

"BLUE"

SERIES PILOT

written by

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INT. MAKESHIFT THEATER - EVENING

In a dark, smoke-filled room, on a crudely plastered brick wall, a screen flickers to life: a black & white movie begins to play. Under a dancing web of film scratches and dust, a blurry image comes into focus...

ON SCREEN: A beautiful woman, MARGOT, drives a 1920s-era motorcar next to her equally seductive female companion. Wind blows in their hair, and the scene exudes the carefree sensuality of youthful dreams.

ON SCREEN: The scene quickly changes when the car stops for a hitchhiker: a seemingly lost and desperate man. Enthralled by uninhibited desire, the girls begin to kiss and torture him with lustful temptations.

In the theater, a mixed crowd of patrons cheer and applaud with eager enthusiasm. Underneath the ruckus, a large projector clacks away.

INT. MAKESHIFT THEATER, PROJECTIONIST ROOM - (CONT.)

A somewhat disheveled man in his 20s, RANDALL, sits behind a behemoth of a projector in a crowded crawl space. His apparent superior, an impeccably dressed, handsome man in his 40s, LAMONT, stands by his side. The room is far too loud, and far too hot for anyone's comfort.

Randall removes a bootleg bottle of whiskey and offers Lamont a drink. Lamont waves the whiskey away, and answers with a sophisticated, Southern accent.

LAMONT

A man can drink ten of those in one night, and still be thirsty for more. But watch a film once, and you'll remember it forever. Tell me Randall, what brings a man greater pleasure?

Randall shrugs and takes a drink while Lamont watches the film with pride.

RANDALL

I just roll the film, boss, I ain't no philosophizer.

INT. MAKESHIFT THEATER - CONTINUOUS

Lamont quietly enters the small theater and slowly paces in the back.

The patrons are engrossed in the picture and barely notice him. Lamont scans over the paying customers with a confident smile.

One man stands out from the crowd: A MYSTERIOUS MAN wearing a trench coat and blue hat. Standing near the entrance, he isn't the least bit interested in the lascivious picture of bare breasts and tender lips.

The Mysterious Man meets eyes with Lamont, then slips outside the theater as if to avoid being seen. Lamont eyes the curious behavior with careful interest.

EXT. MAKESHIFT THEATER - EVENING

The Mysterious Man passes through a speakeasy with much gambling and drinking, and exits out a secret door. He briskly crosses the street and takes a seat in a parked, black car that is waiting for him.

Within seconds, several police cars scream down the street and come to a screeching halt outside the establishment. Armed officers exit their cars and begin to take an offensive position.

The Mysterious Man watches the scene unfold.

INT. MAKESHIFT THEATER, PROJECTIONIST ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Lamont returns to Randall in the projectionist room, but declines to sit. He stares out into the crowd, looking slightly nervous.

LAMONT
Something is amiss, Randall.

Randall is about to drink when suddenly a red lightbulb illuminates over their heads. They both freeze in their tracks. A wave of fear washes over them. Without even realizing it, Randall has knocked his drink over.

INT. MAKESHIFT THEATER - CONTINUOUS

Oblivious to any danger, the rowdy crowd of men continue to hoot and holler at the lascivious images on the screen. The actresses in the film begin to undress.

In another room, unbeknownst to the theater goers, total chaos erupts: Police officers smash bottles with billy clubs, turn over poker tables, and throw men to the ground.

With frantic urgency, a senior officer, DETECTIVE HARTWELL, pounds his fist on every wall looking for the hidden door he knows he'll find.

Back in the theater, the film suddenly cuts to black, leaving everyone confused and grumbling in the darkness.

Before anyone has an opportunity to protest, a shotgun blast rings out and a door bursts open. Everyone in the theater jumps to their feet in a panic as the cops swarm in.

INT. MAKESHIFT THEATER - PROJECTIONIST ROOM (CONT.)

Randall flips the film into reverse and smashes the red light above their heads with a lead pipe sitting by the projector. He braces the door with his chair and anxiously paces while the film rewinds... the high pitch whine gets louder and louder with the tension.

Lamont opens a ceiling panel and pulls down a secret ladder leading to the roof top. Ready to escape, he reaches out to Randall.

LAMONT
The film!

RANDALL
It's not finished yet!

LAMONT
Randall, the film!

RANDALL
I know! I know!

The sound of police officers scuffling with the patrons grows near the door. Lamont can wait no longer. He quickly ascends the ladder while Randall continues to wait for the film to complete spooling onto reel.

Seconds later, the police begin hammering on the door.

RANDALL (CONT'D)
Come on! Come on!

HARTWELL (O.S.)
Break it in!

A loud crack smashes the door in half! Randall grabs the reel and rips it from the projector, leaving the last few feet of film flipping endlessly in the projector.

Randall hurries up the escape route with the reel in hand while the police give chase.

EXT. ROOFTOPS - NIGHT (CONTINUOUS)

Randall exits to the rooftop to find Lamont already some distance away. He spots some construction equipment with loose bricks and boards. Randall quickly grabs the boards and throws them down the stair well in an attempt to block the path.

Undeterred, the police officers continue to pursue him.

Lamont comes to the edge of the rooftop and makes a courageous leap to an adjoining building.

Randall runs to the same ledge, but a fear of heights stops him from jumping. Instead, desperate and nervous, he climbs onto a fire escape and descends to the street.

Directed away from Lamont, Hartwell and his officers pursue Randall down the steps.

HARTWELL

Stop him!

EXT. ALLEYWAYS - CONTINUOUS

Randall lands on his feet at the bottom of the alley, attracting the attention of several other COPS. Randall makes a break for it, and the chase continues.

Randall scales a fence and topples trash cans as he turns corners and flees down alley ways. Nearly out of breath, he takes a wrong turn and stops suddenly.

A GUNMAN wearing a trench coat with a dark fedora pulled down low on his head stands waiting for Randall--a Thompson submachine gun aimed directly at his face.

Randall stops dead in his tracks and slowly and puts his hands up in front of him.

The two relentless Cops catch up to Randall, guns drawn.

COP

Alright you fuck! Enough cat and mouse, now!

They stop when they see the Gunman, brief moment of recognition follows until the Gunman opens fire on Randall the cops behind caught in the gunfire.

Randall drops to the ground as one of the Gunman's bullets hit him in the shoulder.

The Officers fall from bullet wounds, mowed down by the Gunman's superior firepower.

EXT. ROOFTOPS - CONTINUOUS

Lamont watches in horror from a nearby rooftop as the shots echo out. In clear view, he sees Randall and the police officers fall to the ground.

The Mysterious Man with the blue hat exits the idling car and cautiously walks past the bullet ridden bodies of the cops. Clearly dead, he walks past them over to Randall.

Wounded but still alive, Randall struggles helplessly to crawl away. The Mysterious Man crouches by Randall's side and pries the film reel from his bloody hands. The Mysterious Man draws closer, as if questioning Randall. Then, with the help of TWO THUGS drags away him into a car parked at the end of the alley.

Lamont cringes and takes cover, helpless to intervene.

INT. MAKESHIFT THEATER - CONTINUOUS

The projector still winds away, slapping the torn film on the take-up reel.

The commotion has settled down and police officers are escorting hand-cuffed men out of the theater. Detective Hartwell scours the room for evidence.

Hartwell focuses in on the projector and stops the reel. Carefully, he pulls the film out and holds it to the light. The frame reveals Margot in a close-up, licking her lips with sexual prowess (presumably after a great climax).

Hartwell studies the film frame with a proud, victorious grin. He relishes these rewards.

HARTWELL
(Under his breath)
Well, hello darling.

TITLE SEQUENCE: BLUE

TITLE: Hollywood, 1923

BEGIN MONTAGE:

EXT. HOLLYWOOD HILLS - DAY

A large, imposing sign that reads "HOLLYWOODLAND" is just being erected in the hills.

EXT. HOLLYWOOD STREETS - DAY

The roads bustle with street cars and automobiles.

EXT. MOVIE STUDIO LOT, HOLLYWOOD - DAY

Lively movie studios shoot great American westerns.

EXT. BACKALLEYS, HOLLYWOOD - DAY

Bootleggers deliver contraband to hidden speakeasies.

END MONTAGE

INT. POLICE STATION, HARTWELL'S OFFICE - DAY

Detective Hartwell pins an enlarged blow-up of the confiscated film frame to a bulletin board behind his desk. The wall is plastered with maps of Los Angeles, mug-shots, invitations to secret screenings, and various pornographic evidence.

Hartwell takes a step back and stares at the board deep in thought, as if assembling a giant jigsaw puzzle.

VIOLET, an early 30s secretary to the head of the LAPD's Indecency Task Force, approaches Hartwell's office and knocks on his open door. Despite her conservative appearance and professionalism, she cannot dress-down her natural beauty. Much to her regret, her good looks don't go unnoticed.

VIOLET

You wanted to see me, Detective
Hartwell?

HARTWELL

Violet, come in. Shut the door.

Detective Hartwell closes the blinds in his private office and offers Violet a seat. Catching Violet staring at his evidence board, he clears his throat and offers an apology.

