

CAREER MOVE

Written by

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FADE IN:

INT. BAR - NIGHT

Winter wind keens past the windows, causing SHOATE BARNES, 30s, whose cap has seen better days, to look up from his beer. He sits at the bar away from RUTHIE, 60s, the owner. She watches a TV that shows a huge snow storm.

Shoate and Ruthie are the only people in this worn tavern.

SHOATE

Ruthie, how long I been comin' here?

RUTHIE

When did you turn twenty-one?

SHOATE

Seems like I've spent my whole life here.

RUTHIE

And most of your money.

The door opens and FLETCHER, 50s, enters. In fedora and topcoat, carrying a battered, leather briefcase, he looks cold. He blows into his hands as he comes to the bar.

FLETCHER

Jack, neat. Make it a double.

Ruthie waits until Fletcher pulls two twenties from his wallet and slaps them on the bar. Then, she pours.

FLETCHER

And a receipt. Green shade boys want a receipt for a pay toilet.

Ruthie delivers the drink, and Fletcher downs it in a flash.

RUTHIE

Do I know you?

FLETCHER

Long time ago maybe. Another--and a beer for my friend here.

SHOATE

Thank you. That's right neighborly.

FLETCHER
 Don't pretend you're going to
 return the favor. We both know
 you're not up to it.

SHOATE
 I don't see--

FLETCHER
 Forget it.
 (holds out hand)
 I'm Fletcher

Shoate shakes as Ruthie delivers drinks. She studies
 Fletcher.

FLETCHER
 It's cold and snowy, and I have a
 schedule, so don't give me any hey-
 neighbor-well-met crap. You're in
 trouble, and I'm here to help.

SHOATE
 I'm not in trouble.

FLETCHER
 Salote, don't try to snow me.

SHOATE
 My name's not Salote.

FLETCHER
 Like hell it's not.

SHOATE
 Ask Ruthie. She knows me.

FLETCHER
 You're not Salote Berry, son of
 Walter and Irene?

Shoate shakes his head and shows Fletcher his license.

FLETCHER
 Shit, another screw up. Excuse me
 while I ream some clerk's ass.

Fletcher pulls a cell from his pocket.

SHOATE
 What kind is that? I've never seen
 one of those.

FLETCHER

And you never will.

(on phone)

Larry, we have a problem. Pull up my schedule and tell me who I'm looking for.

(beat)

Yeah, well, I got Shoate Barnes here, not Berry.

(beat)

Are you sure? OK, download the file now or I'll come there and kick your ass.

Fletcher puts away the phone.

FLETCHER

Sorry about that. They do their best, but you know the drill. Too many clients, not enough help. Whole system needs an overhaul. But what the hell, you're not here to listen to me. I'm here to listen to you.

SHOATE

Listen to me? Why?

Fletcher looks over at Ruthie.

FLETCHER

Let's get a table.

Fletcher walks to a table where he removes hat and coat. Shoate grabs his beer and follows.

FLETCHER

(sitting)

OK, kid, I'm here to help. I'm your fairy godfather.

SHOATE

Godfather? Hell, I ain't never been baptized.

FLETCHER

FAIRY godfather as in fairy godmother. Think Cinderella.

SHOATE

Yeah, I know Cinderella.

FLETCHER

Everyone does. The publicist who penned that little gem transformed godmothers into gold, pure gold. They get accolades while godfathers wither on the vine. It's not fair, but what the hell do you expect? That Cinderella kid stole everyone's heart.

SHOATE

I've never heard of fairy godfathers.

FLETCHER

We're the best-kept secret since Tiny Tim's limp. You know, Tim wasn't really crippled. He had what is known as a beggar's limp, good for alms. But you can't blame that English guy for writing Tim up that way. Had Tim-boy really been crippled, we'd have been there in a flash. We'd be famous if we had pulled Tim's bacon out of the fire.

Shoate lights his cigarette, not buying the talk.

FLETCHER

This is the hardest part. You don't believe in godfathers. You think I'm some crazy dude without sense enough to wear gloves in a blizzard.

SHOATE

It's colder'n a bitch.

FLETCHER

You're wondering why I didn't just hover over the bar like in a Disney cartoon. Well, the brass insists we be inconspicuous. Civilian clothes, cars, driving, like ordinary folks. They don't want a repeat of that little tyke in France who spotted one of us hovering and thought it was the second coming. Sure, we could debunk that 'miracle', but that would piss off the religious folks.

SHOATE

This is getting weird.

Fletcher's phone CHIRPS and he answers.

FLETCHER
 (on phone)
 You sure? Good, thanks.

