

ADMEN FROM OUTER SPACE

FADE IN:

INT. STEVE'S BEDROOM - MORNING

Slowly rising, STEVE FRIEDMAN wakes.

STEVE (V.O.)

Did you ever get the feeling that
you should just not get out of bed?

Sitting at the edge of his bed, he scans the alarm clock:
7:30AM. On the desk next to his bed is a Smith Corona
typewriter and sheets of paper on either side.

STEVE (V.O.) (CONT'D)

One day, I'll finish my dream. To
write a screenplay. But for now, I
have to work the proverbial day job.

EXT. MAGAZINE STAND - CONTINUOUS

Further down the street, Steve stops at a magazine stand. A
front page headline jumps out at him: David Janssen - dead
at the age of 49, with the headline: "The Fugitive Stops
Running".

STEVE (V.O.)

That should have been my second clue.
I still have that paper to this day
and, although I got a lot out of it,
I've often thought about poor David
and ill omens. Oh, sorry. I'll get
on with it.

He picks up a news paper and a bunch of movie magazines. He
stuffs the reading material in his bag and marches off.

EXT. MARKET STREET - MOMENTS LATER

Steve ends up in front of a seedy building. He checks the
address he has on a piece of paper, then looks at the cheesy
sign next to the door. It reads: SKRULLNOCK ADVERTISING
AGENCY.

STEVE

Welcome to hell?

Reluctantly, Steve tries the door, which is locked. He then
presses the door bell. A disembodied VOICE, barely
intelligible, crackles from a painted over speaker.

VOICE (V.O.)

Hello?

STEVE

Hi, I'm Steve Friedman! I...

The door BUZZES and Steve looks at it for a moment. Just as he tries the door, the BUZZING stops. The door will not open.

He presses the button again.

VOICE (V.O.)

Hello?

STEVE

I'm Steve Fried...

The BUZZER starts again. Rapidly, Steve reaches for the door, but he is too late again. Frustrated, he composes himself and then puts his hand on the door as he presses the button.

Before he can utter a word, the door BUZZES again, and he rapidly pushes it open.

INT. SKRULLNOCK ADVERTISING RECEPTION - DAY

WANDA SKRULLNOCK, a cigarette longer than a pencil hanging from her withered lips, wrinkles so deep that NASA would use them for practice landing sites for Moon landings, greets Steve.

WANDA

You got to be fast on that door. Mr. Skrullnock's been expecting you. Juliette, where the hell are you? You're break's over. Get to work.

Wanda moves at a snail's pace, her smoke-ravaged voice like sand paper on your private parts.

Steve, a nervous, questioning look on his face, surveys the office that seems as if it came from an issue of Early American Trash Dump Magazine.

WANDA (CONT'D)

I'll take you to his office.

AL'S OFFICE

Tentatively, Steve follow Wanda into the office, which makes the reception area seem like an operating room in comparison, tacky furniture, papers and magazines strewn around the room.

AL SKRULLNOCK, a fat, dwarf-like creature in his late thirties, bald, greasy mustache, a three-piece suit that looks like it came from the children's section of K-Mart, slithers from behind his desk.

Steve nearly recoils in shock as Al approaches, smoke billowing from either side of the cigarette that hangs from his slimy lips. He waddles to him on his two short legs and presumptuously, and feverishly, shakes Steve's hand.

AL

Steve Friedman! You're just the man
I want to see. I'm Al Skrullnock.

Al nearly shakes Steve's hand off with his own slimy hand.

AL (CONT'D)

Have a seat. Right there.

He points to a leather, actually vinyl, chair that has seen better days. Slowly, reluctantly, Steve takes a seat as Al goes to the large chair behind his desk.

AL (CONT'D)

Let me get right down to it, Steve.
May I call you Steve? Mr. Friedman?

As Steve surveys the office, his eyes fall on an oversized fish tank built into the wall. He looks back to Al, then back to the tank. His eyes go wide when he sees a disembodied fish head float by.

Steve's mouth goes slack with disbelief.

STEVE

Steve's fine.

He then sees a small Moray Eel swim around and eat the rest of the fish.

AL

Good. I like to be on a first name
basis with all my employees.

Steve just stares a quizzical stare at him for a moment. Al lights a non-filtered cigarette and takes a big puff.

AL (CONT'D)

I seen your resume, here, and I think
it's amazing. You was an English
major right?

STEVE

Uh huh.

AL

A teacher too?

Steve just nods, his eyes wide open.

AL (CONT'D)

That means you talk good English,
right?

Steve slowly nods and parrots him.

STEVE

Yeah, I talk good English.

AL

Good. I ain't got no time for that
gutter talk you hear out there from
them darkies and the slants. Our
clients are classy people. They talk
good English too. Like us.

Steve's eyes go wide and his jaw goes slack.

AL (CONT'D)

I'm gonna lay all my cards on the
table, Steve. Skrullnock Advertising
is moving up. My dad -- he's the
senior account executive -- and me,
we got a vision for Skrullnock
Advertising. There's a great new
land called television and radio
advertising out there. And we want
to get our share.

STEVE

Okay.

Al picks up Steve's coffee-stained resume.

AL

After looking at your resume -- and
it's a pretty impressive resume -you
produced television and radio shit
before. And we need that. We need
the kind of brains and creativity
you got. I think you're the one.

STEVE

One what?

AL

My man.

Steve recoils.

STEVE

What do you want me to do?

AL

Stevie, I can see we understand each other.

Steve does a double take.

AL (CONT'D)

I'm gonna fast track you. Take you right to the top. You'll be my new art director. How's that sound?

STEVE

The first day?

AL

I seen your shit. First rate. Best shit I seen in years. Can't believe I got so lucky ain't no one else snapped you up before I did.

STEVE

Me either.

AL

Then it's settled. I'll start you off at twenty thousand a year.

STEVE

Excuse me?

AL

I know that's a lot of money...

STEVE

My salary requirements said thirty-five. And if you think so much of me to promote me to Artistic Director, I think forty is more like it.

A look of shock and almost anger appears on Al's face.

Steve waits for a moment, then stands and turns away.

STEVE (CONT'D)

Thank you for your...

AL

All right, Steve. All right. Thirty-Nine five. My best offer.

STEVE

Forty. Al.

Steve and Al square off in a Mexican standoff.

AL

You drive a hard bargain, Stevie.

Al jumps from behind his desk and races to congratulate Steve on being the newest Art Director at the Skrullnock Advertising Agency.

AL (CONT'D)

It's a pleasure to have you aboard.

Al slams his repulsive excuse for a hand into Steve's.

SKRULLNOCK HALLWAY

Al leads the bewildered Steve down the hall way. He stops at the door right next to his office.

AL

That's the kitchen in there, Steve.

Steve tentatively follows Al into the kitchen.

SKRULLNOCK KITCHEN

The place is almost as repulsive as Al.

AL

There's a shower too. You can use it anytime you want.

Steve curls up his nose when he takes a whiff.

AL (CONT'D)

I'm a great cook, so if you don't want to go down to that slop truck down stairs, you can eat my shit.

Steve looks at him in utter disbelief.

AL (CONT'D)

My dad's a great cook too.

STEVE

What's that smell?

Al looks a little bit uneasy, but smiles broadly.

AL

I had a little accident when I was cooking lunch yesterday. Come on. I'll introduce you to the rest of the Skrullnock Agency staff.

SKRULLNOCK HALLWAY

Al points to a very pretty cheerleader type, JULIETTE, sitting in a small office, almost afraid to look up.

AL

That's my secretary, Juliette. She don't talk much. Juliette, this is the new artistic director, Steve Friedman.

STEVE

Hi, Juliette.

JULIETTE

Hi, Mr. Friedman.

STEVE

Steve.

JULIETTE

Okay, Steve.

AL

Enough of that shit. Get back to work.

They head down the corridor, leaving the flustered Juliette alone.

AL (CONT'D)

You met my mom, Wanda. She's the checker of the accounts.

STEVE

You mean exchequer?

AL

Yeah, checker of the accounts. You got a good vocabulary, Stevie. That's good. I wanted to go to college too, but I started this thing instead.

STEVE

You seemed to have done so well, regardless.

Al points to an empty office.

AL

Thanks. My dad ain't here yet.

Just then, Al's father, NATE, an even more loathsome creature than the son, enters with his nephew, BERNIE, an oafish sort who could be a hit man for the MOB.

AL (CONT'D)

Dad, this is Steve Friedman. Steve,
this is my dad, Nate Skrullnock.

Nate takes Steve's hand and shakes it vehemently, spitting
his greeting through his coffee and cigarette stained teeth.

NATE

Steve, it's good to meet you. When
Al here showed me your resume, I was
completely impressed.

AL

Steve's gonna be our new artistic
director. He's going to run the art
staff.

Nate raises his eyebrow in his son's direction. Then he turns
his attention back to Steve.

NATE

That's great, Steve. I know you'll
whip the art staff into shape real
fast.

AL

That gorilla over there's my cousin,
Bernie. He helps out the business.

Steve reluctantly shake's Bernie's hand.

AL (CONT'D)

Well, I gotta introduce Steve to his
staff.

NATE

Good idea. I got some business to do
with Bernie here.

Al opens a door that has seen better days.

AL

This is the artist's wing.

ARTIST'S WING

Al and Steve enter the barely lit office, which seems more
like a cave, lined with eight well-stocked drawing benches.

AL

You're gonna love it here. I got
major plans for you.

In the back of the room, an enigmatic, troll-like man, JIM, dark, unkempt hair, a bushy beard and mustache, sits alone at one of the drawing benches.

AL (CONT'D)

We got major accounts coming in and you're the man who's gonna make `em work.

For a moment, Steve locks eyes on Jim's. A contemplative, sensitive face stares back at Steve, then Jim turns back to his work.

AL (CONT'D)

Ah, Jim. Jim. Jim. Jim. Jim, this is Steve. Steve Friedman. He's our new, uh, art director. Your new boss.

Steve looks back at the small man in the back of the room, surrounded by stacks of unfinished assignments. Jim looks up from his work for a moment, nods and continues.

Al shows Steve to his desk at the back of the room next to Jim. Al looks at the other desks, then picks one.

AL (CONT'D)

This is the Art Director's desk. The other artists are at... Lunch. Yeah, lunch. They're all at lunch.

Steve spies the clock, which reads 9:30. Al then looks at the same clock.

AL (CONT'D)

They all take lunch early so they can get back to work faster.

Al non-verbally begs agreement from Jim.

AL (CONT'D)

Right, Jim?

Like a tortoise, Jim glances up.

JIM

Uh huh.

Jim goes back to his work as Al beams with satisfaction.

AL

Okay, now, you sit down, make yourself at home here in the artist's wing. Get to know your troops.

Nonplussed, Steve slowly takes a seat, wiping it with his handkerchief first.

STEVE

Okay.

AL

Don't be too hard on your new boss,
Jim. Heh heh.

JIM

Uh huh.

AL

Glad to see you two are getting along
so well. I got some shit to do.
Welcome again, Steve.

STEVE

Thanks.

Al slithers away as Steve extends his hand to greet Jim.

STEVE (CONT'D)

Nice to meet you, Jim.

Jim barely look up.

JIM

Uh huh.

Steve retracts his hand when, from outside the artist's wing, Al's Voice slices through the air.

AL (O.S.)

Wanda! They're towing my car again!
Juliette! Why didn't you remind me
about the street cleaner again!

SKRULLNOCK RECEPTION

Wanda, spitting out cigarette smoke and coffee, shakes her head.

WANDA

What a putz.

ARTIST'S WING

A broad smile appears on Jim's Cheshire Cat-like face.

AL (O.S.)

Wanda! They're towing my car!

With an uncanny imitation of Gregory Peck as Captain Ahab, Jim bellows.

JIM

Men! Have you seen the White Whale?

A stunned look fills Steve's face.

STEVE

Mr. Starbuck!

Jim smiles broadly at Steve as if he has found a best friend.

Steve sits at his desk, working on something. He and Jim do not speak.

STEVE (CONT'D)

So, when's the rest of the staff
come back?

Jim laughs to himself. Steve joins in.

Suddenly, from O.S. Juliette shrieks and runs past the door, followed shortly by Nate, who stops dead center in the doorway, holding a roll of toilet paper in one hand and holding his pants up with the other.

NATE

Dammit, Juliette! Don't ever come
into that bath...

He looks to Steve and Jim.

NATE (CONT'D)

...Kitchen again without knocking.

The look of shock appears on Steve's face again.

NATE (CONT'D)

You guys are doing some great work
in there. I gotta get back to my...
cooking.

Nate turns and heads away. Moments later, Juliette returns.

JULIETTE

Sorry if I scared you.

She turns back and walks away.

STEVE

What the hell was that?

JIM

Don't ask. But, whatever you do,
don't ever eat anything that comes
out of that bathroom. I mean kitchen.

SKRULLNOCK HALLWAY - LATER

Steve, some art work in hand, goes by the kitchen. As he passes the open door, he recoils and curls up his nose.

Inside, Nate, dressed in a three-piece Krass Brother's suit, slaves over his latest culinary concoction.

NATE

Hey, Steve...

Steve quickly moves on.

ARTIST'S WING - MOMENTS LATER

Steve zips in and takes his seat at his desk.

STEVE

This place is insane.

JIM

Uh huh.

Nate appears at the door with an old dented pot in his hands.

He shouts as if Steve and Jim are deaf.

NATE

I'm glad you two are here! You're
gonna love this!

He blasts in and zeros in on Steve.

NATE (CONT'D)

Taste it! I made it myself! It's
fudge!

Jim seems to try to melt into the desk.

STEVE

I'm getting ready for lunch, Nate.
Maybe next time.

NATE

Okay, but yous guys don't know what
you're missing!

He turns to the door.

NATE (CONT'D)

It's fudge! I made it myself!

Nate leaves.

JIM

If it came out of that room, I'm sure he made it himself.

STEVE

I saw him making it. It's fudge.

JIM

Fudge, huh? Did you happen to see a toilet in the kitchen?

STEVE

Now that you mention it, no. There's a shower.

The blood drains from Steve's face.

STEVE (CONT'D)

You can't be serious. You're kidding! You mean they actually...

JIM

That's right. And nothing grows there anymore.

A beautiful girl walks by, stops in the door, says not one word and moves on.

EXT. SLOP WAGON - DAY

Steve heads toward a small food cart. Jim comes up from behind him and gets in line.

STEVE

So, what's good here?

JIM

Anything that doesn't crawl away.

Jim laughs.

JIM (CONT'D)

It's better than the Skrullnock Diner.

STEVE

How long have you been here?

JIM

My purgatory started three years ago.

They both point to their lunch, pay for it and go to a bus bench.

STEVE

Who was that girl in the...