HARTWELL (CONT'D)
Degenerates, drunks and perverts.
Where'd the good old days of bank
robbers go? Am I right?

Violet forces a polite smile.

HARTWELL (CONT'D)
I'm sorry a lady like yourself has
to deal with this filth.

VIOLET
It's nothing I haven't seen before.

HARTWELL
Movie theaters are breeding grounds
for this kind of obscenity.
Nurturing inappropriate contact in
dark rooms and corrupting the
delicate sensibilities of women...

VIOLET
You mustn't think all films are
bad, Detective.

Hartwell looks over Violet, glaring at her body and doing a
poor job of hiding it.

HARTWELL
Your husband works for the
pictures, am I right?

VIOLET
Yes, R.K.O. He's a camera loader.

HARTWELL
If I had my way, I'd have the
studios shut down. Every last one.
But seeing as I can't do that...
we'll have to pave the way to
decency through law and
censorship... and we have to know
the devil to fight him.

Hartwell steps closer to Violet and leans on his desk. He's
invading Violet's personal space, and he knows it.

HARTWELL (CONT'D)
We're looking for someone who can
run a projector. A specialist to
process evidence. No one in the
back room knows how to handle this
stuff.

VIOLET

Daniel?

Hartwell grumbles an affirmation.

HARTWELL

Yes, you said he was a
projectionist at a cinema up in San
Francisco.

Violet nods, affirming that fact.

VIOLET

Yes. For a time. Detective Hartwell
he could teach me to run the
projector, I am well suited to fill
this role in service of the
department.

HARTWELL

Violet, you know... a lot of this
will be morally questionable
material. Temptation can whittle
away the hardest resolve and break
the most steadfast of unions. I
don't feel it was be morally sound
of me to subject you to any more of
this filth than required.

Hartwell places his hand on Violet's shoulder, an action both
suggestive and reminiscent of fatherly concern.

HARTWELL (CONT'D)

Can you speak to your relationship?

VIOLET

We're happily married. Thank you,
Detective Hartwell.

Secretly dissatisfied, Hartwell nods.

HARTWELL

Good. Bring him in. I have a few
reports and memos I need you to
type up. Please be ready at your
desk, and let your husband know his
community needs him.

Violet nods.

VIOLET

Thank you, Detective Hartwell.

Violet leaves his office, a look of resentment and disappointment on her face.

INT. FILM STUDIO - DAY

Tail-sticks clap on set, marking the end of a long day of shooting. Numerous stagehands begin to break down the scene while tired cowboy actors stroll off to their trailers.

DANIEL, an early 30s "everyman" rushes in to unload the film magazine. With proficiency and speed, he labels the stock, cleans the gate, and dissassembles the camera.

As the set clears out, Daniel shelves the film equipment into a locked cage. Secretly, when no one is looking, he nervously grabs a hand-crank camera and hides it in a rucksack...

EXT. HOLLYWOOD BLVD - DAY

Daniel makes his way home from his studio. He stops in front of a cinema and peers up at the marquee. He gazes at a poster before making his way back towards his apartment.

INT. DANIEL'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Violet removes the camera from Daniel's rucksack with anger and shock. She holds it up, accusing Daniel who sits hanging his head in shame.

DANIEL
I didn't steal it. I'm only
borrowing the equipment, Vi'..

VIOLET
(Unconvinced)
Oh really? And the studio is aware?

DANIEL
Frank knows.

VIOLET
Frank! That's reassuring...

DANIEL
It's just for the week. The studio
has a dozen cameras, they won't
even know it's missing...

Violet leaves the room. Clearly mad and avoiding his apologetic gaze, she starts changing for bed.

VIOLET

This will get you axed Daniel! And of all days! Committing theft when I recommend you for a job at work! Do you have any regard for the position you put me in? I work for the police department! How foolish can you be?!

Daniel interrupts as Violet removes her dress, grabbing hold of her and commanding her attention with a puppy dog smile. It's an uncomfortable situation that she doesn't appreciate.

DANIEL

Are you going to arrest me, babe?

Violet shrugs Daniel off.

VIOLET

It's not funny Daniel.

DANIEL

I promise you, nothing bad will come of it. Do you think Keaton or Chaplin got to where they are without taking risks? I'm not going to be a camera loader... or a projectionist all my life. I can do more than that. You know it, too.

VIOLET

There are other ways, Daniel...

DANIEL

When the studio sees my film, no one will be asking where the camera came from. I guarantee you that!

Violet climbs into bed and turns her back to Daniel. Daniel gives her a kiss goodnight on her cheek, and turns away. With a painful distance between them, they fall asleep facing opposite directions.

Daniel looks over to the camera on the table. He puts his arms behind his head and closes his eyes.

INT. LAMONT'S APARTMENT - DAY

MARGOT WEDDINGTON a red-headed siren of a woman in her late 30's, wearing seductive lingerie, rides vigorously on top an older MAN.

Margot scratches at his chest, approaching climax, when suddenly Lamont walks into the bedroom unannounced. When the Man notices, he panics and scrambles out from underneath Margot.

MAN

I didn't do anything! I swear!

Lamont, looking apprehensive, watches as the Man rushes past him out the door with his clothes in hand.

Margot fixes the lingerie falling off her shoulder and scowls at Lamont. She gets up, agitated, and grabs a bathrobe.

MARGOT

I don't see why you gotta barge in like that! You could knock ya know!

LAMONT

(agitated)

I typically don't knock when the domicile is my own. What if he was an undercover lawman?

Margot scoffs and throws up her arms in frustration.

MARGOT

He wasn't.

LAMONT

And how might you know that, dear Mar-got?

MARGOT

He didn't screw like one...

Lamont returns a puzzled look at the remark.

MARGOT (CONT'D)

And why do you care what I do in my spare time?

LAMONT

I care because you are being so careless as to bring an unfamiliar John back to our room. OUR ROOM. Let me emphasize that fact. Your actions have recourse for more than merely yourself.

MARGOT

What am I supposed to do? Sit here going cross-eyed with boredom like some silly, little dewdropper, while you gallivant around town? When is the next shoot?

LAMONT

I'm investigating that matter now.

MARGOT

And Randall?

Lamont pauses, struggling to hide the awful truth from Margot.

LAMONT

It seems he ran back to Baton Rouge. Too much heat from the raid, I suspect.

His lie fails to raise Margot's suspicion, despite being awkward and unrehearsed.

MARGOT

Was he arrested?

LAMONT

No, no. I'm certain of that.

MARGOT

Well, you'll just have to find us a new director. Hollywood is "the mecca for blue films," you said. YOUR words when you dragged us here. Not mine.

LAMONT

It's not that simple, Mar-got. We need an IN, lest we have another setback like last night. SOMEONE is shooting blue films here. Soon, it will be us.

Margot tosses her robe to the side and lays down in bed, nude.

MARGOT

Wake me up when we're ready to shoot. I'm having a nap.

LAMONT

Dream us up a new director if you can.

Margot ignores him.

LAMONT (CONT'D)

Don't lose hope. We'll find what we're looking for, Margot. After all, this is Hollywood... this town runs on dreams.

INT. DANIEL'S APARTMENT - DAY

Daniel opens a box revealing a sealed, undeveloped roll of film. He holds the reel as if it were made of gold, and with the deepest sincere conviction, shares it with Violet.

DANIEL

This gem doesn't belong to the studio. It's mine. I paid for it with my own money.

Violet, getting ready for work, stops what she's doing and sighs a disappointed, but sympathetic sigh.

VIOLET

Daniel...

DANIEL

Violet, THIS is our future. This is our ticket to a better life. You KNOW what this means to me. I want it to mean something to you, too.

VIOLET

How can we even afford this?

DANIEL

I accepted the offer from your department... with an advance.

Violet shares a conflicted look.

VIOLET

And what about your job at the studio?

DANIEL

R.K.O. Camera Loader by day, projectionist to Los Angeles Police Department by night! It's by assignment, so it shouldn't interfere.

Daniel puts the film stock in Violet's hands and urges her to understand its value.

DANIEL (CONT'D)

This represents our hopes and dreams. One thousand feet of celluloid nitrate, patiently waiting for a kiss of light. Now I have the stock... I have the equipment... I just need you to give the go ahead.

Violet is touched by his careful words, and smiles, despite her trepidation. She can't bring herself to give permission, but she answers with an understanding kiss and hands the film back to Daniel.

EXT. LAMONT'S SHIPPING YARD - NIGHT

A bloody film can suddenly falls to the ground. The thud startles BRANFORD, a large black man working under a heavily modified Model-T engine.

Standing above him, Branford sees the Mysterious Man known only through rumor as BLUEBOY. He's a thin, soft spoken but explosive man in his 40s. His expensive striped suit and two gun totting THUGS make his mob association obvious.

Blueboy uses a handkerchief to wipe blood from his hands with a look of disgust. He clearly doesn't like to get dirty. Branford, on the other hand, is covered in engine grease.

