

Home Movie

By

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FADE IN:

EXT. FRONT YARD OF SUBURBAN HOUSE - DAY

Through the lens of an old video camera, DOUG MICKELSON, a doughy 14 year-old in a hand-me-down tux stands next to his slick brother, WADE, a 15 year-old in a black turtleneck and tinted glasses.

                  YOUNG WADE  
                  (into camera)  
Ladies and gentlemen, you're about  
to witness a cerebral and highly  
visual spy thriller...

                  YOUNG DOUG  
                  (into camera)  
...directed by the next Brian De  
Palma, my brother, Wade Mickelson.

                  YOUNG WADE  
                  (into camera)  
I promise plenty of tasteful yet  
erotic love scenes between Doug  
here and our lead actress, the  
tasty Bess Ackerman.

Chants of "Douglas!" and "Yeah!" from behind the camera.

                  YOUNG DOUG  
What?

                  YOUNG WADE  
                  (enjoying seeing his brother  
                  squirm)  
You said, "Make sure you put in a  
kissing scene. I've liked Bess...

                  YOUNG DOUG  
                  (growing flustered)  
I'm sure I meant that a kiss would  
probably fulfill audience  
expectations for a film in the spy  
genre.

Wade laughs. Doug reaches for the camera, turns it off.

INT. MICKELSON FAMILY LIVING ROOM - DAY

Doug and BESS ACKERMAN, 14, a petite girl in a sequined dress, recline by a blazing fireplace dangerously overstuffed with logs. A bottle of wine, wine glasses nearby.

COLIN BANKS, 14, crouches on the floor holding a device wired to a small bag of powder. He wears tinted glasses.

YOUNG DOUG  
(in terrible British accent)  
Isn't this more pleasant than being  
enemies?

YOUNG BESS  
(pulling out a gun)  
Mr. Hamish, I still have to kill  
you.

YOUNG DOUG  
Can't that wait until morning?

Doug grabs her. She drops the gun.

YOUNG WADE (OS)  
Good, good. Doug, get in there for  
the kiss.

YOUNG BESS  
(breaking character)  
A kiss wasn't in the script.

YOUNG WADE (OS)  
The script is a living organism out  
of my control. If the story calls  
for a kiss, I answer. This is art.

YOUNG BESS  
Umm...I have a boyfriend.

YOUNG DOUG  
(shocked, heartbroken)  
You and Fred a couple now?

Bess nods.

YOUNG DOUG  
You don't have to kiss me.

YOUNG BESS  
No, I don't mind...

YOUNG DOUG

Really?

YOUNG BESS

...it's just...Fred...

COLIN

Come on! Just kiss and wrestle for the gun. I wanna blow something up!

YOUNG WADE (OS)

Relax, Colin.

(to Bess and Doug)

You're lonely assassins in the middle of Berlin. It'd be unrealistic if you didn't kiss. Plus, I promise to shoot it artfully.

YOUNG BESS

Oh...alright.

Doug tries in vain to hide his excitement.

A MOMENT LATER

Doug and Bess sip wine. Sparks of attraction.

YOUNG WADE (OS)

Go Doug!

MR. MICKELSON, a red-faced 45 year-old, enters with his frazzled wife, MRS. MICKELSON, 44. She carries a bowl of snacks.

Wade swings the camera in their direction revealing JARVIS REYNOLDS, 15, a chubby African American in a silver jacket and pants. He waits for his scene, reading a magazine on the couch.

YOUNG WADE (OS)

This is a closed set!

MRS. MICKELSON

Sorry. I brought Combos.

MR. MICKELSON

Hey, that's a real bottle of wine!

YOUNG WADE (OS)

Of course. Authenticity is my trademark.

MR. MICKELSON  
Half the bottle's gone!

YOUNG WADE (OS)  
Doug goes method sometimes, pop.

MR. MICKELSON  
What?

YOUNG WADE (OS)  
You think Coppola minded Martin  
Sheen getting high for that opening  
scene in "Apocalypse Now?"

MRS. MICKELSON  
Have you been doing drugs?

A MOMENT LATER

The parents have left with the wine bottle.

YOUNG WADE (OS)  
Action!

Doug goes in for the kiss. The family dog runs into the  
room, interrupting.

YOUNG DOUG  
Mom, can you put Steve outside?

YOUNG BESS  
You named the dog Steve?

A MOMENT LATER

Again, Doug goes in for the kiss. Right before he makes  
contact, a banging at the door. Bess's boyfriend, FRED  
WELLS, a hulking 15 year-old, storms in.

FRED  
Hey Dougy, what's going on?

Doug bolts away from Bess.

WADE (OS)  
We're creating art. Do ya mind?

FRED  
I mind your brother trying to nose  
in on my girl by making a sleazy  
James Bond ripoff.

WADE (OS)  
A homage really.

BESS  
Fred, nothing happened.

FRED  
Time to go, Bess. My game starts in  
an hour.

Fred walks over to Bess, catches wind of the alcohol. He waves his hand in front of his face.

FRED  
Trying to get my girlfriend drunk?

YOUNG DOUG  
No! It was for realism!

FRED  
Doug E. Fresh, I thought we were buddies. Buddies don't screw each other.

WADE (OS)  
You know, Fred, we're still looking to cast a mindless henchman part.

FRED  
Wade, you're a dick. Doug, watch it.

Fred pulls Bess away. She looks back apologetically at Doug. A beat.

Doug bangs his fist on the wall, causing a few of the flaming logs to roll out of the fireplace. Doug screams. Then Colin ignites his explosion.

COLIN  
Fire in the hole!

A loud boom. A huge cloud of smoke fills the room.

WADE (OS)  
I guess that's a wrap.

10 YEARS LATER

INT. YMCA GYMNASIUM - MONDAY - AFTERNOON

Two 11 year-olds, MOLLY, theatrical, pretty, and LANCE, stone-faced, grumpy, improvise a scene in an after-school acting class led by a 24 year-old Doug. Other kids watch.

MOLLY  
This marriage is done.

LANCE  
No, I love you.

MOLLY  
Tonight I'm leaving for Prague with  
the district attorney.

LANCE  
Oh, didn't you hear, the DA died in  
an accidental car explosion today.

MOLLY  
How could you!

LANCE  
Love makes you do crazy things.

Doug stands up.

DOUG  
Let's hear it for Molly and Lance.

The kids clap.

DOUG  
Great emotion and commitment to  
character. How'd that feel?

MOLLY  
Organic.

LANCE  
I wanted to kiss her.

DOUG  
I don't know if the scene called  
for that, Lance.

LANCE  
Maybe we can practice for homework.

MOLLY

Gross.

DOUG

Tomorrow we'll do some more  
improvising, only we'll work more  
on subtext, which is our unspoken  
thoughts and feelings.

The kids leave, say goodbye to Doug.

Once alone, he checks his phone. A text message. "Happy  
Birthday! Come by the studio. I have something for you."  
Doug's eyes light up.

INT. YOGA STUDIO - A LITTLE LATER

Bess, now 24, dark-haired with big eyes, teaches a yoga  
class to a dozen or so people.

INT. YOGA STUDIO - FRONT OF STUDIO

Doug enters the small storefront. He steps to the door  
leading into the studio, peeks inside.

Bess leans to one side, hands clasped above her head. Doug  
stares with growing intensity. A beat.

Bess notices and blushes. Doug turns away and finds himself  
face-to-face with Fred, now 25 and rugged. He looks deadly  
serious.

FRED

Nice scenery?

DOUG

Uh...

FRED

I say, like what you see?

A beat. Fred breaks into a guffaw.

FRED

Just horsing around, Dougy!

Fred play jabs Doug, then puts him in a headlock.

FRED

(turning serious again)  
But really, stay away from Bess.

DOUG

I...

FRED

(laughing, releasing him)

Oh man! Just jokin'!

Doug straightens himself up.

FRED

Hey, how're things at daycare?

DOUG

It's an after-school drama program.

FRED

Oh right. My mistake.

DOUG

Good. The Y lets me teach what I want and the kids seem to have fun.

FRED

It's cool you keeping an eye on bored, latchkey kids.

DOUG

I don't think they come out of boredom.

FRED

Sure. I should send over my nephew, Hal. He loves charades.

DOUG

We do acting exercises.

FRED

No, I understand.

The yoga class lets out. People file past. Bess steps in between Doug and Fred.

BESS

Hi Doug!

She squeezes his arm.

BESS

(to Fred)

Hey.

Fred and Bess hug. He eyes Doug the whole time. A beat.

BESS  
(to Doug)  
Oh yeah, your gift.

FRED  
What?

BESS  
It's Doug's birthday.

Fred forces a smile. She hands Doug two presents, one big, one small. He opens the big one. It's a fake Academy Award.

BESS  
Until you win the real one...

DOUG  
Not sure how likely that is since I  
work at the Y.

FRED  
I thought it was daycare.

BESS  
Come on, Fred.

FRED  
Just busting his chops.

BESS  
Well, I believe in you.

DOUG  
(bowing theatrically)  
I thank you and the academy.

He opens the small gift. It's homemade soap.

DOUG  
You made this?

BESS  
Yep. Ackerman's Soaps is now taking  
orders!

DOUG  
That's great, Bess. I'm proud of  
you.

FRED  
Yeah, I'm very, very proud.

BESS  
Fred is gonna help me with the  
website.

DOUG  
Uh...great.

BESS  
Well, any plans for the birthday  
boy?

DOUG  
Dinner with the parents.

BESS  
(laughing)  
Sounds like...not a lot of fun.

DOUG  
Wanna come...the two of you?

FRED  
We have plans.

BESS  
No we don't.

Fred scratches his head, then rips two tickets from his  
pocket.

FRED  
Oh, didn't I tell you? Tonight,  
we're going to Wicked! Downtown  
Chicago!

Bess wraps her arms around Fred.

BESS  
I've been wanting to see it for  
years!

FRED  
Pretty thoughtful, eh Doug E.  
Fresh?

DOUG  
Yeah.

BESS  
Sorry, Doug. I'll take a rain  
check. Been a while since I've  
experienced a Mickelson family  
dinner. Say hi to your sister for  
me.

He nods.

BESS  
Call me tomorrow.

FRED  
Why?

BESS  
So I can tell him what an amazingly romantic and intimate date you took me on.

DOUG  
Have fun tonight.

FRED  
Rest easy, Dougy. We will.

INT. MICKELSON FAMILY DINING ROOM - NIGHT

Wade, now 25, and ANDROMEDA, his 22 year-old sister who looks like she never sleeps, Doug, and the Mickelsons sit around the table. Everyone's head is bowed except Wade's. He snacks during the prayer. His crunching annoys his dad.

MR. MICKELSON  
Lord, we thank you for granting Doug 24 years of life. We thank you for showing him mercy during that time despite his not finishing college. And we pray for Wade, that he would find the truth mapped out in the New Testament, and for Yvonne...I mean, Andromeda, that she would find a job that gives her fulfillment and sustainability. We thank you for this delicious, meat-based meal. In your name, amen.

ANDROMEDA  
I have a job that gives me fulfillment. It's called art.

WADE  
I thought you worked at Panera Bread.

ANDROMEDA  
Fuck you, Wade.

MR. MICKELSON  
You will not use that language  
under my roof!

ANDROMEDA  
Whatever the "man of the house"  
says.

MR. MICKELSON  
You bet I'm the man of the house!

ANDROMEDA  
(to Wade)  
Wade, if you want to see me at my  
real job, maybe you should finally  
come to a performance!

MRS. MICKELSON  
Well! It's so nice to have all of  
us together for Doug's special day.  
Let's dig in. There are twice-baked  
potatoes--

ANDROMEDA  
Harvested by underpaid immigrants.

MRS. MICKELSON  
Salad--

ANDROMEDA  
Made with non-organic lettuce.

MRS. MICKELSON  
Homemade crescent rolls--

ANDROMEDA  
Made from non-cage-free eggs.