JIM

Sheba Skrullnock.

STEVE

She's a Skrullnock?

Jim nods, a smirk on his face.

STEVE (CONT'D)

Is she adopted?

JIM

I wish I could say yes. It's Al's sister.

STEVE

That's just creepy. I mean, I thought that family was a genetic experiment that went wrong. But Sheba?

JIM

Makes you wonder.

STEVE

What I don't understand is, I've been here a week. I was hired to do radio and television, and...

JIM

One thing you'll learn is, nothing works the way you think it should in the Skrullnock universe. So, what brought you here?

STEVE

I tried to leave. He offered me too much money. Couldn't turn it down. But my dream is to make movies.

JIM

That's cool. Do I get a free ticket when you make it?

STEVE

Of course.

Steve turns to the door.

NATE

It's fudge! I made this shit myself!

Nate leaves.

JIM

If it came out of that room, I'm sure he made it himself.

STEVE

I saw him making it. It's fudge.

JIM

Fudge, huh? Did you happen to see a toilet in the kitchen?

STEVE

Now that you mention it, no. There's a shower.

The blood drains from Steve's face.

STEVE (CONT'D)

Oh, you can't be serious. You're kidding! You mean they actually...

JIM

That's right. And nothing grows there anymore.

INT. STEVE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Steve sits at his desk, typing away. The clock on the desk reads: 11:30PM.

EXT. MARKET STREET - DAY

Steve, a huge pastry in his mouth, and a stack of magazines under his arm. He enters the advertising agency building.

INT. ARTIST'S WING - DAY

Steve enters and his eyes fall on a stack of new work sitting at his desk. Jim nods as he works away on a logo.

STEVE

Do you believe this guy?

JIM

Yes.

Steve checks things out.

STEVE

We can barely keep up with the quality work, and he stacks schlock up on my desk. That's it.

Steve heads out.

JIM

You're not going to kill him, are you?

Steve shakes his head and bolts out.

JIM (CONT'D)

We can only hope.

AL'S OFFICE

Steve barges in, to find Al slamming down some miserable concoction.

STEVE

What the hell do you think you're doing?

AL

Stevie! Don't you knock?

STEVE

Jim and I can't do this without help.

AL

Awe, come on, Stevie...

STEVE

Stop calling me Stevie!

AL

Look. Steve. The money just ain't in the budget. Now, you and Jimmy boy, you just need to work a bit harder.

Steve just glares at him.

AL (CONT'D)

How can I pay you bonuses if I...

STEVE

I'm still waiting for the art staff to return from lunch.

AL

Okay, I'll put an ad out. Tomorrow.

Steve picks up the phone.

STEVE

You can still make today's deadline.

SKRULLNOCK HALLWAY

Steve exits the office and rubs the disgusting slime off his hand.

INT. STEVE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Steve sits at his desk, eating a sandwich and looking at his script. After a moment, of reflection, he begins typing.

INT. SKRULLNOCK ADVERTISING RECEPTION - MORNING

Steve drags himself in the front door and heads for the Artist's Wing.

Sitting on a chair is JOAN, a girl with a glazed look in her eyes, a terrible complexion, an anorectic body and an Orphan Annie haircut.

STEVE

Wanda, who's that?

WANDA

Your new artist. Joan. My lamebrain son hired her.

Steve walks up to Joan.

STEVE

May I see your portfolio?

JOAN

What's that?

Steve looks back incredulously at Wanda who lights another cigarette off the almost smoked one.

STEVE

Do you have any experience?

JOAN

I used to doodle a lot.

STEVE

One minute.

AL'S OFFICE

Steve barges in to find Al on the phone.

STEVE

That's the best you can do?

AL

I'll call you back. What are you talking about?

STEVE

The creature in the hallway?

AL

Oh. Joan. Cute kid. You needed help.

STEVE

Qualified help?

AL

Look, Steve, just hire her. For the day. You know, to, uh, help out. You can always fire her after you get a couple of hours of free work out of her.

STEVE

What?

AL

You know, just till you find someone better.

STEVE

But you can't do that, Al. She'll think she's really hired. You can't just hire someone in an emergency and then fire them when it's over.

SKRULLNOCK HALLWAY

Steve exits the office and looks to the place where Joan sat.

STEVE

Wanda, where is she?

WANDA

Who?

STEVE

Joan?

WANDA

With Jim.

ARTIST'S WING

Steve enters. Joan sits at Steve's desk.

STEVE

Joan, that's my desk.

Joan looks around for a moment.

JOAN

Oh.

She just sits.

STEVE

You need to get up. That's my seat.

JOAN

Oh.

STEVE

Jim, can you find something for Joan to do? I have to go to the printers.

A look of exasperation covers Jim's face.

STEVE (CONT'D)

Art director's privilege.

After a moment, Jim gets up and moves Joan over to another desk. Steve grabs some work and leaves the office. The clock on the wall reads: 9:30AM.

INT. ARTIST'S WING - LATER

Steve enters the office and finds Jim, a look of greater exasperation on his face, and Joan, doodling at her desk.

Steve looks at the clock, which reads: 2:30PM.

Slowly, he walks to his desk and spies Joan's work as he goes. He looks down to find that all she's accomplished is a doodle that bears no resemblance to the task.

She plays with a circular template, bending it nearly beyond the breaking point.

Steve sits at his desk.

Joan breaks the template, sending its pieces flying across the room.

JOAN

I, uh, broke this. Sorry.

JIM

It's okay, Joan.

Jim glares at Steve, who slowly rises from his seat.

STEVE

Joan, may I have a word with you?

JOAN

Okay.

Steve takes her by the arm and leads her out of the Artist's Wing.

SKRULLNOCK HALLWAY

Joan stares up at Steve, her eyes pools of need.

STEVE

Joan, it's nothing personal. It's just that Al shouldn't have hired you in the first place.

JOAN

Okay.

STEVE

See, the kind of pressure we're under demands a trained artist, not someone who's willing to be trained. And I really don't have time to train you because all the work has to be done yesterday. You understand?

Joan stands silently staring up at him.

STEVE (CONT'D)

You really don't want Jim and me to do all your work for you, do you?

Steve smiles at her, waiting.

JOAN

I don't see why you and... what's his name?... Jim?... I mean, why can't you do all the work, and I can help?

Steve's jaw goes slack and his eyes go wide.

STEVE

Are you serious?

JOAN

About what?

STEVE

Joan, I don't know what to tell you,
but we just can't use you. I'm sorry.
We appreciate all the work you've
done, but it really is better this
way. For you and us.
Okay? Nothing personal. Okay?

Joan, lacking understanding, turns herself down on the bench
outside the office.

JOAN

I don't understand. I can learn. I'm
sure I can. I can learn.

STEVE

I'm sorry, Joan. It's the way it's
going to be. If you wait right here,
I'll talk to Wanda about getting you
paid for today.

Steve heads down the hallway.

SKRULLNOCK HALLWAY

Steve runs into Al as he exits the Artist's Wing.

AL

Hey, Steve, how's the new broad
working out?

Steve glares at him and leaves the office.

AL (CONT'D)

What I say?

WANDA'S OFFICE

Wanda, working payroll, sits amongst a clutter that would
make Al and Nate proud. The remains of Nate's culinary
handiwork, coin wrappers, gold fillings, and an antique
Woolworth ashtray, overfilled with butts.

Steve enters. Wanda does not look up.

WANDA

What?!

STEVE

Wanda, I just told Joan that,
unfortunately, we can't use her. I
told her you'd cut her a check for
the work she did today.

Wanda leaps from her seat as Steve exits.

WANDA

Now wait a minute!

SKRULLNOCK HALLWAY

Steve heads toward Joan, Wanda hot on his heels.

STEVE

Thanks, Wanda.

WANDA

Did you talk to Al about this?

Steve turns and faces her.

STEVE

Don't have to. I'm the Art Director.

ARTIST'S WING - LATER

Steve and Jim continue to work, as the clock ticks on: 3:30PM. Joan stares at them from the entrance.

STEVE

Is she going to sit there forever?

Jim slowly extricates himself from his desk and goes to Joan, leading her away.

Steve continues his work.

SERIES OF SHOTS:

- A) Steve looks up at the clock: 3:45PM
- B) Steve works on logo.
- C) Steve looks up at the clock again: 4:00PM
- D) Steve paces the office.
- E) the clock again: 4:15PM

A LITTLE LATER

As Jim returns and slips into his desk, his eyes bulging out, Steve looks up at the clock. It reads 4:30PM.

STEVE (CONT'D)

So?

Jim just continues to work. After a moment, Steve leaps from his desk and blasts out of the Artist's Wing.

AL'S OFFICE

Al ogles a Penthouse Magazine, his phone to his ear, talking to someone, as Steve nearly knocks the door off its hinges.

STEVE

Let's get this straight!

Al nearly tears the magazine in two and shoves it under his desk. He is nearly apoplectic.

AL

Steve! Jesus! I was in a meeting...

STEVE

Listen to me. If I'm going to stay here, I'll run the artist's wing. I'll do the hiring and I'll do the firing. Do you understand?

AL

Steve, let's be reasonable...

STEVE

To hell with reasonable! And no free work.

AL

No free...

STEVE

None. Yes or no?

Al takes a moment, but finally puts on his faux face and steps toward Steve.

AL

Okay, Steve. And it's only cause you do good shit.

Al reaches his slimy paw out to Steve.

STEVE

I don't need to shake your hand.

EXT. MARKET STREET - LATER

Steve and Jim exit the office, stop, turn back in unison, glare at the building, turn and walk away in opposite directions.

JIM

You don't sleep.

STEVE

How'd you guess?

JIM

I don't sleep either. What keeps you up?

STEVE

I have a dream.

JIM

The dream. What dream?

STEVE

I want to win an Oscar. I have to get it done. I did the first draft, and the producer told me to make changes. Change it to his way, and I have a deal.

JIM

Wow. I'm impressed.

STEVE

You haven't read it.

JIM

I can tell you're good.

Steve smiles and walks on with Jim.

INT. ARTIST'S WING - DAY

Steve and Jim toil away at their work when Al bursts in with a tiny, nervous-looking man, his head bobbing like a bounce bubble-head doll, MARV MAZURSKY.

AL

Guys! I got someone I want you to meet. This is Marv Mazursky!

MARV

Hi, guys.

AL

Marv's our new account executive. This is a great day for the Skrullnock Advertising agency.

MARV

I really look forward to working with you guys.

AL

Okay. I got a lotta shit to talk to Marv about, so we'll let yous guys get back to work.

Al leads Marv away.

STEVE

I know that name.

JIM

He was hot in advertising back in the early seventies.

STEVE

Where's he been?

JIM

If he's working here, I don't want to think about it. You know, I've been in hell for long enough. Let's get lunch.

SKRULLNOCK HALLWAY

Steve and Jim head toward the exit, when, from Al's office...

NATE (O.S.)

That goddamn Mazursky! I'll fire that son of a bitch!

AL (O.S.)

But you can't do that, dad.

NATE (O.S.)

Oh yeah? I'll fire your ass too!

AL (O.S.)

No you won't!

NATE (O.S.)

Oh yeah? Just watch me!

AL (O.S.)

You destroy worlds!

Steve mouths the words to Jim, who simply shrugs his shoulders. An ominous silence fills the air.

After a moment, the sounds of file cabinets and other furniture crashing around the office explodes through the wall.

AL (CONT'D)

Get away from me! Get away from me!

Others in the office gather around the door as the combat continues within. Sheepishly, Wanda, her ubiquitous cigarette hanging from her withered lips, comes to the door.

WANDA

Now, it's nothing to be worried about.
Just a little father and son
disagreement.

NATE (O.S.)

Come back here, you little bastard!

More crashing and smashing of furniture.

AL (O.S.)

Get away from me!

WANDA

Boys will be boys.

NATE (O.S.)

I'll kill you, you little bastard!

WANDA

You know how it is.

NATE (O.S.)

Slow down, you little shit! I can't
catch you!

The phone in Wanda's office RINGS. Wanda goes to answer it.

WANDA (O.S.)

No, it's nothing to worry about.
We're just moving some furniture
around. Thanks for your concern.

Wanda returns. Steve and Jim look at her questioningly, as the father and son battle continues.

WANDA (CONT'D)

The neighbors called.

Silence from Al's office.

WANDA (CONT'D)

See? Everything's all right.

Another crashing of furniture.

JIM

Round two.

STEVE

Lunch?

JIM

Indeed.

EXT. SLOP WAGON - LATER

Steve and Jim examine the cuisine. The doltish-looking COUNTERMAN looks at them, waiting for the order.

COUNTERMAN

What can I get get'cha?

Jim adopts a Raymond Massey persona.

JIM

Which shall it be?

COUNTERMAN

Huh?

JIM

Which shall it be, Passworthy? All the universe, or nothingness?

COUNTERMAN

Look, you want something or not?

STEVE

I think he wants nothingness.

COUNTERMAN

Oh, Beef Stroganoff.

Jim just rolls his eyes and nods as the Counterman loads up the container.

INT. AL'S OFFICE - DAY

Al sits at his desk, reading a smut mag as Nate barges in.

NATE

Where's Steve?

Al jumps out of his skin and tosses the magazine out the window.

EXT. STREET - CONTINUOUS

Steve and Jim watch as the magazine floats to the ground.

INT. AL'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Al leaps to his feet.

AL

I don't know, dad! Lunch! Don't you knock?

NATE

Lunch? That's the first day in like three weeks that loser goes to lunch?

AL

He's allowed to go to lunch.

NATE

Yeah, he's allowed to go to lunch, but he ain't been going to lunch. That means we lost an hour of free work today. That's five hours a week of extra work we can get out of him if we load him up at the last minute.

The light bulb goes off above Al's head.

EXT. STREET - LATER

Steve and Jim finish their lunch.

JIM

That's the first time you've had lunch in weeks. Nate's noticed.

STEVE

Just don't have an appetite in there.

Jim laughs.

STEVE (CONT'D)

I never asked you. Why do you stay?

JIM

Why do you?

Al sticks his head out the window of the office.

AL

I'm not paying you to sit around and bullshit! Now get to work!

JIM

I guess our lunch forty-five minutes is over.

STEVE

You never answer all the important questions.

JIM

You never asked any important questions before.

INT. TRAIN - DAY

Steve sleeps as the train rolls down the tracks. Slowly, he opens his eyes.

ANNOUNCER (V.O.)

Thirtieth Street Station.

Slowly, reluctantly, Steve rises from his seat.

INT. STEVE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Steve reclines in his bed, the manuscript on his lap, a glass of soda. He goes through the manuscript, once in a while making a correction.

INT. ARTIST'S WING - DAY

Steve sits at his desk and looks up at the clock, which reads 12:00PM, as Jim leaves the office.