BLUEBOY

You can tell a lot from a man's hands. Blood and dirt. Grease and oil. I prefer to keep mine clean... I suspect it matters less for your color.

Branford stands up, clearly out-weighing Blueboy, but his size does nothing to intimidate him.

BLUEBOY (CONT'D)

Fetch your keeper, boy.

BRANFORD

Don't have no keeper.

Blueboy smirks.

BLUEBOY

No keeper, well then. Employer it shall have to be. Call it by whatever name you like.

The Thugs laugh. Blueboy moves into Branford's personal space, places his hand gently on his shoulder, and asks politely with a sarcastic, crooked smile.

BLUEBOY (CONT'D)

Get out from under that jalopy and
bring me Lamont Beaudrie, if you
please?

INT. LAMONT'S OFFICE - NIGHT (CONTINUOUS)

Lamont sits alone in his private office, impeccably dressed (as always) in a white suit and matching Panama hat. He stares at a small handgun resting on the table in front of him.

Lamont's gaze is fixed down on the gun, deep in thought, conflicted and concerned.

Making some kind of decision, he picks up the handgun and places it in a locked drawer under his desk.

Branford urgently enters the office.

BRANFORD

We have a problem.

Curious, Lamont gets up and peers out the window. Outside, several THUGS are opening shipping containers and searching through crates of sugarcane.

Amidst them stands Blueboy, carefully and calmly supervising.

Branford reaches for a shotgun on the wall, but Lamont stops him.

LAMONT

No. I have a more important task
for you. I'll deal with these
gentlemen.

Confused and uncertain of Lamont's confidence, Branford reluctantly returns the shotgun.

EXT. LAMONT'S SHIPPING YARD - (CONTINUOUS)

Lamont exits his office to find his shipping yard in complete upheaval. Blueboy's men are opening shipping containers and searching every corner.

Dozens of crates carrying dried stalks of sugarcane are opened up and tossed aside.

LAMONT

Looking for something, friends?

Lamont walks with a steady, confident stride towards Blueboy, and stops several feet away with the bloodied film can lying on the ground between them. Lamont immediately recognizes Blueboy from the theater. They stand-off against one another as akin to a Western showdown.

BLUEBOY

That look familiar to you?

Lamont glances down at the film can in the dirt.

LAMONT

It's hard to tell. You wouldn't happen to have a projectionist at your disposal, would you? We can string it up and I might be able to say definitively.

Blueboy isn't amused by the quip.

BLUEBOY

You see, a young kid delivered that film to one of my theaters. Real inappropriate picture with the touching and the kissing and the fucking... I'm willing to bet you know the type. Tipped off an entire police raid. Didn't end so well for the kid, I have to say.

Lamont resists the provocation and remains silent.

LAMONT

Your theater, you say?

BLUEBOY

That's right.

LAMONT

Sounds like you've got quite the questionable establishment. I'll take care to avoid giving you my patronage, friend.

BLUEBOY

You'll do more than that.

As if on cue, one of Blueboy's men hurries over with something of importance: film equipment.

Lamont watches as several other men raid his secret stash, pulling out lights, projectors, film reels and a camera. Everything is violently dropped in front of Blueboy.

BLUEBOY (CONT'D)
I run the stag operations around here. Every theater that shows stag pictures, shows MINE. And it's going to stay that way.

Lamont has an epiphany as he recognizes the infamous Blueboy.

LAMONT
You're Blueboy...

Blueboy tips his blue hat with condescending sarcasam.

BLUEBOY
Aw shucks, did the hat give it away?

One of Blueboy's thugs rushes over and hands him a sledge hammer. Blueboy eyes the film equipment on the ground.

LAMONT
Wait...

Lamont steps forward, urging Blueboy to show restraint.

LAMONT (CONT'D)
Let me work with you.

Blueboy laughs at the proposition, but Lamont is undeterred.

LAMONT (CONT'D)
I've seen your films play from here to New York. You're good. You know the business... but I can offer you something more.

BLUEBOY
And what might that be?

LAMONT
A beauty unlike any you've ever filmed. A STAR. That's what you're missing.

BLUEBOY
I have plenty of talent.

LAMONT
Sure, you can hire prostitutes and vagrants. They're a dime a dozen.
(MORE)

LAMONT (CONT'D)

You forget their face just as fast
as the picture rolls out. I'm
talking about a starlet that
doesn't just entice desires, but
captures hearts. A woman your
audience will fall in love with.

Blueboy picks up the film camera with a crooked smile.

BLUEBOY

And this starlet... does she have a
name?

LAMONT

She only works for me.

BLUEBOY

Pity.

Blueboy drops the camera onto the ground and prepares to
swing...

BLUEBOY (CONT'D)

I really hate being ornery. It
doesn't agree with my disposition.

Blueboy smashes the camera with the sledge hammer. The lens
shatters and parts go flying. Blueboy begins to raise his
voice. He spins and juggles the sledge hammer in the air like
a western gunslinger.

BLUEBOY (CONT'D)

So when I tell you what I'm about
to tell you...

Blueboy takes another swing at the camera, smashing it beyond
repair.

BLUEBOY (CONT'D)

Know that I'm telling you with the
kindest of intentions...

Blueboy swings at the lights, sending glass flying
everywhere.

BLUEBOY (CONT'D)

STAY...

Blueboy smashes the projector.

BLUEBOY (CONT'D)

OUT...

Blueboy smashes the film cans. Everything is destroyed.

BLUEBOY (CONT'D)
OF STAG!

Finally finished, Blueboy dusts off his hands with his handkerchief and backs away with the mob Thugs.

BLUEBOY (CONT'D)
Please take care you don't cut
yourself on the broken glass. I'd
hate to see you spill any blood...

Blueboy blows a condescending kiss as he climbs into his car and drives off.

Lamont picks up the bloody film reel and shakes his head in anger.

LAMONT
(to Branford)
We may need locate our friend in
the blue fedora. See what you can
do...

Branford nods and walks off.

Lamont looks off and walks back into his office with the film reel.

INT. HARRIS LYMAN'S OFFICE, R.K.O. STUDIO - NIGHT

Lamont sits with HARRIS LYMAN, a similarly aged movie executive on the R.K.O. lot. They sit across from each other reminiscing.

LAMONT (CONT'D)
Next thing you know, Corporal
Porter was running from that French
gal's husband as naked as the day
he was born! You almost had him
court-martialed! Yet he still
managed to win a *Croix De Guerre*...

Harris guffaws and slaps his knee.

HARRIS
Sometimes bravery and foolishness
can go hand in hand...

LAMONT
Indeed.

HARRIS
Look, I have something to show you.

Harris goes to a cabinet near his desk and pulls out an old ammo box. Inside, he reveals a small playing card with a photo of a nude woman on it.

He presents the card to Lamont and hands it to him carefully.

Lamont smiles, gently taking the card and examining it.

LAMONT

Well now, look at this bit of nostalgia. You think she remembers me?

Lamont and Harris share a laugh.

HARRIS

You sure knew how to keep the morale up, Lamont.

LAMONT

I just wanted to remind them of better times, if even for a few moments.

HARRIS

You belong in show business!

Harris laughs, but Lamont only chuckles. This is no joke for Lamont.

HARRIS (CONT'D)

You, a New Orleans sugarcane baron, and me, a "king of moving pictures." Who would have thought?

LAMONT

We've come a long way.

Harris leans in with a serious, slightly suspicious note.

HARRIS

If you don't mind me asking... Why, exactly, has sugarcane brought you this way?

Lamont is short with Harris, giving a clear message that he shouldn't prod further.

LAMONT

Everyone needs sugar, Harris. Coffee and tea don't sweeten themselves. Neither do cakes nor pie.

HARRIS

I suppose you're right. But you should work in the moving picture business. We could use savvy folks like yourself who truly possess considerable business acumen.

LAMONT

Oh no, not me. I'd just end up slinging stag films. It'd be a short career before I was thrown in jail, and *fin*, it'd be over.

Harris shakes his head chuckling, but then shifts tone.

HARRIS

(adamantly)

I would stay far away from that by all means necessary. Trouble. Run by gangsters, shot by perverts, shown in brothels. A bad racket to be associated with.

Harris goes and returns the card back to the cabinet. He comes back to take a seat opposite Lamont.

LAMONT

(sarcastically)

Stop it Harris, you're scaring me with this talk.

Harris gives Lamont a solidm solemn stare.

HARRIS

I mean it. Even in jest, I wouldn't speak lightly of it.

LAMONT

Oh I am just speculating dear Harris, capturing moving images onto film though... it is a mysterious marvel that I do find very fascinating.

HARRIS

Well! How about a tour then?

Lamont and Harris stand.

LAMONT

A grand proposition, Colonel Lyman.

Harris chuckles.

HARRIS
My pleasure, Lieutenant Beaudrie.

EXT. R.K.O. STUDIO, SOUND STAGE - NIGHT

Daniel stands in the shadows outside a deserted sound stage. Through a partially cracked door, a lit scene waits for its director. Daniel places his hands on FRANK, a 20-something co-worker, who looks clearly nervous.

