

THE WRITER'S JOURNEY INTO PRODUCTION OBLIVION

Written by

Jonathan Sieff

A script based on my painful experience of development and
pre-production

© Jonathan Sieff
Sieffy13@yahoo.co.uk
07947 890843

20 Henry Road East Barnet
Hertfordshire
EN4 8BD

FADE IN:

EXT. KEVIN'S HOUSE - DAY

CAPTION: SUMMER 2016

It's hot and dry. A RUNNER (19) a young guy in cargo shorts, a tank top and trainers sprints down the street. He's practically melting from the heat, whilst juggling equipment and multiple coffees like a pro.

He runs up to Kevin's mundane, middle-class detached house. He's almost there but trips on his own shoelace. There's a crash followed by a splash as coffee and camera equipment go everywhere.

INT. BEDROOM SET - DAY

A typical parent's bedroom rigged up with lights and cameras set up on tripods.

DANI (20) a ditsy free-spirited girl lays in bed next to LEAD (21) the visual antithesis of Hugh Grant.

DANI

Wow, that was amazing. So, where do we go from here?

The Lead stammers.

LEAD

Erm... line please?

KEVIN (O.C.)

Okay guys. Take five.

Dani sits up.

KEVIN (22) a lanky and pristine hipster turns to the CAST and CREW.

KEVIN

Where the hell is my soy, locally-sourced, Fair Trade, latte?

The Runner enters, in messy clothing and with a battered appearance. He walks up to Kevin.

RUNNER

(out of breath)
Here's your coffee.

He hands Kevin the drink. Kevin takes a sip.

KEVIN

It's cold, get me another.

The Runner collapses.

Dani sits on the bed buttoning up her shirt. The Lead grabs a copy of the script from the bedside table. He starts making notes.

Dani walks over to CHARLIE (21) a young guy in a bland t-shirt and scruffy jeans sitting away from the shoot. Charlie hands her a pink scrunchie. Dani starts tying her hair back.

The image freezes.

CHARLIE (V.O.)

Okay. Let's tell this from the beginning.

EXT. COFFEE SHOP, LONDON - DAY

CAPTION: AUTUMN 2015

A small independent coffee shop in central London.

It's windy. Pages of a bound script flutter. Kevin, wearing a light jacket and a fedora closes the script. Charlie is wrapped in a thick coat, a woolly hat and a scarf. He puts his hands on his coffee cup to warm them.

Charlie is tapping a cigarette against his phone.

CHARLIE (V.O.)

The guy opposite me is this hipster wannabe Indie film-maker.

Charlie sticks the cigarette in his mouth and goes to light it. Kevin shakes his head, disappointed.

He lights the cigarette and takes a drag.

INT. CLUB - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

CAPTION: SUMMER 2015 - Indie Film-makers' Meet n' Greet

An underground London club filled with pretentious and overenthusiastic FILM-MAKERS. GROUPS of Tarantino-esque film buffs and David Lynch-loving Eraserheads populate the bar.

Charlie and Kevin are chatting. Kevin crushes Charlie's hand and shakes it violently. Charlie's arm flails wildly and looks as if it's about to dislocate.

CHARLIE (V.O.)
I met him at one of those
networking events.

Charlie is grinning nervously. Kevin's face is brimming with "antici...pation".

FLASHBACK ENDS

EXT. COFFEE SHOP, LONDON - DAY

Charlie takes a final drag of his cigarette. The ash catches his finger. Charlie flinches. He throws the cigarette in the ashtray.

KEVIN
That's a sign you should quit.

Charlie smirks.

KEVIN (cont'd)
The reason I wanted to meet is
because I have a producer attached.
And he and I agree. We want you to
be part of the team, every step of
the way.

Kevin flicks through the script.

KEVIN (cont'd)
But Jeff and I were thinking you
could do some rewrites...

CUT TO:

FANTASY #1

Kevin turns to one of the pages.

KEVIN (cont'd)
But Jeff and I were thinking you
could do some rewrites because it's
just too student-filmy.

Charlie nods. He grabs his piping hot coffee. He goes to take a sip, but instead throws it into Kevin's face. Kevin covers his face, blinded and in pain. Charlie gets up and walks away.

CUT TO:

REALITY

Kevin flicks through the script.

Charlie looks confused.

CHARLIE

Okay... It's a film about students.

He grabs his piping hot coffee. He looks up at Kevin. He takes a sip.

Kevin turns to a page.

KEVIN

Especially here, where they hook up. It's a bit clichéd. Tony and Gemma lie in bed together. Bass-heavy music can be heard thumping from downstairs".

CHARLIE

What about it?

Kevin writes on the script and turns it to Charlie. Charlie picks up the script and reads the notes.

CHARLIE (cont'd)

Oh come on. It's not a porno.

Charlie chucks the script back at Kevin.

CHARLIE (cont'd)

Any other rewrites you... recommend?

Kevin wets his finger and flicks through again.

KEVIN

Here, where Tony attempts suicide. Cut that. It's just so depressing.

CHARLIE

Alright, I'll give you that one. Anything else?

KEVIN

Just one. Change the ending.

CHARLIE

Like the whole ending or...

Kevin's phone rings.

KEVIN
Hold that thought.

Kevin answers it. Charlie goes back to his coffee.

KEVIN (cont'd)
Hi... yeah. Okay. I'll let him
know... fantastic, see you then.

He puts the phone down.

An excited Kevin begins packing his stuff away.

KEVIN (cont'd)
That was Jeff, he's looking forward
to meeting you at the auditions
next week.

Before Charlie can utter a word, Kevin is crossing over the street.

INT. CHARLIE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

A small bedroom with posters for vintage print ads' framed on the walls. And more clothes on the floor than a Primark changing room.

A copy of Robert McKee's Ten Commandments is stuck to the wall above Charlie's work area.

Charlie sits at a desk hammering away at his keyboard with a cigarette in his mouth looking like Raoul Duke from *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas*.

Charlie stops typing. He grabs a pen and ticks off Rule #10 'Thou shalt rewrite.'

Charlie takes the cigarette out of his mouth and stubs it into a bowl filled with cigarette ends.

CHARLIE
(Muttering)
Here's your fucking rewrite.

Charlie hits the 'enter' key.

INT. CHURCH, MAKESHIFT CLASSROOM - DAY

A small makeshift classroom for Sunday School. Above the door is a Crucifix.

An audition space has been set up. Kevin and the PRODUCER (28) a well-dressed man are sat at a table chatting.

FANTASY #2

A nervous-looking Charlie rushes in. A beam of sunlight hits the Crucifix as Charlie enters. It rebounds off the crucifix and onto Charlie. Charlie screams as he's dragged down to Hell through the floor as *Tubular Bells* plays in the background. When Charlie disappears a Pentagram is burned into the floor.

REALITY

A nervous-looking Charlie rushes in.

Charlie takes a breath and rights himself. He pulls up a chair. Kevin pours some water from a jug into a glass and passes it to Charlie.

Charlie glugs it down.

The Producer scowls at him.

PRODUCER

You're late. We've only got five minutes till the first audition.

CHARLIE (V.O.)

Look at this guy...

CUT TO:

INT. OFFICE - DAY

A neat office with a pile of scripts on an oak desk. Behind the desk are shelves filled with books.

The Producer sits at the desk. He takes a script from the pile. He flicks through it, closes it and stamps 'REJECTED' on front cover. He grabs the next script and skims the first page. He closes it and stamps 'REJECTED' on the front cover. He continues doing this with a few more scripts. The image freezes.

The opening of *Ave Satani* plays in the background.

The Producer grows a pair of demonic horns. The bookshelf behind him engulfs in flames. Maniacal laughter can be heard.

CHARLIE (V.O.)
 ...He's probably some schnook who
 gave his business card to a guy...

MONTAGE - THE LINEAGE OF BUSINESS CARD

IMAGE: The Producer handing his business card to BUSINESS
 MAN (35) the most 80s looking business man ever.

CHARLIE (V.O.) (cont'd)
 Who gave it to a guy...

IMAGE: Business Man handing the business card to CLOWN (35)
 a shameless Ronald McDonald knock-off.

CHARLIE (V.O.) (cont'd)
 Who gave it to a guy...

IMAGE: Clown handing the business card to RECEPTIONIST (25)
 all acrylic nails and sass.

CHARLIE (V.O.) (cont'd)
 Who gave it to a girl...

IMAGE: Receptionist hands the business card to MAN #1 (35) a
 smartly-dressed effeminate man.

CHARLIE (V.O.) (cont'd)
 Who gave it to a guy.

MONTAGE ENDS

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Man #1 and MAN #2 lay lovingly entwined on a sofa covered by
 a silk sheet. There's clothing scattered all over the room.

CHARLIE (V.O.)
 Who hooked with a guy at a birthday
 party and said...

CHARLIE (AS MAN #1)
 Oh, you're in the film industry
 right?

Man #2 nods.

CHARLIE (AS MAN #1)
 I know this guy who's looking to
 make a career in film. Here, I'll
 give you his business card.

Man #1 gets up, fully nude. He walks over to his trousers and puts them on. He reaches into the pocket and pulls out a business card. He hands the business card to Man #2.

CUT TO:

INT. CHURCH, MAKESHIFT CLASSROOM - DAY (LATER)

Charlie, Kevin and the Producer sit waiting for the first audition.

PRODUCER

Charlie, why don't you read with the actors? After all, it is your script.

The Producer sticks the script out for Charlie to grab.

CHARLIE

I'd rather not.

PRODUCER

Oh I insist.

CHARLIE

I'm not really the acting type...

PRODUCER

No. I insist.

Charlie begrudgingly snatches the script from the Producer's hands. The Producer smiles.

DITSY NEW-YORKER (21) a young typical New York Native strides into the room.

The Producer hands her a copy of the script.

PRODUCER (cont'd)

Page three.

Ditsy New-Yorker turns to the page. She and Charlie start reading from the script.

CHARLIE

Interior. Bedroom. Day. Tony and Gemma lie in bed together.

Ditsy New Yorker clears her throat.

DITSY NEW-YORKER
(Thick Brooklyn accent)
Wow. That was amazing. So, where do
we go from here?

The Producer thinks. He writes some notes.

INT. CHURCH, MAKESHIFT CLASSROOM - DAY - SAME (LATER)

Charlie, Kevin and the Producer sit in anticipation of the next audition.

Montage of extravagant actresses auditioning for the role of 'GEMMA'.

FEMALE BADASS (22) a Michelle Rodriguez/Milla Jovovich-type struts in confidently. Charlie, Kevin and the Producer look confident.

Charlie, Kevin and the Producer shake their heads.

LARGE OPERATIC ACTRESS (27) prepares to read the script.

Charlie, Kevin and the Producer shake their heads.

Charlie sinks into his seat. He buries his head in his hands.

LAUREN OLIVIER (21) a classically-trained actress dressed as Lady Macbeth prepares to read.

Kevin and the Producer shake their heads.

Charlie is trying to keep himself awake.

BUNNY (25) a scantily-clad and well-endowed actress prepares to read.

Charlie perks up massively.

Bunny walks right up to the table where the three men are sitting. She leans over the table, revealing her cleavage to them.

BUNNY
(Sexually satisfied)
"Wow. That was amazing. So. Where
do we go from here?"

Bunny takes a few steps back. She curtsseys.

Kevin and the Producer shake their heads. Charlie nods.

Kevin and the Producer turn to Charlie. They both frown as they shake their heads.

MONTAGE ENDS.

Dani enters the room.

DANI
Hi, I'm Dani.

When Dani sees Kevin, she looks at him perplexed, as if she's seen him before.

She sees Charlie and smiles. Charlie smiles back.

The sounds of MOANS and BED SPRINGS can be heard.

DANI (cont'd)
Listen. We have got to catch up
sometime.

CHARLIE
I distinctly remember I said I'd
buy you a drink.

The Producer loudly clears his throat.

PRODUCER
If you two are finished, we'd quite
like to get this over with so we
can go home for the day.

Charlie clears his throat and prepares to read.

CHARLIE
Tony and Gemma lie in bed together.

DANI
"Wow. That, was amazing. So, where
do we go from here?"

Charlie, Kevin and the Producer are sat at the table.

PRODUCER
That'll be all.

Dani smiles and exits.

Fantasy #3

PRODUCER (cont'd)
Oh, by the way tomorrow, ten AM.
Kevin's house, meeting and recce.
You'll be there right, Charlie?

Charlie nods as he tightly clenches his fist.

PRODUCER (cont'd)
Also, can you do another rewrite?
It just seems too much like a
student film.

Charlie slams the Producer against the table. His head bounces off the surface. The Producer is out cold. He turns to Kevin. Charlie pounces on him and pummels him in a UFC-style 'ground-and-pound'. Charlie stands up. He wipes the blood from his face.

REALITY

PRODUCER (cont'd)
Oh, by the way tomorrow, ten AM.
Kevin's house, meeting and recce.
You'll be there right, Charlie?

Charlie nods as he tightly clenches his fist.

PRODUCER (cont'd)
Also, can you do another rewrite?
It just seems too much like a
student film.

Charlie nods again, grinning.

PRODUCER (cont'd)
Excellent. We'll see you tomorrow
then... and don't be late.

Charlie relaxes his hand.

EXT. THE CAMBRIDGE, BEER GARDEN - NIGHT

A small and well-furnished beer garden. Charlie and Dani are sat at a table drinking and smoking away.

CHARLIE
I didn't know you were an actress.

DANI
I took a few classes, they said I
had a knack for it. So I kinda just
started doing it on the side.

DANI (cont'd)
I can see you've been up to a lot.
You're getting your script made.
That's amazing. Where did you meet
the director?

CHARLIE

At one of those networking meet-ups. D'you get those in the acting world?

DANI

Oh yeah, I always go. One pops up on Facebook and I'm like "Yep, going to that."

CHARLIE

I don't know about you but I think I'm about ready to call it a night.

Charlie stumbles up. He falls backwards onto the floor. Dani smirks. She sticks her hand out to help him up.

CHARLIE (cont'd)

That's okay, I'm fine.

Charlie is about to get up.

His eyes widen.

CHARLIE (cont'd)

Oh crap.

DANI

What is it?

He covers his mouth. His cheeks stick out slightly as if he's about to puke.

INT. DANI'S LIVING ROOM - DAY

A dishevelled Charlie is laying on a sofa, covered with a blanket.

He wakes up in a small well-decorated room with slightly-worn leather furniture. The hangover hits him as he sits up. He puts his hand to his head. He's cuddling a pink plush bunny toy. Charlie freaks. He peeks under the covers.

Dani enters wearing a man's shirt. Charlie brings his head out from under the covers.

Dani smiles at Charlie. She sits on the other end of the sofa. Leaving a space between them.

DANI

I'll take that back, thank you very much.

Charlie hands her the toy.

CHARLIE
We didn't... y'know?

Dani shakes her head, smirking. Charlie stares at her shirt.

DANI
Oh, it's my ex's. He dumped me for
some girl he met at a house party.
I think her name was Lucy.

Charlie looks perplexed.

CHARLIE
Okay... next question, where are my
clothes?

DANI
In the dryer. Hopefully the vomit
comes out.

Charlie mouths the word 'vomit', puzzled.

DANI (cont'd)
You got really drunk, when you
threw up there was some splash
back. So I brought you back here
and convinced you to take your
clothes off. I bunged them in the
wash over night and you slept on
the couch.

CHARLIE
Sounds just like old times.
Anything else I should know?

DANI
I've worked with Kevin before.

Charlie looks at her with intrigue.

CHARLIE
Really? Hang on a sec...

Charlie puts his hand to his mouth, he looks as if he's
about to throw up.

Charlie swallows.

CHARLIE (cont'd)
Sorry. False alarm. Continue.

DANI
It was like six months ago...

EXT. FIELD - DAY - FLASHBACK

CAPTION: SIX MONTHS AGO.

CAPTION: Making of "Le Génial Funérailles pour la Fromage" -
The Great Funeral for the Cheese.

DANI (V.O.)
I was an extra in this art film. My
room-mate got me in on it.

A large field. The sky is grey. ACTORS dressed as clowns are standing in a circle holding hands. In the middle of the circle is a giant wheel of cheese. CREW MEMBERS are preparing for the next take.

DANI (V.O.) (cont'd)
Kevin got into an argument with the
writer over "creative differences".

Dani stands in the background, as Kevin and STUDENT FILMMAKER (21) a tall, slim man in all black clothing, including a beret and thick-rimmed glasses argue. Dani watches as Kevin yells at the Student Filmmaker.

KEVIN
You can find yourself another
director motherfucker...

Kevin storms off.

A shocked Dani sticks a cigarette in her mouth and lights it.

DANI (V.O.)
So I guess what I'm saying is...

INT. DANI'S LIVING ROOM - DAY

Charlie and Dani sit on the sofa next to each other.

DANI
Be careful.

Charlie smiles at Dani.

CHARLIE
I'll be fine.

Charlie looks up at the clock, worried. Dani looks at him puzzled.

The clock strikes ten. Charlie's phone rings. He answers it.

CHARLIE (cont'd)
Morning, how's it going?

KEVIN (V.O.)
Where are you? You said you'd be here.

CHARLIE
I'm fine too, thanks for asking. I kind of overslept. Had a few drinks, crashed on a friend's couch for the night.

KEVIN (V.O.)
Jeff wants to talk to you.

CHARLIE
(Smiling gleefully)
Yeah, go on then.

Nonsensical yelling can be heard. Charlie cringes. He moves the phone away from his ear. Dani snatches it out of his hand.

Charlie doesn't know what to do. He watches Dani with intrigue.

DANI
(Putting on an accent)
Charlie can't talk right now, he's totally wrecked. Hungover and (whispering) still a little bit drunk.

KEVIN (V.O.)
Who is this?

DANI
It's... Charlie's girlfriend... Lucy. He's not gonna be able to make it today. He also promised me a... romantic breakfast.

Charlie is trying to hold in a laugh.

KEVIN (V.O.)

(Perplexed)

Oh, okay. Tell him we need a new draft of the script. This one just isn't working.

Dani moves next to Charlie on the sofa.

DANI

Okay, I'll let him know. Bye.

Dani hangs up and hands the phone back to Charlie.

DANI (cont'd)

You're welcome. Oh and he said they want another draft as soon as possible.

CHARLIE

(Sarcastically)

Great.

Charlie stands up, revealing his Superman boxers.

Dani starts laughing.

CHARLIE (cont'd)

What?

Charlie looks down. Charlie snatches the blanket off the sofa and quickly covers himself.

DANI

I'll go get your clothes... man of steel.

Dani walks out the room laughing.

INT. NEWSAGENTS - DAY

A typical corner shop with shelves of snacks, magazines and other knick-knacks. Charlie enters. He walks up to the counter.

CHARLIE

Pack of Malboro and a lighter.

The Man behind the counter grabs a pack of cigarettes and a lighter. Charlie hands over some money.

Charlie takes the packet of cigarettes and the lighter. Charlie's phone rings. It's Dani. Charlie answers it.

CHARLIE (cont'd)
Hey Dani, what's up?

DANI (V.O.)
Tomorrow afternoon, how would you
like to go for a coffee? Maybe we
could catch up a bit more.

CHARLIE
Yeah, sure.

Charlie gleefully saunters out the newsagents.

EXT. COFFEE SHOP - DAY (MONTAGE)

Dani sits outside the coffee shop.

Charlie comes over with a tray of cakes and coffee.

He sits down.

A cappuccino goes from full to empty. It refills with a
chocolate heart dusted on top.

They sit there laughing.

Dani leans forward and kisses Charlie.

MONTAGE ENDS

Charlie and Dani make out passionately.

INT. DANI'S BEDROOM - DAY

Charlie and Dani lie in bed next to each other. Charlie
holds a lit cigarette in one hand.

DANI
Wow, that was amazing. So, where
are we in our relationship?

Charlie turns to Dani, puzzled.

CHARLIE
Are you practising your lines?

Dani smiles.

DANI
Method acting.

Charlie smirks as he takes a drag.

INT. BEDROOM SET - DAY

A typical parent's bedroom rigged up with lights and cameras set up on tripods. Dani and the Lead lay in bed together

DANI

Wow, that was amazing. So, where do we go from here?

The Lead stammers.

LEAD

Erm... line please?

Kevin turns to the CAST and CREW.

KEVIN

Okay guys. Take five.

The Runner enters, in messy clothing and with a battered appearance. He walks up to Kevin.

RUNNER

(out of breath)
Here's your coffee.