JIM

Want me to bring you something?

STEVE

Go have lunch.

JIM

Okay, but you're going to miss some pretty crappy food.

STEVE

That might be the best thing I've heard all day.

As soon as Jim leaves, Al barges in and dumps some work on Steve's desk.

STEVE (CONT'D)

What the hell is this?

AL

A really important account, Stevie.

STEVE

Like all the other *important* accounts?

AL

This is *really* important.

STEVE

You think because I stayed over lunch to get done the not-so-nearly as important account that I'll drop everything to do this thing?

AL

Stevie, come on.

STEVE

Are you insane?

AL

You're the best artist in the City. They requested you.

STEVE

If I'm the best artist in the City, why am I working here?

AL

What?

STEVE

Nothing. No. I won't do it. In fact, I'm starving. I'm going to lunch.

AL

I'll make you lunch.

STEVE

Now you are crazy.

AL

But, Stevie...

Steve gathers his things together.

STEVE

The guy downstairs makes a great Beef Stroganoff.

AL

But, Stevie, I promised. I gave my word!

STEVE

I know your game. You think because I've worked through lunch most of the time, that I'll do it all the time.

AL

Stevie...

STEVE

You think you'll get an extra five hours out of me? Forget it.

AL

But what are we gonna do? I promised these big guys they could have a whole catalog delivered tomorrow morning. What am I gonna do with this job?

Steve slowly walks back to Al, who starts to smile a bit as if he thinks Steve will do it.

STEVE

Well, I guess you're going to have to take this back to these Big Guys, bend over and spread your cheeks a little farther, won't you?

AL

What?

STEVE

Or you could just go back to your client with the job and a jar of Vaseline.

EXT. STREET - DAY

Steve sits next to Jim.

STEVE

Why do the Skrullnocks do these ridiculous kinds of things?

JIM

You have to ask?

STEVE

Seriously, Jim, they take their few reputable clients for granted and make impossible delivery dates on hideous projects for no money to crooked politicians and deadbeats who don't pay them after the job is delivered anyway!

JIM

There's actually a very simple explanation. If you're interested.

STEVE

Absolutely!

(MORE)

STEVE (CONT'D)

As long as I'm working here, I might as well try to understand why these people are so self-destructive. I mean, maybe my sensibilities are just too highly developed, but I've never met people like these!

JIM

I've been doing their dirty work on a lot of these jobs for almost three years now. And if, sometimes, the things they do and say seem erratic or irrational or insensitive, or even downright disgusting, well, like I said, there's a really very logical reason for it.

STEVE

Yeah?

JIM

They're assholes!

Both men burst into laughter.

JIM (CONT'D)

I've been meaning to ask you something.

STEVE

Okay.

JIM

We're buried in work, and they keep dumping more shit on us. Any chance we can get competent help? I'm drowning.

STEVE

I keep asking Al to get us some help. But I'll tell you. I'm scared to see what they bring in.

INT. SKRULLNOCK HALLWAY - LATER

Steve and Jim enter the office and head for the Artist's Wing. Sitting outside is a hobbit-like creature with sensitive eyes. MURL sits with her portfolio on her lap. Jim heads right into the Artist's Wing.

STEVE

I'm Steve.

MURL

Murl.

STEVE

May I see your book?

She hands it to him. Steve flips through it.

STEVE (CONT'D)

I'll be right back.

AL'S OFFICE

The door opens and Steve enters to find Al reading a smut magazine. Shocked, he tosses it out the window.

AL

Steve! Don't you knock?

STEVE

No. Who is that?

AL

Who?

STEVE

The lady outside the Artist's Wing.

Al waddles over to the door and opens it a bit.

He looks down the hall to Murl.

Al's eyes go wide as he spies Murl. Al closes the door.

AL

She's ugly.

STEVE

Who cares? Who is she?

AL

Murl. I think? She's an artist.

STEVE

You interviewed her?

AL

No. No way. That's your job. Like we agreed.

He shows Al Murl's book.

STEVE

You didn't see this? She's good.

AL

Well, you know, hire her. At least we get a free day's work out of her. She's too ugly to waste good money on.

Steve looks nonplussed with every slimy word.

STEVE

Bullshit! No free work.

AL

Stevie...

STEVE

I'll interview her. And I'll hire her. Do you understand?

AL

Now wait a minute! My dad...

STEVE

I'm the Art Director, not your dad.

Steve leaves the office and Wanda enters.

WANDA

It's amazing how strong your spine is, son.

AL

Look, ma. We'll jerk her paycheck around later on. She'll never know.

WANDA

Yeah, that'll work.

SKRULLNOCK HALLWAY

Steve bolts down the hallway.

STEVE

Come with me, Murl.

ARTIST'S WING

Steve leads the somewhat bewildered Murl into the Artist's Wing.

STEVE

Jim. Murl. Murl. Jim.

Steve begins to pile work onto Murl's desk. Still a bit shocked, Murl sits and begins to work.

SERIES OF SHOTS:

- A) Jim works a design. Looks over to Murl as she works.
- B) The clock arms move rapidly across the face.
- C) Steve works at his desk, oversees the other two.
- D) The clock moves rapidly at first, then slows.

Nate marches into the Artist's Wing, his ubiquitous cigarette butt clinging precariously to his lower lip. He goes behind Jim and leans over his shoulder, much to Jim's displeasure as he begins to grind his teeth.

As he examines Jim's work, he belches.

Steve and Murl glare at him.

NATE

Listen, yous guys.

Nate takes a Jeweler's loop from his pocket and stands in the middle of the room.

NATE (CONT'D)

We've got a big emergency coming up this afternoon. You may have to stay late to finish it.

STEVE

What kind of emergency, Nate?

NATE

It's a little ad for a premium company.

He squints through the jeweler's loop at a lump of golden metal.

NATE (CONT'D)

Lots of prices to be changed. They buy gold coins, samurai swords, silver and gold shit.

STEVE

How big is this ad?

NATE

Uh, it's a full page.

Steve considers for a moment.

STEVE

We'll do our best. Jim, Murl, I agreed to do it. You don't have to stay.

Nate puts his slimy claw on Steve's shoulder.

NATE

That's sweet, Steve. But I don't give a good goddamn who does it! You can stick that fat broad with it if you want to! Just so long as it's on that nine-thirty bus to Atlantic City tonight!

Still smiling, he peels his slimy claw from Steve's shoulder sticks his cigarette back into his mouth. Nate scampers out the door and down the hallway. Steve looks to his shoulder.

STEVE

Yuck! Now what?

JIM

Get your conga costumes, kids! We've got to do something to save the show!

Murl continues to stare at the door.

STEVE

You can't take a handful of men against an entire Apache nation, Sergeant! It's suicide.

JIM

The army changed you, Joe. You went away a boy and came back a man!

STEVE

Trouble and I are old enemies, Tad. We understand each other.

MURL

That man's a pig!

JIM

The lady has taste.

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

Steve, Jim and Murl exit the den of iniquity. They all look at each other with a distant, thousand yard stare, then up at the office on the second floor, then part without a word.

INT. STEVE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Steve paces the room with the manuscript in hand.

INT. ARTIST'S WING - DAY

Steve and his team work hard on their assignments as Al and Nate burst into the office with Marv on their heels. Al tosses a design on Steve's desk.

STEVE

So the client approved it?

AL

Yeah. They approved it.

A long pause passes.

AL (CONT'D)

Change it. Make it better.

STEVE

But why? If the client signed off on it, why change it?

NATE

Because the client don't know his ass from a hole in the ground.

JIM

There seems to be a lot of that going around.

STEVE

My thoughts exactly.

AL

Now, make it better.

NATE

We both know that yous guys can do better shit than this. I mean, we both know that you just threw that piece of shit together. Now, you'll have time to really design something good. Great, in fact.

Smoke steams from Steve's eyes and ears.

STEVE

I don't know about you, but Jim and I spent the past weekend working our asses off to produce the best design we could think of!

(MORE)

STEVE (CONT'D)

And for the record, I don't turn in work for client approval unless I'm proud of it!

AL

Take it easy, Stevie. All Nate means is...

STEVE

I know what Nate means!

NATE

Hold on there, Stevie...

STEVE

Forget it!

NATE

Now, look, son, all I meant is that I seen a lot of shit produced in my years in this business.

STEVE

Where? In your kitchen?

NATE

And your shit is better than most of it.

STEVE

Well, thank you ever so much, Nate. Everything's just fine now.

AL

Great! Now, redesign that shit!

STEVE

Are you serious?

AL

Do I look serious?

STEVE

Absolutely.

Al, Nate and Marv exit in order.

STEVE (CONT'D)

Is it me?

JIM

No. They're assholes.

MURL

And idiots.

EXT. STREET - DAY

Al pulls up to the front door in his car. He pulls a box from the back of his car and bolts into the office.

INT. ARTIST'S WING - LATER

Nearly apoplectic, Al blasts in the office and drops the brochures on the floor and just stands there, red-faced.

STEVE

Well, how'd they like the changes, Al?

AL

I'm gonna have to *eat this job!*

Steve, Jim and Murl can barely contain themselves. Steve picks up the bill on top of the box.

STEVE

You printed ten thousand full-color brochures without getting the client's approval?

JIM

There is a god.

In a daze, Al stands like a statue, a sweating statue.

STEVE

Now what, Al?

AL

Bernie! Bernie! Get in here, you idiot!

After a moment, Bernie sheepishly enters.

BERNIE

Yeah, Al?

AL

You moron! Your Jerkoff! You asshole! Why didn't you get the client's approval before we printed this shit? Do you know how much this is going to cost me?

BERNIE

But you told me not to worry about the client, Al. Don't you remember?

AL

It's all your fault, you asshole!
If it wasn't for me, you'd all starve!
If it wasn't for me, you'd all be
working in some stinking sweat shop
right now!

Steve, Jim and Murl look around the hovel that is the Artist's Wing.

BERNIE

I'm sorry, Al. I'm sorry. It's all
my fault. I'm sorry. I'm really
sorry.

Al throws up his hands and bolts from the office, with Bernie spitting AD LIB Mea culpas as he goes.

MURL

They're not human.

Jim first, busts out laughing, and finally Steve, then Murl.

INT. SKRULLNOCK HALLWAY - DAY

Steve heads toward the artist's wing. With his ever-present Cheshire Cat smile on his face, Marv follows him into the artist's wing.

ARTIST'S WING

Steve heads for his desk. Marv stands at the door, his head bobbing the whole time.

STEVE

Can I help you, Marv?

For a moment, he just stands in the doorway, bobbing his head.

MARV

Perhaps you can help me.

STEVE

If I can.

MARV

Perhaps we can set up a meeting. To
discuss a good time for a meeting.
About the project?

Steve, Murl and Jim exchange questioning glances.

STEVE

Sure, Marv.

MARV

Splendid!

STEVE

When, Marv?

MARV

When, what?

STEVE

When do you want to meet about setting up a meeting, or whatever you said?

MARV

Oh, yeah, whenever.

STEVE

Great. I'll see you then.

Steve and the others go back to work. Marv simply stands in the doorway, his head bobbing, his face grinning.

MARV

But, whatever it is, it's absolutely imperative that you put forth your best effort on this project. It's such a special job that it calls for a... A little jewel.

STEVE

Okay, Marv.

Slowly, still bobbing and grinning, Marv turns. After a moment, he leaves.

STEVE (CONT'D)

Did that just happen? Did he ask for a meeting to discuss setting up a meeting?

JIM

That dog has got to be destroyed, Tad. He'd turned sheepkiller!

INT. STEVE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Steve sleeps with the manuscript strewn all over the bed.

EXT. STREET - MORNING

Steve buttons up against the brutal winter cold as a snow storm beats him back as he makes his way to the office. As he walks past some street people, his heart gets the better of him, and he hands one of them some money.

INT. SKRULLNOCK RECEPTION - MOMENTS LATER

Steve nods at Wanda, who barely notices him.

ARTIST'S WING

Jim and Murl are already working.

STEVE

I don't know which is worse, the weather or working here.

Before Steve can reach his desk, Nate comes barging in brandishing a silver candlestick in each hand.

NATE

Look! You know what these things are?

STEVE

Stolen from the church down the street?

NATE

Funny guy. Very funny. Look, I'm trying to learn yous guys something. Pay attention. Now, seriously, yous know what these are?

The three of them simply stare at him.

NATE (CONT'D)

All right. I'll tell you. They're not solid silver!

JIM

They're not?

Picks up the phone.

JIM (CONT'D)

Get my broker on the phone! I've been taken!

He drops the phone on the cradle.

NATE

Listen, yous guys. I'm trying to `lighten you.

STEVE

Thanks, Nate. I'm sure I speak for the rest of us here when I say that...

NATE

It's NOT solid silver! It's silver plate! Silver plate! Silver plate!

JIM

I didn't know you spoke French, Nate.

Nate fails to comprehend.

NATE

Ah, forget it! I'll show you what I mean! Be right back. You're gonna love it.

STEVE

Not more fudge, I hope.

NATE

What?

STEVE

I don't want any. Jim does. But only if you made it yourself.

JIM

Thanks, buddy. I'll pass.

NATE

Awe, yous guys are always kidding around. I'll be back. Yous are going to love it.

JIM

We're gonna love it.

From down the hall, Bernie SHRIEKS O.C.

BERNIE (V.O.)

Oh my god! Al! Al!

AL'S OFFICE

The eel floats upside down in the tank.

BERNIE

The eel died!

ARTIST'S WING

The three artists turn to each other.

JIM

The eel died?

MURL

The eel died?

STEVE

Does that mean that Wanda's pregnant?

JIM

I believe so, Mr. Starbuck.

MURL

That's disgusting.

STEVE

She's right, Jim. Can you imagine how awful a baby Skrullnock must be?

JIM

Perhaps that's why the eel's dead. Committed suicide over the thought of marrying into the Skrullnock family.

From the hallway, a SHRIEK startles them. Juliette, still screaming, runs past the door. On her heels, Al chases her, wagging the dead eel in front of him.

Moments later, still screaming, Juliette runs into the Artist's Wing and runs behind Steve's desk, shielding herself from the eel-toting moron. Al roars with laughter.

STEVE

Give it a rest, Al. Why don't you act like a human, instead of like your nearest relative there.

He points to the eel.

AL

You don't think that was funny?

STEVE

I'm rolling on the floor. Get out.

Still laughing, Al exits the office. Moments later, Juliette slips out.

EXT. STREET - LATER

Steve, Jim and Murl head for the lunch cart.

MURL

Eating here makes me feel like I'm eating in the Skrullnock bathroom-- kitchen.

JIM

It doesn't matter where you eat,
Murl. It all tastes the same after
you've worked here long enough.

Jim glances upward.

JIM (CONT'D)

What's that idiot doing now?

