

The Campaign

by
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EXT. THE ROYALTY - DAY

In the afternoon sun PEOPLE are passing under the marquee of a single screen movie theater, THE ROYALTY. One guy, TODD BANNER, is standing in front of the box office watching the people pass.

The marquee reads:

TODAY ONLY
SLIGHT OF THE HAND
3 6 9

MIDNIGHT SHOW
SLAP SHOT
WITH LIVE ACTORS!

Todd turns and enters the theater.

INT. THE ROYALTY THEATER - DAY

With the movie flickering on the screen the only light on his face, we see Todd's face intently watching the screen. After a few seconds the camera pulls out to show Todd standing in the middle of the theater. Todd turns and begins to look around the theater.

PAN THE EMPTY THEATER FROM TODD'S POV

The camera comes to rest back on a shot of Todd. He stands there for a moment before looking back at the screen.

SND FX DOOR OPENING

Todd turns around to see who's coming in.

INT. THE ROYALTY THEATER - CONTINUOUS

A Janitor, JOHN, is pulling his cleaning equipment into the room. He stops.

JOHN
Oh, sorry. I thought the room was
empty.

John backs out of the theater banging his equipment along the way.

INT. THE ROYALTY THEATER - CONTINUOUS

Todd watches John exit before turning back to the movie. He stands for a few seconds before dropping into his seat.

INT. THE ROYALTY CANDY STAND - NIGHT

As PEOPLE and a few EMPLOYEES pass, Todd is slumped on the candy counter as TONY counts money.

TONY

Hey, ya started out slow but it
picked up as the day went on.

Tony sees that his words aren't having any effect in stimulating Todd's morose mood.

TONY (CONT'D)

Come on, kid! Did you know The
Godfather only made six grand it's
first day?

Todd looks up.

TODD

Really?

Tony pulls some candy out from the counter and tosses it to Todd. Tony grabs the money and paperwork as he walks from behind the counter.

TONY

Here.

Todd stops as he tries to absorb that.

TONY (CONT'D)

I mean, I made a killing the rest
of the weekend, I think it was over
five million.

TODD

Here?

TONY

No, stupid. Nationwide. Here. . .

Tony stops and thinks for a second. He's been cooking his books for so long and even though it's decades out, he's still hesitant to talk.

TONY (CONT'D)

. . .we did okay.

Tony places his hand with the money on Todd's shoulder and they walk through the lobby.

TONY (CONT'D)

You did okay today, Todd. You did a good job on the movie.

TODD

Film.

Tony looks at Todd and laughs.

TONY

No writing on the screen, kid, you're making movies.

Tony opens the door to his office and lets Todd in first.

INT. THE ROYALTY OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Todd's sitting down dejectedly as Tony passes behind the desk.

TONY

Let's get to it, shall we? I've got a bunch of hockey stick waving lunatics outside. Our neighbors hate Slap Shot night but it makes us a bloody fortune.

TODD

Glad to hear that, Tony. What's my bad news?

Tony looks down at the accounting sheet while Todd is pulling a piece of paper out of his top pocket.

TONY

You had twelve hundred and forty six paying customers.

Todd nods in agreement.

TODD

That's what I got.

Tony looks up.

TONY

Thanks for the back-up, kid.

Todd bristles a moment. Tony was the only one willing to screen the movie and here he was doubling checking his books.

TODD

Sorry. I was just. . .

TONY

. . .ah, I'm just fucking with ya, kid. I'd check up on me if I were you too.

Tony leans forward seriously.

TONY (CONT'D)

But I'd never fuck with the little guy. You may not believe this. . .

Tony leans back.

TONY (CONT'D)

. . .but I love the movies. Made a couple myself back in the day.

Tony loses himself for a moment in memories.

TODD

I know. You showed them to me as part of the deal to run my fi. . . movie.

TONY

Those were the days, Todd. We actually had equipment to lug around. Today you kids have it too easy with your digital cameras and slap dash editing. I remember this one set-up when the light fell into the set. Almost burned down a city block.

Tony laughs as Todd sits there smiling uneasily.

TODD

Don't you have to get me outta here to set up for the midnight show?

Tony snaps to.

TONY

Yeah, oh, that's right. Thanks. Gotta make sure the organ player has his helmet. They use real pucks when he plays Lady Of Spain.

Tony looks back at his books.

TONY (CONT'D)

Twelve hundred and forty six paying customers over the three screenings at seven fifty a head is. . .

TODD

. . .nine thousan. . .

Tony looks up. Todd is immediately apologetic holding up his hands.

TODD (CONT'D)

. . .sorry. Reflex.

TONY

Nine thousand three hundred and forty-five dollars.

Tony looks up smiling.

TONY (CONT'D)

Not bad, Todd. I mean, you had shit advertising, no word of mouth, and, let's be honest, we're not the Metromix here.

Tony is trying to raise Todd's mood but he's not having much effect.

TODD

Thanks, Tony. But I gotta go. I hate hockey. What's the bottom line?

TONY

You had an interesting customer base, Todd. What they lacked in numbers they sure as hell made up with in spending.

Tony goes back to his numbers.

TONY (CONT'D)

You're fans spent almost four times our average at the stand and they even bought a pile of your posters.

Tony hands Todd a few hundred dollars.

TONY (CONT'D)

That's yours. I don't take a cut of that.

Todd is grateful for this gesture. He slaps the bills against his palm.

TODD

At least I can get fucked up tonight.

TONY

There's always something to say for that.

Todd's putting the poster money in his pocket while Tony continues.

TONY (CONT'D)

And here's where we get to the bottom line.

Todd shuts his eyes, grits his teeth, and leans his head back.

TODD

Give it to me, Tony.

TONY

It's not all bad, Todd. I really liked your movie, I think I already said that, but, even more, I like your audience.

Todd opens his eyes and looks at Tony. Tony smile and laughs.

TONY (CONT'D)

I made a fucking ton of money on concessions. The last time I made this much I was screening some tear-jerker and sold out of anything chocolate.

Tony slams his palms on his desk.

TONY (CONT'D)

So here's what I'm going to do, Todd.

Tony slides over a stack of cash.

TONY (CONT'D)

I'm not going to charge you for the rental.

Todd is having some trouble comprehending what's going on.

TODD
So that means?

Tony points at the cash.

TONY
That nine thousand three hundred
and forty-five dollars is yours.

At first Todd has some trouble believing this but, once he regains his senses, reaches out to grab the money before there is any change of heart.

But, before he gets there, Tony's imposing hand slaps down on the stack of cash. Todd's heart drops to his pancreas.

TONY (CONT'D)
But, because I'm being so fucking
nice here, I get a years exclusive.
Any time you play it within a five
hundred mile radius of LA, it's at
The Royalty.

Todd thinks but for only a second.

TODD
Six months and fifty miles.

It's a stand-off. The old pro versus the new filmmaker. Tony laughs.

TONY
I have taught you well!

Tony takes his hands off the money as he stands and begins to walk from behind his desk. Todd grabs the money and jams it into his pants pocket.

TONY (CONT'D)
Be careful getting outta here,
Todd. Those Slap Shot fans are
crazy.

Todd stands and follows Tony out of the office.

TONY (CONT'D)
One time a guy showed up dressed
like Michael Onktean when he
collected the championship trophy.

They exit the office.

TONY (O.C.) (CONT'D)
I hope he never had to go to the
men's room.

EXT. THE ROYALTY - NIGHT

Todd exits The Royalty into a crowd dressed as various members of the Slap Shot cast. Some are reciting lines, others are just fighting. An old style ambulance is parked at the entrance. Todd passes in front of it to cross the street. The siren and lights blast as Todd jogs crosses the street.

Todd disappears into the night and we're left with the fans of Slap Shot composing themselves as Tony opens the door to The Royalty. The crowd surges past waving sticks, banners, and rubber chickens.

EXT. STREET - DAY

On a blisteringly brilliant day four guys can be seen walking down the street. As they pass people they all turn and gawk. Before we can tell who they are we zoom in on them one at a time to introduce them.

The introductions are classic action hero introductions, fast zoom in, wind rippled hair, glistening of general glistening areas. The music and graphics to each one is different. Their sparkling names rip across the screen. Over the top is appropriate, wouldn't you say? Each characters has a specific demographic gawking at them.

Number One: woman of every type.

Number Two: classic action movie fanboys.

Number Three: gay men.

We'll reveal the last guy's shot sequence when his time comes.

Zoom in on character one, PAUL FROST, with the appropriate introduction. As his fan base gawks he passes nonplused. His name is replaced with the phrase, CURRENT MOVIE GROSS TOTAL: which begins at \$0 and quickly rolls up to \$4,522,785,620.

The shot zooms back to all four before giving the treatment to the next character.

Zoom in on character two, RUSS LECAROS, with the appropriate introduction. As his fan base gawks he passes nonplused. His name is replaced with the phrase, CURRENT MOVIE GROSS TOTAL: which begins at \$0 and quickly rolls up to \$4,495,694,711.

The shot zooms back to all four before giving the treatment to the next character.

Zoom in on character three, EARL CASTALDI, with the appropriate introduction. As his fan base gawks he passes nonplused. His name is replaced with the phrase, CURRENT MOVIE GROSS TOTAL: which begins at \$0 and quickly rolls up to \$3,853,876,539.

The shot zooms back to all four before revealing character four, Todd. Unlike the others, there is no music, the zoom can be a little unsteady, the name bumper can flicker like an early 90's name bumper, and there is no one, absolutely nothing, behind him. His name is replaced with the phrase, CURRENT MOVIE GROSS TOTAL: which begins at \$0 and quickly rolls up to \$12,836,992,234. That astounding number is replaced with the phrase, CURRENT MOVIE GROSS TOTAL IN MOVIES WITHOUT PAUL, RUSS, OR EARL: the \$12,836,992,234 quickly drops to: \$172,356,870. We're not going to stop there. A new bumper reads: CURRENT MOVIE GROSS TOTAL WITH A SPEAKING ROLE: the \$172,356,870 quickly drops to: \$9,345.00.

The shot zooms back out as the four of them turn and head toward tables at an outdoor cafe.

EXT. CAFE - MOMENTS LATER

Paul, Russ, Earl, and Todd are seated at a table relaxed as only four real friends can. Waiters, Waitresses, Civilians, and Industry People pass by to nods of recognition, friendly, of distracted, waves and the general relaxed behavior we see when these four are together.

EARL

I tried to get as much relaxation
in this weekend as I could. I've
got press for the next three weeks
before the opening.

PAUL

I'm leaving Thursday for mine. When
are you leaving?

EARL

Tomorrow.

TODD

What'd you do?

EARL

Hung by the pool.

TODD

What about you, Paul?

PAUL

Ocean. Get a little color before hitting the road.

TODD

And I suppose you have a big week coming up, Russ, so that's why you did nothing?

RUSS

Nope. Partied my ass off. I don't even remember how I got here.