FRANK
I only said I'd let you in. I don't want to be a part of it, Daniel.

DANIEL
Frank, all you have to do is keep a lookout. That's all I'm asking. Do you think you can do that for me? Please?

FRANK
I don't know...

DANIEL
How many people are at the studio right now? Hmmm? How many?

FRANK
I don't know. Beats me.

DANIEL
Probably ten, tops. Including the five of us. No one's gonna walk by. I promise. Okay? Frank?

Frank reluctantly nods okay, and Daniel shakes his hand enthusiastically before slipping back inside the stage.

INT. R.K.O. STUDIO, SOUND STAGE - CONTINUOUS

Daniel walks onto a small lit set where a COWBOY ACTOR, a SOUTHERN BELLE ACTRESS, and CAMERAMAN ACTOR stand waiting. The scene is set to resemble a Western stage, as-if behind-the-scenes on a large studio production.

We intercut between Daniel prepping his actors and a visual montage of Daniel staging the scene. Daniel's expertise is clearly evident, as he juggles multiple rolls all at once: taking light readings, measuring focal distance, adjusting the camera aperture, etc.

DANIEL

Films today are only stage plays of Western heroes and villainous mobsters. THIS will be different. We're filming a romantic tragedy behind the picture... with the pathos and comedy of a cameraman falling in love with his actress. A Pygmalion myth for modern times.

COWBOY ACTOR

Pig what?

DANIEL

It's a Greek Myth.

SOUTHERN BELLE ACTRESS

You aim to do all that in ten minutes of film?

DANIEL

Yes. I've seen more said in a single photograph.

SOUTHERN BELLE ACTRESS

(Quietly to herself)

Maybe I should've spent more time dolling myself up...

DANIEL

This is one-take. Whatever happens, don't stop. Just stay in character.

With the actors in position, Daniel takes his place behind the camera.

Through his lens, we see the lowly Cameraman focused on a scene between the Southern Belle and the Cowboy. The Cowboy pantomimes some charming conversation, and the actress pretends to be wooed.

Daniel raises his hand, and...

DANIEL (CONT'D)

Action!

EXT. R.K.O. STUDIO LOT - NIGHT

Harris walks with Lamont down a row of sound stage exteriors.

HARRIS

We can have up to ten pictures filming at one time, give or take.

As they turn a corner, Harris is surprised to see light emanating from one of the sound stages ahead. He perks up with enthusiasm.

HARRIS (CONT'D)

This production is shooting late it seems. Hey... would you like to see the magic in action?

Lamont nods to Harris, pleased and genuinely curious.

LAMONT

I'd be thrilled, if it isn't too much of an imposition of course.

Harris walks over to a nearby studio call-box and picks up the phone.

HARRIS

It's no trouble at all! Wait just a moment while I check with security to see if we're clear. Don't want to enter on a live set and ruin a good take.

EXT. R.K.O. STUDIO, SOUND STAGE - CONTINUOUS

Outside the stage, their lookout, Frank, spots their boss in the distance. Seeing Harris on the studio line, he begins to panic.

Frank peeks into the stage and attempts to whisper for Daniel, but is unable to grab his attention.

Frank listens as Harris gestures towards their location. A few words can be made out in the distance.

HARRIS

That's right... Stage C... what do you mean "no production"?!

Unsure what else to do, Frank begins to creep away... slowly at first, and then sprinting away in the darkness to flee the scene of the crime.

INT. R.K.O. STUDIO, SOUND STAGE - CONTINUOUS

Unaware of the danger outside, Daniel deftly handles the camera, cranking with a steady pace and manipulating position and focus without skipping a beat.

The Cameraman Actor aims a prop camera at the Actress, clearly ignoring the Cowboy. Jealous and flustered, the Cowboy forcibly redirects the camera back to his close-up... but within moments, the Cameraman drifts back to admiring the Actress he so clearly adores.

Losing patience, the Cowboy takes out his prop gun and threatens the Cameraman to film him instead. The Cameraman hides behind his camera, always cranking, and the scene quickly escalates.

Daniel chuckles to himself at the comedic antics. Everything is going so well...

INT. R.K.O. STUDIO, SOUND STAGE - CONTINUOUS

Harris leads Lamont onto the soundstage. He approaches cautiously to prevent an interruption.

They turn a corner to find Daniel's scene in full-swing. Daniel continues filming with his back turned, completely oblivious.

The angry Cowboy stands off against the Cameraman as they circle around each other in a comedic fight. The Cowboy fires a few blanks. The Cameraman swings his camera from the tripod like a medieval mace.

The Southern Belle Actress screams, possibly in-character, but perhaps because she notices the interruption.

HARRIS

What in hell is going on here?!

Daniel jumps out of his pants and spins around to see Harris staring him down.

DANIEL

Mr. Lyman...

HARRIS

O'Malley--have you lost your mind?!

The Cowboy actor drops-character and turns to see what's going on... leaving him open for an unsuspecting blow: The Cameraman swings his prop camera and smashes it over the Cowboy's head. The Cowboy stumbles back as the prop camera explodes into a dozen pieces.

As the dust settles, everyone stares at Daniel speechless.

Harris storms over and gets in Daniel's face.

HARRIS (CONT'D)
Who's responsible for all this?

Daniel replies sheepishly.

DANIEL
I am, sir.

HARRIS
YOU set this up? By yourself?
You're a GODDAMN CAMERA LOADER. Oh
wait, I'm sorry... WAS a goddamn
camera loader. You won't find a job
cleaning shit from toilets when I'm
through with you. Now shut this
rogue production down, and wait for
me outside. All of you!

Daniel quickly rushes out of the soundstage leaving his
disastrous mess.

Lamont watches with quiet interest as Daniel exits.

Harris picks up pieces of the broken prop camera in complete
disbelief.

EXT. OUTSIDE STUDIO - NIGHT

Daniel walks out the front gate despondent, dragging his
feet, his shoulders sagging. He kicks a bottle and sulks
away. Up ahead in the shadows is Lamont leaning against a
light pole. He holds the busted prop camera in his hands.

LAMONT
Hello there, friend, you look like
you've had better nights.

Daniel stops--fearing another tongue lashing by Harris's
guest, and nods acknowledging his poor state.

DANIEL
Not my finest moment. That's for
sure.

Lamont nods sympathetically, walks over, and places the prop
camera in Daniel's hands.

LAMONT
Here: a memento.

Daniel accepts, unsure if this is a sincere gesture or cruel
joke.

LAMONT (CONT'D)
O'Malley I caught. You have a first name?

DANIEL
Daniel.

Lamont beams in admiration.

LAMONT
Daniel O'Malley. My name is Lamont Darcourt Beaudrie, pleased to make your acquaintance, friend.

Lamont leans in and shakes Daniel's hand.

LAMONT (CONT'D)
You did a bold thing back there you know. Took initiative, made something of your own. That took guts.

Daniel listens intently, somewhat surprised that the conversation has gone this way.

LAMONT (CONT'D)
You've got a whole city of outsiders dying to scratch their way in front of the camera, and the lucky ones who make it through the gates are only berated and bullied by producers who can't tell the difference between the silver screen and a silver dollar.

DANIEL
I overstepped my place. I deserved what I got.

LAMONT
Maybe. But then again maybe you make your own place.

Lamont moves in closer.

LAMONT (CONT'D)
It looks like you're out the job... but I just so happen to be in need of a cameraman.

Daniel looks down at the shattered prop camera in his hands.

LAMONT (CONT'D)
We'll be using REAL cameras, of
course. Top of the line.

Lamont hands him a nondescript business card with nothing more than a name and location.

LAMONT (CONT'D)
You can find me here tonight. Think
it over.

EXT. OUTSIDE DANIEL'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Daniel stands in front of his apartment holding the broken prop camera. He stares back and forth between the camera and his home. The windows are dark.

Daniel's eyes water up as he contemplates the severity of his situation. In a sudden burst of anger, he throws the prop camera down the street into the dark.

Daniel walks up to his apartment door, but hesitates, afraid to go inside.

DANIEL
Violet, you were right... I'm done.

He can't bring himself to open the door. Instead, he pulls Lamont's business card out of his pocket and considers his options.

Daniel takes a long, deep breath... then, decidedly, he walks down the hall away from his apartment without looking back.

EXT. SPEAKEASY - NIGHT

Daniel double checks the address on Lamont's business card, and looks around him. He's outside a closed delicatessen, and not a soul is in sight.

With trepidation, he knocks on the door. A DOORMAN, a slim African-American man wearing a smart dark suit, opens the door a crack without saying a word.

DANIEL
I'm not sure if I'm in the right
place. I'm supposed to meet
someone...

Daniel hands the Doorman the card. Recognizing Lamont's calling card, he opens the door and leads Daniel inside.

DOORMAN
Follow me, son.

INT. SPEAKEASY - NIGHT (CONTINUOUS)

Daniel is led inside, down a staircase into a basement serving as a lively speakeasy filled with African-American patrons who dance and drink to an energetic jazz number being played on the piano.

Clearly out-of-place and turning heads (and a few smiles from female patrons) Daniel makes his way inside.

