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## Escape Velocity: A Narrative Short

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*ESCAPE VELOCITY: A NARRATIVE SHORT*

A Thesis

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the  
University of New Orleans  
in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of

Master of Fine Arts  
in  
The Department of Drama and Communications

by

Joshua Trotter

B.A. University of Florida, 1998  
M.A. University of Florida, 2000

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## ABSTRACT

This thesis book describes the development and production of *Escape Velocity*, a short narrative film. The writing, pre-production, shooting, and editing of the film are reviewed. Script drafts and a final budget are included in the appendices.

The film concerns Larry Pipe and Percy Knuckle, best friends who dream of moving to Barbados. They hope to open a beachside bar and spend the rest of their days relaxing and watching girls. When Percy starts dating Melinda Bundt, however, Larry's jealousy threatens to destroy the men's friendship. When Percy needs money to follow Melinda to Atlanta, Larry must choose between supporting his best friend or pursuing their dream of Barbados alone.

*Escape Velocity* examines the ways we hold ourselves back from pursuing our dreams, the reasons we justify doing so, and the changes in our life that finally inspire us to move toward our goals.

## INTRODUCTION

This project began with a promise I made to John Richie, a promise he probably doesn't even remember.

When I was casting my DRCM 4530 film, *Waiting for October*, John read for the part of Larry Pipe, the protagonist's couch-potato roommate. John gave a terrific reading, and I told him I definitely had a part for him. But circumstances ended up blessing me with three stellar actors for two parts, and I decided to go with an actor I had worked with before. I felt guilty telling John that I had cast someone else in the part – especially when Jared Pendergrass, the actor I cast as Larry Pipe, turned out to be John's roommate. I tried to soften the blow by promising John that I would write him a part in my next movie.

In *Waiting for October* Jared created a Larry Pipe that was sarcastic, sloppy, pretentious – and pretty funny. People liked him, and I knew I wanted to use the character again. I liked the idea of pairing that abrasive character with someone who was good-natured and relaxed – someone like John Richie. I thought of a name that suggested such a mild temperament, but with an element of strength, too: Percy Knuckle. My next movie, I knew then, would involve Larry Pipe, his loyal friend/sidekick Percy Knuckle, and their dream to move to the islands and sip frosty drinks from coconut shells.

That's all I had, initially: two funny names and a destination.



## CHAPTER 1: DEVELOPMENT

I wrote my thesis prospectus in the spring of 2002, having just finished Chris Ware's graphic novel *Jimmy Corrigan, the Smartest Kid on Earth*. I loved the way Ware played with layout and panel structure to describe complex social relationships, and I was once again fascinated by how meaning can be produced through the controlled juxtaposition of images. At its most basic level, film works through such juxtaposition: the simple juxtaposition of 24 images per second and the more complex juxtaposition of shots and scenes. Kuleshov's famous experiment in which he placed a "neutral" picture of an actor alongside a variety of different images illustrates how viewers naturally connect two sequential images to create meaning. This tendency of humans to provide closure between two images, shots, or scenes is what makes films (and comics) work. I wanted to address this aspect of film in my thesis.

I was also interested in a sort of "macro-juxtaposition" – the illustration or elucidation of a worldview or philosophy through the juxtaposition of narratives and other objects. For my thesis, I decided to explore the possibility of juxtaposition on a larger scale by shooting three short films that could both stand alone and, when seen together, play off each other to suggest a larger theme. Inspired by Ware's use of multiple generations and time shifts in telling his story, I decided to base my three films around a son, father, and grandfather. The first film would involve Larry and Percy and explore how their friendship fell apart when Percy fell in love with an aspiring cosmetologist. The second film would focus on Larry's father, Mr. Pipe, using a series of Super 8 home movies to chronicle the romantic relationships he pursued while raising

Larry. The third film would set Larry's grandfather's memories against the melody of a jazz tune, with each soloist anchoring a particular memory.

I wanted the films to emphasize the common theme of heartbreak and loss, and to suggest the limited tools each man had to understand the relationships in his life. Although each film would tell its own unique story, I hoped that, when placed alongside each other, they would invite the audience to draw connections between them through similarities in settings, situations, and theme. In my mind, I was reaching for something like the theorist Walter Benjamin's *Arcades Project*, which tried to capture the essence of the Parisian streets through "a carefully arranged collage of found material from mid-nineteenth-century Paris." (Ray 42) I hoped, through the accretion of three separate narratives, to get to the bones of love—to elucidate and convey my own personal view of what love means, why it works or doesn't, and how it can haunt us long after we experience it.

An enormous task, I realize, for a student filmmaker with barely three films under his belt. To make things harder, I planned to shoot each film in a different medium and with a different narrative style, from a straight-ahead, "realistic" narrative to more experimental, almost categorical films. By limiting the length of each film to 10 minutes, restricting myself from using heavy equipment like dollies and jib arms, and engaging in extensive pre-planning and storyboarding, I hoped to minimize the strain of producing three films. By shooting three carefully constructed shorts, I hoped to improve my grasp of narrative filmmaking and develop a substantial portfolio. I planned to complete the films by the end of the Fall 2002 semester.

I bit off way more than I could chew. By the time 2003 dawned, I still did not have one completed script. I had outlines and treatments and pages of notes, but I hadn't come up with a satisfactory way to play out the common themes between each of the three stories—to connect

the three together and still have them stand on their own. With my loans mounting as I approached the end of my third year of graduate school, I decided to minimize the scope of my project and concentrate instead on simply telling one story well.

I chose the Larry and Percy story since I had a much more developed understanding of the plot, characters, and conflict. Since I would be telling one story instead of many, I decided to really focus on creating believable characters and to create a strong narrative that arose from their personalities. I think one of the weaknesses of my previous film, *Waiting for October*, is that the *idea* behind the film—trying to recapture a zest for life by getting close to death—overwhelmed the characters. Sometimes, the characters seemed a little murky because I hadn't clearly thought out their motives in detail; they said or did what I needed them to in order to move the story forward, rather than saying or doing what they *had* to do based on their personalities and their circumstances. The connection between scenes was too tenuous: Scene A often *caused* Scene B, but I never felt like the film made it seem inevitable that B had to follow A. With *Escape Velocity*, I wanted to create real characters and ground the conflict in their different personalities so that each major story event seems inevitable based on what has come before. I wanted to string my scenes along like a row of dominoes—once the first one goes, they all must follow—and I hoped that doing so would allow the film to build to a strong and satisfying conclusion.

At the same time, I wanted to keep the thrust of my original proposal—the focus on the juxtaposition of shots to create meaning. *Waiting for October* had turned out too talky. The narrative and the underlying ideas were expressed primarily by the characters' dialogue: "first I thought this, but now I think that". With *Escape Velocity* I wanted to create meaning through visual montage, through the connection of images and the placement of certain scenes alongside

others. I wanted to tell a story through images rather than dialogue. When characters spoke, I wanted the dialogue to express and reveal character, but I wanted the characters' inner changes kept inside, not brought out through big pronouncements and long-winded speeches. In this manner, not only would I be working with the image juxtaposition that had inspired my original thesis, but I would be working in a sense with the macro-juxtaposition I had originally envisioned: I hoped to express my own worldview concerning relationships and love by placing two characters alongside each other and by showing certain events that occurred as a result of that juxtaposition.

I discussed my revised thesis plans with my advisor, Mark Morris, in the spring of 2003. He thought the changes sounded good, and gave the more focused thesis his approval. It was time to get to work.

## CHAPTER 2: WRITING THE SCREENPLAY

### Background

The story in *Escape Velocity* was inspired by different events from my own life:

- the dissolution of some personal relationships, and the hopelessness I felt at the time
- the beginning of some romantic relationships, and the feeling of hope and power they inspired in me
- the jealousy I felt when my best friend began spending less time with me as he became more involved with his girlfriend
- the week I spent in Barbados in 1996
- my mixed feelings about New Orleans. Maybe it's the swampy location, but I felt like New Orleans sucked me down under the muck and held me there, creatively and emotionally. I disliked the denseness of the city, the cramped streets, the way the houses are built right up on top of each other. At the same time, I was fascinated by how the city is crumbling right in front of your eyes; the way history, in so many of the buildings and streets, manifests itself in chipped plaster, warped boards, and wreathes of ivy slowly turning concrete to dust.

These were the memories and feelings I tapped into when writing the screenplay.

The particulars of the narrative were based around a number of different ideas, primarily my own notions of romantic love and how it makes us behave. I think Larry and Percy represent two different sides of me—the optimistic, easy-going, loyal side that wants to believe in true love, and the cynical, hard-nosed side that knows it's all a sham because he has been hurt before. The inciting idea for the movie, as I mentioned before, was to put these two different sides together and let them fight it out.

Early on, I had another idea that I wanted to work into the story: sometimes the knowledge that you did “the right thing” isn't enough to make you feel good about it. Doing the right thing usually involves personal sacrifice, and personal sacrifice hurts. I wanted Larry to eventually

choose to do the noble thing, but then to feel even worse than he did before. The hurt of doing the right thing would be greater than the moral satisfaction gained by doing it.

Finally, I was inspired by the questions: “Why do we hold ourselves back from what we claim we really want?” and “What does it take to finally get us moving?” Although *Escape Velocity* concerns two friends who plan to move to Barbados, it’s really about two friends who avoid their real problems by “planning to move” rather than taking concrete steps toward their goal. They continually dip into their cash fund because there’s no real consequence to doing so. For Percy, romantic love is the engine that finally drives him. For Larry, choosing to give up Barbados in order to help Percy eventually frees him to take the steps necessary to leave New Orleans. These were the ideas I explored as I wrote.

### **Pre-writing**

I began writing the screenplay in 2002 by taking these ideas and emotions, letting them simmer, and regularly brainstorming on them. I kept adding bits and pieces of detail to the story—the cosmetologist girlfriend, the smoky neighborhood bar—and then jotting down new ideas for dialogue, characters, and scenes as they came to me. I kept these notes in a manila envelope with my other story ideas and scribbles. I was also engaging in daily free writing, and I gained many insights into the story there. When it came time to write the screenplay proper in the summer of 2003, I pulled these notes out and condensed them into a single Word document so that I could get a feeling for the different threads I would be weaving together.

This is what I knew at that point:

- I knew the four main characters and their relationships. I knew that Percy would have a girlfriend, the student cosmetologist, though I still hadn’t given her a name. I knew that Steve, Larry’s rival, would play a role in the story, and that Larry would turn to Steve when Percy started spending time with his girlfriend. I also knew that Larry would play

“the Alpha male” with Percy and “the sidekick” with Steve, and that Larry hates being the sidekick.

- I knew Larry and Percy planned to go to Barbados, that they were saving their money in an UTZ pretzel jar for that purpose, and that they dipped into that jar to fund their trips to the bar.
- I knew that, after they were estranged, Percy would “call a meeting” at a neutral location, where he would ask Larry for his share of the money.
- I knew that I wanted the piece to have a melancholy tone. *Escape Velocity* is primarily Larry’s story, and the issue that Larry wrestles with is this: Life is unfair. Heartbreak is inevitable. The people you love will make choices you will wish they didn’t. They may leave you. They may hurt you. You can thrash and flail and kick and scream, but in the end you will just have to swallow what the world hands you and quietly soldier on. Larry is wrestling with this BEFORE Percy’s love for Melinda changes their plans, and when his best friend hurts him rather than a girlfriend, it hurts Larry in a different, powerful way, because he thought he could trust Percy.
- I knew that, at the climax of the piece, Larry would give Percy the money, would give up his dream for his buddy. I knew that he wouldn’t just give Percy his half of the money; he would give him all of it. I knew how I wanted to convey it, by juxtaposing the scene of Percy happily counting the money in the envelope with the shot of a depressed Larry sitting at home, trying to ignore the empty pretzel jar. These two scenes embodied the “meaning through montage” principle around which I wanted to structure the film.

From here, the first thing I needed to do was to develop the two main characters by understanding their histories. I wrote detailed character descriptions and biographies for both Larry and Percy. Larry’s character sketch was much more extensive, since he is the emotional center of the story. Giving Larry a history helped me understand him as a real person. It gave him a depth and a gravity that he previously lacked, and it was invaluable in giving me the confidence to begin writing the screenplay. I actually stopped writing Percy’s character sketch halfway through, since I had already explored his and Larry’s relationship in depth in Larry’s sketch.

I spent the summer of 2003 hammering out the events of the story. I had read Robert McKee’s *Story* in the spring, and I seized on his suggestion of using note cards to create what he calls the “step-outline” of the story. (412) From May through August, I spent my screenwriting time writing scene ideas on note cards, sketching shots on the backs of those cards, or laying the

cards out in sequence to see how the scenes fit together. I wanted to know how each scene connected to the scenes before and after it.

I used the moment when we first see the empty jar and realize that Larry has given Percy the money—the emotional climax of the film—as the axis around which I focused my writing. It was easy working from the climax of the film to the end where Larry finds himself at the beach; working backwards to the beginning of the story was a much more difficult task. A few primary story events had to happen: Percy had to meet and fall in love with Melinda, and he had to ask Larry for his half of the money. I also had to set up Larry and Percy’s dream of moving to Barbados. The entire enterprise was made more difficult by the fact that, as I wrote, I realized how passive a character Larry was. But I also came to realize that this passivity was Larry’s whole problem: he was trapped in a closed system of his own making. Putting a few dollars in the change jar every week made him feel like he was moving toward a goal when he was actually just lying around.

I found the note card method helpful in that it allowed me to quickly shuffle scenes around and play with new configurations of story events. I also liked that at the end of the day the stack of note cards (or discarded note cards) was a little taller; it was a nice visual sign of progress, which is often so difficult to gauge when writing. But I found the note card method made it more difficult to think about my story in anything other than abstract archetypal constructs, which was a problem since so many of the story events were character-driven interactions. I am normally a very intuitive writer—I let my ideas simmer until I feel compelled to start scribbling, at which point the characters are usually ready to go where they will—and it was very difficult for me to understand the characters when I couldn’t hear them talking or watch them pull the labels off their beer bottles as they decide what to say. McKee argues that “the



premature writing of dialogue chokes creativity.” (417) He has a definite point, but his note card method could only take me so far. I reached a plateau where I had tons of note cards that signified that “Larry and Percy have a stupid fight here,” but I didn’t know what the stupid fight would ultimately be about. Since a stupid fight by definition concerns something other than what is really bothering the characters, I needed to write the story out in order to give their world some specifics. Then I could know which of those specifics Larry might seize upon to precipitate the stupid fight and keep it rolling.

### **Writing and Revising**

By mid-August, I had the bones of the story sketched out on my note cards, and I sat down to write the script. I finished the first *complete* draft (I had been sketching out scenes all summer) during the first week of September 2003. It was 26 pages long, and I showed it to friends and professors to get feedback.

All the feedback I received suggested that the film was too long, but different viewers had different opinions why. Some folks said it was paced like a feature, too slow for a short film. My thesis advisor Mark Morris suggested that perhaps I was diluting the narrative by exploring each of Larry and Percy’s narrative arcs rather than focusing on one or the other. Other folks enjoyed the script, but wondered how Larry took a bus to Barbados at the end (which he doesn’t). The script had a lot of problems, but two things gave me hope.

First, every reader responded to the emotional climax of the story—that two scene juxtaposition where we see Percy with the money and then Larry with the empty jar. People liked it—were surprised and moved by it. I felt like the heart of the story—the sacrifice that Larry decides to make for his friend—was there and was beating.

Second, I had a very good reader in former UNO student Michael Graves, who read the script three times, wrote dozens and notes of questions in the margins of every page, and then spent two hours firing those questions at me. Why did Larry say this here? Does he really believe that? Does Percy really love that girl? Why does he think she's the one? Isn't he afraid that she'll leave him? Why doesn't Larry just do this or that? Two hours of questions, and I knew the answer to every one. If there's anything the months of note cards gave me, it was the confidence that I knew the story even if I hadn't got it on the page the first time.

So I went into the second draft with confidence and made some major changes.

I had originally tried to pay some attention to Percy and Melinda and their story—two people who felt left behind, who felt like also-rans, but who were able to see the unique beauty in each other. A nice sentiment and one that moved me, but this story was Larry's; the Percy and Melinda scenes had to go. I cut all the scenes that justified their love for each other, and I think the story is stronger without them. As an audience, we see the story from Larry's POV now. Larry is blindsided by Percy's decision to move to Atlanta; he doesn't understand the reasons behind it, and we don't need to either.

I also had a long montage sequence in the beginning—three pages—where Larry and Percy discuss their plan to move to Barbados. I thought it was a clever way to show their lives and how they structured their days while setting up their Barbados plan and illustrating that they'd been having this conversation for a *long* time. I cut the entire sequence, came into the story later, and tried to condense some of that background information into the script's earlier scenes.

I also figured out what to do with Steve. In the first draft, I used Steve to occupy Larry when I needed Percy to be somewhere else. But in talking with Mike, I remembered a key

element—Larry *hates* Steve. Steve is cool, confident, rich, and smooth with the ladies. Unlike Larry, he goes after what he wants. Steve turns Larry from the Top Dog into just another mutt, and when Larry turns to Steve for advice we know he's desperate. Much of the momentum I had writing the second draft came from the fun I had turning Steve into the jerk Larry thinks he is.

Finally, I reworked the two confrontations Percy and Larry have—first when Larry hollers at Percy for ditching him for Melinda, and then when Percy asks for his half of the money back. I tried to trim the scenes and give them more emotional resonance while keeping the language brief but realistic. These two fight scenes were the most difficult aspects of the writing (and the shooting), and I was concerned that I was relying on dialogue again to tell my story. But overall, I think they're natural, realistic confrontations that are necessary to the story.