PAUL

I carried you off my couch and threw you in the back of the car.

RUSS

Oh yeah! I dreamt I was in a fire and a big, strong fireman was carrying me to safety.

EARL

More likely carrying you off before you pissed on the couch.

PAUL

Again!

TODD

This week.

PAUL

This week? Today! I swear the reason only have a dog to mask your piss smell.

RUSS

Ah, the things friends do!

There's a pause in the conversation so Todd redirects.

TODD

So, how'd you like my movie?

There's a moment of hesitation at the table.

TODD (CONT'D)

At The Royalty?

As one they begin to heap praises.

EARL

Awesome!

PAUL

I told you all your hard work would pay off. It was brilliant.

RUSS

I don't remember. Was I in it?

TODD

Ya'all are fuckers. You didn't even show, did you?

They strap on their best acting and go to work.

RUSS

Oh, that movie. Yeah, we went together.

TODD

Which show?

Oh shit. Acting is one thing. Thinking is a different ballgame.

PAUL

The early one.

EARL

Yeah, the one you told us to go to.

RUSS

Seriously, was I in it?

Todd looks at them wearily for a moment.

TODD

The early show, eh?

Todd looks at Russ.

TODD (CONT'D)

Yes, you had a cameo. You all had cameos because none of your fucking agents would let you be in, to quote, 'your fucking idiot friends money pit.'

Todd looks around the table.

TODD (CONT'D)

Remember any of that?

No one says anything.

TODD (CONT'D)

But, let's forget that. It seems you have. Let's get back to the early show. The three o'clock screening, right?

They all nod their heads in agreement.

TODD (CONT'D)

Funny, but I didn't see any of you.

PAUL

You know how we are.

EARL

Yeah, we snuck in so as not to distract from the movie.

RUSS

We're good that way.

Todd nods and smiles.

TODD

I'd appreciate that if it were true.

PAUL

It's true! We snuck in and sat in the back.

RUSS

Got there late.

TODD

Late. How late? After the credits?

EARL

Yeah, you know how we are.

TODD

I do, that I do. Well, they must have been the closing credits because for the entire hundred fucking minutes I was the only asshole in the entire theater!

Todd's worked himself up into quite a lather. But just as quickly he calms down.

TODD (CONT'D)

No, that's not entirely true. About half way through the janitor came in to clean the place because he thought it was empty.

PAUL

I hope you didn't stop him from cleaning.

Todd looks at Paul incredulously.

PAUL (CONT'D)

I mean, what difference would it make? You already saw it.

TODD

Shut the fuck up! I can't believe you guys.

EARL

Maybe we're wrong.

TODD

What are you talking about?

EARL

I think we went to the second show.

PAUL

Oh, definitely. I don't think I was even up before four.

RUSS

How were the audiences for that show?

Todd knows they're full of shit.

TODD

The audiences were okay for the two other shows.

EARL

Then that's it! We were at the second show!

Todd looks them over.

TODD

Making pretend all day has gone to your fucking heads! Who do you think you're talking to? You weren't there.

RUSS

How can you be so sure? You said it was a sell out.

TODD

It wasn't even close to a sell out and, do you know why I'm so certain none of you jerks were there? Because I counted every fucking head that passed through the door.

PAUL

Not a bad idea when Tony's doing the count.

They all agree but they also know they're busted.

EARL

We wanted to go.

RUSS

We meant to go.

PAUL

Where were we supposed to go?

Todd stands up.

TODD

Yeah, you're all big stars and I'm a piece of shit. Get it. Don't have to billboard it.

Todd begins to walk away. Earl stands up and blocks his way.

EARL

Come on, hey, we're all in this together.

Earl pulls Todd's chair out. After a beat Todd sits.

TODD

Oh yeah, the support makes me all tingly.

EARL

Todd, you know us. Known us since we were doing work in hot dog suits. We were fucking assholes back then.

RUSS

Really. Remember that time I got a call from Paul but erased the message then forgot which jail he was in?

PAUL

That was a long fucking weekend.

EARL

Yeah, but you got a job as vato number 2 on that series because the producer was there on a DUI.

RUSS

Which lead to you getting the second lead in Kiss Or Punch.

EARL

Which lead to. . .

TODD

. . .ENOUGH! I went to jail too! And, if I remember correctly, it was to protect you, Earl. But I didn't get a part in a series. I didn't get a movie. I got lice and still get calls from my ex-cellmate whenever he has too much to drink and gets wistful.

They sit silently for a beat.

RUSS

You trusted us to be responsible.

EARL

Really! What were you thinking?

PAUL

No kidding! And you're the guy who shot the DVD of me talking to my mother every week that you also play when the call comes in.

EARL

When was the last time you actually talked to your mother, Paul?

PAUL

A year? How long's it been Todd?

TODD

Going on two and a half years.

RUSS

Doesn't she ever ask something that needs an answer?

PAUL

You'd have to ask Todd.

TODD

No, it's the same thing every week.

EARL

How do you put up with it?

TODD

When I get tired of it I jiggle the cable to distort the picture. She thinks she's getting a virus and ends the call.

PAUL

You do that? Dude?!? That's my mother you're fucking with! That's so not right!

TODD

Then I'll let you take the call this week.

PAUL

Hey! I got shit to do.

TODD

And that's just my point. We're all these close buddies, doing things for one another, but, let's be real. I'm the only one doing anything for anyone else.

RUSS

Yeah but you get paid.

TODD

Oh, I do?

Todd stands up and pulls three pieces of paper out of his pocket. He hands one to each of the guys.

EARL

What's this?

TODD

Your bills. You all said you'd pay me to do shit for you.

(MORE)

TODD (CONT'D)

Well, you know what? Time to pay
up, motherfuckers.

Paul, Earl, and Russ look over the bills a little taken
aback.

PAUL

Dude, you charge me fifty bucks an
hour to talk to my mother?

RUSS

I've talked to your mother.

Russ looks at Todd.

RUSS (CONT'D)

You should double that.

Russ leans in towards Todd.

RUSS (CONT'D)

But, dude, I think you're a little
steep for picking up a little grefa
from Gunther.

TODD

See? That's exactly my point. You
all suck.

EARL

He's right, you know.

Russ is waving his bill.

RUSS

Yeah but did you see this bill?

EARL

And what's it amount to, Russ? The
amount you spend on socks in a
month?

RUSS

Hey! I have sensitive and sweaty
feet.

Earl looks at the bill, pulls some money out of his pocket
and holds it out to Todd. Todd hesitates.

TODD

I'm just trying to make a point
really.

RUSS

I'm not going to offer it again.

Todd reaches over and, zip, the money is gone.

RUSS (CONT'D)

The rest of you, pay up.

Slowly Earl and Paul pull out cash and, in various states of begrudging, flip it to Todd. As Todd is collecting the money Russ continues with the admiration society.

RUSS (CONT'D)

But, you know, Todd's right, we've been exceptionally lucky to be as hugely successful as we are.

PAUL

And incredibly talented.

EARL

Don't forget good looking.

PAUL

That goes without saying. But it's not just that. It's our natural charisma.

EARL

And the way the camera loves us.

PAUL

Don't forget. . .

TODD

. . .holy fucking shit! How can you guys talk so much shit with your own cocks in your mouths?

They all begin talking shit over one another.

RUSS

Yeah, yeah, yeah. Shut the fuck up. Are we together or not? Are we the same guys who ran lines for shitty commercials with Todd? Did he direct us and help us get those shitty jobs?

Earl and Paul acquiesce.

RUSS (CONT'D)

And wasn't it Todd who made the decision. . .

EARL

. . .a stupid one. . .

RUSS

. . .to pass up a callback for a part he would have killed because he had to fly to Montreal because you were having artistic differences, Paul?

PAUL

Well, in my defense. . .

RUSS

. . .in your defense, you're an idiot.

The table is silent for a beat.

RUSS (CONT'D)

Forgetting all the chores Todd does to make our lives easier, we should do something to help him grow as an artist.

EARL

Grow? I grew a hundred thou into his fucking movie! In my book that's growing like a mother!

PAUL

Yeah! And I helped, right?

TODD

Stop. Just fucking stop. Listen, I know my movie is a fucking joke to you. Fucking major movie stars. But it's my fucking movie.

(pause)

And I would have liked to share my day with my friends.

For the first real time the true friendship of these guys is evident. It's still full of bluster and bravado but they are friends.

PAUL

We gotta do something more.

EARL

My accountant says I do need a few tax losses.

TODD

Thanks, Earl. Real supportive.

EARL

Hey! I'm just saying. . .

TODD

. . .shit like usual.

EARL

Don't start giving my. . .

RUSS

. . .knock it the fuck off. I swear. Paul has a good idea for the first time in is idiotic existence.

PAUL

Thanks?

RUSS

No offense.

PAUL

None taken!

RUSS

And it almost gets lost in this constant posturing. Let's agree on one thing. We need to step up for Todd. We need to do something for his movie.

Todd looks on with weary expectation. The others truly seem to be working the brain trust. God help the world.

RUSS (CONT'D)

I got it!

Russ looks at Earl who seems focused and Paul who is playing a game on his cellphone.

RUSS (CONT'D)

Can you pay attention for one fucking minute?

PAUL

Video games help me concentrate.

RUSS

And what'd you come up with?

PAUL

I didn't say they help me figure anything out.

RUSS

Good thing I'm here, huh?

Paul puts down his cellphone and pays attention.

RUSS (CONT'D)

What we're going to do is put together a campaign.

PAUL

A campaign?

EARL

A campaign?

RUSS (CONT'D)

Exactly!

Todd looks at all of them pretty much as he usually does. But this time it's to their faces.

RUSS (CONT'D)

Don't look at me like that! I know exactly what you're movie needs.

PAUL

A real screenwriter.

Russ heads off any deviation from the plan.

RUSS

More than that.

EARL

A real cinematographer?

RUSS

It's already in the can.

Everyone looks at Russ expecting something. At this point anything.

RUSS (CONT'D)

We're all going on press tours soon so what we're going to do is chat up

(pause due to confusion)

Sorry, what's the name of the movie?

TODD

Slight of the hand.

RUSS

Slight of the hand. Don't look at me like that. At one time wasn't the name Killing Sally Fields?

TODD

That was a very early draft.

EARL

Before we told you you'd get sued, number one. And you'd never get her to do it number two.

TODD

Well, you never know. If she's approached correctly. . .

RUSS

. . .shut up, he's right. Stupid title. Moving on. While we're on the road we'll chat it up to everyone we speak to.

TODD

Won't your producers get a little pissed that they're footing the bill and all.

RUSS

Don't worry about that. We'll do this after. Give those media people something extra. Let them think they're in on the next big thing before anyone else. They eat that shit up.

Todd's not totally convinced. Earl and Paul see the possibilities. Besides, it'll give them something to do on the road other than answer the same questions thirty-seven times a day.

It might actually be fun.