Daniel is surrounded by illicit activity, drinking, smoking, men consorting with prostitutes, etc.

At the back of the club, Lamont plays a beat-up grand piano with gusto and exuberance while a black female SINGER belts out a bawdy tune. Reaching the end of the song, Lamont slides down the keys with a sweeping glissando.

With much applause, Lamont gets up, bows, and makes his way over to Daniel.

LAMONT
Danny boy, Danny boy, Danny boy!

Lamont takes Daniel by the shoulder and guides him to a more private seat.

LAMONT (CONT'D)
My apologies for the choice of location, friend. I trust you're not easily offended by the nature of this venue. May I offer you a drink, Daniel? Do you imbibe?

Daniel shakes his head awkwardly. Lamont grins.

LAMONT (CONT'D)
Nor I! Not since the Volstead Act was passed. When the Nation went dry, so did Lamont Darcourt Beaudrie. Serendipitous timing, no?

Uncomfortable in the surroundings, Daniel presses Lamont to cut to the chase.

DANIEL
The job you mentioned... What is it... you need filmed?

Lamont studies Daniel with a smile and waits a beat before answering.

LAMONT

I can tell you're truly a bona fide artist, and I want you to shoot something more than this town will ever fully appreciate.

Daniel is intrigued, but before Lamont can continue, a fight breaks out between two male patrons. Pushing and shoving quickly escalates to broken bottles and swinging fists.

Lamont gestures to a door left of the stage.

LAMONT (CONT'D)

It might be better to relocate to a more private area for a spell. Away from all this commotion.

Lamont leads Daniel away from the fighting and into the greenroom of the speakeasy.

INT. SPEAKEASY, GREENROOM - CONTINUOUS

In a private room reserved for talent, Lamont and Daniel take a seat in front of a large makeup mirror.

LAMONT

I'd like to capture something MORE. A true display of beauty and sensuality akin to the Masters' nude portraits during the Renaissance. I have an actress...

Daniel looks uneasy and pulls away.

DANIEL

This is a stag, isn't it?

LAMONT

No Daniel, this is a BLUE film. A far more tasteful and artistic endeavor than a stag could ever hope or dream to be.

Frightened, Daniel stands up and prepares to leave.

DANIEL

I think I've made a mistake.

As if on cue, Margot suddenly barges into the dressing room.

MARGOT

Lamont, darling! Who is this handsome, young gentleman?

Margot rushes over to Daniel's side and instantly captures his attention. She's beautiful, attentive, and oozes sexuality unlike anyone he's ever encountered before.

LAMONT

I was just offering Daniel here the opportunity to film with us.

Margot beams and offers her hand to Danile to kiss. Daniel stands abruptly and awkwardly shakes it.

MARGOT

So lovely to meet you! Margot Weddington. So YOU'RE our new cameraman!

Lamont cuts in.

LAMONT

Daniel hasn't decided to commit to joining our burgeoning operation, dear Mar-got.

MARGOT

No? DON't be a wet blanket Daniel, darling, you have to come aboard! We need some fresh talent. Our last cameraman didn't cut the mustard, frankly. And a cameraman is always an actress' best friend, don't you agree?

DANIEL

Yes, I'm sure. You're lovely, but like I was telling Mr. Beaudrie here... I really need to think about it.

Lamont watches with pleasure as Margot lays it on thick.

MARGOT

Tell me, do you think this side of me is better? Or THIS side?

Margot poses for Daniel, showing off her left profile and right. Daniel stares at her speechless as she accentuates her curves and shows off her derrière.

MARGOT (CONT'D)

Why think on it, when it will be so much fun?

Daniel is deep under her spell when Lamont slaps a large stack of money on the table.

LAMONT

One hundred dollars, in advance.

Daniel is taken aback by the amount. He holds his tongue, desperately trying to muster all his fortitude to resist the temptation. Sweat drips from his brow from the pressure.

Lamont leans in closer. Margot puts her hand around Daniel's shoulder.

MARGOT

What do you say Danny?

Daniel closes his eyes and takes the money. He's been won over.

DANIEL

One film. One film only. That's all I can agree to.

Margot jumps and claps with glee, while Lamont smiles with pride and a hint of deviousness (his secret weapon worked well).

LAMONT

Fantastic Daniel. It will be an honor.

Margot embraces Daniel and kisses him on the cheek, setting him at ease.

MARGOT

I am so excited! We'll make a picture that will be the envy of Hollywood!

Daniel grimaces, still very much in the moment, but yet not quite sure of what he's gotten himself into.

INT. DANIEL'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Daniel lies in bed, unable to sleep, staring at the ceiling. Violet sleeps soundly with her back turned to him... she never heard him come in.

Daniel turns to Violet and looks at her with conflicted longing.

DANIEL
(Whispering to himself)
Just one film. Just one film...

The busted prop camera from his shoot sits on a bedside table...

EXT. ORANGE GROVE, BLUEBOY'S HIDEOUT - NIGHT

Branford turns off his headlights and pulls over. He gets out of his car walks towards a clearing and spies on Blueboy's hideout: a barn, a farmhouse, and a shed for housing film equipment.

He watches Blueboy and his Thugs exit to a car parked outside.

Brandford smiles and heads back to his car, satisfied.

INT. DANIEL'S APARTMENT - MORNING

Daniel sits in bed, fiddling with the broken prop camera, fixing it where he can. He occasionally looks up and watches Violet prepare for work unaware.

VIOLET
Are you going to tell me how it went?

Daniel is taken off guard.

DANIEL
What?

VIOLET
You've been sitting there all morning mopping and playing with that broken camera, so I just assumed not to ask.

DANIEL
Oh, it's just a prop. It's okay. All part of the story.

VIOLET
So, how did it go then?

Daniel is slow to respond.

DANIEL
The film isn't developed yet... so
we'll see.

Daniel holds up the prop camera and watches Violet put on her dress through the pretend eyepiece. Violet notices, and hastily covers herself.

VIOLET
Don't point that at me.

DANIEL
I told you, it's fake.

VIOLET
It's indecent all the same. I don't
like it when you gawk like that.

Violet finishes getting ready and prepares to leave.

VIOLET (CONT'D)
Aren't you ever getting out of bed?
We'll be late.

Daniel springs up, remembering his commitment to work at the police department that day.

Violet pecks Daniel on the lips and turns to leave before allowing him to answer.

INT. POLICE STATION, EVIDENCE ROOM - DAY

Detective Hartwell guides Daniel to the police evidence room while prepping him for his assignment. Once again, Daniel feels out of place, but for entirely different reasons.

HARTWELL
... Some of them are ten minutes
long... others just ten frames. I
need them strung together for the
briefing. You're to wear gloves at
all times. No tampering or cutting.
Forensics is still pulling finger
prints on these.

Hartwell opens the door to the evidence room. Inside, several racks store dozens of confiscated film reels, each bagged and tagged with case numbers. A center table is cleared with a Moviola and take-up reels.

DANIEL
Thank you.

HARTWELL

Good luck.

Hartwell closes the door leaving Daniel inside the small evidence locker. The task before him seems daunting, and the irony of his position makes him feel sick.

INT. POLICE STATION, EVIDENCE ROOM - LATER

Daniel systematically pulls the evidence reel by reel from the shelves and manually splices and winds them into a master. With each splice Daniel views the cut under the Moviola, catching glimpses of nude models, breasts, fellatio, and full-on sex.

Daniel finds himself juggling feelings of discomfort and intrigue. He's drawn to the images, but equally frightened and racked with guilt for accepting Lamont's offer.

Daniel stops suddenly and cringes at the table.

DANIEL

It's just one film.

Daniel resumes his work.

Over the scene, we begin to hear Detective Hartwell's police briefing, delivered with a stern urgency to an unflinching crowd.

HARTWELL (O.S.)

Lewd. Disgusting. Vile. This new wave of indecency sets our moral compass astray and threatens to unravel the very fabric of our society... our families... our wives... and our children.

INT. POLICE STATION, BRIEFING ROOM - NIGHT

Hartwell continues to talk in front of a large room of detectives and police officers. Using a slide projector, he gives visual aides as he goes.

In the back of the briefing room, Daniel sits next to a readied projector. He listens closely to Hartwell's speech and the dangers he may soon face.

HARTWELL

It's not enough to raid theaters and punish the victims of this disease.

(MORE)

HARTWELL (CONT'D)
That is why the Bureau made clear
the paramount importance of
identifying and arresting the
PRODUCERS of these pornographic
films.

Daniel listens as-if Hartwell is speaking directly to him,
accusing him of the crimes he has yet to commit.

Hartwell triggers the slide projector, flipping to a
disturbing crime photograph of Randall's corpse.

HARTWELL (CONT'D)
Make no mistake, this is a violent
enterprise with secret associations
in numerous crime families...
making our jobs all the harder.

Daniel stares at the shocking image with fear in his eyes.

HARTWELL (CONT'D)
Daniel, if you'd please roll the
film?

The lights dim, and Daniel cues the projector. The audience
goes quiet, and the films start.