MURL

Oh my god.

Steve turns his gaze upward to see Al and Nate hanging out the office window. Al swings the eel in a large arc. From the other window, Bernie and Wanda hang. All four cackle in a preternatural way.

SERIES OF SHOTS:

- A) Slowly, inexorably, the eel flies.
- B) Steve, Jim and Murl, slack-jawed, watch the eel.
- C) The Counterman opens a hot dog roll and prepares to place a dog on it.
- D) A patron anxiously waits for his hot dog.
- E) Al launches the eel into the air, head over tail.
- F) Steve, Jim and Murl, their gaze arcs over.
- G) The eel flops down on the bun, freaking everyone out.

Steve, Jim and Murl, their faces go blank. In unison, they do an about face and walk away. Moments later, the entire line does the same thing.

INT. AL'S OFFICE - LATER

Al leaps from his desk as a comely young blond, BARBIE, enters the office.

AL

Barbie, Barbie, Barbie. I can't
tell you what a pleasure it is to
see you again.

Al, with bedroom eyes, takes Barbie's hand in his. She recoils slightly.

BARBIE

How've you been, Al?

AL

I'm great. Skrullnock Advertising
is, well, we're exploding!

Barbie extricates her hand from his and wipes it on her dress.

AL (CONT'D)

The artists are working their asses
off to keep up with all the work we
got. Where are my manners? Take a
seat. Want something to drink?

Barbie slowly sits, looking at the filthy chair as she does.

BARBIE

I'm fine, Al. Thank you.

AL

How long has it been, Barbie?

BARBIE

Not long enough, Al.

AL

What?

BARBIE

It can never be too long for... old
friends.

AL

You know that, sister. You came at
the perfect time. We need a confident
artist.

BARBIE

You mean competent?

AL

Yeah, confident. Like I said. Wait
here. I'm going to talk to the head
of the Art Department.

BARBIE

Okay, Al.

Al bolts from his desk and heads for the door.

AL

Make yourself to home.

ARTIST'S WING

Al enters.

AL

Stevie, I need to talk to you.

STEVE

What now, Al?

AL

I hired my ex-girlfriend to be an artist here.

STEVE

You hired what?

Steve looks to the others, questioningly.

JIM

I guess anyone can have a girlfriend.

STEVE

She's your ex-girlfriend? And you hired her without my approval?

AL

She's good, Stevie. Really good. As good as you.

STEVE

Really? Well, Al, why don't you give her my job?

Al thinks about it.

AL

Nah. You're the best. But seriously. She's great. Just give her a chance.

Nate comes blasting in with what looks like tin foil.

NATE

See! I told you! I smashed those candlesticks with a ball-peen hammer and peeled off the plate! See! It's valuable, I'm telling you!

Nate tries to smooth out the thin, dullish metal.

NATE (CONT'D)

I can't wait to find out what it's worth! I told you guys you were gonna love it!

Nate picks up the phone and quickly dials, a look of avarice plastered across his face.

NATE (CONT'D)

Ira, it's Nate. Nate Skrullnock. I did it! Yeah! I love it! The candlesticks I bought off you! Yeah! How much is it worth? Yeah, I weighed it! You think I'm stupid? It's two and a half ounces of plate silver!

Nate's face goes ashen, his mouth slack. The ubiquitous cigarette falls from his slimy lips.

NATE (CONT'D)

Thirty-two dollars? But I paid you eighty-five dollars for the candlesticks. You mean, they were worth more as...

Red-faced, Nate sheepishly glances at the Artists.

NATE (CONT'D)

Ira, I gotta go. I'll call you right back. Yeah, a big deal just came in.

After hanging up, he gathers up his silver.

STEVE

You were right, Nate. We love it

The staff does what it can not to laugh until Nate slips out of the Artist's Wing. Trickle of laughter begin until...

NATE (O.S.)

Wanda! Wanda! I got taken again!

The artists burst into laughter.

EXT. SKRULLNOCK ADVERTISING - NIGHT

The sun has set, but the lights are still on.

INT. ARTIST'S WING - CONTINUOUS

The crew works diligently. Steve looks over Barbie's shoulder.

STEVE

Al was right about one thing.

BARBIE

Which was?

STEVE

You really are a good artist.

BARBIE

Thanks, Steve.

STEVE

You know what? We've spent too much time in Skrullnock land. Let's get out of here. Dinner's on me.

Without a word, Murl and Jim grab their coats and head for the door.

INT. BAR - LATER

Steve, Murl, Jim and Barbie, laughing, sit around a table full of food.

BARBIE

He told me he lived a few blocks above Market Street. It was his swinging bachelor pad. Very fashionable and close to work.

MURL

The thought of his swinging bachelor pad makes me want to vomit.

STEVE

So where was it?

BARBIE

You sitting down?

They all look incredulously. Barbie builds the suspense.

JIM

You know, if you take too long, I'm going to lose interest.

BARBIE

He lives in his office.

STEVE

I was wondering why it smelled so bad in there.

MURL

There's something I don't understand. I mean, you're what they call a beautiful woman.

BARBIE

Thank you, Murl.

MURL

But, what I want to know is whatever inspired you to go out with a slug like him in the first place.

BARBIE

I was young. Needed a job. Al hired me. Paid me a fortune.

JIM

I wonder why.

BARBIE

Yeah, well, I couldn't turn it down. The holidays came along and the Skrullnocks had a New Years party.

JIM

They had New Years parties?

BARBIE

Back then, they did. Anyway, I got a bit tipsy.

STEVE

How tipsy.

BARBIE

Kinda hooked up with Al?

Without hesitation or warning, Murl hurls onto her plate.

MURL

Sorry.

Just then, Al walks up.

AL

Hey, Wanda told me yous guys came here for a bite to eat.

He looks at Murl's plate.

AL (CONT'D)

Is that on the menu? Looks great.

Once again, Murl hurls as a waitress walks by.

AL (CONT'D)

Oh, must be from the chuck wagon. Can I get a menu? I'm starving. Mind if I join you?

The group, em masse, protests.

STEVE
Got to get back to
work, Al.

BARBIE
Sorry, Al. Too much to
do.

JIM
I already have an upset
stomach.

MURL
I feel sick.

STEVE
You enjoy, Al.

AL
Thanks. I'll see yous guys back at
the office bright and early tomorrow.

INT. STEVE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Steve binds up the copy of the script. He then puts it in an envelope and places the address label on the front. He then crawls into bed.

INT. AL'S OFFICE - MORNING

Al, looking like crap, pours over a bunch of magazines. Nate enters.

NATE
Is that asshole coming today?

AL
Muscles? Yeah! He's coming.

NATE
What do you have for him?

AL
I'm working on it.

ARTIST'S WING

The nondescript SOUNDS of conspiracy resound through the walls from Al's office.

STEVE
Jesus Christ, do they ever stop?

JIM
I wonder what jewel they're cooking
up in their kitchen.

STEVE
You mean bathroom?

Murl rolls over to her trash can.

BARBIE

Keep that away from Al.

The outer door opens O.S.

AL (O.S.)

Muscles Lamarr! Good to see you again.

LAMARR (O.S.)

I'm sure it is.

Steve and Jim toss their pens into the air.

STEVE

Not again.

JIM

Save me.

BARBIE

What's a Muscles Lamarr?

STEVE

Shall I be spokesman?

Jim nods. Steve moves to a stack of old ads.

STEVE (CONT'D)

Spa World -- owner Muscles Lamarr...

BARBIE

Does he have a first name?

JIM

This we do not know.

STEVE

...Spa World is one of Skrullnock Advertising's two biggest clients.

He pulls out an ad with of an overweight woman, twenty pounds of chopped liver, in a cheap gold bikini.

STEVE (CONT'D)

With ads like...

He points to the writing.

STEVE (CONT'D)

If you want to get into her body, you'd better get into yours first.

MURL

Where's my bucket?

STEVE

What's really funny is, Al loves Muscles, but Lamarr despises Al.

JIM

And he's also the only adman in town who's taller than him.

STEVE

Works with him on every ad campaign. Mostly cause he has no intension of ever paying Al.

Al bursts into the office.

AL

Uh... I was up all night working in the... office.

STEVE

Is that so? How was the bedroom? I mean office?

AL

I couldn't do what I wanted to do last night cause I spent the entire time doing your job!

STEVE

Okay, what did you come up with?

Al throws a copy of Advertising Age magazine onto Steve's desk. It is already marked up. It is a reprint of a Volkswagon ad from 1969. It reads: IT'S UGLY, BUT IT GETS YOU THERE.

AL

Do you think that'll make a good ad?

All the artists look at him incredulously.

STEVE

I think it already did, Al.

AL

Yeah, that's just what I mean!

STEVE

Huh?

AL

It's brilliant! It's just perfect for Spa World. Just perfect!

STEVE

Let me see if I get this. You want me to comp up a campaign that says, "She's ugly, but she gets you there?"

AL

No! No! No! It should say: "She's beautiful but she gets you there!"

He points at his crotch. The entire artist staff goes mute with shock.

AL (CONT'D)

Ain't that great?

The rest of the artists snicker in the b.g.

STEVE

Yeah, Al, it's wonderful.

Standing at the door is an old man, OSCAR TUSHMAN, whose face seems to be perpetually on the verge of sliding off his neck.

OSCAR

Al?

AL

Oscar! Oscar Tushman! What are you doing here?

OSCAR

You called me.

AL

That's right! Come into my office. I got some work for you.

Al ushers Oscar out of the office.

AL'S OFFICE

Al takes his place behind his desk.

AL

This is a rush job, Oscar. Top priority!

OSCAR

Okay, Al.

AL

And I want it at cost!

OSCAR

Cost?

AL

Right, cost!

ARTIST'S WING

Steve and the others listen in shock.

AL'S OFFICE

Oscar seems perplexed.

OSCAR

But, Al, if I do it for cost...

AL

Listen, you moron, my keeping this account depends on this job! I don't want you to make one cent of profit! And that goes for the next job too! I promised my client that he could have it for less than the printer's actual cost!

OSCAR

But if I charge you less than it actually costs me, if I lose money on every job, how can I stay in business?

AL

I'll make it up to you in volume!

ARTIST'S WING

All four are in shock. They all mouth the words: Volume.

EXT. SKRULLNOCK ADVERTISING - DAY

Snow fills the sky as Steve enters the front door.

INT. WANDA'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Steve walks by Wanda, head encased in cigarette smoke, and hears Al on the phone.

AL (O.S.)

So, you want the ads to project an affluent, exciting, established image to the world. I got the perfect idea... yeah, yeah, yeah, the contest.

Steve shoots a glare at Wanda, who puffs on her cigarette, then lights one off the other. Steve heads towards the artist's wing.

ARTIST'S WING

Jim and Murl barely notice Steve's entrance. Steve heads for his chair.

STEVE

I get the feeling that this is going to be...

Al blasts into the Artist's Wing with Nate hot on his heels. A moment later, Bernie slips in, but remains silent.

AL

Whatever you got going, stop it!
Rush job!

NATE

Very important!

They all ignore them, and go back to their work.

AL

I need your attention.

NATE

This is unique. Very unique.

STEVE

Something's either unique or not.
It can't be very unique.

AL

He's so smart, that guy. Write that down, pop. But listen yous guys. Wall to Wall Floor Covering World hired us to do their ads.

NATE

Fuck that shit. Listen. Wall to Wall Floor Covering World wants a new way to sell their shit. They want to passionately project...

STEVE

...An affluent, exciting, established image to the world.

AL

It's like he read our minds! I was smart to hire this man.

Nate pulls up a big piece of paper with a half-assed, barely legible sketch on it.

Steve looks at it. All of them go slack-jawed.

STEVE

A sweepstakes?

AL

Yeah.

STEVE

An all-expense-paid vacation for one to Toad Suck Park, Tennessee for two weeks? That's your brilliant idea?

AL

See, pop, even Stevie thinks it's a great idea.

Nate pulls out a coffee-stained piece of loose leaf paper.

NATE

Here's the spice: This weekend, make her dreams come true. At Wall to Wall Floor Covering World, have we got a deal for you! So, ladies, this weekend don't you let your hubby sleep... Get him up and come see us and we'll sell you carpet cheap!

Al grabs the paper from Nate.

AL

So, girls, grab your guy... guys, grab your girl... and swing on down to the cheapest prices in town.

NATE

At Wall to Wall Floor
Covering World!

AL

At Wall to Wall Floor
Covering World!

The artists stare in disbelief.

AL (CONT'D)

What do you think?

JIM

Some of the best work I've ever seen.

NATE

Al thought it up himself. So, he's going to go down as the producer. I hope you understand.

STEVE

I'm fine with that, Nate.

AL

Another jewel of mine are these cards.

He passes them out to the staff.

AL (CONT'D)

It's a scratch and sniff card. It's up to an extra fifty percent off hidden under the scratch-and-sniff.

STEVE

How many fifty percent cards are there?

NATE

That's the beauty. Al's always thinking. All of the cards say one percent.

The Skrulnocks look like they're the smartest people on the planet.

EXT. SKRULLNOCK ADVERTISING - DAY

Amidst a torrential snowstorm, Steve heads towards the door. Jim and Murl meet him, coming from the other side.

JIM

Do we have to go in?

MURL

We can stay here. It's not that cold.

STEVE

What do you guys think?

MURL

You're the boss, Steve. You can tell us it's ok to go home.

JIM

We can walk in the snow.

STEVE

I'd love to tell you to go.

He opens the door and enters, with the others slinking in behind him.

INT. WANDA'S OFFICE - DAY

Wanda does not even look up. Voices BOOM from Al's office.

BERNIE (O.S.)

Well, I don't know, Al.

AL (O.S.)

Well, I mean, it's the same amount of money! But it's much farther away! Isn't it?

BERNIE (O.S.)

Well, sure it is, Al.

AL (O.S.)

Yeah! Besides, an all-expense-paid vacation for one in beautiful El Salvador sounds even more romantic than Toad Suck Park, Tennessee!

The door blasts open. Jim and Murl try to slink away toward the Artist's Wing, but Steve stops them.

AL (CONT'D)

There he is! What do you think...

STEVE

I heard, Al. It's brilliant.

BERNIE

He's a genius. And a real romantic, ain't he?

STEVE

A real Einstein.

From the kitchen/bathroom, Nate emerges, holding another grisly treat.

NATE

Yous guys wanna to taste something really unique?

STEVE

Really unique?

NATE

You're gonna love it.

MURL

Somehow, I don't believe that.

JIM

I'm with Murl.

NATE

Come on. Yous guys never eat my shit. It's great shit.

STEVE

No offence intended, but even Jim here said that he wouldn't eat it even if it weren't still breathing.

NATE

Yous guys. One day I'll get you. Oh, Al, not sure about that idea of yours.

