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A Practical Study of the Role of the Cinematographer

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A PRACTICAL STUDY OF THE ROLE OF THE CINEMATOGRAPHER

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

Ryan H. Martin

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract	vi
Introduction.....	1
Chapter 1: Making the Decision	2
Chapter 2: Butterflies.....	6
The Script.....	6
Pre-production: Conceptual Research and Design	7
Pre-production: Practical and Technical.....	10
Production	12
Post-production.....	15
Retrospection	16
Chapter 3: Transitioning from Film to Video	18
Escape Velocity	18
A Very Special.....	19
Retrospection	20
Chapter 4: Spring Film 2004.....	22
The Script.....	22
Pre-production: Conceptual Research and Design	23
Pre-production: Practical and Technical.....	24
Production	29
Post-production.....	36
Retrospection	37
Chapter 5: 364.....	38
The Script.....	38
Pre-production: Conceptual Research and Design	39
Pre-production: Practical and Technical.....	41
Production	42
Post-production.....	48
Retrospection	50
Chapter 6: The Hunter's Apprentice.....	52
Pre-production.....	52
Production	54
Post-production.....	58
Retrospection	59

Chapter 7: Coyote Funeral	60
The Script.....	60
Pre-production: Conceptual Research and Design	61
Pre-production: Practical and Technical	62
Production	68
Post-Production.....	78
Retrospection	78
Chapter 8: Conclusion.....	80
Appendices	
Appendix A: Mother Wit Storyboards.....	82
Appendix B: The Hunter’s Apprentice Storyboards.....	99
Vita.....	150

Abstract

The following thesis describes the development and process of the responsibilities and skills necessary for a director of photography in the motion picture industry. Pre-production and production aspects pertaining to experiences as a cinematographer are covered. Furthermore, the progression of learning about the field of cinematography is explained through personal examples of logistical, technical, and artistic requirements on both short and feature student films. Storyboards are included in the appendices.

Introduction

What is cinematography? On the first page of the 9th edition of the *American Cinematographer Manual*, John Hora, ASC, states that “Cinematography is not a subcategory of photography. Rather, photography is but one craft that the cinematographer uses in addition to other physical, organizational, managerial, interpretive, and image-manipulating techniques to effect one coherent process.”¹

If you’ve been blessed with a natural talent for cinematography, the road to becoming a director of photography is challenging, consuming, uncertain, and taxing. For the rest of us, it is a long, arduous journey that involves mistakes, sleepless nights, regrets, fear of failure, failure, self-doubt, stress, and countless hours developing a final product that gives little assurance that you have any idea what you’re doing. It requires reading many books, studying films, staring at photographs, and observing the interplay of light and shadow every minute of the day. Yet despite all the scraped knees, harsh realities, and doubt, it can be one of the most satisfying and enlightening jobs one could ever have the pleasure of doing for free—let alone getting paid for. What follows are the technical, artistic, and life lessons I’ve learned related to the study of motion picture cinematography.

¹ In other words, way more involved than looking pensive next to a film camera and creating beautiful imagery. It requires skills beyond a “love of technology” and an “interest in the visual arts.”

Chapter 1: Making the Decision

I initially started my graduate studies with writing and directing in mind. Who wouldn't like the idea of having complete control over a production, let alone all the fame and fortune that's associated with most successful directors? What I didn't realize at the time was the enormous amount of either talent or effort that is required to learn the craft of storytelling. There were countless movies I hadn't seen, books I hadn't read, and concepts I hadn't had exposure to or bothered to obsess over; there's still a list of significant works I have yet to see or read. Also, the myth of complete control was just that, a myth. Good films rely on the talents, collaboration, and effort of a team of individuals committed to telling a good story.

I was initially seduced by the filmmaker's self-inflicted curse, buying into all the overnight success stories, box office cash cows made on a shoestring budget, and visions of creating the ultimate film short that made writing a resume' unnecessary. And while my first film, made in my first semester of graduate studies, received the obligatory approval from friends and family, I was disappointed by the story's simplicity and the poor performances my non-actors had given due to my lack of direction. I didn't mind the visuals I captured though--although I attribute most of them to dumb luck and paranoia surrounding the perceived unpredictability of getting a correct exposure on film.

In my second semester, I found myself struggling to develop a story into a short screenplay I could shoot in the fall semester. I couldn't germinate one idea that I thought would catch an audience's interest and keep me motivated enough through the various steps of production. Did I have what it takes to base my whole future on my creativity? Could I do it alone (a writer) or would I only be able to do it as part of a collaborative

team? If I was going to go anywhere in filmmaking, I needed to identify my talents, find a focus, and develop it. I could study all aspects of film production, but I needed one field to fold them under. What did I love doing, and what could I do well?

Spring Film 2003 came around and I was chosen to be the first assistant director. It's basically an administrative job, requiring organization, delegation, and a knack for planning. I could organize transportation, equipment, personnel, and scheduling. The production was successful, largely in part to the great crew and also due to the fact that I took every minute detail into consideration before and during the shoot days. So planning, scheduling, and organization were a strength I could build on.

Also, Mike Ryan, a fellow graduate student, and I were assigned to capture the background plates for Spring Film's opening credits. I enjoyed being able to focus purely on trying to create interesting images. I could work with Mike collaboratively and he pushed me to look beyond my first instincts as to where to put the camera. Neither one of us knew "the perfect shot," but Mike's influence encouraged me to look harder to find it.

During the shoot we made a few amateur mistakes. For instance, we were using a Bolex H16 camera which uses a beam-splitter reflex system to divide the optical image between the viewfinder and the film plane. Because part of the light is diverted to the viewfinder, there must be an exposure compensation of 1/3 stop. This can be done by opening up 1/3 stop or by adjusting the shutter speed. On top of that, we were using reversal film, which experiences increased density when slightly underexposed around 1/3 stop. On a few shots we forgot to compensate for the light loss brought about by the viewfinder system as well as setting our exposure using the f-stop values rather than the

T-stop values which were about 1/3 stop off. Therefore, these shots were being underexposed by anywhere from 2/3 to 1 stop, which is significant when dealing with a reversal stock which has less latitude than color negative.

When the film came back I was overjoyed by the results of what Mike and I captured. The colors were rich and the compositions were interesting. There were a few unusable shots, but even the images that were grossly underexposed were a moderate success. Although the stock was largely responsible for the rich images Mike and I shot, I enjoyed using new equipment, experimenting with new stock, capturing interesting compositions, and working collaboratively in a creative endeavor.

I was also obsessed with learning how to use every piece of equipment the school had available. Part of it was motivated by a desire to move into the equipment room as a graduate assistant, another part was motivated by a love for the technology and tools of film production. It was during this time that I began holding regular discussions with Pushkar AKS, a graduate assistant responsible for managing the equipment room. Our conversations would always lead to the visual aspects of storytelling, although Pushkar was still entertaining the idea of being a director. Eventually, Pushkar recommended that I consider cinematography as a focus in my studies.

The more I thought about it the more it seemed like a perfect fit. I couldn't write a story I liked, but I knew what worked and what didn't when it came to critiquing others. Whenever I'd discuss films and story concepts with peers, I always leaned toward the visual aspect. Our first graduate films were made in teams of three. On my group's films, I gravitated towards setting up the lights and suggesting shot compositions. I wasn't pleased with the story of my first film because I put more effort into designing the shots.

The acting suffered because instead of directing I was focusing on composition, establishing a visual balance within the frame, and conveying motion using diagonal and curved lines. I spent more time with the equipment than I did with my actors. As a cinematographer, it would be part of my responsibility to obsess over what I was already focusing on—mastering the tools, keeping up with the changes in technology, learning the science, developing the visuals, and I could work collaboratively with the director to help tell the story.

Chapter 2: *Butterflies*

At the end of the spring 2003 semester I managed to put together a short script to shoot in the fall. Nevertheless, I decided to forego directing my own script in order to serve as a cinematographer on other student projects. I subscribed to *American Cinematographer* magazine, and after reading a couple of issues and learning further about what a cinematographer does, decided that it was the profession I wanted to study.

I approached Britt Pitre, a fellow graduate student, about shooting his script in the fall. Britt and I worked together during our first semester along with another graduate student, Brian Ivey. I lit Britt's first graduate film, and we were both pleased with the visuals we captured despite our lack of experience. Although reluctant at first, due to my inexperience, Britt agreed to continue our collaboration on his short film, *Butterflies*.

The Script

Butterflies centers around two reconnaissance soldiers, Charlie and Tommy, in the midst of a war in the distant future. While developing reconnaissance photographs of dead enemies, Charlie discovers that a dead butterfly appears on the lips of the corpses; these butterflies were not on the bodies at the time the photographs were taken. The corpses of the enemy are a problem too, as Charlie is unsure of who is responsible for them. The mission is only to covertly observe the enemy; any mysterious deaths would alert the other side and endanger the mission. Charlie suspects that Tommy is responsible. His actions are not only violating orders, they also illustrate his disconnection with reality and diminishing value for human life; Tommy is killing out of boredom and not out of necessity.

I took interest due to the visual challenges and opportunities the script could provide. First, I would only be dealing with two characters in an isolated environment; an adequate amount for a first time cinematographer to tackle. The film also dealt with visual metaphor, utilizing butterflies as both representations of the soul and the soldier's diminishing mental state. There was also a comment being made about the actual process of photography. Was it capturing reality or was it capturing what was in the imagination of the person behind the camera?

Pre-production: Conceptual Research and Design

I told Britt I wanted to read the script and compile notes on the visual direction I wanted to take the film. Britt already had specific shots and ideas in mind, but he was open to incorporating any further suggestions or ideas I had.

Along with Britt, I established visual guidelines for each character. These guidelines had to work within the restrictions set by the script itself. First, I would be dealing with the two primary environments where the film took place: the jungle and the interior of a small abandoned shack. Very little light could be used because their reconnaissance missions were covert and set entirely at night.

I didn't clearly define Charlie and Tommy as protagonist and antagonist. Rather, I believed Charlie should be seen as prey and Tommy as predator. Although we see Charlie with a gun, his character suggests he would hesitate to use it even in self-defense. So, I wanted Charlie to always be more lit than Tommy; maybe even using a little diffusion to soften his appearance. I felt that this would make the audience more sympathetic and trusting of Charlie. By contrast, Tommy would barely come out of the

darkness, and I wanted to keep his lighting harsh and to a minimum. Britt wanted the characters and the story to be ambiguous, so I would have to keep the differences in lighting between the two characters subtle. This would be difficult for scenes involving both characters on screen simultaneously.

I devised a plan for camera movement and composition related to both characters. Charlie is threatened and concerned with finishing the mission and escaping the jungle as fast as possible. Whenever Charlie went outside, I wanted the framing to be restrictive, barely giving him any room to move within the frame. Also, whenever the camera covered Charlie from a distance, I wanted it to have a stalking feel to it. Therefore, the camera would always be at Charlie's back, with bushes and trees obstructing the view. When Charlie was inside, the camera would be locked down and I would give him a little more room to move within the frame.

Tommy would be just the opposite. The jungle was his playground and the shack was his prison. For exteriors involving Tommy, the camera would be locked down and Tommy would be given plenty of space to roam within the frame. For interiors, the camera would remain locked down, but the framing would be restrictive and often looking from above Tommy's eye line.

Britt and I decided to shoot on color film but the color palette would be muted, limited to dark earth tones, and red would serve as the only variation. Britt felt that the lack of color would assist in conveying the emotional void the two characters were stuck in. The color red would work both practically, for the scenes involving Charlie developing film, and thematically signifying danger, subdued rage, and murder.

The issue of capturing the night scenes became the first major technical uncertainty I had about the shoot. There were basically two options to choose from: film at night and light the woods or shoot day-for-night. I didn't think the school had the equipment to support lighting the woods at night, so I entertained the idea of shooting day-for-night.

Shooting during the day had its benefits. First, there would be little need for additional lighting instruments, and if a situation called for extra equipment it would be easier for the crew to see and setup in the woods during the day. Since we were shooting under the dense cover of trees, the sun wouldn't be much of a problem as most of the changing directional light would be dappled by the natural canopy. Finally, I was still unsure about how to light anything in general; my knowledge of lighting technique was pretty much limited to basic three-point setups, featuring one key light, one fill light, and one back light. Shooting during the day would help me avoid having to do what I didn't know how to do.

I looked through the *American Cinematographer's Manual* and consulted faculty as to how to technically pull off day-for-night. The technique required 1 ½ to 2 stops of underexposure, encouraged the use of filters, and mentioned color manipulation in the transfer. At the time, I was uncertain how to use filters and even more uncertain of how to control exposure. Also, the direction of the sun plays a big factor in making day-for-night convincing. It is better to shoot under clear skies, in bright sunlight, and with the sun in a position that allows for backlighting. While direct backlighting creates a halo effect, it often leaves a strong rim light and isn't as effective. We were shooting in the shadows of dense woods, with sunlight providing dappled light at best. Even if I did nail

everything in the production phase, colors still had to be properly manipulated in the transfer. It would be a challenge, but I felt I could learn how to do it.

I referenced a few professional examples of day-for-night cinematography, watching the movie *Jaws* shot by cinematographer Bill Butler and *Apocalypse Now*, shot by the legendary Vittorio Storaro. The scenes were as perfect as one could get to make the technique work. Although both movies are beautifully lit and shot, I didn't find the look completely convincing; it was too blue and there was not enough darkness. Also, these were cinematographers with 13 or more years of experience behind them when they shot these movies; I had little to none. Britt didn't like the look either and I was unsure if I could pull it off, so we decided to shoot night-for-night instead.

Pre-production: Practical and Technical

Britt and I scouted the river parishes in summer 2003. We needed to find our exterior jungle location and a shack that would serve as the interior location. There were countless patches of heavily wooded areas, but access and availability were a problem for most of them. A friend of Britt's mentioned a wooded area behind his house in Chalmette. We checked it out and it seemed to fit our needs. The road was near the edge of the woods, meaning we could get the grip truck close to where we were filming. Also, we would have access to the house, providing bathrooms for the crew and a power source to run the lights. We would not be able to run the grip truck's generator late at night in the middle of a residential neighborhood. The woods were dense, cutting out the ambient light of the surrounding neighborhood. It would make movement difficult, but paths and staging areas could be cleared during the day before the shoot. The distance from the

house was limited to 500 feet to accommodate the limited length of power cable we had for lighting instruments. However, within that limited range we were able to designate a distinct area for each exterior scene. Power was a bit of a concern, as the home's electrical capability meant I could only draw a maximum of 4kW at a time.

For the interior scenes, we decided to use an old tool shed in the back of my grandmother's house. The shed needed little set dressing and was a hundred feet or so from the house. Again, we had access to bathrooms and reliable electrical power. The area outside the shed was overgrown with vegetation, providing a nice transition to the exterior location. We decided to film two scenes outside the shed to help tie the two locations together.

With the locations locked, I focused on camera training and choosing a film stock. Britt and I felt that the Super 16 format would allow us to show the size and density of the jungle. We already decided the film would be in color, and the low light situations called for a high speed film. Britt stumbled upon a deal with Crest National in California, securing free processing if he bought Fuji film from the lab². That narrowed down the choice to Fuji 400 as our color negative film stock. I was told that Fuji tends to favor the color green, which was perfect seeing as the film was set in the woods and the characters were primarily dressed in green camouflage.

Principal photography was scheduled for late September 2003. One month prior to our shoot date, I began training on the camera and dolly along with Brian Ivey, who would be my camera operator/assistant. One scene in the movie called for night vision point of view shots. Britt and I decided that we would capture these shots during the day

² Crest National no longer offers this deal to student filmmakers.

and manipulate them in post. We captured these shots before principal photography. I also shot the 35mm stills that would be used as prop photographs in the film. Britt wanted to capture Charlie's photos developing in his makeshift darkroom. I suggested that we lock off the camera and achieve the development process by hiding a dissolve between two locked off shots: one of a blank piece of paper and the other with the photo fully developed. Since the photos were developing in a tray of water, Britt could use the ripples as a means to hide the dissolve between the two shots. Britt wanted to capture the effect in camera, but ultimately he agreed to try it my way instead.

Production

We decided to shoot the exterior scenes first, attempting to finish them all in one weekend. The shoot lacked a first assistant director (1st AD), so Britt and I were responsible for the logistics of the shoot. I handled the equipment and crew and Britt handled the actors. The shoot began with the most complicated shot in the film, a dolly shot involving several lengths of curved dolly track. I scheduled setting up the track prior to sunset, mainly so the crew could see to properly set things up. Once the cable was run from the house and the dolly track was leveled in place, we put the lights into position and waited for darkness. My plan was to begin the shoot as far into the woods as possible and gradually work our way back, eventually finishing the weekend within 50 feet from the house.

The logistical and managerial aspects of my planning went well, but the execution of my lighting design was a different story. Despite all the preproduction and planning, once the shoot started I was in over my head regarding lighting the scenes. My first

mistake was limiting myself to two lights. After speaking with professors and reading a few articles regarding lighting scenes at night, I discovered that larger productions traditionally light night scenes with one large source, slightly diffused, and usually overhead.

I tried to mimic one large source by putting up two small sources (2K Fresnels) in close proximity to one another. This created one large pool of illumination, leaving the rest of the woods in complete darkness; thus the exterior images lacked the depth I wanted. I tried to silk the lights to spread out the coverage, but the diffusion often knocked the light levels too low to register. I was forced to leave the diffusion off in most cases, resulting in many of the shots having an obvious concentrated light source. Also, between the Super 16 format and the shot design, I imposed restrictions regarding the distance the lights had to be from the scene—they were too far from the action.

The first night I was fighting to get an exposure, as gelling the lights would also diminish the intensity of the light by up to 2/3 stop. I did capture the muted color I wanted with the lights. Since daylight is around 5600 K, I had the crew gel the lights to around 4200 K; a slightly cooler light without the overbearing presence of blue. But all in all, we were moving slow and I didn't think we were getting the shots we planned for. I was also limiting myself to what I planned, instead of adapting to accommodate the situation. As a result, many of the compositions suffered in order to hide lighting instruments or limit the frame to the small areas that had been lit.

The next night I was in the same situation, abandoning cinematography and fighting to get an exposure. Rain temporarily shut us down, delaying the remainder of the shoot into the early hours of the morning. I inadvertently composed a shot in layers.

Layered compositions possess a foreground, middle ground, and background. The separation of these layers can be achieved by manipulating depth of field or varying light intensity on each layer. The shot I composed could have been nice, but the light was coming from the same direction as the camera, creating flat, even light suggesting all elements in the frame were on the same plane.

At this time, I was a little nervous about the shots we captured. Although Britt and I looked through the camera checking for composition and detail, Brian Ivey was ultimately the final word on focus and minor adjustments during the scene. Brian was camera operator on his first film and his compositions were good and in focus, but the long hours of Britt's shoot were taking their toll on his patience and attention to detail.

The second weekend went better as we were filming in and around the shack behind my grandmother's house. The compositions ranged from medium to close up, meaning I could get the lighting instruments much closer to the action. Also, the crew didn't have to blindly stumble through the woods with equipment and electrical cable. I still hadn't figured out how to get the look I wanted and was merely going for an adequate exposure with some texture. For the few exteriors, the lights still weren't high and soft enough to simulate moonlight.

Mike Ryan discovered a butterfly perched on a nearby blade of tall grass. We quickly and quietly flipped the light around, stealing a few shots of the butterfly flapping its wings as well as being scared off by an anonymous camouflaged figure pushing through the tall grass. This footage would ultimately be used in the title sequence, along with a few others intentionally out of focus shots of the same anonymous figure stalking through the woods.

Next we moved into the shed, and I lit the scene with two 500 watt photoflood lights gelled red as originally planned. Again, the light was positioned from behind the camera instead of from the side or directly across. The various items hanging in and around the shed helped break up the mostly flat red lighting I set up. There was also a shot that called for a rack focus from Charlie at the mirror to pinned butterflies in the background. I kept the light levels low enough to put me at an f/2.8, but the small size of the shed forced me to keep the focal length fairly short, resulting in a deeper depth of field than desired. I could still pull off the rack, but the shift in focus was not severe enough to really stand out.

Post-production

Britt handled the post production aspects of *Butterflies* and my only involvement once principal photography wrapped was screening the transfer after it returned from the lab. I wasn't completely displeased with the results of the film, but it was blatantly obvious that I didn't know what I was doing. There were a few shots that came back out of focus. I was unhappy with several of the shot compositions, and the lighting looked like lighting. The final results were miles away from what I had envisioned in my head.

I let the conditions and requirements of the shoot get the best of me, and I relied too much on textbook principles. I didn't know much beyond basic three point lighting. When faced with a situation I couldn't use it in, I had no idea what else to do and I was too afraid to experiment. I had gotten an exposure, but all the visual elements I wanted to capture suffered due to my lack of technical understanding and experience.

I hadn't realized it at the time, but I had pushed my way into the position of being a cinematographer without fully understanding the tools, techniques, and time it takes to practice it.

Retrospection

I failed to pick up on one important detail that was given to me when I was researching day-for-night. *American Cinematographer Manual* recommended positioning the scene in order to get cross backlighting from the sun. I could have applied the same principles to lighting the scene at night, positioning my two 2K fresnels to achieve the same effect. I could have gotten away with a lack of diffusion or used trees to mount or hide my lighting instruments. This would have also served to pop out a few of the background elements as well.

Also, instead of relying on what others had done on professional shoots to dictate my lighting setup, I could have developed a technique on my own. For instance, instead of using two 2K fresnels to mimic one large source, I could have used a series of smaller instruments to illuminate more background elements and light my subjects as well. I could have also incorporated silver shiny boards to get more out of my limited light situation. In short, I had to be prepared to improvise, adjust, and invent whatever the specific situation called for.

My biggest mistake was not actually looking at the scene I was lighting. I remember staring at the scene a few times, but I was more concerned about exposures than shape, texture, and mood. I was even unsure about getting the proper exposure. I knew how to use a meter, but I didn't fully understand how to use the meter to control the

image. If I had paid more attention to the image I was getting, I could have identified what was missing or needed in the scene and then figured out a way to use the tools to accomplish it.

I limited my experience to what I already knew at the time, which was little to nothing, instead of aggressively pursuing every available option, tool, and technique to get the results both Britt and I wanted. Granted, some of this is acquired through time and experience, but there were a few things I avoided because I didn't fully understand them. We probably could have shot day-for-night, but I wanted to avoid using filters because I didn't fully understand how to use them. I also was unsure about getting a proper exposure, let alone intentionally underexposing the image. My final mistake was failing to shoot a film test. My questions regarding filters, exposure, and latitude would have been answered immediately.

Chapter 3: Transitioning from Film to Video

Escape Velocity

Shortly after *Butterflies* wrapped, I volunteered to serve as gaffer on Josh Trotter's thesis film, with Pushkar serving as cinematographer. Josh's film, *Escape Velocity*, was shot on a prosumer miniDV camera. This gave me the opportunity to compare between lighting for film, which I had just done on *Butterflies*, and lighting for video which I would be doing on spring film the following semester.

Josh's shoot seemed to move quicker, and Pushkar lit a few scenes using only practicals and small photoflood bulbs. We could immediately see the results on the monitor, and fix setups when they weren't working. At one point, Pushkar and I worked in tandem; he would light one setup, while I was lighting another in the other room. Although Pushkar adjusted lighting setups, he was pretty much pleased with my initial lighting design.

Pushkar introduced me to the concept of varying the intensity of lights to suggest depth as well as using practicals to motivate light sources in the scene. While his knowledge of the concept was thorough, I didn't feel the execution of those concepts was entirely successful. The scenes we were lighting lacked something, and I attribute a portion of the image flaws to the camera we were using. Nevertheless, I was gaining experience in regards to how to hide lights, control light, and concentrate on achieving what I want with the final image.

A Very Special

Pushkar was confident that I was starting to develop an eye for cinematography; although there were still elements about lighting I understood but had very little practice in actually executing. Shortly after principal photography wrapped on *Escape Velocity*, Pushkar recommended I shoot Chris Wuchte's thesis film. The film would be shot on the same miniDV camera we used on Josh's film.