MRS. MICKELSON  
And roast beef--

ANDROMEDA  
Which was murdered.

Mr. Mickelson throws down his napkin.

MR. MICKELSON  
Enough! I don't hear you  
complaining about living here  
rent-free.

ANDROMEDA

As if you didn't achieve success by standing on the backs of minorities and the poor...

MRS. MICKELSON

Help yourself everyone!

A long beat.

WADE

I'd like to make a toast.

MRS. MICKELSON

Wonderful idea!

WADE

Hey pop, got anything stronger than Coke?

MR. MICKELSON

We don't stock poison!

WADE

I guess this'll have to do. (he stands, raises glass) To Doug, a guy who immerses himself in every role -- actor, teacher, friend, brother. I hope 25 brings you laughter, professional success, and lots of hot, willing women.

A knock at the door.

MRS. MICKELSON

(to Doug)

Did you invite the guys?

Doug shakes his head, gets up and opens the door. It's Bess. Doug beams. Mrs. Mickelson shows excitement too.

MRS. MICKELSON

Oh, Bess! Let me set you a place! We're having roast beef. You're not still a vegetarian are you?

MR. MICKELSON

(under his breath)

What's wrong with meat!

BESS

Thanks, Mrs. M. I can't stay long. Fred and I are about to catch a show.

MRS. MICKELSON  
(taken aback)  
Oh. You and Fred are back together?

BESS  
Yeah.

WADE  
No offense, but why do you date  
apes?

BESS  
I'll ignore that, Wade. I wanted to  
tell Doug -- and all of you -- that  
we're engaged.

WADE  
WHAT??

ANDROMEDA  
Though I think marriage is a  
patriarchal, oppressive  
institution, congrats, Bess.

MR. MICKELSON  
I think Fred is a fine young man.  
He's a commodities trader and  
believes in reducing the size of  
government.

ANDROMEDA  
Yeah, let's keep on denying health  
care to those who need it.

A car horn interrupts Mr. Mickelson's response.

BESS  
Gotta go.

Doug steps onto the porch with her.

BESS  
Your family is still as...uh,  
quirky as ever.

DOUG  
Yeah.

BESS  
I feel like we have the same father  
-- only mine's Jewish

Doug smiles. A beat. Bess studies Doug.

BESS

Okay?

DOUG

I'm fine. A little sad though that a certain yoga instructor/soapmaker bachelorette is off the market...

BESS

(laughing)

Talk to you tomorrow?

DOUG

Only if the groom allows it.

Bess grins, jogs to the car. Doug comes back inside, plops down into his chair. A beat of silence.

MRS. MICKELSON

I'm so sorry, Doug.

WADE

Doug, they always break up.

DOUG

But they've never been engaged.

MR. MICKELSON

What's the problem? Fred is a decent, productive American.

A beat.

ANDROMEDA

I'd like to give Doug my gift now.  
Be right back.

She exits and returns quickly with a keyboard. She places it on the dining room table.

ANDROMEDA

Hope this makes you feel better. I call this the "Death and Rebirth-day Cycle #1" and I wrote it for you, Doug.

She sits at the keyboard. Several beats pass. She doesn't play anything.

MRS. MICKELSON

Go ahead, honey.

ANDROMEDA  
Shhh! You're interrupting.

MRS. MICKELSON  
What?

ANDROMEDA  
Be quiet! It's almost finished.  
(pauses) There, happy birthday.

DOUG  
Uh, thanks.

ANDROMEDA  
The music was our energy within  
those moments.

WADE  
Why'd you need your keyboard?

ANDROMEDA  
You wouldn't understand.

MRS. MICKELSON  
Since your keyboard is out, how  
about we sing "Happy Birthday?"  
Andromeda, can you give us a note?

She strikes a dark, foreboding chord.

MRS. MICKELSON  
How about something a little  
brighter?

INT. WADE'S CAR - LATER THAT NIGHT

The brothers drive with Jarvis, now 25, a bearded, heavy  
African American, and Colin, 26, a pointy-faced white man.

WADE  
Gentlemen, what do you say we help  
Doug forget about Bess for a night?

JARVIS & COLIN  
(drumming the seats)  
Fuck Bess! Fuck Bess! Fuck Bess!

DOUG  
Hey! Come on! That's my...

JARVIS  
Your what? Girlfriend?

DOUG  
No.

JARVIS  
Exactly.

JARVIS & COLIN  
Fuck Bess! Fuck Bess! Fuck Bess!

DOUG  
Do you have to use the F word?

COLIN  
(seeing a hot woman on the  
sidewalk)  
Whoa! Check her out!

JARVIS  
What? See a chick in military  
fatigues?

COLIN  
Like you have good taste.

JARVIS  
This coming from a guy who last  
dated a Hobbit.

COLIN  
She did renaissance fairs!

WADE  
She wore a sack.

COLIN  
It was a tunic!

JARVIS  
Don't forget those elf slippers.

COLIN  
She's of Celtic descent!

JARVIS  
We're just fuckin' with ya, Colin.

COLIN  
Yeah, whatever.

JARVIS  
I forget, where'd you meet her  
again? Minas Tirith?

Doug finally smiles. Jarvis and Wade high five.

WADE  
Nice one.

COLIN  
Okay, hot shot, you wanna see who  
does more damage with the ladies  
tonight?

JARVIS  
What's damage mean?

COLIN  
Who gets the most numbers.

JARVIS  
You're on, Gandalf.

Doug and Wade exchange amused glances.

INT. MUNSON'S BAR - LATER

Inside is a sports bar/pool room filled with mainly 20 and  
30-somethings. Doug watches as Wade talks up two women at  
the bar.

WADE  
Allow us to buy your drinks.

WOMAN #1  
Thanks.

WADE  
I'm Wade. You might recognize my  
brother, Doug.

WOMAN #2  
From what?

WADE  
Watch any films from overseas?

The women don't react.

WADE  
I imagine you'd recognize him if  
you were into experimental cinema.

WOMAN #1  
Like porn?

WADE  
You've got wit. Doug appreciates  
that in a woman.

Doug remains quiet.

WADE  
He's a very serious artist and can  
go days without speaking.

CUT TO: JARVIS AND COLIN ON OTHER SIDE OF BAR

Colin and Jarvis sit perched on stools, scanning the room.  
Colin notices a young woman, winks at Jarvis, and approaches  
her.

COLIN  
Excuse me. Hi. I'm Colin.

The woman makes a sour expression.

COLIN  
(leaning in, whispering)  
Don't tell anyone, but I'm a PI.

WOMAN  
A what?

COLIN  
A private investigator.

WOMAN  
Yeah? What case you working on now?

COLIN  
I'm digging into the sordid past of  
a suspicious character looking to  
rent a luxury condo.

WOMAN  
So, you do background checks on  
people who rent apartments?

COLIN  
Well...kind of...not exactly.

She snorts a derisive laugh. Jarvis shakes head.

CUT BACK TO: WADE AND DOUG WITH THE WOMEN

Doug resists his brother's scheme.

WOMAN #1

Are you really an actor?

DOUG

I'm a teacher.

WADE

Doug sees his films as educational.

WOMAN #2

What was your last film?

WADE

I believe that was... "Black Nights  
and White Days at the Dawn of the  
Soul" right Doug?

The women seem highly skeptical. Wade shoots him a "Come on,  
play along" look. Doug sighs and gives in.

DOUG

Yes. That's it. It was filmed in  
Norway with all natural light.

WADE

And it won the Jury Award for  
Experimentation at the Helsinki  
Film Festival.

CUT BACK TO: COLIN AND JARVIS

Jarvis and Colin nurse their beers.

COLIN

My job usually impresses women.

JARVIS

Colin, you check peoples' credit.

COLIN

Which can be dangerous depending on  
who you're checking. Anyway, you  
cover high school basketball.

JARVIS

A sportswriter is far more  
impressive.

COLIN  
 High school sportswriter.  
 (he notices a woman)  
 Oh! Watch this.  
 (to woman)  
 Pardon me. I'm a lawyer for a major  
 corporation and I'd like to work on  
 you pro bono, if you know what I  
 mean.

WOMAN  
 What corporation?

COLIN  
 Uh...ummm...Rubber Chickens Inc.

WOMAN  
 A word of advice: think your stupid  
 pick-up lines through beforehand.

She goes away.

JARVIS  
 Why didn't you just say Microsoft?

COLIN  
 I blanked. Doesn't matter. You're  
 still gonna eat it.

CUT BACK TO: WADE AND DOUG

Doug throws himself into the role.

DOUG  
 It's a shame how those of us  
 artists who stretch the boundaries,  
 who throw out the rulebook as it  
 were, are never fully embraced in  
 the West.

CUT BACK TO: COLIN AND JARVIS

Colin steps to another woman.

COLIN  
 Greetings. My name is Merv Hawking  
 and I won the gold medal for shot  
 put in the Olympics.

WOMAN  
Which Olympics?

COLIN  
Oh...the one in Korea.

WOMAN  
That was like 20 years ago.

COLIN  
I meant Munich.

WOMAN  
That was 30 years ago.

COLIN  
Did I say Olympics? I meant the  
Ultimate...International Tournament  
of Mega Champions.

CUT BACK TO: DOUG AND WADE

Doug is really into his role now. The women listen attentively. Wade looks pleased.

DOUG  
Yes, I want to entertain. But, I'd  
rather bore you if it means 20-30  
years later you dissect my films  
for the deeper, more philosophical  
-- and psychological --  
underpinnings.

CUT BACK TO: COLIN AND JARVIS

COLIN  
(to Jarvis)  
Quick! Pretend to be my bodyguard!

JARVIS  
I'm not gonna help you win.

COLIN  
Please!

JARVIS  
Then we call off the bet?

COLIN  
Whatever!

Jarvis nods his assent. Colin taps the shoulder of a woman.

COLIN

Hi there. (she ignores him) You'll have to excuse my bodyguard. The U.N. forces me to have...Leopold around at all times.

The woman shoots a curious, amused glance at Colin. Jarvis pulls the classic finger to ear security move.

COLIN

But...that's the life of a U.N. weapons inspector. Perhaps I should make sure you're not armed?

A beat.

WOMAN

Oh...alright.

COLIN

Huh?

WOMAN

You're kind of cute. Go ahead. Search me.

Colin is dumbfounded.

WOMAN

I'm Audrey. What's your name?

Colin opens and closes his mouth like a fish on dry land. Nothing comes out.

JARVIS

Hans here has had a busy day. He's still jet-lagged from Iraq. Excuse us.

Jarvis pulls him away.

CUT TO: SOME TIME LATER - IN A BOOTH AT THE BAR

The guys sit at a booth, drinking beer. Jarvis and Colin argue. Doug is amused, Wade annoyed.

JARVIS

You called off the bet.

COLIN

I said whatever. That means nothing.

JARVIS  
Get a number?

COLIN  
She clearly was gonna give it to  
me.

JARVIS  
Until you pussied out.

Wade gets up, goes to the bathroom. They continue arguing.

INT. MUNSON'S BAR - BATHROOM - NIGHT

Wade positions himself at a urinal. A poster hangs in front of him. The words, "1st Annual Indie Short Film Festival of Suburban Chicago," grabs his attention. He quickly reads the rest of the poster, then stares at the ceiling.

A smile emerges on his face.

BACK AT THE BOOTH

WADE  
I've got a plan.

DOUG  
For what?

WADE  
Bess.

DOUG  
Weren't we forgetting about her?

WADE  
Hear me out. We finish what we  
started as teenagers.

DOUG  
What?

WADE  
The movie.

DOUG  
Oh no.

WADE  
Yeah! The whole reason we did it  
was for you and Bess to get  
together.

DOUG  
Worked great, didn't it?

WADE  
It's different now. We're adults.  
It'll be more professional. You  
make your living as an actor.

DOUG  
I teach at the Y.

WADE  
Close enough. Look. This time we  
pretend like we're gonna enter it  
into a festival, you know, to  
advance your acting career. That'll  
impress her.