I finished the second draft at the beginning of October 2003 and sent it out again to my readers. The response was mostly positive. Some folks offered minor suggestions that I tried to incorporate into the story, but for the most part people enjoyed it. It was still long at 25 pages, but it was much leaner and more focused. I decided to go ahead and shoot it. I had reservations about shooting what was only my second draft, but I moved forward for three primary reasons.

First, I had reviewed my personal goals and finances over the summer, and I realized that I had borrowed much more in student loans than I thought. I simply could not afford to keep borrowing money for film school, and I knew that if I tried to work and go to school simultaneously it would take much longer for me to graduate. I had set a personal goal for myself to finish my film by the end of 2003. Although I knew the script could possibly benefit from another pass or two, I didn't have time to keep rewriting if I wanted to achieve that goal. Films in the real world are subject to budget and time constraints, and I looked at my need to start shooting as an introduction to that cold, hard fact.

Second, I'd been working on the script for so many months that the story was set in my mind. I was so close to it that I couldn't tell what to cut or how to rework it. Plus, I didn't have time to set it aside and come back to it with fresh eyes if I wanted to meet my goal of finishing by December. Finally, even though I could have made the screenplay better, I felt I knew the story. I knew what needed to happen, and those events happened in the screenplay. I knew some things that read long on the page would clip along in the film once it was edited together. And I had faith that if it was sluggish when I was cutting it together, I could cut it to play shorter without damaging the narrative through-line. I knew my story, even if I hadn't got it exactly right on the page. I felt ready to begin pre-production.

### CHAPTER 3: PRE-PRODUCTION

In August 2003 I set a deadline to finish my movie by December 2003. I planned to write the script in August, spend September taking care of pre-production, shoot in October, edit in November, and put the finishing touches on in December. Even though I knew this was an exceedingly optimistic schedule, I decided to commit to it in order to inspire myself to work as hard as I possibly could. I told everyone that my goal was to graduate by December, even though I knew that would require nearly every aspect of the shoot to come off without a single hitch. By continually telling myself that I needed to finish by December, I kept my intensity level up for the grueling work of pre-production.

I had spent most of August holed up with friends and family in Florida, working on my script and visiting, and I decided for personal reasons to move back to Florida as soon as possible, by December at the latest. I told my landlord in New Orleans that I would not be renewing my lease after the end of the year, and I made no plans to search for another apartment. This added an extra level of urgency to my plans, since I would have nowhere to live in New Orleans if I didn't complete my shoot by December.

When I returned to New Orleans from Florida at the beginning of the fall semester, I got right to work on pre-production after I finished the first draft of my script. My father was getting married in Ohio on October 4<sup>th</sup>, and I initially planned to start shooting the following weekend, October 9<sup>th</sup> – 12<sup>th</sup>. I set to work casting the film, putting together the crew, finding locations and props, and reserving the equipment I would need. At the same time, I was rewriting the script,

hoping to meet that October 9<sup>th</sup> deadline. Script revisions and difficulties I had with casting and location scouting, however, eventually forced me to push the shoot dates back to the weekend of October 24<sup>th</sup>.

## **Casting**

Casting was probably the most agonizing part of the pre-production process. I get intimidated asking people to work for free on my film, in any capacity, because I know it will involve long days, simple food, and tiring work. With actors, it's a little bit easier for me because young actors need experience and I'm giving them a chance to hone their craft. But casting is also difficult because, more than any other decision, it directly affects your ability to bring the story in your head to life on the page. As a student filmmaker with no budget, it's doubly difficult because your choices are limited to those actors you can afford. With *Escape Velocity*, it was imperative for me to cast the film well, since the story depends on the interaction between the characters.

I had six main parts to cast: Larry and Mary, Percy and Melinda, and Steve and Jennifer. My first task, and the easiest one, was to secure John Richie as Percy. I ran into John at school during the first week of the fall semester, and told him that I had a part for him if he was interested. John wanted to play Percy, but only if we were shooting later in the semester, as he was serving as an AD on another student film. I didn't tell him I hadn't finished the first draft yet, but assured him that we would be shooting toward the middle or end of the semester. One down, five to go.

Next, I decided to hold an open audition in the Media Studio at UNO on Saturday, September 20<sup>th</sup>. I am still not sure how to efficiently advertise a student film audition. Students

who run ads in the paper often have excellent turnouts, but of the 100 or so people who show up, few have even considered acting before. I wanted to avoid spending the money on a newspaper ad, and I wanted to cast trained actors in all the roles, not only because the success of the film depended on the quality of the performances, but because I wanted to challenge myself by working with actors who really knew their craft rather than coaxing good performances from talented non-actors. Trained actors would also help me move at the quick pace my shooting schedule demanded.

I advertised the audition by posting flyers around school, asking the graduate acting students to announce the audition to their acting classes, attending a Lakefront Players meeting to inform those actors about my audition, contacting actors I had worked with previously, and asking Kimberly Gibbs and Henderson Jones, two UNO grad students who had already held their thesis film auditions, to recommend potential actors.

My audition was a success in that I managed to round up six or seven friend from UNO to help me conduct the auditions. This kept things running smoothly and gave everyone someone to chat with during the long stretches of time between auditions. All told, we had a turnout of eleven actors over four hours. Two of those eleven were from my assistant pool, auditioning for fun during a particularly slow hour. Only three of the eleven were men—not great news for a film that needed three strong male leads. The three men who auditioned were all solid actors, but I wanted a larger pool of actors to choose from. I knew I would have to keep looking.

My biggest find at the audition was Maggie Mariolis, a former Tulane student who gave a great reading. I was sure I wanted to use her in the film, but I wasn't sure where yet. My second biggest find was Elizabeth Rizzo, one of my friends who auditioned just for fun but who turned out to embody the character of Melinda perfectly. Elizabeth hadn't acted since grade school, but

I had already cut most of Melinda's lines out of the script in the second draft, and I assured her she'd be perfect. She was willing. Three down, three to go.

Rather than hold another open audition, I decided to invite individual actors to audition for particular roles. My friend Pushkar AKS recommended a number of UNO theater students, but most of them were wrapped up in other projects. I also contacted Tim Hammond, a former colleague from UNO, at Louisiana Casting, and he helped me go through his files in search of potential actors. I was contacting and auditioning actors right up until a few days before we finally started shooting on October 24<sup>th</sup>.

Of the men, Scott Theriot, Christopher Waltman, and Lucas Harms gave the strongest performances. (Although Jared Pendergrass, the original Larry Pipe, had moved back to New Orleans, I didn't contact him because I learned he was only in New Orleans temporarily. Also, as much as I enjoyed working with him on *October*, I wanted to expand my range by working with new actors.) Lucas, an actor from the West Bank that Kimberly Gibbs had put me in touch with, had the best audition by far. I thought he could make a very good Larry, but I knew that he would be a perfect Steve. John Richie read with Lucas at his audition, and when Lucas left we looked at each other and said, almost in sync, "Perfect Steve." He had the confidence and good looks to be the intimidating Alpha male. I definitely wanted to use Lucas in the film.

I agonized over whom to cast as Larry. Scott Theriot had been fine, but he made some initial choices that were much different than what I had originally envisioned for the character. He was more "South Brooklyn Jabroni" and less "Dignan from *Bottle Rocket*". He didn't give me as much to work with when I gave him some different things to play during the audition. I decided to go with Chris Waltman, who I had seen play a very Larry-like character in the



Lakefront Players 24-Hour Play Festival. He had less experience than Scott, but seemed to embody the character more.

When I finally got in touch with Chris on October 22<sup>nd</sup>, two days before we were scheduled to begin shooting, he said he had conflicts for the whole weekend, but that he could give me a few hours on Sunday. I thanked him for his time and called Scott, who was excited about the opportunity, ready to play the part, and available on the weekends that we were planning to shoot. I gave Scott the Larry part, then called Lucas and secured him to play Steve. Five down, one to go.

Except that Elizabeth Rizzo, it turned out, had too many other schedule conflicts to play Melinda. John Richie suggested that we try Prachi Vij, an old friend of ours who had been in *October*. As old friends, I knew Prachi and John would be comfortable together, which would help create chemistry on screen. Prachi was interested in the role and available during the weekends we were going to shoot. John was actually old friends with Scott as well, which also helped their on-screen chemistry. What had initially seemed like two setbacks for the film turned out to be two lucky developments.

The hardest role to cast was Mary, because I was casting her almost solely on the basis of appearance. I normally don't recommend that practice, since, in my experience, casting for looks results in weaker performances. But Mary has no lines in the movie; she appears in order to visually convey Larry's heartbreak and longing. I needed a girl who was physically attractive in a classical sense so that the audience, without ever hearing her speak or seeing she and Larry interact, would understand Larry's attraction to her.

I eventually cast Kate Abreo, a UNO music student who I had met once before and who I ran into in the PAC one day. She was exactly the type of girl I was looking for, and on a lark, I asked, “You want to be in my movie?”

She looked stunned, then said yes. I got her number, gave her a rough schedule, and that was that. My major players were secured only a few days before we were set to shoot.

## **Crew**

Assembling the crew was much easier than casting the actors. I generally like to shoot with a very small crew so we can move quickly and so everyone stays busy. On an average day, we had a crew of between five and seven people—a DP, gaffer, sound mixer, boom operator, AD, art director, and an occasional PA. We were often able to minimize the crew by combining the AD and boom operator positions (a useful practice that I highly recommend for small shoots) and by having the art director double as a PA.

I was lucky when assembling my crew in that some very talented friends volunteered to help right away. Pushkar AKS, who I had worked with in the equipment room and who had helped me brainstorm solutions to script problems, volunteered to help before I had even finished the first draft. I immediately asked him to DP, and he agreed. Justin Thomason had recently bought a bunch of new sound equipment he wanted to try out, and he volunteered to run sound for me. Ryan Martin and Mike Ryan were the other key members of my crew, as my gaffer and primary assistant director, respectively. Sherng-Lee Huang and Jeff Hartwick also provided invaluable assistance as secondary sound mixers and assistants, especially when a change in schedule meant that Justin couldn’t help out on certain weekends. The rest of the crew was filled out each weekend based on our needs and the availability of potential crewmembers; I

had begun pre-production in September by creating a database of UNO film students interested in working on the film, which made contacting last minute crewmembers much easier.

### **Cinematography and Equipment**

I debated for a long time whether to shoot on film or digital video. Of course, I vastly preferred the rich look of film to video, but I also preferred the lower cost of digital video. Deciding to move to Florida was the factor that made me choose digital. I figured that digital video would allow us to move a little more quickly, since it would take less time to change tape stock than film stock and we would have to reload the camera less often. I also liked the relative ease of digital video—I wouldn't have to take any precautions for storing film on the days we were shooting exteriors. I also figured that I could use the money I saved on film stock and processing to invest in a DNLE workstation, a tool I had wanted for a while and which would come in handy if I had to push my editing off until after my move, a possibility that became more likely every day. Finally, I reasoned that the main goal of my thesis would be to convince potential film investors or production companies that I could tell a story visually. Since more and more festivals are accepting digital video shorts, I didn't need to shoot film in order to get my work seen, and I didn't need to spend money on film when my cinematography skills weren't what I was attempting to showcase.

I still wanted to produce a great-looking movie on DV, however. In our early discussions about the look of the film, I told Pushkar that I wanted to contrast the lushness of the park exteriors with the gritty dirty apartment that Percy and Larry shared. I described a scene where Larry rummages through the suitcase filled with mementos of his relationship with Mary—I wanted the scene to have a gray, tonal look, almost like a “pencil sketch”. Pushkar reminded me

that we wouldn't be able to get as wide a range of grays with DV as we would with film, but he said we could get a similar tonal effect by lighting the scenes for high contrast and playing with color and shadows. We would need a powerful miniDV camera, though, and to this end, Pushkar and I decided to use the Nims Center's JVC GY-DV500 camera. Pushkar had worked with it many times before, was familiar with its operation and capabilities, and was convinced that the three ½" CCDs and zoom lens would give us a great-looking image. Another advantage to the JVC camcorder was that it had XLR inputs, allowing us to connect Justin's mixer directly to the camera and record 2-channel audio to the DV tape at 48 kHz—the same sample rate we would get if we recorded to DAT tape.

I contacted the Nims Center and got permission to use the camera for my film. The only drawback was that Chris Wuchte, another UNO film student, was using the JVC camcorder to shoot his thesis film as well. I would only be able to get the camera during the weekends of October 24<sup>th</sup> and 31<sup>st</sup>, since Chris had already booked it for the weekends of November 7<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup>. I had written those weekends off, however, as Pushkar was already committed to working on Henderson Jones's thesis shoot then. Plus, I could use the GY-DV500 during the week. I was sure that I could get the big scenes done during those two weekends, and then shoot the little scenes set in the apartment during the evenings.

I wanted us to be able to move lightly and quickly, and so I consciously planned to limit the amount of equipment we used. I planned for only three separate dolly shots and one jib arm shot, where we pan up from the empty bar fund jar to find Larry sitting alone on the couch. In talking my shots over with Pushkar, we decided to replace the jib arm shot with a rack focus, which we felt would tell the story better and would keep us from having to bother with the jib arm. The rest of my equipment was all relatively light. We used the Sennheiser 815 shotgun and

two MKE-2 lavs as our mics, which Justin ran through his 4-channel Shure mixer. For lighting, we used the Nims Center's Lowel kit, which contained both Tota and Lowel-D lights, and we brought two DeSisti 650s along for those times when we wanted a Fresnel light. A softlight rounded out our light kit. The rest of our equipment consisted of peripherals—apple boxes, sound blankets, a color monitor, C stands and flags, sandbags, bounce cards, and the like. We were able to fit all of our equipment for a weekend shoot in my Geo Prism (except for the two weekends we used the Matthews dolly and dolly tracks), allowing me to save a bundle of money by not renting a van or truck to transport equipment.

### **Art Direction**

I didn't have an art director on *Waiting for October*. I simply took advantage of locations and props that I knew I had access to, but even then, preparing the set for a scene involved a ton of extra effort. This time around, I decided to find an art director to handle all the little things I didn't have time for—set design, prop gathering, etc. Pushkar put me in touch with Jessie Tyson, a theater student who had expressed an interest in working on student films. Although she was directing a play that same semester, she was willing to help out on our shoot when she could. Even though she couldn't help with all aspects of the art direction and wasn't able to be there for every day of the shoot, Jessie was invaluable to the production. At the very least, I found it incredibly useful to talk out set and prop design with someone who had experience designing for the stage. On the many days when Jessie was able to join us on the shoot, it was a wonderful relief to have someone else focused on decorating the set so that I could work with the actors.

Jessie fabricated a few of the props that we used from scratch. She made the nametags that Larry and Percy wear at work from an old UNO student ID card, and she put together the

mementos of Mary that Larry stores in his old suitcase. She also made the fake money we used to stuff the money jar with by photocopying dollar bills and then coloring them with green, burnt sienna, and burnt umber Crayolas. Jessie's money looked so realistic that everyone assumed it was real until they handled it.

Most of the other props in the film were items that I already owned, or items that I borrowed from other students: pint glasses, candles, Christmas lights, T-shirts, the actual pretzel jar Larry and Percy store their money in, etc. The actors supplied their own clothes, occasionally borrowing mine in those instances when I wanted something particular in the scene. The only props I spent money on were the For Rent sign we see when Larry moves, the jacket Larry wears when he drives to the beach, and the numerous photos that we see throughout the film.

The biggest challenge my art director and I faced was in creating Larry's wall of beach photos. We planned to shoot the scenes involving that wall—such as the dolly out that begins the film—at the end of the movie, giving me the most time to find suitable pictures. We used a number of old photographs and postcards to create a temporary wall that appears in the background in most of the scenes that take place in the living room. We also used a number of old photos we didn't need to preserve for those shots where Larry rips photos down from the wall.

The wall of photos was originally supposed to be comprised of images Larry had ripped from magazines, but I was concerned about potential copyright issues involved in using professional photographers' work. Instead, I searched for images at royalty-free sites such as [istockphoto.com](https://www.istockphoto.com), but eventually decided that the cost per image would be prohibitive. I also contacted the Barbados Tourism Authority to see if they had any images they would be willing to

let me use. They put me in touch with Ruder Finn, their PR firm based in New York, who supplied me with four lovely 4x6” photographs. They were beautiful, but they weren’t enough.

In September, I had attended the wedding of my freshman-year college roommate, Joe Reyenga, in Pensacola, FL. Joe is an amateur photographer, and I mentioned offhand that if he had any photos to spare, I’d like to use them. He sent me a CD with over 100 photos, many of which were perfect. The wall of photos that we see in the beginning of the film ended up being comprised of photographs Joe and I had taken on family vacations. The uniform size of the photos gave the photo wall a graphic structure that I hadn’t anticipated, but I think the results are satisfactory.

## **Locations**

I intended from the very beginning to use my apartment as Larry and Percy’s apartment. I stayed in that apartment the entire time that I lived in New Orleans, and I’ve filmed there on several locations, including for *October*. My apartment was, by most standards, a terrible place to shoot since its low ceilings and wood paneling both reflect light. But it was big—allowing us to store all of our equipment in the front room while we filmed in the living room and bedrooms—and it was convenient. We could shoot there whenever we wanted. This was a great bonus, especially at the beginning of the shoot when I didn’t know how often I’d be able to use the camera and anticipated having to shoot on weeknights when the demand wasn’t as great. Another benefit my apartment offered was an empty bedroom, which would be essential for the scenes where Percy moves out. The benefits of the apartment outweighed the drawbacks.

I needed four other locations: the gas station where Larry and Percy work, the Rusty Nail bar, Audubon Park, and the beach in Pensacola where Larry ends up. The park was the easiest

location to secure. I had shot part of *Waiting for October* there, so I knew they were amenable to student shoots, especially smaller shoots like mine. I called Sarah Burnette, PR director for the Audubon Institute, and asked her for permission to shoot in the park over the weekends of October 24-26 and Nov 1-2. She agreed, asking only that I send her a letter detailing my plans so that she could inform the park's employees.