Chris' thesis film, *A Very Special*, featured a disillusioned father whose perceptions of reality changed to reflect various television genres. The film relied heavily on specific visual styles mimicking the look of a high-gloss infomercial, a 1970's cop drama, a soap opera, a slick modern medical drama, the show *COPS*, and a sitcom. The finale would feature a music video in the style of the television show, *The Monkees*.

I had about a week to prepare for Chris' shoot. I briefly met with Chris to discuss the shooting schedule and locations. Chris gave me a few episodes of *The Monkees* to watch, as well as an episode or two of *The Rockford Files* and *McCloud*. On my own, I watched an episode of *E.R.*, *Seinfeld*, *COPS*, and a late night infomercial, noting the different styles of lighting and camera work. For the music video portion of the film, I suggested we create a uniform for the characters in the film to wear. We ultimately decided it would be quicker and easier to use brightly colored turtlenecks and blue jeans. I suggested we try a series of cheap video effects, such as live-action stop motion.

The shoot began with capturing some exterior shots in the style of a 1970's cop drama. I really liked the look of Spike Jonze's Beastie Boy's music video, *Sabotage*, and I thought it was the right aesthetic for this portion of the film. *Sabotage* was shot cheaply, quickly, and featured little to no appearance of professional lighting.

The raw, gritty style proved to be very effective and comical. I used the camera's internal ND filters to knock down the overall light level I was getting outdoors and then I incorporated a little gain to introduce noise into the image. I felt that this would give me the gritty look I was trying to emulate. I tried to visually support the sequence's humor by incorporating ridiculous zooms that revealed nothing of significance in the frame.

Next, we moved onto capturing a scene that copied the look and feel of a modern sitcom. I tried to achieve high key lighting by placing photofloods in various spots around the kitchen where the scene took place. Moreover, I color corrected the kitchen window, balancing the daylight to the interior tungsten lights I was using.

I achieved the high key effect I was going for, but the overall image quality looked dingy and dull. It was a similar look Pushkar had captured on Josh Trotter's thesis film. I suspected that the camera was part of the problem, and my lack of experience and preparation filled in the gaps. Although I wasn't completely happy with the look I had gotten, time considerations and actor's schedules forced us to roll.

The shoot continued to be rushed and sloppy. Both Chris and I were overwhelmed with what we were trying to accomplish. I continued to be dissatisfied with the footage we were getting, and although I could see what was wrong with a scene on the monitor I couldn't fix it.

Retrospection

Chris' shoot illustrated the importance of organization and preparation in the field of cinematography. While I had done a little research by watching the shows Chris wished to emulate visually, I hadn't provided enough time to thoroughly observe them

and take notes on what made them visually unique from one another. I recognized their general differences, but I didn't analyze the scenes for specific lighting sources and compositions. Moreover, I scouted one location prior to shooting, my apartment. Therefore, I spent a significant amount of time figuring out how to light the background and characters on the day of the shoot. I was serving not only as cinematographer, but also as gaffer, grip, assistant camera, and camera operator, in short, the whole department that cinematographers are responsible for managing.

I identified another weakness I needed to work on: lighting small interiors. The majority of the interior spaces were small with low, white ceilings and white walls. My lighting package consisted mostly of photoflood bulbs and 650W fresnels, with very few flags or diffusion. I hadn't thought about using the white surfaces as a source of bounce until the last day of the shoot. Even then, bouncing created even more problems as the soft light went everywhere and I didn't even consider attempting to control it.

I also neglected to learn the intricacies of the miniDV camera we were using on the shoot. Again, I found myself starting a project without having shot a test. I allowed the time and technical pressures of the shoot to negatively affect my focus on preserving the overall image quality. The compositions in Britt's film suffered because I was concerned primarily with obtaining a proper exposure. Now, with video eliminating the need to worry about exposure, I was focusing too much on composition and allowing the quality of the lighting to suffer.

Chapter 4: Spring Film 2004

Shortly after beginning preproduction on *Butterflies*, I put in a request to be the cinematographer for Spring Film 2004, *Mother Wit*. I had a few meetings with Phil Karnell, who would be both director and faculty supervisor on the film. He was still in the middle of writing the script at the beginning of the fall semester, but he summarized the story and said if I was interested in shooting it I could have the job. I indicated I was still uncertain of my capabilities as a cinematographer, but seeing as the project would be shot on miniDV I could immediately see my results and adjust things until we were both satisfied with the image.

The Script

The script was inspired by a newspaper article Phil had read. A mother had been providing the answers for various unsupervised intelligence tests given to her child. Therefore, experts were falsely led to believe that the child possessed a superior intelligence. Phil wanted to explore the relationship between the mother and son, as well as the mother's motivation for creating a false perception of her child's abilities.

Mother Wit is the story of Amanda and her son, Calvin. The script shows the relationship that Calvin and Amanda share. The audience witnesses Amanda's cheating, the discovery of her deception, Amanda's desire to gain her mother's acceptance, and the complete emotional breakdown of Calvin who struggles to live up to Amanda's desire for him to be the smartest little boy in the world.

Pre-production: Conceptual Research and Design

I was handed a copy of the final version of the script prior to the Christmas break. Phil and I agreed to meet during the break to discuss what he wanted to achieve visually with the story. Phil was an experienced theater director, but his knowledge and experience of what film could offer technically was in its infancy. This isn't to say Phil was completely unaware of how he wanted the film to look; his ideas were pretty specific in the beginning. Rather, he was unaware of all the tools and techniques at his disposal.

So we began the semester with the mutual understanding that there was a significant amount we could teach each other. My previous work had at least sharpened my technical skills, and I was starting the project with almost a year of film experience under my belt. I wanted to start to take chances, experiment with different techniques, and really explore the visual language of film. I felt that working with a proper crew would allow me the freedom to fully concentrate on all aspects of cinematography.

Phil had a recurring image of a toy molecular structure throughout the script. Between scenes, we would cut to this structure, spinning in slow motion with no clear destination in sight. Later, it is revealed that this toy structure had been thrown by Calvin during his breakdown, eventually shattering against the wall. I suggested we use this device as a motivation for camera movement in other scenes, incorporating circular dolly moves into the film's visual language; Phil agreed.

Also, Phil had indicated that he wanted scenes involving Calvin and Amanda to feel very warm, and scenes at the institute to contrast those scenes. I suggested that this could be done both with color and by using softer lighting sources for Calvin and Amanda. We talked about a complicated dolly shot during a scene between Amanda and

her mother at a driving range. Phil wanted the shot to begin on an extreme close-up of a golf ball being hit out into the darkness. The camera would hold until a second ball was placed on the deck. It would then boom up to reveal Amanda's mother, gradually circling 270 degrees around the two women, ending in a two shot. I could clearly see this shot in my mind and I thought it would be the strongest visual scene in the film if we could pull it off.

Pre-production: Practical and Technical

The project was going to be captured using a new miniDV camera, the Panasonic AG-DVX100. The camera used the same frame rate as that of film, 24 frames-per-second, as opposed to the traditional video frame rate of 30 frames-per-second. It captured these images progressively, meaning the entire frame is captured simultaneously. Usually, a frame of video is constructed by combining two separate fields, each scanned 1/60th second apart.

The DVX100 boasted a cine-gamma feature which more closely emulates the contrast ratio of film. The camera was designed to generate excitement among small independent filmmakers who couldn't afford to make their movies on film. It could deliver a look that was competitive with 16mm film without the additional costs of film development and transfer.³

I learned from previous experiences about the necessity of shooting test footage before principal photography. So for the early part of the spring semester, I checked the camera out on weekends, changing camera settings and seeing how well the camera held

³ Even John Fauer, ASC took notice of the camera, providing a product review and technical breakdown of the camera for *American Cinematographer* in December 2003.

up in indoor and outdoor lighting conditions. During one of these tests, I discovered that the color red would often be oversaturated and would bleed around the edges. I also noted that the camera's internal ND filters introduced a sort of purple-grey haze over the image.

I spoke to Steve Hank about creating an adaptor that would allow me to use the DVX100 on one of the film camera's studio rigs. That way, I could make use of the rig's follow focus and matte box, which would allow me to use the assortment of filters in the equipment room. I then would be able to avoid using the camera's internal ND filters, introducing filtration in front of the lens instead. At this time, we ordered a follow-focus ring adaptor for the DVX100; both the ring adaptor and the matte box adaptor were ready before we began production.

Phil, our production designer Tony French, our art director Kevin Griffith, and our 1st AD Zach Materne searched for locations that could serve as Amanda and Calvin's apartment, the interior of the institution where Calvin was being observed, and an exterior for the institution. Phil was specific about the observation room where Calvin would have his breakdown. I suggested that we check out Loyola University's Communications building. I remembered seeing a room which could work for the observation room, and I felt there may have been a few more places that could serve as other areas of the institute.

Phil and I scouted Loyola and found a few places that were a perfect fit for the script, including an all glass room which was close to what Phil had in mind for the observation room. We spent a portion of the day at Loyola, planning out actor and camera blocking in the spaces we wanted to use. After a few phone calls, we discovered

that Loyola's price was too steep for the project's budget. We then scouted Xavier University, once again finding everything we needed to accommodate the script. Some locations even exceeded what we had initially found at Loyola University. Again, Phil and I spent a portion of the day planning camera and actor blocking and discussing set dressing with Tony French. The university was also very cooperative with accommodating the shoot.

In the meantime, I had a crew of fourteen students to train and put through a filmmaking boot camp. In a few short weeks I had to teach them set protocol, individual responsibilities based on their job titles, and how to assemble, use, and wrap every piece of grip and lighting equipment the school had to offer. I spent time training my camera assistants on the Panasonic DVX100. Although I planned to operate for most of the shoot, there were a few scenes in which I wanted to run two cameras to save time.

In the lighting and grip department, I had to teach my gaffer the basics of light as he had no experience whatsoever. Although we were using video, I taught him how to use a light meter and a color temperature meter. The majority of my grips had never touched a C-stand. My dolly grip wasn't even completely sure what a dolly was. I ran a lighting workshop in which we lit a simple scene, incorporating gels, diffusion, flags, and different lighting instruments. I showed them the differences between directional and diffused light, as well as how to control both. We set up several lengths of dolly track, leveled them, and practiced ramping the dolly up to speed and bringing it to a gentle stop. During that time, I allowed my camera assistants to experiment with the camera.

I had to be sure that everyone was aware of the layout of the grip truck. I made sure my key grip and best boy were certified by the university to drive the truck. I

established the chain of command. By the end of the training, the lighting department was going to my gaffer for answers, the grips through my key grip, and the truck was being carefully monitored by my best boy.

Due to the amount of people registered for the class, I had the luxury of creating a dedicated "video village". I devised a highly-portable system, which could accommodate recording, playback, and monitoring of two cameras simultaneously. In addition, I introduced a waveform monitor and vector scope into the equation. I had never used either device before, but I wanted to be able to refer to them when I was uncertain about the quality or IRE level of the image I was capturing. David Jones spent a few afternoons teaching me and my two video assistants how to read and use both devices properly.

Preproduction was in full swing. My crew of fourteen inexperienced students was quickly starting to resemble a team of professionals. I had been working with Tony, approving his color choices in costuming and set dressing. Kevin and I were discussing furniture styles and props. I spent several afternoons with Phil generating sketches of storyboards for the shoot. I tried to convince Phil of the importance of coverage; most of our scenes were being covered in one dolly shot or one master. Phil thought these could work, I somewhat agreed, but I thought it would greatly limit him later in the editing room. Nevertheless, we reached a compromise at the end of our session and I committed to drawing the storyboards myself.

With two weeks to go before production, Xavier University pulled the plug on our locations. Phil, Tony, Kevin, and I scrambled to find an immediate replacement. Seeking to avoid any future complications, we made arrangements to shoot the majority of the film's institute scenes in the alumni building on the University of New Orleans'

campus. I suggested to Phil to check out the sculpture garden in City Park for the exterior of the institute. Phil liked it, spoke with management, and arranged for permission to shoot there. We locked down an apartment on Frenchman Street for Calvin and Amanda's house, and the driving range in City Park was being fully cooperative.

With all locations locked, I took key members of my crew, including one student who was a certified electrician on a technical walkthrough of each location. We drew diagrams of each location, indicating power outlets and figuring out the total power we could draw from each circuit. In addition we organized locations to park the grip truck and stage equipment. Having walked through some of the blocking with Phil in the new locations, I began to pre-light in my head. Finally, I sat down with Phil and Zach Materne and created a detailed 10-day shooting schedule, convincing Phil to give the crew Easter Sunday off.

Less than a week before principal photography, Phil and I arranged a mock shoot in the Arena Theater. I chose to use the apartment scene for the exercise as it would be the very first thing we would be shooting. The scene called for different lighting setups as well as a dolly shot; everyone would get a chance to practice doing their particular job. I had taken detailed measurements of the space, so I outlined the room in masking tape on the floor of the theater. Everything would be run as though it were a shooting day, including running the lights off of the grip truck outside the theater. No equipment other than what we had brought and what was on the grip truck could be used. If we had forgotten something, we would have to function without it.

The mock shoot went well. Initially there was some trouble getting everyone to communicate through the proper channels, and the generator on the grip truck stopped

working a few times. However, everyone was pleased with the way things went, and we all felt ready to tackle principal photography. Call sheets for the first day were handed out, and everyone was dismissed. The next time we'd meet, we would be making the movie.

Production

Principal photography began in a second-floor apartment we had rented on Frenchman Street in the French Quarter. My crew arrived on time and once the grip truck was parked outside on the street below, I had my key grip, Tim Ory, organize running power cables and staging the dolly and lighting equipment on the outside balcony. This bought me some time to go over the day's shots with Phil as well as think about if my intended lighting plan would work.

I noted in pre-production that the sun would be rising directly into two full-length balcony windows that were mostly off screen. In the early morning, the buildings across the street would block the sun, and I estimated I would only get direct sunlight for about an hour. Rather than have to build a rig outside to compensate for the sun's changing angle and intensity, I closed the shutters when I could, using 1K soft lights to mimic the windows.

Behind the action there was a kitchen and a hallway; they both opened into another large hallway completely lined with large open windows. I used these windows to motivate a daylight color-corrected 1K backlight for Calvin and Amanda. This setup was working until I noticed my 1K soft lights were spilling all over the room. I tried to flag what I could, also trying to give a little room to allow sound to get the boom close to the action without casting shadows.

The biggest problem I had that day was fully utilizing my crew. Initially, I delegated running power and "staging" equipment [placing it off-set], but once it was time to light the scene I personally set everything up. On several occasions my gaffer, Jonathan Evans, asked me to give him something to do. Instead of looking at the monitor and delegating what I needed to be done, I was scrambling around adjusting the lights myself. I was flagging sources, running to the monitor, and then running back to readjust. I was struggling with the same issue I had faced on Chris Wuchte's shoot. I wasn't happy with what I was getting on the monitors, but I also didn't know how to fix it.

Despite my uncertainty and dissatisfaction, we pushed through our scheduled shots for the day. One particular shot called for a rack focus from Amanda in the foreground and Calvin in the background at the window. One of the problems with the DVX100 was that it has an unbelievable depth of field, and for the most part everything remains in focus. Nevertheless, I opened up the f-stop all the way, and shot with as long of a lens as the physical space of the apartment would allow. This somewhat worked, but not as extreme as Phil and I wanted it to. But opening up caused the light seeping through the windows to blow out and we didn't have enough neutral density gels to cover it. Looking back now, I could have had the crew rig a double net on the balcony outside with maybe a silk on top of that.

Near the end of the shoot at the apartment, we realized we had skipped a master shot. Phil and I thought we had covered the scene in a dolly shot earlier in the day, but script continuity pointed out we hadn't. I had to reset the lights and flags to match the dolly shot. With the help of the monitors I was able to pull it off, only now there was one

difference; the sun was now blowing out the large windows in the background of the scene. The windows were too large to cover with the limited amount of ND gels in the grip truck, so I had a couple of grips block them with white bounce cards.

While we were shooting the master, I told Phil I wanted to reshoot a close-up of Amanda we covered earlier in the day. The more I thought about this shot, the more I didn't like it. It was too yellow, too bright, and too evenly lit. Once Phil was happy with the master take, we pushed in, covered the new close-up, and wrapped for the day having covered all the shots.

The production moved to the University of New Orleans Alumni Center, which was serving as the Steubgen Institute for Exceptional Children. The Alumni Center features ceiling to floor windows which were both beneficial and challenging for lighting setups. For one scene, in which two doctors discuss Calvin's test results, we set up in a rear office of the Alumni Center. Behind one of the doctors was a large window facing east. This scene was shot early in the morning, meaning the sunlight would overwhelm the room. I had the crew rig a 20x20 solid, creating a canopy 15 feet off the ground. Underneath it I put a 2K fresnel through a silk. The office was completely white, meaning once again I was dealing with light bouncing all over the place. I tried to control the exterior 2K spill using barn doors, leaving just a little bounce for fill on the actors' faces.

The large windows were a significant help when filming in the alumni lobby and in the second floor ballroom, which was now the observation room where Calvin suffers his breakdown. The windows in the lobby were dirty, creating just a little diffusion. I decided that just a little backlight was needed for the scene, allowing the windows to be

my primary source of illumination. The scene was captured with one continuous dolly shot into Calvin and a young friend talking on the stairs. My one regret was that the backlight was not strong enough to really separate the two children from the background. I probably should have used a little "negative fill" opposite the window. Negative fill is achieved by using a dark solid flag to absorb light, therefore subtracting light from appropriate areas within a scene.

We covered several key scenes in the alumni ballroom. I found myself in another favorable position created by the large windows. Behind the action, the windows looked out onto the lake, giving me a nice background about one to two stops over my scene. Also, the orientation of the building prevented any direct sunlight from penetrating the room, meaning I didn't have to compensate for the directional change throughout the course of the day. Across the room were also large windows. However, there was construction being done on the roof at the time, and large plastic sheets had been thrown over the side of the building, diffusing the window and giving me a one stop difference.

One scene involved Amanda and Dr. Phillips observing Calvin through a glass door. The Alumni ballroom didn't have a double glass door in a position that would accommodate catching Amanda and the children's reflection simultaneously. Phil and I had Kevin Griffith rent and install freestanding double doors in the middle of the ballroom. I used the door frame as my frame edges and I attempted to backlight Amanda and Dr. Phillips, allowing the windows in the room to provide my key.

From the Alumni Center we moved to the university's office of financial aid, which was standing in for a hospital lobby. Phil and I had chosen the office because it featured a wall made of glass blocks, backed by a sterile looking hallway. Once again I

found myself struggling to light a small space. Phil had wanted the scene to feel like Hades, with directional lighting and deep shadows. I initially lit the scene this way, but I wasn't happy with the way it looked. The light source was unmotivated, unappealing, and it didn't help sell the room as a hospital lobby.

I tried a different approach, bouncing a light off the ceiling for overall fill and bouncing another off of a foamcore board as a key. Finally, I put a fresnel at the end of the hallway outside, which would illuminate the doctors walking in the background and leave the hall about one stop under. After both Phil's lighting setup and my lighting setup were completed, I sat with Phil at the monitor and had the crew switch between one and the other. Phil suggested we go with what I had come up with.

We finished our shoot at the university location in the Arena Theater. This scene featured Amanda giving a speech to a large crowd, with Calvin sitting at her side in an oversized leather chair. Originally, Phil envisioned an old European theater. The camera would begin on Calvin's shoes, boom up along the back of the chair, and then dolly around Amanda standing at the podium. Phil wanted large light sources to blind the lens when the camera faced the audience, leaving the crowd unseen.

When the production moved into the Arena theater, Phil and I decided to use the theater's black empty space to create a void, isolating Calvin and Amanda. I set up several 2K fresnels, over lighting Calvin and Amanda. I left the house lights off completely. With the lights set, I stopped down the lens as much as I could. The result was exactly what Phil wanted. The surrounding low lit theater went completely black, and Amanda and Calvin were now exposed normally. My one regret is that the lights I used were not diffused enough.

The production finished with two exterior shots, one day and one night. For the day exterior, we moved to City Park's sculpture garden adjacent to the New Orleans Museum of Art. The weather was beautiful and I didn't have to worry about the angle of the sun, as it would be primarily front lighting the two actors in the scene. Ideally, I should have placed the actors with the sun at their back, but the bench they were sitting on was part of a sculpture and bolted to the ground. However, a large oak tree nearby provided partial shade, breaking up the sunlight in the scene into patches of shade.

We started the day with what I thought would be a simple dolly shot, beginning behind the bench and continuing all the way around, ending in a two shot. Around the bench was a small brick walkway, cutting through the park's landscaping. That morning, we had been told by park management that equipment must remain on the walkways and traffic through the grass and landscaping had to be kept to a minimum. With that in mind, I was barely able to get the dolly track around the bench to get the shot we needed.

With the track leveled and the camera mounted on the dolly, we began to rehearse the camera movement. I noticed that the dolly track was slightly in the shot so we adjusted it, using the bench to block a portion of the track. The next step was hiding the wires for the lavalier microphones as we were seeing the ground beneath the bench. Finally, there was a bit of maneuvering to keep the boom operators and their shadows from getting in the frame. After twenty-seven takes, we finally captured one that satisfied sound, camera, and performance. Phil decided that the coverage we storyboarded was unnecessary and the single dolly shot would cover the scene in its entirety.

The final setup was a night exterior at City Park's driving range. Leveling the dolly track was the first problem we encountered because the track had to cover an area involving a one foot drop from a concrete slab to the grass below. Furthermore, the driving range was divided into individual practice areas by a three foot partition. The track had to run out further than necessary to go in between two of the partitions. The extra length made the overall circle larger and that meant that the track could now be seen in the beginning of the shot. Finally, the jib arm on the dolly was unable to get the camera over the partition and onto the deck to get the close up of the golf ball.

The lighting was a bit of a challenge as well. The overall fill level was supplied by the overhead lights on the driving range. I placed two 1K's on opposing sides to give Amanda and her mother a little backlight. The lights had to be far enough away to not interfere with the dolly shot and also to avoid creeping into the fairly wide frame. Again, I feel as though I left these lights too directional, but my choices were limited. If I softened the light, their intensity would have decreased significantly. I could not use larger light sources as the grip truck's generator had been stalling with 2K lights. Larger soft sources would have been preferable.

Phil and I redesigned the sequence to accommodate the dolly's limitations. I started with the same extreme close up of the golf ball. Then we cut to the beginning of the dolly shot which starts on Amanda's mother as Amanda is heard off screen. The camera circles almost completely around, stopping in a two shot. Next, we used a two camera setup to punch in for individual close ups. Finally, the night and the shoot wrapped with one last long shot, taken from the POV of the range looking back at the two women. I placed a couple of golf balls in the foreground for perspective.

Post-production

At the time of writing this paper, post-production has yet to be completed on *Mother Wit*. I have viewed the majority of the footage and there are a few things I anticipate will have to be done. First, my crew was pretty thorough with maintaining consistent color temperatures on lighting instruments, and white balancing the camera with each new setup. Therefore, I imagine intrascene color-correction will be minimal, and the bulk of the color work will be for aesthetic purposes.

Second, *Mother Wit* was shot using the full 4:3 aspect ratio, but framed for 16:9. I shot the film this way because at the time I was under the impression that shooting with the in-camera masking on would negatively affect its resolution. Since then I have learned that this is incorrect. In-camera masking does not decrease the camera's resolution; it simply blacks out the lines that are above and below the widescreen frame line. A mask will have to be applied in Avid to define the widescreen aspect ratio, and I imagine there will be a few scenes that I wish to resize and adjust the framing.

Finally, there will be some minor special effects that are needed for a few scenes. For instance, the scene on the park bench was a little too hot, leaving small highlight areas completely blown out. This happened because I did not double check my video levels on the vector scope on that day. These hot areas, which are completely missing video information, may be able to be repaired via cloning or digital airbrushing. Also, the background plates for the molecular structure will have to be composited with the computer-generated molecular structure.

Retrospection

Spring Film 2004 had been one of my better learning experiences as a cinematographer as there were a few shots I found satisfactory. It was also the first time that I felt as though I was working collaboratively with a director. I successfully managed a large crew of relatively inexperienced students, and handled the logistics of shooting on location. I had confidently fielded questions from production designers, wardrobe, production management, actors, my crew, and my director. We finished the film on time, on schedule, and under budget without making any major sacrifices to what we originally intended.