He hands Kevin the drink. Kevin drinks it.

KEVIN

It's cold, get me another.

The Runner collapses.

Dani sits on the bed buttoning up her shirt. The Lead grabs a copy of the script from the bedside table. He starts making notes.

Dani walks over to Charlie sitting away from the shoot. Charlie hands her a pink scrunchie. Dani starts tying her hair back.

CHARLIE

How's filming going?

DANI

Well, I'm sitting here in a shirt and underwear...
(sarcastically)
fun.

CHARLIE

Ah don't worry. It'll be over before you know it.

Dani crosses her fingers.

DANI

I wish.

CREW members prepare for the next take.

FIRST AD (O.C.)

Two minutes.

DANI

I've gotta go get ready for the next take.

They kiss. Dani walks back on set.

CHARLIE

Break a leg.

Dani smiles at Charlie.

Kevin looks over at Charlie. He grabs a seat and sits next to him.

KEVIN

You enjoying it?

Charlie shakes his hand indicating 'it's okay'. The Producer appears out of nowhere and joins them.

PRODUCER

So, did you tell him?

KEVIN

I was just about to, but I think you should give him the details.

CHARLIE

Tell me what?

PRODUCER

Well, we're thinking of doing another rewrite.

Charlie sinks into his chair.

CHARLIE

Great.

PRODUCER

No, as an in "we're" doing the rewrite, Kevin and I. We're gonna do a complete rewrite. You'll still be given partial credit of course.

Charlie tries to speak, but can't. He becomes flustered and gets up from his chair.

Charlie exits. Dani looks over at him, puzzled.

EXT. STREET - DAY

Charlie stands in the street. In the background is Kevin's easily distinguishable house.

Charlie takes out a cigarette and his phone. He taps it the cigarette against his phone screen multiple times with some force. He sticks the cigarette in his mouth. He rummages through his pockets for a lighter.

A flame suddenly appears and ignites his cigarette. Charlie turns around to see Dani. She smiles at him.

Charlie smiles back.

Charlie offers her a cigarette. She takes one from the pack, sticks it in her mouth and lights it.

DANI

So, how's it going?

CHARLIE

Fine. Why d'you ask?

DANI

Oh I don't know? Maybe because you just stormed off set.

Charlie looks embarrassed.

DANI (cont'd)

Lemme guess. They're gonna rewrite the script?

CHARLIE

Yeah, how'd you know?

Dani gives Charlie an 'I told you so' look.

DANI

I told you to be careful. You weren't careful.

CHARLIE

I know. What d'you think I should do?

DANI

Look at it this way, it may not be the film you want it to be, but no matter what, your script's getting made and, I don't know if you intended on some sort of romance angle, but here I am.

Dani kisses Charlie softly on the cheek and makes her way back inside.

Charlie throws what's left of his cigarette on the floor.

Charlie strolls up to the house.

INT. BEDROOM SET - DAY

FANTASY #4

CAST and CREW stand around preparing for the next take.

Charlie enters. He walks up to Kevin.

Dani watches, worried.

KEVIN

Ah Charlie I was wondering where you'd gone off to.

CHARLIE

I just went out for a quick cigarette. No biggie.

KEVIN

Well, to each his own.

CHARLIE

Oh by the way, I quit.

Charlie pulls out a cricket bat from behind his back and beats Kevin with it.

Dani covers her eyes.

Bloody chunks of brain and skull decorate the floor where Kevin's head used to be.

Charlie drops the bat to the floor. He exits.

REALITY

Charlie enters. He walks up to Kevin.

KEVIN

Ah Charlie I was wondering where you'd gone off to.

CHARLIE

I just went out for a quick cigarette. No biggie.

KEVIN

Well, to each his own.

CHARLIE

So, you were saying something about a rewrite.

KEVIN

Yeah, I just think it needs it. It really needs that push in the right direction...

Kevin's voice fades.

Charlie listens, nodding occasionally.

CHARLIE (V.O.)

So, that's it. I decided to live with it. Kevin's not really a bad guy, and Dani's right, the script's getting made, I mean we're on set right now. I just hope the film's as good on the screen as it is on the page.

Dani looks over at Charlie and smiles.

FADE OUT.