The bar was the second-easiest location to secure. I had planned to inquire at the Maple Leaf Bar on Oak Street for permission to shoot there, since I was familiar with the look of the bar and wanted to shoot in the courtyard out back. It was also relatively close to my apartment, which would make for an easy commute. Pushkar recommended shooting at the Checkmate Lounge near school, however, since we had a few dolly shots in the bar and wouldn't have to transport the dolly and track across town. Pushkar had also shot at the Checkmate Lounge before, and knew how to light it quickly and easily. We went to the Checkmate and talked to the bartender about shooting there. She checked with the manager, who agreed as long as everyone in our party was of age. They asked that we shoot on a Sunday, however, as that was their slowest day.

I knew that we would have to go to Florida for our beach. I had been to beaches in Mississippi, and the water just wasn't as blue as in the Florida Panhandle. I had previously stayed at the Holiday Inn in Navarre Beach, FL, and I called and asked for permission to shoot on the beach behind their hotel. There was a sundeck out behind the hotel that would give us a great high-angle shot of Larry on the beach. I didn't have a specific date for the beach scene, as it would depend on the availability of cast and crew as well as the weather, but the manager of the hotel told me I could shoot there at any time as long as I gave them a few weeks notice.



I called the North Florida Film Commission to ask if I could use some of the photos on their website in Larry's wall collage. I ended up talking with Tom Roush, the Escambia County Film Liaison and a former film student from FSU, for a quite a while. I told him how much I liked some of the pictures of the Gulf Islands National Seashore, which lay between Pensacola Beach and Navarre. He recommended shooting at the far eastern end of Pensacola Beach, since it adjoined the Gulf Islands National Seashore but wouldn't require me to obtain a shooting permit from the Park Service. Pensacola Beach was also closer to New Orleans than Navarre, which was advantageous since I hoped to shoot the beach stuff in one day without having to stay overnight. Mr. Roush put me in touch with Mary Bolman at the Santa Rosa Island Authority, who gave me permission to shoot on Pensacola Beach.

The gas station was the most difficult location to find. I had hoped to shoot both the interior scenes of Larry and Percy working and the exterior scene of Percy opening the envelope at the same gas station. I wanted Percy's gas station to be outside New Orleans, in the country, so one Saturday I drove around the North Shore checking out potential service stations. I found three or four stores that would be perfect, but I had a difficult time contacting the managers of those stores. The few I did reach turned me down.

I decided that I could shoot the interiors and exteriors at two different locations, figuring that a manager might be more inclined to let me shoot in his store if the shoot seemed less involved. I was talking with Henderson Jones about the exteriors he planned to shoot on the levee behind UNO's Cove dining area when I remembered that the Cove had a convenience store. With the right angles, it could pass for a gas station quickie mart. I contacted the manager of food services at the Cove and she agreed to let me shoot in the Privateer Mart on a Saturday

afternoon, as long as we shot when the store was already open so that they didn't have to ask an employee to stay during off hours.

As for the exteriors, I had initially contacted the Oak Harbor BP station on the North Shore, right off I-10 after you cross the causeway. It was my first choice for the exteriors since it was close to New Orleans yet sat off in field by itself. Every employee I talked to suggested that the owner would be amenable to my shooting there. It took me weeks to get in touch with her, but I finally did reach her in late November, after the principal photography was done. She agreed that I could come out whenever, and we scheduled the shoot for a weekend in early December.

## CHAPTER 4: PRODUCTION

Script revisions and difficulties in casting and location scouting forced me to push my shoot back from its originally scheduled start date of October 9<sup>th</sup>. As the middle of October approached, however, I realized that I would need to start shooting soon if I wanted to wrap production before I moved in December. I set a start date for the shoot of Friday, October 24<sup>th</sup>. Any pre-production tasks not met by that time would simply have to continue during the shoot, and a good bit of the pre-production tasks discussed above took place concurrently with our shooting weekends.

As I mentioned before, I originally thought that I would only be able to use the DV camera during the weekends of October 24<sup>th</sup> and 31<sup>st</sup>. At the beginning of the shoot, I planned the shooting schedule to maximize our production time during those weekends; anything we didn't get during those weekends would have to be picked up during the week, whenever I could get the actors and crew together. After the first weekend of shooting, however, I learned that Chris Wuchte was going to postpone his thesis shoot, which freed up the camera. Henderson Jones decided to push his shoot back as well, which freed up Pushkar. I quickly reserved the camera for those weekends, which made my shooting schedule much less stressful.

Principal photography on *Escape Velocity* took place over four weekends from October 24<sup>th</sup> through November 16<sup>th</sup>. During this time, I got into a rather regular schedule. I spent the week making final preparations for the scenes we were going to shoot that weekend—securing crew, double-checking props and locations, storyboarding upcoming scenes—and attending to

pre-production concerns for weekends still to come. On Friday, I would pick up equipment from the studio and equipment room and bring it to my house. We would shoot Friday afternoon, Saturday, and Sunday. On Monday I would clean up my house and return the equipment, then crash and sleep. On Tuesday, the process would start over.

### **First weekend, October 24<sup>th</sup> – 26<sup>th</sup>**

I offered Scott the part of Larry on Wednesday, October 22<sup>nd</sup>. Scott worked nights and John worked mornings, but we had a brief window on Thursday afternoon to run through a quick rehearsal of some of the key scenes. We read through the two confrontation scenes and worked through the beats, and I gave Scott some supplementary materials to give him an idea of the kind of the guy I thought Larry was (among these was a photocopy of Dan Clowes' comics featuring his opinionated hipster Lloyd Llewellyn). We didn't have a lot of rehearsal time, but Scott and John seemed to understand the characters' motivations and desires, which set me at ease. I crossed my fingers and we jumped into production the following day.

We started the shoot Friday night with scenes 38 and 44—the two scenes that take place in Percy's empty bedroom after he's moved out. I had a roommate who was in the process of moving from the apartment, and I wanted to use his empty room before I sublet it to someone else. I also chose those scenes because they had no dialogue, which meant Scott didn't have to rush to memorize lines. Pushkar set things up with some nice, high-contrast lighting that threw deep shadows on Scott's face, emphasizing the emptiness of the room and melancholy feel of the scene. It was a good, easy night for the crew, giving us a chance to work any kinks out before we got into the intensive dialogue-heavy scenes or location shoots. I hadn't yet taken the photograph of Percy and Melinda that I planned to use in scene 44, so we skipped the insert shot of the

photograph, which I planned to get later in the shoot. After we wrapped, I moved all of my roommate's stuff back into the empty room, freeing up the rest of the apartment and giving us plenty of space in the living room in which to work.

We met at my house on Saturday at 9:00 and drove to Audubon Park to shoot scene 45, the scene at the band shell where Larry gives Percy his money back. The day started out nice enough, with light cloud cover, and we got some great long shots of Scott and John from across the lake. Some very ominous clouds moved in quickly, however, when we went back across the lake to get our medium shots and close-ups. The sky was almost totally black when it finally started to rain, and we grabbed the equipment and high-tailed it under the band shell. I decided to hold out and see if the dark skies would pass over as quickly as they came: a good choice, since they moved on about 10 minutes later. The skies continued to clear as we shot the rest of the scene, however, and the resulting shots had varying qualities of light. In all, I don't think these differences are too noticeable in the final cut. In some ways they actually benefit the scene, since John's close-ups have a brighter, sunnier aspect than Scott's, which are more overcast and dark. This was also the first scene we shot with dialogue, and I think the fact that Scott and John were still finding the characters and getting familiar with the material helped their performances in a scene where Larry and Percy were unsure what to say to each other. We also grabbed scene 10, the baseball scene, when we were done. It was easy and fun, since I knew the exact angles I wanted for those shots.

We headed back to the apartment for lunch, then shot scene 2, where Larry and Percy root through the couch for change and discuss their plans for Barbados. Our momentum really started to flag at this point, since we were working out the cinematography for the living room while simultaneously figuring out the best way to block the shots in a scene where the

characters move quite a bit. My actors were starting to get tired, too, and since they were still on book, we had to get more takes than usual for each shot. I was also trying to help Scott relax into the character; he was making some choices I didn't agree with, and I was having trouble getting the performance I envisioned. The park and our late lunch had worn us all out, so after we finished the scene I let the actors go early. My crew and I discussed the scenes we would cover for the next day, then walked through the apartment and planned out our shots and lighting schemes. We decided to try and tackle scenes 23 and 24: Larry and Percy's big hollering match regarding Percy's flagging interest in Barbados. I knew the actors hadn't had much time to memorize the script, but I figured that it would be better to try and get these two heavy-dialogue scenes out of the way early on. Any other scenes in the apartment would be fairly short and sweet in comparison, the kind of stuff we could knock out in an hour or two some evening. I called the actors and told them about our change in plans.

Our preparation Saturday night really paid off; Sunday moved like clockwork. We started out in my bedroom, shooting scenes 9 and 3, both of which take place in front of Larry's closet. My bedroom had only one window, and because of the proximity of the neighbor's house, I didn't get much natural light. Pushkar did wonders with the lighting, however, setting up scene 3 so that it matched the look of scene 2 from the evening before, then switching gears and making scene 9 look like it was taking place in the afternoon, with soft daylight spilling in from the window. While we shot in the bedroom, Ryan Martin moved on to the bathroom and set up the lighting for scene 23. We were able to move on to scene 23 as soon as we were done with the bedroom, and we started shooting the master shots while my AD, Britt Pitre, ordered lunch. John and Scott had spent some down time earlier in the day rehearsing their lines for scenes 23 and 24, and they nailed the scene right off the bat.

We broke for lunch, then returned to the bathroom and got close-ups while Ryan set up scene 24. By the time we finished scene 23, the living room was lit and ready to go and we still had three hours left before Scott had to leave for work. With so much time to spend, we were all able to relax and focus on the scene. Pushkar and I decided to shoot coverage on Scene 24 since it had so much dialogue. We blocked out the action with Scott and John, modified our shots to cover that action as best we could, and then started shooting. By this point, Scott and John really seemed to have found the characters, and Pushkar and Ryan had even managed to turn my long, narrow living room—notoriously difficult to shoot in—into something visually and graphically interesting. We spaced lights down the length of the room to emphasize the depth, and we used the reflective nature of the ceiling tiles to our advantage: Pushkar lit the rooms so that the ceiling read as almost pure white on the monitors. The bright ceilings contrasted with the darkness of the walls and the dimness of the rest of the room, emphasizing the conflict between the characters.

It was a tremendously satisfying day, and it gave me confidence that we could finish the shoot on time. By the end of the weekend, we had shot six-and-a-half pages, and we had three of the biggest dialogue scenes completed. It felt wonderful to finally be shooting.

### **Second Weekend, October 31<sup>st</sup> – November 2<sup>nd</sup>**

On Thursday, October 30<sup>th</sup>, I met Scott, John, and Kate Abreo at the Checkmate Lounge, where we took the photos that would eventually go in Larry's suitcase. I used a disposable camera for this, but I wish I had access to a digital camera instead. It would have been nice to see the images as soon as I shot them, especially since I wanted the key photo of Larry and Mary to look like they had shot it themselves by holding the camera out at arm's length. I got lucky in

that one of the photos we took turned out well. Scott's smile looks a little funny, but the picture works fine in the context of the film.

I didn't try to shoot on Halloween, since I knew doing so would be like pulling teeth. Instead, I planned out my shots for the weekend's shoot. We had a late call time of 11:00 on Saturday since my crew and cast had all been out late celebrating the holiday. A few crewmembers celebrated too intensely, apparently, and were sick on Saturday, leaving me with a crew of three: Pushkar, Jeff Hartwick, and Jessie Tyson. I left messages for a few potential back-up crewmembers, after which our little group headed to Audubon Park, where we shot scene 35, the second scene at the band shell where Percy asks for his half of the money back.

I decided to shoot coverage on this scene for the same reasons that I had on 24: the amount of dialogue and the movement of the actors. The scene took much longer to shoot, however, mainly because we were all a little tired and were working short-handed (although Sherng-Lee Huang, one of the emergency crewmembers I had called, showed up midway through the shoot and helped alleviate some of the stress we were under). We also had another setback in that, as the sun moved, the shadows and the quality of the light kept changing. Pushkar and I spent a good deal of time moving the actors around to get the best possible light. The sun also brought a number of people to the park that hadn't been there the week before when it was cloudy. At one point, our shooting was interrupted when someone attending a nearby birthday party cranked up some Barney records.

We finally wrapped at 4:00, and I took my tired, hungry crew and actors to Subway for lunch. We headed back to my apartment, but everyone's energy had flagged noticeably, especially Scott's. We shot scene 17, where Percy is talking on the phone to Melinda, then wrapped for the day.



The weather was beautiful again on Sunday, and we started out with scene 12, which takes place in Percy's car. I didn't want to invest in a professional car mount for a scene that would run less than a minute in the finished film, and I didn't feel comfortable mounting the \$5000 JVC DV camera to a car, either. But one afternoon in the equipment room, Pushkar had assembled a simple, sturdy car mount from an old tripod, the knuckle off a C-stand, and a 6" C-clamp. We tested it with my lightweight Hi-8 camcorder, and it worked great. I didn't have a miniDV camcorder, however, and I couldn't talk anyone into letting me borrow one. But Mike Ryan was willing to let us use his Digital 8 camcorder, and since it was digital, we used the car mount to attach it to the door of John Richie's truck. We hid lavalier mics behind the sun visors and ran the cables to the crawlspace behind the seats, where I recorded the audio to DAT tape and watched a feed from the mounted camera on my little Hi-8 camcorder. Scott, John, and I found a relatively smooth street and drove up and down it while we shot the scene.

After we'd got scene 12, we broke for lunch, then moved into the courtyard behind my apartment to shoot scene 11, where Larry and Percy play Hungry Hungry Hippos. I had plenty of crew members on Sunday, most of whom had gotten to kick back and relax while John, Scott, and I drove around town. It was hard getting them to focus again after lunch, and scene 11, which was only 4 shots, took us a long time to finish.

Prachi Vij came over after she got off work, arriving when we were in the middle of shooting scene 11. I had originally hoped to go back to Audubon Park and grab scene 15, where Percy tries to teach Melinda to play catch, but Pushkar convinced me that, because of how sleepy and punchy everyone was already feeling, we would be crazy to try and move to a new location. We went inside and grabbed scene 37 instead—where Melinda helps Percy move out—and then, since we had the living room already lit, we grabbed scene 14—Percy doing sit-ups—as

well. We wrapped at 5:00. The second weekend was not nearly as productive as the first, but for a holiday weekend we still managed to get almost four pages shot. What's more, we had all the big confrontation scenes between Larry and Percy in the can, as well as the weather-dependent car mount scene.

### **Third Weekend, November 7<sup>th</sup> – 9<sup>th</sup>**

The third weekend was the most intensive of the shoot, as we shot the bulk of our locations this weekend and used almost all of the supporting actors that appear in the film. But since both of our primary locations were near school and since Pushkar was also the equipment room manager, I was able to leave the bulk of the equipment in the equipment room for the weekend. I only brought the essential equipment to my house for Friday's shoot.

On Friday afternoon, Pushkar, Mike Ryan, and myself met John and Scott at my house and grabbed scene 16, where Percy grooms himself in the bathroom. Prachi arrived after she got off work at 4:00, and we went back to Audubon Park to grab the catch scene we had skipped the previous Sunday. I had hoped to shoot this game of catch on a sunny day, since it had been gray and overcast in two of our three previous park scenes, but Friday was gray, too. We decided to go ahead and grab it because we already had all the actors together. I also knew that if *really* didn't like it, I could probably make arrangements to re-shoot it, but at least I would have a version to fall back on. Pushkar was able to add a lot of warmth to the scene, however, by playing with the white balance on the camera. We shot the scene by the band shell, where one of the aeration pipes was spraying a jet of water out into the lake, and this spray of water added an interesting graphic element to the background of the scene. It ended up working nicely.

We planned to shoot at the Privateer Mart on Saturday, then shoot scenes 5 and 7 at my house, where the courtyard out back would double for the courtyard of the Rusty Nail bar. Our call time was 12:00, since we couldn't shoot in the Privateer Mart until it opened. I met Pushkar and John up at UNO at 11:00, however, and we loaded the Matthews Dolly and the rest of the equipment into John's truck and drove it to the Cove, where we met the rest of the cast and crew right before noon.

Pushkar and I had scouted the Privateer Mart earlier in the week, and we learned that we would not be able to place the actors behind the register as we had originally planned. There was a sandwich counter off to the side, however, and we decided to use that counter for the scenes in the script that took place at the checkout line. We hoped that, with the right angles, the audience would simply assume that the "register" was hidden from view. There was a rack of chips next to the sandwich counter, and we decided to stage scene 8, which originally took place at the register, at the chip rack instead, with Percy stocking the shelves rather than ringing up customers. It was a quick fix that ended up saving us a bunch of time: shooting at the register as I had originally planned would have interfered with the Privateer Mart's normal operations, slowing everyone down. As it was, the Privateer Mart kept getting waves of people, and we had to wait for them to leave during those scenes that required sound.

We grabbed scene 8—where Percy and Larry talk while Percy stocks chips—first since it was the most involved scene. After that, we moved on to scene 28, the Saints fan scene. By this time it was mid-afternoon and the number of customers had considerably thinned; we were able to get the two different angles of scene 28 relatively quickly. It was getting close to sundown when we finished, but we were able to move quickly from here on out. We wrapped sound and set up the dolly tracks while Jessie Tyson and Angel Osbourne headed to my house, where they

dressed the courtyard with Christmas lights and candles for the evening's shoot. We got the dolly in on Scott from scene 36, then moved the camera to one of the aisles of the Privateer Mart. Kate Abreo and I got the shots of her walking down the aisle for scene 36 by ourselves while the rest of my crew broke down the equipment and returned everything we didn't need for that night to the equipment room. By the time Kate and I were done, everyone else was ready for the company move to my apartment.

The crew and I arrived at my apartment after dark. Jessie and Angel had done a great job setting up the backyard, and Scott and John Richie were already relaxing at the table back there. Maggie Mariolis and Lucas Harms arrived shortly thereafter. I discussed scenes 5 and 7 with the actors while Pushkar and the crew set up the lights and sound.

In the script, scene 7 reads, "Steve explains the nuances of tax law to Jennifer" without specifying any dialogue. I decided to try out John Richie's suggestion that Steve instead tell Jennifer the story of how Mary broke Larry's heart. John also suggested that Larry could be oblivious to Mary's cheating on him as a kind of silly joke. I decided to give it a try, and I asked Lucas if he was up for a lot of improvising. He was game.

We broke quickly for dinner, then got to work. Not only was Lucas's improvisation funny, but all of the actors did a great job of responding to him and going with the flow. That evening was one of the most pleasurable experiences of the entire shoot—nice breeze, actors having fun playing off each other, crew relaxed and enjoying the performances, no pressure to hurry up and move onto something else, and everyone fat and happy on pizza and enjoying the work.

Sunday began the same as Saturday: I met Pushkar and John at UNO at 11:00, since we wouldn't be able to shoot at the Checkmate Lounge until it opened at noon. We loaded the tracks

and dolly and other equipment into John Richie's truck and met the rest of the crew and cast at the Checkmate. We tackled scene 4 first, since it had the most dialogue and because it was set at the bar itself, which we anticipated would fill with customers as the day wore on. Diana Jackson and Cali Pomes, two UNO film students, played the girls who shoot down Larry and Percy's advances, and the three of us worked out some funny lines for them to use in rejecting the boys. My strategy of shooting for coverage on the dialogue scenes backfired on me in this instance, because the owner of the bar began to get agitated with us when we finished scene 4 and moved over into a booth for scene 34. He didn't realize, I guess, that we intended to shoot the whole day, and we had been asking the patrons of the bar to refrain from talking while we shot. Pushkar talked to him and explained that this was the last scene that required sound, and he seemed agreeable. The other patrons of the bar even offered to be quiet during the close-up takes, which was a real help in persuading him to let us continue. I tried to smooth over relations with the bar owner by buying a number of pitchers of beer for use as props and by tipping the bartender well when I paid the tab.

With the dialogue-heavy scenes wrapped, we were free to move to the back of the bar and get out of the patrons' way. We first tackled the dolly shot where we push in on Larry as he sits surrounded by Percy, Melinda, Steve, and Jennifer, which allowed us to wrap Lucas and Maggie and move the dolly tracks out of the bar and back into the truck. We then shot the few remaining scenes with Scott so that he could leave for work at 5:00. We finished up the day with the shots of Percy and Melinda meeting and talking, as well as a quick cutaway of Mike Postalakis playing video poker. My professor Steve Hank, responding to my second draft of the script, had suggested that the scene where Percy and Melinda meet was a little flat and that I should rewrite it so that the audience understands why Percy is so attracted to Melinda. I

wrestled with this rewrite for a while, and finally decided to simply switch Percy and Melinda's lines so that Melinda hits on Percy instead. It's not a perfect solution, but I think it addresses Steve's concerns and I like the simplicity of it.

Once we finished the dialogue-intensive scenes, shooting at the Checkmate was quite a lot of fun. A number of the regulars seemed to enjoy watching us work, and they laughed and joked with us when we weren't shooting. We wrapped at 7:00, took the equipment back to the equipment room, and then my crew and I went to a different bar to relax. Weekend three had been the most productive weekend of the shoot by far. We had shot over seven pages, and we had most of the difficult stuff in the can. It was a huge weight off my shoulders.

#### **Fourth weekend, November 14<sup>th</sup> - 16<sup>th</sup>**

I had scheduled our trip to Pensacola for Friday, November 14<sup>th</sup>. I originally planned to shoot in Pensacola with a simple crew of just Justin and Pushkar, so that we three and Scott could all ride over in one car. Ryan Martin offered to drive himself, however, since he was interested in coming along to the beach for the shoot. Since we now had two cars, I initially hoped that Diana and Cali could come with us to the beach to play the women who Larry meets at the end of the story. I liked the idea that the girls who respond to Larry's hello on the beach look remarkably similar to the girls who rejected him in the bar earlier. Diana was unable to join us, however, so I spent the bulk of the week trying to contact actors in Pensacola who might be interested in being in the film. I finally got in touch with Laura Crolla and Jenevieve Frank, two actors in the theater program at the University of West Florida in Pensacola. They agreed to meet us at East Park in Pensacola Beach at noon on Friday.

Our call time on Friday was for 7:00 at the PAC at UNO. Justin, Cali, Pushkar, Ryan, and I were all there by 7:15, but Scott was nowhere to be found. I called him from my cell phone repeatedly, but with no answer. We went to a nearby Burger King to grab breakfast, and Ryan and I checked our tire pressure and filled our tanks with gas.

I finally heard from Scott around 8:00. He had slept through his alarm and the phone calls and was rushing to get to us. Since he was coming from the West Bank in the middle of rush hour traffic, he didn't expect to get to UNO until almost 9:00. I was disappointed at our late start, but I knew that we could still get all of our shots even if we didn't leave New Orleans until 10:00. It was approximately four hours to Pensacola, and I figured that as long as we started shooting by 3:00 pm, we would be fine. Plus, the weather was beautiful, and I wanted to take advantage of this great beach day while we had it.

Scott arrived at UNO right after nine, and we caravanned to Pensacola Beach. I called Laura and Jenevieve on the way and told them about our change in plans. We got to East Park around 1:30, and it was exactly as Tom Roush had described it: perfect white sand, bright blue water, very little development, and almost totally deserted. Some of the crew who had wondered earlier why we didn't just go to Biloxi now understood why we had to come all this way. Everyone was simply blown away by how beautiful the beach was.

I sent Scott, Cali, and Ryan back into town to pick up lunch while Justin, Pushkar, and I scouted the beach for the best locations. We decided to stay right at the parking lot we'd first turned into, as it had a bathroom. We started off after lunch by shooting Scott walking down the boardwalk and then down the beach. We then moved down to the water's edge and got the shots of Scott opening the suitcase. The sun was already starting to head towards the horizon at this

point, so we tried to move as quickly as possible in order to get everything we needed before the light changed too much.

Laura and Jenevieve arrived when we were shooting the scenes at the water's edge, and I was excited to see that they vaguely resembled Cali and Diana in build, hair color, and hair style: I would be able to get that symmetry after all! We shot the scenes with Laura and Jenevieve, then moved quickly back to the parking lot and got the shots of Scott leaving his car, which I had left for last because they weren't essential. Once we finished them, however, we had plenty of time to relax and record some Foley sounds, ambience, and wild tracks while simultaneously getting some great cutaways of the beach and the sun setting into the water. After dark, we retired to Peg Leg Pete's, a seafood restaurant that Laura and Jenevieve had recommended. This was, without a doubt, the best day of shooting we had. Relaxed, rewarding work, wonderful weather, beautiful location, good friends, and a good meal at the end of the day. I drove home very relaxed, with the bulk of the shoot under my belt.

For the rest of the weekend, we shot at my apartment with Scott as our only actor. On Saturday, we wrapped Larry's bedroom by shooting the remaining scenes involving the money jar and the suitcase in the closet (scenes 21, 26, 27, and 44). These were easy scenes and set-ups, since we'd already worked out the lighting scheme on earlier weekends. We finished up for the day with scene 50, where Larry starts packing and we follow him with a hand-held camera.

The film begins as we dolly out from a photo of the beach, and it's this photo that Larry has in his suitcase at the end of the film. I originally planned to find an attractive photo of a beach and use that as the key photo, but in Pensacola I hit upon the idea of taking a picture of Pensacola Beach from the same angle as one of our shots. This way, not only would the photo's caption lure Larry to Pensacola, but he would actually end up walking into very own photo in the



film, an effect similar to the ending of the Coen Brothers' *Barton Fink* where the final shot resembles the painting on the wall of Barton's hotel room.

Before Saturday's shoot, I took the photos I snapped the day before in Pensacola to the one-hour developer at Eckerd drug store. When we wrapped for the day, I picked up the pictures and drove to Justin Thomason's house. I brought a photo of the beach in Pensacola as well as a photo I had taken in St. Maarten. Justin scanned the photos into Photoshop and replaced the flat sky in the Pensacola photo with the more dynamic sky from the St. Maarten photo. He then added the caption identifying the beach as Pensacola Beach, and added text around the image to make it look like it had been printed in a magazine. It took Justin the better part of the evening to create the image, and I spent most of that time running errands and drawing storyboards in preparation for the next day's shoot.

Justin had a problem printing the photo from his computer, so he transferred the Photoshop image to a portable USB drive, which I took to Kinko's to print. I couldn't get the computers at Kinko's to print the file, and the lone staff member working that night couldn't either. When I finally gave up, it was just past two in the morning and we had a 9:00 am call time. I prayed that Justin might know how to solve the problem in the morning and went to bed.

I was tired as a dog Sunday morning, but I kept myself going with sweets and caffeine. We started off outside my apartment with scenes 49 and 54, exterior scenes that take place as Larry is preparing to move. We then moved inside to finish the living room scenes, most of which involved the wall of photos.

I had been calling Justin all morning, but was unable to get a hold of him. I explained the photo issue to Pushkar and Ryan Martin, who was sound mixing that day. Ryan thought he might be able to solve the problem. He took Justin's USB drive to his house as we started to light the

living room, and was back in 30 minutes with two great-looking prints. He hadn't had any problems at all accessing the files and printing them up, and I still don't understand what had kept the rest of us from succeeding. Now that we had the photo we needed, though, we were ready to start shooting.

We got scene 47—where Scott rips the photos down off the wall—first, using the disposable photos Jessie had originally hung there. As Pushkar set up the lights for scene 20, I replaced the disposable photos with the beach photos that we wanted to use for the finished wall. I placed the Justin's magazine page right in the center. We shot scene 20 at the wall, then wrapped Scott's living room scenes by shooting scene 30, where Larry roots through the couch for more change, then decides to sell the TV. We broke for lunch, then moved into the kitchen and shot scene 47, where Larry throws his photos away, then fishes the Pensacola photo from the top of the heap. Three shots in, Pushkar fiddled with the white balance on the camera and managed to give the sunlight spilling in through the windows a really warm, setting sun feeling, which made the pink walls go coral. It looked very beachy, perfect for our purposes. We moved to the refrigerator and shot scene 33, where Scott spills his beer. Scott was wrapped for principal photography, and he took a nap on the couch while the rest of us set up the dolly tracks and got the opening dolly shot for scene 1. We grabbed a few cutaways of the wall and some Foley effects, and then, while the crew packed up the equipment, Pushkar and I woke Scott up and got the insert shots of the interior of the suitcase, which we hadn't gotten at the beach in the interest of time. With those shots done, we wrapped principal photography. We had shot three-and-a-half pages for the weekend and, except for a few simple shots and the scene where Percy finds the money at the gas station, we were finished shooting. I shook everyone's hands, said good-bye, and crashed to bed.

### **Pick-ups and Second Unit Shooting**

The next week, I drove to Florida for a wedding, then visited my family for Thanksgiving. During this time, I was making plans to get the remaining shots we needed: contacting the actors in order to ascertain their schedules and trying to secure the locations, primarily the BP station on the North Shore. I finally talked to the owner of the BP right before Thanksgiving, and she agreed to let me shoot there on the afternoon of Sunday, December 14<sup>th</sup>.

I returned to New Orleans from Florida on Wednesday, December 3<sup>rd</sup> and set to work. I contacted the Nims Center about reserving the JVC DV camera and was able to use it for the bulk of the week of December 8<sup>th</sup>. I scouted a number of pawnshops in the area and found one, Phoenix Pawn on Clearview, that was amenable to my shooting there. I reserved equipment from the equipment room for the weekend of December 12<sup>th</sup>-14<sup>th</sup>, put together a crew, and informed John Richie and Prachi Vij of our schedule.

I spent the bulk of the next week picking up the small shots I still needed. In some ways, getting this last little group of shots was as stressful as the four weeks of principal photography had been because I had to exert a great deal more effort per shot. Pushkar planned to return to India at the end of the semester and was very busy preparing for his move, so I lit and operated the camera myself during the second unit shooting. Chris Leigh, who had recently defended his thesis, was my sole crew for the majority of these shots.

I started off the week by borrowing Mike Ryan's Digital 8 camcorder again and shooting Larry's POV shots out the window for scene 12, the car scene. We used the Digital 8 camcorder to ensure that these shots would match our other car shots, and we shot two versions of the "reveal" POV shot: one where there's an empty corner where Mary was standing, and one where

a guy is standing there (I played the guy). After getting our car shots, we went down to Audubon Park and got some quick shots of Kate to cut into scene 7, when Steve is telling the story of Larry's break-up.

On Tuesday, I met up with Scott, Chris, and Patrick Roberts, and we took my car (which doubles as Larry's car in the movie) down to the soccer fields behind the Audubon Zoo. We parked the car and shot the low angle up on Larry for scene 55, when he drives to the beach. By shooting a low angle and opening the aperture until the sky outside the window went white, I hoped to fool people into thinking that the car was actually moving. We got the reverse angle—Larry's POV of the suitcase—and then re-shot the insert of the interior of the suitcase for the final scene at the beach. I was concerned that the lighting we used when we originally got this shot might read as too artificial. The natural light at the soccer field matched the rest of the beach scene almost exactly.

Tuesday night John and Prachi came to my apartment, where we snapped a number of different photos to use as the photo Larry finds in Percy's closet in scene 38, the very first scene we had shot. After picking up the developed photos Wednesday evening, I lit the empty bedroom in my apartment similarly to how Pushkar lit it the first night of the shoot and took the insert shots of the photo by myself.

I had planned a scene in the movie where Larry has a garage sale to get rid of most of his possessions before he moves. I wanted to have a similar sale, and I planned to do both at once: this way, I figured, I wouldn't have to dress a set or search for extras. We planned the garage sale and the shoot for Saturday, December 13<sup>th</sup>. New Orleans got hit with a long string of thunderstorms that day, and we were forced to move the garage sale inside. Needless to say, I didn't get a big turn out. When the sky started to clear later in the day, Chris Leigh and I brought

a number of items outside and we got the garage sale shot in my driveway, without extras and with what looked like a pretty staged garage sale. It looked good enough for a 10-second scene however, so I was happy.

On Sunday morning, I met Scott at the Phoenix Pawn shop, and we got some quick shots of him carrying his guitars and television into the shop for scenes 31 and 52. I returned the TV and guitars to my house, then met John, Prachi, Justin Thomason, and Brandon Dauzat at UNO. We drove to the Oak Harbor BP on the North Shore and prepared to shoot scene 46, where Percy finds all the money in his envelope. When I scouted the BP store, I hadn't taken the time to consider where I would be placing the camera and where the sun would be in the sky when we were shooting. When we got to the BP, the relationship between the sun, the pumps, and the building was different than I had recalled it, and the blocking and camera set-ups I had in my mind wouldn't work. We had to take some time to re-block the scene so that the actors would be in the sun, but so we could also fill the background of the frame with space, plants, and trees in order to emphasize that Percy and Melinda had left New Orleans. We were losing light pretty quickly as the sun dropped behind the building and we had to keep repositioning the actors and moving out of the shadows. We finally got all the shots, however, and we wrapped around 6:00.

On Monday, December 15<sup>th</sup>, I reviewed the DV tapes and decided that John's close-up shots from the gas station were too dark. I called John, and he met me at my apartment. We re-shot his close-ups in the courtyard behind my house, using a 650W DeSisti Fresnel lamp to simulate the direct rays of the setting sun. The effect was pretty good, and we got a number of good takes. We broke down the rest of the equipment and I returned the DV camera to the studio.

The last shot I got was Tuesday afternoon. I borrowed Justin's Canon XL1 miniDV camcorder and got a few quick shots of Scott and John dressed as cowboys at the

Uptown Costume Shop on Magazine Street. I was finally done, six weeks after the date I had originally aimed for, but I had still met my most important goal – to wrap production before the end of the year so that I could move to Florida as planned. I returned the camera and the rest of the equipment, boxed up the 14 mini DV and Digital 8 tapes we'd shot, and started packing.

## CHAPTER 5: POST PRODUCTION

I moved from New Orleans just before New Year's Eve, and I spent the first two weeks of 2004 unpacking and getting settled. Then I began searching for an editing workstation on which to edit my film.

I did not know much about computers, and my research took me about a week. I really took my time in researching and considering my options, partly because of the cost involved and partly because I wanted to make sure that I didn't make any mistakes that might slow down my editing. In some ways, I felt like I was stranded in Florida, and I would have to deal with any problems that arose on my own. I wanted to nip any potential computer problems in the bud.

I considered Premiere Pro, Final Cut Pro, and AVID Xpress Pro as my editing system, and I looked at computers from Hewlett Packard, Dell, and Apple, as well as specialized turnkey PCs built specifically for video editing. In the end, I chose AVID's Xpress Pro system since I was familiar with AVID's other products and felt that I would experience a shorter learning curve with Xpress Pro than with the other editing systems. I also chose a turnkey system from DVLine in Colorado. My system had a 3.0 GHz Pentium 4 processor, one GB of DDR 400 RAM, an 80 GB system drive, a 240 GB media storage drive consisting of two 120 GB SATA drives striped together in a RAID configuration, an NVidia GeForce FX 5600 graphics card, a Sound Blaster Audigy 2 ZS Platinum sound card with a front panel featuring multiple sound inputs, and a DVD burner. Although DVLine didn't offer the extensive on-site technical support that Hewlett Packard, my second choice, did, they still offered toll-free tech support by phone.

More importantly, I was able to get all of the specs I wanted in a single system for about \$2200, about \$500 cheaper than a similar system from HP, which still wouldn't have had all the features that the DVLine system offered. What's more, DVLine was able to sell me Xpress Pro at the student discount price, gave me a special price on Sonic ReelDVD, and made sure both programs were loaded and running properly on my computer before they shipped it.

I ordered my computer on January 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2004. The system was going to take a few weeks to build, so I spent the time working on my thesis book and visiting friends and family. My computer arrived on February 9<sup>th</sup>. I plugged it in and set to work.

I did not have my own miniDV camera but I was able to borrow a bare bones Sony miniDV camcorder from a friend. I hooked it up to my system and was very pleased when Xpress Pro recognized the camera immediately, allowing me to control the playback controls of the camera from the AVID application. I started logging and digitizing footage. I was seeing much of my footage for the very first time, and I was excited to see that it looked great. At first, I noticed small glitches in the playback of clips within the AVID application—a distortion like a ripple moving across the image during shots with a lot of movement. I output a few files to see if these glitches were present in the finished media and breathed a sigh of relief when they were not. (I assume that the glitches I saw were simply caused by the high-intensity processing required to play back clips with a lot of motion.)

Because we had recorded most of our sound directly to the miniDV tape, I was able to organize my clips into bins and start cutting right away without having to sync up my sound. There were a few clips—the car mount shots and those shots where we put the camera up in the closet for a high-angle shot—where we had to record double-system sound, and the challenge I now faced was getting that sound from my DAT tapes into my computer. By the time I wrapped



my shoot in December, UNO had closed for the fall semester, and I had focused on my move rather than on getting into the Spectral audio workstation and transferring my sound. The Sound Blaster card I had ordered from DVLine had SPDIF inputs, which would have allowed me to run SPDIF cables directly from a DAT recorder into the computer and transfer my sound at home. DVLine had made a mistake, however, and installed a Sound Blaster card that lacked SPDIF inputs. I called a number of recording studios to see if they might be able to help me, but I ended up sending my DAT tapes back to New Orleans, where Justin Thomason transferred the two tapes into his computer, converted them to WAV files, and burned them to a CD. I loaded the WAV files onto my computer, cut them up in AVID, synced them with my slates, and got to work.

I finished a rough cut of the film on February 29, 2003. The rough cut ran 32 minutes. It was extremely satisfying to finally see my story come to life, even if it was still padded and loose. When I first watched the completed sequence where Larry gives Percy his money back—with a temporary sound track and everything—I nearly became choked up. The scene played like a real movie and, what's more, I found myself affected by the story and the characters. I was moved, and I hoped other people would be, too.

I showed the rough cut to my thesis advisors, as well as to a number of friends. They helped me pinpoint places where the movie was slow, or where there were significant jump cuts or problems with the editing. I set to work on the fine cut, determined to cut at least 6 minutes out of the film.

The fine cut was difficult for two main reasons: first, as I watched the same footage over and over again, it became more and more difficult to distinguish between different versions of a scene. This was especially problematic when working with AVID's trim tool to change a

particular cut. Different versions of a cut started to seem like those picture games where you're asked to find six differences between two identical panels. The more I worked on the fine cut, the harder it was to find the problems in the material, just as it had been when I was writing the script. Unlike the script, however, I didn't have the luxury of sharing my alternate scenes and cuts with colleagues and professors, the most significant drawback of my decision to move to Florida.

The second problem was that I spent so much time focused on the timing of individual shots that I lost my sense of how the scenes played, both alone and in relation to each other. I started to look at each shot with an understanding of what it was supposed to do, rather than what it was actually doing. I would anticipate an upcoming shot—"OK, here comes the reaction of Larry that tells us he's angry"—and then as soon as I got the message of that shot, I cut it. But because I anticipated the shot's narrative purpose before I saw it, the amount of time it took me to respond to the shot was much shorter than a normal viewer would need. When I showed my first version of the fine cut to my parents, they were perplexed by what they regarded as near-subliminal shots. What's more, they completely missed aspects of the story that they had picked up on in the slower-paced rough cut. It's almost as if some shots that seemed reasonable to me by themselves zipped past so quickly in the finished cut that my parents' brains completely disregarded or overlooked them. I had managed to cut 6 minutes out of the film, but I then I had to go back and re-cut my fine cut with an eye towards pacing and flow.

I decided to try and edit my sound with the equalizing and sound editing functions provided as tools in AVID Xpress Pro. I didn't have time to return to New Orleans and go through the process of recording ADR, and I wanted to challenge myself to see if I could clean up the sound with my AVID program. I faced many of the same noise problems that other

filmmakers face in sound editing—especially in the scenes at the bar and the quickie mart, where we were unable to turn off the refrigeration units that produced noticeable hums. Although my sound is not Hollywood perfect, I think it serves its purpose.

My friend Matt Stitt is a musician and songwriter, and I used his compositions to score the film. I think his music serves the film well. I was listening to two of his CDs back in the summer of 2003 as I wrote the script, so his music was been intimately connected with the development of the film from the very beginning. I think his music gives the film a polish that many of my previous films have lacked.

## CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION

I learned quite a lot while making this film. I learned all of the things that you might expect to learn by undertaking such an endeavor—technical tips regarding lighting, sound recording, camera operation, and the like. The most valuable lessons I learned, however, involve the skills necessary to nurture a project like this from idea to completion and to persuade people to help you realize your vision.

I am very proud of the finished version of *Escape Velocity*. I think the story is intriguing, the images look great, and the performances are some of the strongest I have seen in a student film. I think the strengths of the film are attributable not to me, but to the months I spent mulling the story over before ever sitting down to write the script. The time that I spent actively working out the story gave me the confidence to begin the production process. I'm not a gifted cinematographer and I don't think of my story in terms of light, but the work I put into knowing the story helped me to talk with Pushkar and Ryan about the purpose of each scene and the role it played in the whole film. I'm not particularly adept in speaking with actors in the language of their craft, but I think the time I spent with my note cards allowed me to effectively answer the questions they had and to help them understand the characters and the story. Knowing the story allowed me to help other people understand what I was shooting for.

I think a number of aspects of the film could be improved. I wish I had more time to spend with the sound to get it top notch. There are shots in the film that could be better, or that aren't lit perfectly (mostly the ones I lit myself). If I had more time, I would have liked to work

on the script even more. As it stands, I think the majority of the film's problems stem from the script. I think the beginning is a little slow as I set the pieces of the story in place; it takes a while to get going. I feel like the film is structured around two or three conversations/confrontations between Larry and Percy, and I think that some of the material that comes between these fights feel like padding, like we're biding time until the next fight scene. In that sense, I feel like I didn't fully realize my goal of creating a film where the story is told through events rather than speeches. I think I could have brought some of the underlying points that motivated the story more to the surface. I think the film could have been funnier.

There are also some things I would have changed about the way I worked. Although I worked very hard producing *Escape Velocity*, I think I could have structured and spent some of my time better. With better planning, I might even have been able to meet my initial deadline of wrapping the shoot by October. I think detailed goal setting early on in the process would have helped me work smarter and faster.

I also wish that I had storyboarded the entire film. I storyboarded a number of the film's scenes, and I drew detailed shot diagrams for others. All in all, I probably planned out about half of the film in advance. But I would have liked the experience of storyboarding the entire film, so that I could almost sit back and watch it in my head before we shot a single frame. I think of storyboarding as the visual equivalent of the note card work I did early on: while the note cards get you thinking about the events of the story, the storyboards get you thinking of the visual structure through which you'll present that story. I would have liked to have a more fully realized visual sense of the film when we started production.

All in all, though, I am proud of the film. I think the film is an accurate manifestation of my original vision for the script, and audiences that I have shown it to thus far respond to the

emotional core of the story. In that sense, I have met my original goal of producing a film that showcases my ability to tell a story visually.

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## APPENDIX A

### FINAL REVISED SCRIPT



## ESCAPE VELOCITY

by Joshua Trotter

Second Complete Draft  
October 7, 2003  
Copyright 2003

## 1. EXT. TROPICAL BEACH - DAY

A tall palm stretches out over the sugar-white sand. The ocean is emerald green. A few billowing cumulous clouds hang in the sky. We hear the regular SWEEP of waves breaking, the CALLING of gulls, and the ring of STEEL DRUMS. But nothing moves. Not the sea, not the clouds, not the palms.

We PULL BACK slowly to discover that this image is a photo ripped from a magazine and thumb-tacked to the wall of...

## 2. INT. LARRY and PERCY'S PAD - NIGHT

We pull back further to find the photo surrounded by others with a similar Caribbean theme. The photos of clean beaches and blue waves contrast the dark, stuffy apartment. This place is a hole, lit by the flicker of TV and fluorescent lights. Old pizza boxes and take-out bags clutter the table. A fly buzzes up out of an abandoned glass.

LARRY PIPE stands next to the couch. He is in his late twenties, rumpled and poorly groomed in a hip, indie-rock way. He is a man of big plans and few accomplishments. He is pulling cushions off the couch, searching underneath them.

LARRY

In 50 years, Percy, New Orleans will  
be underwater. Global warming? A well  
-placed hurricane? I'm no prognosticator.  
But you'll be able to scuba dive in  
the French Quarter, my friend.

He drops the cushion he's holding. PERCY KNUCKLE climbs up from under the coffee table. Like Larry, he is no slave to fashion. He is slightly greasy, but with a friendly grin and a good nature - the kind of guy who orders milk at a restaurant. He holds out a handful of change, which Larry takes.

PERCY

Maybe all that water will clear out  
the smell.

LARRY

Wouldn't count on it. 600 years of  
dried beer and piss doesn't just  
rinse off.

Larry moves on to the next cushion.

PERCY

There'll be some drunk fish swimming around.

LARRY

In little spirals.

Nothing under here. He puts the cushion back.

LARRY

One more reason to move to Barbados. When New Orleans goes under, we'll be kicking back at our bar on the beach, watching the sun sink into the ocean and checking out the babes.

He picks up the last cushion.

LARRY

Jackpot!

He scoops up a handful of change.

3. INT. LARRY'S ROOM/ CLOSET - NIGHT

Larry pulls open the doors to his closet. On the top shelf, next to a battered old suitcase, sits an old Utz pretzel jar half full of change and crumpled dollar bills. A hand-lettered sign taped to it reads "BAR FUND". Larry takes it down.

LARRY

Got your donation?

Percy reaches into his shirt, pulls out a \$20 and drops it into the jar. Larry tosses his change in, then adds a wad of bills from his pocket.

PERCY

How much longer, you think?

Larry shakes the jar, studies it.

LARRY

Well, we've probably got a couple hundred right here. When you consider our respective incomes and net worth, then subtract the moving and start-up costs - property and inventory and

LARRY (cont'd)  
whatnot - I figure we could open our  
place in Barbados within...

A pause while he figures. Percy waits.

LARRY  
...seventeen months? Of course...

He fishes a few bills from the jar.

LARRY (cont'd)  
All that figuring helped me develop  
a powerful thirst.

Percy grins.

PERCY  
We can't just open a bar without doing  
a little research first.

Percy exits. Larry puts the jar back up on the shelf, grabs an old plaid sport coat off a hanger. The suitcase catches his eye, and he stares at it for a long moment. He kisses his fingers, touches the suitcase, and leaves.

#### 4. INT. "RUSTY NAIL" BAR - NIGHT

The Rusty Nail is a comfortable, neighborhood pub. Percy and Larry sit on stools at the bar, nursing their glasses of beer. A pair of college-aged women sidle up next to them at the bar, order drinks. Larry elbows Percy in the ribs, then leans in towards them.

LARRY  
Howzit going, ladies?

Nothing. The girls take their drinks and head towards a table. Larry turns back to Percy.

LARRY  
They're all the same, man.

PERCY  
Heartbreakers.

LARRY  
Soul-crushers. But no matter. We're  
keeping our eyes on the prize.

PERCY

The swaying palms. The coral blue  
water.

LARRY

That sweet suck of lime. The beer -  
so cold.

They click their glasses together, take big pulls off their  
beers.

STEVE (o.s.)

Where my dogz at?

Larry closes his eyes, winces.

LARRY

Steve...

PERCY

Ah, don't be such a Mary. He's not  
such a bad guy. And he buys the drinks.

LARRY

That he does, Perce.

STEVE PARISH enters and slaps Larry and Percy on the back. He is  
an slightly older guy who has never wanted for money, an ex-frat-  
boy grown up in appearance alone. As a result, he talks a little  
too loud, acts a little too hip, and dresses a little too young.  
His girlfriend JENNIFER is sidled up against him. Pure eye candy:  
she's a little too young too.

STEVE

What up, homies?

LARRY and PERCY (deep voices)

Steeeeeevvvvveeee!

STEVE

Let's grab some pitchers, guys, and  
get a table.

##### 5. EXT. RUSTY NAIL COURTYARD - LATER THAT NIGHT

The quartet sits at a little wire table in a courtyard behind the  
Rusty Nail. A few empty drained pitchers rest on the table. Larry  
and Steve sit next to each other, so they can argue. Percy and  
Jennifer are pushed to the sides, where they watch.

STEVE

Have you considered the sheer volume  
of taxes you'll be paying?

LARRY

Well, hell...you gotta pay taxes anywhere,  
you know?

STEVE

Yes, but on an island, everything you  
sell at your bar will be an import.  
Tariffs and shit.

JENNIFER

Watch out for the death card!

STEVE

No, baby, 'tariffs'.

Larry just stares at them. Percy starts to look around the bar,  
bored.

LARRY (to Steve)

Man, what the hell would you know  
about it anyway?

STEVE

Look, man, when I inherited that money  
from my uncle...

Percy takes his glass and heads inside. Larry doesn't even  
notice. He squints his eyes, trying to figure out what exactly  
Steve's point is.

6. INT. RUSTY NAIL - NIGHT

Percy walks through the bar, checking to see if anything  
interesting is going on in here. A young woman, MELINDA BUNDT,  
sits at the bar next to a group of her friends, who are all  
standing. She looks plain next to them - she dresses more  
conservatively and wears less makeup. She watches their  
conversation from outside. Percy catches her eye. He nods, raises  
his glass. She smiles. He approaches her.

PERCY

Howzit goin'?

She turns towards him, a little surprised, and smiles.

MELINDA

Hi.

They begin to chat.

7. EXT. COURTYARD - NIGHT

Larry sits, staring straight ahead and frowning, as Steve explains the nuances of tax law to Jennifer. Larry closes his eyes. When he moves, Larry sees MARY HOUSTON standing in the center of the courtyard. She is striking, her long brown hair swaying as she approaches Larry. She smiles warmly. Larry closes his eyes, smiles. When he opens them, she is gone.

He looks up through the palm fronds at the stars.

LARRY

Barbados.

He takes a sip of his drink. Steve and Jennifer continue to talk next to him.

LARRY (sound advance)

OK, just so we're clear on this, Steve  
is not coming to Barbados.

8. INT. QUICKIE MART - DAY

Percy stands at the register, ringing up a WOMAN's purchases. Larry leans against the counter behind him, doing nothing in particular. They are wearing matching shirts with names stitched over the pockets.

LARRY (cont'd)

That guy talked my ear off about tax  
law for two hours last night. And he  
dropped out of law school.

PERCY (to woman)

\$9.27

(to Larry)

I'm sure it wasn't two whole hours.

LARRY

You didn't sit through it, Mojo Risin'.  
Working your magic with the ladies.

Percy grins. He puts the woman's money in the register and hands her the change.

LARRY  
So didja nail that chick?

The woman gives Larry a dirty look as she leaves. Percy waits until she's gone to answer.

PERCY  
I'm pleading the fifth.

He grins.

LARRY  
No luck, huh?

PERCY  
Melinda's not the kind of girl you  
"nail" on the first date, Larry.

LARRY  
I see. She likes to "make-a the sweet,  
sweet love" instead?

Percy starts to laugh.

PERCY  
I wouldn't know. But we had a really  
good time together. She's just...wow.

He raises his eyebrows, turns to look at Larry. Larry studies him for a moment.

LARRY  
Well, alright then.

Percy looks off into space, remembering.

PERCY  
She smells really good. Like cinnamon.  
And she's so cool...

#### 9. INT. LARRY'S ROOM - DAY

In front of the closet. Larry and Percy each take the change from their pockets and drop it in the "BAR FUND" jar, which Larry holds. He is listening attentively.

PERCY  
...Clinton walks right up to her, puts  
his hand on her shoulder. Asks if he



PERCY (cont'd)  
can sit in on the next one. She played  
saxophone with the freakin' president.

LARRY  
No!

PERCY  
True story. Apparently, he sucks,  
though.

10. EXT. AUDUBON PARK - DAY

It's a beautiful day. Girls are sunbathing, dorky guys are rollerblading, families are riding bikes around the lake. Larry and Percy stand in an open patch of ground, tossing a baseball back and forth. They have changed into their regular clothes.

PERCY  
So what she did, see, was she took the  
Finley-Coopersmith head off the rotary  
socket and filed it down with an  
Ainsworth 409 permagraph. That way, it  
fit the 180 socket just fine. So, of  
course, she got the job!

Percy waits expectantly for Larry to laugh. Larry searches for the right response.

LARRY  
Aces.

11. EXT. PORCH - A DIFFERENT DAY

Larry and Percy sit at a table on the porch, a "Hungry Hungry Hippos" game on the counter between them. Larry focuses on the game. Percy is staring into space, talking. He rests his hand on his hippo, but only occasionally presses his lever down.

PERCY  
She turned to the other little girl  
and said, "It's not "bisgetti". It's  
"pagetti".

Percy grins at the sweetness of the memory. Larry slams down on his hippo lever with increased fervor.

## 12. INT. CAR - DAY

Larry and Percy are driving home in Percy's old beat-up clunker. Percy drives. Larry stares out the window.

PERCY

The bluest eyes I've ever seen, man.  
They're like the ocean in those pictures  
you've got up on the wall.

LARRY

Alright. She can come with us.

Percy laughs.

PERCY

But no Steve?

LARRY

No Steve. But think about it, P. We're  
going to have girls from all over the  
world in our bar. And we're going to  
be right on the beach...

PERCY

Bikinis?

LARRY

Topless, depending on the beach. Can  
you grasp that, Percy? Envision it,  
friend.

PERCY

Oh, I'm envisioning it.

Larry grins, turns his attention out the window. MARY HOUSTON waits for the bus. Larry turns his head to look at her again, but an OLDER WOMAN has taken her place. He regards the beautiful old houses that line the avenue.

LARRY

Yes, sir, we're going away on vacation  
and we're never coming back.

## 13. INT. RUSTY NAIL - NIGHT

Percy sits between Larry and Melinda at the bar. He introduces them, and Larry reaches over to shake Melinda's hand. Melinda shakes his hand, then turns her attention to Percy. They gaze at

each other as they talk, hold each other's hands. Larry turns his attention to his beer.

14. INT. APARTMENT - DAY

Larry sits on the couch, watching television. Percy lays on the floor, doing sit-ups. They come slowly and require a lot of effort. He is red and breathing hard. Larry eyes him suspiciously.

15. EXT. PARK - DAY

Larry and Percy play catch with Melinda. Larry throws the ball to Percy, who turns and tosses it underhand to Melinda. She misses it. Percy laughs, runs to pick it up. Larry forces a "good-sport" smile.

16. INT. LARRYS and PERCY'S BATHROOM - DAY

Larry glances into the bathroom and discovers a freshly-shaven and scrubbed Percy tweezing his eyebrows. He leans in the doorframe and watches.

Percy puts his tweezers in his cupboard and exits. Larry glances to make sure Percy is gone, then opens the cupboard. It is filled with styling products. Larry looks after Percy, mouth agape.

17. INT. APARTMENT - DAY

Larry sits on the couch, reading a bartender's guide. Percy lays on his back at the other end of the couch, talking on the telephone.

PERCY  
I love YOU more.  
(pause)  
No, I do.

Larry gets up and leaves, still reading.

18. EXT. PARK - DAY

Percy tosses the ball underhand to Melinda again. This time she drops it. They both laugh. Larry stands, waiting.

19. INT. RUSTY NAIL - NIGHT

Larry sits in the middle of the booth. Steve and Jennifer are wedging him in on one side, Percy and Melinda on the other. They

are all talking animatedly across him, having a great time. He forces a polite smile and nods.

20. INT. APARTMENT - NIGHT

Larry sits home alone, watching television, Chinese take-out on the table in front of him. He takes a bite, makes an unpleasant face, and pushes the food away. He stares at the photos tacked to the wall, then turns back to the television.

21. INT. CLOSET - DAY

Larry drops a handful of change into the bar fund jar. He eyes his suitcase for a long moment, then pushes it towards the back and sets the jar in front of it.

22. EXT. PARK - DAY

Percy is holding Melinda's glove hand, showing her how to catch the ball in the webbing of the mitt. Larry sits down cross-legged, rests his chin in his hand, and waits.

23. INT. BATHROOM - DAY

Percy is at the mirror, carefully combing his hair. He is wearing a short-sleeved shirt and tie. Larry enters in his work shirt, looking bushed. He leans against the doorframe and hands Percy an envelope.

LARRY  
Grabbed your check.

PERCY  
Awesome. Thanks.

He kisses it, then stuffs it in his pocket.

LARRY  
You look like a skycap.

PERCY  
I'm taking Melinda to Napolitano's.

He grins.

LARRY  
Fancy.

PERCY

Well, it's our one-month anniversary,  
so, y'know...

Larry stares at him. He doesn't know.

LARRY

Yeah. Well, give me your Barbados  
money before you leave.

Percy winces, sucks air over his teeth.

PERCY

Mind if I hold onto it this week?

Larry turns back, stands in the door.

LARRY

You still owe me for last week.

PERCY

I've been running a little low recently.  
I'll pay you next week, OK?

LARRY

How do I know Melinda won't want to  
go to the movies next week? Or the  
zoo? Or on an outer-space adventure?

PERCY

C'mon, man, lay off.

He checks his hair one last time, turns and exits. Larry follows him.

24. INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

Percy heads for his room. Larry follows at his heels.

LARRY

It takes a lot of money to move to the  
Caribbean, Percy.

Percy stops, turns to face him.

PERCY

I said I'll pay you.

LARRY

You said you wanted to move to Barbados, too, but you don't act like it.

PERCY

I've put in just as much as you have, except the last two weeks.

LARRY

Sure. But while I'm here planning your early retirement, you're off canoodling with some silly college girl in the hope that maybe, someday, if you're real nice, she'll let you touch a tit.

PERCY

She's my girlfriend, not a silly college girl. And what sort of planning have you been doing, Larry? Beyond drinking at the bar?

LARRY

I learned how to mix drinks. I read some stuff about real estate online last week. I worked a double shift today. All while you were off chasing tail.

PERCY

I'm not chasing tail. And even if I was, it'd be more fun than talking about all the international tail I'm going to score at some unspecified point in the future.

LARRY

At some point, you're going to have to choose between this girl and your dream.

PERCY

What dream? This whole Barbados thing is just like the band we were gonna have. Or the adult kickball league we were gonna start. Or that time we were going to move out west and become cowboys.

LARRY

The cowboy thing was completely different. I'm talking about being set for the rest

LARRY (cont'd)  
of our lives. You want to give that up?

PERCY  
I ain't giving up shit. It's never  
Going to happen. And I'm tired of  
dicking around.

He opens the closet and grabs a jacket. Heads out.

PERCY (o.s.)  
Say 'Hi' to Steve for me.

The door slams. Larry is left alone. He punches the air and enters his room.

25. INT. BAR - NIGHT

Larry sits at the bar, an untouched beer on the counter in front of him. There are open spaces on either side of him. He glances around at people having a good time, then stares off into space, mulling things over.

26. INT. CLOSET - DAY

Larry opens the closet door. He moves the jar, stares up at the suitcase. He reaches up and takes it down.

27. INT. LARRY'S ROOM - DAY

Larry sits on the floor in front of the open suitcase. It contains a bundle of letters, neatly stacked and bound with a rubber band, as well as a few manila envelopes and some photos. He is reading a Valentine's Day card with a big red teddy bear on the front. He sets it down, picks up an old boutonniere - a red rose long dried up. It crumbles as he touches it. He stuffs everything back in the suitcase and shoves it back in the closet.

28. INT. QUICKIE MART - DAY

Larry sits at the register, staring at a PAIR of PATRONS who are buying big gulps. His eyes go back and forth between them as they talk.

HENDERSON  
Do you live in New Orleans?

MARK  
I just don't like the Saints, that's all.

HENDERSON  
Do you live in New Orleans?

MARK  
You know I do.

HENDERSON  
Then the Saints are your team.

MARK  
But I don't think of myself as a Saints fan.

LARRY  
The whole thing will be underwater in a few years anyway, so what does it matter?

The patrons stare at him.

LARRY (off drinks)  
That's \$2.50.

29. INT. CLOSET - DAY

A close-up of the jar as a handful of bill and change drop into it.

30. INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

Larry is pulling cushions off the couch, looking for change. No luck. He glances around the room. His gaze rests on the TV

31. EXT. PAWNSHOP - DAY

Larry struggles to carry the TV from his car into the pawnshop.

32. INT. CLOSET - DAY

A close-up of the jar as a wad of bills drops into it.

33. INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Larry enters the kitchen, reading a self-help book on "How to Retire Young and Rich". He gets a bottle of beer from the fridge. He regards it for a second, then tosses it into the air gently. Catches it. A quick flip. Catches it. He grins and tosses it again with a jaunty flip. He misses. The beer bottle shatters on the floor. Larry jumps back from the broken glass.



LARRY

Ah Nuts!

He tosses the book down and grabs the towel from the fridge door.

34. INT. BAR - NIGHT

Larry sits at the bar with Steve, two beers in front of them.

LARRY

Can you believe that guy? He's set us back at least six months. Probably a year. I was going to make him a 50-50 partner, too. The brawn to my brains, y'know? Not anymore.

STEVE

The guy's in love, man.

LARRY

Don't get me started on that.

He takes a swig of his beer.

LARRY

I've just got to get out of this town.

STEVE

Why don't you just move down there then?

LARRY

How? I don't have the "venture capital" to buy the bar, Steve. I barely have enough for a flight.

STEVE

So save enough money to live for a couple weeks, book a flight, and then get a job at a bar or something down there. Then you can take the next step.

Larry thinks about this.

LARRY

I could do that.

The BARTENDER brings the phone over.

BARTENDER

Telephone call for you, Larry.

Larry takes the phone.

35. EXT. PARK - DAY

Larry stands at the bandshell, waiting. Percy approaches.

LARRY

Where you been?

PERCY

Melinda's.

LARRY

Figured. What do you want?

Percy pauses, wonders where to start.

PERCY

To apologize for some of the things  
I said.

LARRY

Don't worry about it. There was some  
truth there. I just need to get out  
of this town, y'know?

Percy nods.

LARRY

How's your girl?

PERCY

Going to beauty school in Atlanta.

LARRY

She leaving?

PERCY

Yeah. And I'm going with her.

Larry frowns. He didn't expect that.

PERCY

I need my half of the money back.

LARRY

You're bailing out?

PERCY

I've gotta put in for a security deposit on a place. Gotta rent a truck. Gotta pay my last month's rent here...

LARRY

What about Barbados?

Percy sighs.

PERCY

I'm in love, man. Can't you just be happy for me?

LARRY

You think it's love, Percy, because it's your first time. But love ain't real. It's a bullshit lie people tell their kids to give them something to look forward to, get 'em through school. You should know better.

PERCY

Whatever. You're just still pissed at Mary for running off with that lawyer from Texas. But you fucked that one up, Larry. You didn't want to grow up, so she left. Don't take it out on me 'cause you messed up a good thing.

LARRY

You think this girl won't hurt you, P? You think things are going to be different for you and her? Heartbreakers, Percy. Eyes on the prize.

PERCY

I'm going to Atlanta with her. And I'd like my money.

LARRY

That's Barbados money. You gave that money to the bar, not to me. If you want out, fine, but I'm still going.

Percy fumes.

PERCY

Whatever. I'll ask my folks.

LARRY  
I've been putting more money in.  
Closer than ever.

PERCY  
Enjoy it.

He walks away. Larry watches him go.

LARRY  
Don't come crying to me - in Barbados  
- when she breaks your heart.

No response. Larry stuffs his hands in his pockets and walks away.

36. INT. QUICKIE MART - DAY

Larry sits behind the register. He has dark circles under his eyes, looks tired and worn. He stares into space.

ANGLE ON AISLE

Mary Houston appears halfway down the aisle. She smiles at Larry walks toward him, her long hair swaying. As she gets near him, she disappears again.

ANGLE ON LARRY

He bites his lower lip, frowns. Keeps staring straight ahead.

37. INT. APARTMENT - DAY

Larry sits on the couch, watching television. A tiny portable television that sits in the gap in the entertainment center that used to house the old TV. Percy and Melinda are struggling to move a dresser out of Percy's room. Larry doesn't offer to help.

38. INT. PERCY'S EMPTY BEDROOM - DAY

Larry enters Percy's room, his hands in his pockets. He looks around. There are a few scraps of paper on the ground, but other than that, it is empty.

Larry starts to walk around, touching the walls and thinking.

## QUICK FLASHBACKS

39. Larry and Percy sit on the couch, watching TV, laughing about something and wiping their eyes. They can hardly look at each other without cracking up.

40. Larry and Percy ride around town in their car at night, windows down, enjoying the radio blaring and enjoying the wind in their faces.

41. Larry and Percy are at the bar, laughing and talking. Larry slaps a hand on Percy's shoulder.

42. INT. PERCY'S ROOM - DAY

Larry stands in the center of the room, smiling. He walks to the closet, opens it, and peers in.

43. INT. CLOSET - DAY

A scrap of paper catches Larry's eye. It is a photo, slightly bent, wedged behind the door. He picks it up, looks at it.

ANGLE ON PHOTO

The photo shows Percy and Melinda - a self-portrait taken at arm's length. Percy has a towel draped around his shoulders and a mud mask on his face. Melinda has her arm around him. They look very happy.

ANGLE ON DIFFERENT PHOTO

A different photo. This one shows Larry and Mary in a similar pose - a self-portrait taken at arm's length with their arms around each other.

44. INT. LARRY'S ROOM - DAY

Larry sits in front of the opened suitcase, going through photos. The bar fund jar is sitting on the floor next to him, full.

ANGLE ON LARRY'S HANDS

As he flips through the photos. Underneath the self-portrait of he and Mary is a photo of he, Mary, and Percy out on the town one night. Underneath that is a photo, taken by Mary, of he and Percy together. They are pals.

ANGLE ON LARRY

Larry swallows hard. Picks up the phone.

45. EXT. PARK - DAY

Larry stands at the "meeting" place. Percy approaches, hands in pockets.

PERCY

Hey.

LARRY

I've got your money.

He hands Percy an envelope.

LARRY (cont'd)

It's all there if you want to count it.

Percy turns the envelope over in his hands.

PERCY

I believe you.

He stuffs the envelope in his pocket.

LARRY

So how's it going?

PERCY

Good. Excited. Little nervous.

Larry nods.

LARRY

I can imagine.

PERCY

Melinda and I want to make it to Tallahassee tonight, so, I actually oughta get going.

LARRY

Yeah, you need to get cracking then.

He sticks his hand out. Percy takes it.

PERCY

Atlanta's not that far. You should  
come visit.

LARRY

I'll do that.

The regard each other for a moment. Finally, Percy moves in to  
give Larry a stiff half-hug: one arm around the shoulder,  
pounding on the other guy's back.

PERCY

Okay, then. See ya.

LARRY

Yup.

They walk off in opposite directions, hands jammed in pockets.  
Halfway to his car, Larry turns back to watch Percy go.

46. EXT. GAS STATION - DAY (SUNSET?)

Melinda sits in the passenger seat while Percy pumps gas into his  
old beater of a car. Percy hangs up the nozzle and fishes the  
money envelope out of his back pocket. He heads toward the  
station, starts to pull a bill out, then stops short.

The envelope is filled with money. Way too much money.

INSERT OF ENVELOPE.

Stuffed full of \$20 bills, with a note: "A little extra for the  
road. Good luck. - L."

PERCY

Son of a bitch.

47. INT. APARTMENT - DAY

The bar fund jar sits empty on the table. Larry sits on the  
couch, wearing his work shirt, flipping through channels on the  
TV. He stares at the pretzel jar. He snaps off the TV, and picks  
it up. He starts cleaning up, stuffing junk from the table into  
the pretzel jar.

ANGLE ON PHOTO WALL

Larry goes to the wall, regards his photos. He grabs one and  
tears it down. Grabs at others, tears them all down.

48. INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Larry walks into the kitchen, his arms full of junk from the other room. He stuffs it into the trash. Crams it in good. He stands up to go, but stops. Something catches his eye.

LARRY'S POV

Of the trash can. Sitting on the top, slightly crumpled, is the photo of the beach we saw at the beginning of the film. Larry picks it up.

ANGLE ON LARRY

As he regards the photo.

49. LARRY'S POV

Of the bottom of the photo. The caption reads, "Pensacola"

LARRY  
Son of a bitch.

50. EXT. APARTMENT - DAY

Larry carries the trash bag to the curb. He tosses it down, turns back toward the apartment. He returns with another. And another.

51. INT. LARRY'S ROOM - DAY

Larry pulls books down off the bookshelf and grabs CDs from the desk, tosses them into boxes and piles. He works like a madman.

52. EXT. APARTMENT - DAY

A yard sale in the driveway. People are going through Larry's stuff. A man with a beard examines Larry's TV, then hands him a wad of bills.

ANGLE ON CIGAR BOX

As Larry stuffs money into it.

53. EXT. PAWNSHOP - DAY

Larry enters the pawnshop with two guitar cases.



CIGAR BOX

As Larry stuffs more money into it.

54. EXT. APARTMENT - DAY

Larry exits his apartment, wearing an old sport coat and slacks. He carries the suitcase from his closet. He nods at his LANDLORD who is tying a "FOR RENT" sign to the gate, and leaves.

55. INT. LARRY'S CAR - I-10 - DAY

Larry drives east on I-10. His suitcase sits in the seat next to him.

56. EXT. I-10 AT FLORIDA STATE LINE - DAY

Larry's car crosses the state line.

57. EXT. RESTAURANT/ MARINA - DAY

Larry pulls into the parking lot, next to a decrepit old sailboat sitting in dry docks. He gets out of the car and looks off camera towards the sound of WAVES CRASHING. He notices a "For Sale" sign taped to the boat, fishes in his pocket for a pen, and writes the number on his wrist.

58. EXT. BEACH - DAY

Larry marches down to the water. He drops his suitcase and sits at the high-water mark. He turns his head to the right. Beach and ocean stretches away to the horizon. He turns to the left. There is a small hut in the distance, where a man tends bar. The sounds of STEEL DRUMS drift across the breeze.

Larry regards the suitcase in his lap. Opens it slowly.

ANGLE ON THE SUITCASE

Mary's stuff is gone. The suitcase is filled with a few neatly folded changes of clothes. Sitting on top is the photo from the trash. Next to it is the photo of Larry and Percy, grinning at the bar.

ANGLE ON LARRY

Larry starts to smile. He closes the suitcase, sets it to the side. He leans back and soaks up the sun.

59. EXT. BEACH - DAY - WIDE SHOT

A PAIR OF WOMEN in bikinis walks past. They smile at Larry,  
dressed up on the beach.

LARRY  
Howzit goin', ladies?

LADIES  
Hey.

They stop to talk with a very relaxed Larry. And we

FADE OUT

## APPENDIX B

### ORIGINAL DRAFT OF SCRIPT

## ESCAPE VELOCITY

by Joshua Trotter

First Draft  
September 5, 2003  
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EXT. TROPICAL BEACH - DAY

A tall palm stretches out over the sugar-white sand. The water in the distance is emerald green. A few billowing cumulous clouds hang in the sky. We hear the regular CRASH and SWEEP of waves breaking, the sound of gulls CALLING, and the ring of STEEL DRUMS.

But nothing moves. Not the sea, not the clouds, not the palms.

We PULL BACK slowly to discover that this image is a photo ripped from a magazine and thumb-tacked to the wall of...

INT. LARRY and PERCY'S PAD - NIGHT

We pull back further to find the photo surrounded by others with a similar Caribbean theme. The photos of clean beaches and blue waves contrast with the dark, stuffy apartment. This place is a hole, lit by the flicker of the TV and the fluorescent lights. Old pizza boxes and take-out bags clutter the table. A few pieces of macaroni dot the floor. A fly buzzes out of old glass with ring of dried Kool-Aid at the bottom.

Next to the coffee table is our old friend LARRY PIPE. He is in his late twenties, disheveled, poorly groomed. He is pulling the cushions off the couch.

LARRY

Seventeen cents, mofos!

He scoops up the change, keeps rooting.

LARRY

Broken comb. Couple tortilla chips.  
One root beer barrel, unwrapped.

Larry puts the cushion back, moves on to the next.

LARRY

Jackpot! Three quarters!

He scoops them up. PERCY KNUCKLE climbs up from under the coffee table, where he has apparently been rooting around for change. Like Larry, he is no slave to fashion. He is heavy-set and greasy, but with a friendly grin.

PERCY

A shiny new nickel.

LARRY  
Aces, my man. Aces.

Percy stands up. Larry hands him a tiny scrap of plastic.

LARRY  
Found a barrette for your mane, P.

Percy flicks it away.

PERCY  
Funny. So where's that leave us?

INT. LARRY'S CLOSET - NIGHT

Larry pulls open the doors to his closet. On the top shelf, next to a battered old suitcase, sits an old Utz pretzel jar half full of change and crumpled dollar bills. A hand-lettered sign taped to it reads "BAR FUND". Larry takes it down, holds it out while Percy drops his change and a few bills from his pocket in. Larry deposits his change in the jar, along with a wad of bills from his shirt pocket. He shakes the jar, studies it.

LARRY  
Well, counting our paycheck money,  
I'd say we're somewhere in the  
neighborhood of 170 dollars. Of course...

He fishes a few bills from the jar.

LARRY (cont'd)  
All that searching helped me develop  
a powerful thirst.

Percy grins.

PERCY  
Lemme get fancied up.

He claps his hands and exits. Larry puts the jar back up on the shelf, grabs an old plaid sport coat off a hanger. The suitcase catches his eye, and he stares at it for a long moment. He kisses his fingers, touches the suitcase, and leaves.

INT. "RUSTY NAIL" BAR - NIGHT

Percy and Larry sit side by side at the bar. Larry wears his sport coat, Percy a regular windbreaker. His hair is painfully combed in a solid part- this must be what "fancied up" means.

Larry leans in towards two college-aged women next to them at the bar.

LARRY  
Howzit going, ladies?

Nothing. The girls take their drinks and head towards a table.  
Larry shrugs.

LARRY  
They're all the same, Percy.

PERCY  
Heartbreakers.

LARRY  
Soul-crushers. But we've gotta keep  
our eyes on the prize, P.

PERCY  
The sugar white sands. The swaying  
palms. The coral blue water.

LARRY  
That sweet suck of lime. The beer -  
so cold.

PERCY  
So tell me again about how our bar  
is going to be.

LARRY  
Percy, this bar is going to be the  
end of all of our troubles.

EXT. LEVEE - DAY

A different day. Percy and Larry sit side-by-side, fishing.

LARRY  
Imagine water as blue as a summer  
sky times two, Percy.

PERCY  
Done.

LARRY  
Now imagine a little green jewel set  
right in the middle of it.

PERCY

Got it.

LARRY

That's Barbados, my friend. That's exactly what it's like.

INT. TEXACO STATION - DAY

Another day. Larry and Percy are dressed in matching uniforms. Percy works the register while Larry leans against the counter.

LARRY

It's primarily a tourist-based economy, you understand. Each year, thousands of people come from all over the world to vacation there.

PERCY

And they'll want to kick back and drink.

LARRY

Exactly. And we're going to help them achieve that goal.

INT. APARTMENT - NIGHT

In front of the closet. Larry and Percy each take a wad of bills from their pockets and stuff them in the "BAR FUND" jar.

LARRY

I mean, we could have as wide a selection of beers as we want.

PERCY

Chinese beers?

LARRY

Chinese, Italian, Nicaraguan...you name it.

PERCY

And what about the mixed drinks...

LARRY

Oh, of course, you need your frozen stuff, you know, for the ladies.



EXT. GOLF COURSE - DAY

Larry and Percy are dressed for the course, but their clothes are obviously from a second-hand bin. Larry is lining up a putt.

LARRY

I don't think you understand exactly what I mean by "right on the beach", Perce. I mean that whenever women Come in, they will be in swimsuits. Or even topless, depending on the beach, y'know? Can you grasp that, Perce? Envision it, friend.

PERCY

Oh, I'm envisioning it.

LARRY

With my managerial skills, we're going to rule the roost, B!

Larry putts.

INT. RUSTY NAIL - NIGHT

A different night. Larry and Percy are back at the bar of the Rusty Nail.

LARRY

We've got about \$320 in the jar, Percy, I think. By my calculations.

PERCY

Right.

LARRY

At the rate we're going - factoring in our respective incomes and net worth, and then subtracting from that the cost of moving and start-up costs - inventory and whatnot - I figure we should be able to move to Barbados within...

A pause while he figures. Percy waits.

LARRY

...seventeen months?

PERCY

Gravy.

They click their glasses together, take big pulls off their beers.

INT. RUSTY NAIL BAR - LATER

Larry and Percy are sitting at a table with STEVE, an older guy who dresses a little too young. His girlfriend, JENNIFER, is sidled up against him. She's a little too young also. Steve and Larry are engaged in a debate. Larry is well soused; Steve, a little less so.

STEVE

Have you given any thought at all to the volume of taxes you'll be paying?

LARRY

Well, hell...you gotta pay taxes anywhere, you know?

STEVE

Yes, but you'll be on an island. Every thing you sell at your bar will be an import. Tariffs and shit. Have you thought about that?

Percy starts to look around the bar, bored.

LARRY

You know what you are, Steve-O?  
You're a downer.

STEVE

Look, man, when I inherited that money from my uncle...

The sounds of LARRY and STEVE are drowned out by the sounds of the crowded bar. Across the room, a young woman, MELINDA sits with a group of friends at the bar. She is kind of plain next to them - wearing too much make-up. They all talk animatedly, but Melinda is sitting outside the conversation. Her eyes meet Percy's. He nods, raises his glass. She smiles.

He glances at Larry, who is oblivious, then picks up his beer and approaches her.

PERCY

Howzit goin'?

EXT. COURTYARD - NIGHT

Percy and Melinda sit at a metal table in the little courtyard behind the bar.

PERCY

Yeah. I've never been down that way,  
but it sounds good. Larry says it'll  
be like summer year-round. Only a cool  
breezy summer.

MELINDA

God, I'm so jealous.

PERCY

Well, we haven't got there yet.

He takes a sip of his beer.

PERCY (cont'd)

What about you?

MELINDA

I'm a teller at Lafayette Bank.

PERCY

Cool.

He nods politely.

MELINDA

But I've sort of been kicking around  
the idea of going to cosmetology  
school. Decatur School of Beauty.

She pulls a pamphlet out of her purse and hands it to Percy.

MELINDA (cont'd)

It's in Atlanta. It's far away, but  
my aunt lives there and a lot of really  
talented make-up artists come from there.  
It's a really well respected school.

Percy flips through the brochure.

PERCY

I didn't know they had schools for  
this kind of thing.

MELINDA

Oh, yeah. You'd be amazed at the amount of training it takes to become a fully licensed make-up artist.

He hands the pamphlet back.

PERCY

I think you should definitely go for it.

She rolls her eyes, sticks it in her purse.

MELINDA

I'd probably never get in.

PERCY

You gotta chase your dreams, right?

EXT. COURTYARD - NIGHT

Larry sits at another table in the courtyard, drink in hand, watching. He smiles as Percy and Melinda chat animatedly. Another patron crosses in front of Larry, blocking his view. The patron moves, and suddenly a WOMAN is sitting at Larry's table. She smiles warmly. Larry closes his eyes, smiles. When he opens them again, she is gone.

He looks up through the palm fronds at the stars winking in the heavens.

LARRY

Barbados.

He closes his eyes and we fade out.

INT. LARRY'S BEDROOM - MORNING

Larry lies in bed, his head in the same position as the night before.

He rises, walks to the closet, takes out his robe. He glances at the suitcase on the top shelf, runs a finger along it.

INT. APARTMENT - DAY

Larry walks into the living room to find Percy saying goodbye to Melinda at the front door. Both Percy and Melinda are made up exactly as they were the night before. Larry jumps, surprised to see them, and hastily ties his robe.

LARRY

Sorry!

PERCY

Morning, Larry.

MELINDA

Bye, Larry, I hope you're feeling better.

Who is this girl?

LARRY

Thanks...you.

MELINDA

Bye, Danny. Call me later?

PERCY

Of course.

A quick peck on the cheek and she is gone. Percy turns to Larry, grinning, but waiting for the quick cut. Larry grins back.

EXT. PARK - DAY

Larry and Percy toss a baseball back and forth. They are animated, hyped up, running on little sleep.

LARRY

So what's with this "Dan" bullshit, tiger?

PERCY

You know, no one calls me Percy but you.

LARRY

That's what your momma named you.

PERCY

I like "Dan". Normal name. Doesn't scare the girls off.

LARRY

Obviously not.

Percy grins.

LARRY (cont'd)  
So...didja nail that chick?

PERCY  
None of your business.

LARRY  
So "no", then? Percy, man, what's the problem?

PERCY  
We had a lot to talk about. She's an amazing girl.

LARRY  
So she's into the lesbian stuff, huh?

Percy starts to laugh.

PERCY  
Fuck you, man.

LARRY  
It's cool. You're just one step closer to a three-way.

INT. CAR - DAY

Larry and Percy are driving home in Percy's old beat-up clunker.

LARRY  
Do you realize how many girls we're going to have down in Barbados, P? Two, three girls a night.

PERCY  
That so?

LARRY  
Oh, yeah. We're going to be major players on the scene.

PERCY  
Awesome.

LARRY  
That's why I'm kind of glad that you've got this new girl, because it means more chicks for me when we get to Barbados.

PERCY

Hey now...

LARRY

Too late, P. That's just how it is.

Larry turns his attention out the window. On the nearest corner, the woman he saw at his table the night before waits for the bus. When Larry turns to look at her again, she is gone. He regards the beautiful old houses that line the avenue.

LARRY

Yes, sir, we're going away on vacation  
and we're never coming back.

MONTAGE

INT. APARTMENT - DAY

Larry is sitting on the couch, watching television. Percy's head pops up into frame, then disappears again. Pops up, disappears - he's doing sit-ups. One more, slowly, with a lot of effort. Larry eyes him suspiciously.

EXT. GOLF COURSE - DAY

Larry, Percy, and Melinda stand in the tee box. Larry smiles as Melinda tries to tee off. She has a crazy swing. The ball hops a few feet away. Percy smiles, scoops it up, sets it back on the tee, and tries to show her how.

INT. MELINDA'S APARTMENT - DAY

Percy sits in a chair, a towel draped over his shoulders. Melinda is putting a mud mask on his face.

INT. LARRY'S BATHROOM - DAY

Larry glances into the bathroom and discovers a freshly-shaven Percy tweezing his eyebrows. He leans in the doorframe and watches suspiciously.

EXT. GOLF COURSE - DAY

Still in the tee box. Percy stands behind Melinda, trying to show her how to swing. They both giggle. Larry looks away.

INT. CLOSET - DAY

Larry eyes his suitcase for a long moment. He pushes it towards the back, sets the Bar Fund Jar up in front of it. He drops a handful of change into the jar.

INT. BAR - NIGHT

Larry sits at a table between Steve and Jennifer on one side, and Percy and Melinda on the other. They are talking animatedly across him. He tries to smile politely and nod.

INT. MELINDA'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Melinda sits at her computer, working on her application to the Decatur School of Beauty. Percy is organizing her portfolio of photos (some of which are of him).

INT. APARTMENT - NIGHT

Larry sits home alone, watching television.

INT. BATHROOM - DAY

Larry enters the bathroom after a well-groomed Percy exits. He opens the medicine cabinet and is stunned by the sheer volume of styling products that Percy has amassed.

INT. APARTMENT - DAY

Larry sits on the couch, reading a book about mixing drinks. Percy and Melinda sit at the other end of the couch, engrossed in their conversation. Larry picks up the remote and turns the volume on the TV up to drown them out.

EXT. GOLF COURSE - DAY

Melinda's still in the tee box, still trying to swing. She and Percy are laughing. They don't notice when Larry walks off to the cart to sit and wait.

END MONTAGE

INT. BATHROOM - DAY

Percy is at the mirror, gussying himself up. Larry enters, leans against the doorframe. He is wearing his Texaco uniform. He hands Percy an envelope.



LARRY

Payday. I picked up your check.

PERCY

Fantastic! I needed this.

He pockets it.

LARRY

I'm bushed, man. I'm gonna change clothes and then let's hit the bar.

PERCY

Shit, I'm sorry, Larry. I've already got plans.

Larry stiffens.

LARRY

You've been over there every night this week, P. Don't y'all ever get tired of each other?

PERCY

Nah...Plus, it's our three-month anniversary next weekend, so y'know...

Larry stares. No, he does not know. But, whatever. He turns to leave.

LARRY

OK. Well, give me your \$20 for the bar fund before you leave.

Percy winces.

PERCY

Ooh...You mind if I keep it this week? I'm taking Melinda to Napolitano's.

Larry turns back, stands in the door.

LARRY

When was the last time you put in, Percy?

PERCY

I know. I'm sorry man, I've just had a lot on my plate.

He smiles hopefully, keeps combing his hair. Larry tries to collect his thoughts.

LARRY

How are we going to move to Barbados,  
P, if we don't save our money?

PERCY

Don't sweat it. I'll pay you next  
week, OK?

He checks his hair one last time, turns and exits. Larry follows him.

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

Percy heads for his room. Larry follows at his heels.

LARRY

Have you forgotten the plan, Percy?  
Do you want to be stuck in New Orleans  
for the rest of your life in a dumpy-ass  
crumbling apartment, or do you want to  
go to bed every night with the sound  
of the waves in your ear? I told you  
before, we gotta keep our eyes on the  
prize.

PERCY

I AM keeping my eyes on the prize.  
What does it matter if I pay you now,  
or next week? We're just going to pull  
half of that money right back out and  
blow it at the bar, anyhow.

LARRY

What's that supposed to mean?

PERCY

It's not like we've ever put fun on  
hold in order to get closer to Barbados,  
Lar. And I'm having fun. I like this  
girl, Larry. I love her. And I've never  
had that before, you know?

LARRY

You think that's love, Percival, because  
it's your first time. But it ain't. It's  
just your glands. Love isn't real. It's

LARRY (cont'd)  
a bullshit lie people tell their kids  
in order to get 'em through school -  
give 'em something to look forward to.  
And then you get out in the real world  
and realize all that "true love" stuff  
was a joke. You should know better.

PERCY  
And why's that, Lawrence? Because I  
spent months listening to you whine  
about Mary? Because I saw how she broke  
you? If anything, that's evidence for  
love right there. If that wasn't real,  
Larry, why did you sit in your room  
for two weeks?

LARRY  
That's different.

PERCY  
You're just mad because you screwed  
it up. Well, I've learned from your  
mistakes, bud. I know what I want and  
I'm actually going to DO something  
about it!

LARRY  
What could I have done about it,  
Percy? One day she's here and then  
she's not.

PERCY  
She left because you didn't do  
anything. You just sat around and watched  
television.

LARRY  
Well, that's why I'm going to  
Barbados. I'm doing something now.

PERCY  
So go on to Barbados then. You don't  
need me. I'm out.

He grabs a coat and exits.

LARRY  
You leave and I'm keeping that  
money, Percy.

PERCY (o.s.)  
My name is Dan, goddammit.

The door slams. Larry is left alone.

EXT. MELINDA'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Percy heads up the stairs to Melinda's door. He is grumbling under his breath. Before he reaches the top, Melinda throws the door open.

MELINDA  
Oh, my God! Percy! I GOT IN!

She holds up a thick manila envelope return addressed "Decatur School, Atlanta, GA" It takes Percy a minute to realize what it is, but then he catches her in a bear hug and lifts her off the ground. They kiss.

INT. BAR - NIGHT

Larry sits alone at the bar, drinking. He stares off into space, mulling things over.

INT. TEXACO STATION - DAY

Larry sits behind the register. He has almost the exact same expression as before - staring off into space, thinking.

INT. CLOSET - DAY

Larry opens the closet door. He stares up at the suitcase

REVERSE ANGLE ON SUITCASE

as Larry takes it down from the top shelf.

INT. LARRY'S ROOM - DAY

He sits on the floor and opens the suitcase. It contains a bundle of letters, neatly stacked and held with a rubber band. There are also several manila envelopes filled with photos and other miscellaneous mementos. He flips through some of the stuff, reads a few letters. He picks up an old boutonniere - a red rose long dried up. It crumbles as he touches it. He stuffs everything back in the suitcase and shoves it back in the closet.