Phil and I were both figuring out the visual language of film simultaneously, but there was one thing I had originally set out to do that I didn't accomplish: take chances and experiment. MiniDV had once again freed me from worrying about exposures, and once again I only stuck to what I knew. There were a few moments when I broke from textbook, but not enough. I was failing because I was trying too hard to avoid it.

I learned that sometimes the best way to light a scene is not to light it, but to use what's already in the space. I could've taken it a step further by supplementing the light with negative fill, or a small directional source here and there to create interesting backgrounds and separation. Moreover, I was still trying to light with fairly directional lights. Most of the shots I captured had shape and depth, but they were still rather unattractive. I was still dealing with hiding hard shadows and using hard fill sources to counter hard key lights. While directional lights are easier to control, they're also more difficult to create attractive lighting for actors. A few setups involved softer sources, but I often put them too close to the scene to be effective.

Chapter 5: 364

During pre-production for Spring Film, I also started pre-production on another student short film, *364*. The film's director, Mike Postalakis, and I took a pre-production class the previous spring, and I offered to give notes and comments on his screenplay. In the fall, I missed the opportunity to work on Mike's film as I had already committed to shooting *Butterflies* for Britt Pitre. Nevertheless, Mike was working on another script that he wanted to shoot in the fall.

When the spring semester began, Mike was looking for a cinematographer and I was looking for another project to sharpen my skills. Prior to shooting Spring Film 2004, I shot a short film for another graduate student, Sherng-Lee-Lee Huang, over one weekend using the DVX100. Mike saw the footage and was pretty pleased with the results I was getting with the camera. He decided to give the new medium a try for *364*; up until this time Mike had only shot on various film formats.

The Script

364 is the story of George, a lonely film projectionist who hasn't found love in the past year. With New Year's Eve quickly approaching, George is hoping to make a connection with an equally lonely coworker, Emily. The only thing standing between them is George's reluctance to make a move and Emily's constantly ringing cell phone. The film follows the haphazard way the two of them come together on the eve of their final day of loneliness.

Pre-production: Conceptual Research and Design

When pre-production began, Mike had a pretty clear idea of how the film should look. The script went through several drafts and there were a few scenes that had already been roughly storyboarded. Mike was also the first director to give me homework before I asked for it. First, he showed me a long, continuous shot in *Manhattan* that he wanted to pay homage to.

Then, he gave me Paul Thomas Anderson's film, *Punch-Drunk Love* to study, instructing me to take note of the film's compositions, colors, and use of lens flares. Also, he wanted me to study the DVD packaging. There was an image on the inside cover of the two main characters, Barry and Lena, that had been enlarged and pixilated. Mike initially wanted the entire short film to look this way and asked if it was possible. I assured him it could be easily done in post-production, but we would have to adjust the frame line to accommodate the enlargement process.

After a few days of consideration, I approached Mike regarding the pixilation idea. I felt it would be far too distracting to the audience and some may even consider it a lack of technical proficiency rather than a conscious artistic aesthetic. I suggested that the film could start off pixilated, slowly losing the pixilation as the two characters come together. It would be apparent that the degradation was an aesthetic choice, and the change towards the pristine image would compliment the story. Mike liked the idea, but ultimately decided to shoot the story straight with no degradation. He did, however, want to try to capture the long, blue flares that streaked across the screen in *Punch-Drunk Love*.

Finally, Mike wanted the film to be made in the parameters defined by Dogme 95. According to their website, Dogme 95 “...is a collective of filmmakers founded in Copenhagen in March 1995.” The collective seeks to return to a pure “high art,” stripping film of its illusions, promotion of ego, expensive technology, and conventional film techniques in order to create truth in cinema. Their “Vow of Chastity” establishes the following rules for Dogme 95 filmmaking:

1. Shooting must be done on location. Props and sets must not be brought in (if a particular prop is necessary for the story, a location must be chosen where this prop is to be found).
2. The sound must never be produced apart from the images or vice versa. (Music must not be used unless it occurs where the scene is being shot).
3. The camera must be hand-held. Any movement or immobility attainable in the hand is permitted. (The film must not take place where the camera is standing; shooting must take place where the film takes place).
4. The film must be in colour. Special lighting is not acceptable. (If there is too little light for exposure the scene must be cut or a single lamp be attached to the camera).
5. Optical work and filters are forbidden.
6. The film must not contain superficial action. (Murders, weapons, etc. must not occur.)
7. Temporal and geographical alienation are forbidden. (That is to say that the film takes place here and now.)
8. Genre movies are not acceptable.
9. The film format must be Academy 35 mm.
10. The director must not be credited.

I was primarily concerned with rules three and four. Mike wanted to use the rules as guidelines for the shoot, eliminating the need for lighting equipment and minimizing setup time. At my disposal, I would have the camera, a bounce card, and a clip-on light whenever my base light level was inadequate.

Pre-production: Practical and Technical

Mike and I began scouting locations in late February. First, we chose to use Mike's apartment as the location for George's apartment. Mike's place consisted of one large room divided into a kitchen, bedroom, and living room area. It had one large window that opened up to a balcony. The window would not be a lighting concern (or asset) as all the scenes filmed in the apartment would take place at night. The apartment had a few overhead light fixtures, white walls, and a swivel lamp on the bedside table.

The Checkmate, a bar near campus, would serve as the bar for one scene in the movie. Overall, the place was dimly lit and darkly decorated. There was a huge mirror against the wall of the booth we'd be shooting in, with a light fixture hanging directly over the table. Also near campus was an apartment complex, completely lined with streetlights. We decided to shoot the night exterior *Manhattan* inspired scene here.

The key scene of the movie, a New Year's Eve party, would be shot at my apartment. The most favorable lighting location was the Grand movie theater in New Orleans East. We would primarily film in and around the projection area. The projection booth was filled with various overhead and table lamps. The projectors also spilled a considerable amount of light. Finally, the rear of the building and parking area featured large, diffused light sources. As we scouted a location, Mike and I blocked the action close to available light fixtures. We both decided that if the light level was too low, we would permit ourselves to change out the bulbs to a higher wattage, but no outside lighting units were to be used.

Even though shooting on miniDV would allow me to instantly see the image I was capturing, the low-light situations were a bit of a concern. Like all video cameras,

the Panasonic DVX100 required a base light level (approx. 3 lux @ f1.6, using 18dB of gain) in order to effectively produce an acceptable image; it was comparable to film with a 320 ASA. The lens on the camera was reasonably fast, around an f/1.6 at times, but I was unsure if excessive video noise would appear if the camera attempted to compensate for low light.

Although I would have the opportunity to become familiar with the camera on Spring Film 2004 before shooting *364*, I arranged to shoot a test at Mike's apartment and at the night exterior location to see how the camera held up in low-light situations. Surprisingly, the camera captured a reasonably clear image with a minimum amount of light. I tried using the gain, but decided that it introduced too much video noise to the image. My only concern was a faint red square that appeared in the upper left-hand corner of the frame; it only appeared when shooting in low-light conditions. The red square was not consistently there, as it did not present itself when I had the camera professionally checked for malfunction. I planned to change out fixtures when I could to get the light level up to at least an f/2.

Production

Production began on a Friday at Mike's apartment. The first shot called for Mike to walk into a dark room, flip on the light, and sit on the bed. After looking at the monitor, I decided that the 60W bulb in the bedside lamp wasn't producing enough light. A 100W bulb seemed to be enough, and I swiveled the lamp to face out, directly backlighting Mike as he sat on the bed. The backlight put Mike in silhouette, so I had someone hold a bounce during the scene.

After the scene was “lit,” I noticed the red square again in the upper left of the screen. We turned on all the lights in the apartment to boost the overall light level. Even after I adjusted to a higher f-stop, the red square remained on screen. I determined the camera was defective and I drove to the equipment room and switched it out that night. When I returned to Mike’s apartment, I discovered that the second camera was also producing a faint red square. I adjusted the camera settings, switched between frame modes, and toggled the camera on/off. Finally, the square disappeared, but I kept an eye out for it throughout the shoot.

The shoot at Mike’s apartment went significantly faster than most shoots, mainly because of the lack of setup time and also because Mike and I had gone over the shot list previously. Since I was limited to available light, my technique was limited to changing to higher wattage bulbs, using white bounce boards, and bouncing another small lighting fixture off the ceiling. I didn’t use the fluorescent fixture in the kitchen to avoid unattractive mixed color temperatures. For one shot, I used Mike’s shadow to create a spotlight around a condom George finds on his apartment floor. To assist in directing the audience’s attention to the condom, I rack-focused from George’s feet in the background to the condom in the foreground. Finally, I kept the focal length short, allowing the light source in the shot to produce a streak of blue flare down the right-hand side of the screen.

The next night, the shoot continued to the long exterior shot along the apartment complex. The light was incredibly low, but I was still able to get a reasonable image. I decided not to white balance, letting the exterior apartment lights go blue and keeping the streetlight where the scene ended a greenish-yellow color. After filming several continuous wide shots of three characters walking towards the camera, I convinced Mike

to push in for a medium shot from the front and from behind. The trick to getting this shot was practicing walking backwards while handholding the camera.⁴ I also had to keep the boom operator, his shadow, and my shadow out of the frame.

We were given a few hours on a Sunday morning to shoot the scene in the Checkmate. To keep it simple, Mike and I decided to get a wide shot of the entire scene, a medium shot of George, and a medium of his friend Charlie and wife Cathy. To light it, I changed out the bulb in the light hanging above the table and introduced a little fill from the left of the camera. Although I neglected to provide a backlight, the red high-backed booth created background separation from the actors, who were predominately wearing dark, cooler colors. The wide shot was a small concern as I would be shooting straight into the mirror and the camera was initially visible. To solve the problem, we obstructed the camera's reflection with a napkin holder and a few mugs of beer.

Going into the second weekend I was a little lost in regards to the storyboards and the chronological order of the scenes. For one reason or the other, I had neglected to study what we would be shooting for the coming weekend. Throughout the course of the remainder of the weekend, I was often going to Mike to get my orientation and to figure out what we were shooting next. I had failed to prepare and instead of being a creative asset to the director, I was briefly another concern.

Also, I hadn't made any suggestions or contributions as to how to shoot a scene differently; I wasn't giving Mike options. Initially, he had been so prepared and communicated a clear idea of how the film should look; I was under the impression that the creative decisions had been made and I was there to fill in the technical elements.

⁴ Although now that I think about it I could have flipped the camera's LCD screen and shot over my shoulder while walking forward.

Now, in the second week of production, Mike was a bit overwhelmed by simultaneously directing and acting. Instead of taking up the slack, I rigidly stuck to what had been storyboarded and made no effort to provide Mike with alternatives and creative input. I would later discover that my creative input would have been appreciated.

Production continued, shooting all the scenes involving my apartment. This included a short scene between George, Charlie, and Cathy. I changed out the overhead lights in the kitchen, and flipped on a small fluorescent unit over the sink. The fluorescent would serve as George's backlight and additional fill for Charlie and Cathy. In the background, I let my living room go dark, with just a small lamp on in the corner to create a little depth. I shot the wide from outside of my kitchen, leaving the window open to eliminate reflection and glare from the glass.

For the party scene, I used the same lighting setup in the kitchen. The living room featured as many extras as we could gather for the weekend, so I had to make sure there was enough lighting coverage for the entire living room area. I mostly achieved this by changing out the two four-way lighting fixtures hanging in the living room. To control the light, I would adjust the aim of the lighting fixtures or remove bulbs that were aimed in areas where I needed shadows.

In the beginning of the scene, Charlie greets George at the door, the two walk up the foyer stairs, stepping into the living room where the party is staged. Although the wide shot and the rules of our shoot didn't permit me to set up a light in the stairwell, I wanted to create fill and backlight when the two reached the top of the stairs. I took a desk lamp and bounced it into a white door at the top of the stairs to create fill on George. Also, I put another desk lamp behind Charlie, hoping it would act as a backlight.

One scene during the party takes place in my bathroom. To light the bathroom, I changed out the fixtures above the sink. I also allowed a lighting fixture in the hall outside to provide a little fill whenever the shot would permit it. The white ceilings provided an overall soft light. The walls in the bathroom were half dark blue and half white; the blue absorbed some of the light providing shape to George and Charlie.

We ended the party shoot with an exterior shot of George and Emily leaving the party and walking to Emily's car. I parked the car under the streetlight, which would help set up the next scene involving a sudden attack by an ex-boyfriend in the car. To cover the interior of the car, I put on all the car's interior lights and kept them above the frame. To compliment the frantic emotion of the boyfriend's intrusion, I held the camera away from my body, minimizing my ability to hold the camera steady. I concluded that the camera shake and slightly canted angle would add to the anxiety of the scene.

Next, we moved to the movie theater for both interior and exterior shots. I started the night grabbing extreme close-ups of the projectors, film cans, splicers, and various objects in the projection booth. Then, I captured a series of shots featuring George splicing film, loading the projectors, and sitting alone in the projection booth. I used the various pieces of equipment and running lengths of film to close the space around George. I also had found that the glass in front of the projectors reflected moving images in and around the projection booth. I captured a couple of shots of George sitting alone with the images spilling across him. I spent about an hour catching dancing light reflections and metallic surfaces. These images would eventually be used in the film's opening sequence.

The first scene filmed at the movie theater took place on the rear balcony, facing the parking area. The entire scene was filmed in a single two-shot against a basically black background. I adjusted my position to allow one of the nearby lights in the parking lot to act as a backlight for the scene. Again, I used a wide angle lens to incorporate a streak of blue flare on the right side of the frame.

From there, we moved to an area below the rear balcony, filming the first scene involving George and Emily. There was more ambient light than there was for the balcony scene, but I left the f-stop open to ensure that George's first encounter with Emily would be significantly brighter. I tried to keep all encounters between George and Emily brighter; the high key look complimented their feelings for one another and made their scenes stand apart from the rest of the film. I also didn't white balance the camera, leaving the scene bathed in a soft green light. The light from the parking lot and the light from the back of the theater alternately served as the backlight for one character and the fill light for the other.

We used a wheelchair to capture a dolly shot, starting from an extreme wide shot of George stumbling down the stairs as Emily smokes a cigarette in the area down below. The dolly ends in a wide shot as George introduces himself to Emily. Next, I went in for individual handheld medium shots, swish-panning between Emily and George letting their conversation and reactions dictate when to switch the focus of the shot. We shot this setup several times, each take different from the previous one.

From there, we captured a single shot in the theater's break room. Then, I captured a shot of Emily cleaning an empty theater as George looks on from the projection window above. For this shot I used a long focal length, hoping it would

condense the space and bring George and Emily closer together in the frame. I then punched in on a close-up of George through the projection window, using a redirected overhead light as my key. Finally, I went back up to the projection booth to shoot Emily cleaning the theaters from George's perspective through the projection window.

Post-production

Post production began near the end of the spring 2004 semester. I have been involved in *364*'s post production, including sound design and DVD authoring. Since starting this project, Mike and I have developed a cooperative creative relationship that has proven to be beneficial to the final outcome of the movie. By actively participating in every aspect of the film's post production, I have developed better ideas of how to correctly execute pre-production and production as a cinematographer.

Our first mistakes were not getting enough coverage of our scenes in order to adjust pacing. First, the continuous *Manhattan* influenced shot didn't work in the edit. The sound in this shot was bad and the lighting wasn't enough to make the scene work. It was ultimately cut from the film and Mike wrote a new scene to cover the exposition lost when it was cut. We shot this scene, between Charlie and George, at the movie theater in early fall 2004.

The next scene that didn't work was the exterior theater balcony conversation between Charlie and George. Mike and I returned to the theater to capture a close up of both Charlie and George, giving us the option to cut up the original wide shot. The pacing of this scene was greatly improved once the new shots were incorporated. While

we were there, we shot a couple of close-ups of George in the theater to allow us to cut away during another scene between George and Charlie in the theater.

Sound was a complete mess. Most of the production sound work had been done by several students over the course of the production schedule. For some takes we neglected to use slates; for others we'd use them improperly. The majority of the sound was recorded too low, the microphone was off axis, and background noise was significantly louder than it should have been. Also, there were no sound logs to assist with sorting through the DAT tapes.

We reached a final cut in the early fall of 2004 and I began to work on post-production sound, using the Nuendo software the school had recently purchased. I spent a great deal of my time learning the software as I was cleaning up and enhancing the audio tracks as best as I could. At various points in time I found myself rerecording dialogue, creating sound effects, and trying to integrate them into the soundtrack seamlessly.

Meanwhile, I was in the middle of supervising an animated sequence for the film. Initially, a friend of mine was going to create a short animated sequence that would play at the end of a scene in the middle of the movie. After Mike and I had finished the edit, we decided to end the film with the animation. We storyboarded the sequence and handed the storyboards to my friend, Andy Hesse. Over the course of the fall semester, Andy had been sending me concepts and short Quicktime movies of the sequence from Austin, Texas. I'd send him notes and he would work on the animation and send new versions.

Finally, I brought the fine cut into the Avid Adrenaline to produce an uncompressed version of the film. I used the Avid to color correct the images and make slight sizing adjustments to a few of the scenes. Then, I incorporated Andy's finalized animated sequence onto the timeline. A few weeks later, I would revisit the soundtrack with Professor Robert Racine, further improving the dynamics of the final mix with the Nuendo's multi-band compressors and limiters. From there, I exported a new stereo mix, along with the first Dolby Digital mix successfully completed in the department.

The final version of the film was converted to MPEG-2 and rejoined with both audio mixes in Sonic DVD Producer. I created menus and authored the DVD, which was successfully shown to a small audience at Twiropa on March 17, 2005. Currently, there is another showing being negotiated and the film has been sent off to compete in the 32nd Annual Student Academy Awards.

Retrospection

A cinematographer must not only be prepared to handle the technical and managerial demands of a shoot; he/she must be capable of acting as a creative collaborator, providing multiple options to a director. My creative collaboration on *364* had been jeopardized by my lack of preparation going into the second weekend of production. I realized that a good cinematographer is well-prepared before a shoot; a better cinematographer remains prepared, adapting and providing creative options to the director no matter how fully realized the final film has been.

By eliminating my ability to incorporate external lighting instruments into a scene, I was forced to suggest lighting setups by manipulating the camera and subject orientation. Often the space or scene wouldn't allow for the best setup, forcing me to break lighting conventions to capture the scene. I was forced to use practicals as my lighting sources, and I was reintroduced to the concepts of using practicals as a motivation for lighting within a scene.

Mike had given me an opportunity to stretch beyond the bounds of traditional composition and by-the-book cinematography. Exploring unfamiliar territory encourages development of a unique style. I did not develop a unique style because I hadn't fully broken out of the mold of a technical cinematographer. I was taking small steps in that direction, learning how to capture a scene without heavily relying on any traditional lighting and grip equipment.

Chapter 6: *The Hunter's Apprentice*

By spring 2004 I had completed one film project, and five miniDV projects.⁵ At this time, Mike Ryan completed a script for his thesis project. Mike was interested in shooting the project on film and asked if I wanted to be his director of photography. I accepted, wanting to work with Mike because of his passion for telling a good story and his dedication to doing something until he got it right. I was aware it would be a tough project to shoot, but I welcomed the opportunity to shoot a drama on Super-16 format.

Mike and I started preproduction in January, 2004 on his script, tentatively called *Beneath the Cypress*. As a visual reference for the look of the film, Mike suggested I watch a scene in *Goodfellas* as well as the entire feature *In the Bedroom*. I contacted the cinematographer for *In the Bedroom*, Antonio Calvache, through the Montana Artists Agency. I was given his e-mail address, but a real dialogue between the two of us never really took off due to his busy schedule.

Pre-production

By the time I completed Spring Film, Mike Ryan had scrapped *Beneath the Cypress*, seeking to shoot a vampire action short, *The Hunter's Apprentice*. The project was even more ambitious than his first idea, but his enthusiasm and dedication to the story's success was contagious. The look of the film would be completely different from *Beneath the Cypress*. Mike wanted to shoot the film in Super-16, black and white.

⁵ The other two miniDV projects not documented in this thesis, but which I served as director of photography on were *The Adam's Case* (dir. Sherng-Lee-Lee Huang) and a music video for Tom Foolery and the Mistakes (dir. Mike Postalakis).

Again, I was given visual references to study including: *Southern Comfort*, *Predator*, *NARC*, and *Rambo*. The camera would be handheld and almost constantly moving.

We began preproduction in late April with principal photography starting in the first week of June, 2004. Mike and I initially met to go over storyboards, which he had already started to flesh out. Again, I was working with a director who knew his script well and had a clear idea of the visual direction he wanted to take it. Again, I volunteered to draw the storyboards as it would allow me to become familiar with the proposed shots. The visuals Mike had in mind were as ambitious and complex as the story he had written. I would clearly have to call upon every trick in the book I had picked up along the way, but I was confident I could pull it off.

I was getting nervous as the shoot day was quickly approaching. We had yet to shoot a film test and most of the crew had not been assembled. Some students committed to helping out, but far too many backed out once they discovered the shoot would continue into the summer. It was early May and casting hadn't been completed, a schedule hadn't been fully fleshed out, and locations hadn't been locked. The locations we did have in mind were a bit of a concern as most of them were thirty minutes or more away, and we weren't sure if we could get permission to shoot there.

Shortly before production began, Mike cast Simon Carmody to play the lead character, Alex. Simon was an undergraduate in the department with 10 years of experience shooting professional still photography. I was a bit relieved that I would have someone with experience in lighting and composition to ask for advice when I needed it. When Simon came onto the project, he volunteered to help with all aspects of production, taking on the job of assistant director as well.

With two weeks remaining before principal photography, I continued to research how to obtain an overcast look, even when shooting under clear skies. In the script, the vampires walk outside during the day due to a large thunderstorm that blocks out the sun. To get this look, I knew I wanted to eliminate any harsh shadows in the scene, diffusing the sunlight with either a large silk or under the cover of dense foliage. Simon suggested that I create an exposure difference between my subjects and the background by incorporating a polarizing filter and a red filter. The polarizer was useful for darkening blue skies as well as eliminating glare and lighting reflections off of foliage and water. The red filter would absorb blue and green light, darkening the sky and foliage even farther.

With less than a week to go before principal photography began, we still had not shot a film test; we were out of time. Mike and I wanted to at least test the effects of the red filter, so we shot a still photography test using the school's Polaroid and Simon's 35mm still camera. We also shot a few setups using the 20 x 20 silk and several reflector boards. Simultaneously, we shot a hundred feet of 16mm film to test the effects of over cranking the camera at various frame rates. If we liked the way the footage looked, we intended to use this in-camera effect to enhance the vampires' speed.

Production

In the first weekend of June 2004 we began principal photography at my grandmother's house, which was standing in for the character Nicholas' house. I stripped the kitchen, living room, and dining room bare on Friday, preparing for set dressing which Mike, Simon, and I set up early the following day. On Saturday, I was unsure as to

how I was going to light the space. Simon stepped in throughout the day to give me suggestions and advice on lighting the scene.

When it came time to set the aperture on the camera, I took the incident light meter and held it on the key side of Simon's face, aiming it into the camera. Although I wasn't one-hundred percent sure, this method had worked on previous shoots and everything I had read up to that point had suggested similar methods. But Simon corrected me, stating that I should hold the meter on the fill side of the face in this particular lighting setup. By doing so, I could be certain that I would get a dense negative that I could later manipulate in post if I wanted to.

I was second-guessing myself for the rest of the day; unsure of how to light the scene and uncertain about whether I was metering the scene properly. Moreover, as the day progressed and we started to fall behind in schedule, Simon started taking a more active roll in lighting scenes. By the end of the day I was lost, overwhelmed, and my confidence had taken a dive. I went home that night and skimmed through several books and cinematography websites, trying to catch up on what I thought I already had a pretty good grasp on.

The second day we started to shoot the opening scene of the film in an empty office space above a gym that Simon's father owned. The space lacked air-conditioning and the June heat and humidity weren't helping either. The scene we were shooting featured a 12-year old version of the film's main character, Alex. We were under pressure to get the scene finished in the eight hours or so the young actor's parents had given us. This time, I had the task of lighting a long hallway with white walls and a white ceiling; however, the hallway had to give the appearance of darkness.

Simon and I began by rigging diffusion outside of the door where young Alex would enter. My intention was to flood the back of the diffusion, creating a silhouette around the actor and allowing the background to blow out against the dark hallway. It would also create Alex's shadow on the floor for the reverse angle. However, the electrical system in the building and the lack of a generator on the grip truck only allowed for two 1K fresnels; not nearly enough to saturate the screen with light but we had to go with it to save time. Finally, Simon bounced another light into the corner where young Alex would initially hide; a much needed lighting addition I hadn't considered. Again, when it came time to meter the scene, Simon corrected my technique. Who was I to argue metering technique with someone who had ten years of experience behind a camera?

The day went into the late hours of the night; the crew was tired and miserably hot. Throughout the day Simon took an even more active role in designing the lighting setups and determining the exposure levels for the scene. I had resigned to camera operation. Every now and then I would determine the position of a light, but Simon would adjust it or redesign it for the better. He was providing Mike with a seemingly endless amount of options, and he was rightfully correcting my creative and technical decisions on every setup.

By the second week of shooting, I was unofficially replaced as the film's director of photography. Simon and Mike were beginning to develop creative relationship, leaving me to handle the technical and logistical requirements of the shoot. I resented not being able to continue as the film's director of photography; I'm sure I would have made mistakes, but I at least wanted the opportunity to make them. My attitude started to have a negative effect on the way I was working. I wasn't focusing on the story, on the

visuals, on getting the shots Mike needed. Instead, I initially tried to enforce my title as the film's director of photography, with little creative input to back it up. Furthermore, I was trying to compete on a technical level against someone who had more technical experience.

By the end of the third weekend, I was officially replaced and shifted to the film's camera operator. I was briefly shifted off of the position of camera operator as Mike needed me to handle crew supervision and equipment logistics. By then, I had given up on the shoot; I nearly quit. Nevertheless, I decided to stick with it if only to fulfill my promise to work on the film until its completion. For nearly a month of shooting in late summer, I was there to do my job (whatever it was that given week), fulfill my obligation, and go home at the end of the day.

To make matters worse, I was still given the responsibility of coordinating the film processing, transfer, and shipping of the footage from week to week. Shouldn't this have been the job of the director of photography? I was miserable and uncommitted to the well-being of the project. In short, I felt I was being handed all the work that no one else either wanted to do or knew how to do. My involvement with the film only went as far as what Mike asked me to do. Even though Mike left an open invitation for me to continue providing creative input, I was in the wrong mindset and I refused to play an active part.

The film occupied the majority of my time well into the beginning of the fall semester. I considered whether or not I wanted to continue pursuing cinematography as a career. In late August 2004, I was offered the opportunity to shoot a feature film

budgeted at \$100,000. I passed for two reasons: I didn't think I was ready and I was still working on the *Hunter's Apprentice*.

I was shortly shifted back to camera operator, eventually taking on the position of gaffer on the film, working with Simon on lighting setups. My outlook about the creative relationships forged eventually improved as well as the way the shoot was progressing, and I regained my focus and motivation. Although I had been withdrawn for a while in the summer, I had learned a significant amount of technical and practical skills from Simon. When I finally embraced my replacement as a learning opportunity, I discovered that Simon could show me how to practically execute the concepts I learned.

Rather than try to compete with Simon, I asked him questions regarding practical and professional techniques. I learned about the angle of incidence and the angle of reflection, a concept I had read about but didn't fully understand. Simon had shown me how to use the sun, bounce boards, reflectors, silks, and flags to compose shots outdoors. We talked about setting the exposure to get the best density on the negative. Through my own observations watching Simon work, I learned the importance of actually looking at the scene, analyze what's needed, and how to build rigs to achieve it. I rediscovered breaking a scene into layers and then setting up lighting to exploit those layers.

Post production

As of April 2005, post production continues on the *Hunter's Apprentice*, with a few more pickup shots left to be shot. Simon and Mike have been editing the film since early December 2004, occasionally bringing me in for additional input and suggestions. With the fine-cut assembled, I have taken on the task of completing the production's

sound design. As with *364*, I am dealing with a mess in regards to production sound. A majority of the film was shot in and around high traffic areas, making the location sound unusable. Also, a majority of the shots called for specific timing of actors and camera moves, therefore, Mike can be heard directing over the sound. Finally, the remaining action was shot without sound being recorded. The film's soundtrack has to be built from scratch, incorporating ADR, foley, and sound effects libraries.

Retrospection

The shoot was challenging, but it was the equivalent of years of film school condensed into eight months. I took another step towards reevaluating camera placement and composition. Both Mike and Simon challenged me as well as themselves to not be content with what their instincts initially told them to do; we had to look harder to find the right shot. I discovered the importance of being a professional regardless of the situation. To succeed I had to find solutions to problems quickly, get rid of the inclination to make excuses, and accept the consequences of my decisions.

Mike has taught me to reassess my work, my outlook, and self-perception; there should always be a desire to improve and adjust. I learned that a professional assumes responsibility for their mistakes, corrects them, learns from them, and tries not to make the same mistake twice. Furthermore, professionals do not dwell on their successes. A story well told is simply a story well told; it is the result of a collaboration of individuals working toward a common goal. Everyone working on a set is secondary to the story.

Chapter 7: *Coyote Funeral*

In September 2004 I was asked to shoot a feature film on location in Texas. The film would be independently produced by Jason May, a graduate student studying screenwriting at the University of New Orleans. The film, *Coyote Funeral*, would be shot over the Christmas break. Although the *Hunter's Apprentice* would still be shooting in December, I decided that I was ready to tackle a feature and I did not want pass on the opportunity. There were a few loose ends to tie up regarding my obligation as a graduate assistant, but I felt as though I could get them resolved with the faculty before production began. I accepted the job at the end of the month.

The Script

Coyote Funeral is the story of two brothers, Casey and Dustin Cannon. Attempting to heal their relationship as brothers and rediscover themselves in the process, they undertake the monumental task of journeying on foot across the state of Texas. Along the way they meet a girl, Nancy Kate, who teaches them about friendship, love, and the importance of trust. Ultimately, it is a journey in which Casey rediscovers the importance of home and Dustin discovers the necessity of leaving it.

What drew me to the script was the sheer size and ambition of the project. The film could have probably been shot in and around Jason's home base, Houston, but to faithfully capture the varied landscape of the state of Texas, we were going to have to cover a significant portion of the state. It also featured fist fights, multiple bars, ranches, a rodeo, and a large dance hall.

A large portion of the story took place on or near Interstate Highway 10. I welcomed the challenge of trying to create visual variation on multiple scenes that involved two characters walking on the side of the highway.

Pre-production: Conceptual Research and Design

This film was clearly as much about the state of Texas as it was about the characters of Casey, Dustin, and Nancy Kate. Jason and Phelps Harmon, a friend of Jason's and the film's co-director, wanted the visual suggestion of modern civilization invading the old west. They wanted the film to represent a western with a modern touch. I am not a big fan of westerns and I had not been exposed to many. When I asked about researching any particular films, neither gave me any definitive suggestions. I began my research by going down a list of popular western films.

In the first few weeks of October, 2004 I studied older westerns such as *The Searchers* and newer films such as *Unforgiven* and *The Quick and the Dead*. Whenever I had the opportunity, I would watch a western television show on satellite television. I checked out a few websites featuring Texas landscapes as well as the work of a few Texas photographers. In addition, Phelps had sent two books featuring cowboy and rodeo photography. Overall, the majority of the images featured hard sunlight, usually in the early morning or late afternoon hours. They were sharp and as rigid as the subjects the photographers were capturing. The images were in deep focus, with a seemingly infinite depth of field. The colors were dusty, but vibrant. The compositions were strong, center-weighted, and for the most part conveyed simplicity.

Pre-Production: Practical and Technical

Initially, I believe my involvement in this project came to be because of my access to the university's equipment checkout room. Almost immediately after I accepted the job as cinematographer, Jason and Sherng-Lee-Lee, the 1st AD, started asking whether or not the production could use the school's equipment. I indicated that there was a pretty slim chance the department would allow an independent film production to take the school's equipment and grip truck out of state to make a film that was being made to eventually sell commercially. Moreover, through past experiences I did not want the responsibility of baby-sitting the school's equipment while having to juggle the responsibilities of cinematographer simultaneously. I suggested we look into equipment rental. Sherng-Lee-Lee was going to submit a proposal to the department for a camera and equipment anyway.

In the meantime, Jason and I arranged a weekend trip to scout several ranches in Texas hill country. We were looking for additional exterior locations for key scenes in the movie. Also, there were a few locations that Jason had already secured, and I was interested in surveying them for logistical and lighting considerations. Jason and I spent the bulk of the weekend driving between ranches as they were all spread across various points of west Texas. I was a bit concerned about using some of the locations because of the long travel time. I wanted to minimize the time spent on the road as well as any location changes in the middle of the day. With the shorter winter days, we would already have a limited amount of time to shoot exteriors. Too many company moves over long distances would take up too much time.

I also voiced my concern regarding the landscape. Overall, the weather was fairly warm for early November, but I suspected that the temperatures would be dropping soon and the foliage would start looking bare. It was already starting to resemble fall, which was beautiful in the hill country, but the story takes place during summer. I spoke with Jason about doing a rewrite to accommodate the quickly changing landscape. He was willing to do so if necessary, but one key scene took place in a river. The brothers meet two girls tubing in the river. Eventually, the scene takes a dramatic turn resulting in the two brothers fighting in the river during a thunderstorm. Jason wouldn't budge on rewriting this scene, feeling the river and the storm were essential to heightening the emotional impact of the scene. I was even more concerned about how we were going to achieve the rain effects and how I was going to handle lighting it.

On the way home, Jason and I talked about choosing a capture medium. I was more than willing to shoot the project on film, but I questioned whether we had the budget to accommodate an adequate shooting ratio. Already, it was beginning to look like we would have to spend a significant amount renting equipment; film, processing, and transfer would add a great deal more to the overall amount.

Ultimately, I asked Jason what were his intentions with the final product. If he was going to try to sell it to television or straight-to-video, we could look into shooting the project on high-definition. He could also use the high-def master to create a film-out if he ever got the option to sell the film for theatrical distribution. We could create similar options for distribution if we shot on film. I didn't think we could afford to shoot on 35mm, so I suggested if he wanted to shoot on film we should go with Super 16. With Super 16 we could also create a high-def master or if the film was sold for theatrical

distribution it could be blown up to 35mm. I warned Jason that either way, HD or film, would mean more costs in the post-production process if he intended to sell or distribute the film theatrically. Before the trip home had ended, Jason and I decided to capture the project on Super 16.

When we returned home, Sherng-Lee-Lee informed us that using the school's equipment was not an option. Sherng-Lee had found a small production company based out of Austin, Texas that was willing to rent an AatonXTR package for three weeks for around \$4500. The package included a Canon 8-64mm zoom lens, a tripod, and an assortment of filters and remote accessories. I obtained a digital copy of the camera's users manual. After reading the manual and reading several reviews by other cinematographers regarding the camera, I gave Sherng-Lee the approval to rent the camera for the production.

The biggest battle I had to fight was obtaining grip and lighting equipment for the shoot. Sherng-Lee had me draw up a wish list of equipment I would need for the duration of the shoot. I told him I knew of a few basic items that I definitely would need, but I couldn't create a definitive list until I had a list of available equipment from the facility we would be renting it from. Sherng-Lee had been shopping around Texas and Louisiana for film co-ops, hoping to get free or cheap equipment. On the other hand, I looked into renting from Texcam out of Houston or Gear out of Austin. At the time we had no transportation for equipment, so I was also looking into grip truck rental.

Sherng-Lee confirmed that the price of renting a grip truck would strain the production's already expanding budget. We would have to rent the equipment individually and use whatever transportation was available from the crew to shuttle it

around Texas. Both Texcam and Gear were willing to negotiate student rates, but even their discounted rates were too steep for the budget. I wasn't exactly sure what the budget was, but I knew it was somewhere in between free and as cheap as possible. Finally, Sherng-Lee seemingly struck a deal with Independent Studios in New Orleans run by Joe "Little Joe" Catalanatto. According to Sherng-Lee, Joe was willing to assemble a lighting and grip package for next to nothing. I decided to drive to Joe's facility to take stock of his equipment, as well as discuss getting the most for what little money was in the budget for equipment rental. By that time, Ray Machuca had signed onto the project as gaffer. I invited Ray to the meeting with Joe, figuring he could orient himself with the equipment and we could begin developing a dialogue with one another before production

Joe talks a mile-a-minute, and the conversation goes wherever Joe wants to take it. By the end of the meeting, I had no clear idea of what equipment our budget permitted us to use and I hadn't seen the condition of the equipment we'd eventually be renting. I did manage to get an inventory of all of Joe's equipment along with their associated rental prices. However, Joe had told me that the prices were negotiable, but I could never get him to commit to a definitive price before the night was over. Nevertheless, I spoke with Sherng-Lee and we agreed that I would take the list and generate my wish list, leaving the rental prices and rental agreement negotiations to Sherng-Lee and Jason.

When it came time to make my wish list, I tried to keep it as simple, and most importantly, as cheap as possible. I limited my grip equipment to the basics: a few C-stands, flags, silks, sandbags, and reflector boards. For lighting and electrical, I designed a stripped down package consisting of china balls, a few 1K fresnels, and two 1.2K HMI

fresnels. I chose the HMI's because renting a generator was not an option, therefore my power would have to come from any available power at the location. The HMI's are more efficient than traditional tungsten lights, and I could extract more light intensity without requiring large amounts of power. I would have also liked a few smaller HMI units as well, but the budget wouldn't allow it.

I submitted my list to Sherng-Lee, and he called me back with a revised list. He also wanted to know if I really needed to rent flags, silks, or the HMI's. I told him that if we had to we could get double-sided foam board, black on one side and white on the other. It could double as both a flag and a bounce source. However, I didn't feel as though I could pull off the night exteriors or the large dance hall scene without the HMI lights. I must admit, I was frustrated because I was being asked to deliver a big-budget look with little to no equipment. I told Sherng-Lee I would get back to him with a compromise.

I re-evaluated my list, but I had trouble finding what equipment to cut out because there was hardly anything there to begin with. Finally, I devised an equipment rental schedule, breaking down specifically what I would need on each day of the shoot. We could save money by renting the equipment on a day to day basis, rather than renting it by the week and paying for what wasn't being used. Sherng-Lee took the list and told me he'd see what he could do. Finally, he called me back with good news—he had reached an agreement with Joe and I would have all the equipment on my original list, with a dolly and two double-bottle Kino units as well. I still couldn't get a generator, but I had Sherng-Lee pick up a few power inverters for automobiles. I intended to use these to power small lights for night driving scenes and a campfire scene as well.

Finally, I picked a film stock, Kodak 7218, because I had read several great reviews of the stock in *American Cinematographer*. The film had an ASA 500, which would assist in dealing with my sparse lighting situation, especially for night exteriors. After meeting with Jason, I helped him devise a shooting ratio and I calculated how much film we would need for the entire shoot. Since the shoot would be divided by the Christmas break, I advised him to order only the first week's film to avoid having an excessive amount of film laying around before being exposed.

I shopped for a lab to transfer and process the film. Through *Hunter's Apprentice*, I established a relationship with Fotokem for processing and Magic Film and Video Works for transfer. I knew just about everyone at Magic by name and they were more than happy to address any questions I had regarding transferring the feature. I spoke with the colorist, Brian Leoni, to discuss properly shooting a chip chart and making sure I provided everything they needed to ensure a smooth post process.

Jason decided to go with Video Post in Dallas, Texas for both processing and transfer. Video Post had beat Fotokem's processing costs by ½ cent per foot and they matched Magic's transfer costs. I called the lab to find out if their procedures and requirements were any different from Fotokem's and Magic's. I also spoke with their colorist, Steve Franko, in regards to how I should shoot the film to make the post process go smoothly. We talked about how the film should be transferred, ultimately agreeing on transferring miniDV dailies for offline editing with the expectation of working together on a supervised transfer to an HD master once the fine cut was completed.

The schedule was set, the equipment had been rented, and a small, untrained crew had been assembled. My lighting department consisted of Ray and my grip department

hadn't been clearly defined. Jennifer Murphy, an undergraduate at UNO, was my 1st assistant camera, and Luke Smith, a graduate student at UNO, was my 2nd assistant camera. The only film experience either of them had prior to the feature was the Intro to Film Production class offered at the university. I decided I would act as both cinematographer and camera operator. Less than a week before principal photography began, there was one major problem—I didn't have a light meter. Luckily, Hamp Overton was kind enough to lend me his personal meter for the duration of the shoot.

Production

Two days before principal photography, I drove to Austin to train on the Aaton camera and pick it up from the rental facility. From there I drove to Comfort, Texas to meet Phelps and Jason to cover blocking and shot lists for the first two days of production. When I arrived on location I took a light reading, plugging in the ASA 500 film rating I intended to use for both interior and exterior shots; I got a reading of f/64. When I initially scouted the location in November I brought my meter, but the weather had been severely overcast and foggy resulting in a much lower light reading. I neglected to compensate for the difference in sunny weather. I had enough ND filters to compensate, but it would be extremely difficult to see and focus with that much glass in front of the lens; I needed a slower speed film. It was late in the afternoon and we decided to pick the first two days shot order and then resolve the film issue on the ride home.

There were three areas on the same property where we planned to shoot. I coordinated the shooting order based on where I concluded the sun would be during

various times of the day, attempting to keep the sun at the actors' backs throughout the day. We would shoot the river/rain scene on the second day and I planned to shoot it in a portion of the river that would allow the rain to be back or side lit. I told Jason we didn't have a silk large enough to cover the river or a means to suspend it even if we did. I hoped that the dense trees and high river bank would create a large shaded area; the scene would be back lit, but not directionally. As the sun went down, I noted the time and the approximate location on the horizon where it disappeared.

That night, we drove to a ranch house two hours away to meet Ray, my gaffer, and Jennifer, my 1st AC. I trained Jen on the camera and various procedures I wanted to follow for the shoot at the ranch, and coordinated ordering ASA 100 film to cover our exteriors for the first week of production. Jason was a bit concerned that we were ordering too much film and we would exceed our ratio and our budget. I assured him that the ASA 500 film would be used, and I would do my best to keep the production within the initially proposed ratio.

We began at 6AM the first day, faced with the coldest temperatures central Texas had experienced in years; ice covered the trees and fields where we were shooting. Jason was concerned, but I told him by the time we were set up for the first shot the sun would melt the ice. I got Jen and Luke, the 2nd AC, to load and prep the camera, while Ray and I discussed what I would need for the first couple of shots. Once everything was staged, I put on hip-waders and took the camera out to the middle of the Guadalupe River to compose the first shot; Phelps would observe from a nearby video tap.

The day was long and the production had to keep a brisk pace to stay on schedule. We were racing the sun which remained near the horizon for the majority of the day.

For the most part, I used reflectors and white bounce to light the scenes. At one point, an even haze of clouds covered the sun, providing a beautiful soft side light. Phelps and I tried to create a sense of motion, incorporating zooms, rack focus, and pans into the shots. The sun set quickly, prohibiting us from shooting a short scene; we rescheduled hoping to catch up the next day.

We concluded the first day with a campfire scene involving all three principal actors. Because the script took place in summer they had been enduring the cold weather in short sleeves the entire day and the temperature quickly dropped once the sun set. The cast and crew were tired and I was under pressure to get the scene as quickly as possible. To light it, I used two 500 watt photoflood bulbs sitting on the ground aimed at the actors. I powered the lights off of two vehicles using the inverters I had Sherng-Lee purchase. To simulate firelight, I had Jen tear Cinefoil into strips and gently wave them in front of the lights. The inverters were overheating fast and shutting down between each take. Nevertheless, we got the shot and completed the day having shot for 16 hours.

We continued the same pace for the first week of production. Everyday I found myself racing in the morning to catch the sunrise and rushing in the afternoon to beat the sunset. However, we were mostly shooting exteriors which I found challenging but familiar, as I had spent the bulk of the summer and fall shooting the *Hunter's Apprentice* outdoors with Simon. The challenge was keeping what little crew I had motivated as the long hours, long travel times, and cold weather tested their dedication.

I developed flu-like symptoms after the second day of shooting. Luke was sick too, and I advised him to sleep in for a few days, leaving me with only one camera assistant, Jen, for the duration of the first week's shoot.

I hit a rough spot in the middle of the week while we were filming interiors at a ranch house. The inciting incident of the film took place in a light-blue bedroom. To compensate, I lit the room with daylight bulbs and a CTB gelled 1K, shooting a color chip chart in the blue light. I was hoping that when the lab corrected the blue-tinted chip chart, the color of the room would be corrected as well. However, I was not happy with the lighting scheme I had set up. While the crew broke for a one-hour lunch, I spent some time alone in the room trying to get the lighting to look right. I didn't think it got any better, but scheduling forced me to press on.

The next few days presented even more challenges. I spent one morning trying to get a grassy valley to look like flat plains. I did this by putting the camera up high aiming down at the actors, putting the base of the mountains just above the top of the frame line. For the wide shot, I tilted the camera slightly to compensate for the incline. We moved on to shooting the actors on horseback near a watering tank, with barely enough time to rush to the top of a mountain to shoot a scene during sunset. We managed to shoot three acceptable takes before the sun disappeared behind the mountain range, completing nine pages in one day and putting us back on schedule.

The end of the first production week concluded with a day of shooting roadside montages as well as a day of shooting along the highway up to El Paso. For the montage, a small group of us drove around in a caravan, picking out various landscapes and devising different ways to capture the actors walking along the side of the highway. The equipment had been sent home with the bulk of the crew for the Christmas break, so I was limited to using a few white poster boards for bounce and one flag. We covered a long distance, spending too much time on the road and too little time getting shots with

proper sunlight. We grabbed as many shots as we could before sunset. When it was dark, Jason, Phelps, the actors, and I drove halfway to El Paso.

Prior to the drive to El Paso, I tried to convince Jason to have an El Paso sign made. It would prevent us from having to drive the six hours to El Paso, and we would be free to pick a picturesque background. After all, the shot involving the sign was very important as it was the final shot of the film. Jason insisted on getting the real thing. At 6AM we continued the drive to El Paso, stopping along the way to grab more roadside montage shots. The drive to El Paso featured gorgeous plateaus and mountain ranges. Unfortunately, we were racing to get to the El Paso sign before sunset, and we missed getting some of the best scenery on the whole trip west.

Forty miles outside of El Paso, we covered two short scenes at a seemingly abandoned gas station. When needed I used a bounce card and flag on the actor's close-ups, keeping the sun at their back or side. I also incorporated a polarizer and a graduated ND filter to even out the bright skies with the darker horizon. With the gas station covered, we rushed towards El Paso, eventually finding a sign marking El Paso county limits. Jason had driven further ahead while Phelps and I shot the gas station scenes, discovering that this was the only sign noting the city's boundaries. Unfortunately, scenery behind the sign was unremarkable; the bulk of the beautiful mountain ranges were in the opposite direction.

Nevertheless, I composed the scene with the sign in the foreground with the highway stretching for miles behind it and one of the principal actors walking into the distance. We wrapped as the sun was setting, rolling out the film and sending the actors home for the holidays.

On the ride east I saw some of the most beautiful scenery I had ever seen. The sky was grey with golden sunlight peaking through the clouds. Against this was a range of blood red hills dwarfed by a backdrop of enormous purple mountains. The camera magazines had rolled out and the remaining raw stock was buried in the back of the SUV; I had no time or space to reload. After missing the photo opportunity that day, I made a point to always have a magazine loaded.

After Christmas, production resumed in and around Houston, Texas in early January. Unlike the first week, the majority of our locations were less than forty-five minutes away from where we were staying. Also, our shooting locations were interiors or night exteriors, eliminating the need to beat the sunset as much as we had previously. Sherng-Lee had also added the two 1.2K HMI Fresnels and Kino units to my equipment package—I hadn't needed them until now. Jen returned as a 1st AC, and I picked up Joe Berk as my 2nd AC for the remainder of the shoot. To my surprise and relief, Ray Machuca returned as my gaffer. The production also picked up several more personnel who would fill into whatever areas were lacking.

