"What’s the Big Idea?"

by

Steve Cleary
FADE IN:

INT. SILVERGREEN STUDIOS - DICKIE’S OFFICE - DAY

A swish, sunlit office in Hollywood. Profanity-laden gangster rap fills the room.

A pair of man-children play a video game on the couch:

DICKIE (30), a short, nice kid from back east, bobs and swerves as he manipulates the controls.

His colleague, QUINCY (30), a bit taller, athletic, with a disarming smile, hovers over the edge of his seat.

QUINCY
Eat lead, punkass!

DICKIE
Quincy! On your flank!

He sets his controller down, rips open a bag of potato chips and huffs it.

QUINCY
Ten o’clock, Dickie!

Dickie shoves the chips at Quincy and grabs his controller. Quincy scarfs down a handful.

DICKIE
Dine on this, brain eater! Oww!

He massages his jaw.

QUINCY
What’s wrong? You hit?

DICKIE
No, this friggin’ tooth’s killing me.

QUINCY
I’ll yank it out for you.

DICKIE
Yeah, that’s not all you wanna yank there, Liberace!

They play-fight elbowing each other. A knock at the door.
QUINCY

Go away!

They continue playing. The door opens. Greasy STAN (early 30s), well-dressed, enters with a smarmy swagger.

STAN

Really guys?

QUINCY

Get lost, Satan! We’re working here!

DICKIE

Yeah, take a hike, Stalin! You’re messing up our research!

STAN

Some research. Mr. Levine’s waiting-

MR. LEVINE (O.S.)

Stan! I said get those two turd polishers out here! Now!

STAN

... on you guys.

Dickie and Quincy look at each other and set their controllers down.

DICKIE

The staff meeting!

QUINCY

Oh shit!

INT. SILVERGREEN STUDIOS - CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

Dickie and Quincy rush in. Quincy’s attire is business casual, but his waistband hangs low, hip-hop style.

MR. LEVINE (late 50s, rotund), taps his fingers at the end of the table. He swigs from a Maalox bottle.

MR. LEVINE

Nice of you to join us. And pull your pants up, Quincy. This isn’t North County.

Quincy adjusts his shirt-tail and belt as he and Dickie look for seats between INTERNS and other STAFF.
DICKIE
Sorry we’re late Mr. Levine. We, uh...

QUINCY
Our conference call ran over.

Dickie finds an empty seat. Quincy motions for an INTERN next to him to get up.

QUINCY
(sotto)
Thanks for keeping my seat warm.

The intern scuttles off and Quincy sits.

STAN
Yeah, ran over some zombies.

MR. LEVINE
Never mind that.

STAN
Uncle Ira, they were playing video games on company time.

DICKIE
Shut up, Stab.
(to Mr. Levine)
Sir, Zombie Conquistador is on our dev slate.

QUINCY
Yeah and we just made it to Level nine!

MR. LEVINE
Never mind, boys.

STAN
You guys are level nine shitheads.

The interns snicker.

QUINCY
You’re a level ninety douchebag!

STAN
Good one. That term’s so played out.
QUINCY
Coming from the guy who still wears crocs on his days off.

STAN
They breath. Talentless hacks.

DICKIE
Philistine.

MR. LEVINE
Boys...

STAN
Has-beens.

DICKIE
Sycophant.

MR. LEVINE
Boys...

STAN
Choads.

QUINCY
Bootlickin’ lickspittle.

Mr. Levine slams his Maalox bottle.

MR. LEVINE
BOYS! For crying out loud, shut your holes!

The boys all compose themselves, clear throats, etc.

MR. LEVINE (CONT’D)
Christ, it’s like Romper Room in here.

QUINCY
Sorry sir.

He sneaks a bird at Stan. Stan scowls back.

MR. LEVINE
Now listen up. We’re in a crisis here. Our last picture, Prostitute Teacher, bombed and now we’re broke. We’re all facing the chopping block.
DICKIE
The chopping block?

QUINCY
But we’re about to unlock the Francisco Pizarro zombie pack!

MR. LEVINE
Zombies are out! Christ, if I see one more zombie script come across my desk, I’ll eat your brains myself!

Dickie and Quincy exchange grimaced looks. Mr. Levine pops a Tums.

MR. LEVINE
We need a hit. All the YA, comic books, and video games have been picked clean and every decent writer in this town is booked into the next decade. We have to go into the spec pile.

DICKIE
The spec pile?

MR. LEVINE
Yeah, the spec pile. You two check the tracking boards. Check the contests. Check Scriptomania for Christ’s sake.

QUINCY
Scriptomania? Last years winner was Mr. Rogers: Neighborly Assassin!

MR. LEVINE
Yeah, don’t remind me. We lost that one in a bidding war.

He pops another pill from a medicine case. Quincy lowers his head.

DICKIE
Even unsigned writers?

MR. LEVINE
I don’t care where they come from! Get me a tent-pole four-Q by the holidays or you’ll both be next on Mr. Rogers’ hit list!
DICKIE
What about Stan?

QUINCY
Yeah, is he still pushing that gay James Bond idea?
(heavy European accent)
My name is Eetzkak.

DICKIE
(gay Sean Connery accent)
I must be dreaming!

The table cracks up. Stan smirks.

MR. LEVINE
Don’t worry about Stan, he’s already got something else in the hopper.
(to Stan)
Keep up the good work, son. Don’t make my brother regret calling in that favor.

STAN
Yes sir.

Dickie and Quincy hem and haw as they rise with the rest of the staff.

MR. LEVINE
Now make Silvergreens great again, boys!

They grouse at each other as they exit.

INT. SILVERGREEN STUDIOS – HALLWAY

Dickie and Quincy walk down the hallway.

QUINCY
The holidays? That’s only three months!

DICKIE
Dude, try two. Levine’s Jewish and Hanukkah’s early this year.

QUINCY
Shit. Then what the hell are we sup–
They approach a receptionist’s desk. Typing at her keyboard is an artsy, rockabilly gal, HAZEL (20s), in secretary glasses.

    DICKIE
    Aw Quincy, not now.

    QUINCY
    Gimme a minute.
    (to Hazel)
    Hey Hazel.

She doesn’t look up and resumes typing.

    HAZEL
    Hey fellas. You heard the man. Hanukkah’s early this year. Better get crackin’.

They continue walking.

    DICKIE
    Shit, does she have the conference room bugged, or what?

He pats his chest and looks about himself.

    DICKIE (CONT’D)
    Does she have us bugged?

He checks around Quincy’s belt. Quincy lets out a wistful sigh.

    QUINCY
    God, Levine’s new secretary is just so... arty.

Dickie tugs Quincy’s sleeve.

    DICKIE
    C’mon, snap out of it! I can’t lose this job! Penny and I just renewed our lease!

    QUINCY
    You can move back in with me. We’ll work at El Pollo Loco during the day and shoot movies on our phones at night.

    DICKIE
    Yeah, between dumpster-diving runs.
QUINCY
I fail to see how people can throw away a perfectly good tostada bowl.

DICKIE
Come on, Paco. We got trabajo to do.

INT. DICKIE’S APARTMENT – NIGHT

A modest bungalow in North Hollywood. Dickie sits at the table loaded with Thai take-out studying his iPad.

His girlfriend, PENNY (mid 20s), petite and fit in nurse scrubs, clears the table of containers, etc.

PENNY
Why don’t you just turn in one of your own scripts?

DICKIE
Sweetie, my department only finds material. It doesn’t create it. Besides, my scripts don’t have any car chases or explosions.

Penny puts a couple of containers in the fridge.

PENNY
Oh. I’ll never understand how those corporate studios work. Such a shame with all those writing contests you won.

DICKIE
Well they got my foot in the door.

Penny returns to the table and gathers forks and spoon.

PENNY
Yeah, with Quincy’s help. Now look at you -- late for dinner in your monkey suit.

DICKIE
Believe me, if this monkey could spend his days in shorts and flip flops, he would.

Penny drops the cutlery in the sink.
Penny
You guys were gonna take over this town. Whatever happened to the scribe I fell in love with?

Dickie sets his tablet down and stares off.

Dickie
He learned that honest stories rooted in reality won’t put asses in theater seats.

Penny returns to the table and collects dirty plates.

Penny
Well that’s too bad. My ass loves your stories. How long do you have?

Dickie
Till the holidays. And by that I mean the one with the dreidels and latkes.

Penny comes around and nuzzles up to Dickie.

Penny
Hmm, maybe Hanukkah would be a good time for us to talk about, you know, making things kosher?

She bats her eyelashes and flexes her left-hand fingers. Dickie doesn’t look up.

Dickie
Sweetie, you know I don’t do kosher. I had a bacon cheeseburger today.

He resumes tapping and swiping his tablet. Penny pouts and drops the dishes in the sink. Dickie looks up and watches her exit.

He looks to the bookshelf next to the doorway. On a shelf sits an old shoebox labeled "Dickie’s Scripts".

Dickie (Cont’d)
Oy vey.
INT. SILVERGREEN STUDIOS - DICKIE’S OFFICE - DAY

Dickie and Quincy sit at adjacent couches, each leafing through a script. The coffee table in front of them is loaded with piles of screenplays.

DICKIE
What’s the coverage of that one?

QUINCY
Pass. Dialogue’s too on-the-nose and second act’s too short. Yours?

DICKIE
Another pass. Dialogue’s too off-the-hip and second act’s too long.

He tosses the script aside and rubs his jaw.

DICKIE (CONT’D)
This blows.

QUINCY
I’m telling you, get some string and I’ll yank it out for you.

He gets up, crosses to the door and tests the hinge.

DICKIE
No thanks. I’m seeing a professional tomorrow. Where you going?

QUINCY
I’ve been on my ass all morning. I need coffee. Want anything?

DICKIE
Yeah a new job and an icepack. And hurry back.

Dickie picks up another script. Quincy salutes and exits.

QUINCY
Sure thing, boss.
INT. SILVERGREEN STUDIOS - COPY ROOM

Hazel flings and bangs cabinet doors, closets, etc. in the copy room. Quincy passes by the doorway. A beat, then he backs up.

QUINCY
Hey Hazel. What’s with all the racket?

Hazel checks inside a door in the copier then slams it shut. She rushes to another cabinet.

HAZEL
Oh hey. I have to make ten copies of this report for Levine’s lunch meeting and we’re all out of stupid paper!

QUINCY
Oh.

Quincy dawdles. Hazel checks under a coffee maker.

HAZEL
If it weren’t for all the interns around here making copies of their head-shots... and private parts...

Quincy fidgets then his eyes light up. An idea.

QUINCY
Did you try the store room?

HAZEL
The store room?

QUINCY
Yeah, in the basement. Usually higher-ups take new interns there to-

Hazel cocks her head at him.

QUINCY (CONT’D)
Never mind. Come on...

He motions for her to come. She throws her hands up and follows.
INT. SILVERGREEN STUDIOS - BASEMENT

Quincy nods at and rushes past a JANITOR (60s, black) mopping the floor. He opens the door to the:

STORE ROOM

And scrambles through, kicking over several liquor bottles.

HAZEL (O.S.)
What was that?

QUINCY
Erm, you’d better stay put. It’s kinda cramped in here.

He moves to a cabinet and flings it open, checks it, and shuts it. He goes to a shelf full of boxes. There’s an old dried-up condom lying on it.

QUINCY (CONT’D)
Eew!

HAZEL (O.S.)
What’s wrong?

QUINCY
Oh nothing, just a dead mouse!

HAZEL (O.S.)
Eew!

He finds a nearby nudie magazine, flings the condom away, and checks inside the box -- nothing.

QUINCY
Dangit.

He spots another box on the lower shelf, cracks the lid, sweeps his arm through the box.

HAZEL (O.S.)
Are you finding anything?

He pulls out a deflated sex doll.

QUINCY
Nothing useful.

HAZEL (O.S.)
Oh, well maybe...
QUINCY

Hold on...

