is a terribly stubborn business.

JUAN

They keep hiring the same old people to write the same old stories. Over and over again.

PROFESSOR

No doubt.

(beat)

When I was your age, the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights addressed Hollywood diversity; the industry has been vowing to diversify.

JUAN

When was that?

PROFESSOR

Nineteen... Ha! You almost tricked me!

(beat)

Eighty seven.

A young girl on the front row seems to be counting to determine the professor's age.

PROFESSOR

But as Los Angeles, California is now 38 percent minority, the business will eventually have to come around. Movie tickets matter and as minority populations improve their economic status, there will be opportunities.

JUAN

Well exactly when do you think this will happen?

PROFESSOR

Well, I don't know. But nothing is an excuse for not learning to write.

(beat)

Right?

Juan shrugs.

PROFESSOR

Don't take this as any discouragement. UCLA published that 94 percent of studio CEOs were white (100 percent were men).

(beat)

But they need you. They need your voice. They aren't artists and they aren't really idea people. They count beans.

JUAN

This gets to why people riot - because of the fallacy of upward mobility.

PROFESSOR

That is a good point. Yes, people are angry. But many of the rioters are just plain pissed off that the promise of Los Angeles as a golden

ticket to wealth and fame is a cruel lie.

JUAN

It is class warfare if you ask me.

PROFESSOR

I agree, when you look at the riots this city has seen, the mirage of Hollywood probably had a lot to do with it.

Everyone seems to agree, but to be honest the only one's really listening are Juan and the professor and Isabella.

PROFESSOR

Writing fosters your ability to explain a complex position to readers, and to yourself.

DAY DREAM:

INT. MUSEUM IN CHINA - DAY

Juan is day dreaming. He dreams of the final fight scene in Enter the Dragon.

It is not Bruce Lee but ABEL (the Texan) in a life and death struggle with a CHARACTER SIMILAR TO HAN. They fight in a museum and when that gets boring, they fight in a room of confusing mirrors. Abel smashes the mirrors and is about to impale the Chinese drug lord with his own spear.

RETURN TO: Classroom

Juan inadvertently makes a slight karate move. And Juan makes a muted Bruce Lee cry. And comes out of his dream. He looks around the classroom everyone is looking at him.

PROFESSOR

Are you okay?

Juan nods "yes" and is embarrassed. Half class laughs a bit. The other half of the class just think Juan is weird.

Once the lecture resumes, Juan jots some notes down on his yellow legal pad.

PROFESSOR

Writing stimulates you to extend a line of thought beyond your first impressions or gut responses.

Juan is semi-listening but he is looking over to Isabella. She is a bit embarrassed but returns a smile. Juan looks confident that he can perform in class.

PROFESSOR

Writing helps you understand how truth is established in a given discipline.

(half beat)

Writing equips you with the communication and thinking skills you need to participate effectively in democracy.

(half beat)

Writing is an essential job skill. Who wants to drive a nice car?

(half beat)

Raise your hands.

Everyone who is still awake and listening raises their hands.

PROFESSOR

I have walked through the student parking lot and some of you can use a new car.

(beat)

If you learn to write you can have a nice job and that nice new car smell.

JUAN

I don't know. I sort of like my '72 Impala.

OTHER STUDENT

It only burns about a quart of oil a day!

PROFESSOR

It's burning oil?

JUAN  
(smiling)  
Yeah.

The class chuckles.

PROFESSOR  
Well, keep it if it has some sentimental or "historic" value.  
(beat)  
But what I'm getting at, prepare yourself for a good job and a new car. And keep the Impala as a toy.  
(beat)  
Okay, we are done for the day. Here are your papers.

The professor calls the names and returns the papers.

Juan's paper has a grade of "D". Juan sinks down a bit in his chair. He hides the grade. When everyone leaves Juan approaches the Professor.

There is a girl waiting in the front row, but she opens a novel and starts reading. Juan gestures to Isabella "1 minute" and he approaches the professor nervously.

PROFESSOR  
Hello. Juan. I guess you are wondering about your grade.  
(beat)  
Where did you go to high school?

JUAN  
Garfield.

PROFESSOR  
Oh, well...

JUAN  
They say it is the worst high school in Los Angeles.

PROFESSOR  
Well I don't know about...

JUAN

I just want you to know I don't want to be like that.

(beat)

You know. Dumb.

There is a long pause.

PROFESSOR

Well, you are obviously bright. But this was a formal paper.

(beat)

You don't write the way you talk.

JUAN

I guess I was thinking dialogue... like for movies.

PROFESSOR

Well, yes that is true but if you don't impress certain people with proper action lines, they won't even let you write the dialogue.

(beat)

You working on a script?

JUAN

I am.

PROFESSOR

Oh, well that is a good thing. Good luck. When you are done I would like to read it.

(beat)

But for here and now. I need formal English. With the correct punctuation and grammar.

(beat)

You can't just go off. Every word must be carefully considered.

JUAN

I will work harder. I'm trying.

PROFESSOR

I know you are. Re-write the paper, correct the mistakes.

JUAN

I will.

PROFESSOR

It is just going to take time.

Juan walks out of the classroom.

The professor mutters to himself...

PROFESSOR

Years, maybe decades.

EXT. EAST LOS ANGELES COLLEGE - DAY

Isabella is waiting for him outside. They walk together.

JUAN

I got to go to work.

ISABELLA

Okay.

JUAN

But I will meet you at the movies?

ISABELLA

Same place as last Friday?

JUAN

It is easier that way? My car really doesn't deserve you.

ISABELLA

It might break down?

(beat)

I got it.

The young girl and the professor leave and walk down the hall.

EXT. MOVIE THEATRE, EAST LOS ANGELES - EARLY NIGHT

Isabella and Juan watch a bar fight scene.

INT/EXT. JOSEPH'S HOME, EAST LOS ANGELES - MIDNIGHT

Juan eyeballs Joseph's moped. Does he want to steal it?

Juan climbs a tree and jumps down into the yard. Hercules wakes and barks.

Joseph, in bed, doesn't stir.

Juan steps on some squeaky toys in the yard as he walks to the door. Juan looks about the yard. It is normal, but there is a kiddie pool with about eight inches of water in it under a tree.

Juan wakes Joseph by knocking on the door. Juan is either agitated or jazzed about something.

Joseph looks though the window, before opening the door. It is only a shadow of a person. Joseph dials 911, puts the phone down.

Something occurs to Joseph and he returns to the window. He looks into the street and sees a familiar Impala.

Joseph opens the door and steps outside. When Joseph opens the door Hercules runs out and bites the shoe of Juan.

JOSEPH

Jesus! It's 12:13 am

Joseph picks up the dog and places him back inside the house and closes the door.

JUAN

Good, you aren't working tonight.

JOSEPH

No. I didn't know who it was so I called the cops.

JUAN

Just then? It's okay, they won't be here for thirty minutes more.

JOSEPH

Good thing. I guess?

JUAN

I have something for you to add to our script.

Joseph is not amused but is tolerant of the youth.

JUAN

Okay this guys walks into a bar with his girlfriend.

JOSEPH

I take it this is a big mistake?

JUAN

Well it depends on how you look at it.

(pause)

Open the movie with a spectacular fight.

(half beat)

The super-suave Abel, a rogue cowboy in China with a guitar case full of guns hell bent on revenge against the Chinese drug exporter who shot his guitar and killed his horse.

(half beat)

We start the movie with Abel eliminating a lot of the bad dude's soldiers.

Joseph nods in agreement.

JOSEPH

That is better than what you have so far.

JUAN

Check this out we need energetic choreography and we need to use bait-and-switch editing. Abel makes short work of a tavern full of scumbags, including the drug exporter's number one hit man.

JOSEPH

Write it.

Juan ignores him.

JUAN

Check it out. The first Chinese dude  
does this and this.

(half beat)

Able does this.

Juan acts out part of the fight that he just saw in the movie.  
Juan is spinning and kicking in Joseph's front yard.

JUAN

The first Chinese guy does this.

Juan acts out more of the fight. Again he is spinning and  
kicking.

JOSEPH

Are you high?

Juan stops the performance.

JUAN

No, I just have this idea.

(half beat)

And I get this way.

JOSEPH

Ok, okay. What's next?

JUAN

The audience will especially like the  
bit where the guy spins like a top  
due to the momentum of all the  
bullets hitting him at his pivot  
points - and, really, the fight is  
fair at first...

JOSEPH

Four Chinese against one Texan?

JUAN

Well, the four Chinese pull guns;  
after that it's not fair.

(half beat)

The Texan has a knife.

(beat)

He gets hit here and spin kicks the second guy.

Juan spin kicks the air.

JUAN

He gets hit here and back fists the third guy.

Juan back fist the air.

JUAN

He keeps spinning until all four bullets are spent. Two hit him and two miss because he is spinning.

(half beat)

Like this.

Juan acts out more of the fight scene. Until he spins himself into a tree, hits his head and then falls into the dog's kiddy pool. Juan is soaked in eight inches of water.

Showing no emotion, Joseph goes inside and fetches a towel. Hercules runs out of the house, but doesn't bite this time. The dog doesn't like it but is trying to reason why there is a man in his swimming pool.

Joseph returns and hands Juan the towel.

JOSEPH

Are you sure you want me to help you?

JUAN

Why?

JOSEPH

It's after midnight. You are a damn weird kid.

(beat)

I'm over 80 and you are barely literate.

JUAN

Oh, I know my grammar sucks. But you are the only person I know that knows what he is doing.

JOSEPH

I never sold anything. Didn't even come close.

JUAN

Dog that was back in the days.

JOSEPH

Still.

JUAN

Well, you know how to write a screenplay.

JOSEPH

Apparently, I only know how to format one.

JUAN

Like you told me how to format the title page to get past the automatic "PASS".

JOSEPH

You would have learned that somewhere. Eventually.

(beat)

Why didn't you just write all this fight scene business and give it to me tomorrow?

JUAN

I don't know.

(half beat)

This is how we work.

JOSEPH

No, this not how we work.

Long Beat.

JUAN

Okay. I get it you want me to write it down.

JOSEPH

You are the one who said you wanted  
to be a screenwriter.

Juan contemplates and then turns to leave. He makes it to the gate.

JOSEPH

Don't be lazy.

INT. JUAN'S BEDROOM, EAST LOS ANGELES - LATE NIGHT

Juan sits at a desk with a nightlight. He has a pencil and a yellow legal pad. He seems to be struggling with his ideas. Frustrated look on his face, but he is writing words.

INT. JOSEPH'S HOME, EAST LOS ANGELES - NOON

Joseph has difficulty getting out of bed but he persists. Octogenarians in their underwear always make people feel a little funny. But now we realize just how old Joseph is. He slowly moves about the house. Joseph's muscle tone is gone; he is skin and bones. He lets the dog out into the yard. He makes some toast and drinks orange juice. He lets the dog back inside. He dresses.

Joseph gets on his Moped. He slowly drives toward the tire repair shop.

EXT. TIRE REPAIR SHOP - MORNING

For the story to be plausible, it must be a great location just off a major freeway. There is a large sign "Luxury Car Tires".

Outside, on the wall facing oncoming traffic, artist Tristan Eaton (28) is painting a mural. The "film" motif of the mural will tell us a great deal about owners of the shop. It is very '90s Hollywood - Scarlett Johansson, Cate Blanchett, Liv Tyler, Mark Wahlberg, Johnny Depp, Brad Pitt.

There is a young Hispanic man patching tire punctures. RAUL (20) is working feverishly repairing the tires. There are a few luxury cars in the bays and the young man is working as fast as possible. We will soon learn that Raul is Juan's brother.

A tow truck brings in a luxury car.

A customer is paying.

In the corner, the customer notices a small table with a sign "Ask me about my screenplay" and a stack of one sheets.

CUSTOMER

Your screenplay?

RAUL

Huh? Oh, Yeah. That is my brother's.  
He works here in the afternoons.

(robotic)

A hero of the Texas revolution  
travels to China and becomes involved  
in an Opium War battle for turf.

CUSTOMER

Hey, that is pretty good. I can't  
help you however, man. I have  
absolutely no power. But tell him  
good luck. It sounds solid.

Customer leaves.

Juan arrives, changes his clothes and dives into the work.

RAUL

Little brother, how many studio  
executives does it take to screw in a  
light bulb?

(beat)

Oh yes, I screwed in your light bulb,  
but I haven't had a chance to turn it  
on yet. I'll get to it as soon as  
possible. It's just that we're  
already sitting under too much light.

