

Temporary Insanity

A screenplay

by

Richard Tunbridge

Copyright © 2010 by Richard Tunbridge

APOCALYPSE NOW, MARATHON MAN, THE GODFATHER, ON THE WATERFRONT. Copies of various books - LYNCH ON LYNCH, PAPILLION, SCORSESE ON SCORSESE. Biographies of Marlon Brandon, Robert De Niro and Al Pacino. Scattered around there are used tissues, a dirty ashtray, empty liquor bottles, beer cans and packets of potato crisps.

ROBERT STAMEN is slouched on an old couch. TV remote in one hand, cigarette in the other. He wears only his underpants and stares at the flickering monitor - a scene from BULLITT is playing - the "Steve McQueen's Commitment To Reality" feature from the DVD.

ROBERT is either concentrating intensely, or in a blind stupor.

There is a knock at the front door. ROBERT looks across to it, but doesn't move to open it. He waits for whoever is there to knock again.

EXT. HOUSE

Door swings open. ROBERT squints into the harsh afternoon light, eventually fixing his gaze on MACI VELLIAN, a hard-nosed bitch on heels

ROBERT

Hey. Mace. Wasn't expecting you. In person. How we looking?

ROBERT walks back into the darkness as he completes his question. MACI waits for a moment, and then follows him into the house. It takes a moment or so to adjust to the light.

MACI

(looking around the living room)

How are you, specifically, looking? Or *us* collectively, in terms of your career?

(she takes in the shambolic interior)

Hey. I like what you done with the place. Early nothing, isn't it?

ROBERT

My last place was a sewer.

MACI

I know. And now you're living in a swamp. You're coming up in the world.

ROBERT

Coming up. Coming back. (beat) So, what've you got?

MACI

Nothing, yet. But I'm worried about what I might catch off the sofa.

ROBERT

Nothing you couldn't get from me.

MACI

That's what I'm worried about. (beat) Look, it's the same deal. Everyone's heard about it. Everyone wants it. Nobody's seen it. Until now. (she throws a script onto the coffee table) You're going to audition, like everyone else. Six-seven weeks. Maybe eight.

ROBERT

A Bit longer would've been a bit better.

MACI

Said the bit-part actress to the bishop. (beat) Bob, you're in no position- You're lucky I even-

ROBERT

Yeah, yeah, yeah. I know. I gotta get started on this.

MACI

Why don't I just get you in as an outpatient? I could hook you up with an orderly for a few weeks. Or, hey, here's a novel idea, why don't you just try acting - talk low, talk slow and don't talk too much.

ROBERT

Because then I'll just be an actor, researching. They'll treat me differently. I'll react differently. The People will see through it. Well, not anymore. No acting. Just becoming.

MACI

So what do you want?

ROBERT

I want to be pinned on the wall of the public imagination.

MACI

That's great. I'll alert the media. But I mean now. What do you want from me.

ROBERT

From you? Nothing. Just keep all this to yourself. I'll do the rest. I have to become. Think. Live. Become. No more acting. Just reacting.

MACI

There's more money in acting.

ROBERT

The lure of the zeros holds no interest for me, anymore, Mace. You know that.

MACI

I know zeros is all you have in the bank these days. I know people like me don't come for free. And I know you're not the man I knew ten years ago.

ROBERT

It's not the years, honey...

ROBERT & MACI

It's the mileage.

MACI

Yeah, yeah. I know. There was a time when you'd do anything for a little extra pocket money.

ROBERT

I even married my agent.

MACI

(tired)

That one just keeps getting better. Every time you uncork it. (pause) Bob?

ROBERT

Uh-huh.

MACI

You don't really believe all that shit about starving in a garret, or being satisfied with artistic appreciation, do you?

ROBERT

I do today.

MACI

What about tomorrow? Next week? Week after? You go through with this, you may burn every bridge you never had.

ROBERT

Mace, there are opportunities in life for gaining knowledge and experience. Sometimes you gotta take a risk. Discover the truth.

MACI

What does the truth have do with anything?

ROBERT

That's what film is. The truth. 24 times a second.

MACI

Oh really? That's what it is, now, is it? Seems like only yesterday it was "all acting is lying, and what is good acting but convincing lying." (beat) Why not just go on faking the truth? You were really onto something there.

ROBERT

The audiences aren't sheep anymore.

MACI

I know. They're snails, with Down Syndrome.

ROBERT

They're not, Mace. And that's the problem. What's wrong with actors today. What's wrong with film. Everyone thinks that way, because 90% of films are made by MTV graduates. People whom only work for 30 seconds at a time. I want to be "on" 24-7. Be the ball. Become the ball. Real.

MACI

But you have to be a little unreal to survive in this business. Unreality *is* the ball.

ROBERT

Not any more. (beat) And that's the other thing. Film *business*. It used to be an *industry*. Now it's a business. Well, I love film, but the business is shit.

MACI

There are a lot of people out there who think the whole Method thing is shit too.

ROBERT

I'm not talking about The Method. I'm going beyond the fucking Method. I'm talking visions before midnight and dreams out of the ivory gate. Method actors give you a photograph. I'm gonna give you a fucking oil painting. I'm dispensing with all that sanctioned vanity crap. I'm tired of the fucking pedestal. The barrage of indulgence. Why just act it out, get paid and go home? Live it! Get locked up! Go to prison! I want the whole battlefield. The love. The hate. The action. Insanity-

MACI

Death.

ROBERT

Death- (thinks about what he has just said) Well, no. Not death. But I want to get as close to it as I can. (beat) Now, there's an event picture, huh? No. A film must be alive. Smashing, devouring, pulverizing everything before it. Synopsis? Plot? Story? It speaks, talks and explains itself. It changes itself. The characters weave in and out of the screen. Take it to a level where it's almost a different film at each screening.

MACI

Okay, Bob. I get it. The pursuit of excellence. Nice one. Listen I've-

ROBERT

Excellence? I'm not looking for excellence. I want to create a myth. Think about Elvis, Mace. Elvis. Bloated, over the hill, adolescent entertainer suddenly draws thousands of people to Las fucking Vegas. That had nothing to do with excellence. It was myth.

MACI

It was the 70s.

ROBERT

They'd still be there today, if he was.

MACI

They are still there. That's the problem with Vegas. (beat)
Whatever. Look, I really -

ROBERT

Maci. Every actor spends their life looking for a part that will combine their talent with their personality. This movie is mine. It's the plutonium I need. I'm excited about it. You know what I'm like.

MACI

Only too well.

ROBERT

When I get excited about something, I give it everything I've got.

MACI

I know. I also know what happens when you get bored. Plutonium can be a little unstable.

ROBERT

Remember what Nietzsche said. Live dangerously.

MACI

I thought that was James Dean... live fast, die young and leave a good-looking corpse.

ROBERT

Actually, James Dean stole it from John Derek.

MACI

As in Bo?

ROBERT

No. John Derek. Nick "Pretty Boy" Romano. **KNOCK ON ANY DOOR**, I think it was. And it's live fast, die young and *have* a good-looking corpse.

MACI

Bob, I really don't give-

ROBERT

And whatever the fuck it was, he stole it from Nietzsche.

MACI

You know what happened to all three of them...

ROBERT

What?

MACI

Same thing as that myth of yours. They fucking died. (beat) Why can't you just run off to Atlantic City for ten days... have a lost weekend. But don't go and get yourself institutionalized just so you can find out what it's like to be nuts. That's fucking-

ROBERT

Insane?

MACI

Exactly. (beat) No. That's fucking-

ROBERT

Crazy?

MACI

No. It's fucking *stupid*. (beat) Look, I'm glad you're passionate about it. Really. I'm just not sure it's going to work out the way you think it will.

ROBERT

This is Hollywood, Mace. Miracles happen every day.

MACI

This is LA. And it's the City of Dreams. There's a difference. Dreams are just that. Dreams are a two shots shy of a nightmare. Everyone has dreams. Miracles, on the other hand, have been few and far between since the 13th century.

ROBERT

If I were as cynical as you, Mace, I'd hang myself.

MACI

I'd help you, except I'd be too cynical to trust the rope. (beat) Just be careful you don't hang yourself out to dry.

ROBERT

Hey. It's me. (beat) Or... is it?

MACI looks deep into ROBERT for a while. MACI turns and leaves. She opens the door and walks out into the hard afternoon sun.

BURN TO WHITE

FADE IN

INT. LIVING ROOM

ROBERT is still standing in the living room, looking at the open door. A FIGURE appears. Backlit. We cannot see his face or features. Just a silhouette, resting against the doorframe.

FIGURE

Put some pants on.

ROBERT

Shut the fucking door. And I don't give a shit what side of it you're on, just so long as it closes.

FIGURE

Fine thanks. And you?

The FIGURE steps forward, and closes the door behind him. It is OLIVER WOODS - good looking thirty-something, dressed in jeans and a t-shirt.

ROBERT falls back onto the couch. Lights a cigarette. Stares at the coffee table.

OLIVER

So this is what tortured artists looks like. (beat) Or did that princess of darkness I passed in the driveway grind one of her heels through your testicles? I didn't think women like that got out of bed before sunset.

ROBERT

Maci. My ex- (he draws on his cigarette, exhaling slowly) My agent. I told you about her. You should've got here earlier. You could've met her. Maybe she'll rep you.

OLIVER

I did. She might. She doesn't say much, but she shakes hands like she's got one almighty set of cajones.

ROBERT

She's quiet but step out of line, and she'll kick your teeth down your throat.

OLIVER

Is that the voice of experience?

ROBERT

(ignoring him)

She's as shifty as smoke. But we love her.

OLIVER

You think she might take me on?

ROBERT

If she can see a buck in you. Acting is just hustling to her. Some people hustle money, some power. She doesn't put it down, but she resents people putting it up. Know what I mean?

OLIVER

Hardly ever. No.

ROBERT

She's an agent. And an agent, with the best intentions, can put you in the shithouse just as fast as someone who wants to ruin you. Jimmy Caan told me that.

OLIVER walks through the living room, toward the kitchen.

OLIVER

You want anything? I'm going to make some coffee.

ROBERT

Grab us a beer.

OLIVER

Is Anther back?

ROBERT

Does it look like she's back?

OLIVER

(off)

I don't know man. Jesus Christ. She could be trapped under all this shit in here.

CUT TO

KITCHEN

The kitchen is indeed littered with trash. The washing up hasn't been done for at least a week. There are glasses, cups, plates, empty bottles of beer and spirits. OLIVER finds the electric kettle. Shakes it. There's hardly any water in it. He takes off the lid. Walks to the tap. And begins filling it with water. He continues looking around the kitchen. As the kettle gets heavier, he turns the tap off and goes to put the lid on. But stops. And stares into the kettle, at something.

CUT TO

LIVING ROOM

OLIVER

(off)

What happened to Arnie?

ROBERT

I knocked the bowl off the table.

OLIVER appears in kitchen doorway. In one hand he holds up the kettle. In the other, a goldfish.

OLIVER

And what about Sly?

ROBERT

He's not in there with him? Oh crap. Check one of the coffee cups. I may have screwed up. Anther's gonna go thermal. She loves those little guys.

OLIVER disappears momentarily and returns with a beer. He gives it to ROBERT and, after eyeing the chair opposite with suspicion, sits down.

OLIVER

Come on. Down that. Put some pants on and let's- (he spots the script on the coffee table) Hey, what's this?

OLIVER picks it up. There is a brief flicker of life in his eyes, but he checks himself and pretends not to be too concerned with anything.

ROBERT

(after drinking from the can)

It's nothing, man.

OLIVER

(reading)

Other Side Of The Wind. What's it about? (flicking through pages) You got a part?

ROBERT

Maybe. (beat) No. Not really. It's, um, reference.

OLIVER

(scanning pages)

What's it about? Boy meets girl... Girl gets raped... Girl watches parents get murdered and goes mad... Boy loses girl. Boy-

ROBERT

(making something up)

It's, err, a movie about making a movie within which there is a movie and, err, within that movie, the film-maker makes a movie.

OLIVER

Oh. Thanks. It's all so clear to me now. What's the fucking story?

ROBERT downs the last of the beer. Crushes the can. Chucks it on the table. Stands up. Grabs the script from OLIVER and chucks it through a bedroom door.

OLIVER

No story. Just characters. Stories bore people.

ROBERT picks a shirt up off the floor. Puts it on and walks toward front door.

ROBERT

Come on. Let's bounce. You want some coffee or not? We'll head up to Malibu.

ROBERT opens door and stands there, backlit. In silhouette, he looks exactly like OLIVER did when he his arrived.

OLIVER stands up. Looks at ROBERT.

OLIVER
Bob?

ROBERT
Come on, man.

OLIVER
Put some fuckin' pants on.

BURN TO WHITE

FADE IN SUPER:

you can't go for an ice cream without running into three editors, four producers, two writers and six agents - all talking about their 'properties'

- roy scheider

CUT TO

EXT. BEACH

ROBERT and OLIVER walk onto the beach. ROBERT is eating an ice cream. They walk past a MAGICIAN, performing a trick.

OLIVER
Check this out.

ROBERT
Only thing worse than a fucking mime is a fucking magician.

MAGICIAN
Illusionist.

OLIVER
What?

MAGICIAN
I'm an illusionist. Not a fucking magician.

ROBERT
Disa-fucking-pear then.

CUT TO

EXT. BEACH

A GROUP of industry types – producers (STEVE & ZACK), director (TREY), wannabe actress (JESSICA), etc. - are lounging about on the sand in front of a beachfront house. Some clutch mobile phones, most are smoking and talking about their latest adventures in the screen trade. Wannabe actress, JESSICA, notices ROBERT in the distance.

JESSICA
(to everyone and no one)
That's Bob Stamen.

STEVE
Didn't know you were an F.O.B?

JESSICA
F.O.B.?

STEVE
Friend Of Bob.

JESSICA
He, like, guested at our class a couple of times. I read with him. He was kind of cool.

TREY
Was is right. Hasn't done much lately.

JESSICA
I did a couple of things with his girlfriend-

ZACK
You and me both.

JESSICA
(shooting ZACK a look)
You wish. (beat) Photo shoots, a couple of walk-ons, auditions... What's her name? Anthea?

STEVE
Anther.

JESSICA
Yeah, Anther. I knew it was something like that.

TREY
(to JESSICA)
Oh, well, you're practically related then. Couple of walk-ons there... (he indicates ROBERT and OLIVER) couple of hard-ons here.

JESSICA
(standing up)
Suck *my* fat one, you cheap dime-store hood.

TREY and Steve both laugh. JESSICA skips the short distance across the sand to ROBERT and OLIVER.

CUT TO

EXT. BEACH

ROBERT sees the JESSICA moving toward him across the sand.

ROBERT
(to OLIVER)

Look at that. How she moves. Jell-O on springs. She must have some sort of built-in motors. I tell you, man, it's a whole different sex.

JESSICA smiles, calls out as she approaches.

JESSICA

Hey, Bob? Bob Stamen? I thought it was you. How *are* you?

JESSICA is upon them, walking beside them. ROBERT is aware of her presence but is continuing his conversation with OLIVER, as if she is not there. OLIVER cannot take his eyes off her.

JESSICA

Jessica Carmody. I took one of your classes at UCLA-

ROBERT

(to OLIVER)

Curved in the flesh of temptation. Resistance is going to a darn sight harder for her than for females protected by the shape of sows.

JESSICA

Err. Thanks. Anyway, I just wanted to say it was really great. I got a lot out of it. (pause) Hey, I'm over here with Steve McGuire and Zack...

ROBERT stops, licks his ice cream a few times while looking at JESSICA, and then takes a step toward the group. JESSICA and OLIVER follow. JESSICA looks across to OLIVER, who is still enchanted by her and introduces herself.

JESSICA

Hi. I'm Jessica. Jess. I did a couple of scenes with Bob last year. In a class. You know? Not in a movie or anything. I wish. You know?

OLIVER

Oliver...

JESSICA

And I know Anther. His girlfriend. (beat) Nice to meet you. What're you doing?

OLIVER

I was, err, just at Bob's house. And he wanted to come down here and, err, well, just hang out, I guess.

JESSICA

No. I mean, what you doing here? In L.A. Are you like, working or just visiting or-

OLIVER

Oh. Sorry. I'm, err, both really. Got here a couple of weeks ago. Looking for work. Thinking about doing some acting, or modeling or something, you know.

JESSICA
(not sure if he is joking or naive)
Well, I guess you're in the right place for that.

ROBERT
(interrupting)
Or, to look at it another way, not in the right place.

They arrive at the GROUP, half of which are talking hands-free on their mobile phones. It looks like they're talking to each other, but in a series of non-sequiturs.

JESSICA attempts to make introductions.

JESSICA
You guys know each other, yeah? Bob, I mean, Robert.
And this is his friend... err...

She's forgotten OLIVER'S name. It doesn't really matter because no one is really listening. They're too busy talking shop on their phones. And give perfunctory waves to ROBERT and OLIVER.

OLIVER
Oliver. Hi. How you doing?

JESSICA sits on her towel, reaches into her bag and pulls a packet of American Spirit cigarettes.

JESSICA
(to ROBERT and OLIVER)
Sit down you guys. Smoke?

ROBERT
(to OLIVER)
Would you like another cigarette?
(to JESSICA – reciting Kathy Kirby/ Serge Gainsbourg song)
You know, when I look at you, all of a sudden my heart
sings and I remember... little things. Your voice, over the
telephone, the little laugh that's all your own. The way your
smile lights up your eyes. The way you look up, in surprise.
(to TREY)
The magic thrill that's in your touch, oh darling, I love you
so much. The funny way you hold your head, the crazy
things you've often said. The way your hair won't stay in
place. The wind and rain upon your face.
(to JESSICA, accepting a cigarette)
The way you hold my hand, that shows. The way you
wrinkle up your nose. Remembering all those little things,
all of a sudden my heart sings...

JESSICA furrows her brow, not sure what to make of ROBERT'S behavior. She lies on her towel, offers OLIVER a cigarette. He hesitates, looks to ROBERT who has turned his back on them and is staring out to sea.

ROBERT is no longer eating his ice cream. Instead, he just holds it before him while it melts all over his right hand.