TODD

Don't get me wrong, I appreciate the thought, but, no ones seen the fucking thing.

RUSS

That's the beauty of the plan. How many people saw it during it's run?

TODD

Twelve hundred and forty six.

RUSS

Perfect!

TODD

You're losing me.

PAUL

Me too.

EARL

We lost you at hello.

PAUL

Shut the fuck. . .

RUSS

. . .boys! Boys! Boys! The fewer
people to have seen it during it's
'limited and exclusive engagement'
so it could qualify for this years
best picture nomination the better!

Russ lifts his glass. Slowly they follow suit.

RUSS (CONT'D)

To the next winning of best picture

(pause)

What's the name again.

Todd and his glass slump.

TODD

Slight of the hand.

RUSS

Slight of the hand!

They clink glasses and repeat the title.

EARL

Slight of the hand.

PAUL

Slight of the hand.

They all take sips of their beverage.

TODD

What the fuck!

RUSS

That's the spirit!

Todd shakes his head still not convinced this will amount to
anything.

TODD

Why do you guys think anyone, the
press much less the public, will
buy any of this bullshit?

Earl feigns shock!

EARL

Bullshit?

Earl stands up.

EARL (CONT'D)

Bullshit?

Earl looks around and sees a Toidi (pronounced Toy-dee)
Energy Drink on another table. He reaches over to get it and,
with a smile, no one at the table objects.

EARL (CONT'D)

Have you forgotten who you're
talking to?

Paul and Russ stand up.

EARL (CONT'D)

Probably the best spokes triumph...
triumm. . .three of all time!

RUSS

Mount Spokesmore!

PAUL

I don't know what the fuck they're
talking about but we make boatloads
of cash talking about shit.

The shot moves to an ECU of Earl's face as we go into a
commercial for Toidi.

EXT. BARREN WASTELAND - DAY

The world behind Earl is devoid of life. Crumbling. In the
last vestiges of existence.

EARL

Does it seem there's no life? No
reason? No pizzazz?

Earl takes a sip of Toidi. His face sparkles. Bright colors
and energetic nymphs fill the pulsating sky. Sounds ripple.

EARL (CONT'D)
Then you're doing it wrong!

Earl sticks his can of Toidi into the camera.

EARL (CONT'D)
Start doing it right! Toidi!

Zoom out revealing a bustling world in back of a smiling and product holding Earl. The fast disclaimer voice pops in.

MALE V/O
Toidi is not recommended for people
who are or ever plan on being
pregnant, sleepy, continent, or
conversant. If you are nearsighted
please consult your ophthalmologist
before ingesting Toidi.

Zoom to a close-up of Earl and the Toidi can.

EARL
Toidi. When you want your world
brighter than you.

EXT. CAFE - MOMENTS LATER

We see everyone at the table for a moment before going into a Norom jeans commercial featuring Russ.

EXT. BUILDING - DAY

Russ is running towards the camera. Behind him we see a building that is about to explode. Just as the building bursts into a ball of flames Russ turns to face the building. As the buildings explosion fills the screen we zoom into label on his jeans.

MALE V/O
Norom.

We zoom out to see scantily clad woman crawling, walking, running out of the wreckage toward Russ.

MALE V/O (CONT'D)
The jeans that transform your
world.

As a few of the women reach Russ he turns to the camera and winks.

RUSS

Norom!

EXT. CAFE - MOMENTS LATER

We see everyone at the table for a moment before going into a Deahtaf (pronounced Deh-taf) sports car commercial featuring Paul.

EXT. FUTURISTIC HIGHWAY - DAY

Futuristic convertible sports car speeding down a futuristic landscape.

EXT. FUTURISTIC HIGHWAY - CONTINUOUS

Paul in the middle of the road. With each cut he's getting more and more prepared to jump.

PAUL

Road sensitive handling.

EXT. FUTURISTIC HIGHWAY - DAY

Futuristic convertible sports car speeding down a futuristic landscape.

EXT. FUTURISTIC HIGHWAY - CONTINUOUS

Paul in the middle of the road. Paul lowers slightly.

PAUL

German engineering.

EXT. FUTURISTIC HIGHWAY - DAY

Futuristic convertible sports car speeding down a futuristic landscape.

EXT. FUTURISTIC HIGHWAY - CONTINUOUS

Paul in the middle of the road. Paul jumps.

PAUL

More MPG's than RPM's.

EXT. FUTURISTIC HIGHWAY - DAY

Futuristic convertible sports car speeding down a futuristic landscape.

EXT. FUTURISTIC HIGHWAY - CONTINUOUS

Paul in mid air as the car passes underneath him. He falls behind the wheel comfortably.

PAUL
Computer sensitive seating.

Paul shifts gears and pulls away.

PAUL (CONT'D)
Deahtaf.

We watch the taillights fade as the word Deahtaf superimposes on the screen.

PAUL (CONT'D)
Drop into one today.

EXT. CAFE - MOMENTS LATER

We see everyone at the table. Earl puts the Toidi back on the table as Russ and Paul sit down. Todd looks at the three biggest stars in the movie world and, for the first time, thinks that, even if they can't pull it off, it'll be one hell of a ride.

TODD
You are all diseased.

Earl sits back down and smiles at Todd.

TODD (CONT'D)
But what the hell? What have I got to lose.

PAUL
My hundred grand you ass.

The conversation at the table devolves into bickering as we:

FADE TO:

EXT. CLEAR BLUE SKY - DAY

A jet flies through the crystal clear sky nose left.

EXT. FLUFFY CLOUDED SKY - DAY

A jet flies through the clouds nose right.

EXT. STORMY SKY - DAY

A jet flies through the stormy sky nose left before changing it's mind and turning right. Changing it's mind again it heads toward the camera.

We pan down through the clouds to reveal a gray day in Los Angeles.

The pan stops revealing a modest house in a neighborhood full of them. We zoom into the house then:

CUT TO:

INT. TODD'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Todd is at the computer watching Slight Of The Hand. Next to him is a 35mm film container, a pile of cash, and a pile of bills.

Todd stops the playback and stands. He paces back and forth in front of the desk.

TODD

What to do? What to do?

Todd picks up the cash and bills then drops them on the film container.

TODD (CONT'D)

I can catch up on all my bills,
even get a couple months ahead on
the mortgage. Or I can spend most
of it to transfer that new eighteen
minute cut to film and grad myself
a special at Freddie Burger.

Todd looks at everything in front of him. The uncertainty is evident. But only for a moment. He picks up the bills and tosses them into a barrel.

TODD (CONT'D)

Fuck it. I'll steal cable from my
neighbors.

Todd sits back in front of the computer while picking up his phone. He dials. After a beat he speaks.

TODD (CONT'D)

Jace. Todd.

(pause)

I know. Listen. I know. Listen. I need eighteen minutes transferred.

(pause)

I know. Listen. I know. Listen.

Todd reaches over, picks up the cash and slaps it on the phone.

TODD (CONT'D)

Yeah, yeah. I know. Listen. I have the two grand I owe you from the last edit and

(pause)

Fucking listen, will ya? I can pay for the next eighteen minutes in advance.

(pause)

No, I ain't shittin' ya. Listen.

Todd slaps the cash on the phone larger.

TODD (CONT'D)

Cash motherfucker!

Todd leans back in the chair tossing the cash onto the desk.

TODD (CONT'D)

Yeah, I thought you'd say that.

Todd leans to the desk, picks up a disc and puts it into the burner.

TODD (CONT'D)

Be there in a hour.

Todd clicks the mouse a few times before sitting back.

TODD (CONT'D)

Cash. There is no substitute. For shutting people the fuck up!

INT. HOTEL ROOM - DAY

A MAKE-UP ARTIST is doing last minute touch-ups to Russ while an AUDIO TECHNICIAN finishes adjusting his microphone. Russ turns around to look at the poster for his new movie, Cone Of Uncertainty. Russ looks forward.

RUSS

Can you read the full name of the movie on the poster?

MALE V/O

Yes.

RUSS

No bad words? Good.

Russ looks at the Make-Up Artist.

RUSS (CONT'D)

Last time I one of these for Assumption Potion my head was in the way so all you could read was ass pot.

The Make-Up Artist and Audio Technician laugh.

RUSS (CONT'D)

Oh yeah, funny now.

MALE V/O

We're ready for the first one.

Russ adjusts himself in the chair as the Make-Up Artist and Audio Technician exit.

RUSS

Only seven hundred and sixty three to go.

INT. HOTEL ROOM - DAY

A MAKE-UP ARTIST is doing last minute touch-ups to Earl while an AUDIO TECHNICIAN finishes adjusting his microphone. Earl's calmly sitting there.

MALE V/O

We're going to have to adjust the set.

EARL

Why? What's the problem?

MALE V/O

Your heads in the way of the title so it says suck.

Earl sits up and looks at a monitor. He laughs.

EARL

Well if that ain't something.

The Make-Up Artist and Audio Technician exit as two SET DRESSERS enter. Earl gets up so they can do adjustments and we see the movie poster for Sphere Of Luck.

After some quick adjustments Earl sits, the Set Dressers exit and everything's ready to go. Earl looks into the camera and smiles.

EARL (CONT'D)

I'm crazy Earl and I'm going to sit
in this chair right here until I
say the phrase action-packed a
million times!

MALE V/O

Then let's get ready to humble!

The crew and Earl laugh.

INT. HOTEL ROOM - DAY

On this set there is a poster for the movie Biff Baxter 2: Container Of Death, a chair and that's about it. After a few beats Paul jumps onto the set and into the chair.

PAUL

Man! No way I coulda held that. I
woulda been pissing all over the
first reporter.

The poster wavers so a SET DRESSER runs over to stop it. A MAKE-UP races over to check his face. An AUDIO TECHNICIAN quickly puts his microphone on. Just as quickly they exit.

MALE V/O

You all set?

Paul looks around. He looks into the camera then points to his side off screen.

PAUL

Just make sure that cooler doesn't
get warm or empty and we'll be good
to go.

MALE V/O

Got it covered Paul.

PAUL

Then let's get through this. I got
shit to fuck tonight.

MALE V/O

Here comes the first reporter. Tara
DeLuca from KLOB.

Paul gets excited.

PAUL

Tara! I fucked her on the last one
of these!

Paul looks directly into the camera.

PAUL (CONT'D)

Ya shoulda kept her for the last
one.

INT. HOTEL ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Russ is sitting there with a prototypical movie star smile.

RUSS

Once I got to the set I knew this
was going to be different. It
doesn't happen often, but when it
does, you can feel it in the air.

Russ leans forward slightly.

RUSS (CONT'D)

It's a sense that everyone knows
we're doing something special.

Russ leans back and laughs.

RUSS (CONT'D)

I know some people may find it
ridiculous to say that about a full
blown action adventure movie such
like Cone Of Uncertainty, but it's
true.

INT. HOTEL ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Earl is sitting there with a prototypical movie star smile.