After a time the backlog of customers are serviced.

INT. TIRE REPAIR SHOP - AFTERNOON

The tire shop is old and a bit run down but it has a nice  
blue-ray player and big screen TV. It might be set up for the  
customers to use when waiting, but clearly the television is  
positioned for the proprietor.

Raul showers and changes clothes; he is going to school in the afternoon. Raul watches the business in the morning and goes to school in the afternoon. Juan watches the business in the afternoon.

With the customers paid and gone, there is a lull in the business. Juan turns on the television; it is TCM and a they are in the middle of an old film noir.

Juan's brother is shouting from the bathroom, through the closed door.

Juan flips through the mail. There are two or three rejection letters.

INT. BATHROOM - AFTERNOON

RAUL  
Bro. You going out with Isabelle tonight?

INT. TIRE REPAIR SHOP - AFTERNOON

JUAN  
I think we are going to see Revenge of the Hackers.

RAUL (O.S.)  
She didn't choose that.

JUAN  
She seemed okay with it.

INT. BATHROOM - AFTERNOON

RAUL  
Dude, she would agree to any movie. Have you ever had a date that picked the movie?

INT. BATHROOM - AFTERNOON

RAUL (O.S.)  
Isabella? Sophia? Valentina? Camila? Emma?

INT. TIRE REPAIR SHOP - AFTERNOON

Juan is speechless. He is watching the old black and white film and taking notes.

INT. BATHROOM - AFTERNOON

RAUL

What is the name of the girl you take out on Wednesday. Real tall.

INT. TIRE REPAIR SHOP - AFTERNOON

JUAN

Valentina?

INT. BATHROOM - AFTERNOON

RAUL

She sure isn't going to pick.

INT. TIRE REPAIR SHOP - AFTERNOON

JUAN

She really likes me; she let's me chose.

INT. BATHROOM - AFTERNOON

RAUL

I can't hear what she is saying half the time. Why doesn't she speak up?

INT. TIRE REPAIR SHOP - AFTERNOON

JUAN

She's just shy around you.

INT. BATHROOM - AFTERNOON

RAUL

She didn't like my joke about the actress.

FLASH BACK:

EXT. MOVIE THEATRE - NIGHT

Raul and his girlfriend are standing in line with Juan and Valentina. The line is not moving, so Raul tells a joke or two.

RAUL

Did you hear about the ambitious young starlet who didn't have a clue? She actually slept with the screenwriter!

Juan chuckles. Valentina is straight faced.

RETURN TO: TIRE SHOP

JUAN

No she did not.

Raul emerges from the bathroom/shower. He is clean and ready for school.

JUAN

I don't take my ladies to see just any flick.

RAUL

Cinematic values, I know. You told me.

JUAN

A twenty-five million budget. Mel Gibson and Ben Kingsley. Two aging hackers stage one last computer intrusion to save the country from environmental collapse.

RAUL

(sarcastic)

She will be all over you man if you take her to see that.

JUAN

Don't talk about her that way.

(beat)

You think I go to the movies to get some lip?

RAUL

Why else? Kissing is the reason  
movies were invented. No?

JUAN

You have a point. Can I use that?

Raul's GIRLFRIEND arrives. Evidently they share a ride to the  
Jr. College. He hugs her and kisses her forehead.

RAUL

(to Juan)

How many studio executives does it  
take to screw in a light bulb?

(beat)

Loved your light bulb. Great light.  
Lots of illumination. Unfortunately,  
the agency's decided to remain in the  
dark indefinitely.

He picks up some text books and a notebook; he is about to  
walk out when their mother, MARIA (42), arrives. On the side  
of her van is "Maria's Catering". Their mother has a thick  
Spanish accent. Clearly the boys are first generation  
Americans.

MARIA

(pointing)

Check that tire please. It looks a  
bit low to me.

RAUL

Mom, get Juan to do it. I just  
cleaned up. I got to be at school.

MARIA

You have to eat.

Mother holds up a dish of food.

Juan runs out of the shop with a pressure gauge.

JUAN

It's fine mom.

MARIA

It looks low. Sorry.

They return to the shop and the brothers take out paper plates. There is a small fridge there with ice tea.

Maria goes to the cash register and counts the money.

MARIA

Boys, you had a nice morning.

RAUL

Sure enough I was busy nearly all morning.

MARIA

Like always boys, I'm taking this money to the bank. If you need money you use your debt card at the ATM. But only at the bank's machine I'm not paything \$3 for nothing.

They all sit down. Raul is rushing through the lunch.

JUAN

This is good, mom.

(beat)

Who did you cook this for?

MARIA

Dancing with the Stars.

JUAN

That makes sense, light. Won't weigh you down. Smart thinking there mom!

(beat)

I swear to god, we are going to OWN this town!

RAUL

Oh, please!

MARIA

(to Juan)

You are a very good boy. You have such a nice vision of the future.

(to Raul)

Raul you are a good boy too. A bit less positive, but still a good boy.

Maria chuckles and her youngest son may have a point. She is a positive cheerful person and she clearly feels that she is living the American dream.

Juan's brother is finished eating. That fast! He throws his plate in the trash and puts his glass in the sink.

RAUL

I bet I'm hungry again by the time my two classes are over.

MARIA

You are always hungry, Raul. You come to the house and I will have something for you baby! Okay?

Joseph pulls up outside as Juan's Brother is leaving.

RAUL

Mr. Jefferson, my man. Making L.A. safe at night! Welcome. They are inside. Get some lunch. I'm out of here.

Raul gets into the Impala the brothers share and he leaves the lot. The car is puffing a bit of smoke out the tail pipe.

Joseph enters the shop and is welcomed by Maria, who gets up from her chair and gives him a big hug.

MARIA

Welcome Mr. Jefferson.

JOSEPH

You can call me Joseph, please do.

MARIA

Okay, Mr. Jefferson. I will do that. Yes, if I remember.

(beat)

Come sit down. I have something I want you to try.

Maria escorts him to a chair and brings him a plate.

MARIA

I want to tell you how much I appreciate your dropping in and checking in on my boys.

Oh, I'm not spying on them. They are my friends.

MARIA

Well you are protecting them with your uniform. And your pistol.

(to Juan)

Un pistolero.

They chuckle.

MARIA

I swear if a criminal sees your uniform, you don't even have to show him the pistol, they will steal from the shop down the road.

JOSEPH

Maybe. Your boys have a great future. Both very talented young men. You have don't a fantastic job raising them.

MARIA

And alone too. No man since their father died.

JOSEPH

It is very admirable. This shop and your catering business. It is just marvelous.

JUAN

Yeah, mom! You done good.

Maria blushes.

MARIA

Eat. Joseph just eat. You are a positive influence on my boys.

(to Juan)

You are going to make me cry.

Time passes...

INT. TIRE REPAIR SHOP

Juan flips through the mail; he opens several rejection letters.

Joseph is reading through some of the yellow legal pad notes. Juan then is nervously watching him. Joseph finishes.

JUAN

Well?

JOSEPH

Yes, sure. I mean it's your story.

JUAN

What's wrong with it.

JOSEPH

Nothing.

JUAN

Oh, come on.

JOSEPH

Look, I can't critique your work. You will get enough of that out there.

(sarcastically)

Work on your grammar.

JUAN

I know that.

(beat)

Seriously, what is wrong with it.

JOSEPH

You want me to be honest? You know sometimes writing partners "break up" over the slightest little thing.

JUAN

I'm not "breaking up" with you. Beggars can't be choosers. What would I do, if you weren't around?

JOSEPH

I would imagine you would continue to write.

There is a long pause.

JOSEPH

Okay, this is only constructive.

(beat)

I already jaded one screenwriter, I can't do that to another.

JUAN

Who did you jade?

There is a profound pause.

JOSEPH

Me.

JUAN

No man. You are the most optimistic "octogenarian" I know.

(beat)

Critique me.

JOSEPH

Okay. You watch a lot of new releases.

JUAN

Every day. And with a different lady every time!

JOSEPH

Well in the back of your head I think you believe people telling you that the films are mostly shit. And when you write you compensate by gravitating to the old films you watch. Maybe you could balance this out a bit more?

JUAN

I can do that.

JOSEPH

The films you see in the theatre are what they think are "commercial" and the films you watch on blue-ray they are what they consider "art".

(beat)

It's all a bit artsy fartsy if you ask me. You are writing art, because that is what you "think" they want, but they don't.

(beat)

Let's find a balance.

JUAN

You think so? Less art and more commercial.

JOSEPH

You are young and you have this insight about the popular films. That is your strong suit. But most of your scenes read like they were written 50 years ago.

JUAN

You should know.

There is an awkward pause.

JUAN

I'm just kidding.

(beat)

Thank you. I know what you are talking about. I hear you.

INT. JUAN'S BEDROOM, EAST LOS ANGELES - NIGHT

Again we see Juan sits at a desk with a night light. He has the same pencil and yellow legal pad.

INT. TIRE REPAIR SHOP - THE NEXT DAY

On the counter at several rejection letters that Juan has opened.

Raul emerges from the bathroom. Showered and ready for school. Business is slow. Raul's girlfriend is waiting.

Juan and Joseph are watching a film. No customers. Raul interrupts before he leaves.

RAUL

Did you hear about the screenwriter who jumped out the window on the 15th floor? He could have gone to the 16th, but that's another story.

JUAN

Bro, that's a terrible joke.

RAUL

Ya, I know this eight year old kid told it to me. But I thought it was pretty good.

Someone pulls through the parking lot and Juan stops the film with the remote control. But they pull out back into traffic.

JUAN

Perhaps they are lost?

Juan rewinds the film 20 seconds and they continue the film. Juan is closely watching and studying each scene.

JUAN

Stop. This scene. We need to use this.

JOSEPH

We can't steal this scene.

JUAN

You sure we can't?

JOSEPH

It's too obvious. Every executive has seen this film.

JUAN

I thought you said they aren't artists.

JOSEPH

Well they aren't but they do watch movies, especially this one.

JUAN

Take a classic film that we appreciate. This is a classic right? Analyze and identify these components scene-by-scene. Then add it to our film.

JOSEPH

Can't do it.

JUAN

There are only 47 plots. Millions of movies have been made off that.

JOSEPH

You are being lazy.

JUAN

Why re-invent the wheel to build your own car?

JOSEPH

I have reservations.

JUAN

This is a completely legal and ethical method since a "scene" is only an IDEA and ideas cannot be copyrighted.

JOSEPH

Well maybe, technically. How do you want to do it?

JUAN

Well, Scarlett is like Ai. Rhett is like Abel.

JOSEPH

All women are like Scarlett.

JUAN

And all men are like Rhett?

JOSEPH

Pretty much.

JUAN

Ai and Rhett get together at the bottom of the stairs.

JOSEPH

What do you mean "get together"?

JUAN

You know.

Juan makes an obscene gesture with two fingers.

A car pulls into the shop. It has a half flat tire. Juan gets up and races out to the shop. He guides the car inside one of the bays. The OWNER of the car comes inside the waiting area. Joseph eyeballs the customer trying to weigh them out - industry professional or not.

In the corner, the car owner notices the sign "Ask me about my screenplay". The owner gives the table a curious look. The owner looks at Joseph and then at Juan in the work area. They have an odd anxious look on their face. But the customer ignores the table and turns to the television.

OWNER

What are you watching?

JOSEPH

Gone with the Wind.

OWNER

Oh, that is right the scene at the base of the stairs.

There is a long pause.

OWNER

Well, lets watch it.

Joseph just smiles and pushes "play" on the remote.

Joseph writes the time down; they can run it back where it left off.

Joseph and Juan have a signal to rush the customer out of the shop. Joseph puts his finger in the air and moves it in a clockwise circle. Juan races to repair the tire. The work is done and the customer pays and leaves.

Clearly the plan is to s-l-o-w-l-y repair a tire if Joseph is pitching the film to the customer.

Joseph runs the film back to the staircase scene. The film is paused at the base of the stairs.

JOSEPH

Look, Hollywood doesn't give a shit about our screenplay. And there ain't a damned thing "fair" about it.

JUAN

What are you trying to say, man?

JOSEPH

Bad-to-mediocre scripts get sold for a boatload of money. Many of which go on to make even worse movies.

JUAN

*Fantastic Four.*

JOSEPH

I think that made money, didn't it?

JUAN

Barely, but it was a big disappointment. My date even thought it was gay.