Fletcher opens his briefcase and pulls out a laptop.

FLETCHER
 Shoate, your file is up. This will
 take a sec.

SHOATE
 Those things don't work in here.
 No wi-fly or whatever.

Fletcher fires up the laptop and puts on reading glasses.

FLETCHER
 OK, now, it makes sense. Success,
 Shoate, let's get started.

Fletcher grabs one of Shoate's cigarettes and lights it.

FLETCHER
 To recap, you're overdrawn at the
 bank, behind on your rent, and not
 working. Your worker's comp has
 ended, and you've tapped all your
 friends. You owe just about
 everyone in the county. You have
 no family to fall back on. Does
 that cover the waterfront?

SHOATE
 I got a Jeep, and I start welfare
 on Monday

FLETCHER
 Welfare might keep you afloat until
 you drink yourself to death, but I
 doubt it. Your future looks bleak,
 kid, very bleak.

SHOATE
 Your point?

FLETCHER
 My point is that you qualify for a
 total makeover, our gold seal
 package. New life in a new place
 with all the trimmings, what you
 dreamed of before you quit high
 school.

SHOATE

I got a GED.

FLETCHER

You bought a piece of paper. Come on, Shoate, don't try to scam the system.

SHOATE

How do you know so much?

FLETCHER

I'm your fairy godfather. I even know about that little incident in seventh grade. Taboo fireworks in a bone dry field, right?

Shoate's face reddens.

FLETCHER

It was a long time ago, and the barn was insured. I'm offering to change your life. What do you say?

SHOATE

What, what exactly is a total makeover?

FLETCHER

That's the spirit. First, location. As I recall, you had your sights on California, Malibu?

SHOATE

I was gonna be a rock star.

FLETCHER

Of course you were. Platinum records, gigs all over the world, your own recording studio.

SHOATE

I was pretty good in high school. I could play guitar and sing.

FLETCHER

So you will again. OK, we have location and career, what about spouse? According to the file, you had the hots for Stephanie Beyer.

SHOATE

She, she went to college and
married a doctor. No way, she's
gonna change

FLETCHER

You don't get it, son. Once we ink
this deal, the past is history so
to speak. Your life gets
rewritten. You end up where you
want to be. It's that simple.

SHOATE

How are you going to do that?

FLETCHER

I'm every bit as magical as those
dogmothers, er godmothers. We lock
down the parameters, and your world
spins in a new direction. What do
you say to children?

(Fletcher holds up glass)
Ruthie, another round, please.

SHOATE

Kids?

FLETCHER

I'll give you some advice. Some
clients opt to be childless,
thinking they can pick up the
little rascals later. Generally,
they miss the boat. For a shot at
happiness, you should toss in a boy
and a girl. They round out the
picture and add value. Trust me.

Ruthie arrives with fresh drinks and gathers empties.

RUTHIE

I remember you. I was ten, maybe
eleven, and I was doing homework in
the corner. You came in and talked
to Marty McCoy, which I thought was
odd because no one ever talked to
Marty McCoy. Marty left with you,
and no one ever saw him again.

FLETCHER

You have quite a memory.

Ruthie heads back to the bar.

SHOATE

What happened to Marty McCoy?

FLETCHER

Marty wanted to fish for lobster off the Maine coast. It took some clout to get the bureau to spring for a new lobster boat, but that's how I operate. No second-hand dreams, gold seal all the way. What do you say? Ready for a makeover?

SHOATE

Hold on a minute. We're moving kinda fast. How do I know you can do what you say you can do?

FLETCHER

I liked it better when people just believed. I grant your point.

Fletcher rummages through briefcase and extracts a short, wooden stick, which he places on the table.

SHOATE

What's that?

FLETCHER

My wand. You can't expect me to work magic without a wand. Of course, I don't expect you to jump into a makeover without a test drive. No pig in a poke here.

SHOATE

A what?

Fletcher hits some keys and spins his computer.

FLETCHER

How about a brief taste of your new life? Ready?

Shoate nods. Fletcher removes his glasses and hits a key. The screen grabs Shoate's attention, drawing him in.

INT. MALIBU BEACH HOUSE - DAY

Shoate stands in a room like none he has ever experienced. As rich as a Malibu room should be. In front of him, a glass wall displays a beach and a brilliant blue sea.

A guitar leans against a leather couch; a music score sits on a table. Stunned, he looks at a wall of platinum records, Grammys, awards. Against the other wall is a fully stocked bar.

BOY & GIRL (O.S.)
DADDY, DADDY!

He turns as two children race into the room. A BOY, 10, and a GIRL, 8, They squeal and jump around him.

BOY & GIRL
Daddy, daddy, can we go to the beach? Please, daddy?

SHOATE
I...I don't know.

He hugs them.

STEPHANIE (O.S.)
I'm sorry, Shoate.

He looks up as STEPHANIE, 30s, sweeps into the room. She is the most beautiful woman he has ever seen. Shoate's mouth drops open.

STEPHANIE
I told them not to bother you. See how they listen?

She pecks his cheek.

STEPHANIE
How is the new song?

SHOATE
You...you're gorgeous.

She steps back and laughs.

STEPHANIE
You've been working too hard. Why don't you come to the beach with us?

SHOATE
Which beach?

STEPHANIE
Malibu beach, silly, the one right in front of you.

SHOATE
I...I guess maybe I can.

BOY & GIRL
Yay!

The Boy and Girl race from the room.

STEPHANIE
Thank you. The kids love it when
you're there. So do I.

She leans forward for a kiss, and Shoate closes his eyes.

INT. BAR - NIGHT

Shoate opens his eyes. Across the table, Fletcher sips whiskey and stares out the window at the snow. The computer is blank.

SHOATE
What the hell! What happened?

FLETCHER
Getting bad out there. What did
you think about the demo? The tech
boys put a lot of work into the
demos, so your candid opinion is
welcome.

SHOATE
That was a demo?

FLETCHER
Trial run but certainly a valid
rendition. Did you like it?

SHOATE
Like it? My god, would it really
be like that?

FLETCHER
Some days, but we don't warrant
that it will stay that way. I
mean, no one can write the future,
not even us. You have to look
through rain to see a rainbow,
right?

Shoate shakes his head and looks around the room. He gulps beer. He waves his empty mug at Ruthie.

SHOATE

Let me get this straight. You're sayin' I can have that life if I do this, this makeover?

FLETCHER

The deluxe, gold seal makeover includes the house, the awards, the family, the money, even a modicum of talent. But we can't guarantee that you'll never have problems. It doesn't work that way. No 'happy ever after' BS. Reality, Shoate, we grant you an altered reality but reality nonetheless.

Ruthie delivers another beer, and Shoate lights a cigarette. His fingers shake.

FLETCHER

I hate to be pushy, but time is short. My schedule isn't padded, I can tell you that.

SHOATE

You can make it like that.

FLETCHER

In the beginning. After that, it's up to you.

SHOATE

If I don't go for it?

FLETCHER

You still have this.

Shoat studies Fletcher a moment.

SHOATE

Why do you do this?

FLETCHER

Employment. The pay's not great, and the benefits won't rock your boat either, but it's honest fairy work.

SHOATE

No, I mean, if you can work magic for me, why don't you do it for yourself?

Fletcher swirls the whiskey in his glass.

FLETCHER
 Rules of employment. The wand only
 works for others.

SHOATE
 You're kidding.

FLETCHER
 Would I be here if the wand worked
 for me?

SHOATE
 What happened to Marty?

FLETCHER
 He got a new lobster boat.

SHOATE
 After that. Something happened.
 What was it?

FLETCHER
 How should I-

SHOATE
 You know. Tell me.

FLETCHER
 Marty made some bad decisions. He
 lost the boat, his business. He
 started drinking.

SHOATE
 His family?

FLETCHER
 Marty used a filleting knife on
 them right before he shot himself.

SHOATE
 Jesus.

FLETCHER
 What can I tell you? The makeover
 is a one-time thing. I'll be
 honest. Some of my clients can't
 handle the change. Jumping from
 here to a Malibu beach house might
 be too much. All I know is that
 not every candidate takes the
 offer. I wish they did, my monthly
 stats would be better and my bonus
 bigger. But some walk. Maybe they
 know they can't pull it off.

SHOATE

What did you turn down?

FLETCHER

What?

SHOATE

That's how you know all this. You were offered a makeover and turned it down, right?

FLETCHER

It doesn't matter.

SHOATE

It does to me.

Fletcher shrugs.

FLETCHER

Baseball player, all-star. Season of records, World Series MVP, Yankees. Her name was Angela, and the kids were Bonnie and Jimmy. Satisfied?

SHOATE

If you turned down the makeover, how did you become a fairy godfather?

FLETCHER

Because that's the door prize, Shoate. If you turn down the makeover, you can still play. You can have my job.

SHOATE

You're joking.

FLETCHER

Paragraph seven, sub-para three of the standard offer. You can become a fairy godfather. You can dispense makeovers, deal with headquarters, meet impossible schedules, create beautiful lives and ruin them. I have to tell you that the job isn't all it's cracked up to be. Like I said, no magic for you. Just lots and lots of travel.

Shoat shakes his head as if the beer is affecting him.

FLETCHER

I have to tell you, if you really want this job, you can have it. It's yours for as long as you want, even longer. I'll be happy to turn it over.

SHOATE

Just like that.

FLETCHER

Just like that. Oh, there's a contract to sign and a ceremony, but in essence, just like that.

SHOATE

Why would you give it up?

FLETCHER

I can't remember how many men and boys I've met during my tenure. Too many, I suppose. I don't care any more. It's time to move on. I need a change. There's a forest fairy gig I've been eyeing.

(beat)

Time flies. What is it going to be? Makeover, career move, or nothing? I'm going to the restroom, old kidneys. Be ready to decide when I come back.

Fletcher rises and heads for the restroom. Shoate lights a cigarette as Ruthie makes her way from the bar.

RUTHIE

I don't trust that one. What kind of lies is he telling you?

SHOATE

Do you think I'm a screw up?

RUTHIE

What?

SHOATE

A screw up. Do you think that's me?

RUTHIE

Shoate, everyone goes through down times. It's natural.

SHOATE
I thought so.

Fletcher returns and sits.

FLETCHER
What's it going to be?

Fletcher shuts down the computer and stashes it in his briefcase.

SHOATE
I want your job.

FLETCHER
A wise decision, Shoate. Get your coat.

SHOATE
Why? Don't you just wave the wand?

FLETCHER
The contract and ceremony are for you only. Come on, it will take maybe five minutes.

INT. FLETCHER'S CAR - CONTINUOUS

Fletcher starts the engine and turns on the heater. Next to him sits Shoate.

FLETCHER
God, I hate cold. Reminds me of Siberia.

He rummages through the briefcase and pulls out a long form.

FLETCHER
This is the contract. The usual disclaimers, the standard language. What you have to remember is that you can't work magic for yourself. The wand works only for clients.

SHOATE
Yeah, right.

FLETCHER
And the job lasts as long as you want it.

SHOATE
I can quit any time?

FLETCHER

All you have to do is find a replacement.

SHOATE

Great, where do I sign?

Fletcher hands Shoat a pen and shows him the bottom line.

FLETCHER

There is no buyer's remorse, escape clause. Once signed, you're in.

Shoat scribbles his name.

SHOATE

Whooeee, gimme the wand.

FLETCHER

It's not quite that simple. Remember the ceremony?

SHOATE

Sure, say the magic words and make me a fairy.

FLETCHER

Fairy godfather, and there are no words.

(sifts through briefcase)

Remember when you were a kid and you wanted to make someone a blood brother? What did you do?

SHOATE

Pricked our fingers.

FLETCHER

Exactly, shared blood. Well, it's that way for fairies too. You have to share blood with a fairy in order to become one.

Fletcher pulls out a sharp knife with an ornate, gold hilt.

FLETCHER

We share blood, and you start your new career.

The blade glows in the feeble light.

SHOATE

Why not?

He holds out his finger, and Fletcher chuckles.

FLETCHER

That might work for an eight year old, but fairies require a bit more commitment.

He grabs Shoat's hand, jerks it forward, and slices deeply into Shoat's wrist.

SHOATE

What the hell!

Shoate pulls back as blood spurts. He glances around, looking for something to staunch the flow.

SHOATE

Stop it! STOP IT!

FLETCHER

Hang on.

Fletcher bares his wrist. The blade flashes, and the edge doesn't bite as deep. Fletcher's wrist barely bleeds.

FLETCHER

Come on. Come on!

Fletcher jams his wrist against Shoate's. Their blood mingles. Shoate slumps against the door.

FLETCHER

A few more seconds. Hang on, Shoate, hang on.

Shoate stares at a maniacal grin in the glow of the dashboard lights.

SHOATE

Please. Please.

INT. BAR - NIGHT

Ruthie stands behind the bar. The door opens and in shuffles a shivering man, RYAN, 30s, who moves to the end of the bar. He looks as miserable as a person could be.

RYAN

Ruthie, how about a beer?

RUTHIE

(pointing)
Waiting for you.

At a stable, a Man has his back to the bar. On the table sit a fedora, a worn briefcase, and a beer. Ryan slides off the stool and goes to the table. He sits and faces...Shoate, an older Shoate.

SHOATE

Drink up, Ryan. We have a lot of ground to cover, and I don't have all day.

RYAN

(sitting)

Do I know you?

SHOATE

What matters is that I know you.

FADE OUT.