EARL

Even before I got to the set I could feel this was going to be different. There was just something about the way the director, Ryan Jacobs, who, as you know, is better known as for his work in the romantic comedy genre, just got what we were trying to do with Sphere Of Luck.

Earl leans forward slightly.

EARL (CONT'D)

I'm not sure if it was his sensitivity with the material or his amazing comedic timing, but he turned the cop buddy zombie genre into something the likes of which I've never seen.

Earl leans back and laughs.

EARL (CONT'D)

And, as you know, there aren't many actors in the world who know that genre better!

INT. HOTEL ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Paul is sitting there with a prototypical movie star smile.

PAUL

And, that being true, I know all the cliches and, in Biff Baxter 2: Container Of Death, we reimagined them. It's as if we spent all of our time breaking down the old way of creating a scene and building it into a new and, we hope, awe inspiring paradigm that, one day, other filmmakers will use as cliches to create their art.

Paul leans forward slightly.

PAUL (CONT'D)

Let me tell you, for me to recreate the character of Biff Baxter, as I've done in Biff Baxter 2: Container Of Death, you know it would have to be pretty special.

Paul leans back and laughs.

PAUL (CONT'D)
I don't have to tell you the lesson
I learned from Jake Stevens 6:
Death's Bony Grip!

Paul sits there smiling for a beat before the camera pans to a shot of the space between Paul and the Reporter.

MALE V/O
And cut! Thank you. Bring in the
next reporter.

A female hand, ERIN LARGO, reaches into scene.

ERIN
Thank you.

A male hand reaches into the scene. We zoom out as they shake.

ERIN (CONT'D)
I hope this movie does wonderfully.

Russ stands still shaking hands with Erin.

RUSS
Thank you, this was fun. I
appreciate your time.

As Erin speaks the camera zooms in on her face.

ERIN
My pleasure. So, tell me, what's
the real buzz? Anything hot on the
horizon?

EARL
You mean other than Sphere Of Luck,
right?

Erin laughs as we zoom to a two shot showing Earl.

ERIN
But, of course.

Earl leans in close to Erin.

EARL
There is one movie I think is going
to change the perception of film.

Earl leans out of the scene leaving Erin standing in anticipation. After a beat she sits and we zoom to a two shot that reveals Paul.

PAUL
Personally, I've never been as
blown away in a movie theater.

Paul looks around conspiratorially. Erin turns to look in back of her as the camera follows.

PAUL (CONT'D)
But I really shouldn't say
anything.

Erin looks forward and we reveal Earl in front of her.

EARL
It's only been screened once to
qualify for a best picture
nomination.

Erin is dying to be on the inside. We zoom in to capture the excitement on her face.

ERIN
I won't say anything. Until the
time is right, of course.

We zoom out to reveal Erin and Russ. Russ leans back contemplatively.

RUSS
I guess if we just keep it between
us.

Russ looks straight ahead for a beat before leaning in. As he leans in we zoom into him as Earl and Paul enter the screen on the left and right of Russ leaning in at the same time. Each movement they make is exactly timed.

RUSS/EARL/PAUL
Slight of the hand is the greatest
movie I've ever seen.

Russ, Earl, and Paul lean back as Russ fills the screen.

RUSS
Trust me, it's a shoe-in for the
best picture award.

Zoom out to a two shot of Russ and COLE. They stand and shake hands.

COLE
Slight of the hand, eh?

RUSS
I don't know when it's coming out
but, wow! It's really all I can
say, wow.

A Set Dresser enters the scene to adjust items. Russ leans in to Cole.

RUSS (CONT'D)
Remember, Cole, this is between you
and me. Less than a thousand people
have seen it so if it gets out the
shit could really hit the fan.

COLE
You've got my word. Thanks.

Cole exits as another reporter, ANNA SMALL, enters. Russ shakes her hand as they sit.

MALE V/O
Anna Small from KFOB interview with
Russ LeCaroz for Cone Of
Uncertainty.

ANNA
Nice to meet you, Russ.

RUSS
My pleasure, Anna.

ANNA
Before we begin, can I ask you
something.

RUSS
Shoot.

ANNA
I've been hearing about this secret
movie, hand of the something. Know
anything about it?

Russ leans back and that movie star grin crosses his face.

RUSS
All I know is it's gonna be a
monster.

Russ smiles as Anna prepares to begin her interview.

INT. AUDITORIUM - DAY

Rows and rows of tables are filled with every type of movie memorabilia imaginable. Throngs of MOVIE FANS clamor around the tables and rush through the aisles.

At one table sits Todd. Behind him hang posters for Cone Of Uncertainty, Sphere Of Luck, Biff Baxter 2: Container Of Death and the one film Russ, Earl, and Paul did together, Technical Difficulties. Separating the posters is a poster sized picture of Russ, Earl, Paul, and Todd with the words: This man is our only authorized autograph dealer! With an arrow pointing at Todd.

He's doing big business if his limited supplies are any indication. DALE and ROSS are looking over some signed posters.

DALE

How can you get all these autographs? Aren't these guys hard to get a hold of?

ROSS

Yeah! They always on location or on some awesome vacation.

Todd looks at them and shakes his head.

TODD

Can you fucking see the poster?

Dale and Ross look up. Not really seeing what point Todd's trying to make.

TODD (CONT'D)

The one with the picture of me and them?

DALE

You coulda photoshopped that.

ROSS

Yeah, you could photoshopped that.

Todd waves them off.

TODD

Fuck off. You're too stupid for me to sell to.

Todd spins his chair around and grabs some pictures. He turns back and feigns surprise to see them still there.

TODD (CONT'D)
You ass lickers still here?

Dale and Ross are a little nervous.

ROSS
We didn't mean anything by it.

DALE
No, we're just asking. You know how these things are.

ROSS
All kindsa fakers around here.

Todd puts the pictures down and leans on the table.

TODD
I'm going to go over this once for you wastes of non-ulcerated kidneys. We've known each other for years. I've been in all of their movies.

DALE
Yeah! I thought I recognized you!

Dale pushes Ross.

DALE (CONT'D)
Didn't I tell you I recognized him?

ROSS
No.

DALE
Yes, I did.

Dale addresses Todd.

DALE (CONT'D)
I did, you know.

TODD
I don't give a fuck. Yes, you're right, they are busy. Right now they're all on press tours for their new movies.

ROSS
I heard Baxter 2 was kick ass.

DALE
Have you seen it?

TODD

Yeah. It's fucking great.

Ross and Dale high-five each other.

DALE

Awesome!

TODD

Yeah, a fucking dream.

Todd looks Ross and Dale over.

TODD (CONT'D)

So are you going to buy something
or what?

Ross and Dale are now enthralled with the plethora of choices
before them when a voice comes over the public address
system.

MALE V/O

Ladies and gentleman, wrap it up!
The seaview movie memorabilia expo
is closing for the day in twenty
minutes. Make your final purchases
now and head to the exits.

TODD

Thank fucking you.

MALE V/O

Remember the seaview movie
memorabilia expo will reopen
tomorrow at ten AM but, for right
now, let's get moving to the exits.

Todd looks over a flustered Ross and Dale.

TODD

You heard the man, boys. What's it
gonna be?

Ross and Dale huddle for a moment before deciding what to do.

ROSS

We'll take one of each poster.

DALE

Each.

ROSS

Yeah. Each.

Todd deftly pulls the posters and begins to roll them.

DALE

But. . .

Todd stops rolling and looks up at them.

TODD

Yeah?

DALE

Ah. . .

ROSS

. . .we'd like you to sign them
too.

Todd releases the posters and they unroll on the table.

TODD

I'd be glad to, boys. And, you know
what?

Dale and Ross look down at Todd signing their posters.

TODD (CONT'D)

I'll even personalize them at no
charge!

ROSS

I'm Ross.

DALE

I'm Dale.

Todd signs all eight posters and slides them toward them.

TODD

That's a hundred bucks. Each.

Dale and Ross quickly and happily reach into their pockets and pull out their crisp clean cash. Todd takes the cash, pockets it, and waves them a good day.

TODD (CONT'D)

Thanks for coming Dale and Ross.
Hope you had fun.

Ross and Dale collect their posters smiling. Todd watches them for a second.

TODD (CONT'D)

Hey, guys.

Ross and Dale stop. Todd points to the table.

TODD (CONT'D)
Why don't you each take a picture
at no charge.

Ross and Dale are beside themselves. They can't believe their luck. They begin looking over all the pictures.

TODD (CONT'D)
It's the least I can do. You're the
first people to ask me to sign
anything other than a speeding
ticket in years.

Ross and Dale make their choices and thank Todd on their way out of the auditorium. Todd watches them for a few seconds before starting to collect his goods. He's putting them in a locked cabinet behind him when another seller, HANK, walks up to the table.

HANK
How'd it go?

TODD
Not bad.

HANK
It sucked.

Todd pretty much ignores Hank as he goes about packing.

HANK (CONT'D)
These fucking people. They don't
know nothing about the history of
film. Here I am with a 35mm print
of King Kong including the ravine
scene where sailors were eaten by
giant spiders, crabs, lizards and
even an octoploid.

TODD
That's when they knew how to scare.

HANK
Sure did.

Hank looks at the posters of these new stars and hardly contains his disdain.

HANK (CONT'D)
I know these are your friends and
all. . .

TODD

. . .yeah, yeah, yeah. They ain't
shit.

HANK

Damn straight. So, ya gonna be here
tomorrow?

TODD

Yeah, you?

HANK

Wouldn't miss it. It's my bread and
butter.

Hank bangs on the table and exits. Todd watches him for a few
seconds as he locks up his cabinet.

TODD

No way in fucking hell I wanna be
doing this when I'm his age.

Todd picks up his cash box and puts it on the counter. He
pulls out a large stack of cash.

TODD (CONT'D)

But, for right now, this is my
break and butter.

Todd puts the cash in his pocket and tosses the empty cash
box into a cubby hole.

INT. HOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

Todd's sitting between two beds that are stacked with movie
posters. He's got his feet on a small opening on the bed.
He's on the phone.

TODD

Just setting up stock for tomorrows
show. You know how it is. How's the
press tour going?

INT. BACK OF A LIMOUSINE - CONTINUOUS

Earl is sitting in the limosune sipping from a champagne
glass with an attractive woman, LILA, at his side.

EARL

It's a drag. Same thing every day.

Earl looks at Lila and raises his eyebrows. She slips down out of the scene.

EARL (CONT'D)
It's boring, ya know?

INT. HOTEL ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Todd is leaning over a poster with a marker. He's signing Earl's name to a poster of Sphere Of Luck.

TODD
Yeah and I'm living the life right here in some fucked up little hotel forging your name on posters.

INT. BACK OF A LIMOSUINE - CONTINUOUS

Earl's head is leaning back.

EARL
For cash, my man. For hard, non-taxable cash! And right now that's almost as good as. . .

Earl body stiffens.

EARL (CONT'D)
. . .hey, we're at my stop. Talk to ya.