Maria brings the two men lunch.

She also brings a toothless homeless man inside.

MARIA

Here sit here.

MAN

Thank you.

There is a table in the waiting room. At one end, Maria serves the homeless man some lunch and brings him some tea. Juan and Joseph are at the other end.

When her son begins speaking of his various love interests; Maria is listening without appearing to. She pretends to be cleaning.

JOSEPH

Your date?

JUAN

I think that was Sofia. Dude that was forever ago. I don't remember. I think that its what Roland Emmerich makes over and over. So I may be all "White House Down, sucked!" but it's really "Bitch, I knew you was a rattlesnake when I bought the tickets."

JOSEPH

You remember the director, but you don't remember what girl you took?

JUAN

I think it was Sofia.

JOSEPH

But you aren't sure. Only in Hollywood, man!

JUAN

Give me a break it was what 2013. I was like sixteen.

JOSEPH

What's this Sofia like?

JUAN

A Mexican Sophia Loren.

JOSEPH

Her parents named her right?

JUAN

Pretty much, if you know what I mean.

Joseph smiles and nods his head in approval.

JOSEPH

What about the girl in your English class.

JUAN

Isabella?

(beat)

She's a Mexican Ingrid Bergman.

JOSEPH

Soft?

JUAN

Very female. Very Ilsa Lund.

JOSEPH

Who did you see last night?

JUAN

The Lighthouse.

JOSEPH

No who?

JUAN

Oh, Camila.

JOSEPH

And,

JUAN

A Mexican Olive Thomas.

JOSEPH

No? She looks so innocent.

JUAN

She isn't.

JOSEPH

Olive Thomas was big trouble.

JUAN

I know; I just can't resist.

JOSEPH

You know who Olive Thomas really was right?

JUAN

Yeah. Innocent but freaky white girl. Particularly energetic.

Joseph shakes his head in disapproval.

JOSEPH

And what happened to that Emma girl.

JUAN

She is still around.

(beat)

You want to know what she is like?

JOSEPH

Sure.

Juan thinks.

JUAN

Maybe something between Penélope Cruz and Rita Moreno. She looks like Penelope but dances like Rita. She's not Mexican. She's Puerto Rican like Rita.

JOSEPH

Who else is there?

JUAN

(now smiling)

Valentina.

JOSEPH

You have a film reference for her?

JUAN

Not really, but she could play Ai.

Joseph's jaw drops. He glances at Juan's mom.

JUAN

Mom, are you listening to us?

MARIA

No. I don't like modern movies.

The men eat in silence. When Maria leaves the tire shop they begin to talk again.

JUAN

My math professor said that you are more likely to become a millionaire by playing the lottery than by writing screenplays! He had statistics.

JOSEPH

But there's an essential difference. A great deal more than luck is involved in writing a screenplay.

JUAN

Selling it.

JOSEPH

Well you have to learn to write one first.

JUAN

I'm ready man let's get this car on the road!

JOSEPH

You will have to bust your ass for years trying to get caught up in school. You will work right here mounting tires until you get a break.

JUAN

No way. I'm going to college, now.

JOSEPH

Look at me. I went to college. Everybody goes to college.

(beat)

I'm nearly dead and this is my last script. And you know that I never sold one, because I told you.

JUAN

What happened?

JOSEPH

I just was stubborn and kept writing these huge budget films, but I had no access to the heavy hitters.

JUAN

Why didn't you write a low budget film and get your foot in the door?

JOSEPH

I could ask you the same thing.

JUAN

Everybody wants that jackpot. Screenplay, Las Vegas style.

JOSEPH

I was dumb. You too. Always dreaming of this big studio deal.

(beat)

I just like the really big movies. Your generation's indie movies they just don't do it for me. I like a spectacular, so crucify me.

JUAN

I know what you mean. Me too.

JOSEPH

And, it just never happened. I won four contests and nothing ever happened.

(beat)

The jobs went to people with connections. Like always.

JUAN

White people with connections.

JOSEPH

No doubt.

JUAN

I hate these fake blonde daughters,  
gay sons and wives of these white  
mother fucking elite -- unproven,  
unworthy and not particularly gifted  
-- get the hookup on studio  
executives, open writing assignments,  
sweetheart options, even their own  
production companies.

(beat)

That is why half these movies suck.  
There isn't any checks and balances.

JOSEPH

Nepotism kills art. Hardly a secret  
for any working-class writer in this  
town.

JUAN

Sucks.

JOSEPH

Here is the bottom line. We have to  
coming up with something entirely  
unique. Something that has never been  
done.

JUAN

A Texas war hero turned outlaw in the  
Chinese drug trade, that is unique.  
No one ever made that movie before. I  
mean the opium wars!

JOSEPH

I like your idea. They will like it  
too. This may be the ticket. Just  
let's go slow and make this the very  
best it can be.

(beat)

And you can't just steal a scene from  
here and there and glue it all  
together.

JUAN

Help me out dude.

JOSEPH

Young man, all the way to the end.  
Sell it or trash it. I'm there.

JUAN

But know the guy's gotta come up with  
my money, no matter what. Business  
bad? "Fuck you, pay me." Oh, you had  
a fire? "Fuck you, pay me." Place got  
hit by lightning, huh? "Fuck you, pay  
me."

JOSEPH

Goodfellas.

JUAN

Yeah, dude wasn't that so cool?

JOSEPH

To me, being a gangster was better  
than being President of the United  
States.

JUAN

Yeah. Cool.

JOSEPH

You got lines like those?

JUAN

I'm on it and I got a list.

Juan goes into his pocket and pulls out a wadded up piece of  
paper. It is barely legible. He hands it to Joseph.

JOSEPH

(reading note)

I'm gonna kill you, bitch!

(beat)

Don't call a woman a bitch.

JUAN

I'm not, this is Abel talking to  
Chang.

JOSEPH

Can you call a man a "bitch"?

JUAN

Dude, there aren't no rules when you are talking smack. A "bitch" is a female dog right?

JOSEPH

Yeah.

JUAN

Well I can't call him a "male dog" in a \$100 million dollar feature film can I?

JOSEPH

Before the big fight scene?

JUAN

No, before the other scene, where Chang runs off and doesn't fight. Pussy won't fight.

(beat)

Can I call Chang a "pussy"?

JOSEPH

I don't know if they had that word back then.

JUAN

Mr. Jefferson, they always, millions of years, had the word "pussy". Think about it.

JOSEPH

Right.

(beat)

Okay, work on that some more. Write it down for me exactly what is said.

JUAN

What else you want me to do?

JOSEPH

The most common question you are going to be asked is not just "what's it about", they are going to want to know specify what's new, different or wholly unique about your story?

JUAN

Well, a Texas dude that can fight in China.

JOSEPH

And...

JUAN

What do you mean, man?

JOSEPH

What else makes it special? Unique.

JUAN

I'm gonna get "Unique" personalized plate on my new Corvette.

JOSEPH

Too many characters.

JUAN

No dude, 2 to 6 letters. It's mine. The day after we sell this bitch.

JOSEPH

Okay, you are right. But practice. What separates and elevates it above the millions of other films and scripts already out there?

JUAN

This guy can fight. I mean better than the others.

JOSEPH

Every action character can fight.

JUAN

He can take a punch. He is tough man.  
(beat)

And he can drink. And he can shoot.  
And he can fuck.

(beat)

Fighting, fucking and shooting? He is  
the best!

JOSEPH

That's not enough; in fact don't say  
that shit to a producer.

(beat)

You are going to have to do better  
than that.

JUAN

You think they heard that before?

I'm sure of it. Ten times a day  
probably.

Further, who's the potential audience  
for your film?

JUAN

Dudes that like fighting, fucking and  
shooting.

No. No. Same answer as before. It's  
not any different than your other  
answer.

Adults over 45? Kids under 20?

JUAN

Dude, this is rated R. If it ain't  
I'm not in. This is a very violent  
time in history. A very deadly  
situation this guy is walking into.

Okay, that is good. But think more  
about marketability. If the powers  
that be can't figure out how to  
successfully market it, they sure as  
hell aren't going to buy the fucker  
in the first place.

JUAN

They like their money just like we do.

JOSEPH

They like their money more than we do.

JUAN

Oh Yeah, you are right. They ain't gonna give me... us... our fair share.

JOSEPH

Hard asses that give people like you and me their money.

JUAN

How about a movie for guys with girlfriends that will let the guy pick the movie?

JOSEPH

Well, that is better than the first answer. Keep working on that.

(beat)

Sorry if this is a brutal awakening.

JUAN

No, I know I've known for a long time the movie business is well - money talks, bullshit walks.

JOSEPH

And the money people expect to see profit potential in your project or they simply won't waste their time.

JUAN

Sucks huh? Everything is about money and it doesn't matter how Tarantino-cool I think our screenplay is.

JOSEPH

Go ahead and get mad, rant and blog and text your girlfriends about how unjust and unfair it is, how it cripples "cinematic art" -- but it

won't make the slightest damned difference.

(beat)

You're going to "come to Jesus" on this point sooner or later if you want to participate as a professional screenwriter.

(beat)

My advice? Might as well take your diapers off and enter the acceptance phase now. Don't waste your life huffing and out of breath like I did my entire damn life. Begin thinking and creating like a professional now.

JUAN

Sex sells.

JOSEPH

Well, yes. It does.

JUAN

They don't even make it up the stairs. He nails her at the bottom of the stairs.

Joseph is trying to contemplate adding this sex scene to their film. Juan has second thoughts but then he seems to be picturing something near porn in his head - it's Gone with the Wind, but raunchy. Long beat. And then he is confident the scene will work.

JUAN

Yeah. He needs to get some.

Joseph isn't totally convinced yet.

JUAN

Ai is beggin' for it.

JOSEPH

Chinese woman never begged for it, until maybe last year. They will of course submit, but this is the 1840s.

JUAN

Well this is a movie, okay. She's begging for it.

There is a long pause.

JUAN

Are you telling me a Texas Revolutionary war hero goes to pre-Opium war China only to get rich? No, he needs some trim. The movie needs some trim!

JOSEPH

This is rural China right?

JUAN

Yeah. The stairs case is out?

JOSEPH

See that is one the problems with this emulation method you are using.

(beat)

America is the richest country in the history of the world. And you want to take a scene into rural China one of the poorest places in history.

JUAN

They that poor?

JOSEPH

You grew up in East Los Angeles and you have NO idea how bad things can be.

JUAN

Well okay. But pun tang is in. Right?

Joseph thinks.

JUAN

This film is for telling the truth and I'm telling you no man is gonna travel to the other side of the world and not enjoy tight little Ai.

JOSEPH  
Sure. I'm persuaded.

JOSEPH  
Chinese or not?

JUAN  
Buddy, it's all pink inside and he is  
a long long way from home.

Joseph jots a few things down on his pad.

Juan presses "play" and the movie continues.

INT. JUAN'S BEDROOM, EAST LOS ANGELES - NIGHT

Juan is again working with his screenplay - pencil and legal pad.

EXT. CONSTRUCTION WAREHOUSE, EAST LOS ANGELES - NIGHT

Joseph arms the security system, leaves the warehouse and he drives his Moped to a different parking lot.

EXT. MEDIUM SIZE STUDIO, LOS ANGELES - NIGHT

Joseph releases the nails as he drives past the parking lot entrance. He drops the nails, but he suddenly stops the scooter.

He looks at the buildings. He looks it up in his book. The medium sized studio is listed as "Does not accept unsolicited material." But he flips through the pages and finds a smaller agency in the building. This smaller agency is listed as "Accepts query letter from unproduced, unrepresented writers."

A defeated look crosses his face. He has made a serious mistake. The street is abandoned. He steps off the scooter and sets the Chihuahua down. He begins to retrace his path picking up the nails. The dog sticks near him and you can imagine that this takes forever.

A police car cruises by and stops. The police observe a security guard picking up the nails and they pull into the lot.

Joseph looks up and signals them to stop before they reach the nails. They assume he is the building's security guard, because of the uniform.

POLICE

He got you too.

Long beat.

JOSEPH

Yep.

POLICE

We've been after him for years. You want us to write a report?

JOSEPH

I don't care. You think it would do any good?

POLICE

Honestly I doubt it. It's gonna be someone like you that catches him. We can't just hang out in front of every studio and agency in town and wait for him to drop his nails.

JOSEPH

Well, then.

The police are satisfied and leave.

Joseph's dog has disappeared.