We began the second stretch shooting the interiors of Jason's father's house. I used a combination of tricks to light it during the day, directing the sun through the windows using reflector boards and lighting the interior with the HMI lights bounced into the white ceiling or into bounce cards clamped to C-stands. When I lost the sun and the HMI's wouldn't work, I bounced small photoflood units into bounce cards to create a soft key on the actress. I found myself having to light a number of small, lightly-colored spaces. To try to make it look good, I would use small, soft sources and flag what I could

on the opposite side to create negative fill. I would use directional photoflood lights to provide backlight when I could.

Another useful tool I used extensively on the production was china balls. I had put them on my wish list that I gave to Sherng-Lee. He bought several different sizes and I would use them to create fill or sometimes as key lights for night scenes. One shot called for Dustin to be in the back of a truck at night. I put a china ball with a daylight bulb on a C-stand in the bed of the truck, running power off of the inverter. My intention was to create a soft base light in the bed of the truck. I used the same daylight/china ball combination for a night phone booth scene.

The HMI's were a lifesaver as well. When I had the power, I used them exclusively to light night exteriors, either pumping them through silks or placing them at a distance using their lenses to soften the light. I pumped them through trees, creating a dappled moonlight effect. I used the HMI's to create sunlight when cloud cover threatened to ruin the continuity of a scene we were finishing from the day before. I created the illusion of daylight in a stable while shooting at night, pumping both HMI's through a silk at the end of the stable and filling in the rest of the stable with every daylight bulb and china bulb we had.

The most difficult part of the second half of production was at Gruene Hall in Gruene, Texas. Gruene Hall is one of the most famous small-town dancehalls in the Lone Star State. A number of accomplished country musicians have played on its rustic stage. The building is one large, wooden barn with a large pitched tin roof. Two sides of the hall feature large wooden shutters that virtually open up the entire wall, flooding the place with daylight. Every surface in the place was dark, with the exception of the stage

which was painted white with a screen printed backdrop. To illuminate the place at night, there were eight 150 watt light bulbs in ceramic fixtures, screwed directly into wooden cross beams. The front bar area had track lighting which illuminated a wallpaper of framed, autographed photos as well as a few overhead lighting fixtures illuminating the seating areas.

The big challenge was figuring out how to light this enormous space with the small lighting package I was given. I had the two HMI's, an assortment of china balls, the two Kino lights, and four 1K tungsten lights. The scene called for a musical performance, dancing, and a crowd of extras. Also, we would be shooting a portion of the scene during the day when it was supposed to be night; I would need to block off the large shuttered walls on the side of the hall as well as the windows in the front bar area. I had someone buy a large roll of thick, black plastic which we stapled to the outside of the hall. The window screens dulled any sheen the plastic was giving off.

Several scenes in the movie *Michael*, starring John Travolta, were filmed in Gruene Hall. Weeks before the shoot I questioned the owner regarding what were some of the things the professional production had done to light the place. Apparently, the DP and production designer decided the place was too large, so the art department built a false wall and cut the hall in half. Also, the owner had a few pictures he had taken of the production and I scanned those for any clues or suggestions. However, it looked as though large soft lights had been hung on a constructed grid above the rafters.

We had two days to shoot at Gruene Hall. The first day we shot scenes in the front bar area and then we finished up outside for a few night exteriors. We wrapped the first day around 2AM, having shot approximately 13 pages in one day. The second day

we shot a scene in the bathroom and a few dolly shots in the band's green room. By the time we completed those scenes, it was 5PM, giving me two hours to light the main hall. We had to roll by 7PM and be done by 10PM. Ray and I scrambled with the rest of the crew trying to keep up.

First, I had Ray hang an HMI through a 4 x 4 silk above the main dance floor. I asked him to keep it fairly directional as I wanted it to provide a little backlight. Next, I had a few people run power and clip photoflood units to create pools of light against the outer walls. Once the HMI was secure above, Ray and I worked on fastening two 1K tungsten units at either end of the stage to cover the band and a music performance by one of the principal actors.

The band, Cooder Graw, was setting up their sound equipment on stage, and I placed a few photofloods to pop out their amps, drums, and speakers. I also had one of their technicians set up their stage lights. In the meantime, I asked Jen and Joe to make sure two full 400 foot magazines were loaded, and all the batteries were on charge. I had another team of people setting up dolly track on a length of tables at the back of the bar. Jason and another crew were setting up risers to extend the stage. I walked the room with my light meter. Ray followed with a ladder and made adjustments when needed. Finally, we set up the second HMI at the back of the hall, acting as a soft sidelight for the tables in the back. By 7PM a large crowd had filled the hall, the band was set, and we were ready to roll.

The band had agreed to perform the same song three times, with an additional song once. Phelps and I concluded that I would shoot handheld for two performances, covering the third on the dolly at the rear of the room. At one point in the song, the lead

singer would pull Casey onto the stage, he would play the guitar, and then dance on stage with a supporting actress.

Jen slated the shot on stage into the microphone and the performance began. About a minute into the song, the eyepiece on the camera fogged up and I couldn't see a thing. I had lit the hall around an f/4 and I knew I had a pretty decent depth of field encompassing my focus setting of 10 feet. I couldn't stop the performance, so I operated with the other eye open, trying to keep my subject within range. I managed to catch all the primary story action in the first take, and we confirmed it on the video tap once the first performance had concluded.

For the second performance, I caught the primary action again, but then I danced in and around the dance floor trying to catch additional footage of the band, the crowd, and principle actors. Again, my eyepiece fogged up. Since I knew I had already covered the story action, I removed my eye from the eyepiece, wiped it, and continued shooting. For the last performance I covered an extreme wide and wide shot of the hall from the dolly at the back of the room. I covered a few shots using a fast tracking motion and a few with a slower motion. Finally, I covered a few punch-ins of the principle actors to give Phelps a little more to cut with in the editing room. We wrapped shooting with thirty minutes to spare, finally giving the crew a moment to rest, have a drink or two, and enjoy the rest of the performance.

After Gruene Hall, there were a few more montage shots and minor scenes to capture in route back to Louisiana. *Coyote Funeral* wrapped principle photography a day ahead of schedule. As far as film goes, we came in just under our target ratio. We had shot a feature film on location in twenty one days and for around thirty-thousand dollars.

Post production

As of April, 2005, all of the footage has been processed and transferred successfully. The footage has been synced and the rough cut is being edited in tandem by Jason and Phelps. Once a fine cut is assembled I will be taking the edit decision list to Video Post in Dallas, Texas. There, I will work with colorist Steve Franko to create a timed high-definition master. From there, a DVD master can be created or a film print can be generated. Jason hopes to enter the film into Texas film festivals, with the intention of selling it to a distributor for theatrical release.

Retrospection

Coyote Funeral was one of the most challenging and rewarding experiences of my graduate studies in cinematography. I learned how to plan, organize, and execute a feature film on location. I incorporated all the techniques and skills that I picked up from shooting other projects and from working with Simon. I had to make decisions quickly, stick with those decisions, and deal with any consequences that came about. *Coyote Funeral* also marked the first time that I worked collaboratively with a professional sound mixer. I have to focus on not allowing the stress of limited resources to effect my relationship with the director or my responsibility to the story.

I must work collaboratively and encourage positive creative debate with the director in order to create imagery that best serves the story. I've learned how to teach technical and artistic concepts to amateur filmmakers in a professional working environment, as well as absorb the same information from professionals.

Whereas, I took more chances with my lighting setups on this production, I have to take it a step further on the next project. I caught myself fighting the instinct to return to old habits of working with hard lights and placing lights in the wrong locations. Finally, I have to reevaluate my instincts regarding shot composition and handheld camera movement.

Chapter 8: Conclusion

A cinematographer is a storyteller. His tools include elements of light, color, motion, and composition. He must serve the story only, ensuring that the visuals are complementary and do not draw attention to themselves. He analyzes the story structure and characters, creating a visual style that is in harmony with the interpretation of the director and the production designer.

A cinematographer is a collaborator. He is in partnership with the director, providing the storytelling process with creative options and visual suggestions. He is encouraged to engage in positive creative debate with the director, with the end result being a new idea. He is never in competition with the director, nor is he more important.

A cinematographer is a technician. He must be experienced with the skills and craft of photography, understanding the tools and technology both old and new. He must be able to control and manipulate light, shadow, and color through the use of lighting instruments, filters, and chemical/digital post production methods. He must be familiar with the science and physics concerning the behavior of light and color. He must be familiar with the mechanics of the equipment, and be open to inventing new devices to meet the demands of a production.

A cinematographer is an artist. Whereby through the use of imagination and craft creates works of aesthetic value. He must understand how certain visuals affect individuals psychologically and emotionally. He must understand how to create harmony using form, balance, color, and space. He assists the production designer in creating a visual palette that successfully incorporates elements of set design, makeup, and wardrobe.

A cinematographer is a manager. He must be able to effectively delegate responsibility to key members of the camera, lighting, and grip crews. He provides a plan that utilizes time efficiently, allowing him to capture the best images in the shortest amount of time without sacrificing quality. He organizes the acquisition of equipment and materials necessary for production. He ensures that the visual goals of production have been communicated to all departments.

A cinematographer is a student. He should always analyze his work for mistakes and inconsistencies, seeking to apply corrected techniques to future projects. He should always be conscious of the interplay of light, shadow, and color every minute of the day. A cinematographer should study the works of his contemporaries, seeking to modify and build off of their techniques for the sake of creating new visual languages. He should be open and capable of applying old techniques to new, developing technologies.

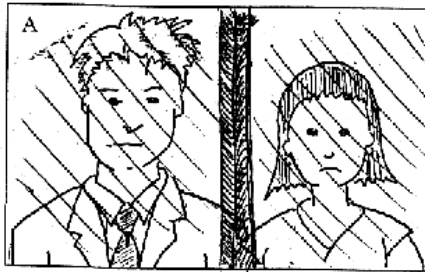
A cinematographer is a teacher. He guides aspiring cinematographers in their attempts to learn the craft. He is willing to share his knowledge and experience to assist students and filmmakers in understanding and developing the visual language of cinema. He provides opportunities for others to observe the cinematographer in a working professional environment. Finally, he is willing to communicate his observations and critique of his and other cinematographer's work.

Appendix A

Mother Wit Storyboards

DOLLY

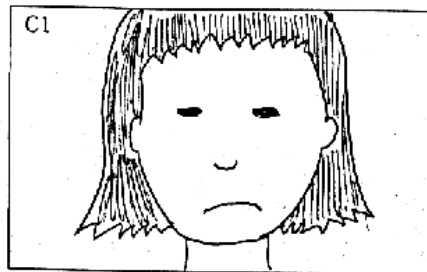
INT. - Alumni Assoc. Building



[Reflection in door] MS - Amanda and Kendal. From beginning to "I knew that answer... but I wished I hadn't."



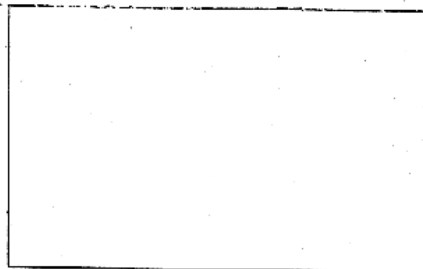
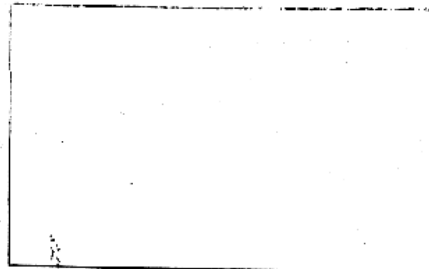
[Up angle, Kendal looking down]
MS - "What's wrong with your son?"
until end of scene.



XCU - Amanda, dolly out slowly on line
"Has he done this before?"



MS - Amanda walking into room
through glass door.

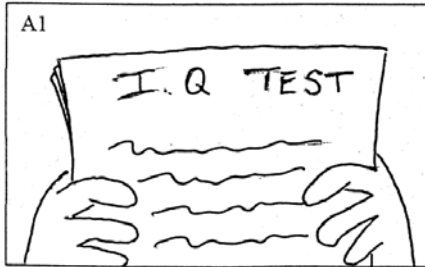


Title: Mother Wit, Scene 1/2

PAGE NUMBER: 1

DOLLY

INT. – Alumi Gardner's Office



XCU – back of I.Q. test in from of Chapman's face. As he lowers test, rack from paper to face and dolly to A2.



Dolly (cont.) – MS at line "You don't like it." Continue dolly to A3.



Lock off dolly at "...Ultra Intelligence Scale." MS – Chapman (frame right), Kendall (lower left), shot continues until "You don't have the support."



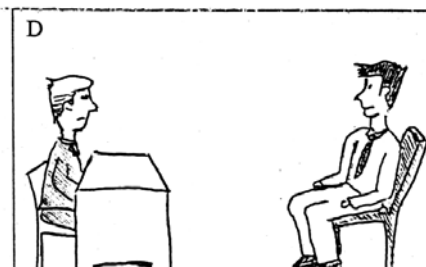
MS – Chapman.

Scene in total.



MS – Kendall.

Scene in total



Profile two shot – Chapman (frame left), Kendal (frame right). Begin at "The prototype..." and end at "...because you're jealous."

Title: Mother Wit, Scene 3

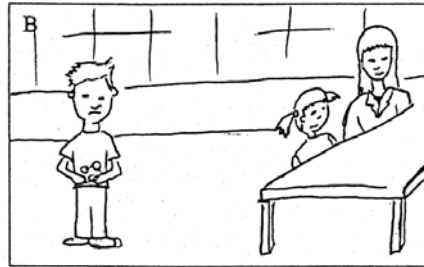
PAGE NUMBER: 2

HANDHELD



Erika and Mary (lower right), Calvin (upper left). Rack focus from Mary/Erika to Calvin, then back to Mary/Erika

INT. – Alumni Ballroom



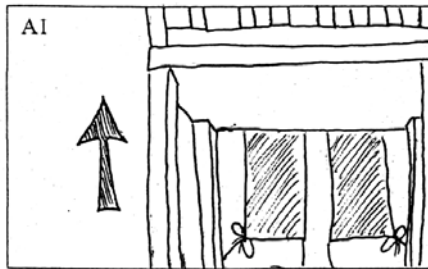
LS – Erika and Mary at table (frame left), Calvin (frame right).



Molecular structure (left foreground) out of focus. Erika and Mary (right background). Rack focus.

DOLLY & JIB

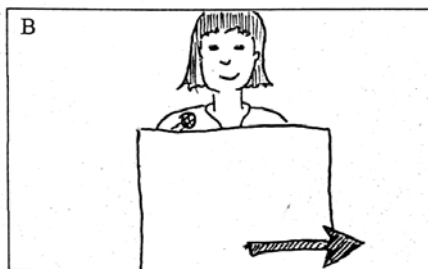
INT. – UNO Thrust Theater



XCU- Calvin's heels through back of chair. Jib up at "But that's not always the case.."



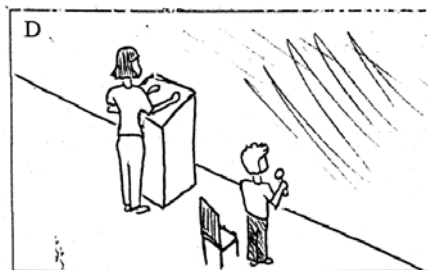
(A1 cont.) – Pan and turn to include Amanda on "My son..." hold shot until "...deficit disorder."



MLS – Amanda. Hold on Amanda only, Calvin excluded. Dolly track from left to right starting at "After a few..." until "thirst for knowledge."



CU – Amanda. "As we all know..."



XLS – Rear high angle from Calvin rising to "singled out."



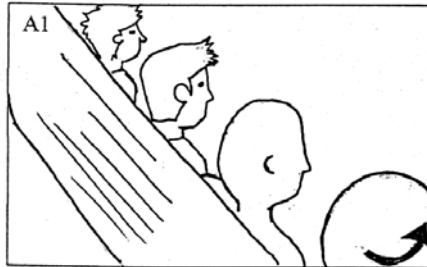
MLS – Calvin on stage, starting at rise and continue until "singled out."

Title: Mother Wit, Scene 5

PAGE NUMBER: 4

CHAMELEON DOLLY

EXT. – NOMA Sculpture Garden



A1
MS – Rear shot of figures on bench, Calvin and Leo at far end of the bench. Dolly around to A2



A2
(A1 cont.) – Lock off at WS directly in front of Calvin and Leo. Hold until end of scene



B
MS – Calvin and Leo, Calvin dominant in frame right. From “have you ever been fishing?”



C
MS – Calvin and Leo, Leo dominant frame left. From “have you ever been fishing?”

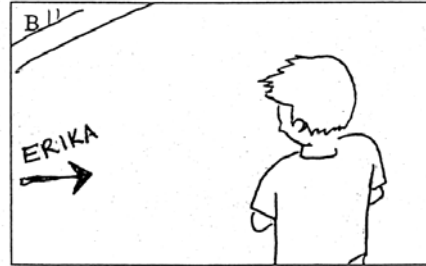


D
CU – Calvin. Various reaction shots.

INT. – Alumni Assoc. Ballroom

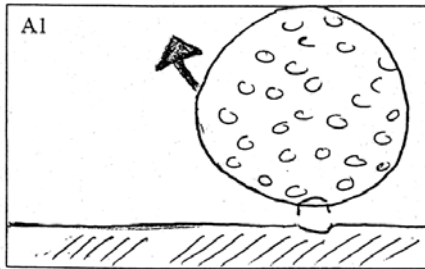


MS – Calvin (left foreground),
Erika/Mary (right background), all in
focus.



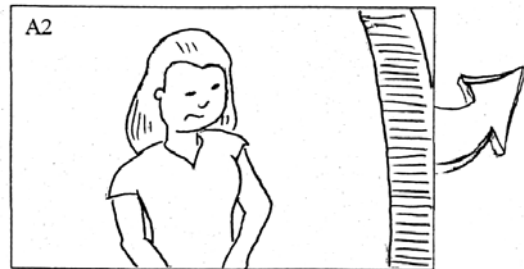
High angle – ¾ view over Calvin's
shoulder (fr. right), Erika enters from
frame left.

DOLLY & JIB



XCU – Golf ball, Martha hits out of frame, places another ball down, then camera jibs up, begin dolly to...

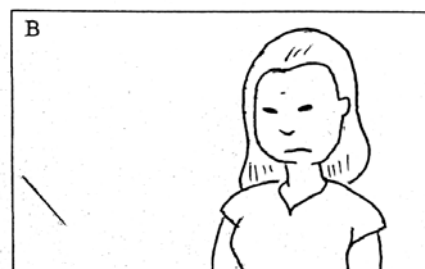
EXT. City Park Driving Range



(A1 cont.) MS – Martha, be at this position on line "I see how you live."
Dolly continues to A3



(A2 cont.) MS Martha, LS Amanda –
Dolly stops at "It's because I love him."



MS - Martha



MS - Amanda



LS – Camera down range looking back,
Martha (fr. right), Amanda (fr. left).

Title: Mother Wit, Scene 8

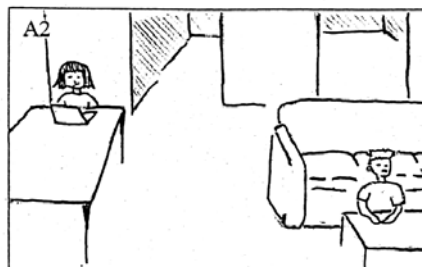
PAGE NUMBER: 7

DOLLY



A1
MS – Calvin assembling structure at coffee table, begin dolly out at line “Museum-Artifacts.” to A2

INT. Marigny Apartment



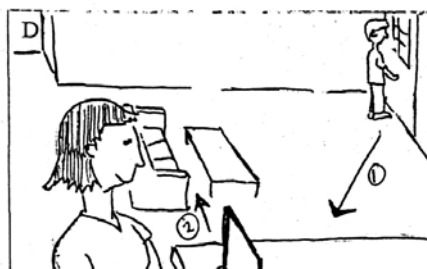
A2
(A1 cont.) MLS – Calvin on sofa, Amanda at laptop on table, hold shot until “...stinker.”



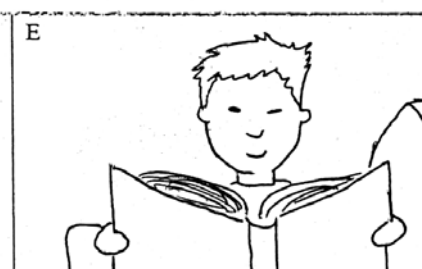
B
Low angle on sofa. Begin at wrestling and hold until line “terse kiss.”



C
MLS – Calvin (lower right), Amanda (upper left), begin at line “Professor Wang’s article...” hold until Amanda exits frame left.



D
LS – Amanda at laptop, Calvin at the window. Rack to Calvin at “I am mommy, rack back to Amanda at “well, prove it.” Calvin walks into focus.



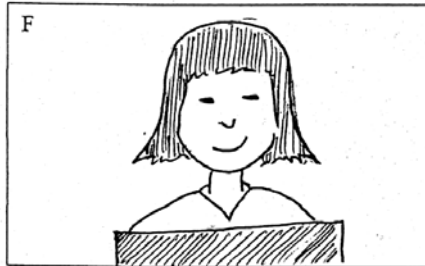
E
CU – Calvin on sofa with book just below chin.

Title: Mother Wit, Scene 9

PAGE NUMBER: 8

Scene 9 (Cont.)

INT. Marigny Apartment

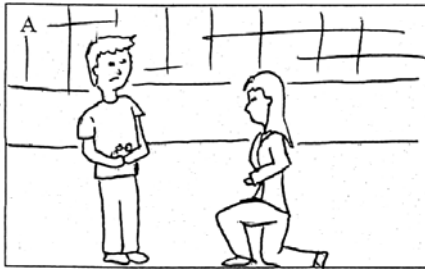


CU – Amanda at table, laptop just below chin. Try to match Shot E in composition.

Title: Mother Wit, Scene 9

PAGE NUMBER: 9

INT. Alumni Assoc. Ballroom



WS – Calvin (fr. right), Erika (fr. left),
Erika yells for Kendall over Calvin's
shoulder. FAKE GLASS DOORS at
Calvin's back.

Title: Mother Wit, Scene 10

PAGE NUMBER: 10

BABY LEGS

INT. Alumni Assoc. Ballroom

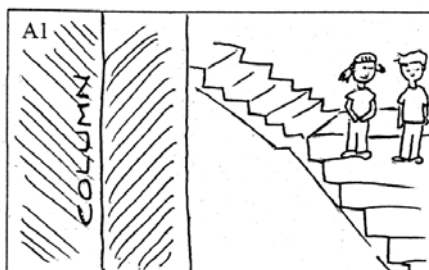


MS – Low angle, glass doors as frame,
Amanda (left), Kendall (right) enter
doors and walk past camera.

Title: Mother Wit, Scene 11

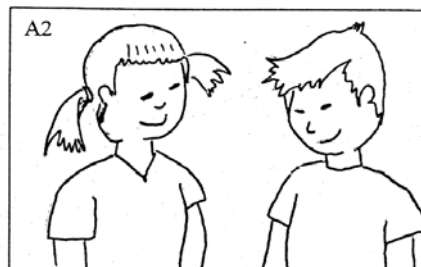
PAGE NUMBER: 11

CHAMELEON DOLLY



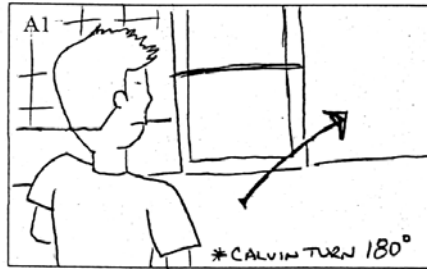
MLS – Calvin (right), Mary (left) on stairs. Camera starts low angle, dollies around column, and rises to A2

INT. Alumni Assoc. Foyer

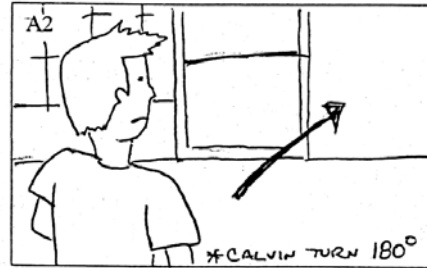


(A1 cont.) MS – Mary and Calvin on stairs.

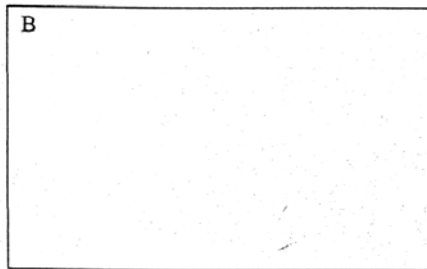
INT. Alumni Assoc. Ballroom



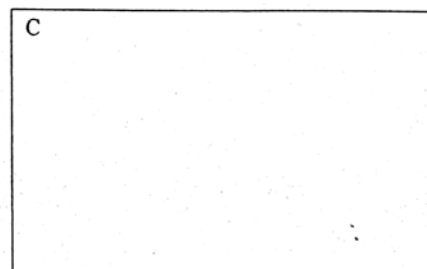
MS – Camera telephoto at Calvin's back.
Calvin throws molecular model intact
into wall.



Same as A1, Calvin mimes throwing
object, molecular model pieces thrown at
wall from offscreen.



CU – Molecular model intact striking the
wall.

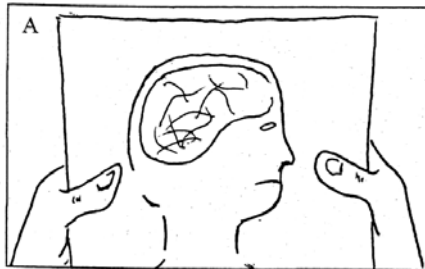


CU – Bird's Eye View against the wall,
model pieces thrown into wall falling
away from camera.

Title: Mother Wit, Scene 13

PAGE NUMBER: 13

DOLLY



XCU – High angle, PETSCAN sheet flipped once and hold until line “ You don’t even know what you’re looking at.”

INT. Financial Aid Office



MLS – Tom (left), Amanda (right). Starting at Tom staring at Amanda and dolly in to MS of both. Lock off at “I can feel what you’re...”



MCU – Tom. Start at line “What?” and hold until “I don’t know what to do.”

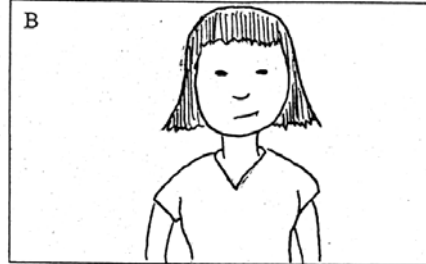


MCU – Amanda. “I have to go...” Dolly out at pause after the line “I don’t know what to do.” Continue slow dolly until end of scene.

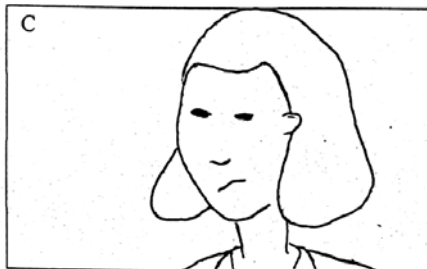
INT. Alumni Assoc. Waiting Area



MS – Kessler at desk, hold until “but telling me now is not going to get...”



MCU – Amanda. Reaction to shot A



CU – Kessler. until “I’m trying to understand...”

Title: Mother Wit, Scene 15

PAGE NUMBER: 15

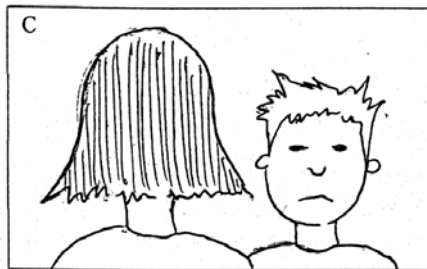
INT. - Alumni Assoc. Ballroom



MS - Begin at Amanda enters from left and hold shot until "I'm sorry..."



CU - Amanda. Calvin back to camera.



CU - Calvin. Amanda back to camera

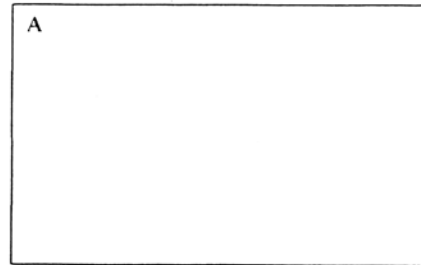


XCU - Calvin. Low angle, Calvin looking down right. "I am mommy."

Appendix B

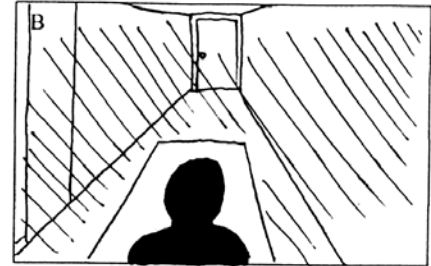
The Hunter's Apprentice Storyboards

STEADICAM, SKATEBOARD

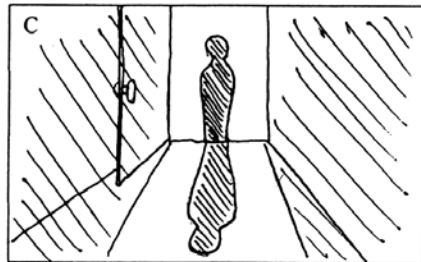


Establishing Shot – Building at dawn.

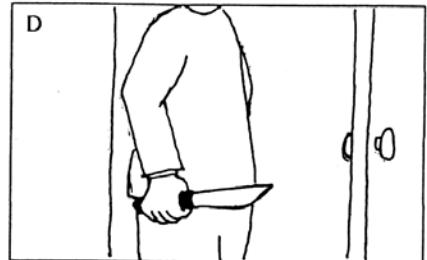
INT. - HALLWAY



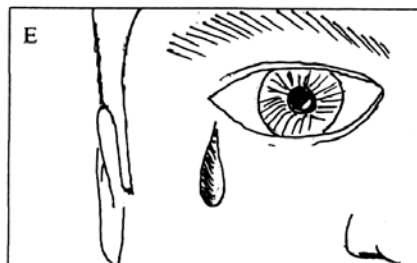
LS Hallway – Door swings open, light floods in, revealing Alex's shadow across the floor.



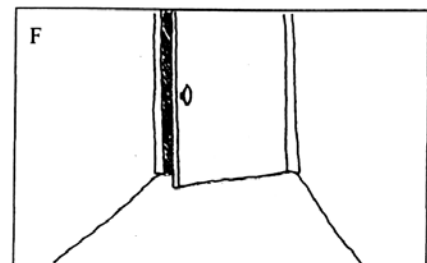
(Rev. B) Hallway – Door opens, Alex in silhouette, steps in, closes door behind him (leaving small crack in the door for light).



MS – Knife in hand, Alex backing into corner next to door. (Door slams halfway down corridor)



XCU Alex – Tear runs down cheek, hand rubs it away.



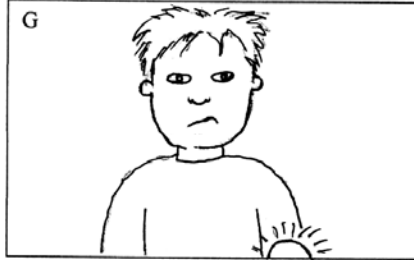
LS Hallway - Door at end of hallway closes.

Title: The Hunter's Apprentice

SCENE: 1

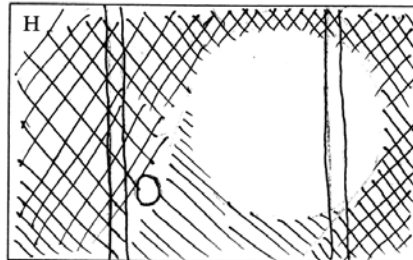
PAGE: 1

STEADICAM, SKATEBOARD

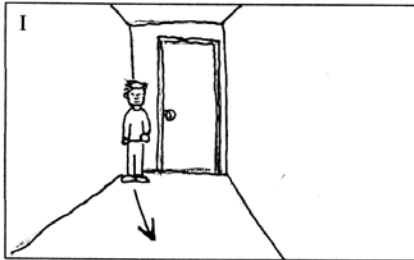


MS Alex – Raises flashlight, clicks it on.

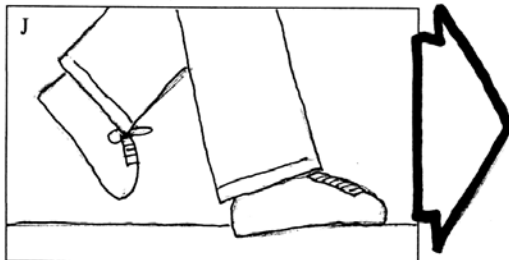
INT. - HALLWAY



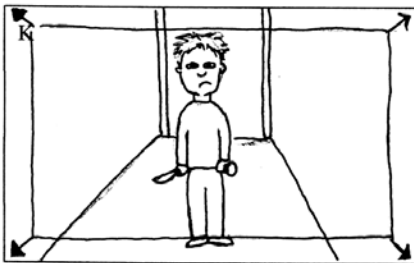
MS Door at end of hallway – Flashlight scans across.



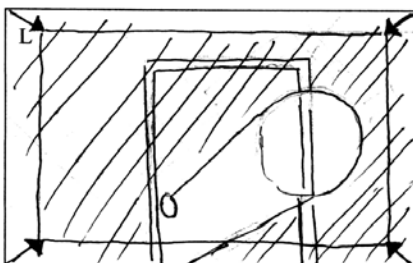
LS Alex – Steps out of corner, heads down hallway.



CU Alex's feet [TRACKING SKATEBOARD] – Side of feet walking down hallway.



LS Alex [TRACK BACK, STEADICAM] – walks down hall.



LS Door [TRACK TO, STEADICAM] – flashlight striking door.

Title: The Hunter's Apprentice

SCENE: 1

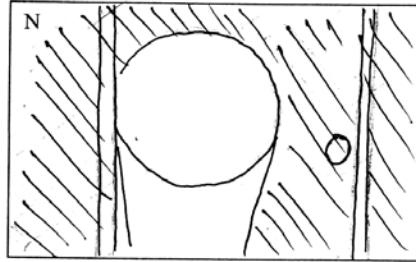
PAGE: 2

STEADICAM, SKATEBOARD



MS Alex [TRACK BACK, STEADICAM] – approaching door.

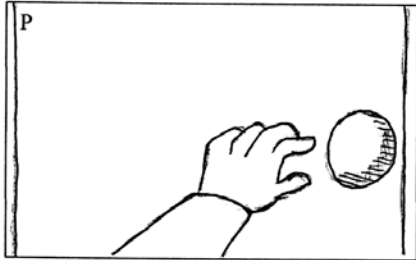
INT. - HALLWAY



MS Door [TRACK TO, STEADICAM]



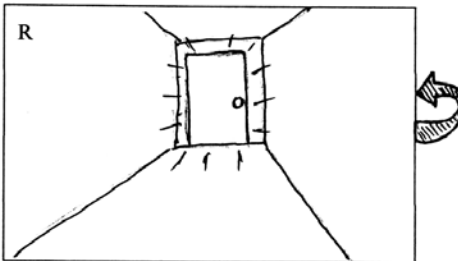
CU Alex [TRACK BACK, STEADICAM] – walks to door and stops.



Alex POV – reaching for door handle



MS Alex – Reaction (Jump)



Alex POV – down hallway to closed door.

Title: The Hunter's Apprentice

SCENE: 1

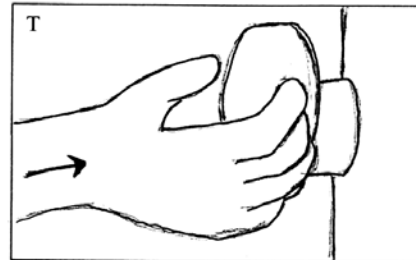
PAGE: 3

STEADICAM, SKATEBOARD



MS Alex – breathes sigh of relief (SAME AS SHOT Q??)

INT. - HALLWAY



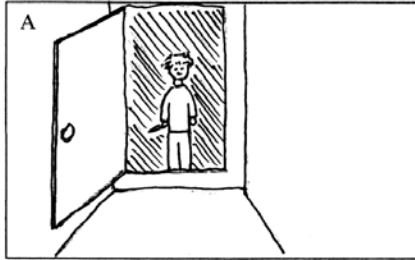
XCU Doorknob – Hand moves to doorknob.

Title: The Hunter's Apprentice

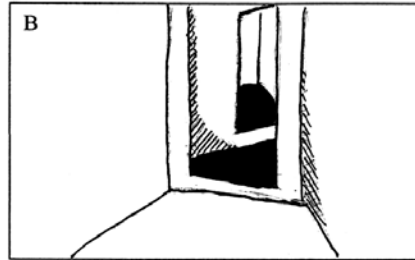
SCENE: 1

PAGE: 4

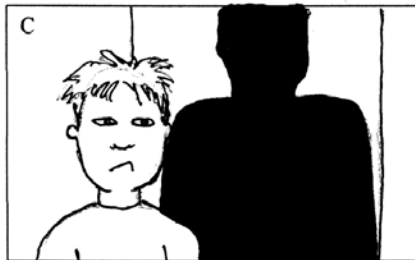
INT. – ENGINE ROOM



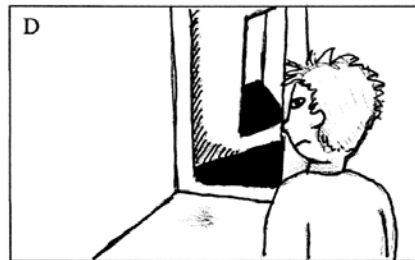
LS – Door opens, Alex steps in, takes two steps and stops.



Alex POV – eyes adjust to light, objects in room come into view.



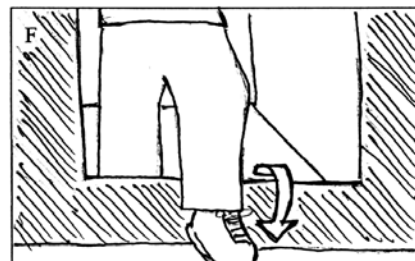
MS Alex – shadowed figure stands behind Alex.



MS Alex – looks around room, takes flashlight from pocket.



MS Alex (same as shot C) – figure is gone, Alex moves forward.



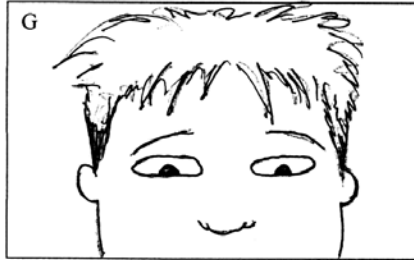
CU at floor – Alex steps over ledge of next doorway, something rustles.

Title: The Hunter's Apprentice

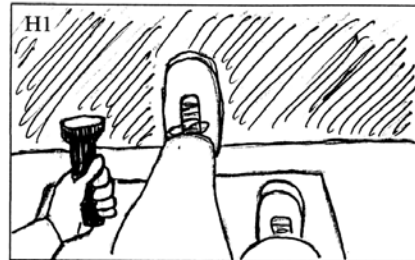
SCENE: 2

PAGE: 1

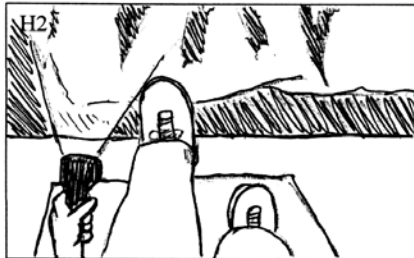
INT. – ENGINE ROOM



CU – Alex freezes, looks down.



Alex POV – Darkness under foot, raises flashlight.



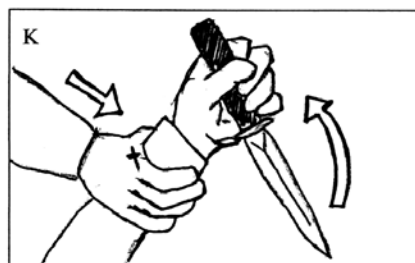
H1 Cont. – Switches flashlight on, figure under tarp. It moves, Alex retracts foot.



MS low angle – Alex turns off light, puts it in pocket, raises knife. Figure rises up behind him.



CU – Alex hand reaches for tarp, lifts it revealing a white hand.



CU – Nicholas' hand grabs Alex's wrist.

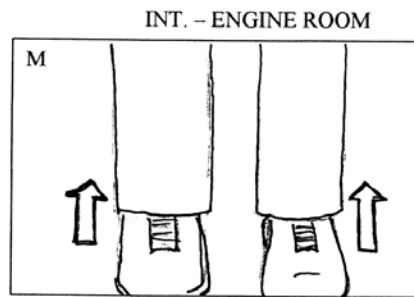
Title: The Hunter's Apprentice

SCENE: 2

PAGE: 2



CU Alex – Nicholas' hand covers mouth.



CU Alex – feet are picked up.



MS to CU – DOLLY IN on moving tarp.

INT. - HALLWAY



MS – Alex pushed against the wall.
N – “What are you doing here?”
A – That man killed my parents.”



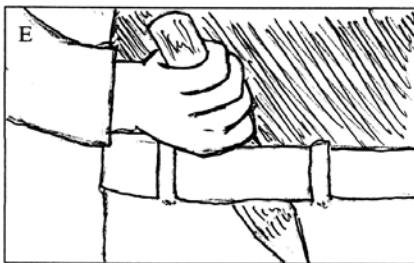
MS Nicholas – “What is your name?”



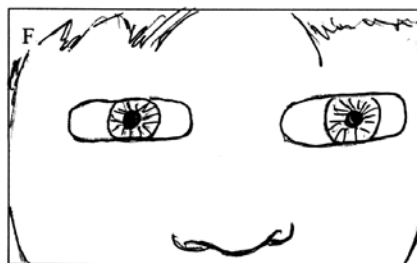
MS Alex
A – “Alex.”
N – “Alex Clayborn?”
Alex nods.



MS Alex and Nicholas – Nicholas looks
Alex up and down, raises knife.
N – “This isn’t gonna do any good.”



XCU Nicholas’ belt – pulls out wooden
stake.



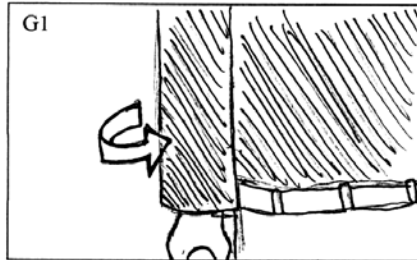
XCU Alex – reflection of stake in eyes.
N – “I’ll show you.”

Title: The Hunter’s Apprentice

SCENE: 3

PAGE: 1

INT. - HALLWAY



MS Alex – Nicholas obstructs camera's view. Nicholas turns towards door.



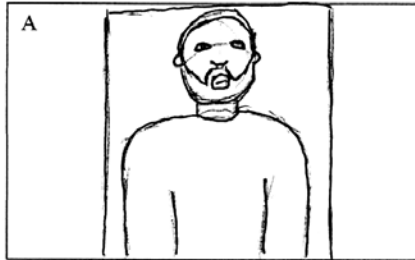
G1 Cont. – Reveals Alex.

Title: The Hunter's Apprentice

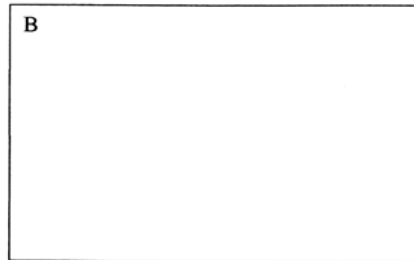
SCENE: 3

PAGE: 2

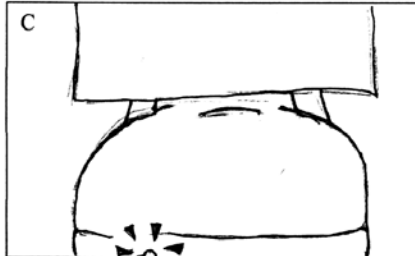
INT. – ENGINE ROOM



MS low angle – Door opens, Nicholas walks in.



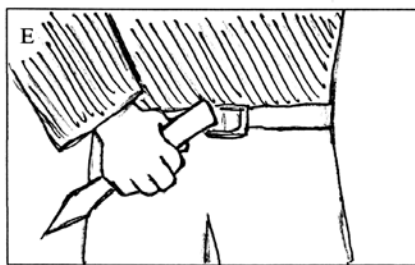
MCU – Alex watches from hallway (inside darkness looking out long focal length?!)



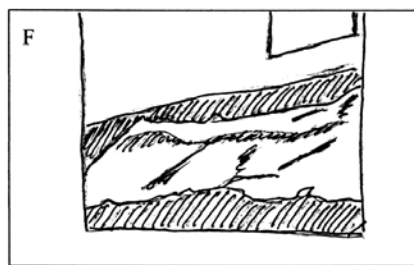
XCU – Nicholas foot crunches a pebble.



XCU – Vampire's eyes flash open.



MS – Nicholas' forward motion stops, hand tightens around stake.



MS – Vampire under tarp.

Title: The Hunter's Apprentice

SCENE: 4

PAGE: 1



MCU – Vampire leaps up at camera.

INT. – ENGINE ROOM



MS Alex – [STEADICAM] Quick push in as Alex screams.

DOLLY

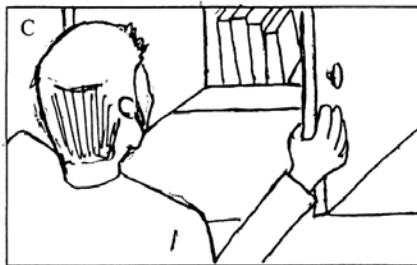
INT. - NICHOLAS' HOUSE



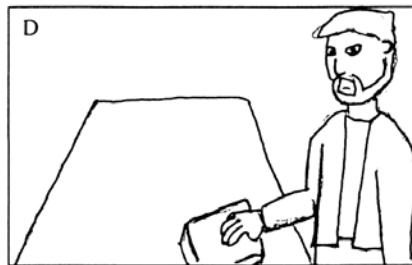
MCU - Alex sits on sofa, hands clasped in front of him, showing tattoo on hand.
N- "Take your weapons."



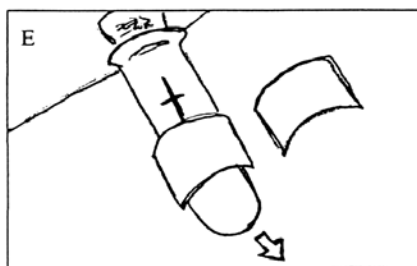
MS (Over Nicholas' shoulder looking down at Alex on couch) - Nicholas tosses bag on couch next to Alex.
N - "You'll fly...cont training with Victor."



MS - Nicholas opens cabinet, takes out bible.
A - "I don't need that."



MS Nicholas and book on table - Nick takes vial from pocket.
N - "You only have a minute to use it..."



XCU - Vial slides into sleeve.
N- "After being bit..."



MS - Alex sitting on couch. Alex gets up, camera follows.
N - "then it's useless."

Title: The Hunter's Apprentice

SCENE: 5

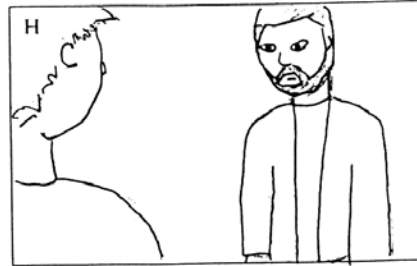
PAGE: 1

DOLLY

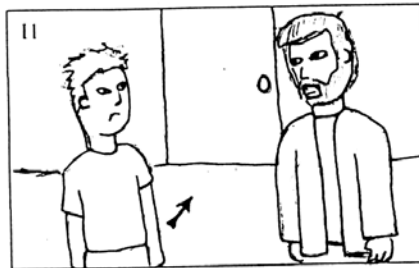


OTS Alex.
A – "I said I'm coming with you."

