

JP Short

An original screenplay

Written by

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Based on a feature screenplay: Just Presence

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FADE IN:

MIDDLE OF NOWHERE INN - OFFICE - PRESENT DAY

We see a modestly decorated office, ecru painted walls with photos of foods from around the world. An L.A. Dodgers hat rests upon a baseball bat wedged into the corner. Several DVD's stack high from the floor.

CLOSE ON a desktop globe which SPINS slowly until an index finger randomly stops it abruptly on Japan.

The finger is attached to PRESENCE (60), dressed in a brown frock. He BEAMS from ear to ear.

PRESENCE

I was hoping for this. Haven't had
sushi in ages.

As Presence licks his chops, he cradles a Galaxy 5000 cellphone in his hand.

The phone belts out a text notification to the tune of the theme song from the sitcom "The Jeffersons": "Movin' on up". Presence scans the display screen.

PRESENCE (CONT'D)

This is so gulchy. I wasn't
scheduled for a delivery until
later.

We hear RAP RAP RAP at the office door in the b.g.

Presence rushes to the door.

The door BURSTS open and a blinding white light USHERS itself in.

Several human silhouettes dot the threshold.

Presence quickly slams the door and puts his back up against it as to not let the intruders enter.

PRESENCE (CONT'D)

Jesus Christ. Oops. Goddammit.
Shit. C-mon Pres, think before you
speak.

Presence shakes his head in disappointment.

PRESENCE (CONT'D)
I gotta give myself two
sanctions...make that three.

We hear the same three RAPS on the door again. Each one
louder than the one before.

Presence checks his phone. The screen FLASHES "low on power".

 PRESENCE (CONT'D)
What the frig?

RAP RAP RAP on the door once more.

 PRESENCE (CONT'D)
The *Energizer* bunny is gonna pay
for this one.

Presence PEEKS through the peep hole.

We see the same bright light with the silhouettes.

 PRESENCE (CONT'D)
Must have shipped in a busload.

Presence changes the battery in his phone and presses the
power on button.

We hear a cacophony of text notification alerts.

Presence taps the keys and reads the messages.

 PRESENCE (CONT'D)
What? A documentary on *moi*? I
always had a flair for the
dramatic. Let's go!

Presence opens the door and walks through.

INT. MIDDLE OF NOWHERE INN - WAITING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

The human silhouettes batter Presence with questions in rapid
fashion. We see what appears to be cameras, microphones, and
boom equipment.

 PRESENCE
Calm down boys. One at a time, one
at a time.

An anonymous voice POSES a question to Presence.

ANONYMOUS VOICE

Tell us about your latest subject,
Billy Just.

Presence LAUGHS in amusement.

ANONYMOUS VOICE (CONT'D)

What's the giggling for?

PRESENCE

Good ol' Billy Just. Had the world
by the balls. F'd it up.

ANONYMOUS VOICE

Did I just hear you correctly?

PRESENCE

My bad. Don't worry, I'll absolve
myself.

ANONYMOUS VOICE

Sure you will...now, what about
Billy?

PRESENCE

Listen, you wouldn't believe how
greedy and self-centered this dude
was. It all started...

INT. JUST DESIGNS OFFICE - DAY

We see BILLY JUST (40), handsome, sitting at his drafting
table working on a building spec.

PRESENCE (V.O.)

As I said, he had it all. Greed is
what F'd him, excuse me, messed him
up.

Billy gazes out the window of his office.

PRESENCE (V.O.)

He claimed his life was missing
something. I don't know what the
heck his problem was. I treated him
the way I treat everyone.

Billy slowly looks away from the window and focuses on
several photos on his desk. The photos are of his wife and
daughter.

CLOSE ON the photos.

PRESENCE (V.O.)
 Look at her. She's smokin'. The kid
 ain't so bad either, thanks to
 yours truly.

We see Presence sitting in the corner of the room eating a pastrami on rye sandwich. He plays "Words with Friends" on his cellphone.

PRESENCE (V.O.)
 I knew I was in there somewhere.
 Always am...always will be.

Presence MASHES on his cellphone, GRINS, then FROWNS.

PRESENCE (V.O.)
 I'm a sore loser. Hate to admit it
 but ya see, that's part of the big
 picture. Knowing when to man up.

Presence POLISHES off the last nibble and SWIGS down a DR. Pepper with ease. He BELCHES and trembles.

PRESENCE (V.O.)
 I'm no different than anyone else.
 I just have the best job in the
 world...being me.