There is an almost frantic search. Joseph is riding around the area calling for his dog. The sun is coming up and the city is waking up. There are suddenly cars everywhere. Joseph has a tear in his eye. But he isn't entirely panicked.

Joseph pauses the scooter and listens. It is very silent but not entirely. In the distance there is a faint disturbance.

EXT. WILSHIRE BLVD - NIGHT

There is a young woman who is shouting in the distance, perhaps two blocks away.

WOMAN

Quit. Quit.

Joseph buzzes down to the location. As he approaches, he sees his Chihuahua tied up with a Chihuahua bitch. A woman is yelling.

WOMAN

Stop, Stop.

She is pouring a pitcher of water over Hercules. Which doesn't do any good at all. It just cools off the over-heated panting dog.

JOSEPH

This your dog?

WOMAN

He raped my dog.

JOSEPH

Are you sure it wasn't consensual?

WOMAN

Well, I tried to stop them, but before I could. Well... this!

JOSEPH

Sounds consensual to me.

WOMAN

That's not funny. She could be injured.

JOSEPH

Dog's tie like that.

WOMAN

No duh.

JOSEPH

Well, I'm sorry.

WOMAN

Why didn't you neuter him?

JOSEPH

Why didn't you spay her?

WOMAN

You should have neutered.

JOSEPH

You should have spayed.

WOMAN

She is a show dog.

JOSEPH

She "was" a show dog. That is all over now.

(beat)

Hey, that is something like a 'runway model' in dog years?

WOMAN

I don't know.

JOSEPH

Hey, how about that Hercules? You nailed the best of show.

(beat)

Good boy!

WOMAN

That did it.

The woman takes out her cell phone and dials 911.

WOMAN

Yes. I would like to report a rape.  
9565 Wilshire Blvd.

The woman smirks at Joseph. Joseph stops smiling. It is a silly case, but clearly he doesn't want the police's attention.

There is a ten second pause and a siren begins to move in their direction. At just this moment, the dog's tie ends. Joseph sweeps up Hercules and puts him in his box and they zoom off down the street.

WOMAN

(shouting)

Now it really is rape, you bastard.

Heading east on Wilshire, Joseph can hear a siren behind him. And ahead of him in the distance he can see emergency lights. He hangs a left and goes three blocks and hangs a right. He escapes on Clifton Way.

INT. TIRE SHOP, LOS ANGELES - DAY

Raul prepares for school.

RAUL

How many studio executives does it take to screw in a light bulb?

(beat)

Sorry, we're not screwing in any new light bulbs anymore. But have you considered turning your light bulb into maybe... a candle?

Joseph is reading some hand written notes that Juan has handed him. Juan looks on as Joseph reads it. Juan shows a high amount of anticipation. Clearly he wants to write well and impress Joseph.

JOSEPH

No I don't like it. This is from Strangers in the Night. About 1943. I forget the director, but it had Helene Thimig in it.

JUAN

1944. Yeah, I like her.

JOSEPH

See, I told you. Here you are cutting and pasting again.

(beat)

Outside the box, remember?

(gesturing with the page)

This is like bringing a Motorola "brick" cellphone to the new iphone release.

(beat)

Who the fuck wants old tech, Holmes?

Juan appears embarrassed. And shot down in flames.

JOSEPH

Forget about selling your movie,  
you'll never see the inside of a  
junior exec's office.

(beat)

And stop watching old movies and  
write your own.

JUAN

Damn, you are a hard man.

JOSEPH

That's right.

JUAN

(finishes the thought)

This is a hard business?

Joseph's turn to appear guilt. He thinks perhaps he was too hard on Juan.

JOSEPH

Write something fun. Something the  
actor will get off on. Something that  
will get them high from acting. We  
will attract a big star and they will  
think the role will make them  
legendary.

JUAN

I can't do that.

JOSEPH

You don't have to actually do that. I  
mean try, of course. But all you have  
to do is 'persuade' them they will be  
legendary.

JUAN

It is perception.

JOSEPH

Sell them the damn dream, for a  
change.

Juan recovers his dignity.

The mail is delivered.

JUAN opens and reads a letter. He is visibly angry.

There is a fathead sticker on the wall - profession baseball player Adrian Gonzalez in his batting stance. Below the strike zone is a trash can.

Juan violently wads it up and throws a 'called strike' off the wall and into the trash.

JUAN

Man, I would play for the Dodgers.  
But this town is fucked.

Joseph chuckles.

JOSEPH

It only takes one buyer.

JUAN

No, man. The system is rigged against  
the little guy.

JOSEPH

No, you are wrong. If you have a  
great script it may take a week, a  
year, or even ten years, but if  
you've written something of  
undeniable quality, someone in the  
business will find it.

JUAN

That's bullshit.

JOSEPH

It's straight-up supply and demand.  
The very best scripts are immediately  
recognizable by even the most hard-  
boiled, cynical professionals. And  
they buy them; simple.

JUAN

What we need to do is write a script and start one of those bidding wars. Big Check.

JOSEPH

Nothing validates a project like another producer being willing to put their own money into it.

JUAN

Look at all the dudes in this town that have written and written and their scripts are just sitting there.

JOSEPH

Look that is an urban legend made up by some failed writer. It probably got him a nice pity fuck or two. But that is about it.

(beat)

There are NOT a ton of great screenplays laying around unwanted and ignored by Hollywood.

JUAN

How you figure?

JOSEPH

Look at this from the industry side. The better script a company starts with, the better talent (stars, directors) they can attract, the bigger budget they can get, the better movie they can produce, which, in turn, gives them the best odds at "cha-ching cha-ching"... profit.

(beat)

It is supply and demand. They always equal out. Equilibrium.

JUAN

I know what that is man.

JOSEPH

They want big money just like you do. Give 'em twice as many scripts with

true commercial potential, they'll  
buy twice as many.

(beat)

The problem is not on their end,  
demand. The problem is on your end of  
the equation, supply.

JUAN

They are greedy too.

JOSEPH

And that greed means there is an  
infinite number of big dollar scripts  
they are eager and willing to buy.

(beat)

But you got to get off your ass and  
write it.

JUAN

And its got to be commercial.

JOSEPH

First rule.

(beat)

So don't give me any more of that sad  
eyed poor East Los Angeles kid  
bullshit.

JUAN

Ok.

JOSEPH

If you aim low and lazy, cutting and  
pasting scenes from other movies, a  
seen-it-done-better-a-billion-times-  
before Protagonist, you will find  
yourself... irrelevant.

JUAN

I know that man.

JOSEPH

This is major league fucking  
baseball. If you can hit the ball  
they will put you in the game!

JUAN

I can hit.

JOSEPH

You can be a "great" "artist" later.  
Now you have to make money for  
someone else or they won't let you in  
the door.

Juan contemplates art vs. commercial movies.

JOSEPH

If there's any part of this you DO  
NOT want to rush, half-ass or phone  
in, it's putting together an iron-  
clad business proposition for these  
assholes.

Juan is persuaded and nods his head in total agreement.

JOSEPH

Hey, and here is another piece of  
advise. Stop watching so many films.  
And instead study how much money they  
made.

Juan contemplates emulation method vs. original  
method.

JUAN

(complaining and reluctant)  
I will have to rewrite the entire  
movie.

JOSEPH

So?

Juan contemplates re-writing the entire screenplay.

INT. EATING ESTABLISHMENT, LOS ANGELES - NIGHT

Sophia and Juan are out to dinner. At the next table are some  
industry people. Juan strains to listen and clearly is  
neglecting his date.

Other industry people approach the table. Two know each other and everyone is introduced. One of the names gets Juan's attention -

PROFESSIONAL

This is Jack Loveman, an agent.

OTHER PROFESSIONAL

Good to meet you.

JUAN

(to Sophia)

That guy is Jack Loveman. He read my screenplay last week.

The other industry people move on.

JUAN

I'm sorry to interrupt. You are Jack Loveman?

LOVEMAN

I am.

JUAN

You read my screenplay. I'm Juan Rodriguez. Red Lotus.

Loveman doesn't want to deal with things like that outside the office. But does smile.

LOVEMAN

I know that script.

JUAN

Thanks for reading it.

LOVEMAN

Well you have potential. But you received our letter?

JUAN

I did. You pass. That's fine. But, I was wondering if you had any advise.

LOVEMAN

Well you are going to be a wonderful writer, but it takes time.

JUAN

So help me out.

LOVEMAN

Here?

JUAN

Sure.

LOVEMAN

Really?

JUAN

Just one minute.

Beat.

LOVEMAN

Your script is too emulative.

JUAN

Okay.

LOVEMAN

You sure you want to hear this?

JUAN

You can't hurt my feelings, go ahead. I have thick skin.

LOVEMAN

You have potential, but your script... I'm not so sure.

JUAN

How come?

LOVEMAN

There are like 10 or 15 scenes that are obviously from other films. You mixed them around and made your own work but it's totally obvious. Come one, you are better than that script.

(beat)  
Now don't get me wrong. The idea,  
plot and the setting and the  
characters have potential. You have  
potential, but you got to stop taking  
scenes from movies and putting them  
in your movie.

Juan boils over and leaves the table for the bathroom. He is embarrassed and steamed. It is childish true, but he is really just a big kid and everyone has been propping him up. No one has really told him the truth. His mom, teacher and Joseph have all treated him with kid gloves.

LOVEMAN  
(calling after Juan)  
But you are learning and you will get  
better.  
(to Sophia)  
Sorry.

SOPHIA  
It's okay. He just wants it to happen  
really bad.

LOVEMAN  
Tell him to keep working on it. Okay?

INT. BATHROOM - NIGHT

Juan's face is red. He looks in the mirror. He doesn't like what he sees. He splashed water on his face.

INT. EATING ESTABLISHMENT, LOS ANGELES - NIGHT

Juan exits the bathroom. He and Sophia are both embarrassed and quiet. He notices Loveman is gone from the restaurant. Juan returns to the table. He puts some money on the table.

JUAN  
Are you ready?

Sophia rises quietly and they exit the restaurant.

INT. TIRE SHOP, LOS ANGELES - DAY

Juan has a new laptop and there is a wireless printer set up in the tire shop office.

Joseph arrives.

Raul is about to leave, but he always stops and tells them a joke.

RAUL

When gaffers get together on the weekend, the conversation turns to football.

(beat)

When screenwriters gather, they discuss tennis.

(beat)

Directors talk about golf.

(beat)

When producers gather they talk about marbles.

(beat)

Conclusion: the bigger your credits, the smaller your balls.

Raul leaves.

Joseph takes out a pad of paper, but eyeballs the brand new top of line laptop. Joseph seems to approve. He actually grins; he sees this as a milestone in Juan's development as a writer.

JUAN

I'm re-writing the entire script. You okay with that?

There is a long pause as Joseph contemplates the wisdom of this move.

Juan prints a page.

JOSEPH

Good. No problems. Frankly, this is something of a milestone.

(beat)

You can type?

JUAN  
I'm getting better.

Juan confidently hands Joseph a page from the printer.

Joseph reads the page.

JOSEPH  
What movie is this from?

JUAN  
It's not.

Joseph nods his head approvingly.

JOSEPH  
And, a semicolon. You used a  
semicolon. This here.

Joseph points to the page.

JUAN  
I know; I put it there.

JOSEPH  
Where did you learn that? You never  
used a semicolon before in your life.

JUAN  
School, of course.

JOSEPH  
It's good. You are getting this  
grammar thing down I think.

JUAN  
I got a cool professor.

JOSEPH  
This is really good. He influenced  
you?

JUAN  
No this is my material. He didn't see  
it. I meant he helps me with  
punctuation and shit.

JOSEPH

I think it's a good scene.

Juan hits a few keys.

JUAN

Done.

JOSEPH

Before the river boat scene or after?

JUAN

I don't know what do you think?

JOSEPH

Your movie. You must have had something in mind.

JUAN

All that is out. The old script is in the trash.

JOSEPH

Same setting?

JUAN

Same characters, everything is the same, but its mine now.

JOSEPH

Proud of you. Well done.

JUAN

Yeah! Academy Award. Put it over there.

Juan points to an empty shelf in the tire store.

Juan shadow boxes an imaginary opponent. Juan hums "Gonna Fly Now", also known as "Theme from Rocky". Big triumphant smile and victory posture, fists in the air.

JOSEPH

What font is this?

Juan glances at his laptop.

JUAN

**18-point Cisolight Bold.**

JOSEPH

Don't use that. Twelve point Courier.