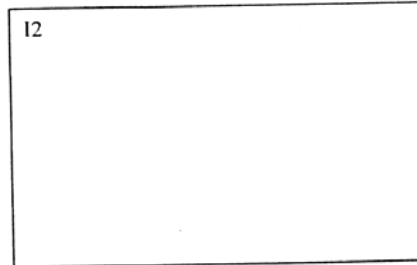
INT. – NICHOLAS' HOUSE



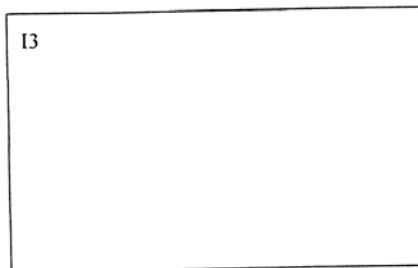
OTS Nicholas.
N – "Go home...talk about it tomorrow."



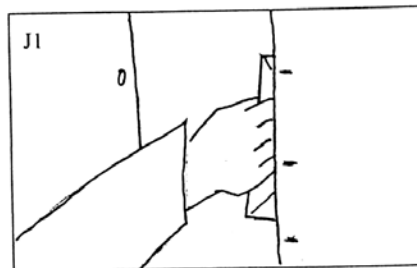
LS Alex and Nicholas.
A – "I'm going home to pack...half an hour."
Alex leaves.



Nicholas listens at door as Alex drives off. Then walks to closet, camera DOLLIES to door, crossing Nicholas.



MS – Nicholas at door, puts suitcases down, turns to couch, reaches into pocket.



CU – Nicholas pulling envelop out of jacket pocket, pan with arm to J2.

Title: The Hunter's Apprentice

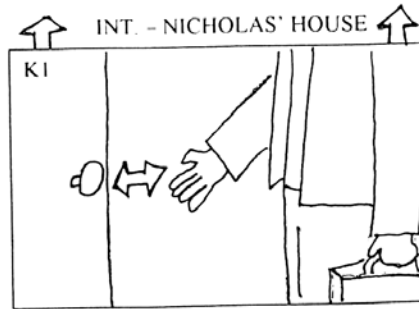
SCENE: 5

PAGE: 2

DOLLY



J1 cont. – Letter placed on couch, name ALEX visible, hold shot.



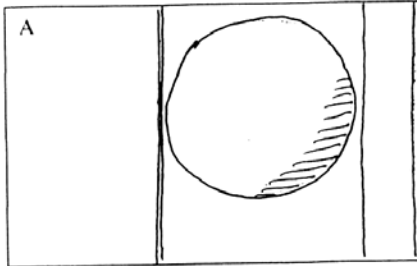
MS – Nicholas opens door, stops, checks pockets, camera pans up to K2.



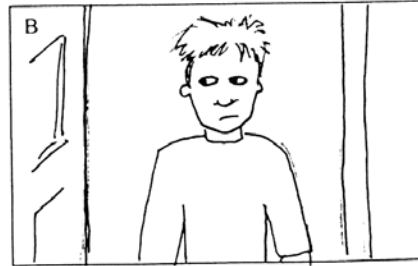
MS – Nicholas walks out of frame, camera dollies around, pans down and into CU of doorknob.

DOLLY

INT. - NICHOLAS' HOUSE



(Click of door in darkness). FADE IN to XCU doorknob turning, door opens.



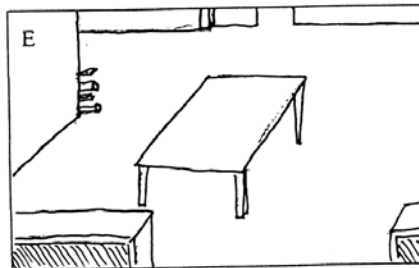
MS - Alex in door, walks in, sees envelope on couch.



CU - Letter on couch, Alex picks it up.



MCU Alex - Letter barely visible on bottom of frame as Alex reads letter, looks up, drops letter at his side.



CU - Letter fills frame, drops out of frame, revealing kitchen area (RACK).



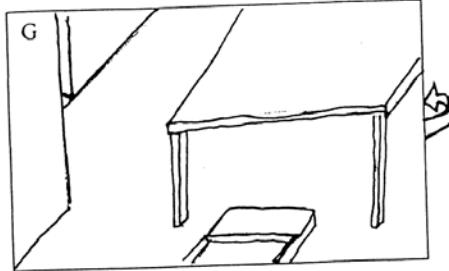
MS [DOLLY BACK] Alex walks to dining area.

Title: The Hunter's Apprentice

SCENE: 6/7

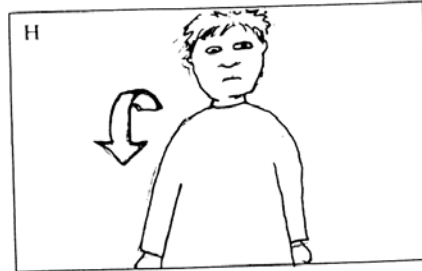
PAGE: 1

DOLLY

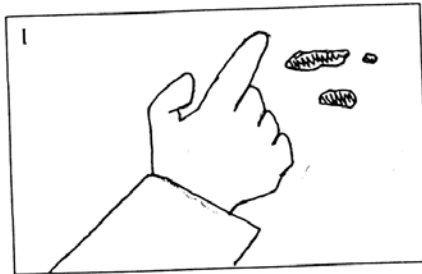


MS [DOLLY TO] into destroyed dining area.

INT. - NICHOLAS' HOUSE



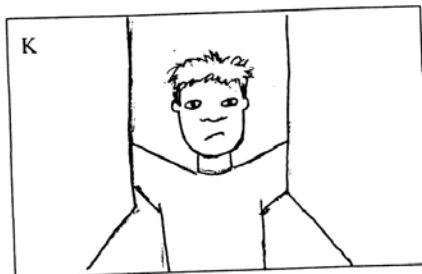
MS low angle, Alex walks into dining area, kneels down, reaches just past camera lens.



CU - Alex wiping blood off floor, turns hand to camera.



MCU Alex w/cabinet in background - Alex looks at blood, then back at cabinet (RACK). Alex leaves frame.



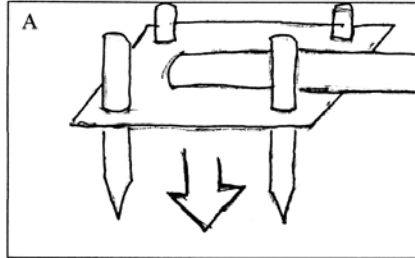
MS from inside cabinet - Alex opens doors of cabinet.

Title: The Hunter's Apprentice

SCENE: 6/7

PAGE: 2

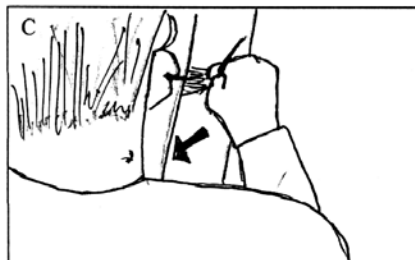
INT. - SWAMP



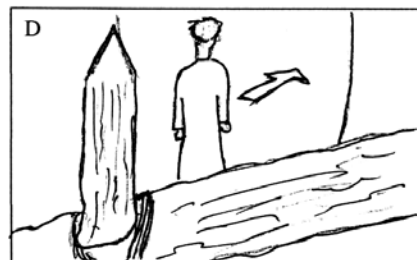
CU- Alex pushing stakes into dirt.



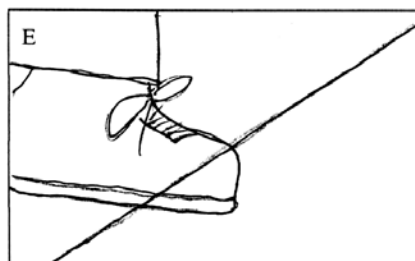
CU – Alex tying wire around a wooden pole.



OTS Alex – Hands tying wire around pole, RACK TO Alex's neck, slaps mosquito.



LS- Stake in foreground, Alex walks towards tree in background.



CU – Alex's foot tripping wire.



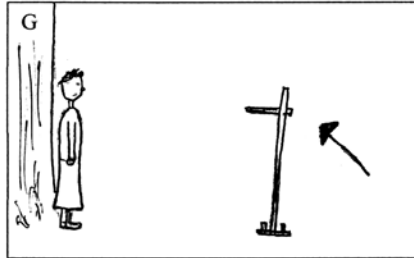
LS – Stake trap springs into frame, Alex in background.

Title: The Hunter's Apprentice

SCENE: 9

PAGE: 1

INT. - SWAMP

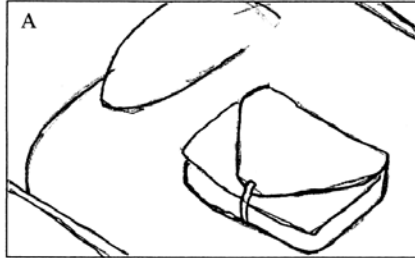


LS – Alex standing at tree, stake trap sprung at chest level.



MCU – Alex's face looking to the sky.

EXT. - ROAD



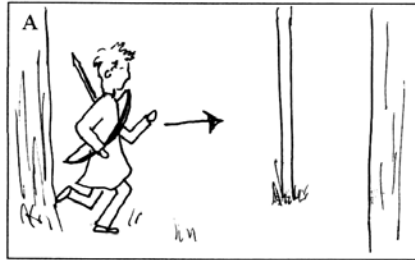
CU - Trunk of car, trunk opens revealing carpetbag. Alex takes bag, closes trunk.

Title: The Hunter's Apprentice

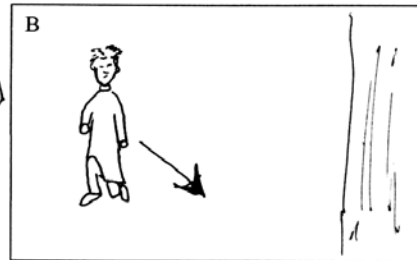
SCENE: 10

PAGE: 1

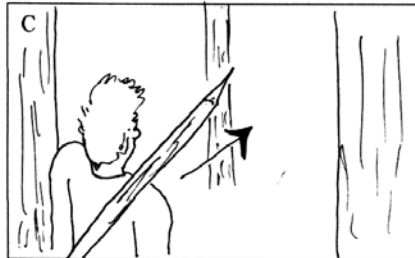
EXT. – SWAMP



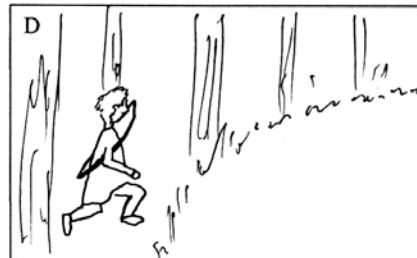
LS- Camera tracks as Alex runs through trees.



LS low angle – Alex runs to camera, out of frame.



¾ high angle – Back view as Alex slows to a walk.



MLS – Camera slowly tracks as Alex stops at clearing edge.

Title: The Hunter's Apprentice

SCENE: 11

PAGE: 1

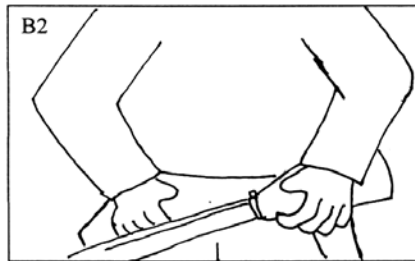
INT. - CLEARING



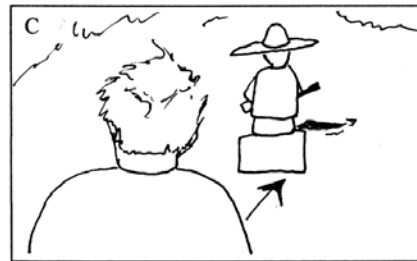
Alex POV - Pushes leaves away to reveal man on crate in clearing.



MCU - Man, Alex in background (Long focal length). Pan down to B2.



MCU- Man adjusts shotgun in hands.



MS - Handheld following Alex.



MS - Alex's approach and coughs.



CU - Man's eyes.

Title: The Hunter's Apprentice

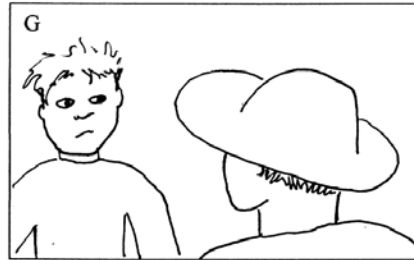
SCENE: 12

PAGE: 1

INT. - CLEARING



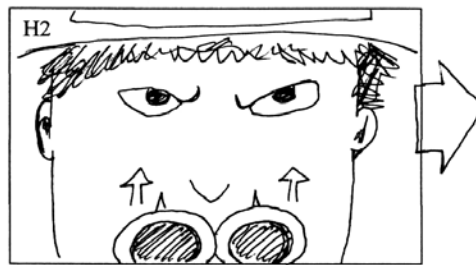
LS - Alex stands as man swings around on crate.



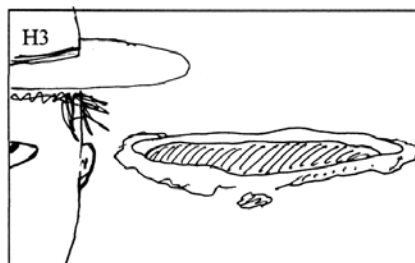
MS (same as D?) Alex and man.
A - "I'm just looking for the road."



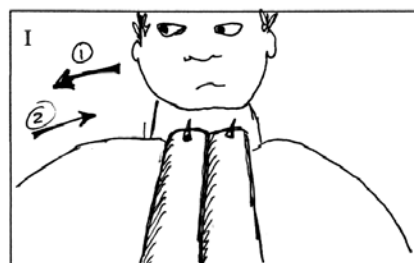
Alex POV - Man eyes up and down, continue to H2.



H1 cont. - raises shotgun into frame, pan to H3.



H2 cont. - hole in background.



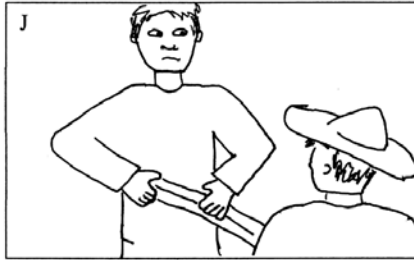
Man POV - Alex moves head to look at hole, then moves back into front of gun.
A - "Whatever they're paying you..."

Title: The Hunter's Apprentice

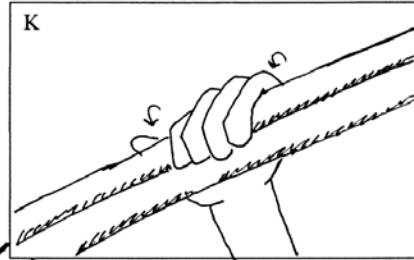
SCENE: 12

PAGE: 2

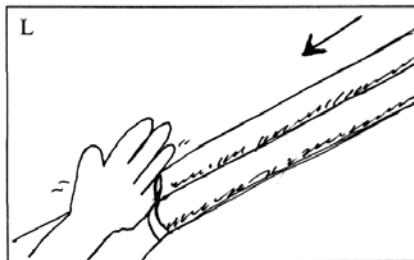
EXT. - CLEARING



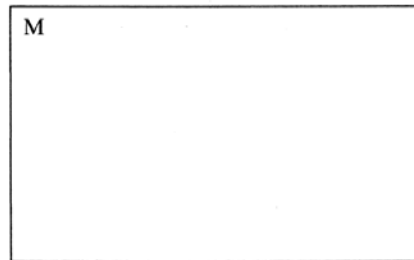
J MS - Alex grabs shotgun (Quick cut to K). LIGHTNING



K XCU - Hand grabbing gun, camera quick pans to L. LIGHTNING



L XCU - Pan down barrel into palm slapping between hammers of gun. LIGHTNING



M MCU ¾ view - Alex yanking gun away from man.



N MCU from back of man - Alex hits him in jaw, man turns to camera spitting blood from impact.



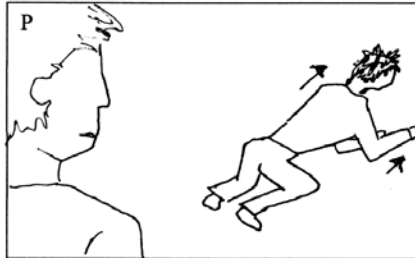
O LS - Man striking ground in foreground, Alex in background.

Title: The Hunter's Apprentice

SCENE: 12

PAGE: 3

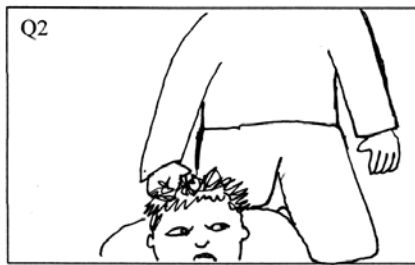
INT. - CLEARING



P
OTS Alex - Man crawling away, Alex moves forward, crosses to other side of man.



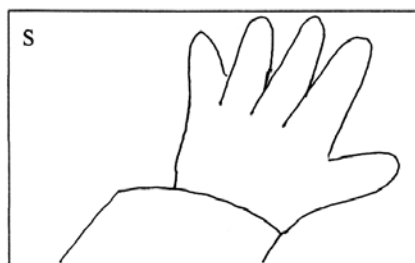
Q1
LS - Man in foreground, Alex crossing in back, tosses gun away.



Q2
Q1 cont. - Alex kneels next to man, grabs him by neck.



R
CU - Alex.
A- "How many are down there?"



S
CU - Man's hand, signals five.



T
MS- Alex pulls knife from behind him with his left hand.

Title: The Hunter's Apprentice

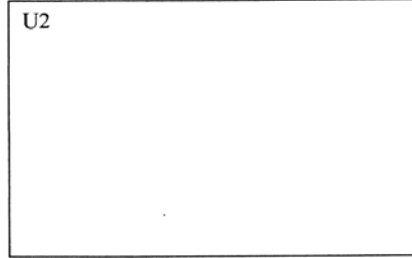
SCENE: 12

PAGE: 4

EXT. - CLEARING



U1
LS - Alex has man by hair/neck. Pulls him to U2.



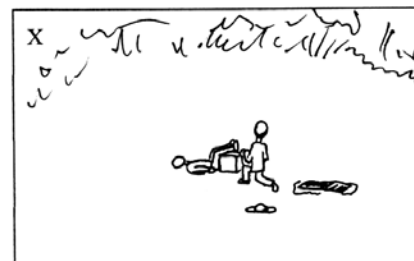
U2
LS- Man pulled back onto crate away from camera.



V
MS- Alex with knife at man's throat. Shows him picture.
A- "Is he down there?"



W
CU - Man's face, picture in foreground.
A- "Answer me."



X
XLS - Alex slits man's throat, body slumps to the ground.

Title: The Hunter's Apprentice

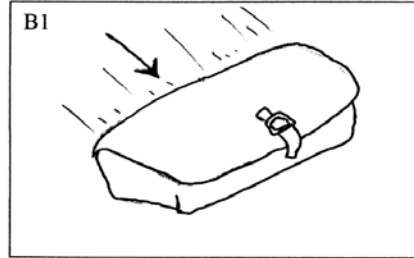
SCENE: 12

PAGE: 5

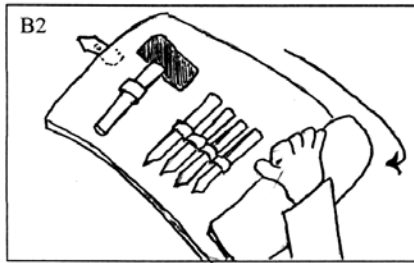
EXT. - CLEARING



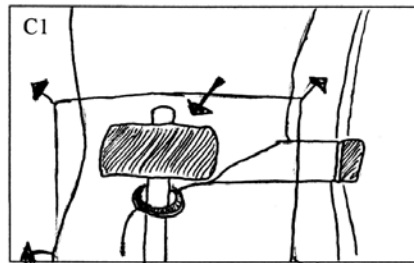
Hole POV - Alex peers into hole.



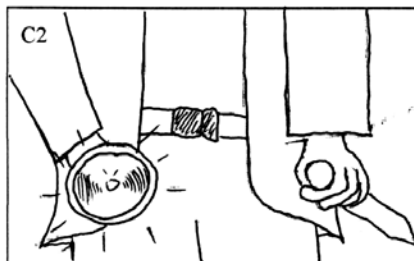
CU- Carpet bag dropped on ground, continue to B2



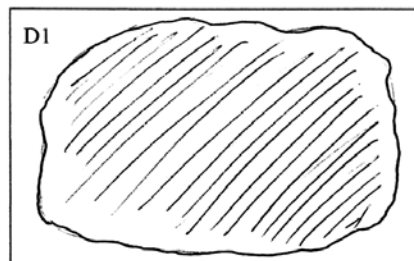
CU - Carpet bag rolled open.



MS - Alex's body turns, slides mallet into holster.



MS - Grabs flashlight and clicks it on.



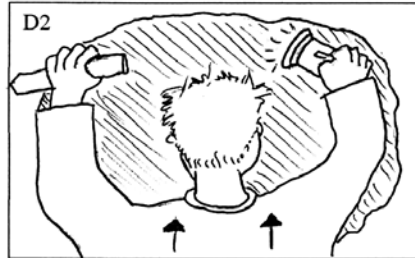
MS - Camera moves onto hole as if Alex's POV, continue to D2

Title: The Hunter's Apprentice

SCENE: 12/13

PAGE: 1

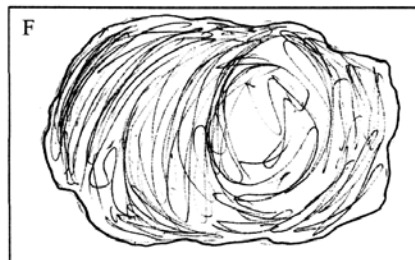
EXT. - CLEARING



MS - Alex moves into frame, climbing into hole.



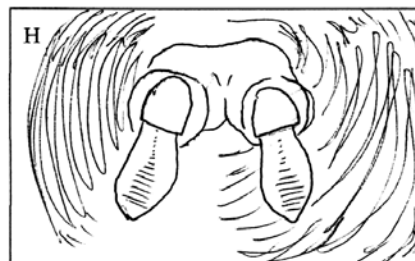
MCU - Alex climbing into hole.



MS - Into hole.



MCU - Alex maneuvering through hole.



MS - Alex's feet disappears into hole.

Title: The Hunter's Apprentice

SCENE: 13

PAGE: 2

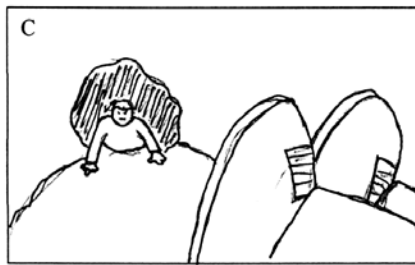
INT. - CHAMBER



XCU - Alex



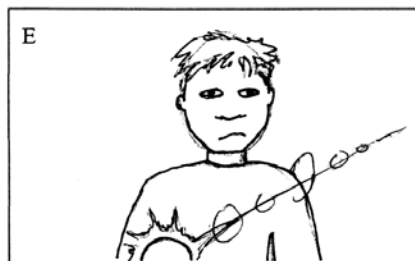
LS from inside tunnel- Flashlight beam moves around room.



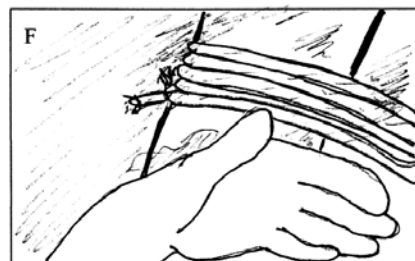
LS - Nicholas' feet in F.G., Alex climbing into chamber from tunnel.