AL

But...

STEVE

Not that Al's idea isn't stellar. I have a better idea.

NATE

You do, genius?

STEVE

You could make the contest a heck of lot more exciting and more important to you, you could save a heck of a lot of money.

NATE

We could? How?

STEVE

Why don't you just give the winner a gun, and let them hijack a plane and go to the exotic, exciting country of their choice?

The unholy three exchange vacuous glances for a moment.

AL

That's not a bad idea, Steve. Come on, Dad, Bernie, let's go into my office and discuss it.

The three of them descend into Al's office. After they close the door, slowly, a trickle of laughter starts, moving from Jim, to Murl, to Steve and finally to Wanda, who laughs out smoke.

INT. ARTIST'S WING - LATER

The four artists work on the Wall to Wall Floor Covering World ads as the sound of someone VOMITING fills the void.

JIM

What the hell is that?

Wanda rushes in, mouth agape.

WANDA

Wall to wall vomit!

Steve holds up one of the ads.

STEVE

You have a way with words, Wanda.

WANDA

No! No! I mean, it's wall to wall vomit! In the kitchen!

MURL

What are you talking about?

WANDA

It's Nate! It's Nate!

Another round of VOMIT SOUND. Steve hands Wanda a waste can as Murl picks up one of her own and hurls into it.

BARBIE

That's disgusting.

JIM

Who's next?

MURL

Wall to wall vomit?

STEVE

That about sums it up for us too.

They all go back to work.

WANDA

No! No! No!

STEVE

Sure you do. Doesn't she, Jim?

WANDA

No!!! I mean it's... It's... Wall to wall vomit! In the kitchen!!!

INT. KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Nate on his knees, face first into a waste can full of vomit, as the artists enter.

STEVE

You have a way with words, Wanda.

JIM

There is a god.

Murl hurls on the floor in front of Nate.

BARBIE

There goes my appetite.

INT. TRAIN - DAY

Half asleep, Steve bumps his head against the window and wakes himself up as the train slows to the station platform.

INT. SKRULLNOCK ADVERTISING - LATER

Steve enters in a cloud of smoke as Nate saunters by, sans shirt, oversized boxers, his enormous belly hanging over, penny loafers, mis-matched argyle socks held up by garters.

He flexes for Wanda.

NATE

What do you think, baby?

WANDA

Nothing I ain't seen before.

STEVE

What is wrong with you? Put something on.

Barbie exits the artist's wing and spies Nate's bulbous form.

BARBIE

Oh, Jesus.

NATE

Not bad, huh?

BARBIE

For a man of ninety-five.

NATE

Oh come off it! I know you like it. Al told me.

BARBIE

You people are filth! You're scum! Vermin!!!

Nate recoils a bit and heads toward his office, as Barbie heads back to the artist's wing.

STEVE

You left out assholes.

Steve smiles at Wanda, who lights another cigarette.

ARTIST'S WING - LATER

The artists work silently. Marv slips into the room, humming the tune, SWANEE, his head bobbing like a cork on a wave.

STEVE

Marv?

MARV

Hi.

STEVE

Hi. May I help you?

MARV

Do you know the tune Swanee?

STEVE

I think so.

Steve scans the other bewildered faces in the room.

MARV

Good.

STEVE

Why?

MARV

No particular reason. Do you happen to know the words?

STEVE

Not sure. Jim and I haven't sung it for the Chuckwagon patrons since yesterday.

MARV

Doesn't matter. We'll have to write some new words to it anyway.

STEVE

And why's that, Marv?

MARV

Oh no.

(MORE)

MARV (CONT'D)

You guys will have to just wait and see. What do you think of using a minstrel show to sell a product?

STEVE

Are you serious?

He nods vehemently.

STEVE (CONT'D)

I think a minstrel show is a great idea. For the seventies!

MARV

You do?

STEVE

Yeah, for the eighteen-seventies! For the nineteen-seventies, you must be insane! Or suicidal!

Marv seems shocked and insulted.

MARV

I'm not suicidal!

Marv does an about face and marches out of the room.

JIM

Are you thinking what I'm thinking?

STEVE

I hope not.

Al's Voice BOOMS from O.C.

AL (O.S.)

Wanda! Juliette! They're towing my car again!

Al runs down the hall in his boxers.

EXT. SLOP WAGON - DAY

Jim, Murl, Barbie and Steve get their food and head toward a table off to the side. Like forlorn puppies, they silently eat. Steve seems so alone even with his colleagues.

INT. ARTIST'S WING - DAY

Only Jim is in the office when Steve trudges his way in.

JIM

You have Marv mail on your desk.

STEVE

Good thing I didn't eat breakfast today. Ah, look, it's the meeting we had the other meetings about having. I can't wait.

JIM

Enjoy.

SKRULLNOCK CONFERENCE ROOM

Steve slips into the room which is already inhabited by Nate, Al, Wanda, Bernie and Marv. Bagels pile on a tray in the middle of the table and Nate noshes.

STEVE

Don't I feel outnumbered.

AL

Great! Stevie, you're here! Take a seat! Everyone's here! Great! Now, let's get down to business. Marv, why don't you take over. It's your meeting.

MARV

Hi, everybody. It think you all got memos.

He holds up a brown piece of paper with his chicken scratch written on it.

MARV (CONT'D)

Great. You all got here. Fine. We're all here. I know you're just dying to know why we're here. It's a great thing.

He leans forward and builds the moment.

MARV (CONT'D)

Listen to the name that will be sweeping the country.

Everyone waits. And waits. And waits. Marv then explodes.

MARV (CONT'D)

Swanee Sheen!

Marv waits, his Cheshire Cat smile grown to full measure.

NATE

What the Christ is this asshole babbling about? Swanee Sheen?

(MORE)

NATE (CONT'D)

Sounds like some fag actor from India!
 You mean to tell me that's what all
 these goddamn meetings have been
 about? One of this looney's fag
 friends?

STEVE

You go, Nate.

MARV

No! No! No! Swanee Sheen!
 America's next craze! Drive-in car
 washes with that Swanee River Sheen!

AL

It's great! Don't you think so,
 dad? I've got it all thought out!

NATE

Sounds like a load of crap to me.
 You and this little pissant...

AL

No! No! No! Dad, Marv's got it
 all figured out. First we buy the
 rights to Swanee. We change the
 words a little to reflect the Swanee
 Sheen Shine your car will have.
 Then we find the right person to
 sing it.

MARV

I think it should be someone in
 blackface.

Steve drops his bagel on the floor and his mouth goes slack.

AL

It'll be a natural, dad! Can't you
 just see it? Get that Swanee Sheen
 Shine for just seventy-five cents.
 Just like the old folks at home.

NATE

Well, maybe it might work. Yeah.
 Yeah. Maybe yous guys got something
 here. I mean for seventy-five cents
 even white trash would probably give
 it a try.

STEVE

Well, you ought to know, Nate.

NATE

Yeah. I know my shit.

STEVE

So does everyone.

NATE

What?

STEVE

Nothing.

WANDA

I'd like to hear what our creative director has to say.

AL

Yeah. What do you think, Stevie?

STEVE

I don't want to come off sounding too philosophical about this, but am I the only one who feels it's fundamentally wrong with this whole thing?

AL

What are you talking about? Wrong? What's wrong?

STEVE

Swanee is one of the few songs that still conjures up images of Al Jolson and Eddie Cantor and minstrel shows.

AL

What's wrong with that?

MARV

Yeah. What's wrong with that?

BERNIE

Yeah.

STEVE

Oh my god. How about the fact that it could just conceivably be construed as racially biased?

They all scan each other's faces.

AL

Nah! I think you're being too overly sensitive.

(MORE)

AL (CONT'D)

I mean, a guy in blackface, with a tuxedo and white gloves would be a really catchy promotion. I mean, maybe a few people, you know, minorities, might find it a little -- but we don't mean any -- you know, bias. You know?

STEVE

It's a mad house. Look, no offence, but a Jewish guy from the northeast telling a member of a minority that there's nothing remotely bigoted in this campaign isn't exactly going to do too much for either race relations or his client's image. Or the personal well-being of his own face. You know?

NATE

Wait! I got it. I got it. We don't use a guy in blackface! Let's use a colored guy. One of their own. See? And we call him the Official Swanee Sheen SHINE!

AL

That's terrific, dad!

BERNIE

Yeah, terrific.

MARV

Yeah. That could just work.

STEVE

You're kidding, right?

AL

It's perfect, Stevie.

STEVE

You have to maintain a healthy respect for the basic human rights. The rights of other people.

AL

Who's talking about rights?

NATE

We're talking about making money. We're not violating nobody's rights.

STEVE

There is one thing you might want to remember.

Steve heads for the door.

AL

What's that?

STEVE

You could get sued for every nickel you have by every citizen's group in the country.

The Skrullnock's eyes go wide with shock.

AL

Sue?

Steve nods.

NATE

You know what I always told you, son?

AL

I know, dad. Only schmucks sue.

NATE

But maybe we better think this out a little.

AL

But we already recorded the song. We could, you know, market in the meantime.

Steve heads out the door.

NATE

I guess it couldn't hurt to find out how it goes down with the animals out there.

Steve does an about face. His eyes shoot flaming daggers.

STEVE

Animals?

NATE

You know, all them foreigners out there. The Afros, the Chinks, and the Gumbahs and the Hunkies. I mean, when I look at them, it just makes me sick.

STEVE

Oh, yeah, foreigners, not real
Americans like you.

NATE

You goddamn better believe it! When
I look at those losers, it makes me
goddamned proud to be one hundred
percent, honest-to-God American.

Nate bursts into song.

NATE (CONT'D)

God Bless America/

NATE AND AL

Land that I love/

Everyone but Wanda joins in.

ALL (CONT'D)

Stand beside her/and guide her/Through
the night with a light from above/
From the mountains/to the prairies/
To the oceans/white with foam/God
bless America/My home sweet home.

Steve slips out of the room as the chorus continues. Nate
shouts down the hall.

NATE

They're not Americans! Americans
are winners! Name one Puerto Rican
or a Pollack or or a WOP who's done
anything for this country!

Steve comes back to the conference room.

STEVE

Forget about all those people: Black,
White, Yellow, Hispanic, Irish,
Catholics and Jews who died for this
country just so a sanctimonious son-
of-a-bitch like you can stand there
in the middle of this room and make
a complete ass of himself!

NATE

Hey! You can't talk to me like that!

AL

Yeah, you can't say that to my dad!
Can he, dad?

STEVE

Look, asshole, the only thing you have to be concerned with is that those animals you're talking about is that those animals out there can be conned into forking over seventy-five cents a crack to try this *Slimy Shame* of Marv's.

MARV

It's Swanee Sheen, Steve.

STEVE

Well, I won't be associated with this bullshit.

Steve bolts from the conference room.

ARTIST'S WING

Steve marches into the office, shocking the rest of the staff as he heads for his desk.

JIM

That sounded exciting.

Steve just puts his hand up as he sits, dropping his head into his hands. Murl and Barbie go back to work.

Al, Nate, Marv and Bernie slip into the office.

STEVE

What?!

NATE

All right. So you do got a point. Maybe we do need these jerks. But that don't give you the right to insult me!

AL

Will you do the campaign, Stevie?

STEVE

If it comes off sounding bigoted, I don't want anything to do with it.

AL

Ah come on, yous guys. This campaign's got everything.

BERNIE

Yeah, everything.

AL

It's got excitement, style, a catchy tune, color. Did we leave anything out?

STEVE

Talent, subtlety, taste.

NATE

All right, so we do it. Now, where can we find nine or ten out of work musicians for a minstrel show?

Nate, Al, Bernie and Marv slink out of the office.

JIM

They're going to get lynched.

MURL

We should only be so lucky.

STEVE

Well, I won't touch it if it's in any way offensive.

EXT. MARKET STREET - DAY

A light snow falls as Steve walks alone down the street. He looks so alone among the throng passing by.

INT. ARTIST'S WING - DAY

Steve hovers at his desk, mulling over a design. Al bursts in.

AL

I need yous to figure this out.

STEVE

What now, Al?

AL

Aquatherm. It needs something punchier to capture the public's fancy.

STEVE

What are you thinking, Al?

Jim smirks and hides his face. Murl and Barbie don't even look up.

AL

What I was thinking was... an Indian.

BARBIE

A what?

AL

You know with his arms crossed like this. Or with his hands up in the air like when they saw "how"? Like in the movies?

STEVE

Okay, I'll bite. What the hell does "how" have to do with heating your home?

AL

Aquatherm! Don't you see? Fire and water? What does that mean to you? Firewater! That's what the Indians drank in the movies. You can even put a whisky bottle in his other hand.

STEVE

Firewater? You can't be serious. Didn't we already go through this with Swanee Sheen?

AL

So what.

STEVE

So what? It's demeaning to American Indians. That's what. Can't you sell something that doesn't depend on insulting someone's ethnic origins or sexual orientation?

AL

Sex sells! That Jug ad was terrific!

He grabs his chest like he had boobs.

AL (CONT'D)

What the hell did the client know?

STEVE

Sex sells when it's used intelligently. But you can't use it to sell everything.

AL

Name one thing it didn't work on.

JIM

Pennsylvania Ballet.

AL

The statue speaks. What was wrong with that, Mister Expert?

STEVE

You had them print, "not getting enough?" on the front cover.

AL

But it said, "If you're NOT getting enough culture, class or artistic stimulation, come to the Pennsylvania Ballet.

STEVE

Do you really want to alienate another minority with this?

Al looks like he is deep in thought.

AL

Maybe you're right.

The artists all look shocked.

AL (CONT'D)

What the hell. Go ahead and do it anyway! After all, how many Indians can there still be out there?

Al marches out of the office.

MURL

It's his funeral.

EXT. SLOP WAGON - DAY

Steve, Jim, Murl and Barbie eat lunch as a rather large, very large, nearly seven feet tall, BLACK MAN, immaculately dressed and groomed, enters Skrullnock Advertising.

BARBIE

That can't be good.

MURL

He looked nice enough.

JIM

I haven't seen a black man in that office since I got here.

INT. SKRULLNOCK ADVERTISING RECEPTION - LATER

The artists file in and head down the hall. The Black Man sits respectfully outside Wanda's office.

STEVE

Excuse me, does anyone know you're waiting here?

BLACK MAN

The secretary told them I was here.

STEVE

Okay.

Steve follows the rest to the Artist's Wing.

ARTIST'S WING

The Black Man's Voice seems to grind through the walls of the office. The artist staff heads toward the door.

SKRULLNOCK HALLWAY

Wanda and Juliette stands outside Al's office door. The artists move closer.

NATE (O.S.)

But, you don't think we're bigots, do you?

BLACK MAN (O.S.)

