

Exit Nothing

By

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Based On: Exit Nothing, A Novel By Pat King

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SCREEN IS BLACK. We hear the sounds of someone typing on a COMPUTER KEYBOARD.

FADE IN:

INT. NOTHING AND KAYE'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

NOTHING and KAYE, a young married couple in their early to mid twenties, stand in front of their apartment door. Nothing has a DUFFEL BAG around his chest. Kaye hugs her husband, but tentatively. Nothing kisses Kaye on the neck.

FADE TO BLACK

Again we hear the sound of someone typing on a computer keyboard. Simultaneously, we see "THE NIGHT BEFORE" appear on the screen.

INT. NOTHING AND KAYE'S APARTMENT, BEDROOM - NIGHT

We see a COMPUTER SCREEN. An e-mail program is open. There's a very long message on the screen. We see this sentence as it's being typed: "My passion for your mind is only matched by my passion for your cunt." Pull back to reveal Nothing. He's an attractive but greasy-haired hipster type. He has a world-weariness about him. He sits at his computer desk completely naked. He pauses a second to think, takes a swig from a CAN OF BEER that sits on his desk, and then starts typing again.

NOTHING (V.O)

My name is Nothing. That's not the name my parents gave me. But that's the name I wanted. So I told the Mad Poet about it and word eventually got around. Now my name is Nothing.

Nothing clicks his mouse, sending the e-mail. He squints his eyes at the computer screen, unsure what to do next. Finally, he turns his computer monitor off and gets in bed with Kaye. Kaye lay on her side, facing away from Nothing, pretending to sleep but not doing a great job of it. Nothing is on his back. He stares woefully at the ceiling.

INT. NOTHING AND KAYE'S APARTMENT, KITCHEN - MORNING

Kaye is an attractive but plainly dressed woman who never wears any makeup. We see her standing over a stove, finishing up some SCRAMBLED EGGS. Nothing is sitting naked at their nearby kitchen table, engrossed in a book.

Kaye and Nothing live in a tiny apartment, about what you'd expect for a young couple living in New York. The place isn't a complete dump, but it's getting there.

Kaye divides the eggs between two plates. She walks over to the kitchen table and puts one of the plates in front of Nothing. He's kind of annoyed at this distraction from his book and grunts a little acknowledgment. He sets his book aside. Kaye takes her place at the opposite side of the table.

KAYE

Sure, husband, no problem at all. No need to thank me for making breakfast. It's just a pleasure serving you.

NOTHING

Oh yeah, sorry. Thanks. I'm still kind of in a daze. I was up late working on my novel.

KAYE

The novel. Right. The infamous novel. The one you won't let me read.

NOTHING

Come on. Just stop. You'll read the damn thing when I'm finished with it.

KAYE

You've been writing this thing for, what, two years now? How long's it gonna take?

NOTHING

You'll read it when it's done. Maybe in another year, maybe twenty. It's only, like, halfway done. What the hell's half a book?

KAYE

I just want to be included.

(CONTINUED)

His ego deflated, Nothing looks sullenly at his eggs for a beat before up looking at Kaye again.

NOTHING

I'm sorry. I promise, you'll be the first person to read the thing.

KAYE

I'm sure you've already shown it to Bill.

NOTHING

Well, I mean, yeah. I need someone to critique my work.

KAYE

After all, he's your literary hero, right? What's everyone call him? The Mad Poet. More like the Unemployed Poet. He's a pretentious jerk and you're turning into him.

NOTHING

He's not unemployed all the time. But, I mean, he doesn't need to work all that much, anyway. He's pared life down to the essentials.

KAYE

Beer is essential?

NOTHING

Sometimes. I guess. I don't know. Can't we just eat?

KAYE

I just don't understand why you don't want me to read your book.

NOTHING

Kaye, please...

KAYE

And haven't I told you that we're gonna wear clothes at the breakfast table from now on? You're gonna get your butt-smear all over that chair.

NOTHING

(finally smiling)

I keep a pretty clean butt, Kaye.

KAYE

(shaking her head)

You're a mess. I got a two for one deal when I married you: I got a writer and a clown.

(beat)

Hurry up and eat. You've been late to work all week.

NOTHING

I'm not hungry. I mean, anyway, who needs food when I can survive on your love?

KAYE

(laughing)

Shut up. Go to work.

Nothing shoves some eggs in his mouth. He stands up and walks over to Kaye. Nothing smiles, some of the egg falls out of his mouth.

NOTHING

A kiss before I go?

KAYE

Gross!

Nothing bends over and kisses Kaye on the mouth. Just a little peck. Nothing very passionate.

EXT. BROOKLYN STREETS - MORNING

Nothing is wearing OLD JEANS, a WHITE T-SHIRT and a BLACK HOODIE. He walks slowly, meticulously, down a sidewalk in the Brooklyn neighborhood where he lives. He doesn't make eye contact with anyone who passes. He looks straight down, watching the movements of his feet.

Nothing turns a corner and walks into a little TACO SHOP. It's the kind of place with very limited seating, a true hole in the wall.

INT. TACO SHOP - MORNING

Sounds of meat sizzling on a grill. There's only three tables in the place. In one of them, A LONELY LOOKING MIDDLE-AGED WHITE GUY is waiting for his food to arrive. At another table is Razzie (pronounced rah-zee), an native of India in his late twenties or early thirties. He's eating a BREAKFAST BURRITO. He looks deep in thought and incredibly bored.

(CONTINUED)

Nothing walks up to Razzie and takes some vegetables off his plate and eats them. He hovers over Razzie, his hands in his hoodie pockets. He's trying to look menacing but doing a half-assed job of it.

RAZZIE

Sit down, man. You make me nervous.

Nothing sits down opposite Razzie.

NOTHING

What time am I coming in?

RAZZIE

You need to go now. The newsstand does half its business in the morning. But someone needs to be there to do the business, man. Where you been, man?

NOTHING

I woke up late. I'll head over soon.

RAZZIE

I really should fire you.

NOTHING

You'd be stupid not to.

RAZZIE

More porno missing when I do inventory yesterday. Man, you don't need to steal the magazines. Borrow them. Bring back when you're done. Hopefully not sticky. Well, you know...

NOTHING

(not taking Razzie's threat seriously)

Razzie, have you ever considered that you're just terrible at taking inventory?

RAZZIE

I should fire you. You are totally unreliable. That's it, final decision. You're fired.

NOTHING

Okay. Well, I guess I should head out and start looking for another job.

RAZZIE

Don't be stupid. You are the best worker I ever have. Anyway, I have a lot of eBay to work on today. Customers are bitching at about their packages being late. I need you to work open to close.

NOTHING

I'll head over now.

EXT. MAD POET'S APARTMENT - MORNING

A bottom level apartment that's in shambles. Beer bottles everywhere, used condoms, all sorts of trash on the sidewalk near the steps leading to the apartment. Someone very broke lives in this place.

Nothing knocks on the door. He waits a short beat. When nobody answers, he impatiently starts kicking maniacally at the door.

NOTHING

Open up! It's the goddamn cops! We know you've been having unnatural relations with a pelican!
(beat)
Come on, Bill, it's fucking cold out here.

Nothing kicks at the door a few more times before the Mad Poet answers.

The Mad Poet is in his late forties or early fifties. His hair is long and uncombed. If he cares about appearances, he tries damn hard to make it look like he doesn't. He's naked except for a PINK BATHROBE.

MAD POET

What's the deal, man? And at nine in the morning, too. This is no time for any civilized person to be awake, let alone functional. So what the fuck, man? You know how retarded I am this time of day.

Nothing impatiently pushes his way through the door.

INT. MAD POET'S APARTMENT - MORNING

The Mad Poet's apartment is a complete wreck. There are STACKS OF BOOKS everywhere. There are also PORNO MAGAZINES and EMPTY CIGARETTE BOXES all over the floor and couch.

Nothing pushes a few books from the Mad Poet's couch and sits down. He breathes a sigh, as if he hasn't been able to relax for days.

MAD POET
(closing the door)
Sure, take a load off. Why not.

The Mad Poet heads over to his kitchen, barely a step or two away from what passes for his living room, where Nothing is sitting. Sluggishly, the Mad Poet opens the refrigerator.

NOTHING
I always appreciate your
hospitality.

MAD POET
Sure. Take a load off. Mi casa
is...ah, fuck it, whatever. It's
too early for this nonsense. I need
a drink. You want a drink?

NOTHING
Of course. A beer.

MAD POET
(annoyed)
A beer it is. You want it in a nice
frosty mug, too?

NOTHING
Meh. A glass will be fine for now.

The Mad Poet pulls out TWO CANS OF BEER. He sets the drinks on the counter, grabs a BOTTLE OF VODKA and pours himself a shot. He tosses the shot down his throat in one expert motion. He grimaces.

MAD POET
Okay. I'm awake.

The Mad Poet walks over to the couch, clears some books off, and plops down next to his young friend. He hands Nothing a beer. Nothing pops the top and takes a long, thirsty swig. The Mad Poet rubs the sleep from his eyes.

(CONTINUED)

MAD POET (CONTINUED)

So, then, how's everything? How you been?

NOTHING

Since yesterday? Fine, I guess. Razzie accused me of stealing again. Nothing new.

MAD POET

I hate that asshole. He should be hanged like a traitorous dog.

NOTHING

Ah, he's all right. Anyway, it's an easy enough job. I can't complain too much.

(beat)

Well, I don't know, I might not be there much longer. I was thinking of skipping town for a few weeks.

MAD POET

And going where?

NOTHING

Shit, man, I don't know. Maybe Charleston?

MAD POET

Where the fuck is Charleston? Ah, fuck it, don't tell me. I know it's down south in Dixieland somewhere. Nice and sunny. Bullshit! What you need is a bleak winter. The kind we have right here in New York. You need to work on that novel of yours, my friend. Cold winters are the perfect excuse for shutting yourself indoors.

NOTHING

You're one to talk. You haven't written anything for a year.

MAD POET

Right! Last winter! Winter is when we write, man! Summer is when you go on crazy adventures!

Nothing smiles, shrugs, and takes a long gulp of beer.

(CONTINUED)

MAD POET (CONTINUED)

You little shit! I know what this is about. That woman. The one you've been e-mailing. I forgot about her.

NOTHING

It's not about any woman. I just want to get away for a while.

MAD POET

Don't lie to me, man. It's that bitch you found online. No. Bad mojo, man. If you want to cheat on your wife, there's plenty of women in New York. Well, from what I hear, anyway.

NOTHING

Yeah, sure, but Kaye lives here, too.

MAD POET

(suddenly very irritated)

That goddamn wife of yours. You two ain't got any money but somehow she still thinks you're bourgeois. She's just a freakin' bank teller! Besides, she's always trying to get you to stop hanging out with me. She's fucked up. Still, I don't think that leaving town is a good idea. Stay here, write. We can read each other's stuff. Help each other out, like we've been doing for years.

NOTHING

I'm not sure that's the best idea.

MAD POET

Well, frankly, neither am I. Hell, I don't recommend anyone listen to my drivel. I should be shot, man. I really should.

NOTHING

Maybe just punched in the face a few times.

The Mad Poet is suddenly filled with rage. He stands up and tosses his beer can across the room. It hits one of his bookshelves, creating a foaming mess.

(CONTINUED)

MAD POET

For fuck's sake, man. You don't leave town over a freaking woman. You stay and do your work. You write. You let me help you. But you don't fucking leave town.

NOTHING

Come on, man. Sit down. I'm sorry. It was just something I was thinking about.

The Mad Poet instantly calms down. It's as if nothing happened.

MAD POET

Goddamn, man. We should both be publicly executed for this nonsense. I mean, what the fuck am I doing giving advice to you? Well, shit, I'll walk you to work.

The Mad Poet starts walking toward his bedroom. Then, as if he's had a flash of insight, he turns around and starts heading back toward the kitchen.

MAD POET

But first, another drink.

NOTHING

Naturally. Or a few.

MAD POET

Of course.

EXT. BROOKLYN STREETS - DAY

The Mad Poet is still wearing his bathrobe. However, now he's also wearing ORANGE DOC MARTIN BOOTS. Though his movements are a bit arthritic, he has a hipster sway about him.

As the Mad Poet and Nothing walk down the sidewalk, we join them in the middle of a conversation:

MAD POET

But of course O'Riley just left me there with the tab. Well, anyway, later on he ended up on the roof of his apartment building, waving his wife's underwear around on a broom handle, demanding to hear the mayor's terms of surrender.

(CONTINUED)

NOTHING
I thought you did that.

MAD POET
Oh, right. Nevermind.

NOTHING
Right.

MAD POET
(sees something up ahead)
Ah shit, it's the Glitter Kid.

The Glitter Kid, a fresh-faced young man in his early twenties, is sitting on the steps leading to his apartment building. He's in a daze, staring straight ahead at a fixed point. As you might expect from his nickname, his face is covered with GLITTER. His hair is PURPLE. He's wearing PINK LIPSTICK.

The Mad Poet walks up to the kid, licks his finger, sticks it in the Glitter Kid's ear.

GLITTER KID
(slurring)
Ah. What the fuck? I mean, what the fuck, man. The Mad Poet. As I live...what the fuck?

The Mad Poet takes a seat on the steps next to the Glitter Kid. Nothing stays on the sidewalk, leans against the railing.

MAD POET
Glitter Kid, you silly little fag, what the hell did you get into last night? What kind of sorrid adventure did you have? I need details.

NOTHING
How's your sister?

GLITTER KID
Stop asking me about her, man. She's not into you anymore. She's moved on.

NOTHING
I just want to know how she's been.

GLITTER KID

We were at a party and someone brought their pet goat. It was just standing there in the middle of the room. Someone put a tiara on the fucking thing. I just want to know...who the fuck...owns a goat in Brooklyn, New York? Just...who does that?

NOTHING

Shit, man.

GLITTER KID

My sister's upstairs sleeping right now. I couldn't make it, though...just kept falling down the stairs...bump, bump bump. So I camped out here for the night. So, uh, you guys mind helping me up?

The Mad Poet stands up straight, as if he's a soldier. He salutes the sky.

MAD POET

Private Glitter Kid! It is our patriotic duty to make sure you make it safely up the stairs!

(to Nothing)

I'll get the arms, you get the legs.

NOTHING

Yup.

Nothing bends down and grabs the young man's legs.

EXT. BROOKLYN STREETS - LATER

The two friends are on the move again, walking, talking, mumbling. They approach the NEWSSTAND. A jovial MIDDLE AGED COUPLE are just leaving. They wave excitedly at Razzie, who's seen waving back at them from inside the service window.

The couple walks off just as the Mad Poet and Nothing reach the newsstand.

NOTHING

Sorry I'm late, man. Stuff came up. I tried to get here earlier.

(CONTINUED)

RAZZIE

It's no problem. I have great news!

MAD POET

You're giving my friend a raise.

Razzie glares at the Mad Poet for a beat and then turns his attention back to Nothing.

RAZZIE

Why do you bring him here? You know I don't like this crazy man.

NOTHING

What you got to tell me?

RAZZIE

We are being sold! Those people want to buy the place.

NOTHING

So I'll be working for them, now?

RAZZIE

I don't think so. They want to run it themselves.

MAD POET

(screaming)

You'd better give my fucking friend at least two weeks severance, man. I'll come bite your fucking balls off.

NOTHING

(to the Mad Poet)

Easy, man.

(to Razzie)

How long have you known about this?

RAZZIE

First time I met them was a few minutes ago. But I still need you here, man. Nothing's final yet.

NOTHING

When will you know for sure?

RAZZIE

We sign papers in a week.

(CONTINUED)

The Mad Poet lunges, reaching his arms through the service window, trying to get to Razzie so he can strangle him. Razzie steps back, against the wall where the lottery tickets hang. He's just out of reach of the Mad Poet's grip.

MAD POET

You slave-driving bastard! My friend works six days a week for your ass and when you don't need him anymore you just toss him out like a cum-soaked condom? Fuck that! Fuck you!

RAZZIE

You're crazy! And he's lazy! He never show up on time! And he steal my porno!

Nothing pulls the Mad Poet away.

NOTHING

Let's just go.

MAD POET

I'd rather kill the fucker.

NOTHING

Let's just go.

Nothing starts walking off in the other direction. The Mad Poet grabs a bunch of PORNO MAGAZINES that are hanging on a rack outside the newsstand. He does a sort of run/waddle to catch up with Nothing.

RAZZIE

Shit eating asshole! Fucking thief! Bring my stuff back! You fucking thief!

NOTHING

(to the Mad Poet)

Hard to argue with that.

By now they're almost out of earshot of Razzie's screaming.

MAD POET

I think maybe you're right. You can use a little time away from all this shit. You're young enough. You've got time to spare.

NOTHING

I think so. Yeah.

MAD POET

I figure the worst case scenario is that Kaye finally gets sick of your ass and really leaves you for good. I think she's a fucking bitch, but I have to admit, she's probably a good kid. She's not gonna put up with your shit forever.

NOTHING

I know.

MAD POET

I love you, kid.

The Mad Poet and Nothing hug.

INT. NOTHING AND KAYE'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Nothing and Kaye are standing in front of the door. He has a duffel bag around his chest. It's exactly like the opening scene.

KAYE

I wish I knew more about the woman who's taking you away from me.

NOTHING

There's nobody else.

KAYE

You don't think you've never left your computer running?

NOTHING

I guess I don't have anything to say about that.

KAYE

What about Bill? The Mad Poet...I bet he had a few things to say. I bet you talked it over with him a good long time. What did he tell you to do?

NOTHING

He said I should go.

(CONTINUED)

KAYE

He's in your head. This is Bill going on this trip, not you.

NOTHING

I need to go. Just for a while.

KAYE

He's in your head and he's not coming out. Even after he dies he'll still be there. You're an asshole.

NOTHING

You think I don't know that?

KAYE

You're coming back?

NOTHING

In a week or so. Maybe a few. I don't know.

KAYE

I might not be here when you get back.

NOTHING

I'm afraid of that.

Nothing and Kaye move a little closer to each other. Tentatively, tenderly. They embrace. Kaye hesitates but eventually embraces him back. They're both about to cry. Nothing kisses her on the neck. This is the exact moment where we left them at the beginning of the movie.

Suddenly, this whole ordeal is too much for Kaye. She pushes Nothing away, breaking their embrace. She grabs at his shirt. She's much smaller than Nothing, but he lets her push him hard against the door. He accepts his punishment stoically.

KAYE

Don't you care? He's in your head.

NOTHING

I don't care.

Kaye suddenly puts her hands around Nothing's neck, as if she's going to choke him. But she doesn't apply any pressure. She takes her hands off him, starts smacking him across the face. Hard. Four or five times. Nothing doesn't try to stop her. His cheeks are getting red.

(CONTINUED)

Kaye stops. She can't believe what she's just done. She's in shock. She runs to their bedroom and slams the door.

After a beat or two, a stunned Nothing turns around, opens the door and leaves.

We FADE OUT.