He sees a bankers box and rushes to it. He undoes the string and opens it.

QUINCY (CONT’D)

What the...

He grabs one of its contents, a script, and holds it up: *The Charge on Siegfried Hill*.

QUINCY (CONT’D)

Huh.

He drops it back in the box and picks up another.

HAZEL (O.S.)

Quincy?

He flips through it, his eyes widen. He drops it back in and looks at another one.

QUINCY

Oh my God...

HAZEL (O.S.)

Quincy? Hey forget it, I’ll just go to Kinko’s or something.

Quincy looks to the door. He puts the scripts back and ties the banker’s box back up.

QUINCY

Wait! Wait!

He spots another box of fresh paper in the corner.

QUINCY (CONT’D)

Bingo!

He checks under the lid, grins, then picks up the box.

QUINCY (CONT’D)

Alright! Here’s enough paper for a hundred copies of that intern’s ass!

He scrambles out the door, kicking the liquor bottles again.
INT. SILVERGREEN STUDIOS - DICKIE’S OFFICE

Quincy rushes in with the banker’s box.

DICKIE
Where were you? My ice pack in there?

QUINCY
No! But this is way cooler!

He shoo’s the pile of scripts aside and drops the box.

DICKIE
Easy!

Quincy opens the box, pulls out a script and hands it to Dickie.

QUINCY
Check this out!

DICKIE
(reading)
Attack of the Flying Saucers?

QUINCY
Some good old-fashioned sci-fi right there! Look at this one!

Quincy hands him another script.

DICKIE
The Ballad of Johnny Durango?

QUINCY
Uh-huh! A classic western! And this!

Dickie takes another script.

DICKIE
Even Showgirls Get the Blues?

QUINCY
A musical extravaganza!

Dickie drops the script.

DICKIE
Quincy, where’d you get these? They’re like a hundred years old.
QUINCY
We optioned them back in the forties and fifties. There was so much good material back then, they couldn’t produce it all!

DICKIE
No one’s made money on a musical since *Psych Ward Shimmy*.

QUINCY
We ditch the songs!

Quincy picks the script back up.

QUINCY (CONT’D)
Look, the guy’s a newspaper reporter. We just make him a blogger!

DICKIE
Well that’s an upgrade.

QUINCY
His adversary is an industrialist -- we make him a web entrepreneur!

DICKIE
Right, and let me guess, the showgirl becomes a stripper?

QUINCY
Bingo!

Dickie picks up another script and flips through it.

QUINCY (CONT’D)
That one’s a war movie. We change the Ardennes to Afghanistan!

DICKIE
Sure, and just swap out Panzers for camels.

He drops the script and picks up another.

QUINCY
Now you’re getting it! And that western we just, well, keep it western!
DICKIE
(reading)
Now look here, ya lousy mugs, I said scram before you all get the works, see!

He tosses the script aside.

DICKIE (CONT’D)
Somehow I don’t think that’s how they really talked in the old west.

QUINCY
No, man! We keep the story and the characters and just re-write the dialogue!

DICKIE
You mean, I’LL re-write the dialogue. And we both know I’m no good in a room.

QUINCY
Right! We give ’em the ol’ Quincy Dickie combo -- I beat it out...
   (jabs) You write it...
   (hook) Then I pitch it!
   (uppercut) It’ll knock their socks off!

Dickie slumps on the couch and massages his jaw.

DICKIE
I don’t know...

QUINCY
Ever hear someone say "they don’t make ’em like they used to"? Well here’s our chance to make Silvergreens great again!

DICKIE
Quincy.

Quincy’s smile fades.

QUINCY
But we’re a team, Dickie. I feed the beast, remember?
DICKIE
The beast has been tamed, Quincy.

Dickie rises.

DICKIE (CONT’D)
See you in the morning. I’ll be in late.

Dickie leaves. Quincy flings the script into the box.

QUINCY
Aw nuts.

EXT. BUILDING - MORNING

A basic, brick-face storefront. A HIPSTER (30s) leans against the wall, smoking a hand-rolled cigarette. He’s got the artisanal look going: rolled-up sleeves, suspenders, beard, man-bun and twirly mustache.

Dickie walks up and rests against the wall himself.

HIPSTER
What’s up.

DICKIE
Hey.

The hipster flicks his butt away.

HIPSTER
Ready?

He leads Dickie through a door.

REVEAL:

Above the door, an ornate stenciling of an open jaw flanked by steampunk dental tools:

"SILVERLAKE MOUTHWORKS"

INT. DENTAL OFFICE - MOMENTS LATER

The hipster wears a white lab coat and mask, at work on Dickie with a whirring tool.

HIPSTER
I feel for you bro. Of course, I’m not exactly your target market. I prefer the cutting edge shit from the seventies -- back when Hollywood took risks.
The dentist goes in with an extraction tool.

INT. SILVERGREEN STUDIOS - HALLWAY - DAY

Quincy saunters down the hall. Hazel looks up and beams at him.

HAZEL
Morning!

Quincy makes a hat-tip gesture.

QUINCY
Hiya dollface.

Hazel widens her eyes.

QUINCY (CONT’D)
Don’t call HR! It’s this script I’m reading. It’s got me in an old-fashioned mood.

Hazel smiles.

HAZEL
In case you hadn’t noticed, I’m an old-fashioned kinda gal.

Quincy leans in on her desk.

QUINCY
Well say, I think you’re a peach. The bees knees, the cat’s pajamas!

Hazel giggles.

HAZEL
That’ll do. But hey, thanks again for finding that copy paper. You really saved my hide, you know.

Quincy smiles back at her.
QUINCY
Don’t mention it, sister. Skip it.

Hazel squeaks.

HAZEL
Okay, do another one!

He thinks, then straightens up.

QUINCY
Say sugar... are you rationed?

EXT. CAFE - DAY

A swanky alfresco hot-spot. Dickie slurps on a smoothie and walks along the seated PATRONS.

Stan sees him approach. He’s seated with two young adults, much younger-looking than they actually are:

MELISSA (21), who looks like she just won class president, and CALEB (21) with black hoodie, scuffed shoes and missing his skateboard.

STAN
I’d invite you to join us, but it looks like you’re off solid foods.

Dickie turns and notices them.

DICKIE
(garbled)
Oh hey Stan. Aren’t your kids a little young to be feeding them mimosas?

Stan scoffs.

STAN
Yeah, funny mushmouth. These kids are the hottest meal tickets in town. Melissa here wrote The Sense Master.

DICKIE
Haven’t heard of that one.

Melissa straightens in her seat and clears her throat.

MELISSA
DICKIE
Yeah?

Caleb cocks himself up, but barely makes eye contact.

CALEB
It’s about a future where society is broken up into legions by the five senses.

Stan gloats. Dickie cocks his head.

DICKIE
I’m sorry. Did you say by senses?

CALEB
Yes, until one girl from the Feel Legion discovers she can see, hear, taste and smell better than anyone else in her education pod.

Melissa glows. Dickie grins back to her.

DICKIE
Well good for you. Excuse me.

He turns to go.

STAN
Caleb’s doing the adaptation. We just optioned the rights today.

DICKIE
Let me guess, it’s a trilogy?

Melissa and Caleb smile back.

DICKIE (CONT’D)
So not a pentology then? A movie for each sense? No?

The kids cock their heads. Stan sneers at him.

STAN
Levine’s put us on the fast track.

Dickie glowers at Stan then looks at the kids.

DICKIE
Welcome to Hollywood. You kids’ll fit right in.

He walks off.
STAN
Have fun in the soup line!

INT. SILVERGREEN STUDIOS - DICKIE’S OFFICE - DAY

Quincy sits marking up a script with a red pen, grooving to some hip-hop. Dickie charges in.

MR. LEVINE (O.S.)
It’s a proven market, Dickie! The Sense Master is gonna be a hit! I sense it!

Dickie slams the door and heads to the couches.

DICKIE
Alright, Mr. Pitch Man. A comedy first, no supernatural shit and keep this on the D-L.

He goes to the monitor and disassembles the video game. Quincy drops the script.

QUINCY
You mean...

DICKIE
You heard me. Dust those old scripts off. No one’s doing another post-apocalyptic dystopia on my watch!

He drops the video game gear into a cabinet drawer. Quincy scrambles through a stack of scripts and selects one.

QUINCY
Well hot dog! I knew you’d come around!

Dickie narrows his eyes at him.

DICKIE
You been reading these all afternoon?

QUINCY
Uh-huh! And I got just the ticket. The story’s all broke out.

He hands the script to Dickie.
DICKIE
(reading)
Is That Your Phone or Mine??

QUINCY
Yeah, a farce where a regular joe
gets mixed up with a bigshot
banker. Research says there’s a
hell of a market for it!

Dickie readies himself at his computer and flips through the
script.

DICKIE
This is good. I’ll run with this.
You run interference.

QUINCY
I got you covered. I’ll take all
our meetings and say you’re working
a deadline. Just don’t stray too
far off script and it’ll be a cake
walk!

Dickie leafs to a page.

DICKIE
(reading)
Now look sister, I’m no wise-head
but I glommed you nick the cabbage
from that gumshoe and I ain’t goin’
to the cooler, see.

He looks up at Quincy.

DICKIE (CONT’D)
I’ll need a pot of coffee to go
with this cake walk.

INT. SILVERGREEN STUDIOS - DICKIE’S OFFICE - DAY

It’s a week later. Dickie hammers at his keyboard. Quincy
stands over him, reviewing his monitor. Mid-century
vibraphone jazz plays over the stereo.

QUINCY
Hot diggity, we’re cooking with gas
now!

DICKIE
Whoa, buster. If you keep flapping
your gums like that, people’ll
think you’re screwy.
QUINCY
Aw, applesauce. Hazel’s hip to it.
I’m taking her to the Brown Derby
this weekend. Boy, I bet she’s a
ducky shin-cracker.

DICKIE
Well don’t be getting all doll
dizzy, we got work to do.

QUINCY
Aw nuts.

He grabs his coat, a fedora, and walks to the door,
revealing his trousers jacked up to his navel.

QUINCY (CONT’D)
Say, I gotta take a powder. I could
eat an elephant. You coming?

Quincy opens the door and puts on his coat and hat. The din
from the outside office spills in.

DICKIE
You go on ahead. I’m on a tear
here. Say, be a pal and pick me up
a sandwich from the auto-mat will
ya?

QUINCY
Sure thing, boss. Ham salad or
liverwurst?

DICKIE
Is there any question?

QUINCY
Liverwurst it is!

Two passing INTERNS (female, early 20s) step out of his way
and look slack-jawed at each other.

INT. DICKIE’S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Dickie enters with a big bouquet of flowers. Penny comes out
of the hallway fastening her dress.

DICKIE
Hiya, cupcake!

PENNY
Dickie! Oh my God! They’re
beautiful.
He hands the flowers to her and ushers her into the kitchen.

DICKIE
Well not as beautiful as you. Come on, drop that in a fishbowl -- we got reservations!

INT. FANCY RESTAURANT - NIGHT

Dickie and Penny cozy up with each other in a red leather booth. A candle flickers between them.

PENNY
Okay, I’m floored. What are you up to, Dickie?

DICKIE
Do I need an angle to show my gal a good time?

Penny demurs. A WAITER approaches.

WAITER
Can I start you folks off with something to drink?

DICKIE
Sure, I’ll have a Harvey Wallbanger.

PENNY
A Harvey what?

DICKIE
And a...
(to Penny)
Champagne cocktail?
(to waiter)
A champagne cocktail for the lady.

WAITER
Coming right up.

The waiter walks off. Dickie takes in the scene. He notices a stylish COUPLE (30s) enter the bar.

DICKIE
Get a load of this mug.

Penny looks over.
DICKIE (CONT’D)
Must think he’s Gary Cooper.

Dickie chuckles at himself. Penny furrows a brow.