DOUG  
She'll see right through that. I'm  
pretty sure she knows how I feel  
about her.

WADE  
Again, it's different now. We're  
adults. This'll be a professional  
production.

DOUG  
Yeah, right.

WADE  
Listen, Sunday night the park  
district is putting on a short film  
festival. We pretend like we've  
been accepted. That gives us an  
excuse to start filming as soon as  
possible.

DOUG  
The park district?

WADE  
Yeah.

DOUG  
And what happens when she finds out  
we're not in this festival?

WADE  
Won't matter. You'll have broken up  
the marriage by then!

Jarvis and Colin cheer.

DOUG  
I don't want to lie.

WADE  
Okay, so maybe we enter it.

DOUG  
Uh, it's in a week.

WADE  
Uh, we live in the suburbs. You want into a rinky dink film festival, I'll fuckin' get you in. Don't worry.

DOUG  
She's engaged, Wade!

WADE  
Means nothing to me.

DOUG  
You think Fred will let me make out with his fiancée for an amateur spy movie for the Lombard park district film festival?

WADE  
Fuck Fred.

JARVIS & COLIN  
Fuck Fred! Fuck Fred! Fuck Fred!

WADE  
You don't have to make out. But you will spend lots of time together this week. You know, building chemistry. As director, I'll make sure of it. I believe she'll then realize you're meant for each other.

DOUG  
I don't know.

COLIN  
Can I play Mr. Silver this time?

WADE  
No way.

JARVIS

The black man always plays the bad guy.

COLIN

At least you're in charge.

(to Wade)

Please don't make me his henchman.

DOUG

(to Wade)

Let me get this straight. Your plan is to make a home movie that will supposedly get into a festival in order for me to break up an impending marriage?

WADE

Great plan, right?

Doug hesitates.

JARVIS

We know you miss acting.

COLIN

Yeah, and I could rig some kick-ass explosions.

Doug hesitates some more.

JARVIS & COLIN

Doug! Doug! Doug! Doug!

WADE

Doug! Doug! Doug!

DOUG

Alright, I'm in!

The guys pound the table.

WADE

And now, a toast. To Doug and Bess, two people made for each other, and to making the best spy movie as quickly as fuckin' possible!

INT. CATERING COMPANY - TUESDAY MORNING

Wade strolls into the office, dressed casually. He nods to the five or six employees at their desks as he walks past. They're genuinely happy to see him.

He enters his private office and sits down. He turns on his computer and pulls up the script from the movie.

INT. WADE'S OFFICE - 20 MINUTES LATER

The intercom on his phone buzzes. His secretary's voice comes through.

PEGGY

Wade, the...

WADE

Hold my calls.

PEGGY

You don't have a call. You have...

WADE

I'm busy doing re-writes.

PEGGY

Re...what?

WADE

No visitors, Peg.

PEGGY

The rep from 911 Balloons is here.

WADE

Put her on ice.

PEGGY

Does that mean make her wait?

WADE

You're sharp.

A pause. His door opens. PEGGY VANDERMARK, 30, his secretary, enters and shuts the door. She holds up her hands in a "what gives?" gesture.

PEGGY

You're still in charge of a catering company right?

WADE

For the moment it'll be part production office. I'm directing a spy movie to get my brother a girlfriend. I need quiet.

PEGGY

(joking)

So what, are the auditions like dates?

Wade stares at her for a moment.

WADE

(in a daze)

Auditions like dates. That's it.

PEGGY

911 Balloons?

WADE

You just gave me a great idea.

PEGGY

Uh, thanks. Can I have a raise then?

WADE

No. (pause) Question for you: what do you think is a better setting for a spy movie: Morocco or Dublin?

PEGGY

Morocco.

WADE

Might be hard to create on our budget.

INT. JUST CHECKING OFFICES - TUESDAY MORNING

Colin sits behind a computer, slurping coffee. On the screen, in big letters: How to Make a Homemade Bomb. Underneath it, a mushroom cloud.

Colin glances around to make sure no one is there, then continues reading.

His phone rings and rings. He doesn't answer. His boss and uncle, a bushy-haired 60 year-old named MURPHY approaches.

MURPHY

Colin! Answer your phone!

Colin shuts off the monitor to his computer, picks up the phone.

COLIN

Thanks for calling Just Checking, your all-in-one apartment resource, this is Colin. (pause) They hung up.

MURPHY

What are you doing? When your phone rings, that means Rebecca has too many calls. Pick up the phone.

COLIN

I was busy researching.

MURPHY

What? How to make a bomb?

COLIN

That's absurd.

Murphy turns on the monitor, revealing the bomb-making webpage.

MURPHY

What the hell! The Feds track that sort of thing.

COLIN

I clicked on that page by accident.

MURPHY

You're on thin ice, Colin. I need you to show an apartment this afternoon.

COLIN

I investigate people. I don't show apartments.

MURPHY

We're short-staffed. Do it and do it well or you're fired!

INT. YMCA GYMNASIUM - TUESDAY AFTERNOON

Doug coaches GENE, a 10 year-old, in front of the class.

DOUG  
(to Gene)  
Show me scared.

The kid winces.

DOUG  
I mean, you're really scared.

The kid continues wincing.

DOUG  
Okay, give me angry.

He maintains his expression.

DOUG  
Imagine your sister smashed your  
Nintendo.

GENE  
I don't have a sister.

DOUG  
Your brother then.

GENE  
I'm an only child.

DOUG  
Okay, imagine if a kid at school  
smashed your Nintendo.

GENE  
I play xBox.

DOUG  
What if a kid at school smashed  
your xBox?

GENE  
I'm home-schooled.

DOUG  
Okay, thanks, Gene. You did great.  
Who's next?

Lance raises his hand. Doug brings him up front.

LANCE  
Can I do a scene with Molly?

DOUG  
We're working on emotions right now.

LANCE  
Okay, no problem.

DOUG  
Show me angry.

LANCE  
Can you give me a motivation?

DOUG  
Sure, uh, you just failed a test you studied really hard for.

LANCE  
How about a girl I like never notices me.

DOUG  
Okay.

Molly rolls her eyes. Lance scrunches up his face and lets out a guttural howl.

DOUG  
Nice, Lance. Give me happy.

LANCE  
Motivation?

DOUG  
Let's see, a girl you like agrees to be your girlfriend?

Lance starts pulling his hair, laughing, and jumping up and down.

MOLLY  
(under her breath)  
What a weirdo.

Wade enters the room. He stands in the back, an amused smile on his face. Doug nods at him.

DOUG  
Great work, Lance. Hey everyone, this is my brother Wade, a very gifted film director.

GENE  
Yeah, what's he directed?

WADE  
You into foreign films, kid?

GENE  
No.

WADE  
Well, believe me, I'm like Brian De Palma in Norway.

The kids greet Wade.

DOUG  
I believe that's it for today.  
Tomorrow we'll do more work on emotions and...

LANCE  
Some two-person scenes?

DOUG  
Maybe.

LANCE  
Yes!

DOUG  
See you tomorrow.

The kids file out. Wade steps over to Doug.

WADE  
Ready for yoga class?

DOUG  
Should I be nervous about what you'll say?

WADE  
Trust your older brother.

INT. YOGA STUDIO - FRONT OF STUDIO - 15 MINUTES LATER

Wade and Doug enter. Bess gets ready to teach a class. Doug sees her soap for sale near the front counter.

BESS  
Hey guys.

DOUG  
Is that your soap?

BESS  
Yep. The studio's letting me sell  
it -- since it is vegan friendly.

DOUG  
Cool.

BESS  
I'm a long way from Bath & Body  
Works, but it's a start. And to  
what do I owe the honor, Wade?

WADE  
A business proposition.

BESS  
Okay.

WADE  
Would you like to audition for a  
film that'll premiere at a huge  
festival?

BESS  
Audition?

WADE  
Actually, it'll be more like a  
"direct-to-callback." The producers  
feel good about you in the role,  
but want to make sure.

BESS  
Are you and Doug the producers?

WADE  
Among other interested parties.

BESS  
And what's the film?

WADE  
"The Blackest Operation."

BESS  
Isn't that the name of the movie we  
did in high school?

DOUG

But it was never finished.

WADE

And I'm doing extensive re-writes, so it'll be a lot edgier and current with what's happening in global politics.

BESS

But if I was in it then, why do I need to audition now?

WADE

Did I mention the part about it playing a festival?

BESS

You did.

WADE

Okay then. Let us ask you something: when's the last time you acted?

BESS

Uh...your home movie.

WADE

So it's been a while?

BESS

Yeah.

WADE

We're upping our professionalism. I repeat, it will be screened at a major festival. We want to make sure your acting skills are where they should be and more importantly, we want to make sure the chemistry between you and the male lead is there.

BESS

Which is Doug?

WADE

Correct.

BESS

(suspicion in her voice)  
Umm...sure...

WADE

You haven't gotten the part yet, I want to remind you.

Bess laughs.

BESS

When's the callback?

WADE

Tomorrow night.

BESS

A nighttime callback?

DOUG

We just figured with our busy work schedules it might be easier at night.

WADE

Be prepared to get into character.

BESS

What does that mean?

WADE

Be ready for anything.

BESS

Doug, what's he talking about?

DOUG

The director is keeping the callback plans a secret from the actors.

BESS

And Wade is the director, I take it?

Doug nods.

WADE

Great. We'll see you tomorrow night.

BESS

(a little intrigued)  
Uh, where do I go?

WADE

We'll pick you up tomorrow night at  
6 sharp.

Wade and Doug exit. Bess shoots Doug a confused, but curious smile.

INT. APARTMENT BUILDING - AFTERNOON

Colin leans against the building, examining printouts of homemade bomb schematics.

A couple approaches. He stuffs them into his pocket.

MALE RENTER

Hi, I'm Terry. This is my wife,  
Laura.

COLIN

Nice to meet you. I'm Colin Banks,  
PI.

FEMALE RENTER

PI?

COLIN

Private investigator, yes. I used  
to be a cop.

MALE RENTER

Okay.

COLIN

I'm only showing this apartment as  
a favor.

They stare at him.

COLIN

Allow me to use my investigative  
skills to guess your professions.

(to the man)

You're a day-trader

(to the woman)

and you run an online chocolate  
business.

FEMALE RENTER

Terry is a furniture salesman and  
I'm a party planner.

COLIN  
Huh. Shall I show you the  
apartment?

INT. VACATED APARTMENT - A MINUTE LATER

Colin unlocks the door, they step in.

FEMALE RENTER  
What do you know about the  
neighborhood?

COLIN  
Seems pretty good.

FEMALE RENTER  
How is access to shopping?  
Libraries? Any parks?

COLIN  
Think so.

MALE RENTER  
Rent is \$1000 a month?

COLIN  
Sounds about right.

MALE RENTER  
There's a full and half bath?

COLIN  
(sounding doubtful)  
Yes.

A beat.

MALE RENTER  
Why don't you tell us what you know  
about this place?

COLIN  
Oh whoa. That was my phone. I'm  
expecting a call from homicide  
division. They sometimes ask for  
advice.

FEMALE RENTER  
I didn't hear anything.

COLIN  
I have it on vibrate.

FEMALE RENTER  
We would have heard the vibration.

COLIN  
I mean it's on silent.

FEMALE RENTER  
How'd you know it rang?

COLIN  
I need to go.

Colin runs out.

INT. DOWNER'S GROVE COMMUNITY CENTER - LATER THAT NIGHT

Andromeda sits behind her keyboard on a small stage. She plays jarring, atonal chords. Behind her, a slideshow of slaughtered cows, families barbecuing, and images of the Washington Monument.

Wade and Doug watch in folded chairs with a dozen other people.

CUT TO: A FEW MINUTES LATER

Andromeda packs up her keyboard. Wade and Doug approach.

ANDROMEDA  
Thanks for coming.

