

THE RADIATOR SAINTS: PROJECT BRIEF

Format

Feature Film

Genre / Tone

Indie Drama / Romance

Past Lives meets *Inside Llewyn Davis*, with the raw intimacy of *Blue Valentine*.

Budget / Buyer Lane

Low to mid budget / actor driven indie drama with road movie elements

Focus Features, MUBI, FilmNation, Bleecker Street, Topic lane

Core Hook

A former poet drives across the country to apologize to the woman he destroyed, only to realize the most loving thing he can do is leave her new life untouched.

One Sentence Pitch

Six years after his ego and jealousy ruined their life together, a former poet turned desert rigger drives to the Pacific Northwest to apologize to the painter he drove away, discovering that redemption may not mean winning her back. It may mean finally letting her go.

Why It's Timely

It speaks to accountability, artistic ego, toxic romance, male self mythology, emotional recovery, and the painful difference between wanting forgiveness and actually earning it.

Main Characters

Zack: A former poet who has buried himself in desert labor because it is easier to punish his body than face what he did. He wants to believe he is seeking closure, but he is really trying to find out whether the worst thing about him can be forgiven.

Bailey: A painter who survived Zack and built a life beyond him. She is not a prize at the end of his journey. She is the person who carries the cost of his old romantic mythology.

The Younger Zack: Brilliant, hungry, insecure, and crueler than he understands. In flashbacks, he is the kind of artist who confuses suffering with importance and jealousy with love.

The Younger Bailey: Talented, open, and slowly realizing that loving Zack does not mean disappearing inside his failure. Her success becomes the thing he cannot forgive.

The Road: The physical journey from the desert to the Pacific Northwest forces Zack to move through the emotional wreckage he has spent years avoiding.

Story Snapshot

1. In the desert of 1977, Zack is working as an isolated steel rigger, living a numb, punishing life far away from the poet he used to be.
2. A waterlogged book of Dante falls out of the glovebox in his truck and triggers memories of his life six years earlier with Bailey, a painter he loved and eventually destroyed.
3. As Zack drives north to find her, the present day road trip bleeds into flashbacks of their freezing, passionate, destructive life in Chicago.

4. The flashbacks reveal the truth of their breakup. Zack's pride, jealousy, and fear of Bailey's success curdled into cruelty, culminating in him defacing her work and driving her away.
5. Zack reaches Astoria, Oregon and finds Bailey alive, thriving, married, and raising a child. He realizes he has no right to disrupt the life she built after him.

Ending / Final Image

Zack walks into Bailey's bookstore and gallery, not to win her back, but to take responsibility. He gives her one final poem, and she allows him a brief, honest moment of grace without reopening the life she escaped. Zack trades the poem for one of her paintings and returns to the desert. He hangs the painting, pulls out his typewriter, and begins to write again, not because he got Bailey back, but because he finally stopped making her responsible for his silence.

Theme in One Line

Redemption is not being forgiven. Sometimes it is becoming someone who no longer needs to be.

Positioning

It's an emotionally mature road romance about accountability, art, and the hardest kind of love: accepting that the person you hurt may be better off without you in their story.

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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