Daniel watches, partially hidden behind the projector as the
images stream out: A burlesque dancer squeezing her
breasts... a romp in the countryside... french maids
servicing one another...

Suddenly, and only for a few seconds, the film cuts to a
close up of Margot licking her sex glazed lips.

Daniel instantly recognizes her. Fear, guilt and lust flood
his senses while images of sex continue to flash in front of
his eyes.

EXT. ORANGE GROVE, BLUEBOY'S HIDEOUT - DAY

Shaded beneath a grove of orange trees, a female performer
rides atop a male performer, moaning loud and amorously. Her
partner underneath suckles her breasts and returns her
lustful gaze.

Blueboy turns a hand-crank camera as he peers through the
viewfinder and grins like a lecherous voyeur.

Over the scene, we hear Lamont's care-free, thoughtful banter
over the sound of a motorcar.

LAMONT (O.S.)

I'll never forget the sweet smell
of Louisiana sugarcane, but believe
me, nothing comes close to the
overwhelming aroma of fresh orange
blossoms. Magnificent isn't it?

EXT. RURAL ROADS - CONTINUOUS

Branford drives Lamont's shiny, open carriage motorcar
through isolates rural farm roads in the outskirts of the San
Fernando Valley.

Lamont rides in back with Daniel, reminiscing and enjoying
the spring scenery.

LAMONT

So Daniel, I'm guessing you were
born to be in the pictures! Where
do you hail from? Were you out east
in the Empire State and were pushed
West with the rest of the studios
to escape the Edison patents?

DANIEL

No. The opposite. I grew up in San
Francisco.

LAMONT

A West coast lad! Branford and I
hail from Louisiana, do we not,
dear Branford?

Branford nods and smiles.

BRANFORD

Yes indeed.

He turns, bringing them into an orange grove that extends as
far as they can see.

LAMONT

Are you in love Daniel?

DANIEL

I'm married... are you?

Lamont stares at Daniel without responding... as if planning
his next move.

LAMONT

Oh, I have many loves in my life.
For Branford, on the other hand,
this car is his first and only
love.

Branford smiles, but does not reply. Daniel leans forward to compliment him.

DANIEL

It's a very nice automobile.

BRANFORD

A Miller 183, straight-eight, with
wet cylinder liners, ram tuning
induction system and centrifugal
supercharger. She'll do a 185 horse
power at 5500 RPM on a bad day.

Daniel shrinks back into his seat, completely clueless.

DANIEL

I don't know what any of that
means.

LAMONT

It means she's fast.

Branford pushes down on the gas slightly and they speed over bumps and dips in the dirt road. It's a new, thrilling experience for Daniel, who holds on tight and laughs.

As Branford approaches a clearing in a row of orange groves, Lamont looks to Branford for confirmation.

LAMONT (CONT'D)

Are we close?

Branford nods.

BRANFORD

It's just up the road apiece,
through the trees.

Branford slows the car down and takes a sharp right onto a bumpy, overgrown path. The car barely fits. The overgrown brush and branches hit Daniel in the face as they drive through the foliage. This ride is no longer fun.

They approach a clearing to what appears to be a barn and farmhouse serving as modified stag film studio.

Branford eases off the accelerator.

Daniel becomes increasingly uneasy from the unexpected detour.

DANIEL

I don't understand. I thought we were picking up film equipment?

LAMONT

Indeed, we are Daniel. But first I have to conduct some business.

Lamont parks near Blueboy's car. No one seems to be around, but when Branford cuts the engine the faint cry of a woman in ecstasy can be heard.

Lamont climbs out of the car and removes a leather briefcase.

LAMONT (CONT'D)

Do you hear that? I believe we arrived in the middle of a shoot!

Branford shoots Lamont a concerned look.

BRANFORD

Do you think we should call this off?

Lamont waves his free hand dismissively.

LAMONT

Nonsense, nothing changes, Branford. This is quite fortuitous. Daniel, come along with me. We'll test your nerves on a live set so you're prepared when time comes.

Daniel nods, not quite sure what Lamont has up his sleeve.

Lamont pauses and takes a deep long breath, soaking in the beauty of the orange blossoms.

LAMONT (CONT'D)

Beautiful day though, ain't it gentlemen?

Branford and Daniel watch as Lamont saunters off towards Blueboy's set and they follow close behind.

EXT. ORANGE GROVE, BLUEBOY'S HIDEOUT - CONTINUOUS

A female performer kneels on the ground, having sex with her partner doggy-style.

Blueboy continues to film the scene while three rough-looking GUARDS and an overweight LOOKOUT stand nearby, completely distracted from their tasks.

Lamont suddenly emerges from the trees, clapping his hands sarcastically at the performance.

Daniel looks at the performers, taken aback. He's never seen this in person and he is in shock.

LAMONT

Bravo friends! Why, Barrymore and
Pickford might be out a job with
talent such as this on screen!

Everyone jumps, and the Guard quickly brandishes a shotgun in shock. The performers scramble off one another and attempt to cover up in the bushes.

LOOKOUT

Stop right there!

Lamont ignores the threat like he's not even there. He approaches the performers and urges them to continue.

LAMONT

Please, don't stop on my account.
Continue the scene!

The Lookout rushes up and points his rifle at him.

LOOKOUT

I don't know who you are mister,
but you just walked into a whole
mess a' trouble.

Blueboy covers the lens of the camera and steps up to Lamont.

Daniel looks curiously at Blueboy.

BLUEBOY

Lamont Beaudrie is a man who likes
trouble it would seem. An amateur
who fancies himself a professional.

LAMONT

With all due respect, dear Blueboy
I come with an enticing
proposition.

Blueboy steps forward and gets right in Lamont's face.

BLUEBOY

What... do... you... want?

LAMONT

First and foremost, I come to offer a sincere and heartfelt apology. My intentions were not to disrupt your production here today.

BLUEBOY

Nevermind your intentions, you did just that, you prick.

Blueboy flicks his head to the GUARD to Lamont's right.

Guard Two shoves the barrel of his shotgun in Lamont's face even closer.

BLUEBOY (CONT'D)

Why are you here, Lamont? Make it quick.

LAMONT

I am here to propose a solution to our current adversarial state of affairs.

BLUEBOY

And what would that be?

LAMONT

I believe we are of better use cooperating than being at odds. As I mentioned, I not only have a star in my stable of talent, I have an extremely talented cameraman with me as well. He comes with studio experience, an extremely keen eye, and enviable grasp of cinematic aesthetics. He could just as well direct as roll camera. Yes, this gentleman, like my starlet, are the real deal and it would be a downright foolhardy decision to refuse my offer. Think about it. You retain ownership of the pictures and all the rights to distribute them to your theatrical venues. Twice the films, for half the work.

Lamont gestures back towards Daniel and he shifts, uneasy about being put in the spotlight by Lamont.

Blueboy points to his cameraman.

BLUEBOY

I have a cameraman, if you hadn't noticed, and I don't need any of your so-called "talent".

Blueboy walks over and slaps the Cameraman on the back.

LAMONT

I do not mean any disrespect, but my cameraman is one-of-a-kind. He is willing to provide a demonstration if you wish.

Blueboy narrows his eyes and glares at Daniel, tempted to call Lamont's bluff.

BLUEBOY

I don't think so. I've had enough of this pointless banter.

Blueboy gestures to his Guards and Lookout to take them away and turns his back to Lamont and his guards.

Blueboy's Guards level their guns at Daniel and Branford.

Daniel stops, paralyzed with fear and puts his hands up.

LAMONT

You're making a mistake here, Blueboy. I think we have an opportunity to truly--

Blueboy turns around and grabs a Thompson submachine gun from one of his lookouts and runs at Lamont waving it at him manically.

BLUEBOY

THERE IS NO OPPORTUNITY HERE! NOW SHUT YOUR FUCKING MOUTH!

Lamont doesn't flinch or move an inch and smiles like Blueboy is just a child throwing a tantrum.

LAMONT

Fair enough.

Blueboy shoves the gun into the hands of Guard Three and walks over to the talent and the Cameraman.

MALE PERFORMER

We gotta get this going Blueboy, let these boys go so we can get on with the scene, they've done us no harm.

FEMALE PERFORMER

Yeah come on Blueboy, I'm getting drier by the second.

Blueboy spins around to confront his talent and pulls out a knife, and brandishing it at them.

The Female Performer screams and the Male Performer puts his hands up.

BLUEBOY

You two fuck, you don't talk, now shut the FUCK UP before I BEFORE I LITERALLY CUT YOU OUT OF THE FUCKING SCENE!

The Male Performer backs off with his hands up.

MALE PERFORMER

Okay, okay.

BLUEBOY

We'll finish the scene when we finish the fucking scene! Now scram!

The Male Performer backs off a few paces. The Female Performer runs off with him and they stand a short distance away, turning their backs to the commotion with Blueboy.

Guard One grabs the leather briefcase from Lamont.

GUARD ONE

What's in the bag, pal?

Guard One opens the briefcase pulls out a fifth of moonshine.