WADE  
I liked the song you played when  
the chickens got decapitated.

ANDROMEDA  
I prefer to call them movements  
within the larger piece. But  
thanks.

DOUG  
Yeah, it was catchy -- but  
unsettling.

WADE  
How would you like to compose music  
for a film Doug and I are making?

ANDROMEDA

What film?

DOUG

"The Blackest Operation."

ANDROMEDA

That misogynistic home movie you made in high school?

DOUG

Only Wade has done some major re-writes.

ANDROMEDA

Probably to make it more exploitative to women.

WADE

Would you be willing to compose music for it?

ANDROMEDA

I was hoping my first film score to be for something more socially conscious, like a documentary on migrant workers' rights.

WADE

Listen. We're making it to break up Bess and Fred's engagement. I know you'd like to see Doug with Bess.

ANDROMEDA

Hmmm...using art to destroy a marriage. For my brother, I think I can throw myself into the world of male-dominated cinema.

WADE

Great! We only ask that it not be too dark.

INT. YMCA GYMNASIUM - WEDNESDAY AFTERNOON

Doug sets up chairs for class. Fred walks in.

FRED

Hey there Doug.

DOUG  
(surprised)  
Hi Fred. What brings you by?

FRED  
Working out.

DOUG  
Didn't know you belonged to the Y.

FRED  
Just joined. Gotta get in shape for  
the wedding.

DOUG  
Congratulations by the way.

FRED  
Yep. The date's set in stone.  
Nothing's gonna change it. October  
17th.

DOUG  
(his jaw drops)  
Wow, that's soon.

FRED  
Four months is plenty of time to  
plan a wedding for a couple that's  
been together as long as we have.

DOUG  
You've actually never dated for  
more than a year at any one time  
though.

FRED  
But all the time added up makes for  
a long dating relationship, don't  
you think?

DOUG  
I suppose.

FRED  
Doug E. Fresh, am I your friend?

DOUG  
(hesitates)  
Yes.

FRED  
I think of us as buddies.

DOUG  
Good.

FRED  
So buddy, why did you ask Bess on a date tonight?

DOUG  
It's a callback.

FRED  
Sure. Who else is auditioning?

DOUG  
Local actresses.

FRED  
You know what I think? I think you're doing the same thing you did in high school. You're gonna try and get a girlfriend by making a home movie.

DOUG  
No, we're showing this at a festival.

FRED  
Cause you're an actor?

DOUG  
And teacher.

FRED  
I thought you worked daycare.

Beat. Doug suppresses his growing anger.

FRED  
There's no festival.

DOUG  
Yes there is. Sunday night. The Indie Short Film Festival of Suburban Chicago. Held at the park district. You should come.

FRED  
I wouldn't miss it.

DOUG

Good.

FRED

Speaking of invitations, you should receive the wedding invitation in a few weeks. We're really moving fast on the wedding prep.

DOUG

Can't wait to get it.

FRED

Better hit the weights.

Fred goes for the exit. He stops, turns around.

FRED

Be careful tonight.

DOUG

And you be careful in the weight room.

FRED

I don't need to be careful. You do.

DOUG

A little caution in the gym never hurt anyone.

FRED

Just be careful.

Fred leaves.

DOUG

(under his breath)

No, you be careful.

EXT. RESTAURANT - DOWNTOWN CHICAGO - LATER THAT NIGHT -  
THROUGH VIDEO CAMERA

From across the street, Colin films Wade's car pulling in front of an Italian restaurant.

INT. JARVIS'S CAR

Colin films. Jarvis looks on with binoculars.

JARVIS  
Wade's making the drop.

INT. WADE'S CAR

Wade parks and gets out. Bess and Doug hop out of the back. She wears a snug V-neck tank top and nice pair of jeans. He's in a short sleeve button-down and slacks.

WADE  
Here we are.

BESS  
I thought this was a callback.

WADE  
It is. A chemistry-building  
callback.

Bess playfully shakes her head. Doug smiles awkwardly. Wade hands Doug the car keys, then goes to cross the street.

WADE  
In case you need to drive. Have  
fun!

BESS  
Aren't you coming? You are the  
director.

WADE  
I trust Doug in his role as  
producer to make an informed  
decision. Remember: get into  
character and be ready for  
anything.

Doug and Bess enter the restaurant.

EXT. RESTAURANT - THROUGH VIDEO CAMERA

Through the glass windows of the restaurant, Colin films Doug and Bess being seated.

INT. RESTAURANT

Doug and Bess sit in a booth. Bess gives him a knowing look.

BESS

You making this movie doesn't have to do with any recent happenings in my life does it?

DOUG

You launching your soap business?

BESS

I think you know what I mean.

DOUG

Well, your soap business did inspire me. You decided that's what you wanted and did it.

CUT TO: RESTAURANT - THROUGH THE VIDEO CAMERA

Colin films Doug and Bess chatting, eating bread.

CUT TO: JARVIS'S CAR

Wade climbs in.

COLIN

Finally, I get to flex my PI muscles! I love this.

WADE

I was just thinking we could use this footage for behind-the-scenes bonus features for the DVD.

COLIN

Great idea. (pause) Hey, you guys ever see "Stakeout?"

JARVIS

Shit! We've got company!

CUT TO: RESTAURANT - THROUGH THE VIDEO CAMERA

Fred enters, kisses Bess on the cheek and sits down. Colin zooms in on Doug. He looks shell-shocked.

CUT TO: JARVIS'S CAR

WADE

He must've followed us. This means we go to Plan Omega. (pulls out his cell phone, speed dials a number) Peggy, it's a go. Get here as fast as you can.

COLIN

Oooh Peggy's coming? She is red hot.

JARVIS

Wade, what's Plan Omega?

WADE

(grinning)  
I'm glad you asked, Jarvis.

CUT TO: RESTAURANT

FRED

So, where's the director?

DOUG

He left.

FRED

Where are the scripts? And those other actresses you mentioned?

DOUG

Well, this is a chemistry-building callback and the production team thought it best to deal with one actress at a time.

Fred glares at Doug with disbelief and annoyance.

FRED

Bess, I'm leaving. And I'd like you to accompany me.

BESS

Honey, this whole thing is harmless.

A high, feeble voice startles them from behind.

JARVIS (OS)

Excuse me!

Jarvis limps to their table, his head down. He wears thick glasses, fake teeth, and a porkpie hat. His hair and beard have been colored white.

JARVIS

(to Fred)

Been trying to catch you for a few blocks!

FRED

What?

JARVIS

You left your lights on! And if it weren't for my bum knees, I would've caught you on the sidewalk.

FRED

(a little suspicious)

I'm parked right around the corner.

JARVIS

When you have my broken down old frame, 10 feet feels like a mile!

Fred pauses, studies Jarvis. Jarvis lowers his head even more.

FRED

(sighing)

Be right back.

Fred gets up, walks out. Jarvis lingers behind, winks at Doug, then trots off.

BESS

Did that man wink at you?

DOUG

(reaching for a piece of bread)

Maybe it's because I've been left alone with such a beautiful woman.

Bess blushes. Doug appears surprised at his words. He takes a big bite of bread.

CUT TO: JARVIS'S CAR

Jarvis dives into the car.

JARVIS  
He took the bait!

WADE  
Nice work! Okay, Colin, suit up.

EXT. FRED'S CAR - CITY STREET

Fred arrives at his car. The lights are off. He throws up his hands and heads back to the restaurant.

Colin approaches on a crutch, wearing a fake mustache, sunglasses, a long-haired wig, and a baseball cap pulled low.

COLIN  
(in a gruff voice)  
Excuse me.

FRED  
(good-naturedly)  
Sorry, I don't have any money.

COLIN  
Oh no. Have you seen an older black man with a beard and glasses come through here?

A look of doubt forms on Fred's face.

COLIN  
Gray hair on the sides, reedy voice?

FRED  
(still doubtful)  
I just talked to him.

COLIN  
Oh, thank God! I'm his caretaker. He used to be a house painter and developed memory issues from inhaling too much paint thinner. You've got to help me find him!

CUT TO: RESTAURANT

DOUG

Let's see...something you don't know about me...uh...when I was 8 I almost died.

BESS

What?

DOUG

I tried making a roller coaster in the backyard. I nailed rope to the trees, took Wade's go-cart and tried sliding it on the rope. I guess it was more of a cable car.

BESS

You were always creative.

DOUG

More like stupid. I fell about 15 feet and the go-kart landed on top of me. It was a close call.

BESS

Glad you survived.

DOUG

The worst part was having to return the money I made from selling tickets to the neighborhood kids.

EXT. CITY STREET - THROUGH THE VIDEO CAMERA

Wade films Colin leading Fred up and down the sidewalk, retracing steps. Fred scratches his head in frustration.

CUT TO: RESTAURANT

BESS

I'm really into new age piano music.

DOUG

Like George Winston, John Tesh?

BESS

Yeah.

DOUG  
 (laughing)  
 That's horrible.

BESS  
 I said it was embarrassing.

DOUG  
 It's okay. I kind of really like  
 Moby.

BESS  
 The lame electronic musician?

DOUG  
 Uh huh.

The WAITER suddenly appears.

WAITER  
 Ready to order?

EXT. CITY STREET

Colin leads Fred in circles.

FRED  
 Look. I don't know where he is.

COLIN  
 Please, keep helping me!

FRED  
 I can't!

COLIN  
 One more time around the block!

CUT TO: JARVIS'S CAR

A banging on the window. It's Peggy.

JARVIS  
 Hello there.

WADE  
 Peggy, you remember Jarvis.

PEGGY  
 Yeah, hi.  
 (to Wade)  
 (MORE)

PEGGY (cont'd)  
I better get a raise for this.

WADE  
(handing her a police badge)  
You will.

CUT TO: RESTAURANT

DOUG  
We were in middle school and Wade talked my parents into letting us film my grandparents' 50th anniversary party. We staged it as a whodunit murder mystery. Meaning, we pretended our grandparents had been killed and went around grilling guests about their alibis, motives to kill, whatever. We did film my grandparents at the end, but missed a lot of the key moments of the celebration and there was a ton of narration by Wade.

BESS  
Sounds funny.

DOUG  
Yeah. It was then I realized how much fun pretending could be.

Fred enters, flustered and sweaty. He plops down.

BESS  
What happened?

FRED  
I'm not sure actually.

BESS  
I ordered you an Amstel.

FRED  
(raising glass to his mouth)  
Thanks.

Someone clears their throat behind the table. It's Peggy. She has her arms crossed, lips pursed. She flashes Fred a badge and puts it away quickly.

PEGGY  
Sir, may I have a word?

FRED  
Uh...why, officer?

PEGGY  
Detective.

FRED  
Sorry, detective.

PEGGY  
Did a man who claimed your lights  
were on and his "caretaker" just  
approach you?

FRED  
Uh, yes.

PEGGY  
They're scam artists we've been  
tracking for some time. I apologize  
for interrupting your meal, but  
your input would mean a great deal  
to the department and this  
community.

FRED  
You're joking, right?

PEGGY  
I lost my sense of humor when I  
made detective. Sir, please?

Fred lumbers up, follows Peggy out.

CUT TO: RESTAURANT - THROUGH THE VIDEO CAMERA

Peggy escorts Fred along the sidewalk.

EXT. CITY STREET

PEGGY  
Show me exactly where the caretaker  
took you.

Fred leads her down a sidewalk.

FRED  
What are they guilty of?

PEGGY  
They're scam artists.

FRED  
I know, but what do they scam?

PEGGY  
I can't go into details.

FRED  
They didn't get my money.

A beat.

FRED  
So, what did they do?

Peggy stops, gets an inch from his face.

PEGGY  
(in a harsh whisper)  
Ever heard of the Armenian mob?

FRED  
No.

PEGGY  
Then say a prayer of thanks.

CUT TO: RESTAURANT

Bess and Doug eat their dinners, continue talking.

BESS  
"Fight Club" got me into soap.

