

DANG

Short Screenplay

by

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FADE IN:

MAN'S FACE - CLOSE UP

ARNIE (20s), sad eyes, totally depressed, bone-skinny, head sags. Tears trickle down his face.

INT. OLD BARN - DAY

Ratty old pickup among clutter. Arnie has a notable limp. Stands on a wobbly chair with a rope around his neck secured to a rotting 4 X 4 rafter above his head.

Chair sways, he stumbles--

Rafter snaps in two - he hits the dirt floor and rolls over. Blinks several times.

ARNIE

Dang.

EXT. OLD BARN - DAY

Wide door open. Pickup engine grinds, coughs alive on the next try. Pickup edges back out toward a 1930s style wooden framed house.

HUGE OPEN FIELD - LONG SHOT

Arnie takes off, engine sputters, coughs, tail pipe smokes badly. An official-type car stops in front of the old house in the b.g. BLUE-COLLAR WOMAN gets out.

Pins a note on the front door as the pickup rambles along toward a huge rock formation in the distance.

EXT. PICKUP - MOVING

Gains speed - BANG! - Swerves hard, comes to an abrupt stop. Arnie's head droops.

ARNIE

Dang.

Climbs out. Rear tire is flat. Doesn't notice the Blue-collar woman drive away from the old house in the b.g.

Arnie re-enters the pickup. Engine grinds, barely turns over. He heads back toward the barn as the flat tire thumps.

INT. OLD HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

Phone on the wall RINGS. BEEPS...

MAN (ON PHONE)

Arnie! You took my phone instead of yours when you left my pad last night. I'm using yours...

EXT. BUILDING CONSTRUCTION SITE - DAY

On the phone is DUFFY (30s), handsome dude, solid build, hard hat, tool belt and pouch on his waist.

DUFFY

You there, Slug? You seemed down last night to that damn book you're wasting your time on. I'll drop by later with some burritos. We can talk, okay...? See ya.

Call ends. Duffy ponders, kicks an empty beer can.

INT. OLD BARN - DAY

Arnie rummages through a footlocker: "DUFFY, P.L. - U.S.N. - 2nd Class P.O. #441-39-28." Pulls out a .45 semi-auto pistol. The pickup is close by.

Arnie puts the barrel to his temple. Closes his eyes, his hand shakes. Squeezes the trigger - NOTHING. Breathing hard, points the gun down, racks a round into the chamber--

GUN FIRES - Slug penetrates his right shoe between the two big toes - he hops about, falls on his ass.

ARNIE

Dang.

Selects a double-barrel shotgun in the locker, sits on the dirt floor against the base of the wall below a shelf full of paint cans. Cocks both barrels.

Shoeless, two toes bandaged, leans back. Inserts his good large toe inside the trigger guard, takes a long deep breath. Gun barrel slips upward--

TWO BLASTS shatter a gallon can of red paint that cascades down on his head. He spits paint.

ARNIE (CONT'D)

Dang.

He finds a grenade in the locker. His breathing's labored. Stands erect, pulls the pin and tosses it aside. Closes his eyes - the spoon flies--

Seconds pass. Nothing. Opens his eyes, sighs.

ARNIE (CONT'D)

Dang.

Stumbles among the mess, lobs the GRENADE out a window which EXPLODES (O.S.) - Knocks him on his ass.

ARNIE (CONT'D)

Dang.

INT. PICKUP

Windows are up, sealed with tape. Arnie turns the ignition key. Doesn't start, dead battery.

ARNIE

Dang.

EXT. OLD HOUSE - LATER

Duffy tools up in a late-model pickup. "McDUFFY'S ELECTRIC" is painted on the side. He piles out with a sack of burritos, and a six-pack of beer. Snatches the note left on the front door by the woman as enters.

KITCHEN

Arnie lays across two chairs with his head inside an oven. Duffy comes in, sniffs, rushes up, yanks him out of the oven and onto the floor--

Opens a window and a door. Turns the gas off. Arnie wakes up, groggy, glances around.

DUFFY

Idiot! You tried to off yourself?

Waves the note in Arnie's face.

DUFFY (CONT'D)

Reason you didn't croak is cause the gas was turned off. You didn't pay the bill again!

Arnie sulks.

LATER - AT THE TABLE

Both seated. Duffy's pissed.

DUFFY

You did all that? Jeez Arnie, you must be immortal.

ARNIE

There's something else I need tell you, Duff.

(sniffs)

I heard a message on your phone by mistake. It was Rita.

Duffy grabs his phone. Plays the message...

RITA

It's not you, Duffy. It's your gimpy brother. If we continued on, he'd drive me whacko. He belongs in a special home for--

Duffy punches the phone stop button.

DUFFY

Inconsiderate bitch! I didn't ask her to marry me!

Duffy drapes his arm around Arnie.

DUFFY (CONT'D)

You've never been a drag on me, Arnie. Don't forget that!

Arnie hugs him tight.

DUFFY (CONT'D)

Pay no attention to her, Arnie. Only thing that really irks me is that book you're writing. There must be some job you can do.

Duffy looks at the wall phone.

DUFFY (CONT'D)

There's another message.

Duffy hits the play button. BEEP...

WOMAN'S VOICE

Arnie. Maria, Cohan Publishing--

Arnie's eyes balloon--

MARIA

Our letter came back. You told me Evan Lane, not Road. I'll bring it to you after five. Thanks.

DUFFY

If it's another reject notice why hand-deliver it? Dammit Arnie, did you plagiarize some author?

ARNIE

No, I... I don't think so.

KNOCK on the front door. Arnie twitches. Duffy answers the door. The caller's young, slam-gorgeous.

MARIA

Hello. I'm Maria Cortez. Does Arnie McDuffy live here?

DUFFY

Right. I'm his brother, Duffy.

Opens the door wider. Maria enters. Duffy eyes her all the way in. She clutches an envelope.

Arnie steps up.

ARNIE

Ms. Cortez.

MARIA

Hi Arnie. Good news!

Maria hands him the envelope. Arnie all but crumbles. Duffy butts in.

DUFFY

Financial good news?

Maria nods. Arnie sits on a chair, stares at the envelope in his shaky hands. Maria, quietly to Duffy.

MARIA

Two-fifty advance for his novel.

DUFFY

(sarcastically)

Nice. That should cover half of his utility bills.

Maria's taken aback.

MARIA

You're belittling Arnie? My God,
it's a great accomplishment.

(beat)

Did you read his novel?

DUFFY

Two pages. Felt like I was drowning
in syrup.

(to Arnie)

Open it, Arnie. But don't build up
your hopes.

Arnie enters the kitchen alone (O.S.). Maria drills Duffy.

MARIA

You always so cruel to him? He
makes you out like a Saint in his
book!

She remains defiant. Duffy's puzzled.

DUFFY

What're you talking about?

MARIA

Your dad left when you were five.
And Arnie doesn't even know who his
father is. Right?

DUFFY

Yeah. Just don't knock our mother--

MARIA

You're three years older than him
when she died in a car crash in
Utah. Correct?

DUFFY

Some cow county. Word never got
out, so I kept quiet, didn't want
Arnie taken away.

MARIA

So you took your mother's place.
Supported Arnie ever since. Signed
his school report cards, and--

DUFFY

Are you married?

Maria's rattled. Brushes her hair back.

MARIA

Where were we?

DUFFY

You were wondering what to wear on our first date...

MARIA

And uh, Arnie limps cause he-he struck a log in a river and nearly drowned, but you saved him.

DUFFY

The yo-yo was screwing off.

MARIA

Still. He nearly died.

DUFFY

About our date, we can dine here. You like burritos?

MARIA

(caves)

My last name's Cortez. Does that help any? While I'm at it, do you have a first name?

DUFFY

Yeah. Percival.

Maria's shot down, hesitates.

MARIA

Duffy... Sure, that works--

Arnie bursts in from the kitchen. Hands Duffy the letter.

ARNIE

Duff. Look!

INSERT - LETTER

Payment to: Arnold Melvin McDuffy \$250,000 advance for his novel, "My Brother Duffy."

BACK TO SCENE:

DUFFY

Dang.

FADE OUT.