Earl shuts his phone and tosses it on the seat.

EARL (CONT'D)
Not quite but almost as good as this.

Earl leans back with a smile on his face.

INT. HOTEL ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Todd lets the phone drop off his shoulder onto the posters. He finishes signing another perfect replica of Earl's signature and slides the poster onto a pile of already signed posters.

TODD
Bet those motherfuckers haven't even mentioned my damn movie once.

Todd finishes another poster.

TODD (CONT'D)
Not even one damn time.

Todd leans over and begins signing another poster.

INT. CASTING OFFICE - DAY

The office is filled with actors reciting the lines from the script for a commercial. We pan through the room and see various types of readings.

A High Drama actor, TROY.

TROY
Kord vodka. When everything in your
world is perfect.

A Street actor, THEO.

THEO
Kord vodka, bitches. When your shit
is tight!

Troy looks at Theo.

TROY
I think they want you to stick to
the script.

THEO
How'd you like to stick to my fist?

Troy feigns fright.

TROY
Owwwww. Rough trade!

Troy leans in to Theo menacingly.

TROY (CONT'D)
You fucking threaten me again and
I'll suck your eyes out and stick
them up your ass so you can see
just how big an asshole you are.

Theo holds his hands up as he steps away. Theo goes back to looking at the script as we continue through the room.

A Club Kid, CHAD, is leaping around during his reading.

CHAD
Kord vodka. When everything in your
world is perfect.

A Drunk, MICK, unsteadily reads his line.

MICK

Kord vodka. When everything in your
world is ferpect.

A Nervous Musical Theater Singer, goes over the top.

TREY

Kord vodka. When everything in your
world is perfect.

We reach Todd sitting on a chair, script in hand, trying to memorize his lines while drowning out everything going on around him.

A few seats down from Todd is the reception desk with the Receptionist, KARA, typing. Above her head is a television with a Reporter, TESS SHEA, informing the world of that days news. All of the normal bells and whistles of entertainment news flash on the screen.

INT. INFOTAINMENT AM SET - CONTINUOUS

TESS

I'm Tess Shea and this is
Infotainment AM. Today's big story
is also one of it's most guarded
secrets.

(pause)

But I'm here to say that, today on
Infotainment AM, that secret is no
more.

(pause)

We're heard from very reliable
sources that a movie that's been
protected under a cloak of secrecy
never before seen in tinsel town is
about to take the town by storm.

(pause)

Not much is known about the film
but, from all reports, slight of
the hand is destined to be a must
see movie of this decade.

Todd thinks he heard something from the television but, with all the surrounding noise, there's no way to be sure. So, to be safe, he turns his attention to the television.

TESS (CONT'D)

What we do know is that slight of
the hand. . .

This time Todd is positive what he heard. As well as one can without making a sound, Todd is freaking out. He runs to the reception desk startling Kara.

KARA
What the. . .?

TODD
Turn that up, will ya?

Kara looks at Todd and rolls her eyes.

KARA
Actors.

The actors in the room notice Todd's behavior but think it's a new way to do the commercial. Little by little everyone in the room is moving and jumping around while doing their lines. After a moment Todd is the only person still in the room.

TESS
We've heard reports that, during
it's screening to qualify for this
years best picture nomination, the
mood in the theater was electric.

The television shot cuts to a close-up of a man's head in silhouette.

TESS (CONT'D)
We were lucky to find an employee
of that unnamed theater for a
behind the scenes glimpse at this
classic in the making.

The television shot zooms out to reveal silhouettes of janitor supplies.

JOHN
I'll be honest. When I walked into
that theater I'd never seen
anything like it.

TODD
That's because you've never seen a
guy holding his pud there before.

The television cuts back to Tess.

TESS
We are in search of some of the
witnesses to this historic moment.
(MORE)

TESS (CONT'D)

If you were in the audience please
contact us at slight of the hand at
infotainment AM today. I'm Tess...

Todd reaches onto the desk and grabs the remote. Kara just rolls her eyes. Nothing an actor would do can surprise her. Todd starts changing channels.

He gets to the channel AM Infotainment is on. The Reporter, KYLE DURNING, is finishing up his report.

INT. AM INFOTAINMENT SET - CONTINUOUS

KYLE

After checking with every theater
in the continental united states
we've come to the conclusion that
if slight of hand is going to hit
the theaters any time soon, it'll
be in Alaska or Hawaii. I'm Kyle
Durn. . .

Todd changes the channel and Entertainment Today host, OWEN REED, is reporting.

INT. ENTERTAINMENT TODAY SET - CONTINUOUS

OWEN

People are visibly salivating over
the possibility of even a one off
screening. Exclusively, via
telephone, we have the owner of the
theater slight of the hand was
screened on that one and only time.
To protect his identity, we've
modified his voice.

A shot of a random movie screen comes onto the screen. Although the voice has been altered there's only one person it could be.

TODD

Tony.

TONY

All I'm willing to say is slight of
the hand, with no advertising, made
more in that one day than the
Godfather did for me. Think about
that.

OWEN

I will. So, is that really all
you're willing to say?

TONY

Well, I will say one more thing.
This movie is BEEEPing brilliant!

OWEN

It seems we've lost out connection.
I'm Owen Reed and you know I'll
stay on this story.

Todd turns the television off.

MALE V/O

Todd Banner. We'd like to see Todd
Banner.

Todd's head is spinning. He looks at the blank TV. He looks
at the script. He takes two steps toward the office door
while delivering his lines.

TODD

When the world is your's for the
taking. Take it with care. Take it
with style. Take it with Kord
vodka. Kord vodka. When everything
in your world is perfect.

Todd throws his script in the air and runs out of the room.
Just before he reaches the door he hears,

MALE V/O (O.C.)

That was perfect. Hey, Banner! Do
you want the job?

Todd stops at the door. Thinks for a second. Shrugs his
shoulders.

TODD

Sure.

Todd turns and exits the room.

KARA (O.C.)

Thank you everyone. The producers
have made their choice. Please
return the scripts to my desk and
don't throw them.

Dejected actors begin to slowly walk to the desk and return
their scripts.

CHAD

I knew he'd get it.

TROY

He had so much energy.

Chad and Troy turn to exit.

CHAD

You going to the Tihs commercial?

TROY

Nah, heard it was lame. Hey, have you heard about that mystery movie?

CHAD

Yeah, saw a news report on it.

TROY

I was in it, you know.

CHAD

No shit! What was it like?

TROY

It was madness, man. Pure madness. But brilliant. Just. . .what's the word? Indescribable.

Chad and Troy exit the office.

CHAD

Man, what I'd do to be in a cinematic classic.

INT. AIRPORT - DAY

Todd is fidgeting in the middle of a group of LIMO DRIVERS. He's the only one dressed in street clothes. PEOPLE start passing, a few of the Drivers get their Passengers and exit.

Paul is shaking hands and signing some autographs as he gets to Todd. Paul says his final good-byes before he and Todd begin walking through the airport.

TODD

Why are you always the last off the plane?

PAUL

I can't help it if I'm beloved.

TODD

You can't help it that you pass out and it takes them ten minutes to revive you. And how come you don't just call a service? Why do I always have to pick you up? All of you assholes do this.

PAUL

Speaking of that, why didn't you have a sign with my name on it?

TODD

Because you know me you idiot.

PAUL

But would it kill you to have a sign?

TODD

Okay, next time. A sign. I promise.

PAUL

I'd like that. Where are Russ and Earl?

TODD

In the car. Let's get your luggage.

Todd heads left, Paul heads right.

PAUL

I'll be in the car.

Todd's about to say something but it's too late. He resigns himself to the task and heads to it.

EXT. RESTAURANT PATIO - DAY

Todd, Russ, Earl, and Paul are sitting around a table eating and drinking. Todd is agitated while the others eat and drink calmly.

TODD

What do you mean wait?

RUSS

What don't you understand about it? Right now we wait.

EARL

It is the best thing to do, Todd.

PAUL

Don't you know shit about this business?

Todd can't believe what he's hearing.

TODD

I know it's a business and, right now, the movie is hot. We should get it out there, make a boatload of cash and, well, make a boatload of cash is as far as I've thought through.

EARL

And that's why we're here, little buddy.

TODD

Why? To fuck up my shot? Every show has mentioned it.

He reaches into his bag and pulls out a handful of magazines.

TODD (CONT'D)

It's mentioned in every one of these.

RUSS

And probably a dozen more you don't know about.

TODD

Then why are we waiting? Seriously, pretend I'm an idiot. . .

PAUL

. . .pretend?

TODD

And explain it to me slowly.

Russ finishes sipping his beverage before slowly placing the glass on the table.

RUSS

This is just the first level. It's a good level. But it's not at frenzy yet.

TODD

How much more frenzy do you want? I was in a grocery store and this lady was bragging to her friend that she had a private screening last night.

EARL

That's good. But it's not frenzy.

TODD

And she was making up scenes that weren't even in it.

PAUL

Were they any good.

Todd thinks for a second.

TODD

Actually, she did come up with. . .

Todd catches himself going off topic and corrects himself.

TODD (CONT'D)

. . .never mind that. People would kill to see this movie.

RUSS

And they'll kill to see it in six weeks.

TODD

Six weeks? Are you kidding me? Are you trying to blow this?

RUSS

Todd, listen.

Todd stares at Russ expecting him to say something. When he doesn't he becomes frustrated.

TODD

What? Say something.

RUSS

No, just listen.

It takes Todd a few seconds to calm down but when he does he does hear something. Everyone at the tables around them are talking about the movie.

From Todd's POV we pan around the room listening in to the conversations of various patrons, ERIK, LILY, DREW, LUKE, and a couple, SETH and SARA SWEETICLES.

ERIK

I'm not saying it wasn't great but you could see where his influences were.

LILY

I can't tell you how I got it, but, I'm going to be putting the first draft of the script on my blog. I've heard it's much more violent than the final cut.

DREW

You're out of your mind! Have you seen it?

LUKE

No.

DREW

Well, I have so I guess I know a little more than you, right?

LUKE

You don't have to be such a bitch.

DREW

You don't have to make me be such a bitch.

SETH

I couldn't agree with you more, Sara. Much of it was grotesquerie masquerading as art.

SARA

I can't understand filmmakers these days. It's all homage covered in more blood.

SETH

They shroud the masters techniques in gore and consider it brilliance.

SARA

The lowest form of thievery is what it is. But that slight of the hand!

SETH

A masterwork. It had to have been
created by one of the masters.

We settle back on the table as it's beginning to dawn on
Todd.

TODD

These people are crazier than you!

EARL

Do we know our business or what?

TODD

They're talking about shit they
know nothing about.

RUSS

Great, ain't it?

PAUL

Right now, Todd, you have the one
thing these people live for.

(pause)

The unknown. They hate not knowing
so what do they do?

EARL

Make shit up.

RUSS

Remember when they said Earl and I
were lovers?

Earl and Russ look at each other longingly.

EARL

If the truth was ever known!

PAUL

I'm the one who started that, you
know.

Earl, Russ, and Todd are all surprised by that admission.

RUSS

Why the fuck did you do that?

PAUL

I thought it was funny.

RUSS

And?

PAUL

I was pissed at Earl because he got
tower of power over me.

EARL

That was a bomb.

PAUL

Sure, I was happy about it later.
But at first. . .

RUSS

And?

Paul feigns surprise.

PAUL

And? And what?

Russ looks at Paul knowing there's more.

PAUL (CONT'D)

And they paid me.

Everyone begins to scoff at and mock Paul.

PAUL (CONT'D)

Hey! I had child support due and
you know how she gets.

They all stop mocking and fall silent with nods and knowing
glances.

TODD

This is all great but let's get
back to me!

RUSS

He's right. Let's get back to the
task at hand.

Russ picks up his glass and takes a drink. He finishes it off
and signals the server for another round.

RUSS (CONT'D)

And that task is more drinking and
less talking about your stupid
movie.

Todd begins to say something but Russ stops him.

RUSS (CONT'D)

Trust me. You trust me, right?

TODD

Not since you stole my girlfriend.

RUSS

That was years ago! When are you going to. . .

TODD

. . .no. The last time.

Russ seems confused.

TODD (CONT'D)

Last month?

RUSS

Oh. Oh, yeah. She wasn't right for you.

TODD

So we're not going to do anything?

RUSS

We're not. But, and you'll have to put away your petty trust issues, it will.

Todd resigns himself to the fact he'll have to do nothing. And, as it turns out, it was the perfect thing to do.

Montage of various periodicals touting the brilliance of the heretofore mostly unseen movie or asking questions.

Gossip Gator: Who IS Slight Of The Hand's Mystery Writer?

Hot Hollywood: How High The Bar? Slight Of The Hand Pushes The Envelope

Movie Industry Insider: Slight Won't Be Slight At The BO. But When?

Film Law Daily: What's The Hold-Up? Is SOTH In Litigation HELL?

Pete's Picks: Planting Tips! The Long And Winding Road: Backwoods Day Trips! Slight Of The Hand: We Saw It! We Talk About It!

INT. INFOTAINMENT AM SET - DAY

Reporter, TESS SHEA, informing the world of that days news.

TESS

I'm Tess Shea and this is
Infotainment AM or, as we should
call it, Slight Of The Hand watch.

Tess turns to another camera angle.

TESS (CONT'D)

Today we have an exclusive
interview with Jace, no last name
given, the man responsible for
putting this masterpiece to film.
Good day, Jace.

The shot goes to a split screen. One side is Tess and the
other is JACE.

JACE

Hey.

TESS

Is it true that you're responsible
for mastering this film?

JACE

Yeah.

TESS

That must have been quite a thrill
for you.

JACE

Sure.

TESS

So, as possibly the first person to
ever see this film, is it as great
as they say?

JACE

I dunno. I just copy them to film I
don't really study them, ya know.

TESS

But you must have come away with
some impression.

JACE

I never saw the full movie. He'd
send me ten minutes here, twenty
there. I mean, I saw some cool
shBEEP. . .oh, sorry.

TESS

Jace, you are probably the only person alive who can answer this question, who is responsible for Slight Of The Hand.

Jace shakes his head back and forth repeatedly.

JACE

Nah uh. No can do. My boss'ed cut my ba. . .

Jace is dropped from the two shot.

TESS

. . .thank you, Jace for that inside information.

INT. TODD'S HOME OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Todd is sitting at the computer with Tess on the television.

TESS

Now to some breaking relationship news. Is there a new threesome in the city?

Todd laughs.

TODD

Cha ching!

Behind Tess a picture of Paul, Earl, and Russ laughing with their hands touching each other.

TESS

Rumors have swirled for years about exactly how close superstars Earl Castaldi and Russ Lecaroz are but now the town is buzzing with word that their good friend Paul Frost may be more than just their friend.

The picture on the screen changes to another potentially more incriminating picture of them on vacation.

TESS (CONT'D)

As you can see by these pictures taken by a close confidant. . .

SND FX Telephone

Todd picks up the remote, mutes the television then answers the phone.

TODD

Yep.

INT. RUSS' HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Russ is sitting on a couch watching television with a laptop on his lap.

RUSS

Very funny.

TODD (O.C.)

What? What? What are you talking about?

RUSS

How much did you get?

INT. TODD'S HOME OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Todd is sitting at the computer.

TODD

More than I made for screening the movie.

RUSS (O.C.)

Good work if you can get it. Listen, it's time.

TODD

Time for what?

RUSS

To make the big move.

TODD

Why now?

INT. RUSS' HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Russ is sitting on a couch watching television with a laptop on his lap.

RUSS

Because we just hit a million search results on a search engine and the backlash is starting.

TODD
Backlash? What are. . .

RUSS
. . .shut up and turn on channel
three.

INT. TODD'S HOME OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Todd is sitting at the computer and reaching for the remote.
The channel changes and we see Owen Reed on the Entermation
Today set.

INT. ENTERMATION TODAY SET - CONTINUOUS

OWEN
It took some doing but through our
dogged pursuit we not only found a
couple from Westwood who not only
saw slight of the hand but hated
it!

EXT. POOL - DAY

Seth and Sara Sweeticles are seated pool side.

SETH
There's so much grotesquerie
masquerading as art.

SARA
I can't understand filmmakers these
days. It's all homage covered in
more blood.

SETH
They shroud the masters techniques
in gore and consider it brilliance.

SARA
The lowest form of thievery is what
it is. And slight of the hand falls
deeply into that morass.

INT. TODD'S HOME OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

TODD

Those people were at the restaurant
and said the same thing about
another movie while call hand a
masterwork that had to be done by a
master. What the. . .

RUSS (V.O.)

. . .don't worry about it. It's
just what we need.

Todd gets excited.

TODD

We're going to release the movie?

INT. RUSS' HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

RUSS

Something better. We're going to
release a trailer.

A less than excited Todd answers.

TODD (V.O.)

A trailer?

RUSS

And make it a good one.

Russ hangs up the phone and tosses it on the couch. He begins
to move his thumb on the computers touch pad.

RUSS (CONT'D)

I wonder if any new fan sites have
opened about me?

Russ turns his attention to ego surfing.

INT. TODD'S HOME OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Todd is sitting at his computer motionless.

TODD

A trailer? That's the good news?

Todd puts his head on the desk.

DISSOLVE TO:

BLACK SCREEN

The screen fills with the name of the movie when it's named.

MALE V/O

The godfather made you rethink your
view of the mafia. Chinatown made
you rethink your view of political
corruption. Reservoir dogs made you
rethink your view of the songs of
stealers wheels.

INT. ROOM - DAY

One hand grabs another mans wrist.

MALE V/O

But soon. . .

The hand slams the arm on a table.

MALE V/O (CONT'D)

. . .you will rethink all of
humanity.

Another arm comes into the screen with a cleaver and chops
off the fingers below the knuckles. The cleaver sticks in the
table.

MALE V/O (CONT'D)

Slight of the hand.

The fingers twitch as blood drains toward the cleaver. The
words: Slight Of The Hand appear on the cleaver.

We zoom out to reveal the trailer is being played on a
computer.

INT. TODD'S HOME OFFICE - DAY

Todd is standing behind Russ who is sitting in front of the
computer.

TODD

That doesn't even happen.

Russ rolls the chair away from Todd while looking up at him.

RUSS

That doesn't even matter.

Russ points to the monitor.

RUSS (CONT'D)

Look at that? Over a million hits
in less than a day. Do you see any
of them complaining?

TODD

I don't want people to think it's a
slasher flick. Have you even
watched it?

RUSS

Don't have to.

Russ pulls himself back to the computer and looks at the
monitor.

RUSS (CONT'D)

And that's another two hundred
hits.

Russ looks up at Todd.

RUSS (CONT'D)

Now don't be going all artiste on
me. We're on a mission.

Russ gets his phone and dials.

RUSS (CONT'D)

Hi, yeah, this is Russ LeCaroz

(pause)

Thank you. Listen I was wondering,
you have may heard about this movie
slight of the hand.

Russ pulls the phone from his ear.

RUSS (CONT'D)

That's great. Hey, hey, listen. How
would I go about setting up a
screening, very secret screening,
for members who can vote for the
best picture?

Russ listens for a second nodding and smiling.

RUSS (CONT'D)

Excellent. If you could send the
contact list to my email address
that would be great.

(pause)

Thanks for your time.

Russ hangs up his phone and types a few words on the keyboard before hitting the enter key.

RUSS (CONT'D)
What time is it?

TODD
Seven thirty, why?

RUSS
Turn on one of the entertainment shows. I want to see how long this takes.

Todd grabs the remote and turns on the television.

TODD
How long what takes?

Russ clicks the mouse to refresh the screen.

RUSS
This.

Russ waves for Todd to come closer to the computer. Todd leans in as we read the screen:

BREAKING NEWS: Slight Schedules Industry Screening

TODD
Fuck that was fast.

While Todd stands there silently we hear the AM Infotainment reporter, Kyle Durning, speak.

KYLE (O.C.)
Her spokesperson says she's recovering nicely.
(pause)
And here's some breaking news everyone's been waiting to hear.

INT. AM INFOTAINMENT SET - CONTINUOUS

Kyle is standing on the set.

KYLE
Reliable sources from within the organization. . .

INT. TODD'S LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Todd and Russ are watching the television.

TODD

. . .we're an organization?

RUSS

Fuck that. They called me reliable.

INT. AM INFOTAINMENT SET - CONTINUOUS

Kyle is standing on the set.

KYLE

. . .have Scheduled a super secret, hush, hush, shhh, shhh screening of the long anticipated masterpiece, slight of the hand. The secrecy surrounding this piece of cinematic history has been unprecedented in the history of the industry.

A picture of Russ, Earl, and Paul fills the television.

KYLE (CONT'D)

Little is known about the cast other than that three of the biggest stars in the world, Russ Lecaroz, Earl Castaldi, and Paul Frost have bit parts. The writer, director, even the plot have come under intense speculation but there has been no definitive information from within the organization. Stay tuned to AM Infotainment for the latest breaking news.

Todd shuts the television off and tosses the remote on a chair.

TODD

This is getting out of hand, Russ.

RUSS

But it's too late to stop this freight train, little buddy.

Russ turns his attention to the computer and types in a web address.

TODD

What are you doing now?

RUSS

Ordering some slight of the hand envelopes.

TODD

Why are you ordering envelopes

RUSS

Just part of the plan.

TODD

Have I ever told you I'm not a bad fan of your plans?

RUSS

Many times. But, trust me, you'll like this one.

Todd sits on a chair.

TODD

That's what you said the time I ended up getting so drunk I fell out of the truck.

RUSS

Hey! It wasn't moving, was it?

Todd sits back in the chair and sighs.

EXT. CITY STREET - DAY

Todd is carrying three boxes of letters into a Post Office. He walks up the stairs into the building.

INT. POST OFFICE SORTING ROOM - DAY

A Postal Worker, BILL, is tossing envelope after envelope into cubby holes. It looks like every cubby hole in the room has one of the same envelopes hanging out of it. There is no return address on the envelope.

EXT. TREE LINED STREET - DAY

A Letter Carrier, MARK, is delivering the same envelope into a box in front of a large, ornate gate. The gate begins to open just as he drops the envelope into the box.

LARA comes running from behind the gate.

LARA

Is that the letter? Did you deliver
a letter from the movie.

MARK

Looks like it. It's all I've been
delivering all day.

Mark turns to exit as Lara quickly unlocks the mail box and pulls out the envelope. Mark isn't full out of the scene and Lara is ripping the envelope open. She unfolds the letter and we read it over her shoulder. Russ reads it in voice over.

RUSS (V.O.)

Dear union member,
We are pleased to invite you to an
industry only screening of the long
anticipated film, slight of the
hand.

The time and location of this
screening will be divulged to you,
and only you (if you do not show up
personally your representative will
not be given your ticket. NO
EXCEPTIONS!), at the day and time
below:

Wednesday between 2:15-2:25 PM.

You will need to bring a photo ID
and a credit card with a credit
line of ten thousand dollars. Both
of which will be returned to you
the night of the screening.

The credit card WILL be charged ten
thousand dollars if you DO NOT show
up night of the screening. We feel,
due to this momentous occasion and
extremely limited seating, this is
a necessary move.

Please follow each of our
instructions exactly to facilitate
a smooth transaction.

Lara folds the letter and runs back up the driveway.

LARA

Wednesday is tomorrow! What am I
going to wear?

The driveway gates close as Lara runs from view.

EXT. TREE LINED STREET - DAY

Panning down a quiet street we see more people than you'd expect walking down the street. There's something going on and they're about to find out. The only clue that gives anything away is the noise.

SND FX CAR HORNS AND HELICOPTERS

The pan turns the corner and we see a traffic jam the likes a street like this would never see. Limos, SUV's, exotic sports cars, the most expensive cars in the world packed together.

We stop at Todd's house and see the biggest names in Hollywood standing in line holding their photo ID's and credit cards. It looks like opening night at the hottest club in town.

A Security Detail keeps the civilians and press at bay.

We get to the front of the line and Todd is taking a picture of MACY. After he takes the picture she signs and seals her photo ID and credit card in an envelope with the words Slight Of The Hand embossed on the front. The photo comes out of the printer and Todd staples it to the front. He puts the envelope in an alphabetized box.

MACY

Now how do I know you're not going to go wild with my credit card?

TODD

Do I look like I'd steal from you?

Macy looks at him quizzically.

MACY

As a matter of fact, you look like a guy who ripped me off on some speakers years ago.

Todd scoffs at ancient history while handing Macy another envelope.

TODD

That was then! I'm talking about now! Look at this face! It's reformed.

Macy turns to exit.

MACY

It better be.

TODD

Remember not to open that until you
get an email from us.

Macy exits. JOEY steps up to the desk.

TODD (CONT'D)

ID and credit card.

Joey holds out the cards as Todd grabs the cards and looks at them. Todd looks at Joey and shakes his head no.

TODD (CONT'D)

What do you think? I didn't see
anger in the heart?

Todd tosses the cards back at Joey who struggles to catch them.

JOEY

Come on man! My boss'll kill me if
I don't score these tickets.

Joey holds up the credit card.

JOEY (CONT'D)

He told me to tell you there's a
hundred thou on this and it's yours
if you let me have it.

Todd looks past Joey.

TODD

Next.

A large man, CARL SHERIDAN, moves past Joey.

JOEY

You suck man.

CARL

Rules is rules, ain't that right?

TODD

Damn straight, Carl. Nice to meet
you. ID and credit card, please.

Carl hands him the cards and signs an envelope. Carl holds the envelope up and Todd drops the cards in it. Carl smiles for a picture then seals the envelope.

CARL

So, this movie as good as they say?

Todd takes the photo from the printer and staples it to the envelope. He puts the envelope in an alphabetized box. Todd hands an envelope to Carl and smiles.

TODD

Better.

Carl smiles and waves the envelope at Todd.

CARL

I'll be the judge of that.

TODD

Remember not to open the envelope
until you get an email.

We follow Carl as he walks past the ever expanding line. When he gets to the sidewalk the press calls him over. He walks over to Tess and her Cameraman, NICK, from Infotainment AM.

TESS

I'm with Carl Sheridan, one of the
hundreds of the worlds favorite
movie stars waiting in line like
regular people for their ticket to
the hottest event in recent memory.
Carl, what are your expectations
for slight of the hand?

CARL

I don't think you'd get the likes
of Elle Lopez and Andy Boudrow
standing in line in this heat if
the expectations weren't high.

TESS

Did you ever think you'd see so
many stars in one place?

CARL

Not outside of rehab I wouldn't.

TESS

Thank you for your time, Carl. I'll
see you at the screening.

CARL

Nice talking to you, Tess.

Carl turns to exit.

TESS

I'm Tess Shea for Infotainment AM
at the one place in the world every
movie star wants to me.

Tess holds her smile for a moment before looking through the crowd.

TESS (CONT'D)

I've got to get someone bigger. I
mean, when was his last hit?
Eighteen months ago?

Tess spots Russ and her mood brightens.

TESS (CONT'D)

Russ! Russ! Can I have a word with
you?

Russ walks over with his movie star smile.

RUSS

Nice to see you, Tess. Quite a turn
out.

TESS

Yes, and, being someone on the
inside, do you think it's
warranted?

RUSS

Having been in the entire process
of this marvelous film, I'd have to
say that it is. When I first read
the script I couldn't believe how
vivid and honest it was.

TESS

On that subject, Russ, who is the
mystery writer?

RUSS

It's not really a mystery, Tess.
Anyone with a computer could have
checked the copyright office and
got the name for themselves.

Russ turns around and points to Todd taking another picture.

RUSS (CONT'D)

It's my good friend, Todd Banner.

Tess and Nick strain to look past Russ.

TESS

Is there any chance of getting an exclusive with him?

RUSS

He looks a little busy right now but I'll see if I can set something up for later.

TESS

That would be great, Russ.

Tess reaches out and takes Russ' hand.

TESS (CONT'D)

And if you could get me into the screening. . .

Russ pats her hand as he begins to turn away.

RUSS

Sorry, darling, it's union only.

Russ walks away.

RUSS (CONT'D)

But I'll see what I can do about getting Todd to talk to you.

Tess and Nick watch Todd for a few more seconds before she pulls at Nick to have him turn the camera back to her.

TESS

I'm Tess Shea for Infotainment AM with fast breaking news about the film sensation, slight of the hand. Through out diligent research we've uncovered the name of the writer and director. It turns out to be confidant to stars such as Russ Lacaroz and Paul Frost, Todd Banner.

Tess pauses for a moment before dropping her microphone to her side. She talks to Nick who's pulled the camera off his shoulder.

TESS (CONT'D)

Let's get back to the studio.

Tess and Nick start working their way through the crowd. She pulls a phone out of her bag and dials.

TESS (CONT'D)

Luke, it's Tess. Get Lola working on information about a Todd Banner.

(pause)

He's a nobody yet but I just found out that he's the writer of slight.

(pause)

Damn right that's great information. Get me anything you can on him. I'm on my way back to the studio now.

Tess and Nick arrive at the van. Nick slides the side door open and puts his camera away as Tess gets in.

TESS (CONT'D)

I sure hope everyone's as stupid as us and doesn't check the copyright office.

Nick slides the side door shut.

NICK

Count on it.

Nick passes Tess on his way to the drivers side of the van.

INT. TODD'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Russ, Earl, and Paul are lounging on the couch drinking and watching Todd pace. There are boxes of signed envelopes on the coffee table.

TODD

What if it sucks? What if they walk out of the theater and trash the shit out of it, me, my lineage?

RUSS

I'll still need my laundry picked up.

PAUL

Oh, and I need another pot pick-up.

TODD

This isn't funny.

Todd picks up the boxes and throws them at the guys sitting on the couch. They block and catch them.

EARL

Hey! What the fuck?

RUSS
Be careful there, Todd.

Russ collects the boxes and gently places them back on the table.

RUSS (CONT'D)
Don't go fucking with your future.

TODD
Future? Future?

Toss points to the boxes.

TODD (CONT'D)
Those people are going to bury me.

RUSS
Are you saying you don't have faith
in your movie?

TODD
No. Yes. I don't fucking know.

Todd is throwing himself around the room like a rag doll in the wind.

EARL
Do you think it's good?

Todd stops and looks at the guys.

TODD
Yes. I think it's good.

PAUL
Then fuck what anyone else says.

RUSS
That's the spirit.

Russ stands up and picks up the boxes.

RUSS (CONT'D)
Listen to me, Todd, the reviews
will be good. Trust me.

TODD
So you liked it?

RUSS
I know I would.

TODD

Aw, shit. How can you be such
bullshit?

Russ walks up to Todd and hands him the boxes.

RUSS

Star power, my boy.

Russ puts his hand on Todd to move him along.

RUSS (CONT'D)

Come on, we got some work to do.

Todd walks with Russ.

TODD

What work?

Russ pats the boxes.

RUSS

We're gonna make a killing.

Once again, Todd has no idea what's going on. But, once again, he dutifully follows.

INT. BEDROOM - DAY

JOSH and MIKE are sitting in front of a computer. Their room is filled with movie posters, memorabilia, and other items of that ilk.

JOSH

Hey! Check this out!

Mike leans in closer as we zoom into the monitor. It's a web site for an auction for movie star autographs. It reads:

Be Part Of Movie History!

This Thursday, beginning at midnight (PST) and ending at 11:59PM Friday, we will hold an auction for autographs of six thousand of the biggest stars in movie history who will be attending the premiere of Slight Of The Hand.

Each of these autographs is on a Slight Of The Hand envelope and comes with a photo of the actor/actress taken at the time of the signing.

Click here for the full list of the autographs, bidding instructions, and scans of the items.

INT. TODD'S HOME OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Todd, Russ, Earl, and Paul are standing around the computer. Todd looks at each of the guys and shakes his head in disbelief.

TODD
This is madness.

Again, Russ attempts to calm Todd's frayed nerves.

RUSS
Depends on how you look at it. And
look right here.

Russ points to the hit counter.

RUSS (CONT'D)
Sites been up for two hours and
we've got almost eighty thousand
hits.

PAUL
It took my fan site a week to get
numbers like that.

TODD
What are you trying to accomplish
with this?

RUSS
Making money. It's all about
keeping the power.

EARL
And when we got the money, we got
the power.

TODD
What are you talking about? You
fuckers are loaded.

PAUL
Yeah, but that's money from the
man!

EARL
Yeah! This is our money.

RUSS
This is our power.

TODD

This is crazy. I think you guys
have been playing pretend for too
long.

Todd grabs Earl and shakes him.

TODD (CONT'D)

Wake up! This is real life, my real
life. In twenty-four hours my life
might be over. And you? You three?
You're fucking bulletproof.

Todd let's Earl go. Earl straightens out his shirt while Todd
talks directly to him.

TODD (CONT'D)

Remember when you did Seesaw Sally?

Earl nods yes.

TODD (CONT'D)

Called the worst movie of all time.

EARL

Not by everyone.

TODD

By enough. And do you remember what
happened? Your rate went up two
million.

Todd points at Paul.

TODD (CONT'D)

And you?

PAUL

Hey! Leave me out of this.

RUSS

Yeah, if you start listing all his
shitty movies you won't have time
to rant at me.

That seems to take the wind out of Todd's sail.

TODD

I. . .you. . .fuck!

Todd turns and exits the room. The guys stand there for a
second before shrugging their shoulders.

PAUL
Fucking directors.

EARL
I think that was the writer side.

RUSS
Fucking artistes.

They begin to exit the room.

PAUL
I know.

EARL
Who'da thunk he'd go all auteur on
us.

RUSS
I guess it's true that you can
never really know someone.

They reach the door.

EARL
Hey, has anyone seen the movie?

RUSS
No.

PAUL
No.

EARL (CONT'D)
Me neither. Hope it doesn't suck.

EXT. THE ROYALTY - NIGHT

It's moments before the first screening and the street is filled with fancy vehicles, press, and on-lookers. The marquee reads: Private Screening.

We zoom in on Todd in front of the ticket stand checking faces against the pictures before handing back the credit card and ID. Tony is at the door greeting everyone as they enter. Russ walks up to see how things are going.

RUSS
It's about show time. Any no shows?

Russ reaches into the box for the first screening and pulls out two envelopes. He cuts them open carefully and pulls out the credit cards and ID's. He hands the credit cards to Tony.

RUSS (CONT'D)
Run each of these for ten grand.

Tony takes the card and enters the ticket stand as Russ places the ID's in the box.

RUSS (CONT'D)
We'll mail these back at the end.

Russ turns and looks toward the onlookers.

RUSS (CONT'D)
I'll be right back.

TODD
Where are you going?

Russ is walking toward the onlookers.

RUSS
To get us a couple of seat fillers.

Russ picks out two people, EMMA and JAKE, and they excitedly follow him. Russ walks them past a startled Todd into the theater.

RUSS (CONT'D)
Can't have a movie with movie fans.

Todd shakes his head as he moves to the door. He stops at the door.

RUSS (CONT'D)
We'll be back in a couple of hours.
Wish me luck.

The crowd applauds as Todd disappears into the theater.

INT. THE ROYALTY - MOMENTS LATER

Todd is pacing at the theater door. He walks toward it then away. His apprehension is palpable.

PAUL (O.C.)
What's up?

Todd startles at the sound as Paul walks up to him.

PAUL (CONT'D)
How's it going?

TODD
I don't know. I haven't had the balls to open the door.

PAUL

Fuck it. You've already seen it.
Earl and Russ are in the limo.
Let's go get some drinks.

Todd's torn. As much as he wants to stay there, feels it's the right thing to do, he knows if he stays much longer he'll have a heart attack.

TODD

You're buying.

Paul tosses his arm around Todd and pulls him through the theater.

PAUL

Tonight. But tomorrow it might all be different.

TODD

Yeah, you might have to pay my mortgage.

PAUL

What do I look like?

TODD

A movie star!

They laugh and exit the building through a back exit.

INT. BAR - LATER

Todd, Russ, Earl, and Paul are sitting in a booth at a darkened bar.

TODD

I don't know how I'm going to make it. How many more screenings are there? Eight?

EARL

You know what they say. What doesn't kill you. . .

TODD

. . .make you damn wish it did.

Todd picks up his beverage and takes a sip.

TODD (CONT'D)

So, what did you guys think?

As if rehearsed, Russ, Earl, and Paul lift their drinks and begin drinking in earnest. It only takes a second for Todd to get the meaning.

TODD (CONT'D)
You fucking bastards! Not one of
you has seen it yet?

PAUL
You know I don't like being in
crowds.

EARL
And I don't like seeing movies when
I'm tired.

Earl exaggerates a loud yawn.

EARL (CONT'D)
And damn if I ain't tired.

Todd just shakes his head as he directs his attention to Russ.

TODD
What's your excuse.

Russ finishes his beverage and places the glass on the table.

RUSS
No excuse. I'm just going to wait
for the reviews. I mean, what if it
sucks?

They begin to give each other shit as Russ tries to get the bartender's attention.

RUSS (CONT'D)
Hey! Another round and, shit! Turn
that up, will ya?

They all turn their attention to the television. As the bartender turns it up we see AM Infotainment's Kyle is standing in front of The Royalty.

KYLE
I'm Kyle Durning in front of the
hottest movie theater in the
universe, the aptly named Royalty.

The shot cuts to various shots of movies stars entering the theater, Todd at the ticket stand, the massive crowd milling about.

KYLE (V.O.) (CONT'D)
After what has been called the
biggest secret in Hollywood the
secret is now out. And AM
Infotainment has the answer to the
question the entire world has been
asking, does slight of the hand
live up to it's hype?

The shot cuts to Carl outside the theater.

CARL
It was magnificent. It put you in
the action and wouldn't let you
out.

Carl looks into the camera.

CARL (CONT'D)
Hey, Todd! Remember me, bitch, when
you're casting your next movie.

The shot cuts to another star, RUBY, outside the theater.

RUBY
I've been in this business for a
long time and never has a move
shaken me to the core like this
one.

The shot cuts to Kyle.

KYLE
All night long we've been hearing
glowing reports about this
transcendent film. But not everyone
was blown away.

The shot cuts to Paul outside the theater.

PAUL
It was okay. There were some hackie
parts. Like when they killed the
Burt character. Totally ripped off
one of my hits, blood nails.

INT. BAR - CONTINUOUS

Todd, Russ, and Earl are staring at Paul. Paul looks back at
them as if nothing's wrong.

PAUL
What?

TODD

What? What the fuck are you doing?

PAUL

I did think that was hackie.

TODD

That was your character! You even picked the way he got killed! You fucking fought me to keep that in. Kept saying you'd pull your money.

PAUL

Hey, I'm just being honest. I didn't say it wasn't my fault.

Russ taps Earl and motions for them all to get up.

RUSS

Let's get back to the theater.

They all get up and begin to exit the bar. Todd can barely take the look of disdain off his face.

PAUL

What? Stop looking at me like that. What'd you want me to do? Lie?

TODD

You could have talked about parts you liked.

An uncomfortable silence falls.

PAUL

I didn't see anything other than my part.

TODD

You people are unbelievable.

PAUL

Hey! I'm an actor. What'd you expect.

Paul tries to find something

I thought it was shot well. I don't think I've ever looked so good in death.

They exit the bar.

EXT. THE ROYALTY - NIGHT

The area around the theater is still wall to wall people. Tony's at the ticket stand checking the faces. Todd is standing in the doorway being interviewed by Owen Reed from Entertainment Today.

OWEN

Does the reception from your peers surprise you?

TODD

Yes. With a caveat. The people in this industry know movie making so if they saw something spectacular I'm sure they'd be the first to recognise it. I'm just surprised at that reaction for something that came out of my head.

OWEN

So what's next?

Russ sticks his head in.

RUSS

We're going nationwide.

OWEN

When will you release this nationally?

RUSS

As soon as we can. We're hoping to be in fifteen hundred theaters by next Friday.

Russ looks directly into the camera.

RUSS (CONT'D)

So if there are any theaters who want to be part of the biggest movie of all time and can put it out next Friday call our pal Tony at The Royalty.

Russ looks at Owen.

RUSS (CONT'D)

Thanks, Owen, but we've got another screening to go to.

Russ and Todd exit.

OWEN

You heard it here first. Slight of
the hand will be release
nationally, hopefully, next Friday.
Get your tickets now!

INT. THE ROYALTY OFFICE - MOMENTS LATER

Russ is sitting behind the desk typing on a keyboard while
Todd paces in front of it.

TODD

Next Friday? You think we'll be
able to release this nationally
next Friday? Do you know how much
it'll cost to make prints? At your
fifteen hundred screens that's over
three million dollars.

Russ has been ignoring Todd's rant. He's been busy at the
computer.

TODD (CONT'D)

Are you listening to me? Where the
fuck am I going to get. . .

Russ pushes his chair away from the desk.

RUSS

. . .check this out.

Todd, once again unhappily, trudges behind the desk. He leans
into the computer.

TODD

What?

RUSS

See this?

TODD

What?

RUSS

This is the revenue from the
auction.

Todd looks closer signed and is pleasantly surprised.

TODD

Three point one million? For
fucking envelopes?

RUSS

And we still have two hours to go.

Russ sits back as if he'd planned this.

RUSS (CONT'D)

Plus we have the two hundred thousand we charged the no shows.

TODD

Two hundred?

RUSS

I figured at least two a screening wouldn't show. And it worked out great because every non-celebrity we let in has been our best ambassadors. They've been posting to sites and blogging all day.

Todd is quite taken aback by all this.

RUSS (CONT'D)

I think we should kick the two hundred thousand to Tony.

Todd is surprised.

TODD

Wow. That's so unlike you.

RUSS

Hey, I have my benevolent moments. Besides, we've been tearing the shit out of this place. And if he is going to be running our film he's going to need some cash to expand.

Todd, finally, takes a seat.

TODD

Man, this has been quite a day.

RUSS

And the best is yet to come.

Out of sheer exhaustion, Todd begins to nod off. Russ smiles and goes back to the computer.

RUSS (CONT'D)

Keep bidding you fuckers!

The camera focuses on Todd's and his closed eyes.

FADE TO:

INT. AUDITORIUM - NIGHT

The camera is on Todd and his closed eyes.

MATT (O.C.)
And the winner of best picture is
(pause)
Slight of the hand!

Todd's eyes open and we see he's at an award ceremony. Beside him are Russ, Earl, and Paul. Everyone is standing applauding. Todd hugs the guys on his way down the aisle. Russ holds him for an extra beat.

RUSS
I saw it at The Royalty this
afternoon.

Todd looks at him expectantly.

RUSS (CONT'D)
Hey! It didn't suck!

They embrace again.

TODD
Just the review I was looking for.

They part and Todd makes the long walk to the stage. He's getting a standing ovation. Todd gets to the stage and MATT hands him the award. They shake hands for a moment before Todd is alone at the podium.

He's holding the award in both hands looking at it. After a few beats, with the crowd still cheering, he looks up and for what seems like the first time in a long time for him, Todd exhales.

FADE TO BLACK.