Leave the Kidzone Pro, Disco '70's and

**Harry Potter** fonts in the bullpen.

Okay, partner? You might as well be submitting it in Arabic.

JUAN

Why? It's cool.

JOSEPH

Cause they will know you are fucked up kid; that is why!

There is a long pause.

JOSEPH

Someday, you are going to have dinner at the Petrossian. You can expect your meal to look straight off a Pinterest page and taste fuckin' amazing.

JUAN

For that much money. Sure better.

JOSEPH

That supper comes out with a dirty thumbprint in your caviar and some poo-smearred Foie Gras, yeah, you're gonna have issues no matter how good it tastes -- especially at those prices.

JUAN

It is all about expectations. And measuring up. I know.

JOSEPH

You want them to give you a million dollars?

JUAN

Courier only. Got it.

A woman gets out of a tow truck pulling a Ferrari with a flat tire. She is obviously entertainment industry and she is carrying a Louis Vuitton handbag.

JOSEPH

Just like Louis Vuitton. They have a uniform and you have a uniform.

JUAN

They all have their Louis Vuitton bags don't they.

JOSEPH

See? Your uniform is courier.

INT. JUAN'S BEDROOM, EAST LOS ANGELES - NIGHT

Juan is again working with his screenplay, only now he has his laptop and he seems to be flying. He stops typing to think but the troubled look has disappeared. He appears to be editing. Progress.

EXT. TIRE SHOP, LOS ANGELES - DAY

Raul is leaving out for school. Juan is just arriving for work. He reads the rejection letters.

RAUL

What's the difference between screenwriters and diplomats?

(beat)

A diplomat sometimes can successfully negotiate with terrorists.

Juan is puzzled by the joke. Juan thinks and then he gets it.

JUAN

Hey, that is pretty good.

(beat)

You make that up?

RAUL

Yep, sure did.

JUAN

That joke shows real insight.  
(beat)  
Best one you've told in months.

RAUL

Thanks, bro.

Joseph arrives like he always does. He looks at the note pad.  
Juan hasn't made any notes or pages for him.

JOSEPH

No emails. No pages in three days.

JUAN

Nope.

JOSEPH

Are we done?

JUAN

Done?

JOSEPH

With the script.

JUAN

We are I think.

JOSEPH

I was going to say you haven't  
mentioned the script lately.

JUAN

You think it's done?

JOSEPH

That is up to you.

JUAN

Oh, well I don't think I can stand  
dealing with it anymore.

(beat)

It used to make me high (writing),  
but that is wearing off a bit.

(beat)

But I just can't give anymore. You know?

JOSEPH

Then we are done.

(beat)

Congratulations.

JOSEPH

You just spent between two and three hundred hours constructing your masterpiece. I don't know how you will ever match this. Maybe.

(beat)

This is a huge accomplishment for you, Juan.

JUAN

It's good and I'm proud of what we did. Thank you.

JOSEPH

I'm proud too. Proud of you too.

They shake hands.

JOSEPH

Print it and I will get copies made.

INT. TIRE SHOP OFFICE, LOS ANGELES - DAY

Raul and his girlfriend leave out for school. Juan is changing a tire. Raul stops in the office to tell Joseph a joke.

RAUL

How many producers does it take to screw in a light bulb?

(beat)

Three. One to screw it in. Two to hold down the screenwriter.

Later in the day..

Everyone is a critic. We insert here a series of cameos, if possible. Three Hollywood personalities have their tires repaired, mostly nails removed. Or new tires, whatever.

Tow trucks bring them in. Or, they creep in on a flat tire.

The "Ask me about my screenplay" has been moved. And at the table there is now a stack of screenplays.

In this sequence, all the celebrities notice the sign, "Ask me about my screenplay." No one picks up a copy of the script; that would be "work". But they do ask about the screenplay. They hear the basics and then proceed to give horrible advice.

Juan is slowly repairing the tires, if Joseph is pitching the customer. A composer/song writer enters the shop. The personalized plates are "MUSIC".

COMPOSER

So, tell me about your movie.

JOSEPH

(gesturing to Juan)

The boy wrote it. A hero of the Texas Revolution travels to China and becomes involved in the opium trade.

COMPOSER

Why don't you make this a musical?

JOSEPH

Opium Wars, Texas outlaw hero from the Texas revolution. It's *Scarface* in China from the 1840s.

COMPOSER

Sure Why not? I have some friends who can write you some music. And we dance. It can be very China, very exotic.

JOSEPH

Interesting. I will tell Juan.

(beat)

His name is Juan, if you want to tell him yourself.

Joseph signals to Juan to finish the tire, that the customer can't help them.

Joseph collects payment and rings it up in the cash register.

INT. TIRE WORK AREA, LOS ANGELES - DAY

Juan rushes and shows the composer a roofing nail he has removed from the tire.

JUAN  
Roofing nail.

COMPOSER  
How about that?

JUAN  
Construction around where you live or work?

COMPOSER  
Oh, all over.

JUAN  
(sarcastically)  
Progress!

COMPOSER  
Hey, Juan. I like your story. Good luck. Maybe we can work together some day.

JUAN  
Sure. I think that would be great.

The composer leaves.

INT. TIRE SHOP OFFICE, LOS ANGELES - DAY

Juan beams.

JUAN  
Break me off some, Mr. Jefferson.

They slap high five. Juan's confidence is growing. But to Joseph it is only a drill for Juan in politeness and small talk with quasi-celebrities.

CUT TO: the next customer, a SEXY ACTRESS. The personalized plates read "SEXY".

JOSEPH

...there is a healthy amount of  
fighting and lot of shooting.

SEXY ACTRESS

How many sex scenes?

JOSEPH

One.

SEXY ACTRESS

More sex. And you need a beefy actor,  
meat you know what I mean? And a  
really sexy actress.

(beat)

Twenty three years old. Five foot  
seven, 34-23-34 and 117 pounds.  
Cardio fit. Perfect skin. Box office,  
you know?

JOSEPH

That's you!

SEXY ACTRESS

Thank you. Well, maybe.

(beat)

Make the plot the romance. And make  
the subplot the opium and fighting.

She is a star and very friendly but she isn't willing to read  
the script. Her investment is only a short time.

JOSEPH

Maybe you should say something to  
Juan?

She points out to the work area.

SEXY ACTRESS

Juan?

There is glass between the work area and the waiting room.  
Joseph is sitting in the office watching. The sexy actress  
walks out to the shop. She hugs him and lays on the charm.  
Joseph can't hear but the body language tells a lot. She  
compliments Juan and he complements her. She finally leaves  
handing him a \$100 bill.

Joseph walks into the waiting room holding the bill over his heart.

JUAN

God, I'm about to die.

(beat)

Did you see that?

JOSEPH

I talked to her for 30 mins.

JUAN

She talked to me. She thinks I'm talented.

JOSEPH

Maybe she is right.

JUAN

Yes!

JOSEPH

Maybe she tells everyone that!

JUAN

No. That is wrong. Don't tell me that, man!

JOSEPH

She gave you a C note?

JUAN

That's so cool.

JOSEPH

Well Yeah, she drives a \$180,000 car.  
And she gave you \$100?

JUAN

Valentina and I are going out tonight. And it's not just going to be a movie.

(beat)

Dinner AND a movie.

JOSEPH

Wait. It's not Valentina's normal night. What she got a promotion?

JUAN

Mami. She is the boss. I might marry her someday.

JOSEPH

She's never been on a \$100 date?

JUAN

She's about to learn!

Time passes...

INT. TIRE SHOP OFFICE, LOS ANGELES - DAY

A third customer arrives with a tire to repair. He is a well known rapper/hip hop artist. The personalized plates read "HIPHOP".

RAPPER

Really?

JOSEPH

Really!

The black man contemplates without reading the script.

RAPPER

Inject rap. It is an old story, inject a little new. There is a certain poetry to stories. You need some of that rhythm and rhyme. You know? You know for the kids.

JOSEPH

Kids?

RAPPER

No body was around during the Opium war. When was that again?

JOSEPH

Two Wars. Once in 1839 and then again in 1856.

RAPPER

No body gonna see a film they wasn't  
around for. You dig? Unless you put a  
modern hip hop twist.

Next in the shop is an actor and drug addict. He is drunk or  
stoned one of the two.

ACTOR/ADDICT

Opium? I don't even know what that  
is? You smoke it or what?

JOSEPH

Yes.

ACTOR/ADDICT

I don't know if people will relate to  
that. Change out the opium and make  
it heroin. That is the drug of choice  
these days. Then you will have my... I  
mean their attention.

Joseph signals that the actor/addict can't help them. Juan  
enters with his keys. He hardly is able to come up with the  
\$10 for the repair.

Finally, a film critic enters the shop. The personalized  
plates read "CRITIC".

FILM CRITIC

It is a western, a crime drama, a  
romance and a period piece. A bit of  
comedy and of course it is a war  
story?

(beat)

In China?

(beat)

You are violating the Fukushima rule.  
When making a film at a foreign  
location you can't mix genres.

JOSEPH

I never heard of that rule. Why?

FILM CRITIC

People are confused enough with the new strange setting. To expose them to more than one genre just overloads their brain.

JOSEPH

Really?

FILM CRITIC

Research proves it.

There is a long pause. The critic hasn't read the script.

FILM CRITIC

No I don't like it.

JOSEPH

Well, I will tell him. Maybe we will need to make some changes?

Time passes...

INT. TIRE SHOP OFFICE, LOS ANGELES - DAY

JOSEPH

And then he says you can't have more than one genre if the film is shot overseas.

They laugh.

JUAN

And he is a film critic?

JOSEPH

One of the most popular.

JUAN

Maybe he isn't very good on his feet.

JOSEPH

Maybe he takes all day at a desk typing carefully worded reviews?

JUAN

Please.

INT. RESTAURANT, EAST LOS ANGELES - NIGHT

Juan and Valentina are dressed nicely. It is a nice restaurant. There is that special ambiance. But Juan seems distant.

FLASH BACK:

Juan is day dreaming about an animation. A talking turnip. It is obviously for kids, but very bad.

RETURN TO RESTAURANT:

VALENTINA

What is the matter, sweetheart?

JUAN

I don't know. Just stuff.

VALENTINA

Like what?

JUAN

Nothing really.

VALENTINA

I know when something is bothering you. You aren't writing something up there in your brain now. You don't have your pin and paper.

(beat)

I know that look, too.

(beat)

So come on. Share it. You aren't the type to keep it all inside. I know you.

JUAN

You do, don't you?

There is a long pause as Juan works up his nerve.

JUAN

Some thirteen year-old Malibu girl sold her talking turnip movie for a million bucks.

VALENTINA

And you are hurt by that?

JUAN

Yeah, I'm a serious person. Sure it hurts like a hollow-point in my face.

VALENTINA

Blind luck is a bitch.

Juan nods his agreement.

VALENTINA

No wait a minute. Were you going to write a fucking turnip movie too?

Juan chuckles.

JUAN

No.

VALENTINA

So why do you care?

JUAN

It's shit. She couldn't even choose a premium vegetable? A carrot or a tomato?

VALENTINA

Different targets entirely. However lucrative it seems short-term, they're playing video games and you're playing for the Dodgers. It ain't the same.

(beat)

Baby, you are the real deal. I think you want to make your mark and want the check second?

JUAN

How do you know that?

VALENTINA

I'm right, aren't I.

(beat)

When we were in the 9th grade, and the teacher wanted to know if you wanted power, fame or money. You said, "fame".

JUAN

You remember that?

(beat)

I don't remember what you said.

VALENTINA

Nothing, she started talking about something else.

JUAN

She never called on you?

VALENTINA

You remember Ms. Tanner. She forgot a lot of stuff.

JUAN

So, what is your answer.

VALENTINA

You know, I think the question is bullshit. I don't really want any of them.

JUAN

What do you want?

VALENTINA

You want me to be honest?

JUAN

Sure.

VALENTINA

I am a Hispanic woman. It's genetic. What do you think I want?

JUAN

I don't know. I'm afraid to say.

VALENTINA

I want a man I can be proud of.

JUAN

That is a pretty good answer.

VALENTINA

I'm just telling you that right now,  
in case you get confused later.

Valentina sees the waitress and their food coming on a tray,  
she makes a frisky fun face at Juan.

VALENTINA

Turnips. It's silly. I'll make you  
forget any turnt out girl writing  
talking turnip trilogies.

The food arrives at the table. It looks spectacular.

JUAN

I feel better. Thanks.

(beat)

How did you get so smart?

EXT. MOVIE THEATER, EAST LOS ANGELES - NIGHT

Juan and Valentina exit the theater after a movie. It has  
rained during the movie and the sidewalk is damp.

A car full of latino friends spot them and pulls up. There is  
the idea it might be a drive by. Juan steps in front of  
Valentina until he sees that it is his friends.

LATINO

Que pasa?

JUAN

Nothing much; just saw a film.

LATINO

Any good?

Juan looks at Valentina.

VALENTINA

It was okay. Yeah, it was pretty  
good.

LATINO

Say there is a party at the Westin  
Bonaventure Hotel. Room #3502. At the  
top, man.

(beat)

Come on.

JUAN

Okay, man. We will try.

LATINO

Don't try man.

The car pulls away.

VALENTINA

They are okay?

JUAN

Sure, you want to go?

INT. SUITE #3502. WESTIN BONAVENTURE - NIGHT

It is a chiefly young people's party. Alcohol and drugs (of course), but not too wild. It is pretty clear that Juan and Valentina are only there to dance. They are offered alcohol and weed but they aren't drinking or smoking. Valentina likes to dance and she is good at it.

The music is just a tad too loud.

A blond girl and her friends knock on the door. No one answers the host has disappeared. Juan answers the door.

BLOND

Can you guys keep it down? I'm  
getting married in the morning.

JUAN

Really? Congratulations!

BLOND

Well, Yeah. Can you keep it down?

JUAN

Hey, come on in. You can sleep after you are married. Or you can sleep when you are dead.

The Blonde chuckles.

JUAN

You want to sleep now?

BLOND

Not really.

JUAN

I don't know what we are celebrating. Might as well be your wedding.

BLOND

Really?

(beat)

You want me to come in there?

JUAN

Sure why not.

BLOND

We would be the only white people in there.

JUAN

Not true. There are some white girls back there.

Valentina arrives and give the women a reassuring smile.

The Blonde looks to her friends and then gives into the last "real" night of adventure. She enters with her friends.

Valentina and Juan dance. The Blonde and friends drink and smoke weed. It is their bachelorette party.

Time passes...

Valentina and Juan approach the Blonde. Her friends are totally stoned. The blond is just buzzed.

JUAN

Where are you from? What do you do?

BLOND

I'm from here. I'm a  
literary agent.

And Juan, bless his heart, blurts out -

JUAN

Wow. I have the best script!

This blond chick is looking at him like... F.U.A.H. That is, of course, the WRONG thing to say.

BLOND

I'm getting married tomorrow, this  
is my bachelorette party and I'm  
still getting scripts thrown at me!

JUAN

No. no. You are right. I'm sorry. You  
have good time. Look at this night!

BLOND

The view from this side of the hotel  
is awesome.

JUAN

There is just enough moisture in the  
air, the colors are out. It's a  
drunken cinematographers dream.

Something in the blond's head snaps. She thinks maybe Juan is  
an industry professional.

There is a long pause.

JUAN

Well you ladies have a nice night.  
And good luck with the wedding.

The ladies are mostly comatose from the drugs. Juan  
and Valentina begin to walk away.

BLOND

What is your movie?

JUAN

Really?

BLOND

I don't mind.

JUAN

Okay, On the eve of the Opium Wars, Texas Revolution veteran Abel Ericson joins an upstart organization in China's opium trade. Abel must contend with his cutthroat competitors (literally cutthroat) as well as agents (feds) of the emperor, assigned to eliminate all foreign smugglers.

BLOND

Ancient China.

JUAN

Well not Ancient, but yes it was a long time ago.

BLOND

Sounds deep. You one of those smart research kids from school?

JUAN

Hardly.

BLOND

Who is this Abel character?

JUAN

He was in the Texas revolutionary war. He can fight, fuck and shoot. And he becomes involved in the opium trade.

The Blonde contemplates.

JUAN

It's like a *Scarface* only with a cowboy in China.

BLOND

China.

JUAN

A Western set in the East.

BLOND

That is cute.

JUAN

It's rural. Poverty like you wouldn't believe. We are Americans and can't really understand. But we should try. Right?

BLOND

Right.

(beat)

This might be interesting.

JUAN

Drama, action, sex, and China hey, strong opportunities for beautiful production design in a way that would hook any adult viewer.

I know some production designers; they are all into these elaborate Chinese films.

JUAN

They are beautiful.

BLOND

And this is that?

JUAN

It can be. It's what is in my head.

If you're serious, leave a copy at the front desk and I'll have somebody in L.A. look at it. I leave out at 6 a.m. tomorrow.

JUAN

I will have a copy waiting for you.

Well, I guess I'm going to bed.

JUAN

Your friends are wasted.

The party is over for the white girls.

The friends are too stoned to move. They are on the furniture.  
The blond bride-to-be leaves for her suite.

Valentina and Juan bolt from the room. Both are excited  
jumping up and down on the elevator down.

EXT. TIRE REPAIR SHOP - NIGHT

Its 4 am and we see the Impala on a Los Angeles near empty  
freeway in the night.

They reach the tire store and Juan fetches a script.

A random police car stops. They neglect to turn the red and  
blue lights on. The officer exits and approaches the car.

Valentina is in the car waiting for Juan who is inside. A more  
EXPERIENCED COP approaches Valentina. A nervous ROOKIE COP is  
interested in and is eyeballing the tire shop.

EXPERIENCED COP

What is going on here?

My boyfriend, he has to get a script  
and take it to a lady.

EXPERIENCED COP

At 4:45 am?

Well, that is the deal. I'm sorry.

The rookie cop is making his way with gun drawn toward the  
front door.

EXPERIENCED COP

(to his partner)

Hey, Joe don't go in there yet.

(to Valentina)

Let me see some ID.

Juan excitedly exits his business. He is excited and anxious to get back to the hotel with the script. He moves a little too fast. And the officers draw their weapons.

The rookie cop nervously (accidentally) fires his weapon and luckily misses Juan's head by inches. A bullet hole is clearly seen in the plate glass of the shop. Juan is very nearly killed.

EXPERIENCED COP

Jesus, what the fuck!

ROOKIE COP

Man, he just ran out of the building.

Juan is frozen in fear. Valentina can't move either for a few seconds.

EXPERIENCED COP

Get down. Get down.

Juan is in shock and doesn't move or even breathe.

The two policemen rush at him and knock him down. They kick and punch him a few times, but he doesn't resist or even move to block the punches. It is slaughter.

It ends quickly however. Juan is handcuffed.

Valentina runs from the car and tries to explain.

VALENTINA

No, no. You are wrong.

EXPERIENCED COP

Get back over there by the car.

VALENTINA

He owns the tire shop.

(beat)

You shot him.

EXPERIENCED COP

He's not hit. He is being detained until we figure out what is going on.

JUAN

Call my mom. No, call Mr. Jefferson.  
Can you get the script out to the  
Westin?

EXPERIENCED COP

God Damn it stand over there; you  
aren't going anywhere.

INT. WESTIN' HOTEL LOBBY - DAY BREAK 6:45 AM

Maria, Valentina and Joseph approach the desk.

Valentina doesn't want to do the talking but she seems to be  
the only alternative.

VALENTINA

This is for ... I don't know her name.  
A blond lady.

CLERK

I'm sorry. I don't know.

VALENTINA

This is a script my boyfriend wrote  
and she wanted us to leave it here.

JOSEPH

She was on the 35<sup>th</sup> floor. A  
bachelorette party.

CLERK

Okay...

(beat)

A Miss Gertner?

(beat)

She works at a studio?

JOSEPH

Yes, that's her.

VALENTINA

Can we leave this for her?

The clerk checks the computer.

CLERK

I'm sorry she just checked out. You just missed her.

(beat)

Maybe her guests are still up there. Can you give it to one of them, perhaps.

VALENTINA

Thank you.

Valentina takes the script up the elevator.

JOSEPH

G-e-r-t-n-e-r.

CLERK

Yes.

JOSEPH

What is her first name, please.

CLERK

Risa. R-I-S-A.

Joseph and Maria remain in the lobby.

INT. WESTIN' HOTEL 35<sup>TH</sup> FLOOR

The sun is coming up in the east. It is glorious, but this is in contrast with the dreadful situation. Valentina finds the suite locked. Valentina searches for the friend's in the party suite. Someone is passed out in the doorway; the door is open. Valentina finds the girl friends who have slept in this suite.

Valentina finds three of the four friends. One is in a bed with the host and apparently nude under the sheets. Another is on a sofa. A final friend of the blond is outside on a chair. This friend is sleeping but clutching an oversized purse/overnight bag. Valentina manages to pry the purse apart and she places the script inside. The sleeping woman, stirs but doesn't wake.

Valentina leaves worried but seems to have done all she could.

EXT. MEN'S CENTRAL JAIL LOS ANGELES - DAY

Valentina, VALENTINA'S MOTHER, Joseph and Maria are all waiting for Juan. Juan emerges from the jail remorseful and embarrassed.

He immediately goes to Valentina's mother.

JUAN

I'm sorry.

VALENTINA'S MOTHER

Don't worry son. Valentina told me what happened. It is just one of those East L.A. things. God was with you.

Valentina hugs him. Clearly they are becoming very attached to each other. He then hugs his mom.

MARIA

Poor baby.

Juan moves down the line to Joseph and they embrace.

JOSEPH

You are alright. This doesn't mean a thing. Chalk it up to experience.

JUAN

You think there is a movie in this?

JOSEPH

No!

INT. MARIA'S CATERING VAN, LOS ANGELES STREET - DAY

Maria is driving. Juan is in the back of the van. Joseph is in the passenger seat.

JUAN

I can't believe they arrested me.

MARIA

I know. Why?

JUAN

It is crazy.

JOSEPH

You are writing a script about China?  
They had to arrest you to save face.  
They are going to protect that kid  
that almost shot you.

(beat)

When they do something wrong the just  
double down. It is better to screw  
one person, then have the whole city  
learn who they really are.

JUAN

So, what will happen?

JOSEPH

Nothing. It is over.

JUAN

They said six months to two years in  
prison.

JOSEPH

That won't happen. If they tried that  
they would have a huge story...  
businessman almost killed by police.  
They don't want that I will guarantee  
that.

MARIA

The police they are such brutes.

JOSEPH

You won't be charged and you won't be  
indicted. All that is just cover  
incase something happens like the  
reporters or someone gets a hold of  
the story. Then they will make you  
out to be the bad guy.

(beat)

See?

JUAN

Okay. I see. Just like any other  
police shooting.

JOSEPH

Just vilify the victim. Justify whatever they do at all costs.

(beat)

See these cops are almost as bad as the outlaws in the jail. They are just one notch above the criminals. But they act righteous and you know they have to do that to maintain order. They have to maintain their place to do that.

JUAN

I see.

JOSEPH

You learned the hard way. That is all.

JUAN

You are right. It's the lower element of society guarding us from the lowest element.

MARIA

They have made my happy fun baby a cynic.

JUAN

Mom, cynic is a good thing.

MARIA

No. I don't think so.

JOSEPH

Well, these things happen in life. You are going to be a great writer; this lesson is inevitable.

JUAN

If we can sell the script they will do a background search.

JOSEPH

They don't care about that. They want a script and we have one.

Juan looks worried.

JOSEPH

Hey, don't worry too much about it. You will never hear another word about it. Unless it is in the newspapers.

JUAN

Will it be?

JOSEPH

You know I didn't see or hear any reporters. Valentina called me and there weren't any there when I got there.

(beat)

Of course with eight or more police cars there. Who knows?

(beat)

It cost us \$1000 bail money; that is nothing. You could have been killed.

MARIA

Poor baby!

JOSEPH

Hand me that menu and that pen please.

Joseph takes a menu and pen off the console and hands it back.

MARIA

Baby, What are you writing?

JUAN

Dialogue

Juan has a confident smile. Joseph looks confident as well. It isn't necessarily a disastrous occurrence.

INT. HOSPITAL DOCTOR'S OFFICE - DAY

DOCTOR

Cancer.

Joseph is revealed, there is in the doctor's office. He has a zombie like look on his face. There is no sound. The word "cancer" has killed that.

And we see the doctor roll his chair from the desk over to an X-ray viewer. We see an x-ray of a man with prostate cancer that has spread. The doctor's face is compassionate. The doctor's lips are moving but there is only silence.

The doctor seems to be explaining the treatment options. The sound returns as Joseph recovers from the shock.

DOCTOR  
Chemotherapy. Radiation.

Joseph and the audience can suddenly hear. He isn't phased. He just sits there.

DOCTOR  
I'm sorry.

JOSEPH  
Oh, no there is nothing for you to be sorry for. I appreciate your help.

The doctor rises and Joseph follows him out of the room.

Time passes...

INT. CLASSROOM, EAST LOS ANGELES COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Juan is in his rhetoric class again. And the class ends. The students file out of the room.

Isabella pays no attention to Juan. There isn't any eye contact at all. She exits the room. If anything, she is avoiding contact with him. We see she is slightly uncomfortable. Maybe they are not dating anymore.

The professor gestures to Juan as he is leaving.

PROFESSOR  
Juan, can I see you for a second?

JUAN  
Yes, sir.

There is a pause until the last student is out of ear shot.  
This makes Juan nervous; it might be bad news.

PROFESSOR

I have graded yours. I haven't gotten  
to the others, but this interests me.

He hands back a "B" paper.

PROFESSOR

Your grammar is much improved. In  
fact, if I didn't know you, I would  
think you were a graduate of one of  
the high dollar private school.

Juan's smile is huge.

JUAN

I guess you don't see many from the  
private schools here?

PROFESSOR

Well, you would be surprised.  
(beat)  
But I see real potential.

And the professor reaches into his satchel and pulls out  
Juan's screenplay.

PROFESSOR

There are a few typos I've marked but  
I didn't find a single mistake. Not  
one.

JUAN

Thanks.

Juan is proud of this. He begins to leave. The professor  
continues...

PROFESSOR

And let me tell you this is  
masterful. It's not just one script.  
This is something like a franchise...  
uh...  
(beat)

Something like Bond or Bourne.  
Twenty movies. You need to sell it  
that way. Tell them in all honesty  
they are going to make money off this  
for a decade or more.

JUAN

Really?

PROFESSOR

It is very commercial. Yes.

Juan is beaming.

JUAN

Thank you sir. Thank you. I  
appreciate that.

PROFESSOR

Well, we appreciate the improvement  
you have shown. The work you are  
doing. Keep it up.

Valentina is looking sweet as ever. She is waiting for him  
outside the class. Big "lovers" smile when she sees him.

EXT. ONCOLOGY CLINIC - DAY

Juan and Maria take him to and from chemo... Joseph enters the  
man we have become accustomed to. He leaves the chemo  
treatment half dead.

INT. MARIA'S VAN

Leaving, Juan opens the door of the van and Joseph can't lift  
his leg high enough to clear the threshold. It is an odd  
moment. Joseph keeps trying but can't get it done. Juan looks  
at mom for advise, which she has none. Finally..

JUAN

Here. Let me help you.

Juan picks Joseph up and puts him in the seat. It doesn't seem  
an effort for Juan. He buckles Joseph's seat belt.

JOSEPH

Thank you.

JUAN

You weigh almost nothing.

JOSEPH

I was a big man at one time. I was a first baseman.

JUAN

You were? I didn't know that.

JOSEPH

Jordan High School was segregated back then. But I was big and man I could play defense.

JUAN

No errors?

JOSEPH

None. Four years.

JUAN

What about hitting?

JOSEPH

Couldn't hit the curve.

Joseph chuckles at himself.

JOSEPH

I tried.

JUAN

You have plenty of company in that. That curve ball messes everybody up.

JOSEPH

Yeah. I know. Boy I wanted to be a pro.

JUAN

Negro league.

JOSEPH

It would have been back then yeah.  
(beat)

But it doesn't matter.

JOSEPH  
My best friend was Britt Woodman.

JUAN  
Who is that?

JOSEPH  
He was the trombonist for Duke  
Ellington.  
(beat)  
Now Britt could play. A real artist.

The chemo has really fucked him up. Joseph goes to sleep riding in the van. He almost topples over when Maria turns a corner. The seat belt helps, but Juan holds his head in place, otherwise it would hit the window.

MARIA  
Valentina called the house.

JUAN  
What did she say?

MARIA  
Yes.  
(beat)  
Whatever that means.

JUAN  
I know what it means.

MARIA  
Oh, you better not get that girl in  
trouble. She is so sweet.

JUAN  
Oh, mom! Don't worry. We are just  
going out.

MARIA  
I mean it.

JUAN  
Don't worry.

MARIA

Oh, I know. I'm only playing with you. You are an angel and my most creative son.

JUAN

Raul.

MARIA

Raul will be married in a year. He is no angel. I promise. It always happens that way.

JUAN

Oh, well. It's not easy to be an angel in this town.

Juan takes a menu from the consol and jots down that phrase.

MARIA

What are you and Valentina going to do?

JUAN

Movies. Friday and Saturday. And Wednesday.

(beat)

I'm cutting back to only three feature films per week.

MARIA

What happened to Sofia? You used to date her every weekend.

JUAN

Don't anymore.

MARIA

And Isabella?

JUAN

Nope.

MARIA

Oh, my gosh.

(beat)

Camilla

Shakes his head "no".

MARIA

Emma

JUAN

Last Tuesday night, but not anymore.

MARIA

Luciana

Shakes his head "no".

MARIA

Oh, my gosh. My little boy is becoming a man.

JUAN

Really, mom. You think?

MARIA

So you think Valentina is the one.

JUAN

I don't know mom. She is really nice.

MARIA

Oh, she is the one for you. I can tell. A mother can tell these things.

A tear comes to Maria's eyes. She wipes her eyes as she drives.

JUAN

What is the matter, mom?

MARIA

(beginning to cry)

I don't want to be a grandmother so soon.

Juan chuckles.

If the truth is known Juan is about the most wholesome (moral well-being) and respectful young man in Los Angeles. He only dates seven girls so he can see seven films a week.

EXT. JOSEPH'S HOME

They pull up at the home and Joseph doesn't wake up.

Juan in the back is panicked. Juan fears he might be dead.

JUAN  
(almost shouting)  
Is he okay?

JOSEPH  
What? Hum? I'm okay.  
(beat)  
Getting out now.

Juan rushes to be there as he exits the van. Joseph almost falls but Juan is there.

Juan helps Joseph to the door. And then enters.

Maria walks with them.

Joseph opens the door and turns off the alarm. The dog runs out into the yard. Pees. Maria shows interest in the dog.

MARIA  
Oh how cute. He is such a proud  
little man. Look at him dance around.

The dog chooses her. And she picks up the dog.

MARIA  
Oh, I would take you home in a  
second.

JOSEPH  
You might be doing that.

MARIA  
Oh don't say that. You are going to  
be 100 years old.

JOSEPH  
I don't want to be 100 years old.

Joseph gives a slight smile, hardly recognizable.

Joseph makes a bee-line to the bed.

Juan looks around the apartment at the film posters and film canisters. He breezes through the VHS and DVDs. He signals his mom that he will be out in "1 second".

Maria retires to the van and waits.

Juan finds several shoe boxes full of old (very old) rejection letters. The return addresses - Leonard Hirshan, Zanuck, Mayer, Wilder, Rossen. Then shift to the stamps which cost ¢5, ¢8, ¢10. Some cost ¢15 and finally ¢20.

Juan searches in vain for more shoes boxes. It appears that after 1984 Joseph stopped submitting his screenplays.

Juan discovers a cabinet full of scripts. He flips through one and then a second script and clearly it too was typed on a manual typewriter (also in the cabinet). The paper is yellowed. Juan feels the thin, poor quality paper and with his body language we can see that he is afraid to actually touch the scripts. He delicately returns the script to the shelf.

Juan comes outside and speaks to his mother.

JUAN

He went right to the bed.

MARIA

Well this is a traumatic thing.

(beat)

You want to stay for a while?

JUAN

I think I need to. At least for a while anyway.

(beat)

I will call you.

MARIA

Okay, baby. Call me and I will come get you if you need. Maybe I will bring you some food later?

JUAN

Sure mom, that will be nice.

INT. JOSEPH'S HOME

Juan goes directly for the old scripts. He sits and reads.

He reads one, two and then three scripts. The finished scripts are on a table. Still 30 or 40 scripts remain in the cabinet.

Maria arrives with tons of food. She is very quiet and respectful. She fills the refrigerator and freezer with the food. Juan continues to read.

Joseph gets out of bed and goes to the bathroom and returns immediately returns. He seems unaware they are in his home.

Maria doesn't say a word. She hugs her son and kisses him.

Maria leaves.

Juan continues to read.

Days pass...

EXT. LOS ANGELES FREEWAY

Traffic is stopped. There is a Hollywood HEAVY HITTER, a major studio boss, in a half-million dollar car. We can see his gold watch and designer sunglasses. He looks amazingly like Harvey Weinstein.

In the next lane is a car full of unemployed men. They are smoking marihuana and when they roll the window downs it looks like a scene from Cheech and Chong's Up in Smoke.

The occupant of the passenger seat looks remarkably like Jeffrey Lebowski. "The dude" signals for him to roll down his window. The Heavy ignores him.

Finally, Lebowski (like a hunting dog) just "points" to the front driver's side tire. He remains pointing for a very long while. Until finally, the Heavy rolls down his window.

Pause in the action, Lebowski remains pointing.

LEBOWSKI

Man, you are getting a flat tire.

The Heavy gets out of the car. We can now see he is dressed casually in a \$500 set of clothes. And \$600 shoes. The Heavy looks down and sure enough the tire is one-half deflated.

HEAVY

Thanks, dude.

The hitter looks ahead. Off the highway at the next exit there is a huge sign "Luxury Tire Repair". Traffic begins to move slowly and the Heavy maneuvers the car so he will be able to exit.

EXT. JOSEPH'S HOME

Joseph leaves his home. He looks much improved, but clearly he is still a very old man.

EXT. TIRE SHOP

When Joseph arrives there is the Heavy reading the script. In fact, it is the HEAVIEST of the HOLLYWOOD HITTERS.

The HEAVY wants to ask Joseph a question but he staggers right past him into the bathroom.

The Heavy's phone vibrates and the caller ID reveals it is "Steven S".

Joseph left the house and he thought he felt better. But the combination of his illness and the Heavy reading the script makes Joseph need to barf. He enters the bathroom. He throws up in the toilet. He sits on the bathroom floor in a panic. Sweating bullets. The cancer has caught up with him? Heart attack? Stroke? Anxiety attack? It is the anxiety.

Juan is working on the tire.

Joseph struggles to rise. Vomiting has drained all his energy. He manages to walk out through the waiting room.

HEAVY

Hey, excuse me. Is this your screenplay?

Joseph doesn't have the energy to respond, but he points to Juan. And he continues into the work area.

JOSEPH  
(exhausted)  
Heavy hitter.

JUAN  
You okay?

JOSEPH  
That's...  
(inaudible)  
Harvey Weinstein.  
(beat)  
Major power broker.

Joseph's clothes are soaked with sweat. He points to the waiting room.

JOSEPH  
Go.

Juan looks worried about Joseph's health. But he slowly moves off.

The Heavy is watching this through the glass.

HEAVY  
Can you tell me who Juan and Joseph are?

JUAN  
I'm Juan and that is Mr. Jefferson.

HEAVY  
So tell me about this movie.

JUAN  
Sure. It's a drug war western set in the East.

INT. WORK AREA

POV of Joseph looking into the waiting room.

Juan is pitching the hell out of the movie. It is the same speech he's given to the blonde at the hotel. We can't hear and Joseph doesn't want to interrupt.

Joseph tries to pick up the tire. He can't, too weak. He takes out his cell phone.

INT. THE WAITING ROOM

The Heavy's phone vibrates; it is "P Diddy".

HEAVY

So what is the world?

JUAN

Abject poverty. Rural China. Struggle for control of the first real drug trade. The rich are rich and the poor are very very poor.

INT. WORK AREA

POV of Joseph looking into the waiting room.

Juan continues pitching the place, China. He is using hand gestures to sell the idea. He seems to have developed some impressive communication skills.

INT. COLLEGE CLASSROOM

Raul's phone vibrates. He receives a text from Joseph, "Heavy in shop. Help."

Raul shows it to his girlfriend. Her eyes become large. She gets him up and out of the classroom.

RAUL

What does it mean?

GIRLFRIEND

Heavy hitter. Your brother needs your help else you wouldn't have gotten this text.

RAUL

Can you text him that I'm on the way?

She takes the phone and they run to the Impala.