INT. FANCY RESTAURANT – LATER

Dickie and Penny dine on their meals.

DICKIE
How’s the linguini?

PENNY
Noodley.

She casts a dour eye at his plate.

PENNY (CONT’D)
How’s the, um, pig’s feet?

DICKIE
Feety! You know this is the only restaurant in town that serves this?

PENNY
I wonder why. So you gonna tell me why you brought me here?

Dickie leans in.

DICKIE
Penny my dear, I have terrific news.

Penny leans in.

PENNY
Yeah?

DICKIE
Quincy and I stumbled upon a gold mine!

PENNY
Oh.

DICKIE
Yeah! We have exclusive access to the best material in Hollywood right now. And the one I’m working on’s a real humdinger!
PENNY
Uh huh.

DICKIE
We’re pitching to Levine and the heads Monday morning. If we play our cards right, we’ll be executive producers!

PENNY
Well what do you know.

DICKIE
Aren’t you thrilled?

PENNY
Sure.

She casts a stink-eye at his plate and shovels in another bite.

PENNY (CONT’D)
(garbled)
So much for going kosher.

Dickie’s own mouth is full.

DICKIE
Hmm-hmm!

INT. DANCE HALL - NIGHT

Swing music blares. COUPLES, young and old, hop, jive and sway in blissful abandon. Out in center, Quincy and Hazel cut a rug with the Lindy Hop. Smiles abound.

They break from the crowd and head to the bar.

QUINCY
Bartender! Two more highballs!

An enthusiastic BARTENDER (40s) responds.

BARTENDER
You got it, mack!

Quincy turns back to Hazel.

QUINCY
Boy, are you having as swell a time as I am?
HAZEL
I’ll say! Hee-hee!

QUINCY
Well stick with me kid and we’ll go places!

HAZEL
Golly! Will you take me to gay Paree?

QUINCY
Oui!

HAZEL
And ol’ Madreeth?

QUINCY
Si! Anywhere on the planet!

HAZEL
Gee whiz! But we’re not on a planet, silly!

QUINCY
Haha! You mean you believe we’re in seventh heaven right now?

HAZEL
No silly, I mean I believe the Earth is flat!

Quincy’s smile drops.

EXT. LOS FELIZ NEIGHBORHOOD - NIGHT

Hazel saunters along, peacefully clutching her purse. Quincy hounds her.

QUINCY
But what about circumnavigation?

HAZEL
What about it? You rode your bike around the block as a kid. Did you live on a ball?

QUINCY
But... but what about the other planets? They’re all spheres!
HAZEL
So are all the balls on a pool table. Does that make the pool table one too?

QUINCY
But... but... what happens when you reach the edge? You sayin’ we just fall off the face of the Earth?

HAZEL
No, silly. Antarctica is a giant, beautiful ice ring, encircling all the oceans and continents.

QUINCY
I don’t get it! This is screwy!

Hazel stops.

QUINCY (CONT’D)
Wait a minute, I’m not saying you’re screwy...

HAZEL
I know that. This is where I live. You may kiss me goodnight.

She presents her cheek to him. He obliges.

QUINCY
Boy. When you said you were an old-fashioned kinda gal, you sure meant it.

INT. SILVERGREEN STUDIOS - DICKIE’S OFFICE - DAY

Dickie taps away at his computer. Quincy paces the room in front of two easels with storyboards on them.

QUINCY
And then our hero drives off into the sunset with the showgirl -- in Conner’s Cadillac. Bam.

He walks over to a tiki-themed liquor cabinet and pours a stiff one.

DICKIE
Sounds good, though you might want to tone down the enthusiasm.

He watches Quincy slug a shot.
DICKIE (CONT’D)
Say, you hittin’ the sauce already?
Your night out wasn’t a flat tire
was it?

QUINCY
Naw, Hazel’s quite a dish, though
she seems to think the Earth is
shaped like one too.

DICKIE
Wowzer. Well, you coulda done worse

He whistles and does a looping hand gesture next to his
temple. Quincy scowls at him and shakes it off.

QUINCY
You almost done with that polish or
what?

DICKIE
Yeah. Just a final once-over.

Quincy walks around the desk and looks over Dickie’s
shoulder.

QUINCY
Whoa hold your horses, there
cowboy.

DICKIE
What?

QUINCY
Who do you have in the ‘written by’
line?

DICKIE
Why, Buddy Weller of course.

QUINCY
No, no, we can’t use his name!

Quincy goes in at the keyboard.

DICKIE
Why not? It’s his script. I only
tweaked it a little.

He blocks Quincy out.
QUINCY
Dickie, Buddy Weller’s long gone.

He goes in again.

DICKIE
Well then his descendants can get the royalties.

He slaps Quincy’s hand and takes over.

QUINCY
I’m sure they’re doing just fine.

He elbows in at the keyboard.

DICKIE
Why should we get the credit?

He nudges in.

QUINCY
’Cause it’ll put us on the map! Besides, finder’s keepers.

He goes in again and they launch into a mini-battle slapping each others hands.

DICKIE
Would you stop!

Quincy backs off.

QUINCY
Look, my brother-in-law works in intellectual property. It’s totally kosher, I tell ya.

DICKIE
But we can’t just use my name. Our contract says we’re only here to polish material, not write new stuff.

Quincy returns to the bar and refills his glass.

QUINCY
I know! We use a pseudonym, see? Ever hear of forgiveness being better than permission? If it’s a hit, we come clean!

Dickie follows him and fixes himself a drink.
DICKIE
And if it bombs?

QUINCY
We lose our jobs anyway!

Dickie knocks back his drink.

DICKIE
Well that’s mucus to my ears. So what’s our nomme de guerre in this losing battle?

QUINCY
I don’t know... What did the *Breaking Bad* guy use in that movie where he wrote screenplays in the bathtub?

Dickie refills his glass, and Quincy’s.

DICKIE
You mean Dalton Trumbo?

QUINCY
Yeah, Dalton Trumbo.

Quincy crosses to the desk.

QUINCY (CONT’D)
D-O-L... How do you spell Dalton?

DICKIE
How did you ever get a job in Hollywood?

Quincy looks up at him blankly.

STAN (O.S.)
What, did you guys raid the *Mad Men* set?

Dickie and Quincy turn to see Stan and Caleb lounging in the doorway. Caleb scratches his face and shortles.

QUINCY
What are you doing here, Stain?

STAN
Same as you. Polishing up our spiel.
DICKIE
You’re pitching that turkey tomorrow?
(to Caleb)
No offense.

Caleb sulks. Dickie looks back to Stan.

DICKIE (CONT’D)
I thought you said Levine put you on the fast track.

STAN
Just a formality. And what you’re up to is pretty jacked up.

Dickie and Quincy exchange a quick glance.

DICKIE
Oh and just what are we up to?

Stan squints at Dickie.

STAN
For one thing, I haven’t seen you in a staff meeting in weeks.

QUINCY
Yeah, so?

STAN
So I know you’re still desperately scouring every last amateur screenwriting board looking for scraps. So pathetic.

Dickie and Quincy sigh in relief.

QUINCY
Well you’re wrong! We have the hottest new writer in Hollywood...
(to Caleb)
No offense.

STAN
Oh yeah? What’s his name?

QUINCY
Dal-

Dickie steps in front of Quincy.
DICKIE
Who says it’s a dude?

QUINCY
Yeah!

STAN
Uh-huh. Then what’s her name?

DICKIE
It’s Roberta... Roberta Richards.

STAN
Never heard of her.

DICKIE
Of course you haven’t. She only works with professionals!

QUINCY
Yeah professionals.

STAN
Right. Well we’ll see about that. Come on Caleb.

Quincy follows them to the door and closes it.

QUINCY
Sayonara, chumps.

DICKIE
You think they’re onto us?

QUINCY
Aw, those chuckleheads can’t see past their own noses.

DICKIE
I’ll drink to that.

They cheers and sip their drinks.

INT. SILVERGREEN STUDIOS – HALLWAY – DAY

Dickie and Quincy slog down the hallway, lugging poster boards, easels, etc. Both look worse for wear.

QUINCY
Remind me never to drink scotch again.
DICKIE
You’re telling me.

They approach Hazel’s desk. She looks up.

DICKIE (CONT’D)
Hey look, it’s Christopher Columbus.

QUINCY
Shhh.
(to Hazel)
Hiya doll.

He leans in. Hazel braces him with a hand and scans up and down the hallway. The coast is clear but she looks at Dickie.

HAZEL
Sorry, mister. Bank’s closed.

QUINCY
Aw baby, Dickie’s on the level.

She presents her cheek. Quincy kisses it.

HAZEL
Whooh! Your breath smells like a basket of dirty laundry!

DICKIE
More like a sanitation plant.

Quincy pops a piece of chewing gum.

QUINCY
Who’s up?

She checks her planner.

HAZEL
Stan should be wrapping up now.

DICKIE
Well let’s see his closer.

HAZEL
Good luck, boys.

Quincy blows her a kiss. She catches it, holds it to her heart and giggles.
INT. SILVERGREEN STUDIOS - CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

The same conference room as before, but this time instead of younger interns, the table is occupied by astute, senior and middle-aged EXECUTIVES, all watching:

Stan, standing in an open area before his presentation materials. A poster of concept art reads "The Sense Master". Caleb stands to the side.

STAN
She’s surrounded by the guards, and they close in on her. They have her backed up to edge of the chasm.

The door opens and Dickie and Quincy walk in. Quincy fumbles his easel and pitch materials. The executives all turn to see the ruckus.

DICKIE
(whispering) Sorry! Excuse us!
QUINCY
(whispering) Sorry!

Stan throws his hands up.

The boy sneak up to the table, fumbling their gear and see all the seats are occupied.

DICKIE
We’ll just, ahem, go over here.

Mr. Levine glowers at them then turns to Stan.

MR. LEVINE
Go on, Stan.

Dickie and Quincy make their way to the back of the room.

STAN
But then she closes her eyes and the walls of the compound start melting away. The guards double over, getting sick all over the place. She leaps over them and frees the others.

A studious, diminutive executive, MR. SILVER (60s) raises a finger.
SILVER
How did she do that?

STAN
She manipulated their sense of smell so they thought they were in a sewage treatment plant.

The pass by another executive, burly MR. GLADSTONE (50s, a live-action Mr. Slate) and set their things down by a windowsill.

Mr. Gladstone turns to the table.

GLADSTONE
Wow, that’s some pitch. For a second there it actually smelled like a sewer in here.

The executives guffaw and erupt in applause.

Dickie sneers at Quincy. Quincy chews his gum faster and points at his mouth.

Stan smirks.

STAN
Thank you. Thank you.

Caleb simpers and picks his face. Stan smacks his hand down and gathers up his materials.

MR. LEVINE
Good work Stan. Let’s see the next draft in three weeks and we’ll go over budget and fast food tie-ins.

STAN
Yes sir.

He leads Caleb to the back of the room and smirks at the boys again.

QUINCY
Tough act to follow.

DICKIE
You’ll be alright. Come on.

They approach the front of the room and set up the easel and poster boards.
MR. LEVINE
Next up, we have Dickie and Quincy with *Is That Your Phone or Mine?*

GLADSTONE
Interesting title.

SILVER
Where’s the writer?

Dickie looks at Quincy then to the room.

DICKIE
Oh, well she’s very reclusive, you know.

QUINCY
Yeah, very old-fashioned. She lives up North and works out of her beach chalet.

The executives look at each other and murmur. Dickie and Quincy look at each other, then back to the room.

GLADSTONE
Whatever. Go ahead, let’s hear it.

Quincy takes a deep breath and steps onto the mound.

QUINCY
Okay, we open in a swanky gin joint. Thumping music. Sexy waitresses. Hipsters and Hip-Hoppers mackin’ on crudo...

The executives nod at each other.

SILVER
Okay...

LATER

Quincy’s warmed up. He paces the room.

QUINCY
Then in walks Herman, a nerdy accountant in dockers and a *Member’s Only* jacket. Totally out of place...

The executives’ eyes follow along.

LATER
Quincy canters around the room, talking with his hands.

QUINCY (CONT’D)
In the corner booth with his hot
date, we see Conner. He’s a real
baller in his Gucci suit...

The executives’ eyes track him around the room.

LATER

Quincy leans in like he’s telling a ghost story.

QUINCY (CONT’D)
So Herman takes the call not
knowing the busboy accidentally
switched his phone with Conner’s.
He thinks it’s his client who owns
an ice cream parlor, but it’s
actually Conner’s client who owns
an ice cream corporation -- with an
insider trading tip...

Smiles on the executives’ faces as they take notes.

LATER

Sweating, worked-up, Quincy delivers his final words like
Jimmy Swaggart at the pulpit.

QUINCY (CONT’D)
And then our hero drives off into
the sunset with the super model --
in Conner’s Porsche!

He pauses with a bright smile.

The executives talk amongst themselves in hushed tones.

Quincy remains, smiling, panting. He looks over to Dickie
and talks through his teeth.

QUINCY (CONT’D)
Do you think they liked it?

Dickie shrugs.

DICKIE
(whispering)
Supermodel? Porsche? What happened
to sticking to the script?
QUINCY  
(through teeth)  
I was losing them. I had to punch it up a little.

DICKIE  
That’s my job!

He glares at Quincy.

GLADSTONE (O.S.)  
Good job guys.

They turn back to the table.

DICKIE  
Thank you.

QUINCY  
Thanks.

GLADSTONE  
We’ll let you know.

DICKIE  
Thank you, gentlemen.

The boys gather their stuff and prepare to leave.

GLADSTONE  
Hold on, we’re not through yet.

The boys stop and resume their centered position.

DICKIE  
Yes, Mr. Gladstone?

The boys both gulp.

GLADSTONE  
You say the writer’s not around?

DICKIE  
Uh-huh.

QUINCY  
Yes sir.

GLADSTONE (CONT’D)  
And she lives up in Marin or someplace?

DICKIE  
Yes sir.

QUINCY  
Uh-huh.

The executives turn to each other and talk amongst themselves again. Dickie and Quincy gulp again.
Mr. Levine looks up and studies the boys, then back to the huddle.

The executives nod and turn back to the boys.

    SILVER
    What’s her name again?

    QUINCY
    Dal-

Dickie jumps in front of Quincy.

    DICKIE
    Dolly. Uh, her name is Dolly, Mr. Silver.

Mr. Gladstone flips to the first page of his copy.

    GLADSTONE
    It says here her name is Roberta Richards.

    DICKIE
    Right. Uh...

Quincy steps up.

    QUINCY
    Dolly’s her nickname. She’s very eccentric, you know.

The execs nod along, screw eyes at them, etc.

    SILVER
    My mother’s name was Dolly.

    QUINCY
    Oh...

    DICKIE
    It’s a lovely name, sir.

    QUINCY
    Yeah! Number one.

Quincy gives a thumbs up to the man. Dickie grimaces at him.

    GLADSTONE
    Never heard of her.
SILVER
Does she have representation?

DICKIE No.
QUINCY Yes.

They look at each other. Dickie steps up.

DICKIE
She just fired her agent.

QUINCY
Yeah, too many dystopia gigs.

The execs all nod and grunt to each other.

SILVER
Is she produced?

DICKIE Yes.
QUINCY No.

They look at each other again.

QUINCY
Nothing mainstream. Only art-house stuff.

DICKIE
Yeah, she really is quite eccentric.

The execs form another huddle and murmur in conference.
Levine peeks up at the boys then back to the huddle.
The execs break and turn back to the boys. The boys gulp.

GLADSTONE
Well, the material is brilliant.

DICKIE
Really?

QUINCY
No joke?

GLADSTONE
Haven’t seen anything this good in years.
SILVER
Yes. What else has she written?

The boys heave a big sigh of relief.

QUINCY
You mean, what hasn’t she written!
She’s got a sweeping war epic, a sultry film noir, a gritty western, a boy and his dog, a girl and her horse...

Dickie’s smile drops like a sack of concrete.

In the back of the room, Stan simmers.

INT. SILVERGREEN STUDIOS - DICKIE’S OFFICE - DAY

Dickie ushers Quincy into the office and slams the door.

QUINCY
Wow! We killed it in there! Let’s have a toast!

Quincy crosses to the tiki bar and pulls out a bottle. Dickie follows and swipes it from him.

DICKIE
Are you crackers?

Quincy grabs the bottle back.

QUINCY
What? They want to see the western!

Dickie tugs the bottle away from Quincy.

DICKIE
Yeah, in three weeks, you dip! This last one alone took me a month and they passed on it!

He puts the bottle back in the cabinet and slams it shut.

QUINCY
Aw, don’t snap your cap at me! We got them eating out of our hands!

Dickie grabs him by the collar and leans in.

DICKIE
You know what happens when we burrow into those old scripts! I’ll
DICKIE
be talking like a ranch hand for months!

Quincy grabs Dickie’s collar and pulls him even closer, their faces in kissing distance of each other.

QUINCY
Just phone it in then, Howdy Doody!

DICKIE
Howdy doo like a knuckle sandwich?

A knock on the door and Mr. Levine steps in.

MR. LEVINE
Aw boys, now is not the time to go Brokeback on me. Did you just spit into your hand, Quincy?

Dickie backs away and brushes himself off. Quincy adjusts his collar.

QUINCY
No sir, we were just letting off a little steam.

DICKIE
It was a tough room in there.

MR. LEVINE
Well the room liked your little farce.

The boys share a look. Quincy looks to Levine.

QUINCY
Our farce?

MR. LEVINE
The movie you just pitched?

DICKIE
They did?

MR. LEVINE
Yeah, welcome to the fast track. Just a few notes.

Quincy’s eyes widen. Levine drops a stack of papers on Dickie’s desk.
MR. LEVINE (CONT’D)
Good work, cowboys.

He exits and closes the door. Quincy pauses until Mr. Levine’s out of earshot.

QUINCY
Woohoo!

He grabs Dickie’s head and plants a wet one on the kisser. Dickie sputters and wipes his mouth.

DICKIE
Blech! If you have to kiss a fella does it have to be after you’ve eaten a corndog?!

INT./EXT. DICKIE’S APARTMENT – DAY

Dickie sits at his desk, banging away at his keyboard. He wears a sweater vest over a pastel polo shirt and checkered slacks.

Penny enters the room, touching up her lipstick.

PENNY
Will you give it a rest? They’ll be here any minute.

Dickie doesn’t look up.

DICKIE
Aw, quit yer dern yammerin’! I ain’t gonna fetch up now!

PENNY
Watch it there, Colonel Custer.

A car horn toots outside. Penny crosses to the window.

OUTSIDE

Quincy pulls up in an aqua ’55 Thunderbird and smiles up at Penny. He wears a navy sport coat with an ascot.

Next to him, Hazel sits in over-sized cat-eye shades and a silk scarf. Quincy waves a handkerchief.

QUINCY
Hello, the house!

BACK INSIDE
PENNY
You say you’ve been in a steam room with this guy?

MONTAGE -- WINE TASTING TRIP

INT./EXT. QUINCY’S THUNDERBIRD (MOVING) - DAY

Quincy Drives with Dickie riding shotgun. They check out each other’s duds and nod approvingly.

In the back, Penny crouches in her modern outfit with her hair whipping about. She looks at the men, then at Hazel in her throw-back dress.

Hazel offers a smile then reaches into her purse and pulls out a spare scarf and pair of shades.

LATER

The group Cruises along, chatting, smiling, laughing. Penny’s look now matches her new friend -- with a scarf of her own and her lipstick touched up a bright red.

The car heads into Santa Ynez Valley.

INT. TASTING ROOM - DAY

The group stands at a counter. A SERVER pours wine into their glasses. They swirl, huff, sip and swish... then, all at once, spit into the spit bucket.

EXT. PICNIC AREA - DAY

Quincy lies opposite Hazel on a blanket. She tosses grapes into his mouth.

Dickie lounges with Penny on a nearby blanket. He lob a twig into Quincy’s mouth.

Quincy gags and spits the twig out. His friends all laugh it up.

EXT. VINEYARD - DAY

Dickie, Penny and Hazel stroll along with wine glasses, chatting, pointing at things, etc.

Quincy jumps out from a bush brandishing vines and leaves as a crude vine monster. The party jumps back, scream, spill their wine, laugh, etc.
INT. TASTING ROOM - DAY

The group stand at another counter. Their wine is poured. They swirl, huff, sip and, this time, swig.

LATER

They cheers and chug another round.

LATER

And then another.

LATER

And another.

LATER

The group laugh and chatter, falling over each other, etc.

At the door, A COUNTRY BOY in cowboy boots and hat mosies in. The girls crack up.

    PENNY
    Say, get a load of this mug!

    HAZEL
    Must think he’s Gary Cooper!

The group bursts out laughing. The cowboy turns to them.

INT./EXT. QUINCY’S THUNDERBIRD (MOVING) - NIGHT

Quincy drives with Hazel riding next to him, holding an ice pack to his eye.

In the back, Penny does the same for Dickie.

END MONTAGE

INT. SILVERGREEN STUDIOS - DICKIE’S OFFICE - DAY

Dickie hammers away at his keyboard. Quincy watches over his shoulder, checks his watch.

    QUINCY
    Boy, I don’t know how you did it, but it looks like we’re gonna pull this off!
DICKIE
Well it took a whole lot of coffee.
I was one latte away from sending
you over to Vine Street to score me
some meth.

A knock at the door. The boys look up. Stan enters.

DICKIE (CONT’D)
Beat it, Stooge!

QUINCY
Yeah, Stunod, why don’t you scram?

STAN
No, I think I’ll stick around and
watch this train wreck.

DICKIE
Ah, go climb up your thumb.

QUINCY
And jump in a lake!

MR. LEVINE (O.S.)
Stan!

STAN
The board’s in the conference room
now, tapping their fingers.

DICKIE
Son of a Siberian Sasquatch!

Stan snorts and exits.

DICKIE (CONT’D)
Aw man, and I’m still not done
punching up the western...

Quincy ushers Dickie out of the chair and sits.

QUINCY
You go on in, they can’t start
without me anyway. I have your
notes, I’ll finish it.

DICKIE
But...

QUINCY
Go!
Dickie exits. Quincy compares the notes against the screen, then sets them down. He saves the file.

    QUINCY (CONT’D)
    Meh. Good enough.

INT. SILVERGREEN STUDIOS – CONFERENCE ROOM – DAY

The executives sit around the table. This time, Dickie has a seat amongst them. Quincy stands in the pitching area.

    QUINCY
    In the corner booth with his entourage, we see Joey Ravioli,
    He’s a real baller in his neck tattoos and gold chain-

    GLADSTONE
    Hold on...

Quincy bows and holds space. The executives confer in hushed tones. Quincy exchanges a look with Dickie.

    GLADSTONE (CONT’D)
    Well she executed the notes well.

    SILVER
    Yes, and it has the danger element now, but I’m not seeing this working as a comedy.

Dickie opens up his notepad.

    GLADSTONE
    I agree. And the stakes need to be higher.

Dickie scribbles in some notes.

    SILVER
    Absolutely. Why not make it an action thriller?

Dickie’s jaw drops.

    DICKIE
    A thriller? Don’t you want to hear the rest of it?

    MR. LEVINE
    Dickie...

The executives wave Dickie off.
SILVER
And make it high concept.

GLADSTONE
Yes, high-concept. How about the hapless accountant must keep his phone charged or the mob kills his family?

DICKIE
But he’s single.

QUINCY
(through his teeth)
Just work it in, Dickie.

DICKIE
How does keeping his phone charged protect his family?