GUARD ONE (CONT'D)

You brought us some hooch, eh? What is this some kind of peace offering?

Lamont smirks pleasantly.

LAMONT

To celebrate...

Guard One snorts.

GUARD ONE

I'll fucking celebrate.

Guard One gestures to the other two Guards.

GUARD ONE (CONT'D)
Fancy pants here brought us some
bust-head to celebrate.

The other Guards and Lookout laugh.

GUARD TWO
Let me have a swig, it's hotter
than Hades out here.

LAMONT
This didn't spring from any
ramshackle gin-mill, friends.
Produced straight from one of my
most-esteemed, local distilleries.
Top-notch, and I don't even touch
the stuff! But it comes highly
touted.

Guard Two takes a swig and nearly spits it out, but gulps it
down. He shakes his head.

GUARD TWO
Holy shit, that's some regular
firewater!

Blueboy's face turns red.

BLUEBOY
What the fuck are you ignoramuses
doing?! This swell brings a bottle
of giggle water and you think it's
an excuse to just have at it and
get bent in the middle of this
fuck's intrusion?! Put that shit
down!

The three Guards and Lookout take turns swilling the hooch
while the other keep their weapons focused on Lamont,
Branford, and Daniel.

GUARD TWO
Sorry, boss. It's on the level
though... whew.

GUARD ONE
It's a regular bolt of white
lightnin' I'll say as much.

BLUEBOY
You rummy scumbags! Put the hooch
down or I'll drain it right outta
yer guts!

They put down the bottle hooch and wipe their lips with their free hands.

BLUEBOY (CONT'D)
Coulda been more than just panther
piss in the bottle and you thugs
would have been none the wiser!

Daniel attempts to back away.

Guard Three stops him.

DANIEL
I didn't agree to any of this... I
need to go...

Guard Three gestures for him to get back where he was with the Thompson submachine gun.

GUARD THREE
Stand back, kid.

Daniel puts his hands up and walks back.

Blueboy snickers.

BLUEBOY
Don't think you can weasel out this
you little shit. No one is walking
away from this scot free. I grant
you that.

Lamont looks to Daniel to reassure him.

LAMONT
Hang tight Daniel, I'm sure we can
come to an amicable resolution.

Lamont turns to Blueboy.

LAMONT (CONT'D)
Like gentlemen.

Blueboy narrows his eyes at Lamont.

GUARD TWO
(to Lamont)
Where'd you get this anyway?

Blueboy walks over to Lamont and the Guards and Lookout.

Lamont beams with pride.

LAMONT

This batch was distilled by my people. It's a family recipe.

BLUEBOY

(to the Guards)

Our friend Lamont came here ready to celebrate a deal before it was even sealed. Sounds like you got ahead of yourself, pal. Seems like something you're very good at.

Lamont shrugs innocently.

Daniel watches intently as the scene unfolds.

LAMONT

One must be prepared for every possible occasion. And outcome.

BLUEBOY

Yet you assumed that I would agree to your offer. You are a fool. But that's stating the obvious.

Blueboy points his finger at Lamont.

Lamont watches the Guards and Lookout greedily pass around his moonshine out of the corner of his eye.

Daniel watches nervously as Blueboy paces in front of them.

BLUEBOY (CONT'D)

I am employed by some very important gentlemen--and they don't look kindly upon interlopers such as yourself disrupting their--MY affairs. And you should worry about what they might do if they found out what you've been up to Lamont. But then again, imprudent fool you are, I don't suppose it would have occurred to you to that I'm not all you had to worry about retaliating for your disruptions.

Lamont notices Guard Three wipe his brow of sweat.

Lamont nods and smiles.

LAMONT

What you're going to do is compensate me for the damages incurred, friend.

BLUEBOY
Come again, now?

Lamont turns his head to speak to Daniel beside him.

LAMONT
Daniel, if you could gather up
Blueboy's camera and gear--check
the equipment first, and be sure to
take whatever you think you'll need
to get our production up and
running again.

Daniel looks to Lamont incredulous, terrified by his order he
hesitates and stands still, paralyzed with fear.

LAMONT (CONT'D)
Come now, Danny. These gentlemen
aren't going to do a thing to stop
you. I guarantee it.

Blueboy points the knife menacingly at Daniel.

BLUEBOY
Even a wayward glance towards my
camera, kid... and I'll cut the
eyes out of your FUCKING HEAD
MYSELF.

Daniel back away, taking Blueboy's threat to heart.

DANIEL
I... can't.

Lamont smirks and nods.

LAMONT
You can, Daniel. Like I said, these
boys won't do a damn thing to stop
you.

Guard Two walks over and points his shotgun at Lamont.

BLUEBOY
Lamont, you are either too crazy,
too arrogant, or fucking STUPID to
understand what is going to happen
here if you don't shut your trap.

Guard Two starts to twitch. Lamont eyes catches Guard Two's
eyelid twitching.

LAMONT

I could be one of or all of those things, but what I do know is that we are leaving with your camera, and your gear. Daniel. Pay no mind to Mr. Blueboy here, he is more bark than bite. I promise you no harm, Daniel.

Sweat beads on Daniel's forehead, unable to decide whether to trust Lamont or his strong sense of fear, he looks to Branford.

Branford nods to encourage Daniel to obey Lamont.

Daniel works up the courage and starts to move towards the gear. Blueboy moves towards Daniel with the knife. It glints in the sun and the reflection shines on Daniel's face.

BLUEBOY

Try it, kid. See if I'm bluffing.

Daniel stops and Lamont gestures for him to move towards the gear. He looks at Daniel very calm but intensely with his eyes to reassure him.

LAMONT

Trust me, Danny.

Guard Two pulls begins to pull back the hammer on the shotgun pointed at Lamont as Blueboy stalks towards Daniel, getting closer to pouncing.

Guard Two struggles to pull back the hammer. His finger can't seem to align with it properly and he loses hold of it even when he is able to grasp it briefly. After several attempts he still can't seem to pull back the hammer.

Lamont brazenly moves forward towards Guard Two and is face to face with the barrel. He might as well be pointing a broom handle at it--Lamont doesn't show an ounce of fear.

BLUEBOY

What the fuck are you waiting for?
Shoot this fuck!

Lamont shakes his head with sympathy towards Guard Two.

LAMONT

Shame.

Lamont snatches the shotgun by the barrel from Guard Two, plucking it deftly from his weakening grip.

He hands it to Branford who accepts it quickly and levels the shotgun directly at Blueboy with authority and purpose.

Guard Two falls rolls around his hands covering his eyes.

GUARD TWO

I can't see! I can't fucking see!

Daniel's eyes widen and he backs away in shock.

Guard One leans over and starts vomiting violently dropping his shotgun on the ground in the process. A stray round goes off above them causing oranges and foliage fall around them.

Daniel shields his head from the falling debris.

Guard One collapses, convulsing on the ground.

Guard Three doubles over and falls to his knees, drops his rifle and rolls over, unconscious and foaming at the mouth.

LAMONT

It looks like your men can't handle their liquor, Blueboy. That's 185 proof moonshine whiskey--with an added kick of foreshot. It's typically discarded from the distilled batch as you might know, but I left it in for additional flavor. It can make a man go blind in minutes. By now paralysis of the lower limbs has begun to take effect. I reckon they'll live through this ordeal with proper medical attention. As they Jake step their way to a doctor of course...

Lamont kicks an orange past by Guard One's head which stops at Blueboy's shoe.

BLUEBOY

Oh this is just fucking dandy. You worthless pricks just had to dive right into that tainted hooch, didn't ya?! Didn't ya?!

Blueboy kicks Guard Three in the stomach as he twitches on the ground and turns to Lamont with impotent rage, shocked by his bold move, he moves towards Lamont, but Branford steps between them with the shotgun and successfully pulls back the hammer.

LAMONT

I demand temperance for all those
in my employ. Maybe you should seek
the same, Blueboy.

Branford gestures for Blueboy to drop the knife. He hesitates and glares at Lamont, then Daniel. Daniel shakes his head to convey he is innocent and not a part of all this.

Branford moves in pointing the shotgun at Blueboy who backs off and drops the knife.

LAMONT (CONT'D)

Shame, really. We could have been
celebrating a profitable
partnership at present, couldn't
we, but *c'est la vie, non?*

Blueboy glares at Lamont, barely able to contain his anger.

Lamont walks over to Blueboy's camera. He gestures for Daniel to follow.

LAMONT (CONT'D)

Daniel, can you work with this?

Daniel inspects the camera and quickly recognizes it.

DANIEL

Looks like a 1911 Bell and
Howell... 1000 foot mag... I don't
know about this... we can't take
this equipment, we simply can't.

Lamont cuts Daniel off and hands the camera to him in a surprisingly hasty manner.

LAMONT

We can, and we are. You take this,
Daniel.

Lamont and Daniel gather crates of equipment and carry them over to Branford's motorcar, while Blueboy stands by seething.

EXT. ORANGE GROVE - CONTINUOUS

Branford starts the car. Daniel holds the camera in shock.

LAMONT

DRIVE.

Branford steps on the gas and spins the car around like a professional stunt driver, throwing Daniel in the back seat.

As they speed away, Daniel watches in horror as another motorcar idles into Blueboy's hideout from the main road with several GOONS inside. The car stops abruptly and Blueboy points to Branford's escaping motorcar. Several goons get out and follow Blueboy to his motorcar with shotguns and pistols drawn.

EXT. ORANGE GROVE, BLUEBOY'S HIDEOUT - CONTINUOUS

Blueboy gets behind the driving wheel of his car and he and the other car peel out in the dirt, speeding off after Lamont leaving the two performers in a cloud of dust.

Naked and stranded, they watch them depart, confused.

FEMALE PERFORMER

Hey now, what about us?!

EXT. RURAL ROADS, LAMONT'S CAR - CONTINUOUS

Branford deftly maneuvers the car through the overgrown path. Daniel holds on for dear life.

The tires screech as they make a sharp turn onto the road, and Branford really lets her open up. The engine roars and they speed down the road, pushing Daniel back in his seat.

Lamont looks behind them and see's Blueboy's men on their tail.

LAMONT

Daniel! Can you tell me if that stock is spent?!

Daniel inspects the camera in a panic.

DANIEL

Mostly! Yes I think so!

LAMONT

I want you to unload the film!

DANIEL

What?!

LAMONT

Unload the magazine! Can you do that?!

Still frozen with a look of terror, Daniel nods "yes".

The car hits a hard dip sending the Daniel and the camera onto the floor of the backseat. One of the cases tips, spilling equipment onto his head, including a portable dark room bag for changing film. Daniel has everything he needs.

Branford makes a sharp turn onto another road, but a horse-drawn wagon crosses in front of him. He slams on his brakes, narrowly avoiding collision, and swerves off the road.

Weaving between trees and smashing through low-hanging branches, Branford manages to steer the car past the tractor and back onto the road.

In the backseat, Daniel quickly cranks the camera to advance the remaining film into the take-up reel.

Catching a break from the tractor, Blueboy's men catch up. They are hot on their trail.

Guard Four leans out of the passenger window and takes aim with his shotgun. Bang!

The shot rips through the back of the car, leaving a thousand holes in the formerly perfect exterior. Daniel ducks for cover on the floor of the car.

Lamont leans out of the car and sees the damage.

LAMONT (CONT'D)
Holy Lord! It seems your lady has
been hit, Branford!

Daniel freezes up, clenching the camera in the back with all his strength.

LAMONT (CONT'D)
Daniel! How much longer?!

Daniel snaps out of it and releases the magazine from the camera body. With surprising speed and precision for the circumstances, he seals the magazine into the changing bag and begins to unload the film.

Once again, the Blueboy's men gain on them. The Guard quickly reloads his shotgun as the Lookout drives up to the driver's side.

Daniel pokes his head out for an instance and sees the Guard taking aim. They both look into one another's eyes. Time seems to slow, as Daniel is sure this is the end.

Branford suddenly hits the breaks. They fly behind their assailants and make a frightening turn, drifting around the corner at top speed.

The Guard and Lookout attempt the same, but they lose control and their car rolls. Only Blueboy stays on their tail.

Daniel finishes unloading the film, and removes a sealed film can.

DANIEL

Done!

Daniel hands the film to Lamont.

Blueboy pushes his engine into the red, screaming vengeance as he gains on Lamont. His eyes blaze with rage.

Lamont watches Blueboy as he speeds closer in his car. Smoke pours from the overheated engine.

LAMONT

I wouldn't pay two cents to watch
your picture, friend!

Lamont aims, and throws the film reel out of the car.

The film hits Blueboy's windshield and bounces off, leaving a giant crack across his field of view.

Lamont frowns, hoping for more damage.

The film can bounces on the pavement and comes to a slow, spinning stop. Blueboy's car slowly decelerates. Having given up the chase, he turns his smoldering car around and drives back to the film reel. Defeated, he exits his car and picks up the film while Lamont disappears in the distance.

EXT. RURAL COUNTRYSIDE - LATER

Out of harms way, the trio come to a slow stop in a secluded overlook near the Los Angeles river.

Lamont is first to step out of the car, and stretches with vigor. Daniel remains seated in the car, still in shock.

LAMONT

How's THAT for a Sunday drive?!

Branford inspects the car damage.

LAMONT (CONT'D)

I am sorry, dear Branford.

BRANFORD

Just a little body work. She'll be fine.

The film equipment didn't fare quite as well. Lamont realizes the shot hit one of the film cases. Inside are two rolls of undeveloped film, both shot and shredded to pieces.

LAMONT

This is unfortunate...

Lamont tosses the useless film cans onto the ground in frustration.

LAMONT (CONT'D)

Brandishing shotguns in the name of love... the carnage wreaked in the trenches of France made more sense than this, dear Branford. We may need another plan to acquire...

Daniel suddenly jumps out of the car, completely exasperated.

DANIEL

I'm done. I'm not doing this.

Lamont and Branford turn toward Daniel. He's having a breakdown and clearly not handling the recent excitement as well as they hoped.

LAMONT

What do you mean?

DANIEL

This! All this! What the hell happened back there!? Those men were going to kill us!

Lamont brushes off the severity of the situation.

LAMONT

Just a minor gentlemanly dispute.

He smirks.

DANIEL

They almost killed us!

LAMONT

It's a game! It's just a game they play. There was no real danger. I promise you it's the last you'll see any of them.

Daniel is red and fuming. He can't believe the mess he's tangled up in.

DANIEL

Who was Blueboy anyway? Who is he connected to? Does he work for the mob?! You heard him--he said he worked for 'important people'! What if they come for us for what we just did?!

Lamont laughs off the accusation.

LAMONT

Daniel, Blueboy is just a man of big words and little action, you saw him. He was just trying to scare us, friend. His connections are likely businessmen who have no intention of seeking retribution upon us for today's dispute.

DANIEL

Really?! You stole his camera! My God, Shooting stag films! Getting shot at in high speed car chases! And we just caused an accident where people probably DIED! I don't know what I expected, but it wasn't this. I'm just a camera loader.

LAMONT

Are you Daniel?

DANIEL

I shouldn't be here. I'm sorry, but I'm leaving.

Daniel pulls out his wallet and removes the advance Lamont paid him.

DANIEL (CONT'D)

Look, I don't have the full hundred anymore... but here's sixty. I'll pay you back, and then I want no part of this.

Daniel places the money in Lamont's car and begins to walk away.

Branford watches Lamont to gauge his reaction. Lamont grimaces and nods reassuringly.

BRANFORD
Where's he off to?

LAMONT
To a dark place I suspect. Give him
time. He'll come around.

EXT. HOLLYWOOD STREETS - NIGHT

Daniel walks along a sidewalk as cars and pedestrians pass him by--his head looking down towards the pavement--unaware of anything but his thoughts. He trudges home, and stops as he notices a couple entering a cinema in front of him. They enter, behaving very flirtatiously with one another. Daniel pulls out his wallet. He pulls out a movie theater ticket that reads:

"Violet McCall, 212 Union St., Apartment 211"

DANIEL
What am I doing... ?

Daniel peers at the marquee. The bright lights illuminate his face, and cast a shadow behind him on the ground.

DANIEL (CONT'D)
I have to tell her.

Daniel stares up at the Marquee immediately resumes his walk home with courage and resolve.

INT. DANIEL'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Daniel makes his way through the lobby to his apartment. He gets in the elevator and pressed the button for the second floor. In the elevator is an ACTOR dressed as a Medieval jester reading lines from a half-sheet of paper.

ACTOR
(to himself)
It was not I, my Divine sovereign,
it was but your Lord, your vassal,
Lord Walter who is guilty of the
deed!

Daniel tries not to pay attention to the Actor as he works up the nerve to confess to Violet.

As the elevator stops at the second floor, Daniel opens the gate, and walks down the hall to his apartment. The Actor follows him out onto the second floor and walks the other direction down the hall.

The actor continues reading his lines aloud.

ACTOR (CONT'D)

Fear not my liege! As my intentions
are but as pure as new-fallen snow!

A middle-aged WOMAN opens her apartment door and yells at the Actor.

WOMAN

Will you clam up already! My
husband works the night shift!

ACTOR

Apologies, ma'am.

The Woman shuts the door behind her.

Daniel walks over to his apartment door and pauses.

His face is twisted with inner conflict. His clothes are worn from a long journey. Sweat drips from his forehead. He looks like he's had the worst day of his life.

Daniel hesitates at the door, chokes back some tears and musters the courage to enter.

He pulls out his key from his pocket and begins to push it in towards the keyhole but pulls it back.

He inhales deeply and collects himself.

Daniel puts in the key and turns the handle.

DANIEL

Violet I have to talk to you.

He freezes in fear when he sees Margot seated in their living room next to Violet. Violet is sipping a cup of tea.

They both stare at Daniel as he enters, clearly taken aback by his appearance.

Daniel stands in the doorway assessing the situation while Violet and Margot awkwardly wait for him to speak.