

"What Just Happened?"

By

Art Linson

January 2007

Based on the book *What Just Happened?*
Bitter Hollywood Tales from the Front Line
By Art Linson

2929 Productions/Tribeca Productions
9100 Wilshire Blvd. #500 West
Beverly Hills, CA 90212
310-309-5704

FADE IN:

MONDAY

Super: 6:30pm.

TO A SCREEN FILLED WITH STEAM.

As the steam slowly dissolves, A VERY TIGHT SHOT REVEALS two hands positioning a clear plastic tray on a firm counter. The right hand reaches for small tube and squeezes a white line of goo into the tray followed by another tube which spurts a long orangy goo next to it. A small brush begins to rapidly mix the two substances until the whole mess turns a deep purplish brown.

TIGHT ANGLE ON MAN'S CHEEK. The right hand is carefully spreading the goo on a five day growth of greying whiskers. Almost instantly, the grey starts to disappear, turning a purplish brown.

As the camera slowly pulls back, we see BEN counting to himself as he studies himself in the mirror. Despite the fact that years of anxiety have taken it's toll on Ben's face as well as his hairline, Ben seems rather pleased with the dye job in progress. Outside the bathroom window it is already getting dark.

BEN

(quietly to himself)

Ninety-seven, ninety-eight, ninety
nine, one hundred!

It's time to rinse the stuff out.

ANGLE ON BARE FEET standing next to a shower drain. Water is cascading down his legs as the brown residue washes away.

ANGLE ON BEN drying himself with a towel. His phone rings. He lets it go. The answering machine intercepts the call.

ANSWERING MACHINE-BEN'S VOICE

Hello?

(pause)

Hello?

Another pause forcing the caller to talk to the machine thinking Ben is actually on the phone.

ANSWERING MACHINE-BEN'S VOICE

Please leave me a message...BEEP.

MAN'S VOICE

Got me again, that fucking message.
That's not nice... Fuck
you...(click).

Ben smiles combs back his thinning hair.

CUT TO:

INT. CINEPLEX THEATER - NIGHT

Super: 10:00pm

ON A LARGE MOVIE SCREEN WE SEE a grainy shot of a man, who looks like Sean Penn. He is laying on the side of a dusty road. He is trying desperately to prop himself up on a large embankment. Blood, his blood, is all over the place. When he nears the top, he topples back down in a grim heap. He appears to be critically injured. Almost lifeless, he refuses to give in. A smallish dog loyally stands next to him.

SEAN

I'm not going to beg.

Three men, casually standing near a car just across the road, impassively eye Sean's struggle.

ANGLE ON A SHOT OF BEN seated in the back of the theater. His eyes strain to remain expressionless as he intently watches the packed preview audience watch the screen.

ANGLE ON the screen.

SEAN

You think I care what happens to me? It's you I'm concerned with. It's your salvation.... "Father forgive them for they know not what they do."

TIGHT SHOT OF ANOTHER MAN three seats down the row from Ben, is a slick looking middle eastern type, JOHNNY, with a young girl poured into tight black leather clothes on one side and a young "hip" looking guy in jeans on the other. Johnny is smiling at the screen as if he were watching a comedy. English is clearly his second language.

ON THE SCREEN Sean furtively reaches in his pocket. One of the men raises his gun. The dog, confused, darts across the road and gets caught in a crossfire.

The dog drops.

ANGLE ON BEN -- He glances imperceptibly to his right, to his left, trying to assess the damage to those seated in his row. He's seen this scene before.

ANGLE ON the screen --

SEAN

No.

ANGLE ON BEN.

BEN

No.

ANGLE ON THE SCREEN. The large man with the gun shoots Sean three more times. Sean, critically wounded and bleeding, remains defiant. The men casually walk away as the road turns red with blood. Then the image on the screen fades, and the interior lights of the movie theater are abruptly raised. The unfinished film has yet to add the credits.

ANGLE ON THE CROWDED AUDIENCE. Except for a few people who offer some scattered applause or serve up a few groans, the rest of the preview audience remains silent, reflective and in pain. Actually, they seem to be in a collective state of STUPEFIED HORROR.

ANGLE ON BEN. His face is now frozen. His eyes don't blink.

ANGLE ON a few business people in the back row, STUDIO PEOPLE. They start to get up slowly and make their way out into the lobby. Whatever their reactions are, they're not going to reveal them yet.

Seated directly behind Ben is DAWN, late 20's, looking every bit the brainy and ambitious development girl. She leans forward and pats Ben on the shoulder, offering comfort. Johnny sits back composed, seemingly unaware that things might not be going so well.

ANGLE ON the POLLSTER, unctuous, hurried, determined to do his job no matter what. He comes down the aisle with a box of cards --

POLLSTER

How about that, ladies and gentlemen? Huh!! We're going to ask you to remain in your seats while we pass out these cards.

POLLSTER(cont'd)

We greatly appreciate your taking the time to give us your thoughts - you're all very much a part of the film making process and we value whatever it is you have to say.

Many start to leave, ignoring the Pollster --

Ben watches them leave, waits a beat, then gets up and starts in the opposite direction --

POLLSTER

Keep in mind that this is a test screening - there are still technical issues that'll be improved in post-production. Since this is a work in progress, your comments are of great significance.

Ben puts on a lightly tinted pair of glasses, before entering the lobby.

INT. THEATER LOBBY - NIGHT

Various groupings - studio people, agents, managers - having conversations, making dinner plans, etc. Thin lipped smiles pasted on each face as they await the "preview numbers." People gesture to Ben and pantomime that they'll be calling him later. Ben nods.

Ben's young assistant, CARL, a "filmie," comes over -

CARL

You want me to drop the top sheet and the cards in your car?

BEN

You can, but you know how I feel, I don't really pay much attention to the cards.

CARL

You don't think they're relevant?

BEN

Who knows, we're here to lead.

CARL

Sure.

Ben tunes out and keeps moving through the lobby. He sees "LOU" TARNOW, the head of the studio, as she walks by the snack stand getting ever closer to Ben.

CARL

(to Ben but has moved on)
I noticed a couple of those shots
before the massacre were taken
right out of the *Third Man*. So
cool.

Lou Tarnow is small with sad understanding eyes. Since she has the power to say, "no," she never has to raise her voice. Nonetheless, one look at her and you know why those around her stand aside and give her lots of room.

Ben tries to duck in the bathroom. It's too soon to trade with Lou.

Coming out of the bathroom is Johnny with his leathered friend. Ben is given a big bear hug by the larger Johnny. His face is shoved in Johnny's chest.

JOHNNY

(thick mid-eastern accent
or is it Israeli)
Thank you for allowing me to be
part of this. Fantastic! Big
foreign upside.

He finally let's go of Ben, who returns an awkward smile.

JOHNNY

Ben, I'd like to introduce you to
Jimmy.

They shake. Johnny leans over and secretly whispers in Ben's ear. Ben leans in.

JOHNNY

He wants to invest in the next one.

BEN

Uh huh.

JOHNNY

He has more than seventy shops. No
one in LA does hair better than
Jimmy.

BEN

Johnny, that's very good to know.
I'm going to think about it.

INT. CINEPLEX MEN'S ROOM

Ben enters and approaches the sink. He stares at himself in the mirror. He removes his glasses. It's not pretty. He hears others about to enter. He retreats to a stall and locks the door.

STUDIO MARKETING GUY #2

Whoa!

STUDIO MARKETING GUY #1

There is nothing to say?

STUDIO MARKETING GUY #2

It evaporated up there.

Ben hesitates, stays in the stall.

STUDIO MARKETING GUY #1

Blood. Body parts. Heart breaking sadness. Y'never know, man. Let's be positive. This could be the year for "grief."

STUDIO GUY MARKETING #2

Grief for whom? They shot the fucking dog in the fucking head!

Ben decides to leave the stall. They see him through the mirror. An awkward moment. Ben confidently walks to the basin. He smiles and nods to both of them.

STUDIO MARKETING GUY #1

Beautifully shot, Ben, beautiful.

STUDIO MARKETING GUY #2

Loved the music. It stays with you.

Ben puts some cold water on his face. Ben looks them over and goes for the door.

BEN

Thank you.

INT. THEATER LOBBY

As Ben exits he sees Lou waiting for him across the lobby patiently eating her popcorn. As he walks, he's followed by his 'D' girl, Dawn.

DAWN

It's almost there. If Jeremy would just cooperate with the cut and we get lucky with the reviews, we have a chance.

BEN

We'll deal with all of this tomorrow. I've got to talk to Lou. It's time.

He walks over to Lou. Her eyes are moist with commiseration, but her crisp demeanor easily maintains the balance of power.

LOU

Ben, it's a *good* movie.

BEN

Yes, it is a *good* movie, Lou, isn't it?

LOU

A *good* movie, and in the end, that's all that's important.

BEN

That's what they say.

LOU

Where's your director?

BEN

Missed his plane at Heathrow. He's sick about it. He gets in tomorrow morning.

LOU

It's so hard to produce a *good* movie.

BEN

Very.

Pause.

LOU

I respect it.

BEN

Lou, you're making me cry....

As a youngish man in a wrinkled dark suit and dark shirt wearing a baseball hat and dark glasses interrupts them, they quickly change their apprehensive expressions and start to gush.

LOU
Brilliant work, Sean. Brilliant.

BEN
You're never not great. Just great.

They all trade hugs. Sean and Lou casually kiss on the lips.

SEAN
Think we gotta shot here?

LOU
Yes, absolutely.

SEAN
That's very generous.

LOU
See you in Cannes.

Sean offers a broad grin, flashes a thumbs up and vanishes into the night. Lou, back to business, offers Ben some popcorn. She just looks at him. Ben waits.

LOU
We're going to lose money.

BEN
How do you know?

LOU
A lot of money.

BEN
You know this before it's done?

LOU
That's right.

BEN
Even before the DVD comes out?

LOU
Pretty much.

BEN
I have to think about this.

Lou gestures 'you do that' as she walks away.

CUT TO:

INT. BRENTWOOD BAR AND GRILL

Super: 11:30 pm

Ben is sitting alone at the bar. Next to him is the box of preview cards from the screening. It has been opened. Various cards are scattered in front of him. Ben reads them without emotion.

CU on cards - *"I just want to go home and hug my children..."*

Another card: *"It would of been funnier if you ate the dog."*

Ben picks up the top sheet. XCU of his finger moving to the "definite recomend box." The box says 1%. As his finger moves to the "definitely won't recommend box," It stops.

Ben remains expressionless. He sips his martini.

FADE TO:

TUESDAY

INT. BEN'S BEDROOM -- MORNING

AN ALARM CLOCK blasts the silence. A hand reaches in and shuts it off.

Super: 7am.

INT. BEN'S KITCHEN

Ben is seated at his kitchen table in what appears to be a modest, empty, neat apartment, seemingly a makeshift residence for a guy between stops. The only accoutrement to luxury is an espresso machine. The box of preview cards are scattered next to a cup of coffee.

Ben is on the phone while perusing Daily Variety. As the camera pushes in on the front cover we see a big picture of a young handsome thirty something guy below the headline: **"JACK MC DONAGH COMMITS SUICIDE. TEN PERCENTER PUTS HIMSELF IN TURN AROUND."**

Ben casually looks at the news.

BEN

I did call after the screening last night. I was not reluctant. He's the director for godsakes! If I did say to him 'fuck me, why should this one be easy,' that doesn't mean I'm not enthusiastic...

Ben's call waiting signal beeps:

BEN

Hold on.....Hello? Hello???
 (pause) No it's not the machine.
 Talk to me. (pause) What are you saying? (pause) He arrived thirty pounds overweight and he's sporting a Grizzly Adams beard?that's no big deal.

Ben pauses to think. He pushes the box away.

BEN

He's fooling with you. We don't start shooting til Thursday. I'll join you today and we'll talk to him. Don't worry. He'll shave.

Ben presses the call waiting button. He glances at one last miserable preview card. He can't resist.

CU of card. There are two primitive drawings of a pair of hands. *One with a thumb pointing down and the other with the middle finger pointing straight up.*

BEN

I'm back...Yeah...I'll tell you what you can tell him. Tell him everything went great. Tell him, it's too soon to get too excited because early screenings are just learning tools, but all signs say...'through the roof.' Uh huh.....

A beat.

BEN

You're asking why would he believe it? He'll believe it...because he wants to believe it.

Ben hangs up, calmly neatens the preview cards and puts them back in the box.

He takes one more look at the head shot of JACK, the dead 10%er, on the cover of Variety, before heading for the door.

CUT TO:

EXT. BEN'S APARTMENT COMPLEX -- SAME MORNING

ANGLE ON BEN as he exits a not unpleasant, ordinary apartment court in Brentwood. A little understated for a movie producer. His cell phone is in one hand, assorted papers in another. We see that he's casually dressed. His only affectation is that he wears no socks. The rims of his eyes are red. He gets into a three year old silver BMW, and drives west down Sunset Blvd.

Super: 7:45am.

ANGLE ON THE CAR AS IT ENTERS a classier neighborhood of expensive homes in the Pacific Palisades. He pulls into the driveway and stops. He looks at himself in the rear view mirror. He tries a few different attempts at manufacturing an optimistic smile. He decides to go with the first version.

Max and Sophie, ages 5 and 7, run out of the house laughing and get in the car.

MAX/SOPHIE

Hi Daddy, hi daddy.

BEN

Morning gorgeouses...Who dresses you guys?

MAX/SOPHIE

WE DO!

MAX

Mom wants to ask you something.

BEN

Now?

SOPHIE

She said it's okay for you to walk up to the front door and talk to her instead of using your cell phone.

Ben takes a beat to stare at the front door.

BEN

Okay, I'll be right back.

As he rings the bell, his ex wife, KELLY, opens the door. In her mid-thirties, she is quite attractive. They both reveal that awkwardness of a separation, still fresh. Vestiges of love are in the air but a touch of hatred is circling. She looks him over. He looks back.

BEN

You always looked best in the morning.

KELLY

Thank you...you promised.

BEN

I said I'll do it.

KELLY

You always say you'll do it but you don't.

BEN

I know, I'm under siege....I realize I always ... but this time it's true.

KELLY

For all of us.

BEN

I'll do it. I will take them this weekend. And no more peanuts in the apartment.

KELLY

Or the kids can't stay over.

BEN

Okay.

He peeks inside the front door. Kelly stands her ground not letting him get too familiar.

BEN

Where is the big sofa chair?

KELLY

I'm having it recovered.

BEN

Oh. I miss it.

KELLY

You miss the chair?

BEN
I loved that chair. I sat in it
all the time. I remember how much
I paid for it.

Ben tries to enter the foyer for a better look. Kelly
reluctantly blocks his view.

KELLY
C'mon Ben, let's play by the rules.

BEN
I thought our last session went
really well, didn't it?

KELLY
Yes, but this therapy is called
"how to learn to live apart." So
we can move on gracefully.

BEN
I still have feelings.

KELLY
So do I.

A beat.

BEN
(pointing inside)
The dark green velvet was such a
good look for that sofa.

KELLY
I felt like a change.

BEN
Can I call you?

KELLY
(can't help but smile)
Yes, of course.

Ben waves and walks back to the car.

CUT TO:

EXT. BRENTWOOD GRAMMAR SCHOOL

Ben waves goodbye to his kids as they run into the school. He
drives away.

CUT TO:

INT. BEN'S BMW DRIVING DOWN SUNSET.

Ben drives further west until he enters a large circular driveway of ANOTHER HOUSE. This neighborhood is even more luxurious than the first. He honks. A very hot girl, ZOE, comes dashing out and gets in the car.

ZOE

Hi.

BEN

Hey, baby.

He pecks her on the cheek.

ZOE

You want to say hi to Mom before you drive off?

He looks back at ANOTHER HANDSOME WOMAN who is gardening. She turns to look at him. He thinks about it.

BEN

Maybe, next time.

He's about to pull out of the drive way. He looks at her.

BEN

Hey, your eyes are red. You weren't crying?