From Billy's P.O.V. we see the corner where Presence was. Presence is not in frame.

PRESENCE (V.O.)
 Don't worry, I'm there. Always
 am...always will be. Let's get back
 to Billy.

EXT. LITTLE LEAGUE FIELD - DAY

A young BILLY (12), dressed in complete uniform, CHOMPS on a wad of Bazooka Joe.

We see him strike out one batter after another.

CLOSE ON Presence watching from the stands with glee. He munches down some peanuts followed by a chaser of Dr. Pepper. He then continues on with his "Words with Friends" game.

PRESENCE (V.O.)
The kid had a rifle arm, but he
also had some issues.

CUT TO:

INT. CHURCH - DAY

Billy sits in the front pew during mass. He scribbles swear words on a piece of paper.

Presence sits beside Billy. He SNEAKS a glimpse at Billy's paper. He RETRIEVES his phone from his frock, then quickly puts it back.

PRESENCE (V.O.)
I get it. Church ain't for
everyone. But swear words?

CUT TO:

INT. CHILDRENS HOSPITAL - DAY

Billy reads from a pop-up book to the handicapped children.

He mocks their inability to remain still.

We see Presence sitting at the end of a bed. He listens to Billy as he GOBBLES down some M + M's. He surfs the web on his cellphone.

PRESENCE (V.O.)
The more I think about it, the kid
was rotten. Big boy Pres had his
hands full with this clown. I
decided to play a trick on him...

CUT TO:

EXT. HIGH SCHOOL BASEBALL FIELD - DAY

Billy TOSSES long-ball with a TEAMMATE (16), in the outfield grass.

Billy readies himself for the incoming baseball. The ball comes up short and Billy DARTS forward.

Presence SMIRKS with wolfish eyes as he watches Billy.

Presence TOSSES in a mouthful of sunflower seeds and begins to SPIT OUT the shells. He pauses, then CRINGES.

 PRESENCE (V.O.)
I'll spare you the gory details. I
did what I had to do.

CUT TO:

EXT. CHILDRENS HOSPITAL - LATER

Billy walks out of the hospital with his arm in a sling.

Presence STRUTS out behind him with a hospital tray full of jell-o. His cellphone is clipped to his hip.

 PRESENCE (V.O.)
Maybe this would be a wake up call
for the little rascal.

CUT TO:

EXT. COLLEGE CAMPUS

BILLY (20), dressed in sweats, DEMONSTRATES pitching techniques to a host of college baseball players.

We see DARLA (20), a natural beauty, in the b.g.

She assists a handicapped person around the nearby running track.

 PRESENCE (V.O.)
Billy thinks his charm is what
caught Darla's eye.

Presence JOGS in place with his Dodgers blue cap prominently glistening in the California sun. He stops, starts, and then stops again. He swigs down some Gatorade and then shovels in handfuls of popcorn.

Presence lowers his brow and lasers Billy with his eyes.

Billy stops mid-throw and locks eyes with a passing Darla.

Presence laughs.

 PRESENCE (V.O.)
I set the whole thing up. Dinner, a
movie. (beat) Let me tell ya guys,
Billy was a movie buff, that's why
I stuck with him.

We see Billy and Darla engage in a kiss.

PRESENCE (V.O.)
The rest is history.

BACK TO:

INT. MIDDLE OF NOWHERE INN - WAITING ROOM

The bright light fills the waiting room.

PRESENCE
You guys want to get some selfies
with me?

ANONYMOUS VOICE
That's it? That's all you have for
us? What happened to Billy?

PRESENCE
He got what he deserved, okay? You
fellas want some autographs?

A hubbub of chatter fills the air. Presence LOOKS dismayed.
The clamor increases in intensity.

PRESENCE (CONT'D)
Stop! I can't think straight. You
wanna know about Billy?

ANONYMOUS VOICE
Yeah! We don't have enough for a
feature film.

PRESENCE
I thought this was a doc?

ANONYMOUS VOICE
Little bit of both.

Presence GATHERS himself up and straightens out the sash on
his frock. He clears his throat.

PRESENCE
Listen up peeps. Billy's bio is an
example of how to screw your life
up after you flatline.

CUT TO:

EXT. TUSTIN AIRPORT - DAY

Several single prop planes rest on a blacktop pavement.

Presence HACKS away at his cellphone as he leans against the tail of a plane. He SHAKES it, not unlike someone checking an expired light bulb.

PRESENCE (V.O.)

The kid wanted to fly. He thought that was his escape. I tried to stop him but...

CLOSE ON a heartbeat monitor which FLATLINES.

BACK TO:

INT. MIDDLE OF NOWHERE INN - WAITING ROOM

Nothing but bright white light and silence.

The silhouettes remain still as Presence MASSAGES his hands and inhales, then exhales.

The same lone anonymous voice disrupts the quiet.

ANONYMOUS VOICE

This is a rip-off. We need a story not a bunch of bull-

PRESENCE

Rip off you say? Presence always keeps his promise.

And with that statement we hear a gigantic, thunderous crash. The waiting room shakes and shimmies.

PRESENCE (CONT'D)

I'll give you rip off. You think you can come to my crib and question my power?

We see the silhouettes. Their hands cover their ears. The thunder wanes.

ANONYMOUS VOICE

No offense to your power, Your Presence. We wanna know Billy's faults so we can put it in the movie.

Presence PONDERERS with his chin raised. He caresses his jaw.

PRESENCE

Very well...I'll give you a story.

Presence SCANS the waiting room in a deliberate manner.

PRESENCE (CONT'D)

Everyone's life begins when they
flatline...

Indistinct whispers are heard in the b.g.

PRESENCE (CONT'D)

Leave it to Billy to screw it up.
It all started right here, in this
very room.

The silhouettes appear to sit down and lay their equipment at
their feet.

Presence takes out his cellphone and POUNDS on the screen.

There is deafening silence.

Finally, we hear the anonymous voice break the ice.

ANONYMOUS VOICE

What are we waiting for?

PRESENCE

I'm pulling up Billy's video.
Ready... Wait. This damn phone...

Presence throws his arms in the air in disgust.

PRESENCE (CONT'D)

I never talk like this when I'm
alone. By the way, how did you guys
get by my gatekeeper?

ANONYMOUS VOICE

Divine intervention of sorts.

Presence SCOWLS at the remark.

PRESENCE

Okay, here we go. Three, two,
one...

Flashback:

INT. MIDDLE OF NOWHERE INN - WAITING ROOM

Presence meets Billy.

Billy whimpers like a little wuss and pleads for his life.

PRESENCE (V.O.)

What a joke. He claimed he loved his wife and daughter and would do *anything* to get back to them.

We see Presence counting out slowly on his fingers.

PRESENCE (V.O.)

I gave him a choice. Stay here, the universally famous M-O-N-I as I call it, or accept an easy challenge.

Billy closes his eyes and contemplates his life.

PRESENCE (V.O.)

A challenge that would grant him a dream, a wish, and a want. His choice. Anything under the sun. In return, he'd have to complete a mission of my choice.

Billy STRETCHES out his limbs and gives the thumbs up sign.

PRESENCE (V.O.)

He accepted the challenge but...

CUT TO:

INT. DODGERS STADIUM VISITOR'S CLUBHOUSE - NIGHT

Billy, dressed in an L.A. Angels jersey CELEBRATES his game seven victory of the World Series.

Presence PACES nearby with a glum countenance. He tilts the bill of his Dodger blue cap down. He snarfs down a Dodger Dog then chugs a Dodger cup filled with a stadium draft beer.

PRESENCE (V.O.)

He loved his family so much he wished he could be the winning pitcher in game seven. Against *my* team. How dare he.

CUT TO:

INT. JUST HOME - EARLY EVENING

Billy exists, motionless, in a wheelchair/bed. A computer screen is situated nearby. A tube extends from Billy's mouth.

PRESENCE (V.O.)

Dum dum wanted to play hardball.

From Billy's P.O.V. we see Darla and JESSICA (16), embracing and crying.

Presence LOUNGES on a sofa while he munches on some cheese and crackers. A plate full of assorted fruits and vegetables beckons his attention. He checks his cellphone for text messages.

PRESENCE (V.O.)

Thank myself I found some good apps. This job keeps me hungry. Too bad my phone apps weren't up to speed.

Darla PULLS out an envelope marked "Important Papers".

From Billy's P.O.V.:

She opens the clasp and removes a Life Insurance policy.

The policy SCREAMS "CANCELLED" in bold red letters.

Darla BREAKS DOWN and sobs.

CLOSE ON Billy's eyes. They well up with tears.

PRESENCE (V.O.)

All-star stud athlete to a quad.
And a snake to boot. What a shame.

CUT TO:

INT. MIDDLE OF NOWHERE INN - WAITING ROOM

Presence and Billy are face to face.

Billy shakes his head and waves a finger at Presence.

PRESENCE (V.O.)

He thought I did him dirty. I gave him a chance to back out and stay. He even had the gall to accuse me of lying. Fancy that.

Presence EXTENDS his arm out to Billy like an auto dealer salesman showing off cars.

Billy CONNECTS his hands as if he were praying and shakes them in front of Presence's face.

 PRESENCE (V.O.)
 He wanted no part of the M-O-N-I.
 So, on to round two. Would you
 believe his dream was...

CUT TO:

EXT. NOKIA THEATER - LOS ANGELES - EVENING

Billy STRUGGLES to carry his armful of Oscar statues as he makes his way to his limousine.

 PRESENCE (V.O.)
 Like I said, he was a movie buff.
 Apparently, his love for his family
 didn't mean much.

The limousine driver opens up the door and we see Presence inside with a glass of the 'bubbly'.

 PRESENCE (V.O.)
 I do have to give him some kudos.
 One of his movies, Just Presence,
 won "Best Film" and gave me some
 serious street cred.

Several FANS (Mixed ages), jockey for position to get an autograph from Billy. He turns around and starts to scribble.

 PRESENCE (V.O.)
 But I had a lesson to teach and a
 job to do. So I let him have it.

CUT TO:

EXT. HOLLYWOOD AND VINE STREET CORNER - LOS ANGELES - NIGHT

We see Billy. He is unshaven, disheveled, and wears tattered clothes. He panhandles outside several restaurants.

 PRESENCE (V.O.)
 Mr. Big Shot to a vagrant. Yeah, he
 had a greedy streak to him like no
 other.

Billy is seen next to a fellow HOMELESS PERSON (50's). His new friend offers him a hit of wine.

Billy takes the bottle and downs a big gulp. He PUKES it back up. His homeless comrade dumpster dives into a sea of garbage. Billy SHUFFLES backwards, turns, and disappears into the neon night.

CUT TO:

EXT. SUNSET BOULEVARD - CONTINUOUS

Billy begs for scraps outside the Pig and Whistle restaurant on Sunset Boulevard.

From behind Billy's shoulder we see Presence playing on his cellphone inside the cozy confines of the restaurant. He stops to have a sip of Cabernet. He places the cellphone down and cuts himself a slab of filet mignon.

PRESENCE (V.O.)

I was right in front of his nose
and the jackass didn't see me.
Typical symptom for a self-
centered, egomaniac.

Billy huddles up over a sewer grate to keep warm.

PRESENCE (V.O.)

I'd enough of his sorry behind.
Maybe, just maybe, he'd want the
one thing he'd been seeking.

CUT TO:

INT. MIDDLE OF NOWHERE INN - WAITING ROOM

Presence SMIRKS as he watches Billy shake his head in anger.

Billy STOMPS his feet and CLENCHES his fists as he waves them dangerously close to Presence's jaw.

PRESENCE (V.O.)

You'd think he'd figure it out.
Greed gets the best of us.
Stupidity is a close second.

Billy PACES. His face washes over with rage.

PRESENCE (V.O.)
 I gave him a chance to stay. I
 guess he didn't like the
 accommodations.

We see Billy mash his right fist into his palm.

PRESENCE (V.O.)
 Then he tells me his "want" is to
 live forever. I'm still laughing
 over that one. (Beat) But, he
 insisted...and...well, I always
 keep my promise.

CUT TO:

EXT. ABBEY MEMORIAL FUNERAL HOME - DAY

A slew of PEOPLE (mixed ages), file into the main entrance of
 the funeral parlor.

Presence and Billy look on from the parking lot.

Billy's face DISPLAYS fear and bewilderment.

PRESENCE (V.O.)
 Numbnuts couldn't comprehend what
 he was witnessing.

Billy POINTS both index fingers at Presence in a threatening
 and menacing manner.

PRESENCE (V.O.)
 He thought he could outsmart me. I
 even gave him a shot at redemption.
 But no...

BACK TO:

INT. MIDDLE OF NOWHERE INN - WAITING ROOM

The silhouettes remain eerily still. Not even a heartbeat is
 audible.

PRESENCE
 Well?

ANONYMOUS VOICE
 What happened next?

Presence starts to snicker like a hyena. The snicker turns
 into a ripsnort. Now it's a full-out bellow.

PRESENCE

Are you serious? Just go see the
movie. It'll blow your mind.

The end.

(MORE)

(CONT'D)