MS - Alex shines light on Nicholas



MS - Alex flashes light across lens, reaching for Nicholas.
A - "Nicholas."



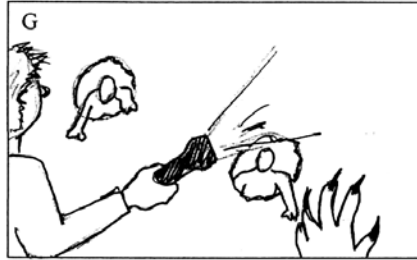
CU - Alex brushes dirt off, sees legs are tied, hears mud sliding.

Title: The Hunter's Apprentice

SCENE: 14

PAGE: 1

INT. - CHAMBER



LS - Alex scans chamber with flashlight, vampires pushing out of walls.



LS - Vampires hands in foreground, two more push out the walls in back, Alex in middle of it all.



CU - Hand grabs for Alex.

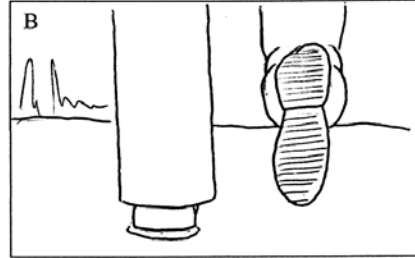


MS from tunnel - Alex crawls out of chamber.

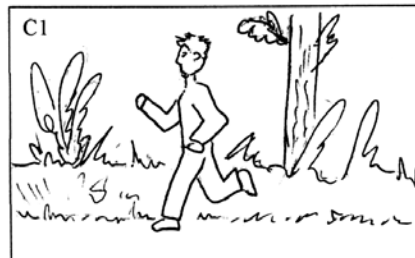
EXT. - CLEARING



A
Low angle - Alex climbs out of hole, running past camera.



B
Reverse of A - Alex runs away from camera.



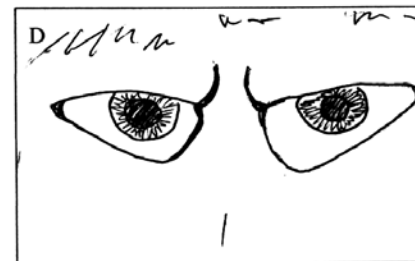
C1
LS - Alex running into woods, whip pan to C2.



C2
LS - Vampire's out of hole, lined up, continue to C3



C3
LS - Nicholas steps across frame to reveal closest vampire. Turns head to face vamp on last step.



D
CU- Nicholas turning head.

Title: The Hunter's Apprentice

SCENE: 15

PAGE: 1

EXT. - CLEARING



E1
MS - Vampire 1 turning head, continue to E2.
NOTE: Overcrank?
Snap to look?



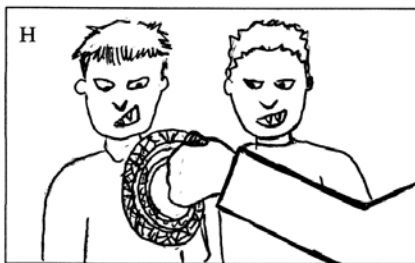
E2
MS - Vampire 1 breaks from the pack.



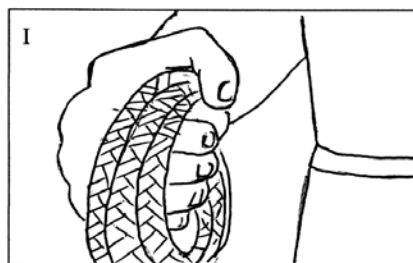
F
Low angle - Vamp 1 bursts into swamp (match Alex's running shot).



G
LS - Remaining vampire's move forward.



H
MS - Hand with whip moves up, Vampire 2 moves out of frame.



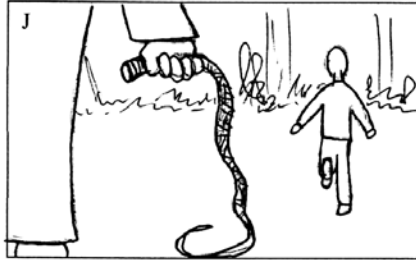
I
CU - Hand drops length of whip.

Title: The Hunter's Apprentice

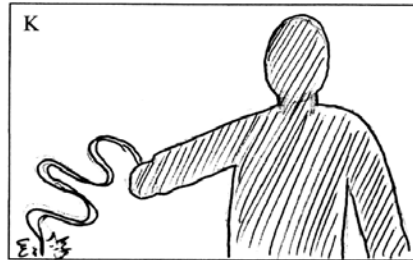
SCENE: 15

PAGE: 2

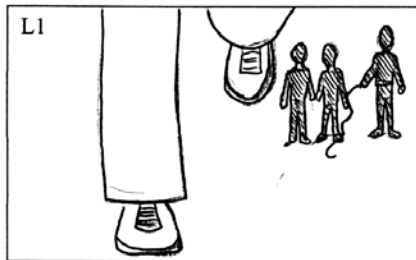
EXT. – CLEARING



MCU – Whip unravels in foreground, Vampire 2 running in background.



LS – Whip cracks, figure in silhouette or shadow.
NOTE: Dust on whip to emphasize crack.



MCU – Vampire 2 feet walks into foreground, soft focus on feet. Whip cracks, continue to L2.



MCU – Vampire 2 drops on whip crack, rack focus to foreground. Vamp 2 calmly rocks.

STEADICAM



LS – Alex sprinting through woods.

EXT. - SWAMP



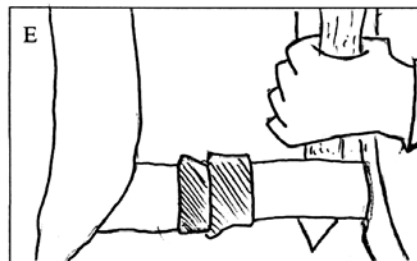
MS – Alex turns head, sees something behind him.



Low angle – Alex stops, throws down weapons.



DOLLY SHOT – Camera tracks as something moves quickly through the underbrush.



MCU – Alex puts stake into his belt.



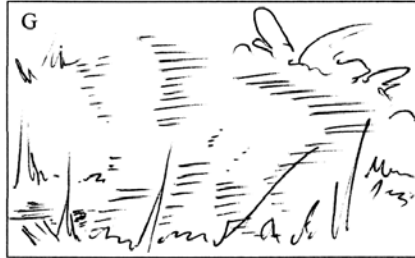
MS – Alex pulls bow off of his shoulder.

Title: The Hunter's Apprentice

SCENE: 16

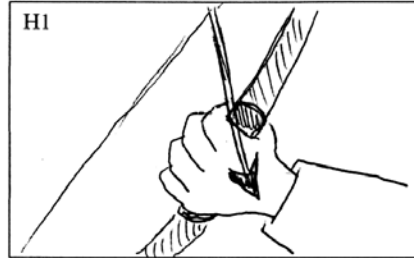
PAGE: 1

STEADICAM

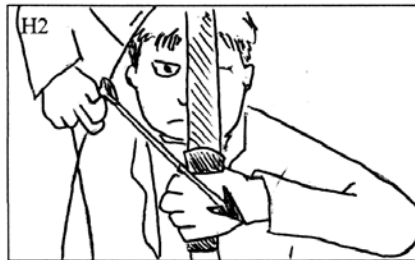


Camera tracks with vampire barreling through the underbrush.

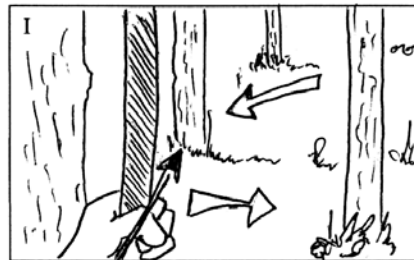
EXT. - SWAMP



MCU – Arrow put into place on bow, raised to H2



MCU- Arrow raising into aiming position



LS – Vampire moving fast through underbrush, changes direction.



STEADICAM – Camera tracks with Alex shifting his aim 180 degrees.



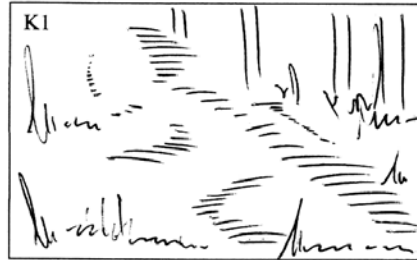
STEADICAM – Camera tracks with Alex shifting his aim 180 degrees.

Title: The Hunter's Apprentice

SCENE: 16

PAGE: 2

STEADICAM



Camera pans left, Vampire outruns camera pan to K2.

EXT. - SWAMP



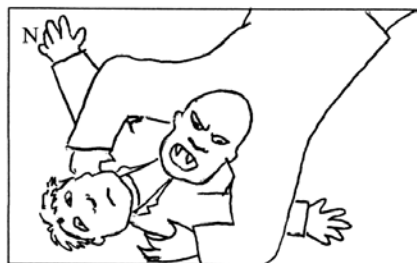
When camera catches up, vampire runs at camera.



MS- Alex releases arrow.



MCU – Arrow shatters on vampire's chest.



MS- Vampire tackles Alex offscreen.



MS – Alex and vampire roll into frame, then vampire tosses Alex towards camera.

Title: The Hunter's Apprentice

SCENE: 16

PAGE: 3

STEADICAM



LS – Vampire jumps to his feet in the distance, continue shot to P2

EXT. - SWAMP



LS- Alex falls into foreground, vampire charges.



MS – Alex's forearm is thrown up as camera moves in.



MS – Vampire presses against Alex's forearm, pan left to R2.



MS – Vampire's claws extended out, digs into Alex's side off frame.



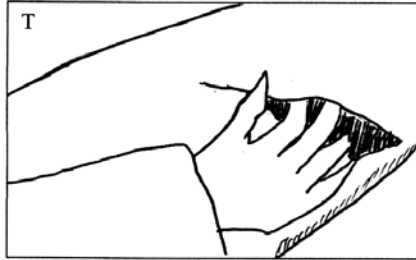
CU – Alex's reaction.

Title: The Hunter's Apprentice

SCENE: 16

PAGE: 4

STEADICAM



CU- Claws digging into side.

EXT. - SWAMP



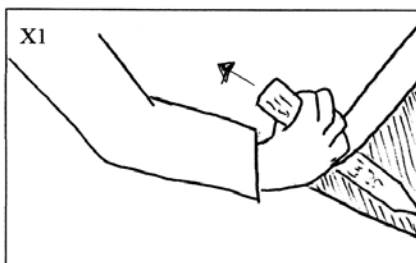
MCU – Vampire



MCU – Hand grabs throat, lifts chin to expose neck.



MCU- Vampire leaning in to bite.



MCU – Alex pulling stake from belt, continue to X2.



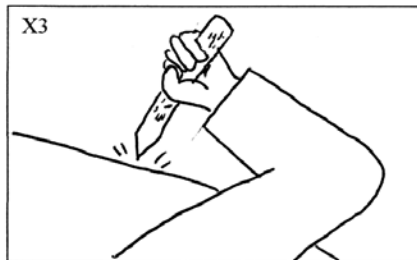
MS – Alex stabbing into vampire's back.

Title: The Hunter's Apprentice

SCENE: 16

PAGE: 5

STEADICAM

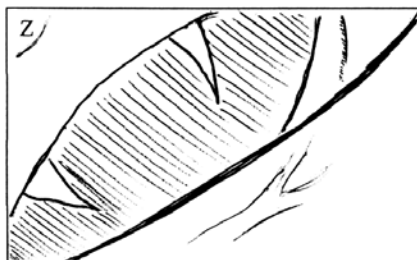


CU – Stake won't penetrate.

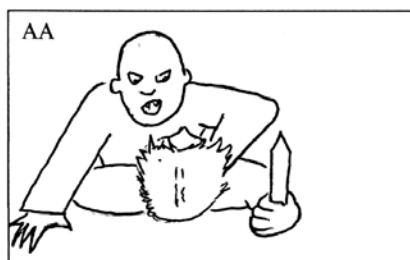
EXT. - SWAMP



CU – Alex's reaction.



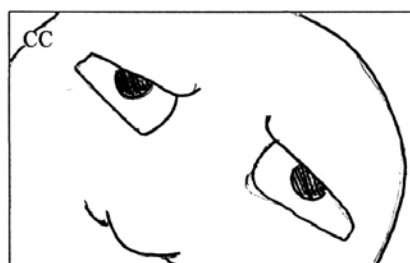
XCU- Vampire's teeth moving into Alex's neck.



MS – Alex's hands slides down stake, MATCHCUT to...



MS – Alex slams stake into vampire's neck.



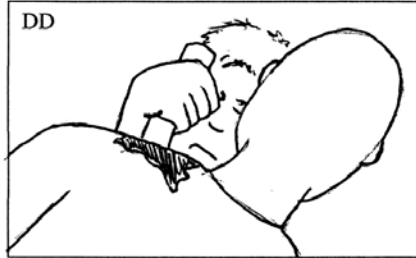
CU- Vampire's reaction.

Title: The Hunter's Apprentice

SCENE: 16

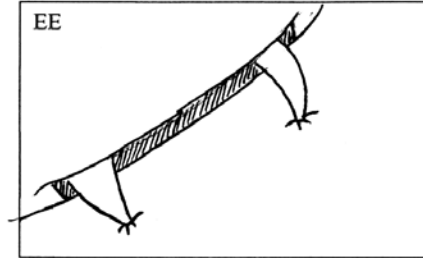
PAGE: 6

STEADICAM



MS – Stake driven into vampire's neck into his chest, blood drips.

EXT. - SWAMP



XCU- Vampire's teeth resting on Alex's neck.

Title: The Hunter's Apprentice

SCENE: 16

PAGE: 7

STEADICAM

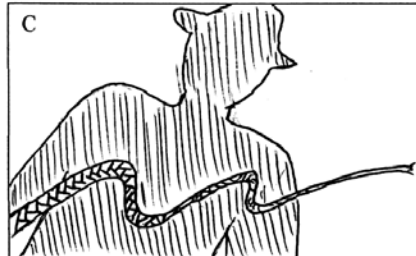


CU- Nicholas' back.

EXT. - CLEARING



XCU - Nicholas' ear twitches.



MS- Low angle of Nicholas' silhouette as he cracks the whip.



Vampire #2 sprints towards the woods.

Title: The Hunter's Apprentice

SCENE: 17

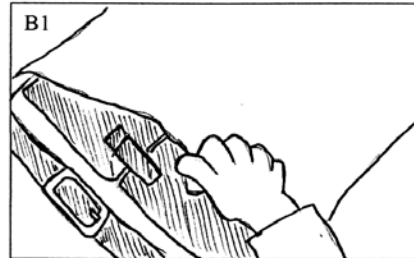
PAGE: 1

STEADICAM

EXT. - SWAMP



MS- Alex pulling up vampire's shirt.



CU- Shirt being pulled up revealing bulletproof vest. Alex knocks on plate with fist. Continue to B2.



CU – Alex reaches over to feel vampire's side. Fingers push into side, no plate.



MCU- Alex's reaction to vest, then cringe of pain. Continue to C2.



MCU- Alex holding bleeding wound on his side, continue to C3.



MCU – Alex's face, Alex runs off screen.

Title: The Hunter's Apprentice

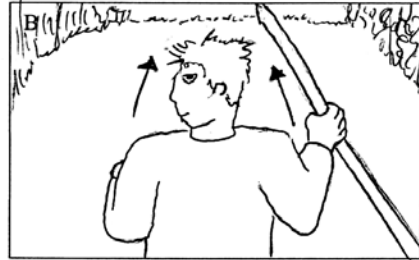
SCENE: 18

PAGE: 1

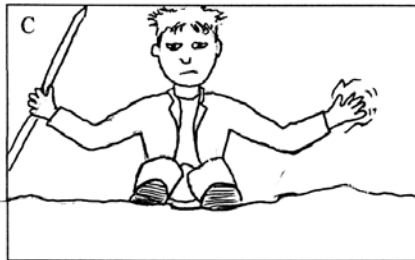
EXT. - WATER'S EDGE



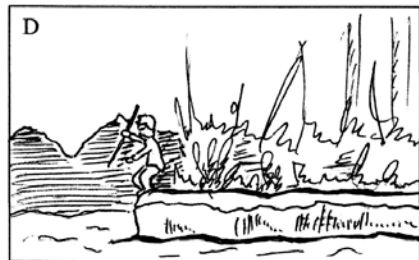
MS - Alex limping with pole stake, hears branch crack, turns head up and back.



POV branch crack - Alex runs, looking up over shoulder - water's edge comes into frame.



Low angle - Alex running, turns head forward and almost falls off of cliff. Waves arms for balance.



LS - Alex teetering at water's edge.

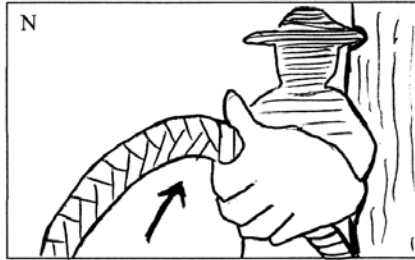


MS - Alex turns away from water, camera tracks in, continue to E2.

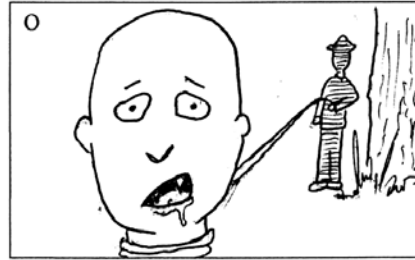


MCU - Alex hears branches above, looking up.

EXT. - SWAMP



MS – Figure yanks whip, whip tightens.



CU- Vampire's head, whip wrapped around his neck. Figure pulls him back.



MS – Vampire flies back into figure's arms, figure stabs stake into vampire.

Title: The Hunter's Apprentice

SCENE: 31

PAGE: 4

EXT. - WATER'S EDGE



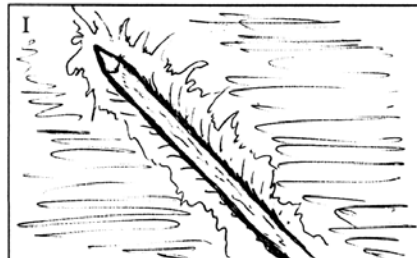
MS - Camera JIB up.



LS - Vampire tackles Alex into the water.



High angle - Alex and vampire's impact into water.



MS - Pole stake splashes onto water.



MS looking from under surface - Vampire chokes Alex, smiles.



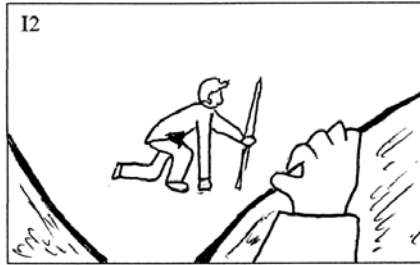
MS - Alex under water.

Title: The Hunter's Apprentice

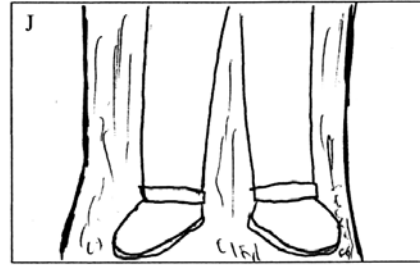
SCENE: 28

PAGE: 2

EXT. - SWAMP



I2
CU – Unseen figure watches Alex from tree.



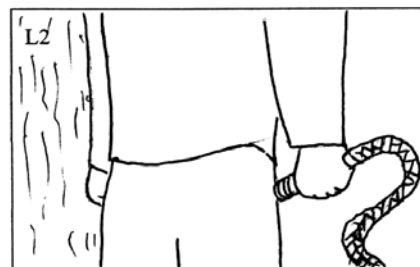
J
MCU – Feet crash in mud from out of tree, then turns left around tree.



K
MCU – Alex looks up.



L1
MS – Back of figure's head watches as vampire lunges for Alex, pan down to L2.



L2
MS –Figure raises whip into frame.



M
Low angle – figure cracks whip.

EXT. - WATER'S EDGE



CU - Vampire's hand squeeze Alex tighter.



CU - Vamp's nails cutting into Alex's neck.



MS - Blood blooms to surface, Alex stops struggling.



MS from water's surface - Alex's hands fall away, Vamp smiles, waits a few seconds, pulls Alex up.



MS - Alex pulled out of water, eyes pop open, raises arms out of water.



Same as O? - Alex holding stakes, thrusts them into vampire's sides.

Title: The Hunter's Apprentice

SCENE: 28

PAGE: 3



CU – Vampire's eyes reacting to being stabbed.

EXT. – WATER'S EDGE

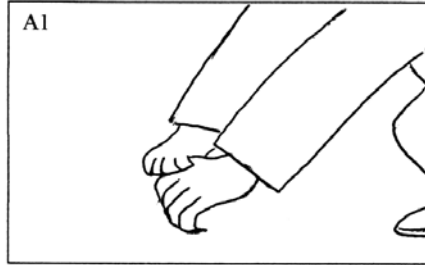


MS behind vamp – Vampire falling back into water revealing S2.

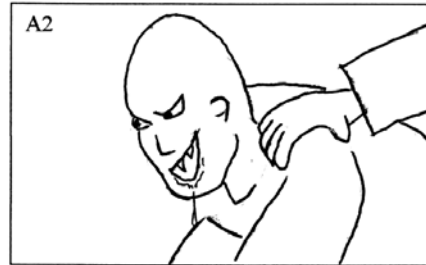


MS – Alex drops vampire into water.

EXT. - CLEARING



MCU – Vampire 4 claws dig into ground, continue to A2

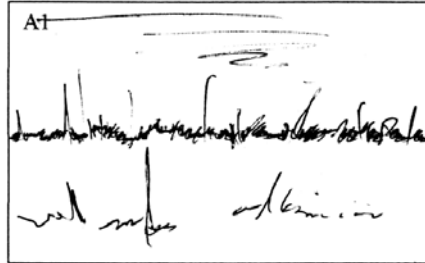


MCU – Vampire 4 drools, Nicholas' hands hold him back, continue to A3.



MCU – Hand releases vampire 4, runs off frame.

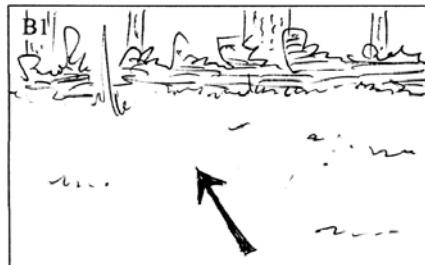
EXT. - SWAMP



A1
Low angle – water's edge, continue to A2.



A2
Alex pulls himself out of the water.



B1
MS – Camera tracks through woods, continue to B2.



B2
MS – Alex holding neck, limps forward.



C
MCU – Tracking shot, then Alex looks ahead.



D
LS – Stake trap in foreground, Alex limps forward in background.

Title: The Hunter's Apprentice

SCENE: 31

PAGE: 1

EXT. - SWAMP



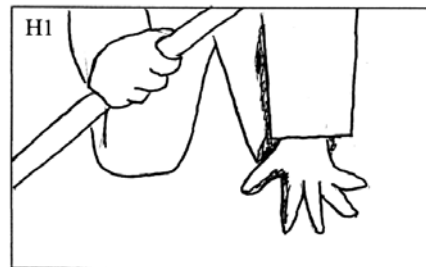
MS – Alex looks left, movement in background, turns around.



MS – Alex holds pole stake, drops to his knees.



LS – Movement in the woods.



MS – Alex, bloody on his knees, camera pans up to H2.



MS – Alex in pain, head dips down.



Camera travels up tree to I2.

Title: The Hunter's Apprentice

SCENE: 31

PAGE: 2

Vita

Ryan H. Martin was born in New Orleans, Louisiana on February 6, 1979. He grew up in St. Charles Parish, Louisiana, where he developed an interest in visual arts, animation, film, and digital technology. In 2002, he received a Bachelor's degree in English from Loyola University, New Orleans.

Mr. Martin's graduate studies have included working on ten student short films, two independent features, and two major motion pictures. In addition, he has served as a Graduate/Teaching Assistant for the Department of Drama and Communications. Mr. Martin hopes to continue learning and practicing the craft of cinematography within the major motion picture industry.