DOUG  
But that was so disgusting, when  
they hauled those big bags of fat.

BESS  
It made me curious about how soap  
was really made. And maybe it's the  
little bit of traditional  
femininity in me that likes the  
sweet smells.

DOUG  
You are more than a little bit  
feminine.

BESS  
Watch it, Douglas, I'm engaged.

CUT TO: CITY STREET

Peggy and Fred walk up and down the sidewalk.

PEGGY  
These men didn't try to give you a  
package to hold onto?

FRED  
No.

PEGGY  
Did they give you or sell you any  
fruits or vegetables?

FRED  
No.

PEGGY  
Curious.

FRED  
What is?

PEGGY  
I'm afraid that's highly sensitive,  
not too mention disturbing.

FRED  
May I go?

PEGGY  
(searching for more to ask)  
Uh...did they give you any  
communist literature?

FRED  
What?

PEGGY  
Did they try and get you to sign a  
petition?

FRED  
I'm leaving, detective.

PEGGY  
Just one more time around the  
block?

CUT TO: JARVIS'S CAR

JARVIS  
(looking through binoculars)  
Peggy's not gonna hold him for much  
longer.

WADE  
(pulling out phone)  
I didn't pay this waiter a hundred  
bucks for nothing.

CUT TO: RESTAURANT

BESS  
At Bennigan's, once I got caught  
eating fries from a customer's  
plate.

DOUG  
Please tell me it was before you  
brought it to the table.

BESS  
Nope. The customer came back to  
leave a tip and saw me stuffing his  
leftover fries in my mouth.

The waiter appears, looking urgent.

WAITER  
You two must go now.

BESS  
What?

WAITER  
Your cover has been compromised.  
Spies are everywhere.

He hands them a manila envelope.

WAITER

Mr. Silver left you this. Open it  
in a more private place.

DOUG

What about the bill?

WAITER

Taken care of by Silver himself.  
Go!

Doug and Bess are ushered out by the waiter.

BESS

What about Fred?

DOUG

I'm sure he's fine.

Doug and Bess walk to Wade's car, get in. Bess grabs the envelope. It reads, "Nick Hamish and the woman who might play the female lead, Zola Vasser."

DOUG

(pointing to the writing)

See, the part's not yours yet.

She rips it open. Inside is a piece of paper, folded repeatedly into a square. She flattens it out. It says, "Greetings. Hope you enjoyed your meal. It was my pleasure to provide it. Did you go for the veal? It's my favorite. Now let the games begin. Your task: work together to find me. First clue: Looks like a bumper car, works like a bike, but more like a raft."

BESS

Hmmm...go-karts?

DOUG

But it's more like a raft...a log  
flume?

BESS

A bike...a bike has pedals.

DOUG

Yeah.

BESS

Hey, don't they have paddle boats  
in Humboldt Park?

DOUG  
Paddle boats?

BESS  
Yeah, they do.

CUT TO: RESTAURANT - THROUGH THE VIDEO CAMERA

Bess and Doug take off.

Fred enters the scene a second later. He stops, cranes his head to see if that was Doug and Bess driving away.

He runs into the restaurant and comes back out a moment later. He looks angry.

He darts back to his car.

EXT. HUMBOLDT PARK

Doug and Bess jog along a path to a boathouse.

INT. HUMBOLDT PARK - BOAT HOUSE

They glance around, searching for clues, then step to the counter.

DOUG  
One paddle boat, please.

BOAT RENTER  
Name?

DOUG  
Dou...Nick Hamish.

BOAT RENTER  
You're all taken care of. Follow me.

EXT. HUMBOLDT PARK LAKE

Out on the water, Doug and Bess notice a man in a trench coat with slicked back hair and a mustache. It's Colin.

COLIN  
Pssst!

Doug and Bess just stare.

MAN  
 (waving them over)  
 I said, hey, pssst!

Doug and Bess paddle over.

DOUG  
 Colin?

COLIN  
 (using his gruff voice)  
 No, Mr. Hamish. My name is Landis.  
 Assistant to Mr. Silver.

Doug gets into character. So does Bess.

DOUG  
 (in a bad British accent)  
 Where's Silver?

COLIN  
 Do you desire to offer thanks for  
 your opulent meal?

BESS  
 No games. Tell us where he is or we  
 flip your boat!

COLIN  
 Such bluster from your CIA  
 shipmate. I suggest your calm her,  
 Mr. Hamish, or I may decide to  
 withhold your clue.

DOUG  
 Relax, Zola.  
 (to Colin)  
 Alright, give it to us.

COLIN  
 Freaks come out at night and so do  
 these. The closer you get to them,  
 the closer you get to me. Auf  
 Wiedersehen!

EXT. HUMBOLDT PARK LAKE - THROUGH THE VIDEO CAMERA

Wade films the exchange. Colin paddles quickly away.

EXT. HUMBOLDT PARK LAKE

BESS

Hmmm, freaks come out at  
night...and so do these.

A long beat.

DOUG

Stars?

BESS

Yeah! The closer you get...the  
planetarium.

DOUG

Let's go.

EXT. HUMBOLDT PARK - PARKING LOT

Fred screeches into a space. Bess and Doug drive by just as  
he gets out. He jumps back in, tries to follow them again.

EXT. ADLER PLANETARIUM

Doug and Bess reach the planetarium. It's a clear, crisp  
night. They search around then pause by a railing  
overlooking Lake Michigan.

BESS

Not too shabby.

DOUG

(turning towards her)

Yeah.

Bess blushes. At that moment, Colin barrels toward them,  
holding onto his mustache.

COLIN

(winded)

You're quick.

BESS

We're professionals.

EXT. ADLER PLANETARIUM - THROUGH THE VIDEO CAMERA

Wade films them from across the street. Bess appears as though she's threatening Colin. He then removes a note from his pocket.

EXT. ADLER PLANETARIUM

COLIN

Your next clue. A hit in 1893, it's still here, but it ain't free. Best of luck.

Colin bows and runs away.

DOUG

1893?

BESS

Hmmm, what was a hit?

DOUG

Ragtime?

BESS

No...

DOUG

Something to do with baseball?

BESS

No...

DOUG

Hey, the Chicago World's Fair was in 1893!

BESS

Ooh, you're right.

DOUG

The Ferris Wheel?

BESS

Yes.

EXT. PATH ALONG LAKE MICHIGAN - HALF A MILE FROM PLANETARIUM

Fred spots Bess and Doug in the distance, sprints towards them. They run off to the car, not seeing him.

Fred jogs back to his car, giving chase once again.

EXT. NAVY PIER - NIGHT

Doug and Bess navigate through people on the boardwalk. They reach the Ferris Wheel.

About 200 feet away, Colin charges toward them.

COLIN  
Very impressive.

BESS  
Where's Silver?

COLIN  
That's Mr. Silver to you.

BESS  
Well, where is he?

COLIN  
On his way.

EXT. NAVY PIER - THROUGH THE VIDEO CAMERA

Jarvis approaches them in a silver jacket and pants.

EXT. NAVY PIER

JARVIS  
Nick Hamish. We meet again.

Bess recognizes Jarvis as the old man.

BESS  
Jarvis? Oh my god...(grinning,  
shaking her head) that was you. I  
don't believe this.

JARVIS  
Believe it, Zola. (clapping slowly)  
I offer my congratulations to Ms.  
Zola Vasser on her full acceptance  
back into the CIA, if you catch my  
meaning.

BESS  
(breaking character)  
I got the part!

JARVIS  
Landis! Hand them their reward.

Colin gives them an envelope.

JARVIS  
Until next time, when we meet under  
less cordial terms.

Colin and Jarvis depart. Bess rips open the envelope. Inside are two tickets. She looks at the Ferris wheel, then at Doug disapprovingly. A beat.

DOUG  
Hey, we're only building chemistry.

A beat. Bess furrows her brows.

DOUG  
Friends can't ride a Ferris Wheel?

BESS  
Ferris Wheel means romance in my  
book.

DOUG  
It'd be a shame to waste the  
tickets.

A beat.

DOUG  
We could ride in separate cars?

A beat.

DOUG  
I won't talk or look at you the  
entire ride. I promise.

BESS  
Alright! Let's go.

INT. FERRIS WHEEL CAR - NIGHT

Doug and Bess sit on opposite sides of the car.

BESS  
I take it that wasn't a real cop.

DOUG  
My brother's secretary.

BESS  
Wade must really care about making  
a good film.

DOUG  
It'll be shown at a festival.

A moment of silence. Bess sighs.

BESS  
Doug, what are you doing?

DOUG  
Huh?

BESS  
I know you don't want me to marry  
Fred.

DOUG  
Fred has...some redeeming  
qualities.

BESS  
Name one?

DOUG  
Uh...he hasn't killed anyone.

BESS  
Please tell me what's going on?

DOUG  
Well, for starters, I love you.

Bess is taken aback. Doug is too.

DOUG  
I can't believe I said that.

A beat.

DOUG

Can we rewind the tape? I didn't say that.

BESS

(shaking her head)

I feel like this is all my fault. All these years I think I've known how you felt about me. Maybe I liked the attention, even encouraged you.

A beat.

BESS

Remember prom junior year?

DOUG

Of course.

BESS

You were the only guy who attempted Salsa dancing with me.

DOUG

And merengue. And cha-cha.

BESS

Had they played Korean opera, you would've danced with me. You didn't mind looking stupid.

DOUG

I guess "A Visit to the Islands" wasn't the best prom theme for our high school.

BESS

(smiling)

No. (pause) I knew, really knew, then how you felt about me.

A beat.

BESS

Tonight was one of the most imaginative and fun dates...callbacks, I've ever been on.

A beat.

BESS  
I can't be in this movie.

DOUG  
(weakly)  
But it'll be in a festival.

EXT. FERRIS WHEEL

Fred waits, irritated. Doug and Bess exit the ride.

FRED  
(sarcastic, annoyed)  
Hey, thanks for letting me know you  
were leaving. I've really enjoyed  
chasing you all over the city.

BESS  
Sorry.

FRED  
I called your cell 10 times.

BESS  
I said I was sorry.

DOUG  
I'll let your soon-to-be-husband  
drive you home. Goodnight.

Doug walks away before Fred responds. Bess is distraught.  
Fred is frustrated.

INT. DOUG AND WADE'S APARTMENT - LATER THAT NIGHT

Jarvis and Colin play foosball. Wade sips whiskey on the  
couch. Doug enters. The guys applaud. Doug falls into a  
chair.

DOUG  
Bess is out.

WADE  
What?

DOUG  
She's not in the movie.

WADE  
Of course she's in the movie.

DOUG  
I told her I love her.

WADE  
I thought our plan was to slowly  
make her realize her feelings for  
you.

DOUG  
I couldn't hold it in any longer. I  
fucked up.

WADE  
You didn't fuck up, little brother.

DOUG  
Fred's gonna love it when he finds  
out I lied about the festival.

WADE  
What'd you tell him?

DOUG  
That our movie was definitely  
showing Sunday.

WADE  
Not a problem. I can get us in.

DOUG  
What's the point? Bess is out. Fred  
wins. I quit.

Doug slumps into his room, shuts the door. A beat.

COLIN  
I'll still work on some explosives  
just in case he changes his mind.

Wade takes a deep breath, lets it out. He sips his drink.

INT. JUST CHECKING OFFICES - THURSDAY MORNING

Colin is at his computer, reading a webpage on how to make  
napalm at home. Murphy comes to his desk.

MURPHY  
What the hell, Colin!

Colin punches off the monitor.

COLIN  
Hey, Uncle Murphy.

MURPHY  
What'd I tell you about pulling up  
that shit at work?

COLIN  
I have no idea what you're talking  
about.

Murphy punches the power button with his finger.

MURPHY  
You planning to invade Saigon?

COLIN  
I clicked on that page by accident.

MURPHY  
You're a liar, kid.

COLIN  
I don't lie.