The car doesn't want to start. Heart sinks. Finally, the car starts and they leave the college. Heart rises.

INT. WORK AREA

Visibly ill Joseph is looking into the waiting room. Juan is in the zone. Confident and standing with perfect posture.

INT. THE WAITING ROOM

HEAVY

Who's your protagonist?

JUAN

Abel. He is a war hero from Texas. But lost love and legal problems have him in China in the middle of a drug war. He has to take sides. Get his fair share of the wealth and get out alive. And he can fight, fuck and shoot.

The Heavy chuckles.

The phone vibrates and the caller ID reveals it is "D Beckham". He doesn't pick up.

HEAVY

That's good.

INT. WORK AREA

Raul arrives and begins working repairing the Heavy's tire. Raul tells no jokes.

INT. WAITING ROOM

HEAVY

Who's the potential audience?

JUAN

Pretty much everyone -- plenty of action for the 15-to-25 demographic, plenty of brain-power for the 25-and-over crowd."

INT. WORK AREA

Valentina arrives with her mother. Evidently Valentina doesn't drive. They all seem to be talking and peering into the

waiting room. They are certainly more nervous than Juan who appears perfectly at ease.

INT. WAITING ROOM

JUAN

... They will think about becoming legendary!

HEAVY

Okay.

(beat)

What other movies are like this movie?

JUAN

First of all it is 100 percent unique. This has never been done. But if you insist. It's the Scarface in China only the protagonist is a good hearted Texas war hero.

A call from "Leno". It is ignored.

HEAVY

Let me just study this for a moment.

JUAN

You forgot to ask me...

HEAVY

What?

JUAN

You didn't ask me about production values.

Awkward pause.

HEAVY

Okay. What about the production values?

JUAN

China is a beautiful country. Exotic. The colors and the architecture. The people and their clothing.

HEAVY

You write a lot about color, I noticed.

JUAN

All these production designers they love these Chinese historical epics. All you have to do is show this to them and they will work like dogs to win you best picture.

HEAVY

I know some of these Chinese films.

JUAN

Beautiful.

HEAVY

Yes.

(beat)

Okay. Thanks.

The Heavy returns to reading the script.

Call from "Nicholas C". It is ignored.

INT. WORK AREA

Maria in the van arrives. There is food and she is ready to spread it a table in the waiting area.

Juan leaves the waiting room. Joseph is tired of standing. He enters the waiting room and sits on the couch. He is perfectly silent. Waiting.

The phone rings in the office and it startles everyone; they fear the Heavy will put down the script. Joseph is about to get up from the couch, but it rings twice and stops. The Heavy looks up and then looks around, but then continues to read.

Valentina enters the Heavy's car and looks for CDs. She looks in the back, in the glove box and under the seats.

RAUL

What are you doing?

(beat)

He's going to think you are stealing.

VALENTINA

No, I'm looking for his music.

JUAN

It's in here.

Raul points to the car radio, which is state of the art and plays digital music.

Valentina toggles thru his collection. She gets a reasonable idea of his tastes and then. Pulls out her phone. She pushes a few buttons.

The Heavy reaches the last page. Everyone springs into action. They position themselves to quickly bring a party to the room. There is no dialogue, the family/group just know what to do to keep the Heavy there for just a bit longer. And then they wait...

Everyone has a tray of food from the van. Juan, Maria, Valentina, Raul and his girlfriend. Joseph picks up some sporks.

The minute the Heavy closes the script, the room is flooded with people carrying food.

Juan brings the Heavy his keys. Valentina brings food from the van and then syncs her phone to the television. Video's of the Heavy's favorite songs begin playing.

The Heavy looks at the \$10 repair sign. He pulls out a \$20 for Juan.

The Heavy is just as nervous around Juan as Juan is around the studio head. Either he doesn't believe Juan is the actual writer or he is intimidated by his talent.

JUAN

Let me get your change.

HEAVY

Forget it.

JUAN

So what do you think?

HEAVY

I don't know.

There is an odd pause.

JUAN

I liked Shock and Awe and Crooks and Robbers.

HEAVY

What about Wolfhounds?

JUAN

Uh... not so much. It was okay. But what are you gonna do? To be honest, they probably let you down.

HEAVY

I fired most of them.

JUAN

Well you should have.

(beat)

A simple concept everyone needs to accept -- profit good, losses bad.

There is another odd pause.

HEAVY

This your family?

JUAN

Pretty much.

Valentina walks up.

JUAN

This is my girl.

VALENTINA

Hello. Glad you came.

HEAVY

The writers always get the best women.

VALENTINA

Thank you.

HEAVY

About your writing partner...

Joseph is motionless and quiet on the couch.

HEAVY

Is he okay? He doesn't look well.

JUAN

Cancer.

HEAVY

Oh, I'm sorry.

(beat)

If there is anything I can do you will let me know?

JUAN

Well...

(beat)

He's written over forty feature length scripts.

HEAVY

Oh, I see.

JUAN

Could you have some people read a few of them?

HEAVY

Of course.

They turn to Joseph who is still perfectly motionless and quiet on the couch.

MARIA

Hello, sir. I'm Maria. Juan's mother and part owner.

HEAVY

You and your boy are the owners?

MARIA

And my other son, Raul.

HEAVY

Hard working boys.

(beat)

I think Juan may have some real talent.

MARIA

He has been telling stories since he was a baby. I couldn't get him to do his homework in school, he was always watching movies.

HEAVY

You are a single mom?

(beat)

And you made this?

MARIA

Yes, sir. I'm very fortunate. I have my boys to help me. Thank you for taking an interest. If there is anything I can ever do for you. I run a small catering business and of course you know this, we can repair or replace any tire.

HEAVY

Amazing.

MARIA

Come try some food.

They have set up a table in the middle of the waiting room and it is a real spread. Maria fills a heaping plate for him.

The Heavy takes a plate. He enjoys this. He has the script he hasn't put down and a paper plate. He looks at a pitcher of iced tea.

The toothless homeless man, from earlier, shows up. He sits at the table and patiently waits. Maria brings him a plate and some tea.

MARIA

How are you, Joe?

MAN

I'm good.

MARIA

Well great. You tell me how you like this. It's a new recipe.

MAN

Yes, ma'am. I will let you know.

(beat)

Thank you.

Camera pans.

A celebrity (cameo) arrives with a low tire.

CELEBRITY

Hey what are you doing here?

HEAVY

Had a low tire.

CELEBRITY

Looks like you are having a party.

Raul's girlfriend immediately brings him a glass of tea.

RAUL'S GIRLFRIEND

Nice to meet you.

RAUL

We fixed your flat. It was a nail.  
But if it leaks or you have any  
problem bring it right back.

The Heavy walks around eating and smiling at people. Under his arm is the script. He will not part with it.

A call from "Jerry S" is ignored.

The Heavy sits on couch and almost whispers to Joseph.

HEAVY

I think you have something here. I'm going to show this to some people and I will be in touch.

JOSEPH

Thank you.

The heavy hitter stands and extends his hand to shake.

Joseph tries to get up.

HEAVY

No, no don't get up.

They shake hands.

HEAVY

Either way, I'll be back.

(beat)

You hang in there.

Outside in the parking lot, the Caller ID says, "Jennifer A" and the Heavy Hitter takes the call.

HEAVY

Jennifer. Hello.

(beat)

Nothing really.

(beat)

I picked up a nail in a tire. Just had it fixed.

(beat)

Why? What is up?

(beat)

No really? I'll take care of that.

Weeks pass...

EXT. THIRD AND FAIRFAX AVE - JUAN'S IMPALA - DAY

Juan steps down on the clutch and SNAP! The clutch cable breaks. We can actually hear it shatter, like a pencil broken in two, and the pedal plunges straight to the floor as useless as a severed limb.

JUAN

FUCK!

But Juan has a blue-collar grease monkey trick up his sleeve. Good thing it is possible to drive an old Chevy Impala without a clutch. Here's how he does it. He cuts the engine off, crams the gearshift into first, then restarts it.

JUAN

Fuck it.

The car lurches and whiplashes Juan horribly, but he car does grind forward. He matches the RPM's just right, and shifts straight into second, too -- top speed, 20 mph.

The Impala's antiquity is actually an asset in this situation.

Hazards on, Juan politely edges to the shoulder. But there is nothing Juan can do about the angry motorists who began honking and cursing as they passed. It is a hot day and people are grumpy and maybe in a hurry. Nearly every single motorist has their horn pinned down.

There is zero mercy on the streets of Los Angeles.

Juan smiles and waves at the irate drivers.

JUAN

(smiling)

Fuck you, too.

EXT. STUDIO PARKING LOT - DAY

It is bright daylight. Joseph pulls into the parking lot very slowly he scans the entry area carefully for nails.

He drives his scooter past a Ferrari 458 Italia license plate "KIM K".

A Maybach "PDIDDY"

Roll Royce Phantom Drophead Coupe "BENDIT"

Mercedes SLR McLaren "CARMAN"

Ferrari Enzo "N CAGE"

Porsche 959 "JERRY"

Lamborghini Aventador "Kanye"

Hennessey Venom GT Spider "AeroSm"

Bugatti Veyron "IDOL"

Maybach Exelero "JAY Z".

Joseph has a satisfying expression on his face.

There isn't a place to park his Moped but he manages. Juan arrives in his winged and damaged Impala. He exits the car and we see he is wearing an ill-fitting suit, but it looks new.

Inside the office building, Juan will look a little out of place. They both look a bit out of place.

They meet on the sidewalk in front of the building. They shake hands.

JUAN

Believe it or not, the clutch cable broke. Those last two miles I had to baby her in, at, like, ten miles per hour.

JOSEPH

Did you bring your ID and banking information?

Juan has left his paper in the Impala. He runs back to the car and returns with his papers. He's a messed up kid about to walk into a vipers den.

JUAN

I left them in the car. Sorry.

JOSEPH

Well, you are a little nervous.  
Settle down. Breath. In and out.  
(beat)  
You ready to go inside?

Juan is very nervous. And Joseph has his shit together.

JOSEPH

Listen, they may pitch you inside. If anything weird happens, I'll keep my foot on the bag.

(half beat)

But you keep cool and stay in the batters box.

Juan helps Joseph up the three or four steps into the building.

**INT. STUDIO CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY**

There isn't any B.S.

HEAVY

These are the lawyers.

There are some lawyers and the Heavy motions to have them begin with Juan.

LAWYER

We just need your ID to copy and your banking information.

They take Juan's ID and photocopy it. They take his banking information down. They move to Joseph and he give them the same.

SECRETARY

Can I offer you something to drink -  
soda or water?

Juan looks to Joseph for reassurance.

JUAN

Can I have some water?

SECRETARY

You certainly can.

Joseph declines.

SECRETARY

Well, if you change your mind don't  
hesitate to ask.

A second lawyer approaches Juan with a contract. Juan nuts up and looks at Joseph for permission to sign. Joseph encourages him to sign. It all seems to be arranged. Juan signs. Big smile.

The Heavy is a serious student of human nature and is eyeballing Juan trying to read him. He moves his attention to Joseph, studying him.

The lawyer moves to Joseph with the contract. Joseph signs without hesitation. Joseph is emotionless. He looks directly into the Heavy's eyes. Neither blink an eye for a very long time; it is strangely adversarial.

Is it fear and/or resentment from the Joseph's past?

Does Joseph fear the movie won't get made? Or does he think the studio will butcher the story?

Or is Joseph just a 80-year-old man of steel? Maybe Joseph is just returning the study the Heavy is giving him?

Perhaps Joseph is handing Juan's career off to the Heavy, given the cancer and his advanced age.

Joseph is still nervous. It is a 'done deal' but he is glancing around the office. He watches through the glass as the lawyers make copies of everything.

SECRETARY

Here is your water, honey.

JUAN

Thank you.

SECRETARY

Listen ever since talking to your mother on the phone, I've been wondering about you. She's so very nice.

(half beat)

I'm sure you are the youngest writer that has been in this room. And they say you are very talented. I can't wait to see what you wrote.

(beat)

Congratulations.

JUAN

Thank you ma'am. I appreciate that.

SECRETARY

Welcome to the business.

(half beat)

What are you going to do next?

JUAN

I don't know ma'am. We didn't talk about that yet.

HEAVY

(to Joseph)

I think you have really done a great job here. We really have hopes for this script.

(beat)

And of course you molding him; some of the script is masterful. It must have been some sort of miracle.

JOSEPH

No not really. He is a natural.

FADE OUT: