

FOR YOUR CONSIDERATION

B I R D M A N

OR

(THE UNEXPECTED VIRTUE OF IGNORANCE)

BEST ORIGINAL SCREENPLAY

Written by

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Nicolás Giacobone

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SAM
Dad? What kind of--
(Turning to Korean.)
SHUT UP!!!
(Back to screen.)
What kind of flowers did you say you
wanted?

RIGGAN
Alchemillas. Or something soothing that
smells nice. Listen I can't--

SAM
It all smells like fucking *Kimchi*!

RIGGAN
Then whatever looks nice. Anything but
roses. *No roses.*

KOREAN
*Flowers don't need you touch! They need you
buy!!!*

SAM
(Close into the screen.)
I hate this job.

And the Skype call is over. Riggan closes the laptop and leans forward trying to regain his calm. His reflection appears in the mirror, and for the first time we see his face. He has a dark goatee and his hair looks strangely abundant. There is a piece of paper on the mirror with the handwritten phrase "A thing is a thing, not what it is said of that thing."

ANNIE ON SPEAKERS
Riggan, they're starting scene
five. We need you on stage.

RIGGAN
Shit...

Riggan throws on a sweater and stumbles into his slacks. He hurries out...

2 INT. HALLWAYS - THEATER - CONTINUOUS

2

...through the narrow corridors of the theater. There is a lot of activity as various workers and stage hands appear and disappear carrying equipment and scenery. As Riggan descends the stairs, a Stage Hand* passes by in the opposite direction.

STAGE HAND*
Mr. Thomson.

(CONTINUED)

RIGGAN

Steve.

STAGE HAND

It's Daniel.

RIGGAN

(Already passed.)

Okay.

Riggan continues on until he arrives backstage. He runs into Jake (42) his producer and friend.

JAKE

How's it going, buddy.

RIGGAN

Great. It'd be even better if I could get Ralph to stop acting like he's in an educational video for syphilis...

The camera moves off of them and onto...

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INT. STAGE - THEATER - CONTINUOUS

3

...the stage. Suddenly we are in the midst of an Americana style kitchen.

Around the kitchen table sit Lesley (35), plain and no nonsense, her simple hairstyle and makeup can't hide how attractive she is. Laura (35), dark, exotic, the kind of woman who makes every person she meets feel like she's seducing them. And Ralph (40), slightly handsome, slightly balding, slightly invisible.

A half empty bottle of gin on the table, they drink from highball glasses as they chat...

LESLEY

He loved me.

RALPH

Yeah. He loved her so much he tried to kill her.

LAURA

He tried to kill you?

LESLEY

No. (A beat.) Okay, well, he did beat me up one night. He dragged me around the living room by my ankles, yelling "*I love you, I love*"
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

LESLEY (CONT'D)
you, bitch." What do you do with a
love like that?

RALPH
How is that-- That is not love and you know
it. Why do you insist on calling it--

LESLEY
You can say what you want, but I know what
it was.

RALPH
What about you, Nick? Does that sound like
love to you?

Riggan arrives at the table and sits.

RIGGAN
Sorry I'm late.
(Beat. In character.)
I'm the wrong person to ask. I didn't
know the man. I've only heard his name
mentioned in passing. You'd have to
know the particulars. But I think what
you're saying is that love is absolute.

RALPH
Yeah. The kind of love I'm talking about
is... The kind of love I'm talking about,
you don't try and kill people.

LESLEY
(Sadly.)
It was love, Mel. To Eddie, it was. I don't
care what anybody says. He was ready to die
for it.

RALPH
Ask her what he did after she left him.

LESLEY
He shot himself in the mouth. But he
screwed that up, too. Poor Ed.

RALPH
Poor Ed, my ass. The guy was dangerous.

LAURA
How'd he screw it up if he shot himself in
the mouth?

RALPH
(By the numbers.)
He used to carry this twenty-two. We lived
like fugitives those days. I never knew--

(CONTINUED)

RIGGAN

(Breaking character to direct.

Exasperated.)

Okay. Fugitives are on the run, Ralph. How many times do I have to-- *Fugitives are scared*. Give me more of that.

Ralph nods. He takes a breath and dives in once again...

RALPH

(The same but louder.)

We lived like fugitives those days...

Extremely frustrated, Riggan stares out into the auditorium. From his POV we see Jake who is now sitting in the third row. His head buried in his hands, tortured by Ralph's performance. Riggan turns back to Ralph.

RALPH (CONT'D)

...I never knew if he was going to come out of the bushes or from behind a car and just start shooting.

Riggan watches Ralph act and sees his whole production headed down the drain. Ralph is just that bad.

RALPH (CONT'D)

The man was crazy. He was capable of anything.

The actors all wait for a cue from Riggan, who is now staring up into the lights above the stage. Laura finally picks up Riggan's cue.

LAURA

Christ. What a nightmare...

RALPH

He used to call me at the hospital and say...

(Over the top.)

"Son of a bitch. Your days are numbered."

Silence. Ralph looks over to Riggan.

RALPH (CONT'D)

Too much? Little bit? I just wanted to give you a range, so you could--

And with that a light comes barreling down from it's perch and crashes into Ralph's head, making him hit the floor like a rag doll. Silence.

LAURA

Holy shit.

(CONTINUED)

Lesley and Annie (35), the Stage Manager, run over to Ralph who is out cold. Not knowing what to do, they stare at him.

LESLEY
Is he breathing?

Jake runs toward the stage.

JAKE
Someone call 911!

Riggan slowly backs away from the chaos.

LAURA
Is that blood coming out of his
ear?

JAKE
(To Riggan.)
Where are you going?

LESLEY
Okay, he's breathing. What did he
have for lunch?

LAURA
Did anyone call for help?

ANNIE
(Clapping.)
Wake up! Wake up!

Two crew members try to help Ralph.

CREW MEMBER
Grab his legs. I got the top.

JAKE
Don't move him! Wait for the ambulance.
(Calling out.)
For the love of God! I could get a black
audience in this theater faster than a
doctor!

Riggan heads off the stage, and Jake chases after him. We follow them as...

4 INT. HALLWAY - THEATER - CONTINUOUS

4

...they walk through the corridor.

JAKE
Where are you going? We'll have the
understudy ready to rehearse in five--

(CONTINUED)