

A WALKING SHADOW: PROJECT BRIEF

Format: Feature Film

Genre / Tone Drama / Indie Tragicomedy. *The Fisher King* meets *King Lear*.

Recognition: 2026 Top 10 Finalist: ISA Table Read My Screenplay at Cannes
Stage version selected for The Road Theatre Company's 17th Summer Playwrights Festival

Budget / Buyer Lane Low to mid budget / actor driven indie drama with contained locations and heightened theatrical sequences. A24, Searchlight, Focus Features, Bleecker Street, FilmNation lane

Core Hook: A former stage legend with schizophrenia tries to save a homeless encampment by turning it into a theatre company and staging *King Lear* before the city bulldozes the park.

One Sentence Pitch: Facing eviction from a city park, a once brilliant Shakespearean actor living with schizophrenia rallies a group of unhoused misfits to stage *King Lear*, hoping the performance can turn their encampment into a protected cultural site before the bulldozers arrive.

Why It's Timely: It speaks to homelessness, mental illness, public space, civic cruelty, art as survival, and the way vulnerable people are often erased by systems that call removal "cleanup."

Main Characters

Ralph Huntington: A former titan of the stage whose mind has fractured, but whose language, wit, and command still carry traces of greatness. He turns the park into a kingdom because reality is too brutal to survive without armor.

Kit: A sharp nineteen year old runaway who becomes Ralph's Fool, stage manager, protector, and emotional anchor. She sees through his delusions without reducing him to them.

Props: The camp's scavenger and technical director. He creates sets, costumes, and strange beauty out of discarded things, turning trash into theatre.

Slo-Mo: A gentle addict cast as the King of France. His vulnerability and tragic fate become a turning point for the troupe.

Syd and Joey: Two frantic meth users who become part of Ralph's rough theatrical army. Through rehearsal and ritual, they briefly find shape, purpose, and belonging.

Councilman Halloway: The political force behind the park eviction. He represents the clean language of public policy hiding the violence of displacement.

Story Snapshot

1. Ralph Huntington lives in Cibola Park, a homeless encampment in Albuquerque, where he transforms daily survival into a Shakespearean kingdom.
2. Councilman Halloway launches a sanitation initiative that gives the camp seven days to disappear.
3. Ralph seizes on an obscure legal idea: if the camp can become an established artistic entity, it may qualify for cultural protection.
4. With Kit, Props, Slo-Mo, Syd, Joey, and the others, Ralph begins turning the encampment into a theatre company and rehearsing *King Lear*, a play about a fallen king stripped of power, shelter, and dignity.
5. As rehearsals deepen, Ralph's hallucinations intensify. Performance and reality collapse into each other, and the fragile theatre company becomes harder to separate from the kingdom inside his mind. At his lowest point,

Ralph stabs Kit, the one person who has truly stayed with him, then wanders off broken, ashamed, and untethered from the role that once kept him alive.

Ending / Final Image

Ralph does not win the park in any simple way. The encampment is cleared, and the people who lived there are scattered. But the performance leaves a mark. Sixteen months later, Cibola Park is clean, green, and public again. Children play near the Ralph Huntington Stage, a civic tribute that feels both beautiful and inadequate. Kit works with the library, carrying forward the part of Ralph that gave people language, structure, and a reason to stand in the light. Ralph, now in a care facility, directs older patients with the same fire he once brought to the park. He has not been magically healed, but his art has been given a safer shape. Props, still relocated under the overpass, keeps the ending from becoming a fantasy. The world has changed a little, but not enough.

Theme in One Line: When reality becomes unbearable, performance can become both a refuge and a reckoning.

Positioning: It's a tragicomic indie drama about a former stage legend whose Shakespearean fantasy gives a homeless encampment dignity, purpose, and danger, forcing him to face the difference between art that shelters people and art that consumes them.

Materials Available: One-pager and full screenplay available upon request or through the private script library.

RYAN CLARKE

Screenwriter & Playwright | Albuquerque, NM

Dark Comedy | Satire | Character Drama | Social Thriller

Ryan Clarke is an Albuquerque-based screenwriter and playwright whose work blends dark comedy, social satire, and intimate character drama. Across a slate of 20+ feature scripts, his stories often follow deeply flawed people pushed into impossible situations, finding humor, tension, and humanity in characters who are entirely in over their heads.

His screenwriting recognition includes Grand Prize Winner, 30th Annual Fade In Awards Comedy Competition (*#FightForNoah*); Semifinalist, 30th Annual Fade In Awards Comedy Competition (*The Trencherman*); 2026 Top 10 Finalist, ISA Table Read My Screenplay at Cannes (*A Walking Shadow*); 2026 Quarterfinalist, Finish Line Script Competition (*#FightForNoah*); two-time Semifinalist, ISA Emerging Screenwriters Competition (*Flashbang* and *Ghost of the Highway*); and four additional 2026 Honorable Mentions from Finish Line (*The Finalists*, *How to Be a Human: A Musical with No Songs*, *Ghost of the Highway*, and *Dead Signals*).

As a playwright, Ryan is a three-time winner of FUSION Theatre Company's short works festival, "The SEVEN", in 2024, 2025, and 2026. The stage version of *A Walking Shadow* was also selected in 2026 for The Road Theatre Company's 17th Summer Playwrights Festival.

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