MURPHY  
Oh yeah? How'd that apartment  
showing go the other day?

COLIN  
A home run.

MURPHY  
I just got off the phone with that  
couple. They said you didn't know  
anything and ran out in the middle  
of the tour.

COLIN  
Untrue.

MURPHY  
I said I'd fire you if you screwed  
that up.

A beat.

MURPHY  
Well, I'm not gonna fire you. But I  
am gonna do whatever it takes to  
make you more responsible.

INT. YMCA GYMNASIUM - ACTING CLASS - THURSDAY

Doug addresses the kids. Bags hang under his eyes.

DOUG  
(unenthusiastic)  
Today we're gonna improvise.

MOLLY  
You okay?

DOUG  
Great. Molly, you start. Who wants  
to do a scene with Molly (Lance  
raises his hand)...other than  
Lance.

No one else raises their hand.

DOUG  
Go Lance.

LANCE  
Awesome!

DOUG  
Somebody give them a suggestion.

GENE  
How about two co-workers in an  
office?

LANCE  
Or two co-workers on their first  
date?

DOUG  
Whatever. Start when you want.

Molly does an elaborate stretching warm up. Lance watches.  
They start a scene.

LANCE  
Here we are, two workers from the  
straw factory on a date.

MOLLY  
I never thought we'd go out. (mimes  
swinging a golf club) Your turn.

LANCE  
I did. (mimes a golf club swing)  
Hey, hole in one!

MOLLY

Nice shot.

LANCE

(mimes eating hot dog)

For years we've been friends there on the straw manufacturing line. I knew deep down you really liked me.

MOLLY

(mimes sipping soda)

How?

LANCE

You laughed at my bad straw jokes and always wanted to be around me. That made me not want to give up.

MOLLY

I'm glad you didn't give up.

Lance suddenly kisses her on the mouth. Molly shrieks, backs away. The kids cheer.

MOLLY

What are you doing!

LANCE

I was in the moment! You can't tell me the scene didn't call for that. Doug?

Doug is in a fog, staring into space. Molly and Lance go back to arguing. Doug sits there in his own world.

INT. DOUG'S CAR - 45 MINUTES LATER

Doug drives home, still in a daze. Suddenly, he slams on the breaks. He pauses for a moment. Then, he hits the gas, and makes a U-turn.

INT. YOGA STUDIO

Bess teaches a class to a dozen people. Doug bursts in.

DOUG

(stammering, in a fog)

For years we've been friends on the straw manufacturing line. I know deep down you really like me.

BESS

Huh?

A beat.

DOUG

(coming to his senses)

I'm not giving up, Bess.

BESS

I'm teaching right now.

DOUG

I don't care. Remember our sophomore year when I was in my southern rock-cowboy boot phase? And that time I forgot my gym shoes and wore boots to play lacrosse? Everyone laughed but you.

The women in the class are moved. Bess doesn't respond.

DOUG

Don't marry Fred. I know we're both a little directionless and he's stable in his job. But, we'd have fun at least. You teach yoga. I teach acting. We're both teachers. And I could help you with your soap business.

Bess seems affected. She studies Doug in silence. A woman in the class covers her face. Fred's voice chimes from the front.

FRED (OS)

Bess? I got you a chai latte.

He enters the studio.

FRED

Who'd you bring with you this time?  
The FBI?

DOUG

No. Just me.

FRED

I thought we were buddies, Doug E. Fresh.

DOUG

I think we're more acquaintances,  
actually.

FRED

The truth is out. You're making an  
elaborate homemade spy movie to win  
my fiancée.

YOGA WOMAN

Really?

A couple other women look impressed.

FRED

It didn't work in high school and  
it won't work now.

DOUG

We'll see, won't we?

FRED

There's no festival.

DOUG

Actually there is.

FRED

Who's gonna play your female lead?

DOUG

Bess.

BESS

Doug, I told you no.

YOGA WOMAN

I'll do it.

DOUG

(ignoring woman)

I'm not giving up, Bess.

FRED

Uh yeah, you are giving up.

DOUG

You sure aren't gonna stop me.

Fred punches Doug in the face. Doug falls to the floor.

BESS

Fred!

Doug gets to his feet. The yoga woman helps him.

BESS

Are you okay?

DOUG

Yeah.

Bess escorts him out front. Fred hangs back in the studio. Everyone shakes their head at him.

INT. YOGA STUDIO - FRONT OF STUDIO

BESS

You should go.

DOUG

So you'll think about it?

BESS

Think about what?

DOUG

Doing the movie.

BESS

(laughing, exasperated)  
Doug, I said no!

DOUG

Think about it, Bess.

Doug steps unsteadily out the door.

BESS

(calling out to him)  
Are you okay?

DOUG

Fine. Just think about it.

Bess half smiles to herself. Fred approaches.

BESS

You're an asshole.

FRED

Why?

BESS  
 Because I'm a pacifist and you just  
 hit one of my closest friends  
 unprovoked.

FRED  
 Unprovoked?

BESS  
 Leave.

Fred exits. The woman from class steps to Bess.

YOGA WOMAN  
 That Doug was quite a catch.

Bess nods.

EXT. PARK - DAY

Colin configures an explosive device in a grassy area near a  
 playground. He checks his bomb printouts, double-checks the  
 wiring.

Two elderly women walking a small dog pass by, glaring at  
 him. Colin waves.

INT. CATERING COMPANY - WADE'S OFFICE

Wade is on the phone. Doug enters, half of his face swollen.

WADE  
 (hangs up)  
 Whoa, what happened?

DOUG  
 Fred punched me.

WADE  
 Where?

DOUG  
 In Bess's yoga class. I went to  
 tell her I'm not giving up, that I  
 love her. We make this movie to  
 prove Fred wrong.

WADE  
 (clapping his hands)  
 I had a hunch you'd come around.

DOUG  
Can you get us into this festival?

WADE  
No problem. (standing up) Come on.  
Let's pay the park district a  
visit.

EXT. PARK

Colin ignites the explosive. A loud boom. A flurry of smoke, grass, and rocks swirl in the air. Through the haze, Colin sees park police pulling up. He gets an idea and runs toward them.

COLIN  
Officer! A couple of lunatics just  
set off a bomb. They were short,  
had gray hair, and a dog.

The police take off running. Colin laughs, gets in his car.

INT. LOMBARD PARK DISTRICT OFFICE

The festival director, NANCY SLAUSEN, sits behind a desk in a cramped office. A poster for the festival hangs on the wall.

Wade and Doug knock, enter.

WADE  
Is this the office for the Indie  
Short Film Festival of Suburban  
Chicago?

NANCY  
You think it should be nicer? We're  
not Sundance, you know. I hate  
Sundance.

WADE  
No, it's a fine office.

NANCY  
Guess who didn't do the decorating?  
Robert Redford. Because this isn't  
Sundance.

WADE  
Uh huh.

NANCY

How do you expect the park district to compete with a major festival?

WADE

Not sure. We want to submit a film.

NANCY

Too late. Deadline was a month ago.

WADE

You couldn't make a special exception?

NANCY

No.

WADE

I'd be happy to provide financial incentive.

NANCY

Are you bribing me?

WADE

Yes.

NANCY

That might work at Sundance.

WADE

(placing hands on her desk,  
leaning in)

Alright. You seem a creative type. How would you like a part in the movie in exchange for a slot at the festival? It's an action-packed spy thriller.

NANCY

No.

DOUG

What if we told you we need to get our film in the festival so I can win over a woman I've loved for years.

NANCY

Is this the plot of your movie? A movie within a movie type thing?

DOUG

No! I need to get this into your festival to prove the jerk marrying the woman I love wrong.

NANCY

I found that confusing. Now if you don't mind.

Wade and Doug exit.

INT. OFFICE HALLWAY

DOUG

Well, that went fantastic.

WADE

Don't worry.

He pulls out his phone.

INT. HIGH SCHOOL GYM LOCKER ROOM

Jarvis straddles a bench next to a sweaty basketball player. Jarvis holds a tape recorder.

BASKETBALL PLAYER

I brought my A game, big time. I was breakin' rules and rewritin' them. I was like a judge and the ball was my gavel.

JARVIS

(sarcastic)

That makes sense.

BASKETBALL PLAYER

But really, if it wasn't for this guy (he points upward), we wouldn't have won. You know the poem "Footprints in the Sand?"

JARVIS

(answering phone)

Hold on.

(into phone)

Yeah?...I'm in the middle of something...alright, be there in a half hour.

(to player)

You were saying?

CUT TO: LOMBARD PARK DISTRICT OFFICE - 30 MINUTES LATER

A knock at the door. Jarvis enters wearing all silver.

JARVIS

I am Vincent K. Opaque.

She stares blankly.

JARVIS

One of my assistants spoke to your office about my film, "The Blackest Operation."

NANCY

I don't think so.

JARVIS

You realize I had to leave Norway, mid-production in my latest film, to come here?

She just stares.

JARVIS

Do you know who I am? I've won the Most Experimental Director award at the Ft. Worth Film Festival, the Peoples' Choice Award for Most Rules Broken at the Vancouver Cinephile Convention, plus countless other accolades. My films are adored all over Europe.

NANCY

Do you mind? I have work to do.

JARVIS

Fine. I guess I'll just have to settle for Sundance.

NANCY

I think we can squeeze you in.

INT. ANDROMEDA'S BEDROOM

Andromeda sits behind a keyboard wearing all black. She plays dissonant, ambient-sounding music. The room is filled with candles.

Wade and Doug enter.

ANDROMEDA

Never interrupt an artist while they're creating.

DOUG

Sorry.

WADE

That sounds a tad depressing.

ANDROMEDA

Male-dominated films usually are.

DOUG

What part of the score was that?

ANDROMEDA

The love theme.

WADE

If you remove all the minor notes, it'll be perfect.

ANDROMEDA

Don't tell me how to do my art. Leave me alone.

WADE

Fair enough.

Wade and Doug leave.

INT. HALLWAY OF HOUSE

Doug stops. He thinks for a moment.

DOUG

Can you take off work tomorrow afternoon?

WADE

I own the place. I never have to come in.

DOUG

Good. Cause I think I have a plan for Bess.

INT. JUST CHECKING OFFICES - FRIDAY MORNING

Colin sits at his computer, reading about homemade grenades. Murphy approaches. Colin turns off the monitor.

MURPHY

Colin, my office. Now. Two men want to talk to you.

COLIN

What?

MURPHY

(grabbing him by the arm)  
Come on!

INT. YOGA STUDIO - NEXT DAY - FRIDAY

As Bess leads the class, an envelope slides under the door. She stops. Everyone looks at the envelope.

BESS

(to class)  
Hold the position.

She picks up the envelope. It says "For Zola Vasser. The information contained within couldn't be more sensitive." Bess rolls her eyes, puts down envelope, returns to the front of the class.

YOGA WOMAN

Is that from Doug?

Bess ignores the question, gets back into position. A beat. Another envelope slides under the door.

BESS

(to class)  
Keep holding.

She goes over, picks it up. It reads, "The information contained within can't wait!"

She reveals the trace of a smile.

She finds a square piece of paper inside and spreads it out. It says, "Your Yoga teacher/soapmaker cover is compromised. Silver's onto you. Go to where you go when you really need to go."

BESS  
(to class, showing some  
excitement)  
I need to cut class short today.  
We'll go longer next time.

People gather their mats and towels. Bess scans the room.

INT. JUST CHECKING OFFICES - MURPHY'S OFFICE

Murphy and Colin enter. There are two men in dark suits,  
wearing baseball hats that say FBI.

FBI GUY #1  
Colin Banks?

COLIN  
Maybe.

FBI GUY #2  
Sit down.

Colin complies.

FBI GUY #1  
You a terrorist?

COLIN  
Huh?

FBI GUY #2  
Like to blow shit up?

COLIN  
No.

FBI GUY #1  
We know you've been researching how  
to make a bomb.

Colin looks worried. A moment of silence.

INT. YOGA STUDIO

Bess snaps her fingers, darts into the lobby. She notices  
the bathroom, runs into it.

INT. YOGA STUDIO BATHROOM

She scours the paper towel dispenser, the sink, and the mirror. Nothing.

She opens the stall. An envelope is taped to the inside door.

She tears it off and rips it open. Inside is a note. It reads, "A little steam usually clears things up."

Bess stands still. A beat.

She glances at herself in the mirror, then turns on the hot water. Steam rises from the sink. Words form on the mirror. "A lot of information for 50 cents." Bess returns to the lobby.

INT. YOGA STUDIO - FRONT OF STUDIO

Bess moves her eyes around the storefront. They land on a newspaper box she sees through the window.

She opens the door, steps to the box, tries to open it and can't.

She searches herself for change, then spots to quarters on top of the box.

She inserts them, pulls it open. An envelope is taped to the top of the box. She opens it. A note reads, "Turn around."

She does. Doug is inches away, in Colin's mustache and wig.

DOUG  
(grabbing her arm, in terrible  
British accent)  
Come with me if you want to live.

Bess grins. Doug escorts her to Wade's car. They get in and Wade floors it onto the road.

BACK TO: MURPHY'S OFFICE

FBI GUY #2  
Think bombs are cool?

FBI GUY #1  
Think you're tough?

FBI GUY #2  
Tough guy's gonna make a bomb and  
blow shit up, huh?

COLIN  
What proof do you have?

FBI GUY #1  
Internet records.

FBI GUY #2  
Lots of internet records.

FBI GUY #1  
And what we got up here. (he taps  
his forehead)

Colin studies them for a beat. Then, a look of recognition.

COLIN  
Don't you guys bowl with my uncle?

The men look uncomfortable, stare back at Colin.

INT. WADE'S CAR

WADE  
Ms. Vasser, I am CIA Director  
Fielding. You know Nick Hamish I  
presume.

Doug removes his disguise.

WADE  
You have a non-negotiable new  
assignment. You and Nick are to  
work together to bring Silver down.

Bess shakes her head.

WADE  
The British government is aware of  
Nick Hamish's feelings towards you  
yet they assure us he will conduct  
himself with professionalism on  
this mission.

BESS  
I don't know, director. Nick has  
made it pretty clear what he wants  
from me.

DOUG  
Trust me, Zola. For the good of the mission, I can put personal feelings aside. I am British.

WADE  
Now, before you take this mission -- which is non-negotiable, by the way -- please inform me as to your current relationship status?

BESS  
I am engaged...

Doug hangs his head.

BESS  
But...things are on hold right now.

Doug brightens. Wade does too.

WADE  
That is wonderful news! For the mission. It's always good to start a mission unattached.

BESS  
I'm not unattached, director. Things are just on hold.

WADE  
Whatever. So, what do ya say, Agent Vasser? It is non-negotiable, as I mentioned.

BESS  
(throwing up her hands)  
Alright, I'll do your stupid movie.

BACK TO: MURPHY'S OFFICE

The men, Murphy, and Colin sit in silence. Finally, they stand up and go for the door.

FBI GUY #1  
We're letting you off with a warning.

They leave.

MURPHY

I want you to think about what you would do if these guys were really Feds. Now, get back to work.

INT. JUST CHECKING OFFICES - COLIN'S CUBICLE

Colin sits back down, pulls up a webpage on how to make rocket launchers.

INT. MICKELSON FAMILY DINING ROOM - SATURDAY MORNING

Doug, Wade, Colin, Bess, Jarvis, Andromeda, and Mr. and Mrs. Mickelson sit around the table. Mr. Mickelson prays.

MR. MICKELSON

Lord, we thank you for this temperate day -- despite all the talk of "global warming," and for providing this delicious meat-based breakfast. We ask that the filming today would honor you. Amen.

MRS. MICKELSON

There's plenty of everything, so dig in!

Bess piles eggs onto her plate.

ANDROMEDA

(to Bess)

Ever seen what they do to chickens?

MR. MICKELSON

There is nothing wrong with how we treat animals!

ANDROMEDA

Dad, have you ever seen the inner-workings of a poultry farm?

MR. MICKELSON

Who cares! Animals are for eating!

MRS. MICKELSON

(cutting in loudly)

Thank you for spending time with us before your busy day.

A beat.

MRS. MICKELSON  
Bess, how's the wedding planning coming?

BESS  
Well, Fred and I are taking a little bit of a break right now.

MRS. MICKELSON  
(smiling broadly)  
I'm so sorry to hear that.

BESS  
We're still engaged.

MRS. MICKELSON  
Oh.

MR. MICKELSON  
Jarvis, you still covering sports for the Naperville Sun?

JARVIS  
Yeah. Just the usual basketball stuff. I did just do a piece on the rubber duck race in St. Charles.

MRS. MICKELSON  
Sounds very nice.

ANDROMEDA  
(shaking head in disgust)  
Rubber. It's impossible to recycle.

MR. MICKELSON  
Rubber helps everyone!

A knock at the door. Mr. Mickelson throws his napkin down, walks to the door.

MR. MICKELSON  
Know where we'd be without rubber?  
In a horse and buggy wondering why doors can't stay open because there are no doorstops!

He opens the door. It's Fred. He holds a chai latte.

MR. MICKELSON  
(happy to see him)  
Why Fred, welcome. Come on in. Have some bacon.

FRED  
Hi everyone.

A beat.

FRED  
I've come to apologize. Doug, I'm  
sorry for hitting you.

MRS. MICKELSON  
Oh my goodness! You hit my son?

FRED  
Yes, Mrs. Mickelson. And I'm sorry.  
Bess, I'm sorry for acting like a  
jerk. I was immature. (throwing up  
his hands) If you want to do his  
movie, that's fine. I just ask that  
I be able to stick around and  
watch?

The room is silent. Everyone is stunned.

WADE  
I liked you better as a jerk.

BESS  
I forgive you. It's okay if you're  
here while we film. Doug?

Wade shakes his head no.

DOUG  
Uh...sure.

FRED  
You forgive me?

DOUG  
Yeah.

Fred steps over, holds out his hand. Doug shakes it.

FRED  
Guess this means I can keep an eye  
on you, Doug E. Fresh.

Fred hold his eyes for a moment, then laughs.

INT. MICKELSON FAMILY BASEMENT - A LITTLE LATER

SERIES OF SHOTS - MAKING THE MOVIE

Doug and Bess sit in separate chairs, tied up. Wade is behind the camera.

BESS  
What're you thinking, Hamish?

DOUG  
About you, me, and room service of  
glazed lamb and a bottle of  
cabernet franc...

BESS  
Nick!

DOUG  
Give me a moment. I was a boy  
scout, you know, and was quite deft  
with knots. The boy scouts  
originated in the UK,  
incidentally...

The family cat, JOSH, comes into the room, leaps onto Doug. Andromeda pulls the cat away.

WADE  
Mom! Can you keep Josh upstairs?

BESS  
What is with your family and pet  
names?

A MOMENT LATER

Doug frees himself from the ropes, then reaches around Bess's waist to untie the knot. He can't quite get it.

Bess and Doug are face-to-face for several seconds. She blushes.

Fred clears his throat disapprovingly.

WADE (OS)  
Fred, shut up. Doug, go!

DOUG  
Relax. Silver is long gone.

Colin enters. He wears his fake mustache and a trench coat.

COLIN  
But I'm not.

BESS  
You're playing for the wrong team,  
Landis.

COLIN  
Yet it appears I'm about to bat in  
the game-winning run.

Colin points a gun at Doug.

DOUG  
But what happens when we pitch you  
an unexpected curve ball?

COLIN  
Huh?

Doug grabs the rope and whips it at Colin, hitting him in the face. Colin covers his face and yelps in pain. He's really hurt.

A MOMENT LATER

DOUG  
But what happens when we pitch you  
an unexpected curve ball?

COLIN  
(turning away, shielding face)  
Huh?

Doug whips the gun out of his hand, runs and tackles him. They wrestle on the floor.

Josh comes to the window, starts scratching at it.

WADE (OS)  
We got it. Even with Josh in there.  
Let's take five.

INT. MICKELSON KITCHEN

Bess instructs Doug on how to properly fight someone. She grabs his hand, pulls his arm over her shoulder as if about to flip him over.

Fred gives Doug annoyed stares. The other guys drink sodas and watch.

INT. MICKELSON HOME - MR. MICKELSON'S OFFICE

Wade films Jarvis and Bess.

JARVIS

Use any means necessary to lure in  
Nick Hamish.

BESS

By any means, do you mean play to  
his libido?

FRED (OS)

What?

WADE (OS)

Fred you're a visitor to my closed  
set. Shut up. Please. Alright,  
Jarvis, action!

JARVIS

When I say any means, I mean if you  
need to cross the line, do so.

BESS

I think I understand.

JARVIS

Good. Do not fail me.

Bess exits. Wade goes in for a closeup on Jarvis showing  
menace.

WADE (OS)

Got it. Let's move to the basement  
for your death scene!

INT. MICKELSON HOME - MR. MICKELSON'S OFFICE

Colin is slumped on the floor. There are two empty chairs  
with ropes on the floor.

JARVIS

Landis, you fool! Get up!

Colin gets to his feet, rubbing his head.

JARVIS

What have you done! You let them  
get away!

Colin races out of the room.

ANDROMEDA (OS)  
 (in a robotic voice)  
 Self-destruct will commence in 20  
 seconds.

JARVIS  
 No. They found the self-destruct  
 button. Why did I trust the girl?  
 Nick Hamish, of all my adversaries,  
 you were the most formidable.  
 Relish the victory, sir. I bid you  
 a fond and final adieu.

WADE (OS)  
 Cut! Nailed it!

Wade swings the camera around to Colin, Doug, Andromeda,  
 Fred and Bess. They're all clapping, but Fred. He glares at  
 Doug.

INT. RUBY TUESDAY - AFTERNOON

Through Wade's camera, Doug and Bess sit huddled in a booth.  
 In the background, people heap food onto their plates at a  
 buffet.

BESS  
 I wonder what you're really up to,  
 Mr. Conyers.

DOUG  
 Is it a crime to take a beautiful  
 woman out for a fine meal.

BESS  
 This place is a bit indulgent,  
 don't you think?

DOUG  
 I'm an art collector. I like the  
 finer things.

BESS  
 (running her finger across his  
 cheek)  
 Are you trying to collect me?

Doug blanks.

DOUG  
 Line?

WADE (OS)

Are you...

DOUG

Are you for sale?

BESS

Depends if you're interested in a permanent exhibition or something a bit more temporary.

DOUG

Which do you prefer?

A baby from somewhere in the restaurant wails.

WADE (OS)

Everybody hold for the baby.

A MOMENT LATER

DOUG

I'd have to examine your value before adding you to my museum's perman...

In the background, Jarvis and Colin go through buffet line.

WADE (OS)

Cut. (to Bess and Doug) Jarvis and Colin are in the buffet line. Andromeda, can you grab them?

A MOMENT LATER

DOUG

I'd have to examine your value before adding you to my museum's permanent collection.

WAITER (OS)

What's going on here?

Wade swings the camera at the waiter. Wade's hand comes into view. He holds a 20 dollar bill.

WADE

Why don't you check on another table?

The waiter pockets the 20 and leaves.

A MOMENT LATER

DOUG

Why don't we turn a late lunch into  
an early dinner and then into a  
late night and late morning?

BESS

You're very persuasive, Mr.  
Conyers.

Bess caresses Doug's hand. Doug reacts with out-of-character excitement.

WADE (OS)

Cut! Perfect! Let's head to the  
park.

Bess touches his hand even after Wade says cut. She looks away.

FRED

(to Doug, sarcastic)

Man you're good. I didn't even know  
you were acting.

Doug doesn't respond. Everyone gets up and leaves.

Fred stays seated. He stares intensely at Doug.

EXT. WOODED AREA NEAR PARK - DAY

Through the video camera, Bess and Doug walk along a path.

She removes a gun from her purse and points it at him.

BESS

I double-crossed you, Mr. Conyers.  
Or should I say...Nick Hamish?

DOUG

Does a double-cross count when your  
target is aware of the ruse?

Bess lowers the gun.

DOUG

Former Agent Zola Vasser. You  
play the part of an art dealer  
rather well.

BESS

And you play the limey stooge perfectly. But sadly, I must pull the curtains on your performance. (raises gun) A new play starring Mr. Silver and yours truly is about to open.

She shoots. It's empty.

DOUG

Or close before the dress rehearsal. You shouldn't leave your gun lying around.

Bess shakes her head in disbelief.

DOUG

You still have a chance. Help me kill Silver and the CIA will take you back.

BESS

Are you insane?

DOUG

(grabbing her shoulders)  
No, and neither are you.

BESS

Stay away from me.

DOUG

I didn't last night.

BESS

That was business.

DOUG

Not all of it.

They freeze, an inch away from each other. Fred groans.

WADE (OS)

Shhh!

Wade turns the camera on Fred.

WADE (OS)

That's it. You're banned from the set.

Fred pays no attention to Wade. He fixates on Bess and Doug.

And then suddenly, Fred goes berserk. Suppressed laughter from Colin and Jarvis. Wade swings the camera back around.

Doug and Bess kiss passionately.

Fred barrels into the scene. He pulls Doug off Bess and pushes him down.

Wade, still behind the camera, runs towards Fred, who's about to attack Doug. Fred turns on Wade.

From the perspective of the camera, Fred's hand covers the lens, then the camera flips through the air and crashes on a giant rock.

The action comes to a halt. No one says a word.

FRED  
Bess, let's go.

Bess stands still.

BESS  
No, Fred. That's it.

FRED  
What?

BESS  
The wedding...you and me...it's off.

Wade and Doug high five. Jarvis and Colin hug.

FRED  
You'll come around. You always do.  
(to Doug)  
Hey Doug E. Fresh. Good luck entering your shitty little festival now.

Fred points to the smashed camera on the ground. The tape has popped out, lies mangled on the ground.

WADE  
Oh we'll be there. Are you still coming?

FRED  
Wouldn't miss it.

WADE

Well then, you might want to consider finding a new date.

FRED

Fuck you, Wade!

Fred stomps off to his car.

Bess stands still, in shock. Doug goes over to her, attempts to hold her hand. She pulls away.

BESS

I...need some time to process.

Doug doesn't respond.

BESS

I just ended a relationship I've had since high school.

DOUG

An on and off relationship.

BESS

I need time.

Bess walks away.

DOUG

Wait, let me drive you.

BESS

I wanna be alone.

Doug watches her go, then slumps to the ground. Wade walks over and picks up the battered camera and broken tape.

WADE

All our footage was on here.

COLIN

At least you finally kissed her.

DOUG

It's official. Now I quit.

A long beat. Wade brightens suddenly.

WADE

It won't be what we intended, but we can have something ready in time for tomorrow night.

DOUG

Huh?

WADE

Still want to prove Fred wrong?

DOUG

Doesn't matter.

WADE

Of course it matters!

DOUG

No, it doesn't.

WADE

Little brother, that goon just attacked you again. He's gonna come to this thing ready to laugh at you.

Doug lowers his face into his hands.

WADE

Come on, Doug. I only need to film you for a scene or two. I already have all the footage I need to put something together.

DOUG

Huh?

WADE

Let's hurry. We need to swing by Circuit City on the way.

INT. PARK DISTRICT COMMUNITY CENTER - SUNDAY NIGHT

About 75 people, including Doug, Wade, Jarvis, Andromeda, and Colin sit in metal folding chairs in front of a small projection screen. Wade's secretary Peggy is there.

Fred stands in the back, scowling. Bess is nowhere in sight.

NANCY

(standing up)

Welcome everyone, to the first annual Indie Short Film Festival of Greater Chicago sponsored by the Lombard Park District.

A smattering of applause.

NANCY

Our first film is from the celebrated director, Vincent K. Opaque. He decided to show his (glancing at notes) satirical meta-spy thriller at our little festival instead of Sundance. Finally, someone said "no thank you" to the great ego of Robert Redford. Vincent, would you care to say something about your film (glancing at notes) "The Blackest Operation?"

JARVIS

I prefer not to address crowds. The film's producer will say a word.

WADE

(addressing crowd)

Hi, I'm Wade Mickelson. Mr. Opaque has decided to rename the film. It's now called "A Covert Spy's Journey into Mayhem."

CUT TO: THE SCREEN

Fade in. Wade sits behind the desk in his dad's office. Doug sits opposite. Andromeda's heavily synthesized, dark music plays in the background.

WADE

You're in deep shit, Hamish. This is the last time the CIA collaborates with you fuckin' Brits!

DOUG

(in terrible British accent)

Maybe you've never seen an agent go under such deep cover.

WADE

Deep cover my ass! We surveilled you the entire time.

Doug's eyes bulge.

CUT TO: THE AUDIENCE

Someone enters the room. Doug whips around in his chair. It's his parents. His mother waves. Doug then makes eye contact with Fred. Fred stares at him with disdain.

CUT TO: SCREEN

WADE

Show this limey bastard the tape.

Jarvis, wearing a suit, holds up a video tape.

WADE

After showing you, we're gonna  
FedEx copies to MI-5, MI-6, and  
Buckingham fuckin' Palace!

Doug shows alarm.

WADE

Carter, push play, and watch this  
rat bastard squirm.

Jarvis puts the tape in a TV/VCR combo. The camera centers in on the TV screen, then cuts to the footage Colin and Wade shot the night of the callback.

The image shows Doug and Bess chatting in the restaurant.

WADE (OS)

Well, well, well, there you are  
chatting it up with Zola Vasser...

DOUG (OS)

My job was to infiltrate Silver's  
organization!

WADE (OS)

Yes, but look what happens here.

Fred enters the restaurant, sits at the table. The camera zooms in on Doug's stunned face.

WADE (OS)

We sent Agent Manson in because we  
knew you had crossed the line. Your  
look of surprise told us  
everything.

DOUG (OS)  
I was surprised to see another  
agent, that's all!

WADE (OS)  
Save it, shit face!

CUT TO: THE AUDIENCE

Doug jerks around and sees Bess come through the door. She stands in the back, about 20 feet from Fred. Bess and Fred look at each other. Doug starts to sweat.

CUT TO: THE SCREEN

A close-up on a toy car in the Mickelson's front yard.

WADE (OS)  
That was quite a car bomb you  
rigged in Agent Manson's car.

The toy car explodes.

DOUG (OS)  
I didn't do that!

WADE (OS)  
You wanted him out of the way  
before meeting up with Silver's #2,  
Nester LaGrange.

CUTS TO: planetarium, meeting Colin as Landis.

WADE (OS)  
You fuckin' trader! Meet the right  
woman and she'll introduce you to  
all the right crooks, eh?

CUTS TO: Doug and Bess meeting Jarvis as Silver at Ferris Wheel. He hands them an envelope. The image freezes. The perspective shifts back to Wade behind his desk.

WADE  
And here's the coup de grâce. The  
payout. Inconvertible proof you are  
dirty.

DOUG  
That wasn't a payout! That was a  
confession from Silver himself! He  
wanted witness protection.

WADE  
Thaddeus Silver? Witness  
protection? Can you prove it?

DOUG  
No. I've lost the envelope.

WADE  
Likely story.

DOUG  
But you know what I didn't lose?  
(he pulls a gun from his sock) Give  
me the tape.

Jarvis ejects it, hands it over.

DOUG  
Now if you'll excuse me, gentlemen,  
Zola and I have a flight to catch.

WADE  
Just tell me, was that a payout?

DOUG  
Yes. A certain microchip for a  
large check and Zola's freedom.  
(standing) Until next time, I bid  
you adieu.

The screen goes black.

CUT TO: AUDIENCE

Nancy stands up in front of the screen, clapping, a confused  
look on her face.

NANCY  
Any questions before we start our  
next film?

MR. MICKELSON  
Yeah. Why so much foul language?

WADE  
(standing up)  
Sir, it's escapist fun.

MR. MICKELSON  
But what values are you promoting  
with that kind of talk?

WADE

That it's fuckin' fun to pretend.

MR. MICKELSON

Watch your mouth!

NANCY

(to Mr. Mickelson)

Let's all relax. This isn't Sundance.

DOUG

It's alright. He's our dad.

MRS. MICKELSON

I have a comment! That was just a wonderful movie.

FRED

(yelling out from back)

Here's one. Why was it so confusing!

WADE

Vincent designed it with repeated viewings in mind, to make it more timeless. So maybe someone as simple as the gentleman in the back wouldn't understand.

FRED

I thought the male lead's acting was terrible!

DOUG

(standing up)

It was satire, sir. Maybe you didn't understand that either.

FRED

That movie was ridiculous!

NANCY

Sir, I'm going to have to ask you to leave. We are civilized at this film festival -- unlike some others you'll find in the state of Utah.

Fred storms out. Bess follows him. Doug can't believe it. He sits back down.

NANCY

Okay, are there any other questions?

A beat.

NANCY

Any cast or crew want to say something?

BESS

(reentering room, calling out from back)

Yes! Hi, I played Zola in the film. I would like to thank Doug, who played Nick Hamish, for not giving up on me.

She walks towards where Doug is seated.

BESS

It took me years to realize I should...act with him.

Bess smiles at Doug. He beams back at her.

NANCY

Okay, we'll start our next short in 5 minutes.

Doug pulls Bess away from everyone, gets close.

BESS

I think I might love you too.

DOUG

Really?

BESS

Fred's a good guy. I know you can't see that. He is though. But, he's not the one for me. And maybe the history I've had with him has blinded me to the fact that we have a history too. And I can't imagine my future without you in my life.

Bess stares at Doug expectantly. A beat.

DOUG

I'm glad to hear you say that. Now, how about we stop talking and pick up from that last scene?

They kiss.

CUT TO: BACK OF ROOM

Jarvis slides over to Peggy.

JARVIS  
You'd be perfect as the female lead  
in our next film.

Peggy doesn't respond. Colin approaches.

COLIN  
Hi again. You see that car  
explosion? I did that.

PEGGY  
I'm gonna go.

COLIN  
Wait, could I have your number?

PEGGY  
No.

JARVIS  
If you had to give it to one of us,  
who would it be?

Peggy rolls her eyes and walks away.

COLIN  
She very clearly looked at me,  
indicating I'm the winner.

JARVIS  
Bullshit!

CUT BACK TO: BESS AND DOUG

Wade interrupts their tender moment.

WADE  
Doug, check this out. For the next  
Hamish movie, Jarvis plays a  
digital terrorist who holds you  
hostage, Colin a corrupt FBI agent  
who holds Zola hostage. And it all  
takes place in Dublin.

DOUG  
But I'm a bad guy now, right?

WADE  
Then we'll make it a prequel.

BESS  
I'm in.

WADE  
Great! I'll have a script ready in  
a week.

DOUG  
Well then, Bess and I better go  
build some chemistry.

#### MONTAGE OF SHOOTING NEW MOVIE

-- Doug and Bess chase Colin on bikes. Wade drives behind.  
Andromeda hangs out of the window, filming.

-- Bess and Doug have a shootout with Jarvis in the park.  
Park police run into the scene. Doug puts his hands up. The  
others run.

-- Colin drags a gigantic bomb past Mr. Mickelson as he mows  
the lawn.

-- Jarvis watches Lance and Molly from the acting class  
interrogate Doug in the conference room of the catering  
offices. Colin blows up the door. Jarvis ducks. Bess bursts  
in the door, pulls out Doug.

-- Doug and Bess share a bubble bath with an absurd amount  
of bubbles. Jarvis comes in pointing a gun. Josh the cat  
jumps into the tub.