I think you, and whoever put you up to this are trash of the lowest kind.

SKRULLNOCK CONFERENCE ROOM

Nate and Bernie stand across the room from the Black Man.

BERNIE

But we thought your station would like to present both sides of the issue.

BLACK MAN

Bullshit! This has got nothing to do with understanding racial issues! You guys are just trying make a fast buck by adding to the bigotry that proliferates in this country!

SKRULLNOCK HALLWAY

The artists, Wanda and Juliette do their best to control their laughter.

SKRULLNOCK CONFERENCE ROOM

Nate retreats as the Black Man looms over him.

NATE

Now wait a minute here...

BLACK MAN

We've got nothing further to talk about. And we won't run this abomination. And we'll warn all the other stations about the caliber of work you people do here.

NATE

Hey! Hey! We were only kidding! It's all a joke. Can't you guys take a joke?

BLACK MAN

A joke?

NATE

Sure! A joke. You didn't think we were serious about running something as offensive as that Swanee Sheen Shine now did you?

The Black Man just glares at Nate.

NATE (CONT'D)

Let me get the President of the company to explain the real campaign we'd like you to run. You wouldn't want to spread lies about the kind of work we do here, now would you? Be right back. I'll get the president.

BLACK MAN

The President?

Nate heads for the door.

NATE

My son, Al.

BLACK MAN

Oh, him? He came in here, played the jingle and when I told him I was personally insulted, he vanished.

NATE

Yeah, he wanted me to handle the meeting with you cause he had some consulting work to do. You know how it is. Let me see if he's free now.

BLACK MAN

You do that.

SKRULLNOCK HALLWAY

As Nate nears the door, the audience tries to act as if they were not listening. Nate tries to act nonchalant as he heads for Al's door and enters without being called.

STEVE

Consulting work?

JIM

He's probably cowering under his desk.

The artists head back to their office. Wanda and Juliette retreat as well.

ARTIST'S WING

The artists go back to work when the phone BUZZES. Steve hesitates, but finally picks it up.

STEVE

Yes?

AL (V.O.)

Could you... come to my office for a minute?

STEVE

Sure, Al.

JIM

What's up?

STEVE

God only knows, and he hasn't talked to me since I started working here.

SKRULLNOCK HALLWAY

Steve stands outside Al's office. He knocks. No answer. He shrugs his shoulders and starts to walk away. Al's voice meekly rings from the other side of the door.

AL

Who is it?

STEVE

It's me, Al.

AL

Are you alone?

STEVE

Just me and the Mormon Tabernacle
Choir.

The door opens and Al grabs Steve's arm and jerks him in,
quickly closing the door.

AL'S OFFICE

Al, in a tuxedo and blackface, takes a bottle of whiskey and
takes a slug. Bernie, Wanda and Nate stand to the side.

STEVE

What do you want, Al?

AL

It's that guy in there. I don't
think he understands.

STEVE

What doesn't he understand, Al?

AL

That I didn't mean no harm by that
ad.

STEVE

I'll tell you what I think. You're
going to get an award for the most
original, innovative -- not to mention
sensitive -- sales tools in the entire
history of advertising.

AL

Yeah?

STEVE

Posthumously.

BERNIE

That means you'd be dead.

AL

I know what it means, you moron.

STEVE

You're not really going to do this,
are you?

AL

Sure. I just thought he'd realize
how silly it is to get all upset. I
mean, you're not upset, are you?

STEVE

Give me a break, Al. Look at this logically. He's got to be at least six eight, six nine? You're maybe, on a good day, five three? You're Jewish and covered in shoe polish. Even if it were Halloween, he'd probably want to kill you.

AL

Maybe he's right.

NATE

That guy's not gonna push us around! Is he, son?

AL

Uh, yeah, that's right, dad.

Slowly, Al heads for the door.

NATE

That's my boy.

STEVE

You might want to get a new one. This one's going to be dead in about three minutes.

Al stops dead in his tracks and looks back at Steve.

NATE

You know, I don't like you.

STEVE

I know.

A Mexican Standoff.

WANDA

All right, everybody. Thanks for your opinions. Why don't you all go back to work now. We got some serious re-thinking to do.

Wanda ushers Steve, Al and Juliette from the office. The three of them exit the office.

SKRULLNOCK RECEPTION

The door slams behind them.

NATE (O.S.)

Listen, you little bastard!
(MORE)

NATE (O.S.) (CONT'D)

I told that big son-of-a-bitch you were going to tell him about the real Swanee Sheen campaign!

AL (O.S.)

What real campaign? That's it! What can I tell him?!

NATE (O.S.)

How the hell should I know? Make it up for all I care! But you'd better goddamned get yourself in there right now!

AL'S OFFICE**AL**

But supposed Steve's right? He's liable to kill me if I go in there like this!

NATE

If you don't go in there like I promised you would, I'll kill you!

AL

I don't take orders from you!

NATE

Get in there, you little asshole! If anyone's going to get their ass kicked around here, it's gonna be you! Not me!

SKRULLNOCK RECEPTION**AL (O.S.)**

Get away from me! Get away from me!

NATE (O.S.)

Come back here, you little bastard!

JIM

It sure looks bad for Doctor Dave and the Cosmic Man, doesn't it kids?

Steve, Jim and Juliette laugh a little. Then, the noise stops. After a moment, the door opens and Nate slips out, his breast pocket torn nearly off and sweating profusely.

STEVE

What happened?

NATE

Al says you're right, and I'm wrong.
And since he can't get that goddamned
shoe polish off his goddamned ugly
puss, I've got to go talk to that...

JIM

Jerkoff?

Nate glares at Jim, then shoots laser beams from his eyes at Steve.

NATE

I want you to know, I hold you
personally responsible.

He then plasters a faux smile on his face, tries to unruffle himself and heads for the conference room.

JIM

Doesn't that ignorant cretin know
that you may have just saved his
idiot son's life?

STEVE

Speaking of which, you didn't really
think it was a good idea for Al to
talk to that guy with shoe polish on
his face, did you?

JIM

Of course not. But what I want to
know is, why'd you try to stop him?
It would have served him right and
probably made our lives a lot easier
if you just let him get his head
kicked in.

The door to Al's office opens and Nate slips out. Without a word, he heads to the conference room, enters and slams the door behind him.

Wanda opens the door to Al's office and motions for them to come in.

AL'S OFFICE

Wanda, Al, Bernie, Jim, Steve and Juliette move to the wall between Al's office and the conference room. They quickly scramble for paper cups to hear what is going on with Nate and the Black Man.

They are all blasted back from the wall by the carnage going on in the conference room. Unintelligible cries fill the air.

JIM

Holy shit!

STEVE

Should we call an ambulance?

WANDA

Not yet! Let's see how bad it is.

They all look at each other incredulously, until finally, the noise stops. They can hear the sounds of the conference room door opening and rush to see.

They open the door and look down the hallway to see the Black Man storming out of the office. Moments later, Nate exits the conference room, his face swollen and bloody.

STEVE

Well, that went better than I thought.

WANDA

Yeah. No ambulance.

Wanda pulls out a cigarette and lights it as she heads for Nate.

WANDA (CONT'D)

Are you okay, sweetie?

Nate glares at her.

WANDA (CONT'D)

That was very brave of you. Let's get some ice.

Steve and Jim head down the hallway.

STEVE

You know something? I'll bet, even now, Al doesn't know why he did it.

JIM

Beats the hell out of him too.

Both laugh their way down the hallway.

INT. ARTIST'S WING - DAY

The artists work on their designs.

STEVE

Has anyone seen Mazursky recently?

BARBIE

You want to see him?

STEVE

Not the point. Wonder if he's dead.

MARV

Death by Skrullnock. Wish I'd have thought of that.

SKRULLNOCK HALLWAY

Nate, his face bruised and battered, paces out of his office, deep in thought. He goes by Bernie's office. The hulk hides in his office as Al passes by.

ARTIST'S WING

The artists all look up as they hear Al march toward the artist's wing.

AL

There's plenty of fat cats just right for the pickings!

They all just shake their heads as he passes by. After a moment, he returns.

AL (CONT'D)

There's plenty of fat cats just right for the pickings!

BARBIE

Wish he'd put the makeup back on.

SKRULLNOCK HALLWAY

Nate comes out of his office and heads down to the artist's wing. He pushes Al out of the way, lights a cigarette, and moves on.

ARTIST'S WING

Nate blasts in, billowing cigarette smoke.

NATE

I got a hot one. A hot one.

STEVE

How hot, Nate? Swampland in Florida?

NATE

You have no idea how hot. Only a smart guy can see this.

STEVE

Really.

NATE

Listen, smartass! Just cause you got a fancy college degree and shit, don't mean you're smarter than me. Got it?!

STEVE

Never said I was, Nate.

NATE

Well, you're not! And no, it's not anything as stupid as swampland in Florida. There's money to be made out there. I can smell it!

Steve begins to cough.

STEVE

The only thing I can smell is cigarette smoke.

Nate looks at his cigarette, then plants it back in his slimy mouth. He tosses some scrap metal on Steve's desk.

NATE

Do you know what that is?

Steve and the others just stare.

NATE (CONT'D)

Gold! Real goddamn gold!

STEVE

And?

NATE

Do you know where it came from?

STEVE

Now, I really don't think I want to know, Nate.

NATE

It's a million dollar idea, I'm telling you! From fillings! Patients teeth! Isn't that great?!

The artists all exchange revolted glances.

STEVE

Nate, what exactly are you talking about?

Nate puts his revolting arm around Steve's shoulder and spits smoke as he speaks.

NATE

Look, son, the dentist and I have a deal.

STEVE

A deal?

NATE

See, most people have at least one gold filling from when they was kids. Before the modern age of dentistry.

Steve looks nonplussed.

NATE (CONT'D)

Yeah, so the gold's no good to them, right?

STEVE

You mean the patients?

NATE

Yeah! It ain't no good to them. So I have this deal with this dentist.

JIM

He must be a top man in his profession.

NATE

You know me. Nothing but the best. I got this idea where the dentist removes the gold fillings from the patient's fillings and replaces it with porcelain. Then, he gives me the gold. I sell it to the premium house for top dollar and we split the money! Well? Whatdya think? Brilliant, huh?

STEVE

I just can't put it into words.

NATE

I can see that I finally impressed you!

STEVE

I'm impressed all right.

BARBIE

And the patient never knows a thing about it?

NATE

You got it! What they don't know ain't gonna hurt them.

STEVE

Nate, can we go over the brochure for this later? I feel a headache coming on.

NATE

Sure, kid. Later's okay with me. Headache, huh? You sound just like my wife when I feel like porking her once in a while. Heh heh. Okay, kid, we'll go over the brochure later.

None of the artists seems able to speak.

EXT. SLOP WAGON - DAY

The artists sit near the slop wagon and ingest.

BARBIE

Ah, I love summer. So much easier than winter.

MURL

And it makes it easier to get out of the dungeon.

JIM

And with the gold teeth ad done, we can all enjoy Fourth of July weekend with no thoughts of Skrullnocks.

STEVE

Speaking of the slime.

Nate and Al come up to them.

NATE

What are yous guys doing out here?

STEVE

It's called lunch, Nate. And it's sacrosanct.

NATE

Sacro what? Don't you try to act smart around me!

STEVE

It means it's our time and screw off!

AL

Listen, Steve, we need to get those brochures printed this weekend.

STEVE

Forth of July? Are you insane? What printer in Philadelphia -- wait, not just Philadelphia -- what printer in the world would do a rush job for you on Fourth of July weekend?

JIM

I'm with Steve. They'd have to be morons to work for you on Forth of July.

INT. ARTIST'S WING - DAY

Steve holds the phone to his ear, as Jim works next to him. He is speaking with a PRINTER.

PRINTER (V.O.)

That's okay. I understand perfectly.

STEVE

You do?

PRINTER (V.O.)

Sure. I've dealt with the Skrullnocks before. And I wish I had a hundred customers just like them.

STEVE

You do?

PRINTER (V.O.)

Yep. Unfortunately, I have two hundred just like them.

CLICK!

STEVE

Hello? Jesus.

JIM

How many printers?

STEVE

Twenty-seven. That's it. Work's over. Everybody, go home.

EXT. STEVE'S APARTMENT - AFTERNOON

Steve checks his mail. After a moment, he enters, seeming dejected.

INT. ARTIST'S WING - DAY

The artists work on the Spa World Ad.

STEVE

How about "Flower Drum Song" plus, second big hit, "I Bombed Pearl Harbor"?

JIM

Okay, how about "The Song of Bernadette" and "The Texas Chainsaw Massacre"? Or "The Gay Sisters" with "The African Queen" or "The Green Berets" and "Hair"?

MARV (O.S.)

I can't talk to you now, mom! I'm up to my eyeballs in crap! Quit bugging me! You're starting to piss me off, mom!

JIM

How about "The Return of the Little Jewels"?

The artists burst into laughter.

STEVE

Oh, we must be doing horror films now?

SKRULLNOCK RECEPTION

MARV'S MOTHER turns and walks away as Nate storms toward Marv.

NATE

Mazursky, where've you been, you son-of-a-bitch!

MARV

That's not true at all. I was just talking to my mother, and she's nothing of the sort.

NATE

What the hell are you talking about?

MARV

You called my mother a bitch, you ignoramus!

NATE

Ignoramus? Why you little bastard!

MARV

What's my father got to do with this?

ARTIST'S WING

Steve and Jim continue with their game.

STEVE

How about "I Was A Teenage Sleezebag"?

JIM

Or, "I Was A Teenage Ad Man"?

STEVE

Same thing.

JIM

You're right.

STEVE

How about, "Assholes From Outer Space"?

JIM

Right! "Assholes From Outer Space" in Skrullnockscape, "You See It Without Taste."

MARV (O.S.)

I don't have to put up with this constant abuse!

NATE (O.S.)

You ought to be used to it after all the self-abuse you do!

MARV (O.S.)

Well, you're just an ignorant lump of malignancy!

NATE (O.S.)

I'm going to look that up! And if it means what I think it means, I'm going to kick your ass!

Al slips his head inside the office.

AL

It sounds like Marv's back.

JIM

Oh, is that what it is? We just thought that Nate was brushing up on his sales technique.

AL

Well, Marv has been acting a bit strange lately.

STEVE

How can you tell?

AL

He hasn't been showing up.

STEVE

That's the most sensible thing he could do.

JIM

How about "I'll Be Seeing You" plus "The Invisible Man"?

STEVE

Nothing. How's your face?

AL

My face? What's wrong with my face?

STEVE

It's fine. Just fine.

AL

Listen, I need to talk to you.

STEVE

Do you have to?

AL

Listen, all those layouts you did for Spa World? Forget `em.

STEVE

Just like that?

AL

They was lousy anyway.