INT. LARRY'S APARTMENT - DAY

Larry sits on the couch, reading a book about Caribbean Real Estate. The BAR FUND jar is sitting on the table. He closes the book, shivers, and fishes in his pocket for a few bills, which he throws in the jar..

INT. BAR - NIGHT

Larry sits at the bar with Steve.

LARRY

Can you believe that guy? I mean, we had big plans, and now he's set me back at least six months. Probably a year. I was going to let him be the brawn to my brains, too, y'know. Make him a 50-50 partner. But that's all gone now.

STEVE

That's hard, man. But the guy's in love.

LARRY

Don't get me started on that.

He takes a swig of his beer.

LARRY

I've just got to get out of this town, man. I hate it here.

STEVE

Well, why don't you just move down there?

LARRY

I can't just "move down there". I don't have the necessary funds to buy the bar, I don't have anywhere to stay, I barely have enough for a flight.

STEVE

What I'm saying is, rather than wait and save up all the money you need to buy the property, why don't you save enough money so you can fly down there and live for a couple weeks, and then you can look for a job at a bar down

STEVE (cont'd)  
there or something.

Larry thinks about this for a while.

LARRY  
I could do that.

The BARTENDER brings the phone over.

BARTENDER  
Telephone call for you, Larry.

Larry takes the phone.

EXT. PARK - DAY

Larry stands at the band shell, waiting. Percy approaches.

LARRY  
You wanted to meet here?

PERCY  
Yeah.

LARRY  
Lame. So what do you want?

He pauses, wonders where to start.

PERCY  
I wanted to apologize for some of  
the things I said.

Larry is silent.

PERCY  
I'm sorry that I said what I did  
about Mary. About how you...

LARRY  
Don't worry about it. There was some  
truth there.

Percy nods.

LARRY  
That's why I need to get out of this  
town, y'know?

PERCY

Yeah, I know.

LARRY

How's Melinda?

PERCY

Good. She got into that beauty school she wanted.

LARRY

Cool. She moving?

PERCY

Yeah. And I'm going with her.

Larry frowns. He didn't expect that.

PERCY

Look, I'd like my half of the money back.

LARRY

So you're bailing out?

PERCY

I know it'll set you back a bit, but it'll really make things easier for me. And Melinda. This move is just gonna cost more than we thought.

LARRY

I'm sorry, P. I've already spent that money.

PERCY

On what?

LARRY

I bought a plane ticket down there. I'm going down there to scout things out, check out the real estate market, that kind of thing. You were right. It was time for me to get serious. So I did.

PERCY

That was OUR money, Larry. Yours and mine.

LARRY

Yeah, that was our money that we set aside for the bar. We had a deal. And if you want out of the deal, that's fine. But you can't take half of the company with you when you go.

Percy fumes. He doesn't know what to say.

LARRY

I'm sorry, man. That's just how it is.

PERCY

Look, I've gotta go help Melinda.

He turns to go.

PERCY

I'll talk to you later.

He walks away. Larry turns and heads off in the opposite direction.

INT. APARTMENT - DAY

Larry sits on the couch, watching television. Percy and Melinda are moving big items of furniture out of Percy's room. Larry doesn't offer to help.

Percy approaches, hands Larry a slip of paper.

PERCY

That's going to be our contact info in Atlanta. We're going to be staying with her aunt for a little while.

LARRY

OK.

He sets the paper down on the table. Turns his attention back to the TV.

PERCY

Good luck with Barbados.

LARRY

Thanks.

Percy nods.



PERCY

Ok then.

He shakes Larry's hand and leaves.

INT. PERCY'S EMPTY BEDROOM - DAY

Larry enters Percy's room, his hands in his pockets. He looks around. There are a few scraps of paper on the ground, but other than that, it is empty.

Larry starts to walk around, touching the walls and thinking.

QUICK FLASHBACKS

Larry and Percy sit on the couch, watching TV, laughing about something and wiping their eyes. They can hardly look at each other without cracking up.

Larry and Percy ride around town in their car at night, windows down, enjoying the radio blaring and enjoying the wind in their faces.

Larry and Percy are at the bar, laughing and talking. Larry slaps a hand on Percy's shoulder.

INT. PERCY'S ROOM - DAY

Larry stands in the center of the room, smiling. He walks to the closet, opens it, and peers in.

INT. CLOSET - DAY

A scrap of paper catches Larry's eye. It is a photo, slightly bent, wedged behind the door. He picks it up.

ANGLE ON PHOTO

The photo shows Percy and Melinda - a self-photo taken at arm's length. It's from the night of Percy's mud mask. Melinda has her arm around him. They look very happy.

ANGLE ON DIFFERENT PHOTO

A different photo. This one shows Larry and a girl in a similar pose - a self-photo taken at arm's length with their arms around each other. We recognize her as the girl Larry saw in the bar and on the corner: Mary

INT. LARRY'S ROOM - DAY

Larry sits in front of the opened suitcase, going through photos. The BAR FUND jar is sitting on the floor next to him, full. He bites his lower lip.

ANGLE ON LARRY'S HANDS

As he flips through the photos. Underneath the self-photo of he and Mary is a photo of he, Mary, and Percy out on the town one night. Underneath that is a photo, taken by Mary, of he and Percy together. They are pals.

ANGLE ON LARRY

Larry swallows hard. Picks up the phone.

EXT. PARK - DAY

Larry stands at the "meeting" place. Percy approaches, hands in pockets.

PERCY  
You wanted to meet?

LARRY  
I've got your money.

He hands Percy an envelope.

LARRY (cont'd)  
It's all there if you want to count it.

PERCY  
I believe you.

He stuffs the envelope in his pocket.

LARRY  
So how's it going?

PERCY  
Good, just busy. Getting ready.

Larry nods.

PERCY  
I should actually get going. Melinda and I have to finish packing.

LARRY  
When you leaving?

PERCY  
In the morning.

LARRY  
Yeah, you gotta get cracking then.

He sticks his hand out. Percy takes it.

PERCY  
Atlanta's not that far. You should  
come visit.

LARRY  
Yeah, I'll do that.

They stand for a second.

PERCY  
Okay, then. See ya.

LARRY  
Yup.

An awkward shake, with a half hug. They walk away in opposite directions. Halfway to his car, Larry turns and watches as Percy walks off.

EXT. GAS STATION - DAY (SUNSET?)

Percy and Melinda pull up to the pump. Percy jumps out to fill the tank.

Filled up, Percy hangs up the nozzle and fishes the money envelope out of his back pocket. He starts to pull a bill out as he walks towards the station, then stops short. The envelope is filled with money. Way too much money.

INSERT OF ENVELOPE.

Stuffed full of \$20 bills, with a note: "A little extra for the road. Good luck. - L."

PERCY  
Son of a bitch.

INT. APARTMENT - DAY

The BAR FUND jar sits empty on the table. Larry is sitting next to it, wearing his work shirt, flipping through channels on the TV. He stares at the pretzel jar, snaps off the TV, and picks it up. He starts cleaning up, stuffing junk from the table into the pretzel jar.

ANGLE ON PHOTO WALL

Larry goes to the wall, regards his photos. He grabs one and tears it down. Starts grabbing at others, pulling them down. Tears them all down

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Larry walks into the kitchen, his arms full of junk from the other room. He stuffs it all in the trash. Stands up to go, but stops. Something in the garbage catches his eye.

LARRY'S POV

Of the trash can. Sitting on the top, slightly crumpled, is the photo of the beach that we saw at the beginning of the film.

ANGLE ON LARRY

As he regards the photo.

EXT. APARTMENT - DAY

Larry walks to the curb with a large trash bag slung over his shoulder. He tosses it down. He returns with another. And another.

INT. APARTMENT - DAY

Larry tosses his stuff into boxes and piles. He is working like a madman.

EXT. APARTMENT - DAY

A yard sale. People are going through Larry's stuff. A man with a beard looks at Larry's TV. Hands him a wad of bills.

ANGLE ON CIGAR BOX

As Larry stuffs money into it.

EXT. PAWN SHOP - DAY

Larry enters the pawnshop with a guitar case.

CIGAR BOX

As Larry stuffs more money into it.

EXT. APARTMENT - DAY

Larry leaves his house, carrying only the suitcase from his closet. He is wearing "good clothes". He waves at his LANDLORD, who is tying a "FOR RENT" sign to the gate, and leaves.

INT. BUS STATION - DAY

Larry sits in a chair, waiting for his bus. The suitcase is on his lap. He taps his foot and looks around. Excited.

INT. BUS - DAY

Larry sits next to the window. He is wearing his "good" clothes. He is pensive. Is he really doing the right thing?

Outside the window is a salt marsh stretching away to the horizon.

He has the suitcase on his lap. He opens it.

ANGLE ON THE SUITCASE

Mary's stuff is gone. The suitcase is filled with a few neatly folded changes of clothes. Sitting on top is the photo from the wall, the one we first saw at the beginning of the movie.

EXT. RESTAURANT/ MARINA - DAY

Larry walks through the parking lot, carrying his suitcase. He is staring off-camera, towards the sound of WAVES CRASHING, but a decrepit sailboat in dry dock catches his attention. He notices a "For Sale" sign taped to the boat, fishes in his pocket for a pen, and writes the number on his wrist.

EXT. BEACH - DAY

Larry marches down to the water. At the edge, he drops his suitcase and sits. He turns his head to the right. Beach and ocean stretches away to the horizon. He turns to the left. There

is a small hut in the distance, where a man tends bar. The sounds of STEEL DRUMS drift across the breeze. Larry starts to smile.

A PAIR OF WOMEN in bikinis walks past. They smile at Larry, dressed up on the beach.

LARRY

Howzit goin', ladies?

LADIES

Hey.

They stop to talk with a very relaxed Larry. And we FADE OUT

## APPENDIX C

### FINAL BUDGET

COST SUMMARY			
ITEM	CASH	IN KIND	TOTAL
SALARIES	0	9800	9800
PRODUCTION DEPT	1849.08	2650	4499.08
ART DEPT	106.93	1600	1706.93
CAMERA/ LIGHTING	0	4790	4790
AUDIO	41.46	1140	1181.46
TAPE STOCK	138.46	10	148.46
POST PRODUCTION	3339.78	1800	5139.78
GRAND TOTAL	5475.71	21790	27265.71



Budget Breakdown				
ITEM		CASH	IN KIND	TOTAL
Principal Talent	32 days @ \$100/day		3200	3200
Supporting Talent	14 days @ \$75/day		1050	1050
Primary Crew (DP, AD, Gaffer, Mixer, Art Director)	48 days @ \$100/day		4800	4800
Production Assistants	10 days @ \$75/day		750	750
<b>Salaries TOTAL</b>		<b>0</b>	<b>9800</b>	<b>9800</b>
Food	16 days	1390.32		1390.32
Telephone	Allow	200		200
Shipping		91.56		91.56
Photocopies		30.78		30.78
Office Supplies		68.14		68.14
Misc.	Batteries, cables, etc.	68.28		68.28
Location Fees	14 days @ \$100/day		1400	1400
Insurance			1250	1250
<b>Production Department TOTAL</b>		<b>1849.08</b>	<b>2650</b>	<b>4499.08</b>
Photos and Developing		64.45	150	214.45
Props		22.48	1000	1022.48
Wardrobe		10	250	260
Makeup/Hair		10	200	210
<b>Art Department TOTAL</b>		<b>106.93</b>	<b>1600</b>	<b>1706.93</b>
JVC GY-DV500 DV Camera	16 days @ \$150/day		2400	2400
Sony Digital8 Camera	2 days @ \$75/day		150	150
Camera Accessories (field monitor, tripod, etc.)	16 days @ \$50/day		800	800
Grip and Electric (Lowe Kit, Tweenie, Flags, etc.)	12 days @ \$120/day		1440	1440
<b>Camera/Lighting TOTAL</b>		<b>0</b>	<b>4790</b>	<b>4790</b>

DAT Recorder and Mics	12 days @ \$40/day		480	480
Senn 815, boom pole, and lavs	12 days @ \$55/day		660	660
DAT Tape Stock	4 90 min DATs @ \$10.36	41.46		41.46
<b>Audio TOTAL</b>		<b>41.46</b>	<b>1140</b>	<b>1181.46</b>
miniDV tape	17 60min @ \$5.70.	96.95		96.95
Hi8 tape	10 30min@ \$10/e.	21.51		21.51
VHS tape		20	10	30
<b>Tape Stock TOTAL</b>		<b>138.46</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>148.46</b>
DV Editing workstation		2300		2300
Mini DV Camera			500	500
Editing Software		934		934
Audio Transfer	From DAT to CD	80		80
Blank DVD/CD media	10 CDs/3 DVDs	25.78		25.78
Music Recording			500	500
Music Rights			800	800
<b>Post Production TOTAL</b>		<b>3339.78</b>	<b>1800</b>	<b>5139.78</b>
<b>GRAND TOTAL</b>		<b>5475.71</b>	<b>21790</b>	<b>27265.71</b>

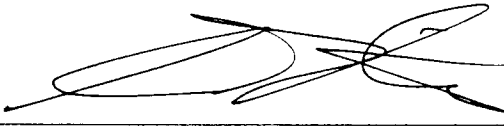
## APPENDIX D

### RELEASE FORMS

## ESCAPE VELOCITY

We appreciate your interest in "Escape Velocity". If you would like to be photographed in this movie, we will need your signature below granting this permission.

1. I agree to your recording my likeness and/or voice on film and/or tape, and to edit such film and/or tape at your discretion in connection with the telecasting or other broadcasting and my participation in your media program tentatively titled "Escape Velocity", which is referred to herein as "The Program."
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Signature

10/10/03  
Date

Scott Thesiot  
Print Name


## ESCAPE VELOCITY

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Signature

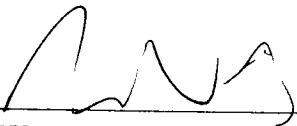
10/14/03  
Date

  
Print Name

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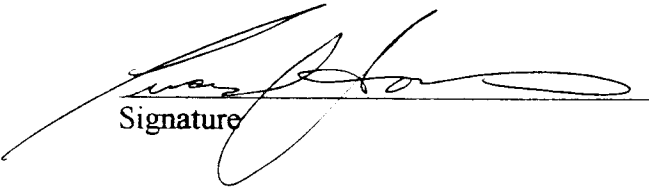
12/14/03  
Date

Prachi Vij  
Print Name

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Signature

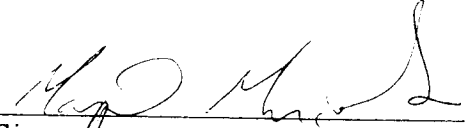
11/09/03  
Date

Lucas Hains  
Print Name

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Signature

11/9/03  
Date

Maggie Maridis  
Print Name



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Signature

Date

Print Name


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Signature



Date

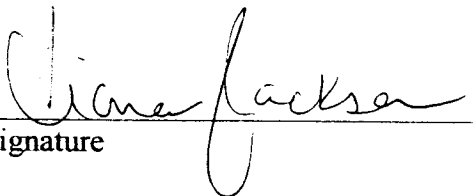


Print Name

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Signature

11-9-03  
Date

DIANA JACKSON  
Print Name

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Signature

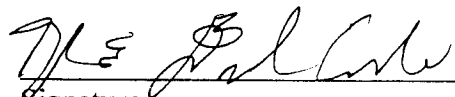
12/8/03  
Date

Mike Postalakis  
Print Name

## ESCAPE VELOCITY

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Signature

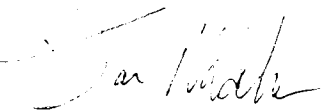
2-16-04  
Date

BLAINE DAVID CADE  
Print Name

## ESCAPE VELOCITY

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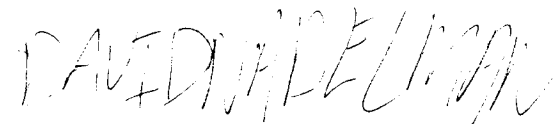
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Signature



Date



Print Name

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Skyla Sanchez  
Signature

November 9, 2003  
Date

Skyla Sanchez  
Print Name

## ESCAPE VELOCITY

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Laura Crolla  
Signature

11-14-03  
Date

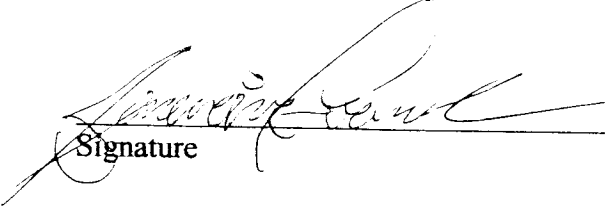
LAURA CROLLA  
Print Name



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Signature

11-14-03  
Date

Jenevieve Frank  
Print Name

## APPENDIX E

## DIGITAL COPY OF FILM

## VITA

Joshua Trotter was born in Cleveland, Ohio, in 1976. He grew up in Pinellas County, Florida, where he developed a love for reading, writing, comics, animation, films, and the outdoors. In 1998, he received a Bachelor's degree in English from the University of Florida, where he studied American Literature, Fiction Writing, Comics and Animation, and Zoology. He continued in the graduate English program at UF, where he taught Composition and Technical Writing courses. For his Masters thesis he analyzed the directorial styles of Bob Clampett, Friz Freleng, Chuck Jones, and Frank Tashlin by examining the Private Snafu cartoon produced by the Warner Brothers studios during World War II.

Mr. Trotter moved to New Orleans in the summer of 2000 to pursue his dream of making films. He produced seven short films while at UNO and crewed on several more. In addition, he served the Department of Drama and Communication as a Graduate Assistant. He hopes to find work in the entertainment industry as a writer and director.