GLADSTONE
You figure that out! And change the title. It’s too on-the-nose.

SILVER
Yes, too on-the-nose. How about simply: Charge.

He gestures an imaginary line.

DICKIE
Charge?

QUINCY
Charge?

The executives nod their heads.

GLADSTONE
Charge. That’s a winner.

Stan snickers in the back. Dickie glowers at him.

DICKIE
Yeah, real winner.

GLADSTONE
Is our creative direction problematic, son?

DICKIE
No sir.
SILVER
Pass it on to your writer. That’s her shtick.

DICKIE
Yes sir.

GLADSTONE
And bring her in, we want to meet her.

Dickie fidgets.

QUINCY
Oh I’m sorry but she does live up north and all.

SILVER
Well, fly her in for the holiday party.

GLADSTONE
Great idea. And put her up in the Standard.

QUINCY
Yes, Mr. Gladstone.

The executives gather their things.

DICKIE
But sir, what about the other script?

Gladstone turns to him.

GLADSTONE
The western? I’ll see if my assistant got to it yet.

SILVER
In the meantime, send us another one. The one with the flying saucers.

They exit the room. Dickie’s jaw hits the floor.
INT. SILVERGREEN STUDIOS - DICKIE’S OFFICE - DAY

Quincy sits on the couch watching Dickie stomp about the room.

DICKIE
Fargin’ friggin’ dagnabbit...

QUINCY
You okay, chum?

DICKIE
No, chum, I’m not okay! Two weeks for a page one and another punch-up? I’ll need a bag of meth the size of your head!

Dickie whips out his pocket square and dabs his brow with it.

QUINCY
Golly, Dickie, crank’ll make your chompers fall out. And you still have credit with the tooth fairy for last month.

Dickie raises his fist to him.

DICKIE
Whadya say we max out your account!

QUINCY
Well, how do you like that? I grease the skids to advance our careers and this is the thanks I get?

DICKIE
Why don’t you tell that to Roberta Richards? You’ll find her listed with the tooth fairy!

QUINCY
Aw, she’s out there somewhere. I’ll post an ad on Craig’s List.

DICKIE
What and have every starving starlet in this town lined up at our couch?
QUINCY
Or they could just send an email.
Dickie starts hyperventilating.

DICKIE
I can’t take this! I’m falling
apart! I need my support! My rock!
My everything!

He crosses to his desk and picks up the phone.

QUINCY
Calling Penny?

DICKIE
No, my dentist!
(into phone)
Operator, get me Klondike five oh
two oh jeezus! What’s happening to
me?!

A knock at the door. Dickie hangs up the phone.

DICKIE (CONT’D)
Oh what now?

Mr. Levine enters.

MR. LEVINE
I don’t know how you charlatans
pulled this off-

Dickie drops his shoulders and heaves a sigh.

DICKIE
Okay, fine Mr. Levine. Here’s what
happened-

MR. LEVINE
No time for that -- you two
had better get hopping!

QUINCY
What for?

MR. LEVINE
A Bonanza remake went into
turn-around and we took over the
properties in a fire sale. We got
the financing too but our lead’s
only available till January.
DICKIE
Okay, so...

MR. LEVINE
So we’re green-lighting The Ballad of Johnny Durango.

QUINCY
The classic western!

MR. LEVINE
Don’t get ahead of yourself. You start shooting next week.

DICKIE
You mean...

MR. LEVINE
That’s right! You two lunkheads just became the youngest executive producers in Silvergreens’ history!

He exits.

QUINCY
Well hot digitty!

He grabs Dickie’s head and tries to kiss him. Dickie foils the move by shoving his handkerchief into Quincy’s mouth.

EXT. NEWS STAND – DAY

PEOPLE shuffle past a Hollywood magazine stand. A break in traffic reveals a cluster of trade magazines with a special cover:

Dickie and Quincy stand back-to-back, arms folded. Quincy has a beaming white smile. Dickie’s eyes are half closed.

The headline reads: "The Boys who Saved Silvergreens?"

INT. SILVERGREEN STUDIOS – CONFERENCE ROOM – DAY

Quincy, in a sharp tailored suit sits among Stan and various CAST and CREW.

All eyes are on the MALE LEAD (30, a pretty-boy version of Lorne Greene) as he reads the script.

MALE LEAD
Now look, you lousy pack of suck eggs, I said hit the trail or you’ll each get a lead plum!
The FEMALE LEAD (20s) takes her cue.

FEMALE LEAD
Careful, Johnny, they’ll be back on account of those Indian out there.

The DIRECTOR (40s, urbane) halts the read.

DIRECTOR
Stop. That’s the fifth "On account of" I’ve seen. Who wrote this, the Beaver?

The supporting cast laugh obsequiously. The male lead sulks a beat at the attention directed at the director, but adds:

MALE LEAD
Yeah, with a little help from the rabbit?

The cast laughs even louder. The male lead gloats.

The director and Quincy share a look and Quincy scribbles onto his copy.

QUINCY
We’ll fix it. People talked screwy back when this was written I guess.

Stan raises an eyebrow at Quincy.

STAN
When was it written, Quincy?

Quincy stops scribbling, pauses then looks up.

QUINCY
Last year.

The director stares at Quincy. Quincy darts his eyes about the table.

The director bursts out laughing. The leads and supporting cast join in.

Quincy looks back to Stan who returns a suspicious gaze.
INT. SILVERGREEN STUDIOS - DICKIE’S OFFICE - DAY

Dickie slaves away at his desk, gulping down a giant mug of coffee. Quincy comes in and closes the door.

QUINCY
Oh boy, you look like a pile of old socks.

Dickie looks up.

DICKIE
Well I haven’t changed mine in a week.

Quincy crosses to the bar and fixes himself a drink.

DICKIE (CONT’D)
How’d the meeting go? Any notes? Do I need to change anything? I’ll pull it up now.

Dickie wields his mouse all over the mouse pad.

QUINCY
Whoa, there, buckaroo! Our flint’s all fixed.

DICKIE
Stan’s been on the prod since they shelved the Smell Sorcerer. Better stay skinned around him.

QUINCY
Eh, he got to keep Igor around. Don’t get your dander up.

Quincy finishes his drink and heads for the door.

DICKIE
Where you going now?

QUINCY
Stage six. We’re starting principal photography and craft services has tacos.

Quincy exits.

DICKIE
Yeah, don’t work too hard.
INT. DICKIE’S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Dickie works at his desk. Penny paces by him.

    DICKIE
    Could you pull in your horns?
    You’re distracting me.

Penny crosses to the window to observe the world outside.

    PENNY
    Come on, Dickie, it’s Saturday Night. Can’t we go see a movie or something?

    DICKIE
    Sweetie, can’t you see I’m busy?

Penny huffs and disappears down the hall.

    PENNY (O.S.)
    You’ve been chained to that desk every night for weeks. What’re you working on anyway?

    DICKIE
    I told you, I’m putting together a production budget.

    PENNY (O.S.)
    I may work at a pet clinic but I know a screenplay when I see one.

Dickie’s eyes widen.

    DICKIE
    I’m, uh, just polishing it.

Penny returns with her purse and a light jacket, and pauses at the entrance to the room.

    PENNY
    Oh Dickie!

    DICKIE
    What?

    PENNY
    (weak James Cagney sendup)
    You’re a dirty rat, see!
DICKIE

Huh?

She mimics a bow-legged cowboy about to draw.

PENNY

(weak John Wayne sendup)
You're the rootin-tootin', high falootin' sheriff in these parts!

DICKIE

Now sweetie-

PENNY

How could I be so dense!

Penny crosses to him and kisses his cheek.

PENNY (CONT'D)
You're writing again!

DICKIE

Well yeah...

Penny heads to the front door.

PENNY

Don't let me distract you. I'm going over to Hazel's. Let me read it when it's finished!

She puts on her coat and opens the door.

DICKIE

But...

PENNY

I'm so proud of you!

She blows a kiss at him. He "catches" it and plants it on his cheek.

DICKIE

Thanks.

She exits. Dickie stares at the closed door.

DICKIE (CONT'D)

Criminy.
INT. SILVERGREEN STUDIOS - CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

A breakfast meeting. Mr. Levine heads the table with Stan, Dickie, Quincy and the rest of the staff. Quincy sits with a plate of donut holes in front of him.

Dickie is disheveled and fights nodding off.

QUINCY
So we’ll have a rough cut in the can by Friday and ADR should be completed next week.

Quincy bites into a pastry and nudges Dickie awake.

MR. LEVINE
Great work, Quincy.

STAN
Yeah, great work on those donut holes.

QUINCY
(garbled)
You’re a hole.

Stan glares at Quincy’s full mouth.

STAN
Slob.

MR. LEVINE
Stan!

STAN
Yes, Uncle Ira.

MR. LEVINE
We’re trying something new with our test markets. I need you to screen a copy of the rough cut at Shady Acres Friday afternoon.

STAN
The retirement home in Glendale? But we haven’t done color grading or a music score.

MR. LEVINE
They can’t eat their soup or wipe their asses without a nurse’s help. They’re not gonna kvetch.
STAN
But that's way across the five and the holiday party's on Friday!
The table clears out.

MR. LEVINE
We'll save you a rugelach.

Quincy snickers and helps Dickie up. Stan glares at him.

INT. SILVERGREEN STUDIOS - DICKIE’S OFFICE - DAY
Quincy helps Dickie into his office and closes the door.
Dickie passes out on the couch.

DICKIE
Alright, I’m just gonna close my eyes for a-
He crashes and starts snoring. Quincy goes to the bar and gets an old-fashioned soda syphon.

QUINCY
Come on! Wake up! Wake up!
He douses Dickie’s face. Dickie snaps to it.

DICKIE
Is it Friday yet?

QUINCY
No but it will be in two days and you still need to finish the space movie. Better get a wiggle on.

Dickie jolts up, slaps his face, etc.

DICKIE
I still have the third act to do. Shit. Two days? I don’t think I can do it.

QUINCY
Sure you can. Get through this and we can let loose at the party. And don’t forget my nephew’s birthday Sunday.

Dickie rises.
DICKIE
Oh, we’ll be there alright. Penny dropped forty clams on the present.

QUINCY
Good. Now git along little doggie.

Quincy helps Dickie slog over to his desk.

DICKIE
Find our writer yet?

QUINCY
Everything’s copacetic. There’s this lady in my building, see -- used to be a player.

He grabs an empty coffee pot off the desk.

DICKIE
Anyone we know?

Quincy crosses to the door.

QUINCY
Don’t sweat it. I’ll fix you some more joe. And I think I saw a dime bag of coke in the storeroom.

He exits. Dickie’s asleep at his desk.

INT. NURSING HOME - DAY

Stan slouches in a chair with a notepad in a darkened room full of SENIOR CITIZENS, most of whom are asleep. Caleb scribbles notes next to him.

The Johnny Durango rough cut is projected in front of the room:

EXT. LOG CABIN - DUSK

The female lead performs in frontier gingham on the porch.

FEMALE LEAD
Careful, Johnny, they’ll be back.
That’s Cherokee country out there.

BACK TO SCENE

On the other side of Stan, an old man, MR. WELLER (100), sits barely alive in a wheelchair. His oxygen tank gives off a loud puff.
Stan rolls his eyes, turns to Caleb and hands him a twenty dollar bill.

    STAN
    Go get me some Fireball.

Caleb takes the cash and walks off. Stan looks back up to the movie:

EXT. PRAIRIE - DUSK

The male lead stands in cowboy wardrobe in front of an expansive backdrop with storm clouds gathering.

    MALE LEAD
    I ain’t a talkin’ man. A cowboy saves his breath for breathin’...

BACK TO SCENE

The oxygen tank puffs again. Stan sighs.

    MALE LEAD (O.S.)
    I only cuss around horses, cows, and other cowboys...

Stan notices Mr. Weller speaking along with the dialogue and turns to him.

    STAN
    Sir, do you mind?

Mr. Weller doesn’t respond.

Stan looks away then back as Mr. Weller recites the next line verbatim with the lead.

    MALE LEAD (O.S.)
    I live by a different code. The cowboy code. And if a man don’t respect that, then heaven help him. Cause a six-shooter don’t discriminate.

    MR. WELLER
    I live by a different code. The cowboy code. And if a man don’t respect that, then heaven help him. Cause a six-shooter don’t discriminate.

Stan’s eyes widen. A NURSE (50s) approaches and leans into Mr. Weller’s ear.

    NURSE
    Come on now Mr. Weller, you know it’s not polite to talk during the movie.
She turns to Stan.

NURSE
I’m so sorry. He was in the industry, you know.

She wheels him away. Stan’s face morphs into a maniacal leer.

INT. SILVERGREEN STUDIOS - CONFERENCE ROOM - NIGHT

The Christmas party in full swing. The room is tastefully decorated and set up so one would never suspect it was just a conference room. EMPLOYEES socialize.

Dickie, Penny and Hazel, in evening attire, watch Mr. Levine hobnob with the other executives and their WIVES.

MR. LEVINE
So I told him, let’s just have the party here and there’s our marketing budget!

The group bursts out laughing.

Penny turns to Hazel.

PENNY
He doesn’t seem so wound up.

HAZEL
Believe me, there are enough knots inside that man to make a boy scout jealous.

Dickie cranes his neck around the party.

DICKIE
Come on, where are they?

Quincy enters the room and approaches them escorting a buxom older lady, CANDY (60s), sashaying in, wearing a fox stole, fancy hat and wielding a cigarette holder.

QUINCY
Hiya dollface, sorry we’re late.
(to Dickie)
Got held up in wardrobe.

He leans in to kiss Hazel. She presents her cheek while sneering at the lady and her pelt.
HAZEL
Eew. You can’t smoke in here.

Candy takes the shaming with class and replies in a hammy mid-Atlantic accent and rolling her ’r’s.

CANDY
Oh daaahling, that’s just for show.
And relax, this isn’t real.

She holds the pelt out for Hazel and Penny to pet it.

PENNY
Feels just like a dead fox...

Dickie sneaks a word with Quincy.

DICKIE
What the?

QUINCY
It’s all good. She’s a trained actress.

DICKIE
This is a Christmas party, not Night at the Opera!

QUINCY
Hey she takes her craft seriously.

Mr. Levine walks up with Gladstone and his wife, MRS. GLADSTONE (50s). Elegant, tan and Botoxed. She eyes Candy up and down.

GLADSTONE
I suspect this is the mysterious Roberta Richards I heard so much about?

QUINCY
Roberta, this is Gene Gladstone, Executive Vice President of Production.

Candy extends her hand.

CANDY
How do you do?

GLADSTONE
Your work precedes you, Ms. Richards. Or should I call you Dolly?
She shoots a nervous look to Quincy. Quincy quickly bobs his head. She turns back to Gladstone.

CANDY
You can call me anything you like, my dear.

She locks eyes with him. Mrs. Gladstone glares at him. He adjusts his tie. Quincy pops in and ushers Candy to Mr. Levine.

QUINCY
And this is our boss, Ira Levine.

Candy holds out her hand.

MR. LEVINE
Thrilled to have you with us, Dolly.

CANDY
I’m thrilled to be here.

MR. LEVINE
You have an uncanny talent.

CANDY
I have many talents, thank you.

GLADSTONE
Yes, I can’t explain it. You write in such a classic style we haven’t seen in ages.

CANDY
Oh, well I’ve been around the block a few times.

MR. LEVINE
But with a modern voice.

CANDY
And I stay current with the times.

Dickie turns to Quincy.

DICKIE
Hey, she isn’t bad!

QUINCY
Uh-huh!
GLADSTONE
Tell me, how do you have such a command of so many different genres?

CANDY
Lots and lots of practice and always..
(leans in)
...trying new things.

Mrs. Gladstone huffs and turns her nose.

GLADSTONE
Oh my. Well...
(clears throat)
That’s just the type of chutzpah we need around here. Let’s have a toast.

Quincy and Dickie share a smile. Mr. Gladstone calls over to Mr. Silver and his wife, MRS. SILVER (50s), classy, tan and equally collagened as Mrs. Gladstone.

GLADSTONE (CONT’D)
Mort, come over here.

Mr. Silver turns, then freezes. Candy freezes as well.

SILVER
Candy?

CANDY
Rocco?

GLADSTONE
You two know each other?

CANDY
Oh, we did some work together...

Mrs. Silver glares at her husband.

SILVER
Yes, once or twice back in the disco era.

CANDY
It was a groovy time, wasn’t it Rocco?

Silver turns to Gladstone with gritted teeth.
SILVER
And what is she doing here?

Quincy and Dickie look at each other.

GLADSTONE
Why this is Roberta Richards, the writer.

SILVER
Oh, and Ron Jeremy’s directing the next Star Wars?

Gladstone scratches his head and studies Candy.

GLADSTONE
Wait a minute, you’re Candy Conners! Loved your work in The Wench Connection!
(to Silver)
Mort, you devil!

SILVER
It was the seventies. I just got into town.

MRS. SILVER
You grew up in Bel Air, Mort.

The executives glare at the boys. Quincy stammers and turns to Candy.

QUINCY
Candy– Dolly– Roberta! I’m appalled! How could you?

Dickie scowls at him. Candy stands firm. Her real voice is a nasally Bronx accent.

CANDY
What? Other adult performers made the transition to mainstream. Why shouldn’t I?

GLADSTONE
So you’re saying you did write those scripts?

Penny and Hazel glower at their dates.

MRS. SILVER
This old tramp couldn’t write a grocery list.
SILVER
Sylvia, please...

CANDY
Sylvia Silver? Hah! Well if that’s not an industry name, I don’t know what is!

Mrs. Silver fumes and charges at Candy.

MRS. SILVER
You don’t talk to me like that! I’m the wife of an executive!

Mrs. Silver swings her purse at her. Candy fights back with her fox stole.

CANDY
This trophy’s looking a bit tarnished! Let me buff that out for you!

She mashes the stole in Mrs. Silver’s face. Mrs. Gladstone sneaks a cheap purse shot in.

The men all join in to break them up.

GLADSTONE
Ladies! Please!

SILVER
Darling! Your dignity!

Dickie turns to Quincy.

DICKIE
Well this is a fine mess you’ve gotten us into, buster!

QUINCY
Say, what gives, Dickie?

DICKIE
Oh, you know what gives. Gammin’ around in your glad rags while I did all the heavy lifting. Was that your angle?

A crowd gathers around them. The ladies cool it.

QUINCY
Aw, you’re all wet! There’s no angle! I’m on the level, I tell ya!
DICKIE
Why I outta level you...

MR. LEVINE
Boys...

QUINCY
Oh yeah?! You and what army?

MR. LEVINE
Boys...

Dickie scores an imaginary line with his foot.

DICKIE
Cross this line, I dare ya! I
double dare ya!

QUINCY
Alright! You asked for it!!

Quincy launches at Dickie and they topple on top of each other.

MR. LEVINE
Boys, cut it out!

QUINCY
I’ll show you!

He swings and misses Dickie’s head completely.

HAZEL
Quincy!

DICKIE
Come on! Show me!

He swings and misses, loses his balance and they tumble into
a table of appetizers.

PENNY
Dickie!

MR. LEVINE
Come on boys, knock it off!

GLADSTONE
What’s the meaning of this?

STAN (O.S.)
Yeah fellas...
The boys stop wrestling and look to the door. The rest of the crowd does as well.

Stan leans against the doorway, dangling a screenplay. Caleb holds the box of old scripts and the janitor stands next to him with a ring of office keys.

    STAN
    What’s the big idea?

Candy turns to Gladstone.

    CANDY
    I can still have that room at the Standard tonight, right?

INT. DICKIE’S APARTMENT – NIGHT

Penny wheels out her luggage into the living room. Dickie rushes through the front door.

    DICKIE
    Oh here you are! Why didn’t you wait for me?

Penny sets a wrapped present on a side table.

    PENNY
    Here. For Quincy’s nephew.

    DICKIE
    Aw, I can’t go to that party now.

    PENNY
    Well you have to go, cause I’m not.

Dickie sees her suitcase.

    DICKIE
    Wait, what are you doing?

    PENNY
    I’m going back to Laguna to be with my parents. I’ll get the rest of my stuff on Sunday.

She advances toward the door. Dickie steps in her way.

    DICKIE
    But you can’t leave!
PENNY
Why not?

DICKIE
We just signed another year on the lease!

PENNY
That’s the only reason you want to keep me around and string me along?

DICKIE
Oh, so that’s what this is about. Because I haven’t slapped a handcuff on you yet?

PENNY
No Dickie. You made a fool out of me thinking you were writing again.

DICKIE
But I was!

Penny furrows her brow at him.

DICKIE (CONT’D)
Look, I paid the price for it, but now I’m all yours. Let’s go to Catalina for the weekend!

PENNY
It’s too late for that.

She skirts him to the door.

DICKIE
Oh swell. So you’re gonna just toss me aside like yesterday’s mashed potatoes?

PENNY
We didn’t have mashed potatoes yesterday, Dickie. We never did.

She sobs and walks out the door.

EXT. SILVERGREEN STUDIOS - NIGHT

The sounds of the party waft from above. Quincy storms out of the front door with a banker’s box.

Hazel follows him out.
HAZEL
Quincy!

Quincy stops.

QUINCY
What?

HAZEL
Where you going?

QUINCY
To look for a job.

HAZEL
But what about us?

QUINCY
What about us? I’m no good for you anymore. I’m no good for anyone anymore.

HAZEL
Don’t say that. Come on, take me for a ride. It’s a beautiful night. Look at the moon!

She waves her hand across the sky. It’s a full moon.

QUINCY
Oh that thing we never landed on? I have enough problems without your nutty beliefs.

HAZEL
Hey, I don’t push my nutty beliefs on you. And so what? Both of my parents are gone. If I want to believe that I can stand anywhere on this earth knowing Heaven is always up and they’re smiling down on me, then what’s it to you?

Quincy takes a beat to let that sink in.

QUINCY
Nothing. See ya, dollface.

He continues on. Hazel drops her shoulders and pouts.
INT. SILVERGREEN STUDIOS - DICKIE’S OFFICE - DAY

Dickie packs things from his desk into a banker’s box.

He exits the door as Caleb enters with his own box. Stan gloats in the hallway.

Dickie glowers at Stan.

    DICKIE
    Better set a mouse trap. There’s a rat in this office.

Caleb grimaces.

INT. SILVERGREEN STUDIOS - COMMON AREA - MOMENTS LATER

A cube farm with office din of typing, phones ringing, etc.

Dickie skulks past an open area with his box. Murmurs come from the INTERNS and ASSISTANTS at their desks.

    DICKIE
    Well what’re you all looking at? I’ll lick any one a ya!

A sharply dressed EFFEMINATE INTERN (Male, 20s) titters with a GIRL INTERN (20s) next to him.

    EFFEMINATE INTERN
    Oooh!

Dickie continues down the hallway.

INT. SILVERGREEN STUDIOS - HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Mr. Levine steps out into his doorway.

    MR. LEVINE
    Dickie.

    DICKIE
    Aw I’m on my way out. No need to make a federal case out of it.

    MR. LEVINE
    Wait a minute.

Dickie turns.

    MR. LEVINE (CONT’D)
    Look kid, you had a good run. But you know, copyright laws. It’s a real mess here.
DICKIE
Uh-huh.

MR. LEVINE
Don’t give up on yourself. You know I was once an actor, now look at me. I’m a real mess.

He jostles his gut, prompting a slight grin from Dickie.

HAZEL (O.S.)
Mr. Levine, Sam Ludwig returning.

MR. LEVINE
Take care of yourself, Dickie.

Levine disappears into his office. Hazel offers him a sad smile. Dickie nods and continues on.

MR. LEVINE (O.S.)
Sam, you ol’ son of a bitch, how the hell are ya...

EXT. HOLLYWOOD STREET - NIGHT

Dickie wanders with his banker’s box among the throngs of TOURISTS, PARTIERS, HOMELESS PEOPLE, etc.

NEWS STAND
Dickie slogs past the news stand, not bothering to look at a stack of trade papers with a special front page:

A black and white photo of Dickie and Quincy wrestling at the Christmas party.

The headline reads: "Script Stealers Sully Silvergreens"

INT./EXT. PENNY’S CAR (DRIVING) - NIGHT

Penny wipes tears from her eyes. An old Big Band era standard drones on. She huffs and switches the radio to a Top 40 station.

A beat then she sighs and changes the radio back.

EXT. EL POLLO LOCO - DAY

Quincy takes a breath in interview attire, toting a resume folder. He walks toward a building.

REVEAL:
Quincy walks into an El Pollo Loco.
INT. HAZEL’S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Hazel cradles a carton of ice cream, sobbing in front of her laptop. The screen casts a glow on her.

NARRATOR (O.S.)
(squeaky-voiced teen)
And in nineteen-eighty-eight, an eyewitness saw Elvis eating a grilled cheese sandwich at a malt shop in Tucson...

EXT. BACKYARD - DAY

A make-shift stage set up in the backyard of a Hollywood Hills home. Behind the mic, urbane JESSE (20s) tunes an acoustic guitar plugged into an amp.

Brooding in a black leather jacket and dark aviators. To him, he’s playing the Hollywood Bowl. He strums a chord.

JESSE
How you all doin’ tonight? I’m Jesse Cassidy and I’m here to make you smile.

REVEAL:
Jesse’s performing before a group of restless CHILDREN (4-9).

Quincy watches from the rear, wearing an El Pollo Loco uniform. Dickie sidles up next to him with the gift.

DICKIE
Hey.

QUINCY
Yo.

DICKIE
So what do they have you doing, frying up churros?

QUINCY
No. I spin the sign down the corner.

DICKIE
Gotta start somewhere, I guess.

Quincy quaffs his drink. They watch the performance.
JESSE
(wistful oversinging)
A B C D... E F G, she said...

Dickie cringes.

Quincy’s brother-in-law, SIMON (40s) comes over, sipping a stiff cocktail. The three stand there, wincing.

SIMON
Yeah, your sister discovered him.
Open mic in Pasadena.

QUINCY
That’s my sister for you.

JESSE
... H I J K L M N Oooo Peeeeee...

The kids all laugh at the last note.

DICKIE
This is criminal.

SIMON
Nah. It’s in the public domain. Copyrights expire seventy years after the death of a writer anyway. This song’s way older than that.

Dickie frowns at Quincy. Quincy remains facing ahead.

QUINCY
I didn’t know that, I swear.

DICKIE
This is criminal.

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JESSE
Thank you. Thank you.
(singing)
Row, row, row your boat, she said...

DICKIE
Okay, I’m done.

Dickie downs his beer and tosses the bottle in a trash can. He sets the gift on the table and marches off.

Quincy turns to watch him off. Dickie doesn’t look back. Quincy looks back to the performance.

JESSE
Merrily, merrily, merrily...

A kid starts crying.

INT. DICKIE’S APARTMENT - DAY

Dickie, in shorts and sandals, sits at his desk typing away at his laptop.

He huffs a bag of potato chips and sets it aside -- next to his open shoebox of old scripts.

He looks at the door. Penny stands there with a box.

PENNY
Good to see you writing again.

She exits. Dickie sighs and resumes working.

INT. SILVERGREEN STUDIOS - HALLWAY - DAY

Hazel types on her computer and hears a heated discussion from inside Levine’s office. She leans an ear to the wall.

MR. LEVINE (O.S.)
What do you mean we lost the rights to the Sense Master? We optioned it just last summer!

STAN (O.S.)
It expired! We only had it for six months!

MR. LEVINE (O.S.)
Well god damn dagnabit son of a- You mean you didn’t acquire any other material?
STAN (O.S.)
Not since you put me on that shitty old western that’s gonna bankrupt us!

MR. LEVINE (O.S.)
Well now what the hell are we supposed to do with no screenplays?!

Hazel snatches her cellphone and dials a number.

HAZEL
Penny, how are you holding up?
(beat)
Aw, sweetie, me too. But listen, I need to talk to you about something else. Something big.
(beat)
Yeah, you might call it a conspiracy.

INT. DICKIE’S APARTMENT - DAY
Dickie’s position hasn’t changed. Same clothes, but with a beard. A pile of potato chip bags cover the shoebox.

His phone rings and he picks it up. On the other line is Hazel in disguise as a buttoned-up showbiz type.

DICKIE
(into phone)
Hello?

HAZEL (O.S.)
(disguised voice)
Hello Mr. Cohn, this is Debra Walters from Global Diversified Talent Agency. I heard what happened with you at Silvergreens.

DICKIE
Oh. Word sure gets around.

HAZEL (O.S.)
Yeah. But we heard of your material and wanted to know if you’re seeking representation.

DICKIE
Well, yeah, I sure am!
HAZEL (O.S.)
Great! Do you have anything new you could send over?

DICKIE
As a matter of fact I’m finishing up a spec right now.

HAZEL (O.S.)
Wonderful. And it’s your own material?

DICKIE
Wow. Word sure does get around.

EXT. DOWNTOWN LOS ANGELES - NIGHT

A pair of YOUNG MEN (20s) face each other in a dark alley, lit up by a spotlight. ACTOR #1, looks athletic in a tracksuit. ACTOR #2 is more rugged in dark leather.

ACTOR #1
Cut the crap, Murdock. What do you want?

ACTOR #2
I have a little proposition for you-

A phone rings.

QUINCY (O.S.)
Cut!

The actors drop out of character and the LIGHTING GUY (20s) lowers his spotlight to reveal:

Quincy twiddles with his phone aimed at the boys.

QUINCY
Take five you guys.
(into phone)
Hello?

On the other line, Penny in disguise as a valley girl.

PENNY (V.O.)
(disguised voice)
Hello, Mr. Pratt? My name is Alyssa. I’m an assistant at Wrong Hole Productions and we’re looking for a producer for a script we just optioned. Are you available?
Quincy watches his cast practice Karate on each other. ACTOR #1 does a spinning back kick and knocks Actor #2 to the ground. He and the lighting guy rush to him.

QUINCY
Yes. I’m definitely available.

INT. SILVERGREEN STUDIOS - HALLWAY - DAY

Another heated discussion wafting from Levine’s office.

MR. LEVINE (O.S.)
Look, we’re getting this sorted.

GLADSTONE (O.S.)
Well you’d better. I haven’t been with this studio for forty years to see you flush it down the toilet!

MR. LEVINE (O.S.)
Yes sir.

SILVER (O.S.)
We’ll be back Wednesday afternoon. That nogoodnik nephew of yours had better deliver or you’ll both be sacked!

MR. LEVINE (O.S.)
Yes sir.

Hazel hums along while holding the phone to her ear and working on her computer.

INSERT -- A SCREENPLAY TITLE PAGE: "OH DAMNIT"

The cursor backspaces over "Dickie Cohn" in the 'written by' line.

BACK TO SCENE

HAZEL
Hey Dickie.
(beat)
How’ve you been?
(beat)
Oh that’s great news! Listen, we need you to come in and get the tiki bar.
(beat)
No, I’m not talking to him.
(beat)
Can you come by Thursday at, say, five o’clock?
(beat)
Great. See you then.

Hazel hangs up the phone and resumes typing.

INSERT -- SCREENPLAY TITLE PAGE "OH DAMNIT!"

The text "Alan Smithee" spells out in the 'written by' line.

The sound of the door opening

MR. LEVINE (O.S.)
Hazel, book an all-hands for Thursday at four.

HAZEL (O.S.)
I’m already on it.

EXT. EL POLLO LOCO - DAY

Quincy, in a chicken costume, spins a sign outside the building.

His phone rings. He drops the sign, fumbles under the suit and pulls it out.

QUINCY
Hey Penny.
   (beat)
I’m great, I actually just got a lead for a new comedy. The script is fantastic!
   (beat)
Uh-huh.
   (beat)
Uh-huh.
   (beat)
Yeah well, I don’t want to talk to her either.
   (beat)
Sure, I can go in Thursday.

INT. SILVERGREEN STUDIOS - HALLWAY - DAY

Dickie saunters down the hall, disheveled in his shorts and flipflops, looking like The Dude, but without the White Russian.

   DICKIE
Hey, hey, heya Hazel!
HAZEL

Shhh!

Hazel springs up from her desk, checks around her, and ushers him toward his old office.

HAZEL (CONT’D)

You’re not really supposed to be here.

She pushes him through the door.

DICKIE

But-

INT. SILVERGREEN STUDIOS - DICKIE’S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Dickie enters with his head turned behind him to Hazel.

DICKIE

Didn’t you tell me to come-

He turns around to see Quincy and Penny standing there. Quincy’s in his El Pollo Loco uniform and Penny’s in her nurse scrubs.

DICKIE (CONT’D)

Wait, what’re they doing here?

Quincy turns to Penny.

QUINCY

Now will you tell me what’s going on? The tiki bar’s not even in here.

They all look to the space where the tiki bar was: a gamer’s paradise with beanbag chairs, gaming consoles and controllers, and a large flat-screen monitor.

DICKIE

Hazel? What gives?

HAZEL

Look, we’re in a pickle here, Dickie. We need your help. Both of you!

DICKIE

Well you’re outta luck. Global Diversified has me in their hip pocket and I’m about to sign.

Quincy turns to Penny.
QUINCY
And I’ve been tapped to produce Oh Damnit!.

Dickie perks an ear and turns to Quincy.

DICKIE
Say, you stealing material again?

QUINCY
What are you talking about?

DICKIE
Oh Damnit! is my damned script, damnit!

QUINCY
Alan Smithee wrote Oh Damnit!, damnit!

DICKIE
You blockhead! Alan Smithee is not a real person!

QUINCY
Who you calling a blockhead?!

Quincy steps up to Dickie and Dickie extends his chin. They put up their dukes.

Penny steps between them.

PENNY
Guys! Stop it!

The boys back off.

PENNY (CONT’D)
Quincy, was the script sent by someone named Alyssa from Wrong Hole Productions by any chance?

QUINCY
As a matter of fact it was! And it was the best script I’ve ever read! How’d you know that?

Dickie lets his guard down and turns to Hazel.

DICKIE
So lemme guess, that must make you-
HAZEL
(disguised voice)
Debra Walters.

Dickie sniggers and shakes his head.

QUINCY
So Alan Smithee didn’t write Oh Damnit?!

DICKIE
Now you’re on the trolley. Looks like these dames have taken us for a ride.

Quincy nods. Dickie laughs to himself a moment and Penny kicks him in the shin.

DICKIE (CONT’D)
Oww!

HAZEL
Look Dickie, we haven’t much time!

Dickie leans down and massages his shin.

DICKIE
What do you want me to do? I already got the axe.

HAZEL
Levine’s in the conference room now and the axe is about to fall on him any minute. If he goes, I go.

DICKIE
So why is she in on this?

He casts a side glance at Penny. Penny looks to Quincy.

PENNY
Hazel’s my friend.

QUINCY
Well, it was still pretty sneaky of you broads pulling a switch like that-

Hazel growls and kicks Quincy in the shin.

QUINCY
Oww!!

Hazel turns to Dickie.
HAZEL
Penny told me she saw you writing again and, well, I just had to do something.

The boys dawdle, bent down rubbing their shins and gazing at their shoes. Dickie looks over to Quincy.

DICKIE
Did you really think the script was the best you ever read?

Quincy nods.

QUINCY
I had a feeling it was yours all the time.

Dickie scans Quincy up and down, looks about himself, then turns to Hazel.

DICKIE
Do we have time to drop by wardrobe?

INT. SILVERGREEN STUDIOS - CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

Executives populate the table. Stan stands in the open area with Caleb in front of an easel with concept art reading "You Again?".

STAN
And that’s when she discovers that he was the she she dated before she went from being a he to a she!

GLADSTONE
So she was a he before being a she and he was a she before being a he?

STAN
Uh, yeah.

SILVER
But they dated each other when she was a he and he was a she?

STAN
Uh, exactly!

GLADSTONE
I don’t know. This is all so confusing.
SILVER
Who’s the target market for this again? Hes, shes, he-shes or she-hes?

Caleb clears his throat.

CALEB
I was thinking she could turn out to be a Cyborg and it was all a dream she implanted in her mind.

The executives look at him speechless. Mr. Levine buries his head. The door creaks open.

Mr Levine turns to see Hazel poking her head in.

MR. LEVINE
What is it Hazel? Can’t you see we’re busy?

HAZEL
A couple of gentlemen wish to see you.
(out the door)
Come on in fellas.

Dickie and Quincy walk in, all cleaned up but in old-timy suits with tailcoats, carnations, etc.

MR. LEVINE
Aw Hazel.

SILVER
What are these gentlemen doing here?

GLADSTONE
I thought we said they’d never work in this town again!

QUINCY
Well technically we were working out of North Hollywood.

DICKIE
Please, just give us a minute—

SILVER
After what you put us through? I had to send my wife to Cabo to cool off -- with the pool boy!
GLADSTONE
Levine, get them out of here.

Mr. Levine rises and walks to the boys.

DICKIE
Mr. Levine, please.

MR. LEVINE
Come on boys. Don’t make this any harder than it has to be.

Quincy calls over Levine’s shoulder.

QUINCY
Wait! What if I told you the lawsuit was dropped?

Silver and Gladstone look at each other.

SILVER
What do you mean?

Gladstone raises a hand to call off Levine.

GLADSTONE
Explain.

Quincy approaches the table.

QUINCY
I met with Buddy Weller’s family and explained the whole thing.

DICKIE
You did? MR. LEVINE
You did?

QUINCY (CONT’D)
They’re just happy to see one last film of his get made. As long as we give him his due writing credit they’re not going to sue!

Silver and Gladstone turn to each other again, then back to Quincy.

SILVER
And his other film? The thriller?

QUINCY
Charge? Well, that one’s hacked beyond all recognition. But sure, why the hell not?
(to Dickie)
Right?

DICKIE
Yeah, I don’t need any credit for that one.

The executives confer a beat in hushed tones.

GLADSTONE
Well. It looks like you boys redeemed yourselves.

Dickie and Quincy smile to each other and to the table.

SILVER
You may go now.

Their smiles fade.

DICKIE
But...

MR. LEVINE
Come on, Dickie, don’t push your luck.

STAN
Yeah, sayonara chumps.

Dickie turns to go but takes a look at Stan’s pitch set-up.

DICKIE
You Again?, huh? Where’d you get that script?

SILVER
You’re not the only writer in this room, son. Now be on your way.

Mr. Levine takes him by the elbow.

MR. LEVINE
Don’t make me call security, Dickie.

DICKIE
Horseradish! I wrote You Again?!

QUINCY
You did?

MR. LEVINE
You did?

A din rises in the room, ooohs and aahs, etc.
GLADSTONE

Stan?

STAN

Erm, uhhh...

Dickie winks at Quincy.

DICKIE

(sotto)

I planted it when I packed up my things.

Stan whips his head at Dickie.

STAN

Yeah, well they think it sucks anyway.

DICKIE

It was a first draft. First drafts always suck.

Silver and Gladstone confer with other in hushed tones then turn back to the room.

GLADSTONE

So is that all you have then, Stan?

STAN

Well no, uhh...

Stan elbows Caleb.

STAN (CONT’D)

(sotto)

Come on, tell ’em one of yours.

CALEB

Oh okay. It’s a future where humanity is ruled by robot deejays...

Stan nods and looks to the table.

STAN

Yeah! See?

The executives fold their arms and frown at them.

CALEB

And society is divided into syndicates, by musical genre.
The room falls silent. Dickie approaches the table.

    DICKIE
    Sirs, do you really want to listen to this?

Gladstone turns to Silver.

    GLADSTONE
    Well, the post-apocalyptic premise is a bit played out.

    STAN
    Yeah but it’s original!
    (to Dickie)
    Do you have anything better?

    QUINCY
    Only the funniest comedy I ever had the pleasure to read.

    STAN
    Pfff! I bet.

    SILVER
    Alright, let’s hear the logline.

    QUINCY
    Okay, it’s about a guy, he-

Dickie gently takes Quincy’s arm.

    DICKIE
    Let me get this.

Quincy backs away. Dickie steps up.

    DICKIE (CONT’D)
    A corrupt CEO dies in a plane crash and when he’s sent to Hell, he learns it’s not as bad as they say, but actually a lot of fun. So he plots a journey to Heaven to convince his best friend to join him... back in Hell.

Gladstone and Silver stare at them a bit then confer again. Mr. Levine’s brow sweats. The boys wait.

    STAN
    That’s the stupidest idea I’ve ever heard.

Dickie and Quincy ignore him.
QUINCY
No supernatural shit, huh?

Dickie shrugs.

DICKIE
I’m evolving.

Gladstone looks back up.

GLADSTONE
This is your material?

DICKIE
Yes sir.

SILVER
No funny business?

DICKIE
No sir.

The executives fix their eyes on him.

DICKIE (CONT’D)
Look, what I did was wrong, I know that.

The executives nod.

DICKIE (CONT’D)
I thought I could gain Hollywood status by updating those old scripts.

GLADSTONE
Well derivative content is safe.

DICKIE
Yes sir, considering the risk in this industry.

QUINCY
It’s practically killed our boss.

Mr. Levine pops an antacid.

DICKIE
Sure, there’s a lot of magic in those classic scripts, but screenwriting has also evolved over the past sixty years.
SILVER
Of course. It’s become a science.

DICKIE
Sure. And I’ve become a better writer by working in the best of both worlds.

Stan launches into sarcastic clapping.

STAN
Well good for you. I’m sure you’ll do real well in direct-to-video. We’re a big six studio. We don’t have time for this schmaltz. (to Mr. Levine) Right Uncle Ira?

The room murmurs. Gladstone looks to Silver. Silver looks to Mr. Levine.

SILVER
Levine, would you kindly dismiss the plagiarist?

Mr. Levine rises and walks to Stan and Dickie, then stammers. Quincy leans toward the executives.

QUINCY
Did you say plagiarist or plagiarists?

STAN
Pfft! Who do you think?

Gladstone and Silver nod at Stan.

STAN (CONT’D)
What?! Oh, come on!

MR. LEVINE
Come on, Stan.

He takes Stan by the elbow and walks him to the door.

STAN
But what am I supposed to do now?

MR. LEVINE
You can go back to work with your dad.
STAN
But he works in public television!

MR. LEVINE
Consider it community service.

Mr. Levine shuts the door on him.

STAN (O.S.)
(through door)
I’ll show you! I’ll show the whole lot of you!

Levine returns to his seat.

LEVINE
That’s nepotism for you.

Dickie and Quincy share a chuckle and the rest of the room chortles, murmurs, etc.

GLADSTONE
Alright, alright, quiet down everyone.

Dickie and Quincy snap to attention.

GLADSTONE (CONT’D)
Please, continue.

DICKIE
So, gentlemen, I’m willing to do whatever it takes-

SILVER
With the pitch.

The boys let out a sigh. Dickie smiles.

DICKIE
Right! So the CEO’s a real piece of work. He brings a smelly reuben sandwich into first class...

Penny and Hazel enter the room and distribute copies of the script around the room. Penny found a wardrobe upgrade herself: a modest old-fashioned work dress.

DICKIE (CONT’D)
... pinches a flight attendant’s backside, and doesn’t turn off his cell phone.

Dickie sends a nod to Quincy.
QUINCY
But his best friend, the CFO, is a real mensch. He warns him about the toy company they’re about to do business with as it has ties to North Korea...

Dickie watches Penny make her way about the table and smiles to her.

INT. SILVERGREEN STUDIOS - COMMON AREA - NIGHT

The staff file out of the conference room. The janitor mops the floor down the hall.

Mr. Gladstone shakes Dickie and Quincy’s hand. Mr. Silver shakes Quincy’s. Mr. Levine observes proudly.

SILVER
Well, that picture’s quite a gas, fellas.

GLADSTONE
I love the part where he lands in the scalding hot tub and the maintenance demon apologizes!

DICKIE
Thank you. I had a lot of fun writing it.

GLADSTONE
We’ll have our girls send our notes to the hacienda.

SILVER
Good luck, Levine.

The executives walk off.

DICKIE
The hacienda?

QUINCY
Good luck? What just happened?

MR. LEVINE
Well, you two schmendricks did fine work, but I’m afraid you’re not getting your old jobs back.

Dickie and Quincy drop their shoulders.
DICKIE
We’re not?

MR. LEVINE
No. But we can put you up in the old backlot. Silvergreen’s gets first look, of course.

Dickie and Quincy look stunned then share a laugh. Mr. Levine turns to Caleb.

MR. LEVINE (CONT’D)
Caleb, do me a favor and go in my closet. I stashed away a nice bottle for an occasion like this.

CALEB
Okay.

Caleb walks away.

DICKIE
Mr. Levine, I don’t know what to say.

QUINCY
Yeah, how could we ever thank you?

MR. LEVINE
It’s not for you, you schmucks! We’re celebrating my resignation!

Everyone’s mouths drop in shock.

MR. LEVINE (CONT’D)
But you can thank me with a bit part in Oh Damnit!. I’m going back in front of the camera!

Everyone cheers. Quincy pats him on the back.

QUINCY
We’ll see if we can pull some strings!

The staff gather around and shake hands with Mr. Levine, ad lib best wishes, etc.

Quincy sidles over to Hazel. She feigns disinterest.

QUINCY (CONT’D)
Well, I still think you’re a little nutty.
She huffs and turns her nose. He takes her hand.

**QUINCY (CONT’D)**

But I don’t care! I’m nuts about you, baby!

He pulls her in and kisses her.

Penny comes up and fidgets next to Dickie.

**PENNY**

All this excitement is making me hungry. I think I need a hot dog or something.

Dickie puts an arm around her.

**DICKIE**

Better make it a Hebrew National.

**PENNY**

Why?

**DICKIE**

Because I wanna go kosher, sweetie!

**PENNY**

Oh Dickie!

They embrace and kiss as well. The two couples kiss among a throng of onlookers.

Then release and Quincy walks over to Dickie.

**QUINCY**

Say, so you’re not still sore at me?

Dickie stares him down for a beat.

**DICKIE**

Nah, skip it.

**QUINCY**

Well, put ’er there pal!

They give each other a hearty handshake.

The boys return to their gals. Caleb returns with a bankers box and hands a bottle of scotch to Mr. Levine.
CALEB
I found it. And I also found this.

He opens the box and presents it to the men. Quincy pulls out a script and reads the title.

QUINCY
Black Justice?

Dickie reaches in as well.

DICKIE
Race Car Brother?

Levine takes a peek.

MR. LEVINE
Hah! The old blacksploitation scripts! I was wondering what happened to these!

Dickie and Quincy’s mouth’s drop. Mr. Levine looks up to them and grins widely.

MR. LEVINE (CONT’D)
They were never produced, you know!

Dickie and Quincy turn to each other, mouths agape. The janitor stops his mopping and breaks the fourth wall.

JANITOR
Say what?!

FADE OUT

THE END