

# THE FINAL DRAFT

by

The Don

FADE THE FUCK IN:

INT. AWARD BANQUET - DAY

DAVE(50s), a middle-aged, doughy, bespectacled screenwriter stands awkwardly at a podium clutching a trophy to his chest, holding a white ceramic coffee mug in his hand. He is sweating profusely. His hair is falling out in patches.

DAVE

...and I'd like to thank all my fellow writers for their support. The only way to be a good writer is to write. I won this mug years ago and it's been my lucky charm ever since.

Hobbling off the stage, DAVE nearly collapses into his wife's arms.

DAVE

Fuck they hurt.

DAVE nods to his clunky orthopedic shoes.

DAVE

It feels like I'm walking on burning coals.

INT. DIMLY LIT STUDY - NIGHT

Stacks of manuscripts. Vintage typewriter. A martini with a helical sliver of lemon peel. Brubeck's "Take Five".

DON (50s), refined and intense, types with precision. He finishes a page, reads it aloud.

DON

"...and so the ink dried on another soul. The End."

Later that night. DON skims through his email in-box. He sees the words, "Regrettably, we are going to pass on your work..."

DON

Fuck them!

INT. COFFEE SHOP - DAY

Young, eager LENA (28) sallow complexion scribbles in a notebook. She wears an oversized sweater and has a scarf wrapped around her head like a turban. Her friend JAMAL (30s) watches skeptically.

JAMAL

You seriously entering that stupid writing contest?

LENA

It's a challenge, not a contest.  
And, it's free. And, you are nearly  
guaranteed feedback on your script.  
And, sometimes the scripts are  
picked up to be produced. And, if  
other writers like your work, maybe  
you win a cute little mug.

Beaming, LENA holds up a small, white, ceramic mug.

LENA

I already won one. I'd like to win  
another one for you, before I...

Her voice trails off.

JAMAL

You just got out of chemo, babe.  
You should be home resting.

Lena rolls her eyes and bends back to her work.

INT. DON'S STUDY - NIGHT

DON reads a screenplay. His fingers tremble.

DON

God! They write so much better than  
me. I can't compete with them.

DON turns to his computer, sighs, and begins typing, "And  
the Writers' Choice is..."

INT. FUNERAL HOME - DAY

Mourners file past a coffin where lies HARTLEY CHEF (50s).  
Beautiful and elegant even in death. A group of mourners  
huddle around CHUCK CHEF (60s), HARTLEY'S husband.

CHUCK

...yeah, and a few years ago she  
took up screenwriting. Man! She was  
good at it. Won a bunch of awards.  
Sold a bunch of scripts.

Gesturing to the small white mug in HARTLEY'S folded hands,  
his own hand trembles slightly as he gestures, CHUCK  
continues...

CHUCK (CONT'D)

That crappy mug she's holding was a  
prize from some writing contest.  
She has a ton of them. Been going  
on for the last 25 years or so. A  
lot of top names in screenwriting  
got their start there...

CHUCKS voice trails off and another overlapping voice comes in from DIANE (40s) psychotically manic, holding another small white mug.

DIANE  
 ...and it's a FREE challenge! You  
 get amazing feedback!  
 (beat)  
 That's how I met Hartley!

DIANE demurs for a moment, then continues, gesturing with the mug.

DIANE (CONT'D)  
 Though there are the occasional  
 assholes being mean to each other.  
 The guy who runs it is wonderful,  
 though. Terrible writer, but he is  
 sooo supportive of screenwriters  
 and he is always looking for the  
 best writers...

The conversation is interrupted when DIANE coughs into a blood speckled tissue.

INT. BASEMENT - NIGHT

Thick rubber boots descend wooden stairs into a dusty basement. "Take Five" plays faintly in the background. The descending figure wears a bright yellow hazmat suit. The figure passes a shelf of large, glass containers labeled "Thallium," "Lead," "Mercury," "Radium". He sounds like an asthmatic Darth Vader as he walks over to a large metal box with a dark orange HAZMAT sign that reads "RADIATION".

A thick, black, rubber-gloved hand clumsily opens the box, reaches in and pulls out a small, white ceramic mug with a blue logo.

Over on a bench are stacked small, square brown cardboard boxes. The boxes are about the size of the taxidermied cat's head that sits inexplicably on the workbench. The mug is carefully wrapped in bubble wrap, sealed in one of the boxes, and labeled for outgoing mail.

The figure holds up the prepared box and says,

"...and so the ink dries on another  
 soul."

FADE OUT:

THE END