

# BREAKING THROUGH THE CLUTTER

By

James DeMarse

David Kelly - Vice President of Gibson Advertising

Sally - Assistant and girlfriend of David

Mark - Art Director of Gibson Advertising

CAROLYN - Homeless woman, 30s.

## ACT I

### SCENE 1

The interior of the Gibson Boutique Advertising agency in SOHO in New York. A desk, small couch, a couple of chairs, an easel with drawings on it.

Also, a couple of windows looking down on the street.

Sally is looking out the window. David is sitting going over some paper work, Mark is sleeping on the couch.

It is almost midnight.

DAVID

If this is the best we can come up with we're fired.

SALLY

(looking out the window)

It's snowing.

DAVID

It's thirty million down the drain.

SALLY

It's late. I can't think anymore.

DAVID

Gibson's not going to buy this.

SALLY

It's going to be hell getting a cab.

DAVID

It's not signature.

SALLY

It's bold. A house painter turning a house into a castle.

DAVID

Too high tech. Where's the passion?

SALLY

It's good! I like it! At least sleep on it, David. If you don't like it in the morning we'll try something else.

DAVID

We don't have time.

SALLY

Let me get a couple of hours sleep and then we'll come in nice and early-

DAVID

Now.

SALLY

Five days, Jesus --- to come up with an idea, to cast it, to shoot it and edit. It's insanity.

DAVID

It's thirty million. When opportunity comes up behind you, you bend over.

SALLY

I don't know if I'd quite put it like that.

DAVID

Gibson did handstands for the privilege of pitching this account. They brought us in under the table. It was past the deadline-

SALLY

This is a good idea!

He kicks the storyboard. This wakes up MARK.

MARK  
(still in the dream)

Mom!

DAVID  
We do this fucking thing or we die. I don't want suburbs and castles! No clichés! I want urban, real!

SALLY  
You get going like this; it's like a piranha feeding on a drowning cow.

DAVID  
There's no cow drowning here! I want some ideas. I want bold. I want human. Come on, goddamn it!

Mark gets an idea.

MARK  
A man's asleep. His mother comes into the room. It's sweet. It's nice. The landlord comes in and wants the rent. Suddenly, it's urban and real and bold and human. But mom gives him a Rick's and he's happy.

SALLY  
I think you need a joint.

DAVID  
We need something here, now! In the here and now. Real.

Mark goes to the window and looks out toward the street.

MARK  
Something there. Out there. On the street. If we could just take the camera out. No set. No casting.

SALLY  
Real people. Go into a supermarket, a bodega, and a school.

MARK  
Like that homeless person out there.

DAVID

What? What did you say?

MARK

That homeless woman-

David goes to the window and looks out on the street four floors below.

DAVID

She pulled a can out of the garbage. What is it?

MARK

It looks like a can of Rick's.

DAVID

Shit. It's a can of Rick's.

SALLY

A homeless woman drinking a can of Rick's. It's time to go home, boys.

David dashes out the door.

SALLY

Where are you going? David! David!

DAVID

(from off)

I'll be right back!

MARK

He has no coat on.

SALLY

He has no brain in his head either.

MARK

Maybe it's a nervous breakdown.

SALLY

He has no nervous system, remember.

MARK

You know, there are certain things in life that aren't worth doing. I'm beginning to wonder if maybe this isn't one of them.

SALLY

I think the house turning into a castle is a good idea.

MARK

I do too.

SALLY

Maybe not.

MARK

It touches a responsive chord. Integrating soda pop into life. Making it a part of life's choices. Making it meaningful and important. Making it a house.

SALLY

I don't get it.

MARK

Advertising is psychological, isn't it? We create something in people's minds. When they buy something, it alters their consciousness. And that product is still there, imprinted on their psyches, even after they drink it. It's like God and the soul. Visualization. Like romance. Is it love? Or sperm and zygotes? Is it loneliness? Or desire for the womb? Illusion or reality?

SALLY

Sounds like...your...thing...your...uh...uh...

MARK

Neo-natalism. No. It's just what it is.

SALLY

Oh. Well, do you want to keep the house idea alive then?

MARK

Let's try bringing it up again in about forty-five minutes.

SALLY

Why forty-five minutes?

MARK

Or an hour. I don't know. I've known David for a long time. He has these fits of genius. We just have to wait till it's over. It's like epilepsy.

Sally walks over to the window and looks out.

SALLY

He's bringing her in here! What has gotten into him?

MARK

Just let him go through it.

SALLY

I love him but sometimes I wonder.

MARK

Something happened a long time ago. Maybe in the womb even. I don't know.

SALLY

Why do I want to be with him?

MARK

It's like flirting with danger. Sometimes I'm in the birth canal and can't quite get out.

David comes on dragging the homeless woman. She  
is in her late 30s, maybe 40s. It's hard to tell.

She wears a ski mask.

DAVID

(breathing hard)

Hey! Hey! Jesus. I saw her standing in the streetlight holding up a can of Rick's in the  
light.

(to Sally and Mark)

Did you see it?

(to woman)

You got Rick's in your pocket, right?

CAROLYN

Why?

DAVID

I saw you put it there. I mean, do you like it? I saw you smile.

CAROLYN

Gee, can't a girl admire the finer points of an empty can of soda without the whole world  
knowing about it?

DAVID

You see I'm trying to sell the fucking stuff. And what you did was beautiful. I can't explain it but it was beautiful. I mean, the contrast, the dichotomy, the paradox. The product transcended itself.

CAROLYN

You want the nickel?

DAVID

What are you talking about?

CAROLYN

For the can!

DAVID

Shit no. I'm telling you. This is just incredible. You're incredible. Her name is Carolyn something.

MARK

Dave, what's going on?

CAROLYN

This some kind of weird club or something? Give me the five you promised and I'll go.

DAVID

I just wanted to see you in the light. Talk to you for a little while.

MARK

Hey, man.

CAROLYN

You got a card?

DAVID

(showing his card)

You think I'm crazy, don't you?

CAROLYN

Could be. That nose. Those lips.

(Carolyn reads the card.)

DAVID

The only thing I am is desperate. I need to get this commercial together.

CAROLYN  
(to Mark)

Who're you?

MARK  
(to Carolyn)

Art director. This is Sally --- producer.

SALLY  
(to David)

What's going on?

DAVID  
I will tell you in a moment.

SALLY  
You don't even know. Do you?

CAROLYN  
Where's that fridge?

DAVID  
I'll show you.

He walks her over to a small fridge and opens the door and pulls out a can of Rick's.

CAROLYN  
Wow! A full can of Rick's - another nickel.

DAVID  
You won't have to worry about nickels.

Carolyn takes the can, opens it and takes a deep swig of it. David takes Sally and Mark and sits them on the couch and looks at Carolyn amazed by her satisfaction with the product. Sally and Mark look at David waiting for some explanation.

DAVID  
What a shot! What a picture! You make love to that can. Do you know that?

CAROLYN  
I wasn't aware of that. No.  
(she drinks)



DAVID

I mean, it's chemistry. You and Rick's. It's powerful, revelatory. Would you mind...uh, taking off the ski mask?

CAROLYN

Nope.

She takes off ski mask. Her face is weathered, smudged with some dirt but she's attractive to a point.

DAVID

(to Sally and Mark)

Yeah. This is going to happen. We'll do a whole change thing. I mean, it's happening now. It's real.

CAROLYN

Are you serious?

SALLY

You took the words right out of my mouth.

DAVID

We're going to make a commercial, baby.

CAROLYN

You mind if I lie down somewhere. It's so warm and cozy.

Mark and Sally get up from the couch. Carolyn lies down.

DAVID

You'll be in the shit. Crap all over the place. A big pile of shit. Crap. Then this guy in this window. This window cleaner. He tosses you a can of Rick's. You catch it. You take a sip. You turn into a ten. We'll put you in a bikini. Put you on the beach in the sun. Great tan, great buns. Beautiful. Lying on a towel, sexy, drinking Rick's. What do you think? Not quite right.

SALLY

David!

DAVID

What?

SALLY

We have to talk.

DAVID

Right.

CAROLYN

You got any chips?

DAVID

Sure. Over there in the drawer. Help yourself.

She goes off to the kitchenette.

SALLY

We're going to do a spot with a homeless person in it! I don't believe this!

MARK

A homeless person? You're talking about a homeless person here.

SALLY

We're supposed to sell soda pop here. Not create a lot of anxiety about homeless people.

MARK

I feel anxious.

DAVID

Classic textbook. When Ogilvy came up with the eye patch for the Hathaway shirt ad, people thought it was too negative. The client said people would only think, what a terrible thing for that man to lose his eye. They'd be consumed by pity. Repelled by the thought that it could happen to them, but no, it didn't happen. People were intrigued. Especially men. Like dueling scars the eye patch declares: "I am a man. I have been through some great struggle and I am now ready to wear a Hathaway shirt!"

MARK

You're talking pain and suffering here to sell something refreshing and sweet.

SALLY

I don't get it.

DAVID

Historically man has always been drawn into the pain and suffering of others. When it's safe for him to watch, you can't pull him away. It's a proven fact. Look at some kid hit on his bike on the street. Look at the crowds that gather.

MARK

What does a kid getting hit on his bike have to do with history?

SALLY

Listen, David, the house-

DAVID

'There-but-for-the-grace-of-God-go-I' makes you remember.

SALLY

All right. So what!

DAVID

They're going to remember her drinking Rick's! It sticks. It's riveting. Conflict. You are emotionally involved.

Sally looks.

SALLY

(to Mark)

He's got a point.

DAVID

Real is the key.

SALLY

We'll shoot it on the streets. She's scraping out the bottom of garbage cans. She finds a can of Rick's. She drinks the last drop.

DAVID

She turns into Cinderella. Mark, get out your pencils and paint.

MARK

Synchronicity.

DAVID

Synchronicity?

MARK

The same things happen in a parallel universe. They come together in the womb.

DAVID

Neo-Nazism rears its ugly head.

SALLY

Pre-natalism.