Steve launches from his seat.

STEVE

They were what?

AL

Take it easy!

Al smiles to reveal a few missing teeth.

AL (CONT'D)

I got a better idea to make Spa World a household name.

STEVE

Are you aware that most household names are associated with things that flush or disinfect?

AL

Huh?

STEVE

Forget it. What do you want us to do?

AL

Well, you know that little bastard as well as I do.

STEVE

Which one? There are so many little bastards from which to choose.

Jim does his best Victor Mature imitation.

JIM

This place is lousy with them.

AL

What's that supposed to mean?

STEVE

Nothing, Al. Who are you talking about? Which little bastard?

AL

Muscles Lamarr! Anyway, I got this original idea that I saw in Advertising Age about a whole room filled with computer-controlled sex machines!

STEVE

And?

AL

Don't you see? We stand his fat, dumpy wife in her bikini up in front of these science-fiction type, hi-tech machines and we say something like, let's see, how about, "Get The Body Of The Future At Spa World Today!"

STEVE

Terrific.

JIM

So original.

AL

I like my original idea even better than the original I stole it from.

STEVE

Great.

AL

Only trouble is, I just don't like being associated with fat, dumpy broads.

He looks at Murl.

AL (CONT'D)

No offence to what's-her-face.

MURL

Thank you, Mister Tact.

STEVE

Where are you going to get all this futuristic machinery?

AL

I thought we'd just borrow some stuff from a computer place.

STEVE

Al, exactly what kind of machinery did you have in mind? And did you already promise it to Lamarr?

AL

Star Wars stuff! You know, flashing lights, wheels turning, dials. Computer stuff!

STEVE

Al, computers don't look like that.

AL

The hell, they don't. They'd better look like that!

STEVE

But they don't.

JIM

He's right, Al.

AL

Oh my God! What am I going to do now?!

STEVE

What's the big deal, Al? What difference does it make?

AL

What difference does it make? I already sold him on the idea of the science fiction angle! I mean, if computers don't look like that anymore, the ad doesn't work.

JIM

It doesn't make any sense anyway. Why would anyone want to look like his wife now, or in the future?

AL

What am I gonna do? What am I gonna do? The photo shoot's scheduled for Monday morning.

JIM

Well, Al, you'd better call some computer stores to find out what they have. We could be wrong.

STEVE

Yeah, that's a good idea, Al.

AL

You're right. You're right! Great idea!

STEVE

And when they confirm what we've told you, you can start whining again.

AL

If you guys aren't putting me on, I'm in big trouble. I could lose this account.

Near apoplectic, Al turns and bolts from the office.

BARBIE

You guys are so mean to him.

After a moment, Barbie bursts into laughter, followed by the rest.

EXT. SLOP WAGON - DAY

The artists sit in their typical places, shoveling down their lunch.

STEVE

I got a bad feeling about this.

JIM

You mean the one we get every Friday?

MURL

The one I have every day?

They all laugh.

INT. ARTIST'S WING - LATER

The crew is back at their desks. Al blasts into the office.

AL

Yous guys have got to help me!

They ignore him.

AL (CONT'D)

Hey! Didn't yous guys hear me?

Al is dumbfounded.

AL (CONT'D)

Hey! What the hell's wrong with yous guys?!

Jim smiles at Steve.

AL (CONT'D)

What am I gonna do? There's gotta be some way to get a computer for this at!!! Wait a minute!!! If you were producing this for a TV commercial, what would you do?

Steve turns to him.

STEVE

If I couldn't find the right prop, I'd have a dummy computer made to look like what the client wants.

AL

That's a great idea!

STEVE

What is?

AL

The prop computer! Now where can we get one made?

STEVE

By Monday? Impossible. It's Friday afternoon. No one's going to make you a special prop over the weekend, even if you could find someone who does it for a living.

AL

Fine! You guys'll have to do it! Come on, you guys.

STEVE

Why should we work all weekend just because you promised an impossible deadline again?

AL

Because if you don't help me out, I'm liable to lose this account! And if I lose this account, I'm liable to lose the agency! I swear to you, Steve. I don't know why I keep doing these things. I guess I'm just a loser.

Steve looks at Jim, then at Al, then at Murl and Barbie.

STEVE

Oh hell. All right, Al. I'll do what I can. I guess I'll be the hero again. Are you with me, Jim?

Jim's head sinks to his chest.

JIM

Hell is right. I'm with you, Steve. I had *nothing* planned. But just this once. Damn!

Teary-eyed, Al raises his fists in the air.

AL

Thanks, guys!

Al bolts from the office.

STEVE

Sorry to have gotten you into this,
Jim. Gonna be one hell of a weekend.

EXT. MARKET STREET - NIGHT

The lights burn brightly in the agency.

INT. SKRULLNOCK CONFERENCE ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Steve and Jim stand amidst a mass of materials to be used
for Al's creation.

JIM

What's this thing supposed to look
like?

STEVE

What do you mean?

JIM

How elaborate is it supposed to be?

STEVE

I don't know, exactly. I kind of
envision a whole bank of blinking
lights with an ingenious use of forced
perspective combined with lights and
shadows.

JIM

Very impressive. And what are we
really going to do?

STEVE

By Monday morning? How about a
cardboard box with a bunch of blinking
lights?

SERIES OF SHOTS:

- A) Steve and Jim working on the creation.
- B) Al checking and being ushered out.
- C) the creation begins to take shape.

HOURS LATER

Steve and Jim step back to admire their creation. It is
finally taking shape.

STEVE (CONT'D)

Go get Al.

Jim disappears for a moment then returns with Al.

STEVE (CONT'D)

What do you think?

AL

It stinks! What am I gonna do now?

STEVE

What's that supposed to mean?!

AL

Just look at that pile of junk! I promised him a beautiful science-fiction set!

STEVE

Pile of junk? What don't you like about it?

AL

It looks like a bunch of boxes!

STEVE

It isn't done yet, you moron! Believe me, by Monday morning, it'll look great. We still have to spray-paint it and add all the lights, the switches, the metal grilles. Everything!

AL

If I lose this account because yous guys are no good, you're fired!

STEVE

Because we're no good?! You son-of-a-bitch! You promise your client something you can't even deliver! You get us to come here and work all weekend without pay because we feel sorry for you, then you have the unmitigated gall to threaten to fire us?!

Steve heads for the door.

STEVE (CONT'D)

Let's go, Jim. Skrullnock, you don't deserve us, and we sure don't deserve you.

AL

Listen, yous guys.

(MORE)

AL (CONT'D)

Maybe it'll be all right. I mean, I know it's gonna be all right. It'll be terrific! By Monday morning. Listen, yous guys. I was just kidding. Can't you take a joke?

STEVE

A joke? You're a joke, Skrullnock.

AL

Will you stay, anyway, yous guys? Please?

STEVE

Why should we?

AL

Cause I'm asking you? Begging you?

STEVE

Under one condition. You get the hell out of here!

AL

Sure! No problem. I'll go to my luxury apartment.

Steve and Jim laugh as soon as he leaves.

JIM

His office apartment. What do we do now?

STEVE

I have an idea. I have an idea.

INT. ARTIST'S WING - MORNING

Steve and Jim sit at their desks. Murl and Barbie enter.

BARBIE

How was your weekend?

STEVE

Weekend sucked.

JIM

Monday's going to be great.

MURL

What did you two do?

AL (O.S.)

Where are yous guys?!

JIM

Let the game begin.

They rise from their seats and head out.

SKRULLNOCK HALLWAY

Al struggles to get the door to the conference room open as Steve and Jim stand on either side.

AL

Why's the door locked?

STEVE

To protect our creation.

SKRULLNOCK CONFERENCE ROOM

The door opens and they find the ten foot by three foot by four foot creation wrapped and ready to go.

AL

What the hell's this?

STEVE

It's wrapped so it won't get damaged, Al.

AL

Oh, yeah, right. How's it look?

STEVE

Terrific. Just wait till you get there and unwrap it. You're going to love it.

JIM

It's fudge. He made it himself.

AL

Fudge?

STEVE

It's an old joke, Al.

AL

Is it really good?

STEVE

It's great. By the way. I finished it myself. Jim just came in to help me wrap it.

AL

I gotta get Bernie to help me get it
in the car.

STEVE

We're going to get breakfast.

AL

Breakfast?! You're supposed to do
that before you come to work!

STEVE

You are incredible!

Al seems to realize he just put his foot in his mouth.

AL

Uh, why don't yous guys go have
breakfast.

JIM

Would've never thought of that, Al.

EXT. MARKET STREET - MOMENTS LATER

Steve and Jim head out of the building. As they head for
breakfast, they look up to see Al and Bernie dangling the
creation at the end of a rope, trying to lower it to the
street.

JIM

The only thing I regret is that we
won't be there to watch it.

INT. ARTIST'S WING - LATER

Steve and Jim re-enter with the leftovers from their breakfast
in their hands. On their heels is Marv, his head bobbing as
usual.

MARV

I've been thinking.

STEVE

I like you to try new things, Marv.

MARV

I do too. I think that this family
might actually have a valid way of
looking at things.

STEVE

This family? You must be kidding.

MARV

I never kid.

STEVE

I forgot.

MARV

But I have been thinking that even though I may not be able to understand the Skrullnocks sometimes. They do seem to be able to pull together almost like they're a family.

STEVE

I don't know how to break this to you, but they are a family, Marv.

MARV

Well, that's almost as good.

STEVE

Okay, I'm going to throw this to Jim.

MARV

I mean, I haven't been myself recently.

JIM

You mean some other poor devil got stuck with the job?

MARV

But even so, Al has really tried to make me feel like part of the family.

STEVE

I'd sue if I were you.

MARV

Oh, I know Nate and I have had our little differences, but I think that deep down the Skrullnocks are decent, hardworking people.

JIM

Are we talking about the same Skrullnocks?

MARV

I think it's important to have family. I know how important my mother is to me.

STEVE

Why the sudden change of heart?
What made you change your mind about
Nate and Al?

MARV

Well, you know I haven't been around
lately. So I've had a lot of time
to think about all the things I've
never done.

STEVE

Uh huh.

MARV

For instance, I never got to tell my
dad how I really felt about him.

STEVE

That's a shame. There's a really
nice movie about father/son
relationships called *I NEVER SANG
FOR MY FATHER*.

MARV

I never did either. What was it
called?

STEVE

What's what called?

MARV

The movie.

STEVE

I NEVER SANG FOR MY FATHER.

MARV

Neither did I.

STEVE

That's a shame.

JIM

Who's on first?

STEVE

I'm sure your father knew how much
you loved him, Marv.

MARV

I don't think so.

STEVE

Sure he did. You're being too hard on yourself.

MARV

No. I don't think so. As a matter of fact, I hated his guts. As a matter of fact, I still hate his guts. I just never got the chance to tell him.

STEVE

God, that's awful. I'm really sorry, Marv.

MARV

It's okay. As a matter of fact, the next time I see him, I'll tell him myself.

STEVE

The next time you see him?

MARV

Oh, yes. Mother and I have dinner with him every Thursday.

Jim starts whistling the theme to the TWILIGHT ZONE.

STEVE

Jim, do you need help over there?

Steve moves toward Jim's desk.

MARV

Which is why I appreciate the relationship Nate and Al have.

STEVE

Okay, Marv.

MARV

And despite his animosity towards me, I think that Nate gets a real kick out of Al.

STEVE

Well, at least we agree on that. I myself have seen him kick Al from one end of this place to the other.

INT. SPA WORLD - DAY

Al and Bernie struggle to get Steve's and Jim's masterpiece into Spa World.

AL

Muscles! Muscles!

Muscles all but acts indifferently toward the little troll.

LAMARR

If it isn't Al Skrullnock.

AL

I got something here that I know you will love! You will love it more than anything we done before! Wait'll you see it! We spared no expense! No, sir! I had to spend top dollar for the best prop man in the whole country to get it done for you, Muscles!

LAMARR

I'm very busy! Let's see what you have!

AL

Sure, Muscles.

He and Bernie begin to cut the ropes that hold the wrapping on.

AL (CONT'D)

Just wait! You're gonna love it!

Feverishly, Al and Bernie work to unwrap the Creation.

Pulling the wrapping off, Al and Bernie turn toward Muscles, as they face him and point to the Creation.

LAMARR

What the hell is this?

It is a giant sized BOZO THE CLOWN. Al turns to face the Creation and his mouth goes slack.

AL

Oh my god.

Al hides behind Bernie.

LAMARR

Is this your idea of a joke, you little asshole? I'll kill you, you dirty bastard!

AL

Muscles! I didn't know! I swear!

LAMARR

Come here, you son-of-a-bitch! After
all that shit about all the money
you spent and how beautiful it was?
You son-of-a-bitch!

INT. ARTIST'S WING - LATER

Steve, Jim, Murl and Barbie work away the afternoon.

BARBIE

You didn't.

MURL

Are you serious?

Steve and Jim stifle laughs.

BARBIE

You guys are too much. You're liable
to get him killed.

Al, a little more bruised, slinks in.

AL

I guess I had that comin'. Good
joke. Good one.

He turns and walks away.

The artists crew breaks into laughter.

EXT. STEVE'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Steve wanders up to the mail box and retrieves a handful of
junk mail. Tired and worn, he enters his apartment.

INT. STEVE'S BEDROOM - LATER

Steve enters, drops his things on the desk, and flops down
on the bed, quickly falling asleep.

INT. SKRULLNOCK HALLWAY - DAY

Al nervously paces up and down the hallway. After a moment,
he storms toward the Artist's Wing.

ARTIST'S WING

Al blasts in.

AL

Have yous guys heard from Marv?

STEVE

No, Al. Sorry. But he ought to be here soon. You guys have a one-thirty appointment to make the presentation, don't you?

AL

Yeah! I can't understand this. He knows we got to be on time.

Al exits. Jim points to the clock. It reads 12:00PM.

SKRULLNOCK HALLWAY

Al storms down the hallway.

ARTIST'S WING - LATER

Steve and Jim, and the others sit quietly.

AL (O.S.)

Steve!!! You got to come quick!!!

They nearly jump out of their collective skins.

STEVE

What's up?

Al pops his head in the Artist's Wing.

AL

Come to my office!!! Please!!!

Reluctantly, Steve rises from his desk and follows Al.

AL'S OFFICE

Steve follows Al into the office to find Marv sitting in a chair with a large bandage over his head, a whopping black eye and ten stitches on his swollen face.

STEVE

My god! What happened to you?

AL

Nevermind that! What am I gonna do? I can't go to the most important presentation of my career with a walking accident! I mean, how can I pitch an account this important with a guy who looks like he got beaten up in a barroom brawl?

Marv's eyes take on an almost feverish glow. He speaks softly.

MARV

He hit me when I wasn't even looking.