ZOE

Uh no. Just stuff.

BEN

Well, if it's boy stuff, you can always talk to me. I know things your mother may not know.

ZOE

I'm sure.

BEN

Seriously, you can ask me?

ZOE

I'm okay.

A beat. He looks back at this first wife.

BEN

I'll be right back.

He walks up the manicured stone pathway. Even though this relationship is two clicks back, it still seems to smart a bit. After all, they share a daughter and Ben's probably still on the hook for child support.

BEN

Hi Marilyn.

MARILYN

Hey, Ben.

BEN

What's with Zoe?

MARILYN

Girl stuff. I don't know.

BEN

Is she dating? Parties? She doesn't really tell me much. She keeps things to her self.

MARILYN

I think she gets that from you. I think she tells us about as much about what she does as you would tell me about what you do. Secrets seem to be the family hobby. I think it's in the DNA.

BEN

(chastened)

I know what you mean.

(he looks over the property)

Hey, this place has gone way up. I wished I still owned it.

MARILYN

(smiling)

But you don't.

BEN

(smiling back)

I gotta go.

CUT TO:

BEN'S BMW - MOMENTS LATER

Ben and Zoe drive south down Amalfi towards the school. Zoe has turned her music station on and her spirits have brightened.

ZOE

You know not every 17 year old girl lets their father drive them to high school. I like it, makes me feel like a kid.

(pause)

I like to feel like a kid sometimes.

BEN

You are a kid and I'm a lucky guy. I still get to drive you to school.

ZOE

You think you're gonna pick me up and drop me off when I go to college.

BEN

You bet. If you'll let me.

They smile at each other.

ZOE

Let's just say it's negotiable.

CUT TO:

EXT. PARKING LOT CROSSROADS UPPER SCHOOL

Ben watches as Zoe gets out, meets up with her friends and heads into school. Ben's about to get back in his car when he sees SCOTT SOLOMON, another father who has dropped his kid off. Scott, after glimpsing Ben, walks briskly in another direction. Ben catches up and the two walk briskly away.

BEN

Terrific re-write, Scott. The studio just wants one more little tuck....

SCOTT

I'm done. It has to stop.

BEN

You can do this. We're at that stage where a couple of tiny fixes...

SCOTT

The madness has to stop.

BEN

It's a process.

SCOTT

A process? I've been working on this script for two and a half years. Where's the light at the...oh fuck. You promised me, if you weren't going to make this movie, you'd give it back to me. You gave me your word.

BEN

I did?

SCOTT

Yes.

BEN

Things change. You know that.

SCOTT

I can't do it.

BEN

Scott don't make me say....'you're bought and paid for.'

SCOTT

Fine. But remember there is the next script, and believe me, I have a next one...

BEN

...what is it?

SCOTT

I'm going to write about a chef.

BEN

Uh huh...

SCOTT

It's a rich world. Restaurants are playgrounds for deceit and power. Chef's are the new stars.

BEN

It's about cooking?

SCOTT

It's *A Star Is Born*. Shampoo with garlic.

A beat. They stop walking.

BEN
It's not a movie.

SCOTT
It's not a movie? What is it?

BEN
Food on the big screen, I don't think so. It doesn't work. Why don't you try Leonard - it might be his thing.

SCOTT
I already did.

A beat. Scott starts to walk away, Ben follows.

BEN
You went to Leonard before you went to me?

SCOTT
He's the coach of my kid's soccer team.

BEN
But Scott, c'mon. Leonard?

SCOTT
What difference does it make if you're not interested?

BEN
Loyalty matters to me.
(pause)
What'd Leonard say?

SCOTT
He said, 'It's not a movie.'

Ben gives him a look as if to say 'two producers can't be wrong.'

BEN
Don't worry, Scott. I'm going to get *our* script made.

SCOTT
Too bad about Jack, huh.

BEN
It's rare. Usually agents kill
others not themselves.

SCOTT
Out of the blue?

BEN
Hey, it happens.

SCOTT
SUICIDE? It happens!

BEN
Stress. It builds up.

CUT TO:

A VERY CLOSE SHOT OF A MAN'S SHAVED HEAD.

Super: 9am.

His left ear holds four pierced earrings and on the side of his neck the word "chai" in large Hebrew lettering is tattooed in blue black ink. He's wearing red lipstick. Don't be fooled by the extreme "get up," this is a serious guy who considers himself a serious filmmaker. This is JEREMY BRUNELL, the English director who missed the preview from last night.

BEN (O.S.)
Jeremy, Would you please stop
saying, "If they don't fuck up my
cut, we may just have something we
don't mind putting our names on."

JEREMY
Mate, I don't wanna get too lofty
here, but I made a film that
doesn't wallow in the cliches of
retribution. It doesn't try to
satisfy by letting the audience
'get even.' You knew I didn't do
that stuff when I was hired.

We pull back to reveal Ben's unpretentious office. Through the windows we see the landmarks of a large studio complex, sound stages, etc. Jeremy is on the couch dressed in black leather, a sleeveless, baggy T-shirt that expose wrist to armpit tattoos. His two suitcases are strewn on the floor. Dawn sits at the other end of the couch taking notes.

BEN

That's true. But let's just say when those that put up the money finally see the bad guys get away and the little pet dog get murdered, they get concerned.

JEREMY

You said, Lou said, "it was a 'good' movie."

BEN

She did. Three times.

JEREMY

Is that "concern" to you?

BEN

A bit.

JEREMY

How's 'at?

BEN

Jeremy, I don't know what *good* means in south London. But north of fucking Pico, at a preview screening where Lou says 'good' three times, it means drop your pants, bite down hard 'cause this one's gonna hurt.

JEREMY

Don't buy it mate. Were you watching the audience watch the movie?

BEN

Of course I was.

JEREMY

What was their overall reaction?

Ben taps the box of preview cards.

BEN

Like they took their kids to Disneyland and saw Mickey Mouse douse himself with gasoline and set himself on fire.

A beat -- Jeremy smiles.

JEREMY

I'm okay with that. And anyways, we're two weeks away from the red carpet.

BEN

The festival took the film because they want stars. They only saw a ten minute reel. The studio could pull it from the festival with a phone call.

JEREMY

You're overheated, mate.

BEN

I don't think so. We're going to have to accommodate Lou in some way. Throw her a bone. Do something...or the road could get a bit weird.

JEREMY

Are you saying you're not gonna protect my cut?

BEN

I'm your partner - of course, I'm gonna protect your cut.

Dawn stops taking notes from the meeting.

DAWN

That's what Ben does.

BEN

Thank you. I just want you to understand the terrain we're about to cross. The preview was terrifying.

JEREMY

If we stand united, we'll prevail.

BEN

All right. I'm here to support you.

JEREMY

Once I explain the raison d'etre of the thing, Lou'll listen.

Ben points to his own mouth.

BEN

Before we go upstairs you might want to rethink the lips thing.

INT. RECEPTION AREA - MORNING

Ben, Dawn and Jeremy come out of Ben's office. Carl is at his reception desk. Johnny is speaking in an animated middle eastern language on the phone, while thumbing through a *Robb's Report*.

CARL

(to Jeremy)

I was thinking, you know, what the dog getting shot is? It's Richard Widmark kicking the woman in a wheelchair down the stairs in "Kiss Of Death".

JEREMY

Don't know it, mate. Sorry.

DAWN

We should go.

Johnny is on the phone, signals to wait. Dawn takes Ben aside.

DAWN

The room's gonna be too crowded.

BEN

He found some money. That's what really gets you to the table. Money. Carl, cancel my lunch.

DAWN

It was my script notes that turned things around. You said that.

Johnny wraps up his phone call with a loud, guttural middle eastern send off.

JOHNNY

I'm ready?

Dawn looks at Ben. Ben takes Johnny aside --

BEN

I really want you in this meeting. Johnny. I really do.

BEN(cont'd)

My problem is that if we all troop in there together it's like ... I don't want Lou to feel ganged up on. I want her to be comfortable to say what she really feels. It's not good business.

A beat.

JOHNNY

You're smart, Ben. Maybe, next time.

Ben pats him on the shoulder. Johnny gives him the thumbs-up sign.

CUT TO:

INT. EXECUTIVE BUILDING HALLWAY -

Ben, Dawn and Jeremy are making their way down a very long carpeted hallway, ostensibly on their way to a studio meeting. Jeremy's lipstick is still in place. Posters from movies made during the studio's long and glorious history line the walls.

JEREMY

You should be proud, we went out on a limb with this one.

BEN

I am.

JEREMY

It's not just about the money.

BEN

We got the money.

DAWN

Believe me, Jeremy - for Ben it's never really about the money. It's about pride. When he's not taking creative risks is when he gets nervous.

Jeremy puts an arm around Ben's shoulder. Ben throws Dawn a 'thank you' glance. The three of them continue their long walk towards Lou's office in silence.

CUT TO:

INT. LOU'S RECEPTION AREA - MORNING

BEN, JEREMY and DAWN are seated in sumptuous couches behind a large see-through glass coffee table top.

Other than that, the only other evidence we are visiting a "movie mogul" office is a giant movie poster hanging behind Ben. The poster has no title, no star credits, no technical credits, just a LARGE BLOOD STAINED SPIDER WEB over a titanium black background with the words: DOMESTIC GROSS \$410,000,000 strafed across the bottom.

There are two secretarial desks but only one is occupied.

SECRETARY

Ben, are you sure I can't bring you guys any water? She got snagged on this call. You know she hates to keep people waiting.

BEN

We're fine, Judy.

She gets up and walks to Lou's door.

SECRETARY

Let me see how long she'll be.

She opens the door, leans her head in. We can only hear some muffled conversation. She quickly pulls her head back out and grabs a key.

SECRETARY

This could go on for a bit. I've got to run to the lady's room. I'll be right back.

Jeremy leans into Ben.

JEREMY

Couldn't be happier to get my day in court. There's something about doing this face to face.

BEN

There's a strategy to all of these meetings, pal. You have to decide what you want out of this before we go....

ACCIDENTALLY, THE DOOR TO LOU'S OFFICE SLOWLY SWINGS OPEN ABOUT SIX INCHES. Ben stops talking.

They begin to make out Lou's phone conversation as glimpses of Lou can be seen as she walks back and forth in front of the door.

LOU

I always listen....and when we talk, I want you to know I listen carefully.

(pause)

That's correct. It's not about being considerate. It's about doing the right thing. It's about caring about the people that work for you.

Jeremy smiles at Ben. He's impressed.

LOU

We have gone over this now several times and in several ways. And I want to help but...I'm afraid and I say this with great respect...I'm going to have to say, 'no.'

(pause)

'No.' That's right. I know....what? Joe, that's not necessary. That is not necessary. I said... I said...

Jeremy stops smiling. They can see Lou pacing more rapidly. For the first time Lou changes her tone, loses patience.

LOU

Joe, do not....DO NOT...I said do not make me have to reach down your fucking throat and RIP OUT YOUR FUCKING TESTICLES AND SHOVE THEM UP YOUR USELESS RECT.....

At that moment, Lou realizes that her door is ajar and slams it shut. A moment later, the secretary walks back in. She sees the light on the phone is still on.

SECRETARY

My goodness. She's still talking.

Jeremy looks at Ben.

JEREMY

(whispering)

Bloody hell.

Ben nods. He knows the terrain.

JEREMY
 (feigning a smile)
 Was this some sort of a set up,
 mate?

BEN
 I'm not that clever.

Jeremy, with a sardonic glance to Ben, decides to pull out his handkerchief and wipe off his lipstick.

CUT TO:

INT. LOU'S OFFICE - MORNING

The meeting is in progress. Ben, Dawn, Jeremy, Lou and three of Lou's assistants are circled around a meeting area away from Lou's desk. In the corner is a complete nursery set up for pre-school kids: toys, plastic swing set, giant 'lego' pieces, etc.

After an awkward silence in the room, Lou stands up and points to Ben.

LOU
 You're good , you're really good.
 My god, kill the dog. Of course.
 What a brilliant tactical move.

BEN
 Well, we wanted to do the
 unexpected.

LOU
 You know, Ben, I always sensed you
 were blessed with good instinctive
 negotiating skills, but killing the
 dog! Oh boy.

JEREMY
 (misunderstanding Lou)
 We surprised them, huh? We mussed
 up their hair and kicked them in
 the balls to see if they were still
 breathing.

Ben pats Jeremy on the knee.

BEN
 (whispering)
 Easy big fella.

LOU
 (chuckling ironically)
A bargaining chip! You guys figured, leave the dead dog in the movie now, knowing we'll cut it out later and say "OK Lou, the dog stuff is gone, can we keep the rest as it is and call it a day?" I'm too old for this.

BEN
 Lou, I think there's another way to look at it.

JEREMY
 What are you saying?

LOU
 We've got a problem.

JEREMY
 (getting a bit wild eyed and sweaty)
 Wait a minute. We're not touching my ending are we? That's not what I'm hearing is it? Has anyone seen *Amores Perros*? It's not about cruelty. It's about realism and loss. It's the difference between doing something profound, something that'll be remembered or simply pandering rubbish. We're trying to be great here.

Jeremy looks around the room.

JEREMY
 I actually toned it down. Way down.

LOU
 A serious problem.

JEREMY
 The dog has to DIE.

BEN
 (quietly to Jeremy)
 Trust me, kemosabe, you gotta back up.

LOU
 Maybe, I'm not being clear abo...

DAWN

(interrupting Lou)

Wait. Excuse me, but I don't think Sean would've done the movie if it weren't hard hitting and didn't take some real risks.

LOU

(points to Dawn and then to the door)

Would you excuse us?

The room goes dead. Dawn looks to Ben for help. He nods at the door. Dawn, humiliated, leaves. Lou finally addresses Jeremy.

LOU

Look here, I've lost twenty five million dollars before, and I'll lose twenty five million dollars again. We've managed to put together extensive notes for you. Very extensive. If you do the kind of work that needs to be done here, I'll lose a little less. Maybe fifteen million dollars less.

JEREMY

You're asking me to eviscerate my movie so you can lose a little less money?

LOU

I would be very appreciative.

JEREMY

I can't do it.

BEN

Let us chew on this, Lou.

JEREMY

The dog dies.

BEN

(to Jeremy)

I don't think so.

JEREMY

You're fucking hell kidding.

BEN

Not really.

LOU
 Let's not make this even more
 awkward than it already is. We
 respect you. Fix it.

JEREMY
 My guts are in that cut. It's not
 broken.

LOU
 Do the right thing, the right
thing, or your big evening in
 Cannes will be cancelled and you
 will be replaced.

A beat, then Jeremy unexpectedly puts his head in his hands
 and then smashes his fist three times on Lou's coffee table,
 knocking a large bowl of M & M's across the floor. His eyes
 are moist with tears. He drops to his knees. Lou and the
 others in the room are stunned.

LOU (CONT'D)
 (to Ben)
 I...what do you suggest?

BEN
 He'll come around. He'll be fine.
 It's jet lag. I'll take care of
 it....

One of Lou's assistants goes to Jeremy and puts her arm
 around him, and with Ben, they help him to his feet. Ben
 gives him a big bear hug.

BEN
 (whispers in Jeremy's ear)
 C'mon let's get a grip. You can do
 it.

Lou's assistant leads Jeremy to the door.

LOU'S ASST
 I know, it's your baby. That's why
 it hurts so much.

LOU
 We don't have much time.

BEN
 We can fix it.

JEREMY
(hisses back at Ben)
E tu Brute, man. E tu fucking
Brute.

LOU
(to Ben)
Could I talk to you for a second?

As the office clears, Lou and Ben remain as if this happens all the time.

Lou walks back to her desk shoving bits of M & M's aside with the toe of her shoe. Lou picks up the cover of Variety, glances at the large photo of Jack, the dead agent, and then starts to read a series of memos on her desk while Ben just stands there waiting.

Lou then points to Jack's picture in Variety.

BEN
(after an awkward beat)
He had ten percent of the brass
ring....didn't he?

She folds the Variety under her arm and strolls into her private bathroom.

LOU
(as if offering a big
compliment)
I'd fuck him.

Ben can hear the toilet flush. Lou is already on the bathroom phone, completely forgetting that Ben is still there.

Ben waits a beat and then leaves, crunching the scattered candy into the hard wood floor.

CUT TO:

A CLOSE ANGLE ON A WOMAN SITTING ON THE EDGE OF A BED. Her blouse is unbuttoned. She is leaning forward to slip off her shoes.

Super: 1:00pm.

The woman sits up revealing that it's Kelly, Ben's ex-wife. A noon day sun filters through the window shutters.

BEN (O.S.)
My old bed. God, I love this bed.
Are these new sheets?

Kelly turns. Ben is lying face down under the covers. Trying to stop himself from caressing the bed.

KELLY
This is a huge mistake.

BEN
Don't say that.

Kelly starts to button her blouse.

KELLY
I can't do it. I just can't. This is as much my fault as yours. This is why we are seeing Dr. Montez. To not do this.

BEN
Let's not tell her.

He sits up and pats the duvet.

KELLY
It's been almost a year, and you're already too comfortable. And, I'm nervous. Why is that?

BEN
You still look fantastic.

KELLY
Well, I appreciate that.

BEN
Do you want me to go?

KELLY
Yes. No.

BEN
I won't talk.

KELLY
I'd like to talk.

BEN
(a long beat)
Good let's talk. I'll start.

BEN(cont'd)

I admit I do love this bed (pause)
but only with you in it. Even if
just for a moment I'm so grateful
to be back here.

He sits up, puts his arm around her and finishes unbuttoning her blouse.

KELLY

Really.

BEN

Truly.

KELLY

(softens)

After all the lawyers, it's just so
awkward....

BEN

...and all the money.

KELLY

Yes...I don't know, it's been so
long...if I could do this...I feel
so vulnerable...

BEN

You can. We can...

A cell phone rings. It seems to be coming from under the sheet.

Kelly and Ben both hesitate. He doesn't want to spoil the moment but he doesn't want to miss the call.

BEN

I know how you feel...

Ben points to where the ring is coming from.

KELLY

If you could only focus...

Ben can't take it anymore. He jumps up and shakes the sheets until the hidden phone leaps from the bed. Kelly watches the dance. He flips it on.

BEN

(to Kelly)

Please, Kelly hold on to that
thought.

(into the phone)

Hello?

ASSISTANT
I have him.

BEN
Who?

ASSISTANT
HIM.

BEN
Oh. Okay.....Hey, mi amigo.

He holds up one finger beseeching Kelly to understand.

ACTOR
I heard something.

BEN
What?

ACTOR
Concern about my beard. I don't
know. Or is it buyer's remorse?

BEN
(clears his throat)
Not from me.

ACTOR
Wait a second could you...I'll be
right back (click)....

BEN
(covering the phone to
Kelly)
It's business. He's a fucking
movie star. We've got issues we've
got to solve.

KELLY
Like what?

BEN
Like shaving a beard. Sounds crazy
but it's becoming a big issue.
What can I do?

KELLY
You can be a man and tell him
you'll call him back.

BEN
You're right. You're right.

ACTOR

Hello?

BEN

(into the phone)

There you are. Listen...

He turns away from Kelly.

BEN

Uh..uh. Did I tell you how truly happy I am that you are doing this movie. A lot of actors were circling this but...

Kelly gathers the rest of her clothes. She's had enough.

BEN

Sure. We do need to talk about the...face to face is always better. You know me, I'm one hundred per cent at your disposal...

He watches Kelly leave.

BEN

That's good. Could you, could you hold on for one second... (click) For the love of...Kelly! Where are you? I'm off in a sec...if you could just...

Ben walks down the hallway undressed. He presses his phone button.

BEN

Wait, WAIT! I'm losing you.

The line goes dead --

BEN

Hello?

It's too late. Kelly's gone. And so is the Actor. Ben walks back into the bedroom. As he starts to dress he sees something under the bed. He leans down and recovers another man's sock, a bright multi colored argyle sock. He holds it up. He measures it against his own foot. He shoves it in his pocket.

For the first time since we've seen Ben, his face cannot cover up his true disappointment, as he slowly makes his way out of his old house.

CUT TO:

INT. BEN'S OFFICE RECEPTION AREA

Super: 2:15pm.

Ben enters. His impenetrable facade has returned.

BEN
Did you get him?

CARL
(shakes his head)
I left messages at every number I
have.

Ben looks through the door to his office. A man is stepping off the dimensions to Ben's office.

BEN
Who's that?

CARL
Studio guy.

Ben enters his office and closes the door.

BEN
Excuse me?

JIM
I'm from Studio Services?

Ben pauses to watch the guy measure the floor.

BEN
And you are doing?

JIM
I'm measuring....

BEN
I can see that.

JIM
I'm almost...

Ben starts pacing. He breaks into a broad sardonic smile.

BEN
Oh, this is terrific.

JIM
Sir?

BEN
That's always the way. Isn't it?
Without warning.....

JIM
I called earlier...

BEN
...because of one bad screening.
Are you fucking kidding me?

BEN
These people have no shame....you
touch anything in here?

JIM
No...I...

BEN
You sure?

JIM
I'm sure that...

He gets right into Jim's face.

BEN
You think I don't know how to
confront these ruthless
pricks...who's coming in here next?
WHO?

JIM
I wouldn't know...

Ben smashes his fist against his desk, scattering objects all over the floor. The commotion causes Carl to rush into the office.

BEN
I DON'T THINK SO.

CARL
(jumps into the fray)
Sir! It's the new carpeting. You
ordered the new carpeting.

Ben stops. Sheepishly, he looks at the studio guy and then at Carl.

BEN
When?

CARL
March.

BEN
March?

CARL
Yes. Light brown shag.

BEN
(recovering)
Yes. Of course....

Carl nods. Ben collects a few things and heads for the door.

BEN
Since when does it take three
months to get carpeting?

CARL
I've badgered them but the color
you wanted was a special order.

BEN
Okay then, I'll be in the editing
room.

INT. EDITING FACILITY

Ben walks down the hallway and enters the outer area of the editing rooms. As he approaches one of the rooms, the door is closed with a 'do not enter sign.' The editor and the two assistants are waiting down the hall.

A loud "oh cunt" groan followed by the sound of glass smashing erupts from inside.

Ben quickly enters to see Jeremy, glassy-eyed, wrecked, really wrecked, like a man on life support. He's laying on a couch. Chards of a coffee cup are at his side.

BEN
You may not realize this now but I
was protecting you and our movie in
that office.

JEREMY

I've gone out, man. Really out.

BEN

I can see that but maybe it's a good thing. Sometimes it clears your head...

JEREMY

No. No. I've gone out. I had eleven months and twenty two days of no drugs or alcohol and after the meeting with Lou, your fucking well-meaning, assassin-in-training, gave me a fucking Ativan...

BEN

Uh huh...one Ativan doesn't sound so terrible...

JEREMY

...which I then followed up by scoring three Dilaudids from a bartender, and pounded them down with rum and Coke.

BEN

Okay then. You needed a release. It can happen to anyone.

JEREMY

(tears welling up)

Please, in seven days I was gonna get a cake, a cake, and your naked fucking treachery has robbed me of that moment.

BEN

That's not true.

Jeremy picks up one of the shards of glass and pierces his finger until a few drops of blood flow. He shows it to Ben.

BEN

That's not necessary. Shouldn't we save this high drama for the screen?

Jeremy smears the blood across his forehead.

JEREMY

It's my blood on that film.

BEN

I know it is, Jeremy. That's why I'm here.

JEREMY

My blood. Blood and dreams going back to the Jew ghetto of Vilna. From a little shtetle. Could you possibly understand something like that?

BEN

Yes I can.

Ben starting to get concerned.

BEN

Let me get you a Valium? Just for now....It's not that I don't...but we're on deadline. This is for us...these changes?

JEREMY

(thinking)

Can you get me Vicodin instead?

BEN

Sure. Easy.

Ben leans out the door.

BEN

(to the assistants)

Could someone call my office and have them deliver two Vicodin to the cutting room. Now.

Ben glances over at the Avid. There is a frozen image of Sean Penn and his dead dog on the screen.

BEN

(to the assistants)

Three.

Ben puts his hand on Jeremy's shoulder.

BEN

We need you to dig deep on this one. You can do it. We can get our victory in Cannes and I can get these bastards to spend a lot of money and release this film properly.

JEREMY
(pointing to the Avid)
It's so hard for me.

BEN
Trust me. Once you do it, you make
these cuts and trims, you'll forget
the pain. You'll feel cleansed.

Jeremy gathers himself. He calls for his staff to return.

JEREMY
I don't want you to see anything
until I finish.

BEN
Sure. So long as I can review it
with you before we leave. Call me
if you need me. C'mon get up.
Give me a hug.

Jeremy offers his bloody hand instead .

JEREMY
I'm not ready yet. Let me do the
work.

BEN
I understand.

CUT TO:

EXT. STUDIO PARKING LOT - SAME TIME

Ben is rushing to his car parked on the other side of the
lot, when he runs into SCOTT, the screenwriter.

SCOTT
Hey, it's a nice day, huh?

BEN
Walk with me, I'm late. You
must've sold your chef movie.

SCOTT
How'd you know?

BEN
You're happy and you're on this
depraved lot. What else could it
be?

SCOTT

Let's just say we're in negotiations.

BEN

I'm sure it'll be *Batman* for foodies. Who bought it?

SCOTT

Can't tell you. I don't want to jinx it.

Ben stops and in a mock gesture knocks on a tree --

BEN

I'm so happy for you. Can't wait to read it. When are you going to finish my rewrite.

SCOTT

Soon. Very soon.

Ben trying to look pleased gets to his car and starts to leave. As he pulls out he watches Scott stop and talk to an agent. His attention gets diverted when Scott lifts his pant leg and rests his foot on a car bumper. He's wearing the same style of brightly colored Argyle socks that Ben found under Kelly's bed.

Ben, motionless, just stares at Scott until Scott disappears into the administration building. He then looks at himself blankly in his rearview mirror trying hard to not let this new news affect him.

CUT TO:

INT. VAST ABANDONED FACTORY RECONVERTED TO A SOUND STAGE

Super: 4:00pm.

Inside, several large trucks are parked next to ten large trailers, except for where people are working the place is quite dark. Sets are being built. Equipment (ie. lights, cameras, dollies) is being unloaded and assembled.

Ben enters the facility through a small side door. Across the way, to his right, is makeshift wardrobe trailer with a large bay window. In the back, by the clothing racks, he sees a large bearded actor trying on clothes. The actor is profusely sweating.

That call Ben got was quite accurate. The ACTOR does look a little bloated and he's sporting a beard that Moses would have envied.

Ben decides to walk the other way and find, CAL, the director, who is standing alone by the prop truck.

BEN
Cal! Como esta?

CAL
Ben!

BEN
I saw Moses through the window.
What's the status of the beard?

CAL
Don't know.

Ben leads Cal inside the prop truck for privacy.

BEN
Did you tell him to shave?

CAL
I'm going to bring it up but I
haven't done it yet.

BEN
We start shooting Thursday
afternoon. Today is Tuesday.

CAL
I'm the director, I know what day
it is.

BEN
I suppose it took him a long while
to grow it, he probably wants to
wait til the last minute...

CAL
That's what I thought last week,
but after seeing him read today, I
sensed this is going to be his
look. It's an artistic choice.

BEN
It can't be.

CAL
It's a feeling.

BEN

Cal, we got the studio to pay him ten million dollars to be a LEADING MAN. For that kind of money there's an expectation.

CAL

I assume they expect a good performance.

BEN

No. No. For that kinda money, Cal, they expect millions of menstruating women to want to have intercourse with him.

CAL

Okay. Okay. Let's go tell him to shave.

BEN

No wonder Sid said, 'I can see the poster now: SEE SANTA RUN.'

CAL

Don't worry so much, he'll shave. Especially if he hears it from you.

BEN

That's the hope.

CUT TO:

INT. WARDROBE ROOM -- MOMENTS LATER

Crash! A fist hammers the center of a formica table spilling most of the costumes on the floor. Ben and Cal, who are seated next to it, slide backwards to avoid the blow. The actor is on a rampage.

ACTOR

MOTHERFUCKERS!

More clothes are strewn. Two wardrobe fitters run for the exit.

ACTOR

Integrity. We're talking integrity to me! Mother FUCKERS!!!

BEN

Did I say integrity?

The actor walks over to a wardrobe stand, feints a kick, and then decides to let one go. Cal slowly makes his way to the door.

ACTOR

Hollywood producer, my ass. I knew this was coming. Never a doubt. Never a doubt. You no talent...straight to video mother...

CAL

(turning to Ben)
Maybe we should listen...

ACTOR

This typical Hollywood mentality...this...

The actor without looking flings a chair in Cal's direction.

BEN

No.

Ben, out of the ashes, begins to rise from his chair. For the first time in his grueling day he seems to be taking this current onslaught personally.

BEN

You want to talk about INTEGRITY?
You want to talk about art. Art!
Let's go. LET'S GO.

Ben starts flailing his arms like an agitated mideastern vendor. The actor puts his fist through a makeshift plastered wall. Cal is frozen.

BEN

Let's talk about INTEGRITY. Hey, hey, I'm willing to stack my last three pictures against your last three pictures. Huh!

The actor perfectly imitates the flailing gestures of Ben as he gets closer.

ACTOR

You've gone way too far, lad.

He gets nose to nose with Ben. Ben tries to hold his ground but can't help but take a couple of steps back, knocking over a couple of chairs. Ben's cornered against the wall.

Even in retreat, Ben can't stop himself.

BEN

Why don't we start by GIVING THE
FUCKING MONEY TO THE RED CROSS.
That would show me some integrity.

The actor is about to grab Ben by his shirt. There's almost tears in his eyes. For whatever reason, perhaps his innate fear of criminal prosecution or perhaps just not wanting to hurt someone, he changes his mind and decides to kick the table over.

ACTOR

(whispering)
Motherfucker.

He slowly walks out of the room towards his trailer. Ben and Cal peer at each other for an extended moment, both trying to conjure up some twisted grin in an attempt to hold on to their dignity.

BEN

Well, I, for one, don't think he
expects to shave.

CAL

I felt that.

Cal grabs a cigarette and shakely lights it. Offers one to Ben, who turns it down.

CAL

Not as much of a reason to quit
now.

They leave the wardrobe room and walk toward Ben's car.

BEN

The police should have put me on
producer's suspension. I blame
myself. I shouldn't have let it
get so personal. I'll call the
money and see what they're willing
to live with.

CAL

We'll make it right.

BEN

We've got two days to sort this
out.

Suddenly a loud explosion emanates from the actor's trailer. It sounds as if an espresso machine might have been hurled against a full length mirror. The trailer shakes and then goes dead still.

Without thinking, Cal stops and does a couple of push ups. Ben watches him.

BEN
That's why your great.

A beat. They walk on.

CAL
Did you know I heard that just before Jack decided to 'off' himself Saturday, he spent his entire bonus, all of it, his last dime, actually, on an Ed Ruscha painting.

BEN
Classy, classy guy. He loved the arts.

CAL
It was a giant brown oil painting and it had one big word across it.

BEN
Yeah, what?

CAL
That was the word. "WHAT."

Ben eyes Cal. He's trying hard to make sense of his day.

BEN
I'll call you from the car.

CUT TO:

INT. BEN'S BMW -- EARLY EVENING

Super: 6:30pm

Ben is driving in slow traffic on the 405 coming over the pass into Brentwood.

BEN

Ha. Ha. Good one, Sid. Listen, I need the studio to give me some flexibility on this one.

SID V.O.

Okay, what do you call a man with no arms or legs in a swimming pool?

BEN

I give, Sidney.

SID V.O.

BOB! Get it. Bob!

Sid howls.

BEN

I get it. I do, Sidney. Listen, out of all the studio heads you are by far the funniest. But you have to stay with me. Our guy is a great actor, a great actor. Maybe we need to bend...we could...you know...think creatively. In fact, he could be right.

SID V.O.

Let's keep it simple, Ben. I'm not Lou. I like to be direct.

BEN

Tell me what I have to do.

SID V.O.

If that bastard doesn't shave and look like a leading man by tomorrow... A. We shut the movie down. B. We sue him for all damages. C. We then sue you for misrepresentation.

BEN

Awww Sidney. C'mon. Let's have lunch and discuss this like men.

SID V.O.

Call my office.

CLICK.

Ben checks the rear view mirror. As if willing his own confidence to return, he gives himself an arrogant smile.

INT. BEN'S BEDROOM -- EVENING

Super: 8:00pm

Ben is getting re-dressed to go out to dinner. He's on the speaker phone with DICK BELL, the star's agent.

BEN

Are you saying your client never mentioned this to you? You're his agent, his confidant for godsakes. We're on the ledge on this one. He's got 48 hours to clean himself up. And I'll personally pay for the trainer.

DICK'S VOICE

You've got to be kidding.

BEN

No, Dick, I'm not kidding.

DICK'S VOICE

This can't be happening now.

BEN

It's happening.

INTERCUT THIS CONVERSATION with DICK who is standing in his master bedroom on the second floor of his Malibu beach house, watching the ocean. Dick, who has all of the trappings of a single, successful agent, is slightly younger than Ben. He's pacing back and forth holding a wireless phone.

DICK

This late in the game, you tell me it's HAPPENING!!? It can't be.

We cut back to Ben's apartment. He's changing his pants.

BEN

'Fraid so.

Ben hears, through his speaker, Dick explode with a weird vomiting sound. A death rattle. A dry heave.

DICK'S VOICE.

AAARRRGHHH! AAAAARRRGHHH!

Ben runs to the speaker phone as if trying to come to Dick's aid.

BEN
What was that....?

Back to Dick, who casually walks out of his bathroom but his face is a bit more ashen. He sips from a glass of white wine.

DICK
It's nothing.

BEN'S VOICE
Nothing!

DICK
Finish your point. How much does he know?

BEN'S VOICE
That's a bit sketchy. We all got lathered up. Things might have been taken out of context.

DICK
Tell me exactly what was said.

Back to Ben's apartment.

BEN
You know how it goes. 'Fuck you. No, no. FUCK YOU!' And then it got worse. Why not call me back after you talk to him?

DICK'S VOICE.
I don't want to. You give him the bad news?

BEN
Dick, you're an agent. Delivering bad news is part of the job description.

DICK VOICE
I can't do it. I can't.

Back to Dick's master bedroom. He places the glass of wine on the bedstand.

DICK
I've been working with him for 2 years. He's one of my most important clients but he's very mercurial. He can snap at any time.

BEN'S VOICE
Don't be scared of him.

DICK
I'm not scared of him....I'm scared
of all of them.....could you hold a
second?

Dick casually strolls to his bathroom still holding the
phone.

DICK
AAAARRRRGGGHHH....

Dick walks back out.

BEN'S VOICE
You okay?

DICK
Yes. It's a stomach disorder. It
comes and itGUGHH...(a little
dry rattle as he gazes at his
gorgeous view of the ocean)...and
it goes.

Back to Ben pacing near the speaker phone.

BEN
You...Maybe we should do this
later. Yes. Let's do this later.

DICK'S VOICE
No. Seriously. I'm fine.

BEN
Sure?

DICK' VOICE
Absolutely. They cut me back on my
anti-depressants so I can get it
up, but...the withdrawal makes my
stomach clench. Sounds worse than
it is. I even had to cut back
Kilonopin.

BEN
When do you take that?

DICK
Travel. Whenever I pack. Too many
choices...ough...g'head, I'm okay.

BEN

Dick, your client has to give us some relief...let's figure out how we can solve this beard thing?

Back to Dick's place. He seems to have composed himself.

DICK

We! WE! For a start, whyn't we let him wear his fucking beard. Excuse me, but what's the big deal?

BEN'S VOICE

We're way past that now.

DICK

Yesterday everything was fine. How did we get WAY PAST THAT in one day?

Back to Ben. He's putting on a different shirt.

BEN

Money.

DICK'S VOICE

Have you told him about the shutting down of the movie?

BEN

No.

DICK'S VOICE

What about the lawsuit? Did you mention the word *lawsuit*.

BEN

I tried but the timing was bad. I couldn't.

DICK'S VOICE

D'you know the ramifications of what your asking of me?

BEN

I do.

Dick calmly disappears into his bathroom.

DICK

AARRRRGGGHHH!

Back to Ben, who leans inches from his speaker phone.

DICK'S VOICE
AARRRGGGHHH!

BEN
Jeezus, man, get hold of yourself.

A beat. All one can hear is Dick's heavy breathing through Ben's speaker.

BEN
Dick?

DICK'S VOICE
(almost inaudible)
I'll get back to you.

BEN
You should talk to somebody about
that stomach thing.

Ben shuts off the phone and puts on his sport coat. He reaches in his pocket and pulls out the multi-colored argyle sock. He carefully folds it to preserve the evidence and puts it into his briefcase. He examines himself once again in the mirror. This time, he nods to himself, almost on the verge of talking to himself, as if he were looking for agreement on his next plan of action.

CUT TO:

INT. GIORGIO'S RESTAURANT -- NIGHT

Super: 9:00pm.

In the back of this Italian restaurant there is a large round table near where the cooks are preparing the food. Ben is seated with Johnny the mid-eastern slick money guy from the office.

Seated next to Johnny is a tall mid-eastern man in his fifties, ABA PETERSON. He is festooned in multilogo'd athletic wear. He could be Israeli, Tunisian. An American flag is proudly stuck to his Adidas sweat shirt.

Next to the men are three young women wrapped in tight clothes. They talk amongst themselves.

JOHNNY
The money is guaranteed. When Aba says, 'yes,' it's like a mother offering her child her teat. It can be trusted. He loves movies.

JOHNNY(cont'd)

He loves movie people. He loves
you.

Aba smiles at Ben, Ben smiles back.

ABA

I love your work.

BEN

My work?

JOHNNY

Rio, Ben, he wants to make *Rio*.

BEN

Rio? Great, we don't have a script
yet, but...

ABA

Johnny told me what it is and I
love it. I trust you'll get a good
script. The money is already in a
box.

BEN

Well, okay then.

ABA

Last night, very late, Johnny took
me to the Sunset Room.

BEN

Johnny, you were moonlighting.

JOHNNY

(not completely
understanding)
Yes. Thank you.

ABA

We were drinking with Sly.

JOHNNY

It was a real good night.

ABA

Don Johnson was three tables away,
he'd be very good in this.

BEN

Uh huh.

ABA

Can you make this movie in fifty days?

BEN

Well, there's no director yet and no scr...I don't know.

ABA

Have you visited Luxembourg?

BEN

Luxembourg?

ABA

We can get some real, how would you say, breaks there. Could you excuse me for a moment.

Aba, recognizing someone from across the restaurant, leaves the table. Ben looks at the young women, they smile back.

BEN

Where did he get his money?

JOHNNY

Dry cleaning. He started by cleaning the wardrobes for the movie studios. He charged them ten dollar a suit. They pay. Next time he charged them 50 dollar a suit. They pay. Next time he charged them hundred dollar a suit. They pay. He says, 'I want to get in the movie business,' I understand these people.

BEN

Does he still have the money?

JOHNNY

We can count on him.

One of the girls lifts her glass and proposes a toast. She looks into Ben's eyes, takes a beat.

LAURA

The past is HISTORY....today's a GIFT....and that's why we call it the PRESENT.

They all look at each other without reaction and continue talking.

JOHNNY
 (turning back to Ben)
 Do you know Tina Mercado?

BEN
 Uhhh...Latin dancer?

JOHNNY
 Actress. *Instant Karma*.

BEN
 No.

JOHNNY
 It's Aba's ex-wife.

BEN
 Uh huh.

Johnny makes a fist with his left hand and straightens his forearm simulating a hard-on. The girls perk up, they've seen Johnny do this before. He gently bounces his elbow up and down on the table and smiles. Ben's cel phone rings. He nods for Johnny to continue.

JOHNNY
 He say, 'she cost me thirty two million dollars but she can suck the paint...'

Before Johnny can finish, Ben decides to answer.

BEN
 Hello?...Kelly. Kelly. (to the table) Please, excuse me.

Ben gets up and starts for the door to take the call outside. He stands by the entrance.

BEN
 I'm so glad you called me back...yes. It was my fault, no I don't think he is as important as you. No. No. I did not call you ten times today. I called you four times.
 (pause)
 Well, I'll tell you what was so important. I just wanted to...to...

A beat. He clears his throat.

BEN

Is anyone else other than you
sleeping in my old bed?...No. No.
No. I know I don't have the right,
but, but. Wait a minute! I
believe thirty thousand a month
entitles me to something!

(pause)

I have never heard you say 'fuck
you' like that before. You know the
kids. Uh huh. Well, okay, then.

Ben is in the way of five people trying enter the restaurant.
One of them is DICK, the agent with the nervous stomach.
Another is JERRY, a man in his late 60's. As they get
closer, we can make out Jerry's dicey dye job, the plastic
facial surgery and the greying eyes, and an eye patch, all of
which just exacerbates the mess. Ben sees Dick.

BEN

Dick? Dick? I need to talk to
you....Honey, could you just hold
on....No.

Ben is about to confront Dick but realizes diverting his chat
with Kelly will be punishing.

BEN

You're absolutely right. It's a
very bad habit and I'm working on
it. Look, can't we discuss this
now. Why can't we? I'll come
over. Please. I'm hurting.

(pause)

....yes, there I've said it...."I'm
hurting." No, we need to do this
now. Okay, okay. You're right. I
suppose it's not the right time.
Yes. I'll speak to you soon. Thank
you for returning my call.

Ben hangs up and re-enters Giorgio's. Before he can get to
Dick's table, he ducks into the small unisex bathroom off the
kitchen. Laura, the girl from his table, barges into the
stall and joins Ben.

YOUNG WOMAN

I know what you think this looks
like but it's not. Johnny did not
send me to make you 'happy.' I
wanted to meet you on my own.

YOUNG WOMAN(cont'd)

I know everything you've done, I know who you are and I'm not some silly girl in tight clothes. I went to Stanford.

BEN

It's a good school.

They are squeezed together between the toilet and the urinal.

LAURA

I just want to get to know you.

BEN

Me...you know me...it's. What's your name?

YOUNG WOMAN

Laura.

BEN

Laura.

Laura moves closer.

LAURA

I respect you and your movies and I know if I did not take this chance now, no matter how aggressive this seems, my chance will never come up again.

BEN

That's so flattering. I mean, I guess if I were a tailor, you wouldn't be doing this. Am I right?

LAURA

You are such a funny person.

There is a knock at the bathroom door.

LAURA

And I just wanted you to know that there is nothing I wouldn't do to have a chance to see you on my own with no strings attached. Unless you want to do something now?

BEN

Now!

LAURA
Then just call me.

Ben takes the phone number. They both exit the bathroom. Ben first. He gathers himself and walks over to Dick's table near the entrance. After hellos are exchanged, Ben leans into Dick to get a private word. There is no seat at the table so he joins them by resting on one knee.

BEN
Did you tell him?

DICK
I eluded to it.

BEN
Eluded?

DICK
Yes.

BEN
A picture is about to get cancelled. What does that mean?
Eluded.

DICK
I...I told him I have something important to discuss.

BEN
Oh Dick. We're out of time.

Ben gives Dick a tight little bear hug.

BEN
No more eluding. You have to do this.

Dick starts to gag causing Ben to release him. Dick courageously manages to suppress it.

DICK
I'm going to do it.

Ben stands and nods across to Jerry.

BEN
Well, sorry for the intrusion. (to Jerry) What's with the patch?

JERRY

Shingles. My lid. It occasionally flutters. It's nothing.

BEN

Of course. We're just glad it's not serious.

JERRY

If I went blind you'd celebrate.

BEN

Nice.

Ben walks back to Johnny's table, the three young women and Aba are waiting.

CUT TO:

BEN'S BMW -- NIGHT

Ben is seated in his car outside of Kelly's house.

Super: 11:30 pm.

There's a couple of lights on upstairs. Ben just sits there gazing at the windows. A shadow walks by followed by another. Are the moving silhouettes in the window more than one person? He opens his briefcase to glimpse at the argyle sock. The lights finally go off. Ben pulls away.

CUT TO:

WEDNESDAY

INT. BEN'S BEDROOM

An alarm loudly blares. Ben's hand reaches for it. He looks ravaged and out of sorts. He peruses the room as if he forgot something.

Super: 7:00am.

Staggering out of bed naked, he measures himself in the full length mirror. Not happy with what he sees, he begins doing an elaborate set of yoga stretching exercises to the sun god which requires a difficult set of maneuvers. On the first attempt, he loses his balance. He tries again.

While on one knee with his head arched backward and his right leg bending toward the sky. Laura, the development girl from Giorgio's, enters the room dressed carrying three scripts.

Ben, startled and confused, having no memory that she was ever there, falls over. He pulls a sheet down to cover himself.

BEN
I...uhhh....oh god...I'm
exercising.

LAURA
I can't stay for breakfast. I got
three scripts to read.

She leans over Ben, who looks trapped and lost. She lifts her blouse.

LAURA
(softly)
You want to kiss them one more
time?

BEN
Uhhh.

LAURA
You don't remember a thing do you?

BEN
(smiles)
I remember offering you a two
picture deal.

LAURA
...and that was before we dropped
the ecstasy. I dig older guys.

Ben sees his reflection. He looks ten years older than the night before.

LAURA
I got to go.

BEN
(relieved)
If you have to.

Ben watches her walk out of the apartment.

BEN
Wait!

Laura stands by the bedroom door.

BEN

I changed my mind. I think I want
to kiss them one more time.

Laura laughs, walks into the room and closes the door.

INT BEN'S APARTMENT -- 30 MINUTES LATER

Ben, now alone, is dressed in a suit and tie. He throws back an espresso as if it were medicine. The espresso machine and the TV are his only accoutrements to luxury in his spare apartment. He sits at the bare table and stares out the window. Traffic on Sunset is already starting to build up. Screaming kids are playing while waiting for the school bus.

Ben glances at the Daily Variety. The headlines just won't go away:

TOO YOUNG TO GIVE UP 10%.

TEARS MIXED WITH DARK RUMORS.

WHO'S GRAVE GRABBING JACK'S CLIENTS NOW?

With a rare flash of introspection, Ben decides to open his living room closet. Inside are four large plastic containers that apparently house all of his personal belongings. He pulls one out, removes the top, and takes out some framed pictures. He momentarily examines his two sets of families. He appears in each photo, wearing the identical expression and standing in the identical way. The only difference is that the wife and children are different. He puts the photos back in the box.

Getting ready to leave, he gathers his work stuff on the coffee table. He glances at an invitation: *VANITY FAIR INVITES YOU TO BE PART OF THE "30 MOST IMPORTANT PRODUCERS IN HOLLYWOOD PHOTO"-- STAGE 7 ON THE PARAMOUNT LOT. WEDNESDAY, 11AM.*

He adjusts his tie in the mirror and walks out.

CUT TO:

Super: 11:00 am

EXT. PARAMOUNT LOT

Ben pulls up to the front gate where he gives his photo ID to the guard while his trunk is being inspected for explosives by another guard. He gets waved through.

Ben, dwarfed by the massive sound stages, checks his watch, walks through the lot.

INT. SOUND STAGE 7

The place is already bustling. In the center there is a makeshift bleacher in front of a large red curtain. Attached to the curtain are large gold letters spelling out P O W E R. A small crew is finishing the lighting and placing the camera for the shot. Test flash Polaroids are crackling in the background.

Off to the side are three make up chairs in front of brightly lit mirrors for those that want to be touched up before the shot. Across the way, ten tables are set up with flowers and candles to serve a formal lunch after the session is over.

Most of the producers have already arrived and are mingling in small groups. Everyone is trying to be extra polite, flushed with the excitement of getting their picture taken. But this is not a bunch of people that are rooting for each other, or for that matter, even like each other.

Ben is huddled with two producers.

PRODUCER #1

People bought their popcorn, got comfortable, the lights dimmed, the projector turned on. And the fucker fell off the screen like wet paint.' It did \$600 dollars a theater.

BEN

For me it's an ugly story. I root for everyone.

PRODUCER #2

Of course you do. I forgot.

All three are keeping their eye on the three tiered stand which are fronted by three large throne like chairs. ANGLE ON several producers who have already gathered near the front and center, hoping to get a better position in the photo. Ben and his group decide to join them. They are all now awkwardly bunched in the front row. The photographer's assistant, MARY, addresses them.

MARY

All right everyone, I'm Mary. Over on the wall there and on the table are charts which will indicate where each of you has been designated to stand. If you could find your places quickly, it would be most appreciated.

TIGHT ANGLE ON BEN who locates his place on the chart. It's the last tier off to the left. Not good.

ANGLE ON PRODUCER B, PRODUCER S AND PRODUCER Z. They are not only front and center, but they have the large thrones to sit on while everyone else is standing. Ben and Producer #1 walk by the priveleged threesome.

PRODUCER B

When that first big one crosses 100 million you celebrate. When it passes 200 million you celebrate again and so on. When the next movie crosses 100 million and so on, you don't celebrate any more...all you feel is a deep sense of relief.

PRODUCER S

Exactly. Relief and then a sense of purging.

They smile at Ben as he drifts by. Ben reluctantly walks up to his place on the second tier next to Producer #1.

PRODUCER #1

(to Ben)

This is great...the three kings and we're the court jesters.

BEN

Where's Alan?

PRODUCER #1

It's been awhile for Alan. He's probably off the list.

Ben doesn't like where he's positioned. He decides to walk back down to talk to Mary.

BEN

(almost in a whisper)

Could I have a word with you for a second? I'm Ben..

MARY

Of course, Ben, I know who you are.

BEN

I was thinking maybe you could do something for me and then I could do something special for you.

MARY

(to the crowd)

PLEASE EVERYONE, some of you will have to stand on the top tier.

(to Ben)

Yes.

BEN

This is awkward but if you could... I could find the way to...

MARY

Ben. Last night I received several calls, packages and envelopes at my hotel. I've got more gift certificates from Prada than Gwyneth fucking Paltrow. Everyone seems to want 'do' something for me.

BEN

It's not what I'm really getting at. It's just that some of these people are not really' producer' producers, if you know what I mean.

MARY

(to the crowd)

THAT'S LOOKING BETTER.

(to Ben)

Graydon chooses the pecking order, not me. He's the boss.

BEN

Actually...I don't care about the...hey, maybe I'll catch up with you later.

ANGLE ON BEN who walks by the three throned producers who smile as he climbs to the third row off to the left and takes his place under the letter P.

CUT TO:

A BLAST OF LIGHT and the photograph is frozen in time. As the camera pushes into Ben's face, he tries to make the most of the moment but, unfortunately, his face is slightly blocked by the taller producer next him.

CUT TO:

ANGLE ON MARY as she addresses the crowd.

MARY
OKAY, EVERY ONE. THANK YOU, THANK
YOU. HORS D'OURVES WILL BE SERVED
MOMENTARILY.

No one is bothering to listen now that the photo is over. Everyone starts to file out the door, grabbing free Vanity Fair gift bags off the table. The small talk is over.

They file past the waiters and the food. Apparently no one wanted to eat.

CUT TO:

EXT. STUDIO LOT

Super: 1:00 pm

Ben's car is being checked at the front gate. He pops his trunk. The guard in the kiosk hands him the pass for his windshield, but the guard checking the car sees a rifle resting in the back of the trunk.

GUARD
Stand out of the car, sir.

BEN
I don't think so. I'm here to have
lunch with Sidney Voss. I'm late.

The guard pulls out the rifle, shows it to Ben.

GUARD
Please stand away from the car door
and put your hands on the hood.

BEN
That's for skeet shooting. I have
a license and everything. I forgot
to take it out.

GUARD
Step out.

BEN
Fellas. C'mon you know me.

GUARD
Out.

Ben gets out.

GUARD
Put your hands on the hood.

BEN
On the hood? This ridicu...It's
not good for anyone if i'm late.

GUARD
The hood is just procedure.

BEN
An entire movie is on the brink.
Jobs could be lost, f'chrissake.

As a car passes by the driver leans out the window.

DRIVER
Better check those wheel rims for
drugs.

BEN
Thank you, Stuart. Nice.

The guard in the kiosk nods to the other guard that Ben's
okay.

GUARD
Okay, sorry for the caution. Mind
if we hold onto this until you
leave? Never know these days.

BEN
Why not.

Ben gets behind the wheel and drives off to park.

CUT TO:

EXT. STUDIO LOT SOUND STAGES

We see Ben pass under the vast mural of Marilyn Monroe in *Some Like It Hot*, as he makes the long walk to the commissary.

INT. STUDIO COMMISSARY--LUNCH TIME

Ben enters the packed room. The room is divided by the "good" section near the back of the room and the "not so good" section in the front of the dining room.

BEN looks toward the back of the dining room to see if his lunch partner, Sid Voss, has already arrived.

He is suffering the indignity of standing there without being immediately ushered to the "good" table. He camouflages all this, as always, with a slightly strained but confident grin.

He inches into the dining room. A hostess comes up from behind.

HOSTESS

Sir, you have to step back in the reception area before being seated. We have a big insurance problem if you're blocking an aisle.

BEN

Of course, you do.

HOSTESS

Do you have a reservation?

BEN

I'm joining Sidney Voss.

HOSTESS

Oh, goodness. Sorry. He's not here yet but let me take you to his table.

BEN

S'all right, I know where it is.

HOSTESS

Well, he's not at his usual table. Upper management came into town.

She points to an empty table in the middle of the room.

BEN

I see it, thanks. I can get there
on my own.

He sits alone. He can't help but look around to the back of the room, particularly at the "A" section. Someone who looks remarkably like Rupert Murdoch stares right through Ben. Ben looks away. The mojo's not working, he's at the wrong table. The hostess comes back to the table.

HOSTESS

I'm so sorry Mr. Voss's office
called and he simply can't make the
lunch.

BEN

Did they say 'why'?

HOSTESS

They said he's too grief stricken
to eat. You know that poor young
agent.

BEN

Yes, it's quite a loss. We're all
feeling it.

HOSTESS

I saw his picture in the trades.
He was very good looking.

BEN

I suppose that makes it even
harder.

HOSTESS

Oh, they said you should order
whatever you want, on him. And,
uh....they sent over a note.

She pulls a note from her pocket. It's scotch taped shut.

HOSTESS

For you.

BEN

I forgot my reading glasses. Would
you read it to me?

She pulls apart the scotch tape, the note is handwritten.

HOSTESS

Uhhh. 'dear Ben, don't think for a second that having lunch was going to change a fffu...

She looks at Ben not knowing if she should continue. Ben nods.

HOSTESS

...a fucking thing...and that there will be no give unless...

She hesitates.

BEN

Go ahead.

HOSTESS

'...unless that...fff...fucking... beard goes or he goes and then...we fucking shut the...the whole fucking movie down and then...'

The hostess stops, looks at Ben, not wanting to read on.

HOSTESS

I can't.

BEN

Might as well continue.

HOSTESS

'And then you...and then...and then... you are going to be...and he underlined this part...fucking history.'

The hostess now looks frightened. Her eyes well up.

BEN

Thank you.

HOSTESS

I'm so so sorry.

The hostess hands him the note and rushes off. Ben picks up the menu.

CUT TO:

INT. BEN'S OFFICE

Ben seated behind his desk is talking on the phone.

BEN
 Betty, tell Sid I tried our star
 three times. Can't get him on the
 phone. I've got a crew of forty
 people standing by. We launch
 tomorrow afternoon.

His screen for incoming calls is flashing "Kelly on 2." He presses the "tell her to hold" button.

BEN
 I know I'm running out of
 time...fine...

Ben's incoming screen: "Jeremy on 3" "Urgent!" Ben accidentally presses "Kelly on 2"

BEN
 Uhh...

KELLY
 Ben? Ben?

BEN
 Uhh Kelly, stay right there!

Ben presses "3."

BEN
 Jeremy, talk to me.

JEREMY
 (screaming through the
 phone)
 COME NOW! HOLY JESUS. COME NOW
 AND DO NOT PASS GO!
 (click)

Ben hangs up. He rummages through his desk, grabs some pills, thinks about which one's to take, decides and downs them. He gets up and walks out. He remembers Kelly is still on the phone. He runs back, presses "2" but Kelly is gone.

CUT TO:

EXT. FOX LOT

Ben is dwarfed by a giant mural of Darth Vader painted on the side of a sound stage. He pauses for a moment and stares up at the ominous "light sabre" before resuming his walk towards the editing room.

CUT TO:

INT EDITING ROOM

Ben enters the dark cutting room. Jeremy is sitting with an editor reviewing a scene from the film on the Avid Screen. When Jeremy sees Ben, he jumps up enthusiastically.

JEREMY

Welcome, mate. Sit here.

Jeremy turns to his editor.

JEREMY

Verna, luv, would you mind terribly giving Ben and me a bit of privacy?

Verna gracefully steps out.

As Ben takes a seat he notices that Jeremy although still ravaged, seems quite content. Jeremy, seemingly for fun, is wearing an Indian feather on his head.

JEREMY

Do I look happy?

BEN

Enough to scare me.

JEREMY

Well, I did a lot of deep reaching last night. I realized that I had to put myself in a different location to accommodate everyone.

BEN

I truly appreciate that.

JEREMY

The world is a big place and I had to remind myself that we're all just visiting.

BEN

Hey, it's an honest thought. One that I'm starting to share with more frequency.

Jeremy points to the feather.

JEREMY

Tonto.

Ben laughs.

JEREMY

I know, mate. I know. But this feather gets me there. ME TONTO...the studio, THE LONE RANGER. Why fight a battle I can't win? Makes no sense.

BEN

Sometimes it takes more guts to concede.

JEREMY

I think so.

BEN

I guess the question is, is the damn thing fixable for Cannes? The films got be remixed and sent out in the next few days.

JEREMY

Lemme take you through it.

Jeremy manipulates the computer that's connected to the Avid screen. The movie images are fast forwarding.

JEREMY

Verna and I have been able to make some significant cuts. Particularly in the market place investigation and the clue search at Dulles Airport.

Jeremy stops the avid and runs a scene where Sean's character is running through an airport, leaps through security and corners an attractive woman.

ANGLE ON THE AVID SCREEN

SEAN PENN

Everything you were trying to tell me was true and I won't forget it.

ATTRACTIVE WOMAN

I'm not surprised.

Sean quickly proceeds to his gate.

ANGLE ON JEREMY AND BEN

JEREMY

Some of the notes were good. The next three scenes in the library investigation was shoe leather. No longer necessary and it saved another three minutes. I cut it.

BEN

Excellent.

JEREMY

I think we've got about ten minutes out already by just shaking the box. Let me take you to the...

Jeremy puts his fingers up like quotation marks.

JEREMY

"dreaded ending." I think there's some things I can do albeit it's breaking what little heart I have left.

Jeremy presses the play button:

ANGLE ON THE AVID SCREEN

WE SEE THE SAME GRAINY SHOT OF SEAN PENN. He is laying on the side of a dusty road, trying desperately to prop himself up on a large embankment. Blood, his blood, is all over the place. When he nears the top, he topples back down in a grim heap. He appears to be critically injured. Almost lifeless, he refuses to give in. A smallish dog loyally stands next to him.

SEAN

I'm not going to beg.

Three men, casually standing near a car just across the road, impassively eye Sean's struggle.

SEAN

You think I care what happens to me? It's you I'm concerned with. It's your salvation.... "Father forgive them for they know not what they do."

ON THE SCREEN Sean furtively reaches in his pocket. One of the men raises his gun. The dog, confused, darts across the road and gets caught in a crossfire.

SEAN

NO!

ANGLE ON THE GUNMAN. This time he unloads all of his ammunition in an attempt to kill the dog.

ANGLE ON THE DOG, who is running around in odd circles seemingly dodging the bullets. And then, out of nowhere, he decides to play "dead."

ANGLE ON THE GUNMAN, who disgusted that his weapon is empty, looks at Sean's lifeless body, joins his two accomplices and walks off.

ANGLE ON SEAN who is lying face up in a bloody heap. The dog enters the shot and starts licking the blood off of Sean's face. Sean trying to stay in character remains motionless until finally he turns and smiles at the dog.

Jeremy freezes the image. He looks at Ben, who slowly places his hands on his chest as if he's about to receive a large Buddhist blessing.

BEN

Wow!

Jeremy pats his hand over his mouth gives out a victorious Indian war chant.

JEREMY

WHOOOP! WHOOOP! Lou's going to come in her pants.

BEN

Panties.

JEREMY

Pants.

BEN

Point taken.

Ben gestures at the Avid.

BEN

How? How did you figure...

JEREMY

It was an outtake. I had ten of them. We could never get the dog to stay still. He loved Sean.

BEN

Brilliant. I mean it certainly changes the tone of the movie. I just hope that...

JEREMY

I know. I know. The movie won't mean anything now but at least we can be comforted in that it won't offend.

BEN

Jeremy. I don't get it. This isn't you talking.

JEREMY

It's me.

BEN

How did you get there?

JEREMY

Placidil, laddie. Placidil, three times a day. I could watch me mum get gang raped in broad daylight and still admire the weather.

BEN

Apparently, the stuff works.

JEREMY

Well, there's a key to it. You cannot mix it with with coke or alcohol.

BEN

What happens?

JEREMY

Bad juju? If you do that with placidil the raging snake comes shrieking out of the closet. Not good.

Ben looks at the Avid's frozen image of Sean Penn smiling next to lovable dog.

BEN

I admire your courage. Where can I kiss you? C'mon. There's no location I wouldn't consider.

Jeremy holds up the Placidil bottle.

JEREMY

Hey, this shit's not that strong.

They both laugh. Ben grabs his cell phone and dials.

BEN

Hello Florence, Is Lou there? It's Ben...tell her I'm in the cutting room and it's important.

Lou picks up the phone in her private bathroom.

LOU

Yes. Ben.

BEN

Jeremy's done it. He's really done it. I think we've licked this bastard.

LOU

I knew you would make this work. You have a way, Ben.

BEN

We ham and egged it. We're a good team.

LOU

It's not that I doubt you but when can I see it?

Lou gets up from the toilet and without regard to the fact that Ben can hear, flushes. The loud noise backs Ben away from his phone.

BEN

Well I guess we know who's number one.

LOU

WHAT?

BEN

You can see it whenever you want.

He turns to Jeremy.

BEN

She'll be by this afternoon with her creative group.

BEN(cont'd)

Pick out your tux and leisure wear,
we'll be leaving to France in a few
days.

CUT TO:

INT. UNDERGROUND GARAGE -- LATER SAME DAY

Ben speeds through the facility, tires shrieking, while he desperately searches for a parking space.

BEN

(into his phone)

Dick. I will meet you at the
theater tonight...yes, I want to
meet her... but you gotta face this
thing. You have to tell him now.
My director is starting to look
like a stroke victim.

Super: 4:00 pm

INT: SHRINKS OFFICE -- SAME DAY

A woman with a Latin American accent, DOCTOR MONTEZ, is seated behind an expensively designed desk. Kelly and Ben are facing each other and are seated in front of the doctor.

BEN

I thought we're supposed to be
telling the TRUTH here. Are you
saying that you've never...

DR. MONTEZ

Ben. I'm sorry to interrupt but
again I must emphasize that for
this drill to work we must not
bring up what the other person has
done to you. For your own relief
you must disclose what you have
done to Kelly. Get it off your
chest, as they say. And she has to
disclose any transgressions she has
done to you.

BEN

Well, that's the point. She's not.

KELLY

Look, I thought the goal here was
not to get us back together but to
help us feel better about being
apart. So we can move on
gracefully. We share two kids.

DR. MONTEZ

Exactly right. This is a drill to help couples separate with affection instead of acrimony. It's not about trying to control the other persons behavior.

BEN

Okay.

DR. MONTEZ

Is there anything you can think of that you've done to Kelly while you were married or divorced that you wish you didn't?

BEN

That question feels so vague. I don't know.

DR. MONTEZ

Okay, here's an example. When you were married did you ever lie about your whereabouts with other women?

BEN

Uhh...no.

Ben sees Kelly roll her eyes.

BEN

Well...there was one time when we were married when I thought about seeing Ann.

KELLY

Really. And did you?

BEN

Uhh...yes, but nothing happened... I just. Well, I guess I wanted to but hey. (turns to Montez) I think I know what you mean. I feel a little better already.

DR. MONTEZ

Is that everything on this matter?

BEN

Pretty much.

DR. MONTEZ

The complete truth will set you free, Ben.

BEN

I, uhh, was with Ann once at a party?

DR. MONTEZ

Where?

BEN

In the bathroom?

KELLY

You fucker.

Ben shrugs.

DR. MONTEZ

Very good, Ben. Now Kelly, it is not for you to judge. This is just a start. We're a little short on time so let's give Kelly a chance to get the hang of this, and then next week, we will dig deeper. You ready Kelly?

KELLY

Yes.

DR. MONTEZ

Did you ever use your kids as ammunition against Ben?

KELLY

Before or after the divorce?

DR. MONTEZ

Whatever comes to mind.

KELLY

No.

DR. MONTEZ

Did you ever have an affair while you were married?

Ben perks up.

KELLY

Absolutely not!

DR. MONTEZ

Okay, then.

KELLY

Well there was one time at Alan's son's bar mitzvah when I kissed Alan on the mouth in the master bathroom.

BEN

How could you do that to Sheila?

KELLY

Oh please. It never went farther than that. I must admit, I did think about it though.

DR. MONTEZ

That's very good.

Ben and Kelly look at each other confused. They seem to be filled with more angst now than before.

BEN

Why don't we talk about what we are doing to each other now?

DR. MONTEZ

Next time. I think this was a terrific start. Both of you, congratulations.

Dr. Montez applauds them.

DR. MONTEZ

You'll see. As we dig deeper and deeper...you guys are going to feel so good about being apart...that Your never going to want to get back together.

CUT TO:

INT. ELEVATOR

Ben and Kelly alone, not talking, watching the floors tick by. Both are trying to make the best of this. As the elevator doors open and the phone reception clears, Ben's cell phone goes off. Kelly shrugs. Ben watches her walk off. Ben presses the 'off button' and let's this call go.

CUT TO:

TIGHT ANGLE OF A POSTER

The Graduate, starring Jerry Hall.

INT. STROMBERG PLAYHOUSE -- SAME NIGHT

A small theater in Hollywood. The play is already in progress.

ANGLE ON THE STAGE to include Mrs. Robinson and Benjamin in the living room of Mrs. Robinson's house. She pours herself a drink.

MRS. ROBINSON
What do you think of me?

BENJAMIN
What do you mean?

MRS. ROBINSON
Benjamin, you've known me nearly all of your life. You must have formed some opinion.

She moves suggestively closer to him.

MRS. ROBINSON
Did you know I was an alcoholic?

BENJAMIN
What?

ANGLE ON THE AUDIENCE. The camera pushes into Ben who is seated in the third row between DICK, bearded movie star agent, and an older couple, who could be Mrs. Robinson's parents.

BEN
And?

DICK
Shhhh. Wait til we're in the lobby.

As the play forges on, Ben's head is tilted forward, his mouth slightly ajar, his eyes at half mast. He's gone.

DICK
(nudging Ben)
Hang with me babe, she's getting to the best part.

Ben stirs awake, not sure where he is. He stares at the stage. Mrs Robinson has just removed her dress. She's down to a bra and panties.

Ben tries to focus.

ANGLE ON THE STAGE. Mrs. Robinson stalks Benjamin and starts to remove her bra.

MRS. ROBINSON
Benjamin, I want you to know I'm
available to you.

BENJAMIN
Oh my God.

MRS. ROBINSON
If you won't sleep with me this
time Benjamin, you can call me up
any time you want.

Mrs. Robinson boldly removes her panties. Benjamin is caught in the headlights.

BENJAMIN
Let me out!

MRS. ROBINSON
Because I find you very attractive.

TIGHT ANGLE ON BEN. His eyes are wide eyed now.

DICK
(whispering in Ben's ear)
That's why I decided to sign her.

Ben gives him a reassuring nod.

CUT TO:

INT. LOBBY STROMBERG PLAYHOUSE.

Ben and Dick make there way through the crowd.

BEN
Dick. Enough. Did you tell him he
has to shave and what the
consequences would be if he didn't.

DICK
Yes.

BEN
What'd he say?

DICK
He told me that he hopes I contract
pancreatic cancer and die a slow
withering death.

BEN
He's a beauty. What'd he say after
he calmed down?

DICK
He said, 'you gutless little turd.'

BEN
Oh no....and then?

DICK
You're fired!

BEN
Wow...did he happen to say...

DICK
...and then my biggest client, my
biggest paying client, the one
responsible for my mortgage, hung
up the phone.

Ben puts a consoling arm around Dick. Dick looks like he is
about to dry heave, Ben backs off, but Dick controls it.

BEN
Ooo, Dick...I'm sorry...man, you
are strong.

DICK
Is 'strong' a euphemism for
'uninsultable?'

BEN
No. But I couldn't help but
admire....I mean you're still
smiling...did he add anything else,
about, you know, the movie? The
beard? The weight?

DICK
Can't you once let this moment be
about me.

BEN

You're right. You're right. It is your moment, I was just wondering...he must of talked about his plans...

DICK

Not really.

BEN

He said nothing?

DICK

No.

BEN

That is not good.

EXT. STROMBERG PLAYHOUSE.

Near the back of the playhouse on a side street off of Santa Monica Boulevard, Ben and Dick arrive to join the rest of JERRY HALL's entourage as Jerry makes her exit.

DICK

Jerry, I want to introduce you to Ben.

Ben still preoccupied by the news, forging on.

BEN

A true pleasure. You were great.

JERRY HALL

Oh, Thank you so much.

BEN

No. Really. I don't ever say that unless I truly mean it. I was smitten in there. You are so talented.

Jerry is almost cooing.

JERRY HALL

I'm so glad you could see me in front of a live audience. I needed this exposure.

BEN

They should double the ticket prices.

Across Santa Monica in the parking lot of Miceli's Restaurant, Ben sees what he thinks is KELLY. He gets momentarily distracted.

BEN
Uhh...if...

JERRY HALL
(puts her lips near Ben's)
I'd love to hook up. Can I give you my number?

BEN
Definitely.

TIGHT ANGLE ONTO BEN. Ben tries to concentrate on Jerry but he takes one more look across the street.

BEN'S POV: FUCK! IT IS KELLY, he's almost sure. And she's leaning against a parked car in the shadows and wait a minute! COULD THAT BE SCOTT leaning in and passionately kissing her? Tongue and all?

BEN
Yes. Uhhh. That would be great...could you...I'm going to be right back...

Ben walks toward the curb to get a closer look. IS THAT SCOTT'S HAND CREEPING UP KELLY'S SKIRT BETWEEN HER THIGHS! Ben waves back at Jerry and tries to cross Santa Monica Boulevard. He weaves through the heavy traffic. By the time he gets across, the kissing couple is gone. He walks back to the theater. Dick is the only one still there.

BEN
Sorry. I thought I saw...it doesn't matter...

DICK
You're dog die?

BEN
The whole kennel.

DICK
Seems to be going around.

Dick laughs and, then unexpectedly, gives up one of his brief dry heaves: AARRGH. As Ben pats Dick's back, Dick removes two pills from his pocket.

BEN
Are you getting ready to travel?

Dick knocks the pills back.

BEN
I think that bastard is going to
kill us all.

They start to walk to the parking lot.

BEN
Where's Jerry?

DICK
She had to go but she would very
much like to meet up with you when
it's convenient.

BEN
Good.

DICK
I'll take care of it.

THURSDAY

A TIGHT SHOT OF THE WORD *WHAT?*

Super: 11:am

As the camera slowly pulls back we see the rest of the expansive oil painting which is adjacent to an array of huge black and white blow up photos of JACK (the dead guy we've been talking about) perched on giant easels. The photographs reveal an irresistably kind and attractive looking young man.

A WIDE ANGLE OF hundreds of mourners who are slowly gathering inside the HOLLYWOOD CEMETERY. An organ is playing a rather spirited version of *My Way*. Indeed, Jack is dead. And they've all come out to pay their respects.

By the time BEN arrives, it's standing room only. Ben surveys the Hollywood crowd, acknowledges friends and acquaintances with a subdued and understanding smile. In the tenth row, DICK waves for Ben, indicating an open seat. As Ben is about to sit down, he notices, from all the way across the chapel, underneath one of JACK'S photos and next to the treasured oil painting, four young, nubile and beautiful teen age girls huddled and crying. They're holding flowers.

At first Ben reflects an almost jealous admiration for the post mortem love that Jack is getting. But, WAIT A SECOND!

Is that, ZOE? Is that Ben's beautiful daughter from his first marriage, one of the girls, IN DEEP SORROW OVER A DEAD AGENT? Ben asks Dick to save his seat.

As he makes his way through the throng, he sees SCOTT, his writer friend who's surreptitiously sleeping with his ex-wife, enter the chapel with EDWARD NORTON. The curiosity of that pairing takes Ben aback for a moment, but he decides to go in the other direction to avoid having to talk to Scott. He has to let that one go for now. Zoe is his first concern.

BEN

Hi Zoe.

Zoe turns, revealing her tear stain face.

ZOE

I...oh...god.

Zoe turns back to her friends and tries to hold back further tears. Ben puts his arm around her.

BEN

Terrible, terrible thing.

ZOE

The worst....

Zoe and one of her friends tenderly touch Jack's chin on the photo.

BEN

To care so much...

ZOE

It's been so hard.

BEN

I didn't know that you knew Jack.
You knew him?

ZOE

(wiping her tears)
Yes.

BEN

How?

ZOE

This is the wrong time.

Ben notices Zoe is wearing a man's necktie loosely knotted around her neck over a very tight T-shirt.

BEN

Is that tie...Jack's?

Zoe nods.

BEN

For godsakes, it's ten o'clock in the morning, you should be in high school.

ZOE

Please.

Scott and Edward Norton pass Ben and Zoe. Because of the crowd they can't avoid each other. Zoe is nudged out of the way.

SCOTT

Hello Ben.

BEN

Not now.

SCOTT

You've met Edward Norton? This is Ben.

Ben puts on the Hollywood game face for a celeb.

BEN

Pleasure, Ed.

EDWARD

Edward.

BEN

Yes. Of course. This is my daughter, Zoe.

Zoe brightens at his fame. Scott takes Ben aside.

SCOTT

I've got something very important to mention to you. Can we talk later?

BEN

(bolsters himself)

Why not...no, let's do it now. Let's get it over with.

SCOTT
Uhh, I think after the service
would be better.

BEN
Fine. I'm ready.

Scott and Edward walk off. Edward gives Zoe a 'maybe later' smile.

Ben moves Zoe further away from the photos. He repositions himself so he can talk to her privately.

BEN
I mean when did...you...Jack...have
time to know each other.

ZOE
Does it really matter?

BEN
Honey, I know, I know but...was
there any intimacy.

Zoe gets tears in her eyes and rolls her eyes at the same time.

ZOE
What difference does it make now?

BEN
A big difference. He blew his
brains out!

Zoe turns away. Ben pulls her back.

BEN
Sorry. That was harsh...but I
mean,...I don't know...an agent!

ZOE
He was wonderful. He was gentle.
He taught me so much about me.

BEN
He took drugs.

ZOE
He touched me.

BEN
Where?

Zoe's had enough.

ZOE
Everywhere?

She rejoins her girl friends. The organ player is now playing Sting's *Every Breath You Take* while a rabbi asks everyone to please be seated.

BEN
You're a kid.

Ben, slightly rocked, makes his way slowly back across the chapel. Throngs of people still huddled around waiting for the proceedings to start. Ben squeezes passed two agents and a movie executive.

YOUNG EXEC
(surveying the room)
Nice crowd. Jack has never been so hot.

AGENT #2
Believe me, most of Colombia is grieving.

AGENT #1
Hey Ben, como esta amigo.

BEN
Good to see you.

AGENT #1
(leans into Ben, puts his arm around him)
If I only had one tenth of Jack's pussy...one tenth. Where did he find them? High School?

Ben gives him a brave "atta boy" smile.

BEN
I don't know, Joe.

But he's had enough. He moves down the row, takes his seat next to Dick, while taking one last look at Zoe. For the first time, he's starting to look as desperate as Dick.

The organ music stops.

NEW ANGLE from the wings, the Actor (Ben's star and Dick's ex client) walks out to the pulpit to deliver the eulogy.

BEN
(whispers to Dick)
Oh my god, he appears even thicker
and hairier than he did yesterday.

ACTOR
This is a tough one. So young. So
final. Jack. Gregory. Levine.
McDonagh. Not just an agent...

He deliberately scans the vast assemblage of Hollywood folk,
his eyes linger when he spots BEN and DICK. He takes his
time.

ACTOR
I see so many people out there that
I would rather be eulogizing today
than....Jack.

A beat. Scattered awkward laughter.

BEARDED MOVIE STAR
When a life gets cut short we all
feel saddened. But, when it had
the promise, the vision, the...

Ben leans into Dick whispers.

BEN
Do you know that stuff you take to
pack. You know...

DICK
Kilonopin?

Ben nods.

BEN
If I could have one....

Dick hands him two. Ben swallows them. He glances at the
pulpit.

BEN
He fired you, you're better off.

DICK
I'm comfortable with it.

BEN
Tomorrow, at four, he shaves that
fucking beard or the whole picture
goes down.

DICK

Call me crazy, but I don't
...AARGH...excuse me, I don't think
he gives a shit.

ANGLE on the bearded movie star.

ACTOR

The optimism, the decency, the
generosity that Jack exhibited, as
an agent and future studio head,
and, particularly, exhibited in an
industry that, let's face it, is
often known for mercilessly
devouring and punishing its
own.....

He almost points at Ben. As several younger and older women
are attempting to hold back their tears.

ACTOR

Adored by women and men. He had the
heart of an artist because he
genuinely cared about them. And so
it is that today is the day for
goodbyes, but before we do.....

We slowly push in on Ben and Dick, who stare back
expressionlessly.

CUT TO:

WIDE ANGLE on a long line of mourners exiting the chapel
single file.

With the eulogy and ceremony completed, the multitude of
mourners are slowly making their way to the grave sight,
walking through a manicured parking lot adjacent to the head
stones.

Scott sees Ben and hurries to join him.

SCOTT

That was a good send off.

BEN

I thought so.

SCOTT

Listen, I've got an opportunity that I thought I could share with you.

BEN

Share? Is that a word you're comfortable with? Like as in 'what's mine is yours.'

SCOTT

Well, maybe you should hear it first.

BEN

Or how 'bout 'mi casa es su casa.'

SCOTT

I think if we talk about it, we can come to some mutual understanding.

BEN

Are we negotiating?

SCOTT

Let me tell you.

CAMERA SLOWLY MOVES INTO A TIGHT ANGLE OF BEN'S FACE, who, out of nowhere, SNAPS.

He grabs Scott by his shirt collar, walks him out of the procession, wheels him around the side of a parked Range Rover, out of sight from the crowd, smashes his head against the rear window, knees him in the groin and then perches him up on the passenger door with his hand firmly on his neck.

BEN

You use MY EX FUCKING BED TO SLEEP WITH MY EX FUCKING WIFE! IN MY EX FUCKING HOUSE

He slaps him hard in the face, tosses Scott to the ground and starts to stomp. A trace of blood seeps out of the corner of Scott's mouth. Ben picks him back up.

BEN

AND YOU WANT TO NEGOTIATE?

SCOTT

NO. NO.

Ben then grabs the argyle sock from his pocket, dangles it in front of Scott's eyes.

BEN

You think I'm weak, that I don't
care, that I won't fight back?

Ben shoves the sock into Scott's mouth and starts to suffocate him with it. Scott's eyes start to bug out. He's going to die. The camera zeros in on Ben's face.

BEN

WHEN I'M DONE WITH YOU, YOU LITTLE
SHIT BAG, ALL YOU'LL BE ABLE TO
WRITE IS TAMPON JINGLES. DO YOU
HEAR ME FUCK FACE. TAMPON JINGLES!
YOU FUCKING HACK!

Suddenly, as if nothing happened, Ben changes his expression to complete calmness. He almost smiles.

BEN

Go ahead, Scott, it's your dime.
I'm all ears.

As we turn to Scott, we see there is no sock in his mouth. He is relaxed. NOTHING HAPPENED. They are still in the line on their way to the grave sight.

SCOTT

For a moment there...I thought you
were...

BEN

What?

SCOTT

Uhhh...I just wanted to tell you
the chef movie now has a star
interested in doing it, and, quite
frankly, I would rather see you
produce it than Leonard.

BEN

No. No. Who do you think
I...wait. Heh. I don't understand.
You want to throw this opportunity
my way? Why?

SCOTT

I think it would be great. My
agent said it would be good
business...that you could get the
money and you're the right guy to
run interference on this one. And,
I agree with him.

BEN
Out of the question.

SCOTT
Why?

BEN
Well...I have to, I believe,
there's a coupla things you and I
would need to sort out first.

SCOTT
Sure. Like what?

BEN
Like you're seeing my ex-wife.

SCOTT
Ben, you've been divorced for a
year and a half.

BEN
It doesn't matter.

SCOTT
Hell, you almost married somebody
else 6 months ago. Remember.

BEN
So what? It's not right. It
doesn't FEEL right! It's wrong. I
mean ...uhh...for godsakes Scott,
you're married!

SCOTT
What difference does it make. I'm
NOT HAPPY. NOT HAPPY. Is that a
feeling that's not familiar to you?

BEN
I have to think about this.

SCOTT
Fine.

BEN
Uhh... by the way, who's the actor
in the chef movie?

SCOTT
Brad Pitt. Got the call last
night.

BEN
He's in?

SCOTT
Hundred percent.

Ben hesitates, trying to think this through.

BEN
He'd be good.

SCOTT
Sure would.

BEN
I've already got a couple of
thoughts...

SCOTT
Good. This shouldn't affect us.

They continue walking away towards the grave site with the rest of the mourners.

SCOTT
I thought he did a brilliant job up there today. He's a good spokesman to elevate our industry.

BEN
What'd you think of his beard?

SCOTT
I think it hides his double chin.

BEN
It does that.

Scott decides to go to his car. They say their goodbyes. Ben decides to go to the open grave. The rabbi is already starting to offer some final benedictions.

The coffin, covered in flowers, is about to be lowered. Ben decides to walk to the other side and as he passes through the crowd HE WINDS UP ACCIDENTALLY STANDING NEXT TO HIS BEARDED MOVIE STAR.

The following conversation takes place in tense whispers as the casket is being lowered.

ACTOR
You don't want to stand here.

BEN
Couldn't be helped. I'm certain
that we are making more out of this
than is necessary.

ACTOR
I told you, no.

BEN
(under his breath)
'No' means the picture's as dead as
Jack. That's not good for you or
me.

ACTOR
We'll see.

Mourners are now shoveling dirt on the grave.

ACTOR
Look. You're a producer. You're
just the fucking mayonnaise in a
bad sandwich.

BEN
They're gonna crush your nuts.

ACTOR
Save the speech.

The actor goes to pick up a shovel. He digs up some dirt and forcefully tosses it into the grave and then slams the shovel deep into the mound of earth, as if he were intending it for Ben. He looks back at Ben and smiles. Ben nonchalantly walks over and yanks the shovel from the dirt and to show he doesn't back off, he tosses his bit of earth forcefully into the grave. Unfortunately, the weight of the shovel, spins Ben accidentally into the next agent in line careening the guy head first into the grave. It takes all of Ben's will to keep himself from following.

Flustered and embarrassed, Ben with the help of other mourners pull the guy back out onto the fake green turf. He mouths his apologies to the rabbi.

In the back of the crowd, he catches Zoe's eye. She looks away.

CUT TO:

TIGHT ANGLE FROM INSIDE A SINK.

It is filled with water and ice cubes. Suddenly a head smashes through the surface and stays submerged in the frozen water. It is Ben. He slowly opens his eyes as if trying to focus on the drain. He pulls his face out of the sink, and without wiping any water from his head, he looks in the mirror.

INT. BEN'S BEDROOM -- MOMENTS LATER

Ben is seated at the edge of his bed. He has changed his clothes to studied casual wear. Levi's, loafers without socks, etc. He's wearing slightly tinted glasses. His phone rings. He thinks about answering it but decides to let it go to the machine.

ANSWERING MACHINE-BEN'S VOICE
Hello?....(pause).....Hello???.
...(long pause)....

Ben smiles at the machine. He knows the message is going to bait the caller.

ANSWERING MACHINE
...please leave me a message
...BEEP.

It's Cal, the director.

CAL
What's wrong with you? Anyways,
it's 2:30. It's Cal. I'm out here
early.

CUT TO:

INT. VAST ABANDONED FACTORY/CONVERTED SOUND STAGE

Cal is on his cell phone still talking to Ben's answering machine. Behind him, there is a beehive of activity. Make up and hair people are preparing the extras and actors for the first scene. The wardrobe truck is filled with people attempting to deal with the last minute alterations and changes.

The catering truck is on movie time. A line of workers are gathered around the tables waiting to get "breakfast" to steal themselves for a long night of shooting.

It looks like chaos but it is actually a well orchestrated group of actors, extras, and crew gearing up for a movie.

CAL

For godsake where are you? Our first day and not only are we shooting nights, we don't even know if we're going to shoot at all. What the fuck is that? I'm having a nervous breakdown. You should be here. I need you. SOS! SOS!

INT. BEN'S APT.

Ben likes the sound of being needed. But he doesn't pick up the phone.

INT. A VAST CAVERNOUS ABANDONED FACTORY

CAL

Wait. There he is.

Dramatically, the huge metal door to the factory starts to slide open revealing a blast of hot sun light. Through the haze a limo slowly enters the compound.

CAL

He's driving up in the town car now. He's early. This could be a very good sign. The car is headed straight for his trailer. I better go.

INT. BEN'S APT

Click. Ben gathers his things and walks out.

CUT TO:

INT. TAP DANCE STUDIO

Zoe is in a line of six girls and two boys going through a series of tap exercises in a small wood floor studio. *42'nd Street* is blaring from a portable CD player. Through the small window of the school room door, Ben's face appears. He watches the kids dance.

He carefully opens the door, trying not to interrupt the class. Zoe sees him. Ben looks over at her and smiles. She doesn't react. He places a small Barney's gift bag near the door. He mimes: "this is for you, I've got to go." Zoe, still going through her steps, watches Ben leave.

The music stops. Zoe opens the Barney's bag, takes out a small box, sees a small gold chain necklace inside.

She opens the card: "Good God, I think I've come to the conclusion that my daughter is older than me. Better late than never. love, Dad."

Zoe smiles.

CUT TO:

INT. VAST ABANDONED FACTORY.

A line of workers are gathered around the tables waiting to get "breakfast" to steal themselves for a long night of shooting.

Angle on BEN and CAL, the director, are walking through the cluster of activity. The actors' trailers are in the background.

He went right from the car to his trailer and burrowed deep.

BEN
What'd he look like?

CAL
Hard to tell, he had a hat, sun glasses and a scarf. Kept his back to everyone. The make-up guy and his assistant are the only ones in the trailer. The door's locked.

SUIT #1
Didn't the Teamster who drove him see him?

CAL
Said he didn't notice.

BEN
I ran into him yesterday at Jack's funeral.

CAL
Well?

BEN
Not good.

CAL
Was this really necessary?

A young studio 'suit' approaches.

YOUNG SUIT

Sid has asked me to come out to support you guys but he's adamant. If the status is quo, this baby goes down.

BEN

Let's be patient.

YOUNG SUIT

If he's forced to, he'll make the movie with Jeff Daniels.

CAL

I'd have to think about that.

YOUNG SUIT

He said he's not sure that he'd keep you either.

Cal and Ben share a glance and keep walking.

CAL

If the 'status is quo?'

BEN

It's a new breed.

1ST AD

(to Cal)

Ten minutes and we're lit. I'll tell the actors.

CUT TO:

EXT. STAR'S TRAILER.

Ben, Cal and the two suits are standing off to the side. Behind them forty people from the cast and crew are casually gathered trying to look disinterested in the proceedings. The 1st AD knocks on the trailer door.

1ST AD

Ready on the set, sir.

The door opens but it's not the actor, it's his assistant.

ASSISTANT

Two minutes. Almost there.

The assistant shuts the door. Cal lights up a cigarette.

YOUNG SUIT
I'm betting no.

BEN
People's livelihoods are at stake.
What kind of a remark is that?

YOUNG SUIT
Make a note. A producer with a
conscience.

Noise is coming from inside the trailer. Some one has slightly drawn the blinds and part of his face can briefly be seen through the shadow as he walks by the window. It looks like the beard's still there. Disappointed, the bystanders look away.

YOUNG SUIT
They say, you know, were measured
by how we handle adversity.

Ben grabs the executive by the lapel.

BEN
You're going to have to stop it.
All right?

Cal takes a napkin and wipes his face. He's breathing heavier. He's starting to look pale and desperate. He tosses his cigarette and lights a fresh one. He offers one to Ben. Cal's hand is shaky.

CAL
Go ahead. Calm the nerves.

BEN
Okay. Why not? It's only been
twenty years.

Ben takes a big drag.

The trailer door suddenly swings open. The crowd goes stone still. It's as if Elvis is about to descend. Ben, subconsciously edges closer. Ten long seconds go by. Nothing. Ben's had enough.

BEN
COME ON ALREADY! THAT'S IT!
WHAT'S IT GOING TO BE?

Cal sucks hard on his cigarette.

The actor slowly moves out and stands on the top step. BAD NEWS. He's only in profile but his beard looks like it got even longer.

Everyone lets out a collective groan. The actor, without turning his face, takes a big drag from a small cigar. He looks pissed off.

BEN

OKAY. OKAY. HERE WE ARE, AREN'T WE?

With perfect timing the actor turns to face the crowd exposing the other side of his face. THE OTHER SIDE OF HIS FACE IS SHAVED! IT'S SHAVED! He looks like a circus side show performer, "the half bearded man." the half bearded movie star gets a big grin on his face.

ACTOR

Hey, how about we get this fucker on the road?

The crowd breaks into applause.

Ben turns to Cal. Cal has fainted. He's out cold. Ben calmly turns to the 1st AD.

BEN

Get the medic?

The actor joins Ben. The medic rushes to the scene. Cal stirs.

ACTOR

Not his heart is it?

BEN

No. He's fainted before. That's my heart you hear exploding.

ACTOR

Couldn't be. You don't have one.

Ben looks at the "half bearded man." It's a goofy sight. Cal, still woozy, is sitting up drinking water.

CAL

I'm fine. It was the heat.

Ben and his star have already started to walk off.

BEN

Can I get you a breakfast burrito?
It's good luck to eat one on the
first day of shooting.

ACTOR

Nice of you.

BEN

Bacon or no bacon?

ACTOR

Always the works on the first day.

They head for the catering truck.

CUT TO:

SUNDAY

NICE AIRPORT, FRANCE -- EARLY EVENING

A series of shots to reveal the Cannes Film Festival is in full swing. Flags and banners festooned everywhere, announce the coming attractions. Paparazzi, limo drivers, taxi drivers, french police and fans fill the entrances and exits waiting to get a glimpse of of someone special to arrive.

CUT TO:

ANGLE ON SPECIAL LUGGAGE HOLD. At a special luggage exit three people run up to a large plastic cage and pull open the door. A dog leaps out into his masters arms. ISN'T THAT THE SAME DOG FROM THE MOVIE?

CUT TO:

ANGLE THROUGH THE LARGE PLATE GLASS WINDOW we can see LOU and her group getting off a G-5 private jet and quickly entering two limousines waiting on the tarmac next to the plane.

CUT TO:

ANGLE ON BEN, wheeling his baggage in the commercial section, makes his way through the throng. He goes virtually unnoticed except for one photgrapher who thinks he's "somebody." The photographer leaps in front of him and aims his camera. Ben pauses. The photographer, getting a closer look, realizes that Ben isn't famous, scraps the shot and walks away. Ben eyes him, puts on his sunglasses and

continues to walk towards a row of limo drivers.

CUT TO:

INT. LIMO -- SAME TIME

Ben peers through the window as the car makes it's way down the Croisette, rushing by the beautiful mediteranean coastline, outdoor restaurants, famous hotels and large movie billboards.

As the car slows down BEN can see a poster of his movie "FIERCELY" with a shot of SEAN PENN and a BEAUTIFUL WOMAN running dangerously across a busy highway. He leans back. It looked pretty good. Things could be looking up.

EXT. HOTEL DU CAP -- SAME TIME

Ben's car passes the famous entrance.

INT. HOTEL ROOM

Ben is adjusting his black tie.

INT. HOTEL DU CAP LOBBY AND BAR AREA --EVENING.

The place is packed with the full collection of Euro/Hollywood types. Executives, teen hookers, faded actors, agents etc. etc. BEN enters the lobby. He sees JOHNNY huddled with ABA, the impressario from Israel with the drooping eye. When Johnny and Aba spot Ben they wave. Johnny approaches him.

Johnny spreads his arms wide and reaches into hug Ben. Because of his towering height, Ben's face gets smothered into Johnny's arm pit.

JOHNNY

It can't get more exciting than this? What can I say. You did it. I just want you to know that I don't care about the money. Fuck money. And I don't care about the movies. Fuck movies. I only care that you and I are becoming close friends.

Jphnny then releases Ben from his grasp. Ben stares back at him temporarily at a loss for words.

BEN

Uhh...friendship is very important in this business, thank you. Has Jeremy returned to the hotel?

JOHNNY

I invite him and I was told he's at the Palais checking the sound with his editor.

Aba approaches with two teen age girls hoisted on spike heels and wearing matching wire rim police sunglasses.

ABA

Ben!

JOHNNY

Ben you remember Aba?

BEN

Uhh...yes. I do.

ABA

What a night?

JOHNNY

Ben, I'd like you to meet Mary and Mary.

Ben extends his hand to the girls. Eyes Aba.

ABA

(whispering to Ben)

They're with all of us. Okay?

BEN

They're very young.

ABA

Not really. (pause) Sixteen and sixteen is thirty two! Hah!

JOHNNY

Aba knows numbers.

Aba and Johnny start to laugh. Mary and Mary start to laugh. Ben joins in, tries to laugh even harder than the others. Ben is almost convulsing.

CUT TO:

EXT. PALAISE THEATRE -- NIGHT

The red carpet rises up the two flights of stairs leading to the theater entrance. Photographers and fans held back by velvet ropes and gendarmes are greeting the arrivals of "Fiercely."

Ben and Jeremy, wearing mirrored shades, lead the procession, followed by Sean Penn, various other cast members and the dog.

As the group reaches the top step. Several photographers rush in to grab a group shot and any solo shots of Sean that they can muster. Flashbulbs are popping at a machine gun frenzy.

Sean Penn leans into Ben.

SEAN PENN

I heard we made some changes.

BEN

Just some nips and tucks.

SEAN PENN

S'long as we didn't lose our edge.

BEN

Uh. no. The "edge." We saved the edge.

Ben turns to Jeremy.

BEN

How you doing?

Jeremy tilts his mirrored shades. Ben peers into Jeremy's eyes. They are unfocused, blood shot, on fire, heavily bagged with deep dark circles.

BEN

My god man! Did you get any sleep on the plane?

JEREMY

I'm fine. "Optimistic" is the better word.

BEN

Good.

They turn to continue the climb to the top of the stairs, where LOU and entourage smile proudly as the procession enters the foyer.

CUT TO:

INT. PALAISE THEATRE -- NIGHT

The audience is standing and giving an ovation to Sean Penn who was just introduced from his seat in the rear of the theater. Sean smiles, waves and sits down. Both Lou and Ben pat him Sean on the shoulder.

FESTIVAL HOST
 (thick french accent)
 And now it is with great pleasure I
 introduce the director of this
 movie. Would you please welcome
 Jeremy Saunders.

Jeremy walks briskly to the microphone.

JEREMY'S SPEECH WILL BE DELIVERED ENTIRELY IN FRENCH. WE
 WILL READ IT IN ENGLISH SUBTITLES.

JEREMY
 Hello. France. Where liberty is
 cherished. Where the individual is
 cherished. I send my love.

The French cheer. Ben looks to Lou. This could be
 encouraging.

JEREMY
 Making this movie has been and
 remains to be a ballbusting,
 intestine wrenching, blood
 rendering experience. Not just for
 me but for all involved.

The crowd laughs.

It comes from my heart. So, for
 those of you that are moved when
 you see this film, I am your
 servant. And for those of you that
 are not moved, for those UNTALENTED
 LEECHES IN HOLLYWOOD who try to
 impose their ill-gotten will, you
 can all KISS MY HAIRY ASS AND THEN
 BLOW ME! Merci. Merci.

The crowd cheers. In fact, a partial standing ovation. Lou,
 Ben et al do not know exactly what was said but it seemed to
 work. They reluctantly participate in the ovation.

LOU
 (leans towards Ben)
 They like him.

BEN

They do.

LOU

Ben, your welcome to come back on
the private jet with us tonight.
Wheels up at two am sharp.

BEN

Thank you, Lou. Great.

LOU

My assistant will get you the tail
number and the details.

Jeremy finally arrives at his seat between his editor Verna
and Ben. Ben smiles at Verna. The editor is so nervous she
looks like she's about to cry.

Ben reaches over to grab his arm.

BEN

You were brilliant. Nice job.

JEREMY

Ben. My priorities are finally
straight.

The lights slowly dim. The large red curtain opens to reveal
the screen. The crowd hoots in anticipation of a movie about
to start. The studio logo fades up. Jeremy finally removes
his sun glasses. The theater is now completely dark. Ben
looks over at Jeremy. Without his sunglasses he looks nuts.

ANGLE ON THE SCREEN. Music comes up over a man's feet running
as fast as they can. Bare feet on hard pavement. A flock of
birds soar through the air.

ANGLE ON BEN. He takes one more look back at Jeremy whose
nostrils are flaring. Is that white powder ringed under
Jeremy's nose? Unquestionably. Ben tries to lean back and
concentrate on the movie.

DISSOLVE TO:

ANGLE ON THE AUDIENCE. Judging from the audience the film seems to be playing a bit slow. Some are straggling out or using the bathroom but there is also an occasional burst of laughter from the crowd. It's a real laugh. Maybe they like it.

TIGHT ANGLE OF BEN. He's encouraged. He looks over at Lou. Things seem okay. Looks over at Jeremy. Jeremy has put his sunglasses back on.

DISSOLVE TO:

ANGLE ON THE SCREEN. We're nearing the climax.

WE SEE that grainy shot of Sean. He is laying on the side of a dusty road. He is trying desperately to prop himself up on a large embankment. Blood, his blood, is all over the place. When he nears the top, he topples back down in a grim heap. He appears to be critically injured. Almost lifeless, he refuses to give in. A smallish dog loyally stands next to him.

SEAN

I'm not going to beg.

Three men, casually standing near a car just across the road, impassively eyeing Sean's struggle.

TIGHT ANGLE OF BEN, who is smiling. He turns to Jeremy, who reaches into his jacket pocket, pulls out a small metal flask and 4 vicodin tablets which he polishes off with a big long drag. OH NO. Ben's eyes go wide. Ben turns to Verna, the editor. She is staring at her shoes. Ben turns to the screen.

ANGLE ON THE SCREEN.

SEAN

You think I care what happens to me? It's you I'm concerned with. It's your salvation.... "Father forgive them for they know not what they do."

Sean furtively reaches in his pocket. We see one of the men raise his gun. The dog, confused, darts across the road.

RAKING ANGLE ON LOU. We see Ben looking at her in the background. Lou is implacable.

ANGLE ON THE SCREEN. The dog is caught in the crossfire. About to be blown to smithereens.

ANGLE ON BEN -- He glances imperceptibly to his right, to his left, trying to assess the damage.

BEN

NO!

ANGLE ON THE SCREEN

SEAN

NO!

KABOOM. We don't see the dog go but we see a lightening shock of red reflect off the audiences faces. We know what happened.

JEREMY HAS NOT ONLY PUT THE MOVIE BACK THE WAY IT WAS, HE ADDED MORE OF THE HORROR.

This time the dog was caught in a brutal, bloody Sam Peckinpah crossfire. An unmentionable amount of gunshots are heard as we watch the audience stiffly and stoically absorb the punishment.

ANGLE ON THE SCREEN. The gun man then shoots Sean, who remains defiant. The road turns wet with blood. As the image slowly fades, the score comes up and the credits roll.

ANGLE ON THE CROWDED FRENCH AUDIENCE. There's a delayed reaction. Part of the audience starts to cheer. "Encore, encore, tresurie!" There are others, however, like the preview audience in Los Angeles, that remain silent and reflective. And even some who seem to be in a collective state of STUPEFIED SHOCK.

"Merde." "C'est deguelas." "Le cochon."

ANGLE ON BEN, who turns to Jeremy. Jeremy's gone. He turns to Lou. Expressionless, Lou is frozen in her chair, staring off into the void. Ben sees Jeremy going to the lobby he follows him into the men's room.

CUT TO:

INT. PALAIS MENS ROOM.

Ben crashes through the door. Jeremy is pressed against the urinal. They're alone.

BEN

WHAT?

JEREMY

I'm in pain.

BEN
WHO CARES? Keep it to yourself.

JEREMY
I had to know...I had to know...

Ben opens up his arms and leans back.

BEN
You might as well piss on me. Go ahead. I insist.

JEREMY
Do you want me to say the film was a waste of time, a pretentious self indulgence? Fine, but I don't think so.

BEN
That's not the point.

JEREMY
I'm no Tonto.

BEN
No. You'll be carrying ammo, polishing saddles and ironing underwear for the next twenty years.

JEREMY
Fuck Hollywood.

Ben throws some cold water on his face.

BEN
Hey, Jeremy, Hollywood's like eating an elephant with a teaspoon. One bite at a time. baby. It don't taste good. You can never finish it. But if you stop eating it, you will starve to death.

JEREMY
Oh, the 'bend over, we all do it' speech. I don't think so. Not me.

BEN
That's what everybody says their first week in prison.

Ben smiles, tosses Jeremy a towel and walks out.

CUT TO:

INT. PALAIS LOBBY

Sean Penn is exiting off in the distance, above the fray, receiving his usual massive applause, back patting, autograph seeking and all the love that attends a movie star; oblivious to any darker vibe on the horizon.

Sean spots Ben across the theater lobby. He raises his thumb up and then down as if asking for a score. Ben gives him a big thumbs up. Sean departs the theater.

Johnny, Aba and his Euro friends intercept Ben.

Aba spread eagles his arms and reaches for Ben, trying to give him a big haimisha bear hug. His lilting eye is literally at half mast. Ben neatly side steps him and pulls away.

BEN
(a rueful smile)
It's too soon.

EXT. PALAISE THEATRE -- NIGHT

Ben walks out onto the first tier overlooking the red carpeted staircase. Huddled off to the side is Lou and her marketing guys. The pleasantries have vanished. Lou is stone faced. The marketing guys look away.

There's probably nothing to say. Ben sucks it up faces the group anyway.

BEN
You know...Lou. I gotta say. And
I've given this some real thought.

Lou pulls out a cigarette.

BEN
Since when you smoke?

LOU
It's goin' around.

Ben pulls out a cigarette and lights up.

BEN

It occurred to me... something...on reflection, when I saw the movie tonight with a fresh head, it really kind of grew on me.

LOU

Is that so.

BEN

It's better longer. It had a better flow. More depth. Time will be its ally.

Lou just looks at him.

BEN

And you know what...

LOU

No.

BEN

I think the ending, the ending had a lot of courage. Lotta courage.

LOU

Good to know.

Lou looks at Ben like he's "dead man walking." Ben shrugs again and goes back down the red carpeted staircase alone. After a few steps he turns back.

BEN

Hey. That's what I think.

When Ben gets to the bottom of the stair case, he sees the dog from the movie and her handler proudly scurry across the wide sidewalk. The dog is already being photographed by the paparazzi.

CUT TO:

TIGHT ANGLE ON BEN. He is riding in a taxi, through the Croisette on his way to the airport. It is very early in the morning. The traffic is light. His bags are next to him.

TAXI DRIVER

Un tres belle soir, monsieur. A beautiful night in Cannes.

Ben peers out at the Mediteranean. Passing quickly by is the huge billboard of "Fiercely." Ben stares at it as it fades in the distance.

BEN

Yes.

EXT. FRENCH COASTLINE

The taxi moves off the main drag and enters the thruway. Bold French signs indicate directions to the airport. Several smaller billboards of "Fiercely" whiz by.

A cell phone rings. Ben answers. The camera slowly and irrevocably pushes in on his face.

BEN

Hello?....Kelly?

KELLY

Hi Ben. The sofa chair just came back from the upholsterer and when I sat in it, it made me think of you. So, I thought I'd call to see how everything went. The screening and all.

Pause. Ben doesn't know whether to laugh or cry.

BEN

The chair came back?

KELLY

This morning.

Pause.

BEN

What sort of fabric?

KELLY

A bright red English gingham.

BEN

Bright red? You know, I always thought it was great the way it was.

KELLY

I felt like a change.

BEN

But red? Honey, I can't picture that.

KELLY

I like it.

BEN

You know...hey, it's your chair.
I know that now. I know that.

The taxi pulls off the main road, heading towards a kiosk entrance to a private airport.

Ben looks at his watch: 1:00am.

In the neon glow, he can see several expensive private jets parked on the tarmac as the French guard approaches the taxi and leans in.

FRENCH GUARD

Oui mensieur, (in french) what is the tail number? And I need a passport.

BEN

Kelly hold on one second..

Ben smothers the phone.

TAXI DRIVER

He needs the tail number and a passport.

BEN

2..1..1...2..F. Yes, 2112F.

BEN

(to Kelly)
Where was I?

KELLY

You actually said 'it's your chair and I know that now.' It's so nice of you for realizing that.

Ben watches the French guard shake his head 'no.'

BEN

I do reali...hold on. Hold on.
(to the taxi driver)
What's he saying?

TAXI DRIVER

He say 'the plane already gone.'

Ben leans out the window.

BEN
Deux. Un. Un. Deux. F

The French guard continues shaking his head as a deafening ROAR of a jet engine pummels the taxi.

Ben looks out and sees a jet with the tail number 2112F lifting off, soaring vertically into the sky as if it can't getaway fast enough. Ben, not knowing how to react, just stares while the plane vanishes.

When the noise dies down, Ben hears Kelly's voice faintly muffled in the cell phone couched between his legs. "Ben, Ben, can you hear me?"

BEN
Kelly, sorry. I...uhh.

KELLY
What just happened?

BEN
A low flying plane.

KELLY
Oh.

Ben signals to the taxi driver to turn around and go back to Cannes.

ANGLE ON THE TAXI AS IT U TURNS.

KELLY
When are you coming back?

Pause.

BEN
....I heard about this great French bistro on the water...I thought, maybe, I'll stay another day, soak up the culture.

WIDE SHOT OF THE TAXI RACING BACK TO CANNES.

KELLY
Sounds good. I'm jealous.

BEN
(wryly smiling at the horror)
Hey. Can't complain.

POSTSCRIPT:

To be added over credits:

One year after the controversial screening at the Cannes Film Festival, the studio reluctantly opened "Fiercely" in the USA. Amazingly, the movie did indeed "go through the roof." It went on to gross 112 million dollars domestically.

Lou was honored at Sho West as the Visionary Movie Executive of the Year.

INSERT OF LOU WALKING TO A PODIUM TO A STANDING OVATION. SHE OPENS HER ARMS WIDE IN GRATITUDE, TAKES A BOW. SHE HAS THE SWEET LOOK OF A FRESH BRIDE WALKING DOWN THE AISLE.

She was singled out for her courage to tackle controversial subjects, her relentless pursuit of the truth and her unique ability to form long lasting relationships in the artistic community.

Unfortunately, Jeremy, hit the wall. He was arrested for a drug possession charge when he landed in Heathrow. He served 4 months in prison and is currently completing rehab in Australia.

INSERT OF JEREMY WEARING A WOMAN'S WIG WHILE APPLYING EYELINER TO HIS LASHES. HE LOOKS AT HIMSELF CLOSELY AND THEN MAKES A MINOR ADJUSTMENT OF THE WIG.

His agent confirmed that Jeremy has multiple million dollar offers on the table and is about to announce his next film.

Scott is now living with Kelly.....in Ben's old house.

INSERT OF SCOTT SEATED IN THE NEWLY RECOVERED BRIGHT RED ENGLISH GINGHAM ARM CHAIR. HE LIFTS UP HIS DRINK LEAVING A BIG WATER STAIN ON THE STUFFED ARM. HE WAVES AT KELLY WHO IS COOKING DINNER IN THE KITCHEN.

Good news for Dick Bell, the agent. He was able to get his movie star client back in the fold. The Actor re-signed with Dick's agency for the next three years.

INSERT OF DICK DRIVING DOWN THE PACIFIC COAST HIGHWAY IN A MASERATI CONVERTIBLE WITH A BEAUTIFUL YOUNG WOMAN AT HIS SIDE.

His nervous stomach, however, never completely healed.

INSERT OF A TIGHTER SHOT OF MASERATI DOOR OPENING, DICK'S HEAD POKES OUT. AAAAGGGHHH.

YOUNG WOMAN
(o.s.)
You, okay?

DICK
It's nothing.

Johnnie, the middle eastern producer, is now living in Libya planning a series of low budget action/horror movies.

INSERT OF JOHNNIE WAITING TABLES AT AN OUTDOOR AFRICAN COFFEE HOUSE.

He is currently under criminal investigation for the misuse of a German tax fund.

Ben got a new three year multi-pic producing pact from Lou which included a complete redo of his office on the lot.

INSERT OF BEN'S OFFICE BEING PLUSHLY REDECORATED. A LARGE POSTER OF "FIERCELY" FRAMED ABOVE THE LEATHER COUCH. BEN, LEANING BACK IN HIS OVERSIZED DESK CHAIR, IS READING A SCRIPT.

Six months later, after a heated dispute with Lou, his contract was abruptly rescinded. The cash buy out, which Ben's lawyer expects to be hefty, is still being negotiated.

INSERT OF BEN IN HIS CAR NEXT TO THE UCLA SIGN. HIS DAUGHTER, ZOE, LEANS OVER, PECKS HIS CHEEK AND EXITS.

BEN PRIDEFULLY WATCHES HER WALK OFF TO COLLEGE.