STEVE

Who did?

He grins like a madman.

MARV

The bartender.

STEVE

I don't know what to tell you. Maybe you can cancel the presentation and set it up for another day.

AL

I've got it! You got to come with us!

STEVE

Me? I'm not even dressed for it.

AL

That's okay! You got to! Please! You know more about the presentation than anyone else! You designed it! Please?

INT. AIRLINE - DAY

The three of them stand in front of the edifice, Al and Marv, dressed in a cheap three-piece suit, look at the building with avarice in their eyes. Steve looks sick.

STEVE

This is not a good idea, Al.

AL

Nonsense! This'll be great!

INT. AIRLINE-LOBBY - MOMENTS LATER

Al marches to the reception desk. The comely RECEPTIONIST looks up in horror.

AL

I'm Al Skrullnock. I'm here to see the Advertising Director.

RECEPTIONIST

Ah, yes, Ms. White will be with you in a moment.

AL

Ms. White?

RECEPTIONIST

Yes. Have a seat, please.

Al leads Marv and Steve to the sofa.

AL

A broad? This account is as good as ours.

MARV

What makes you think that, Al?

AL

Listen, broads love me. I'll have her eating out of my hand in no time. And for god sake, let me do all the talking.

Steve has a look that says one thing: Get me out of here!

INT. MS. WHITE'S OFFICE - MOMENTS LATER

JILL WHITE, comely, early thirties, rises from her desk to greet the crew.

WHITE

Hello, I'm Jill White. You must be the gentlemen from Skrullnock Advertising.

AL

Does the Pope crap in the woods?

WHITE

I beg your pardon?

AL

You know. Is a bear Catholic?

For a moment, she is nonplussed.

WHITE

Will you please take a seat?

Al plops down in one of the three chairs she indicates. Steve attempts to sit in the chair closest to the door, but Marv plops in before him.

WHITE (CONT'D)

Now, before you make your presentation, why don't you tell me a bit about your company.

AL

Sure, gorgeous.

Steve's whole countenance shows his shock and revulsion.

AL (CONT'D)

Marv, you used to be a big name in the ad biz. Why don't you talk about our organization?

MARV

Sure, Al.

Ms. White's eyes begin to narrow as she looks at Marv's eye.

AL

Don't worry about Marv's eye. He was so excited at the prospect of meeting you that I had to punch him in the eye to calm him down.

WHITE

I see.

AL

Go ahead, Marv. Tell her about us.

MARV

To tell you the truth, I haven't gotten to do much with Al and his family...

WHITE

His family?

Steve looks like he wants to disappear.

MARV

Yes, but that doesn't mean that we aren't planning to do a little jewel of a campaign for your account.

WHITE

Of course.

MARV

See, I used to handle some big accounts like yours in the old days and then I sort of went crazy and for the past few years, I've been on *The Farm*. Now, it looks like you could be our first big account.

Marv's ubiquitous head bob begins again along with his Cheshire Cat grin. Steve begins to sweat profusely.

AL

Heh heh, Marv's always kidding.
Now, let's get down to brass tacks,
Jill. I can call you Jill, can't I?

WHITE

Well, I suppose, if you'd like.

AL

Okay, toots.

Steve and Ms. White cringe at the same time.

AL (CONT'D)

The name of this game is bucks!

WHITE

I beg your pardon? Oh, of course.
Profits.

AL

Yeah, babe! Well, anyways, we're
masters of promotion, exploitation,
public relations and...

He motions to Marv, gesturing for help.

MARV

How many syllables, Al?

Steve grits his teeth.

STEVE

Advertising.

AL

Oh yeah! Advertising!

WHITE

I see.

AL

And when I tell you we got big results
from some of our campaigns, I mean,
we're talking *big* results! Look at
these!

He lays out some of the more grotesque layouts for Spa World
on the desk. Ms. White is aghast.

AL (CONT'D)

This one really pulled in the fat
broads! And this one here would
have made us a lot of dough if the
client had paid us for it!

STEVE

Al, why don't we get on with the presentation?

AL

Nah. Let's show some of the neat things we done first!

Ms. White begins to tap her pen on the desk impatiently, as Al reaches into his bag, looking for an ad.

AL (CONT'D)

Wait till you see how we jazzed up the ballet program.

Urgently, Steve mouths the word "no."

AL (CONT'D)

Got it!

WHITE

This thing got good responses from the ballet patrons?

AL

Does the Pope crap in the woods? And look at these.

He flips out the Swanee Sheen ads.

STEVE

Oh my God! Excuse me, Ms. White. Al, may I have a word with you?

AL

It's okay. Steve here is all opposed to the Swanee Sheen approach.

WHITE

Good for you.

AL

But I think it's gonna break some kind of record when we finally launch the campaign.

WHITE

Aren't you worried about it being somewhat offensive?

AL

Nah! That's what Steve here said, but I think people will get a kick out of it. You wait and see.

WHITE

I can hardly wait.

AL

Yeah, but let me tell you, we've gotten tremendous results for some of our clients.

WHITE

I'm sure you have. Well, I think I've seen enough to tell me what I need to know about your firm.

AL

Great! But look at this! There's gold in them thar teeth! My dad even manages to turn a couple of bucks on this one.

She rises from her chair.

WHITE

I have another meeting in a few minutes.

AL

Great! I got just enough time to show you what my dad calls the pizza resistance.

He digs through the loathsome black satchel for what seems like an eternity, and plops the brochure down on the desk.

It reads: WE'LL BUY ALL YOUR UNWANTED GOLD COINS, SILVER, JEWELS AND SAMURAI SWORDS... EVEN IF YOUR LOVED ONES ARE DEAD!"

AL (CONT'D)

Let me explain it to you. One of our... Biggest clients is a premium company. You know, they buy gold, silver, diamonds, uh, samurai swords, anyway, most of this stuff is, uh hidden away in people's attics and we figured... What happens to it when the owner dies?

WHITE

What are you talking about?

AL

Yeah so we look up names and addresses in the... uh... obituary columns and... uh... send a copy of this

(MORE)

AL (CONT'D)

mailer to the deceased. Then, when their widow or widower reads it, they think, "Gee, I guess he must have sent away for this before he died, so maybe he'd like it if I got rid of all his stuff.

WHITE

Oh my god.

AL

Yeah, and we get to cart it all away for peanuts! We made big bucks for our clients, let me tell you!

WHITE

Thank you for coming!

AL

Yeah, sure. Come on, yous guys. We've gotta let the other boys go through the motions, even if it's already in the bag. Right, toots?

WHITE

Goodbye, gentlemen.

Steve, mortified, moves to the door.

Marv, who has been staring off into space, suddenly jumps up like a broken Jack-in-the-box and bellows.

MARV

Thanks! Your account could probably SAVE my career.

Steve manages to catch her eye.

STEVE

Thank you for your time, and your understanding. I'm sorry we stayed so long.

WHITE

Thank you for coming.

AL

Uh, wait outside for me, will yous, guys?

He ushers Marv and Steve out the door.

AL (O.S.) (CONT'D)

Listen, babe, after I get the account,
maybe you and me can get together
and, you know, fool around.

He emerges a few minutes later, wearing an odd expression on his ugly face and clutching his bag and its vile contents.

INT. AL'S CAR - DAY - MOVING

Silence reigns on the way back to the agency.

AL

Well? Don't you think we got it?

Steve turns to him incredulously, mouth agape.

AL (CONT'D)

Why am I asking you for? I know we
got it! I mean, that broad was eating
right out of my hand! Wasn't she,
Marv?

MARV

Huh?

AL

Eating out of my hand.

MARV

Whenever I do that, I always get
food all over myself.

AL

What are you talking about?

MARV

Now I Always try to remember to use
a fork. They didn't Always let me
use a fork at the farm.

INT. ARTIST'S WING - LATER

Steve heads for his desk, with Al and Marv on his heels.

JIM

Should I ask?

Steve says nothing.

AL

You know, Steve, I could tell how
impressed she was by the last
brochure. You know the one about
dead people.

STEVE

What about it?

AL

Like I said, I didn't want you to feel left out, so I told her it was all your idea.

STEVE

You what?

AL

Yeah, but don't worry. You don't have to thank me.

STEVE

Thank you?! How could you have told her it was MY idea? I've never even seen the goddamned thing before!

The phone rings, and Jim answers it.

AL

That's okay there's more than enough credit to go around. As a matter of fact, she said she'd never seen anything like us before. How about that?

STEVE

Of All the ad joints in All the towns in All the world, I had to walk into yours.

JIM

Steve...

AL

What does that mean?

STEVE

What, Jim?

JIM

It's for you.

STEVE

Who is it?

JIM

Some production company.

Instantly, Steve launches for the phone.

STEVE

This is Steve Friedman. Yes? Really?
My script? I can be out there
tomorrow.

Steve hangs up the phone and turns to Jim, a great smile on his face.

AL

What did that horse shit mean?

STEVE

It means I quit, you slimy little
bastard!

AL

You what? If it's about what I told
her about the brochure...

STEVE

It's not just the brochure, it's the
kind of thinking that went into it
and your sleazy way of doing business
and your whole nauseating family!

Steve grabs his coat, and heads for the door, as Al, nearly apoplectic, runs for him.

AL

Look, I'll get RID of the brochure!
And I'll call the broad and tell her
it was All my idea, not yours! Wait
a minute! I'll find it! Wait! I'll
get rid of it! You'll see!

STEVE

Sorry, Al, but I don't think there's
anything in that black bag for me.

AL

What are you talking about?

STEVE

Forget it, you wouldn't understand.

AL

But what am I gonna do?

STEVE

Frankly, Al, I couldn't give a damn.

Steve walks away.

EXT. MARKET STREET - MOMENTS LATER

Breathing in the fresh afternoon air, Steve smiles broadly.

STEVE (V.O.)

You may ask, how the hell did I last so long, almost a year? Your guess is as good as mine, but it did get me my dream. My movie. Hope you enjoy it when it comes out.

He turns away, then back.

STEVE (V.O.) (CONT'D)

Oh, Ms. White, it really wasn't my idea. Just thought you should know.

Steve points back to the Skrullnock Agency.

STEVE (V.O.) (CONT'D)

Wait, folks, don't leave. There's something else you should see.

He goes to the slop wagon and orders.

INT. ARTIST'S WING - CONTINUOUS

SUPER: A MONTH LATER

MURL

Well, that's enough for me.

BARBIE

What do you mean?

MURL

My boyfriend's moving to England, and I'm going with him. He's a Viking warrior. We're getting married.

JIM

You have a boyfriend?

She smiles, picks up her things, and heads for the door.

SKRULLNOCK HALLWAY

Murl heads down the hall, but stops at Al's office.

MURL

Hey, asshole. I quit!

She turns and exits, with Al popping out of his office, heading right down the hallway to the Artist's Wing.

ARTIST'S WING

Al blasts in.

AL

We got rid of the ugly fat broad?

BARBIE

You're a pig, Al.

AL

At least we got rid of the ugly fat broad.

ARTIST'S WING - DAY

SUPER: THREE MONTHS LATER.

Jim and Barbie work.

JIM

Aren't you late, Barbie?

BARBIE

Vacation. Finally. Two weeks away from Skrullnock land.

Al appears at the door.

AL

And just where's my money taking you, toots?

BARBIE

Your money? Just what the hell is that supposed to mean? I earned every penny of it.

AL

Well, where are you going on this big vacation of yours, anyhow?

BARBIE

None of your business. What do you care, anyway? I've already told you. I *earned* this vacation! You're not paying one nickel that I haven't already earned. Jerk!

AL

Well, maybe we can get together when you get back, huh?

BARBIE

You are joking.

AL

why not?

BARBIE

I just don't want to go out with you again. Okay?

AL

Why not? I'm just as good as the other trash you hang out with! My Dad was right about you! You're not so special!

Barbie does her best to conceal her anger and contempt.

BARBIE

I was trying not to hurt your feelings! I should have realized that you don't have any to hurt! What happened between us was over after the first terrible night and it should never have happened in the first place! Goodbye, Al. See you later, Jim.

JIM

Have fun.

She storms out of the office. Jim glares at Al.

AL

I'll fire the bitch and I won't have to pay her vacation pay. Screw her. No sense in paying for work she ain't done. Jim, I want you to redo this job again. It ain't right. It sucks. I can't believe you gave this to me. It's shit!

Jim stands and places his attaché case on his drawing table, opens it and places his personal belongings into it.

AL (CONT'D)

Jim, what are you doing?

JIM

Going home.

AL

Why? You don't feel good?

JIM

Better than I ever felt before.

AL

What's the gag?

JIM

No gag. Well I guess that's everything.

AL

Wait a minute. Where are you going?

JIM

Home.

AL

But it's the middle of the day yelled Al.

JIM

It's later than you think.

AL

What the hell is that supposed to mean?

JIM

It means that I'm an artist, you pig-eyed sack of shit, and I'm just tired of doing work that I can't be proud of.

AL

What?

JIM

Don't you ever want to do work you can be proud of, Al?

AL

If I get paid for it, that's All the pride I need.

JIM

Well I need more than that.

AL

Oh yeah? Like what?

JIM

You wouldn't understand.

Jim picks up his attaché case to leave.

AL

I understand this much. You're a lousy, two-bit, dime-a-dozen artist. The only reason I kept you around all these years is cause I felt sorry for you.

JIM

Goodbye, Al.

AL

Please don't leave, Jim. Please don't.

Al looks on the verge of tears. Jim looks as if he is going to give in.

AL (CONT'D)

Please don't leave me, Jim. After All these years, you are Skrullnock Advertising, Inc.

JIM

I'm what?

AL

You are a Skrullnock.

JIM

That was a close one.

AL

You mean you'll stay?

JIM

Of course not. I simply meant thanks for helping me make up my mind.

AL

You mean you're really gonna leave?

Jim simply picks up his attaché and exits, with a near-crazed Al on his heels.

AL (CONT'D)

You'll never work in this town again!
You hear me? You'll never work again!

WANDA'S OFFICE

The ubiquitous cloud of smoke encircling her, Wanda just shakes her head and then stands up as Al passes.

WANDA

My son the schmuck! I can't believe you let him get away! What are you gonna do now, hotshot? Who's gonna pull your ass out of the fire this time?

AL

We can always run a classified ad.

WANDA

You moron, that's about the only kind of ad you can do without Jim!

EXT. MARKET STREET - MOMENTS LATER

Jim exits and finds Steve standing near the Slop Wagon. The sounds of the Skrullnocks fighting filter through the walls.

STEVE

What took you so long?

JIM

Some people just take more time.

STEVE

Buy you lunch?

JIM

Sure. Maybe we can catch a matinee too.

Jim smiles and walks with Steve to the slop wagon.

FADE OUT: