

THE KING OF 7B

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1/2 HOUR PILOT
ABC STUDIOS/
RHODE ISLAND AVENUE PRODUCTIONS

Sept. 16, 2014

On the screen, we read this:

**THE TYPICAL AGORAPHOBIC IS NOT JUST AFRAID TO LEAVE HOME --
BUT A SHY, HUMBLE SOUL WHO AVOIDS CONFLICT. IT TURNS OUT,
HOWEVER, A TINY PERCENTAGE OF THEM DEAL WITH THE SITUATION IN
A DIFFERENT WAY, ENTIRELY.**

FADE IN:

COLD OPEN:

INT. APARTMENT 7B - LIVING ROOM - MORNING

Pulling into his monogrammed dressing gown, PRENTISS PORTER heads to the front door with a refined, upright -- let's say *regal* -- bearing. (Among the last words that come to mind are "shy" and "humble".)

The windows of his handsome one-bedroom look onto E. 79th St. A collection of Medieval weapons (crossbows, maces, swords and shields) is arrayed on a wall. A Spanish suit of armor, circa DON QUIXOTE, stands vigil by the couch. At the door, Prentiss unbolts no fewer than four locks.

OUT IN THE HALLWAY

The N.Y. Times lies on a FedEx box. Prentiss leans out to grab them. But his body language makes it clear crossing the threshold is OUT of the question.

1.) The newspaper slides off the box. He tries to retrieve it without stepping foot in the hall. No matter how precariously he TILTS or far he REACHES, he can't quite get it.

2.) On a stork leg, he makes an elaborate, upward, swooping motion, snags the paper, then loses it; it lands even *farther* away. In JUMP CUTS he tries to: HOOK it with his foot (prone, supine, on his side); SPEAR it with a sword; SNAG it by swinging a mace.

As he stares covetously at the newspaper, we push in on him, then see this:

1.) He steps out, grabs the Times, sees the door blowing shut behind him behind him. He hurls himself at it -- too late!

2.) Panicked, he rattles the knob, buzzes 7A, fumbles for his phone (crushed in the collision), rushes the door, is bounced to the floor. The ELEVATOR dings.

3.) Stylized THUGS out of "A Clockwork Orange" swarm out (codpieces, etc.) with slobbering PIT BULLS. As they strip Prentiss of his watch, ring, phone and slippers, it's hard to say who is louder: the Thugs (who shout); the dogs (who bark) or Prentiss (who shrieks).

4.) BACK TO REALITY (and sudden silence): Still on the "safe" side of the threshold, Prentiss decides against it, shuts the door. We hear the locks CLICK, SLIDE and THONK.

TITLE SEQUENCE (WITH MUSIC):

Some TIGHT/WIDE shots convey Prentiss' "lifestyle".

1.) TIGHT: he walks jauntily on 5th Ave. WIDE: he's on the elliptical, the scenery is virtual.

2.) TIGHT: in a WORKROOM full of antiques he wields an ancient sword for an off-camera colleague; WIDE: he's on Skype with a blow-up of the MUSEUM INTERIOR behind him.

3.) TIGHT: he dines at a restaurant (linens, candles, a gorgeously "plated" meal). WIDE: he's in 7B, pots and pans in the BG.

Having established the *modus operandi* of a natty, worldly, talented, tech-rich (total) shut-in, we read **THE KING OF 7B**

ACT I

INT. APARTMENT 7B - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Prentiss' housekeeper, JUANA DE LA CRUZ (mid-40's) enters (with the newspaper). Before she can even speak:

PRENTISS
(agitated)
Eugene is late.

Prentiss is at the window, punching a number on his phone, well dressed (especially for somebody who never leaves home). A pair of binoculars hangs from his neck. Juana knows to use the Purell dispenser by the front door *immediately*.

PRENTISS (CONT'D)
He's never late, he's forcing me to imagine the worst! Did you see anything untoward down there? A cab engulfed in flames? A collapsed scaffolding?

A native Puerto Rican (with an accent) Juana is a stoic, widowed, mother of six -- hard to get a rise out of.

JUANA
Maybe he just overslept.

PRENTISS
Impossible! He's supposed to bring me a chainmail gauntlet from the Schleswig Dynasty in time for an
(MORE)

PRENTISS (CONT'D)
 A.M. conference call. What
 assistant of mine has ever been
 late? What about a sinkhole?

JUANA
 A what?

PRENTISS
 Sinkhole! Where the very *Earth* op-
 ens up and swallows everything in
 its path.

JUANA
 (hanging up her coat)
 I probably would have mentioned it.

Prentiss rings off the phone (no answer).

PRENTISS
 He's a farmboy, a *naif*, anything
 could've happened.

Prentiss picks up the BINOCULARS and peruses the street like
 James Stewart in "Rear Window".

PRENTISS (CONT'D)
 Where are you, Eugene?

THROUGH THE BINOCULARS

A typical Upper Eastside block with a BANK, a STARBUCKS, a
 GYM, APARTMENT BUILDINGS of many eras, etc. Prentiss racks
 onto an OLD WOMAN in a motorized wheelchair exiting the
 building across the street.

PRENTISS (CONT'D)
 Old Lady Dick Cheney's taking her
 "drive" a little later than usual.

It's true, the woman looks *exactly* like Dick Cheney in a
 housedress with a perm. Prentiss focuses on 24 HOUR FITNESS
 where a pumped-up Gym Rat is tying his DOG to the bike rack
 with a thin, wimpy rope.

PRENTISS (CONT'D)
 Conan the Barbarian, on the other
 hand, is early.
 (calling to "Conan")
 That's right, tie "White Fang" up
 with a thread, that should stop him
 from killing.

JUANA
 Exactly.

(In truth, Juana doesn't really listen to his diatribes at the window anymore.) A key turns in the FRONT DOOR.

PRENTISS

At last! My gauntlet!

But, no, it's CHARLOTTE PORTER ARMSTRONG. Formerly a stylish deb, Charlotte is now a PETA zealot who eschews beauty products, wears only "natural fabrics" and looks like a human Koren cartoon: frizzy hair, gunnysack dress, vegan shoes and a hemp handbag with the PETA logo woven into it.

PRENTISS (CONT'D)

You know how I feel about people who drop by unannounced!

As Charlotte rubs her hands with Purell:

CHARLOTTE

(fondly)

Your sister is not "people," Prentiss. I knew you'd want to see what came by messenger, ASAP. . . Uncle DeWitt's last will and testament!

We see a ripple of excitement run through Prentiss, but he manages to fake his usual insouciance.

PRENTISS

Is that so.

As Charlotte heads for the couch with her giant handbag:

PRENTISS (CONT'D)

I always was his "special favorite" you know. How he loved the Metropolitan Museum of Art -- especially Arms and Armor. Dear, sweet, proud man.

He sits across the coffee table from her on a Biedermeyer chair (one of a pair).

PRENTISS (CONT'D)

Not that I need the money, but how I'd love to splurge on that *rack* from the Spanish Inquisition in the Christie's catalogue.

CHARLOTTE

You must admit I visited him a LOT more than you did the last 10 years (since you never visited at all).

PRENTISS

And *bored him to death* with your stories about PETA. Apparently literally!

Charlotte begins emptying the contents of her enormous bag, setting it out on the coffee table. She shows him:

CHARLOTTE

Those muffins you love so much from the Village. Raisins from Balducci's?

PRENTISS

Yes, yes -- the *will!*

CHARLOTTE

Those special pens from Forest Hills (three subway stops but I know you can't live without them).

PRENTISS

You really shouldn't have.
(but then)
What about the ink?

She flourishes the ink. Digging deeper: a (leaky) bag of birdseed, a PETA water bottle, a PETA tea mug, three copies of PREVENTION, a bag of green tea, some junk mail, a flashlight, some herbal moisturizer. . .The more she clutters Prentiss' (previously *immaculate*) table the more agitated he gets, flaring his nostrils. She removes a legal envelope.

PRENTISS (CONT'D)

There it is!

CHARLOTTE

These're my divorce papers.

PRENTISS

Surely you're officially divorced from Bramley by now?

CHARLOTTE

For three years. I just enjoy reminding myself it's official.

PRENTISS

Do you still carry around the divorce papers from Brian, too?

CHARLOTTE

I'm not some sort of hoarder! Here we go!

As she tears open an envelope, Prentiss adjusts his cuffs and sits up a little taller. Charlotte clears her throat:

CHARLOTTE (CONT'D)

"I, DeWitt Montgomery Porter, being of sound mind and body, do hereby bequeath the proceeds from the sale of my co-op on East 61st Street --
 (Prentiss is getting more and more excited)
 plus the balance of my account at New Amsterdam Savings and Loan to -- "

PRENTISS

Yes?!

CHARLOTTE

. . . "People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals."

A dreadful silence. Prentiss stares at Charlotte. His eyes briefly dart up at a crossbow on the wall, then back to her.

CHARLOTTE (CONT'D)

Gee. I didn't even think he was *listening* to me all those years.

PRENTISS

Who even *wanted* his blood money, really (the monster)? I suppose this helps assuage his guilt over a lifetime spent ravishing forests.

CHARLOTTE

(confused)

Wasn't he a "gentleman publisher"?

PRENTISS

The point is, I'm over it. C'est la guerre. Onward and upward.

CHARLOTTE

You're not angry? You don't -- blame me?

PRENTISS

I said I'm over it. Thanks for the muffins.

Prentiss casually crosses one leg over the other with his usual suavity -- and UPENDS an end-table crowded with *tchotchkes* (tremendous clatter). [NB: When Prentiss gets

nervous, his elegant self-control sometimes gives way to a terrible clumsiness.]

Charlotte kneels and starts retrieving fallen items, which she mixes up with all her crap on the coffee table.

PRENTISS (CONT'D)

Leave it! Haven't you made *enough* of a mess for one day?!?

CHARLOTTE

You *do* blame me.

The door BUZZES.

PRENTISS

Thank God! My gauntlet!

Prentiss almost runs into -- barely manages to circumnavigate -- his suit of armor. Reclaiming his composure (and regal posture) Prentiss goes to the door, whips it open.

PRENTISS (CONT'D)

Finally!
(but then)
Oh.

It's DARSH MEHTA, 28, the (East) Indian owner of the bodega downstairs. He holds a box with groceries and sundries.

Charlotte, relieved for a change of subject, is full of cheer (and seems to have a rapport with Darsh).

CHARLOTTE

You're here bright and early this morning, Darsh.

Darsh has an accent and a soulful, almost philosophical air.

DARSH

It's very quiet in the bodega. Why wouldn't it be, now that people buy even their *chewing gum* online? Not everyone is as loyal as your brother.

Prentiss takes the box from Darsh.

PRENTISS

The *moment* Amazon Fresh gets drones it's over for you. Stand by while I see what part of the order you've managed to mangle *this* time.

CHARLOTTE

He's not really cross with you,
Darsh. It's me.

Darsh, too, knows to use the Purell first thing.

PRENTISS

You didn't see Eugene down there in
the bodega, did you? Comatose? Or
maimed?

DARSH

No one is down there, no one at
all. And the few who do come in
never look up *once* from their text-
ing.

As Darsh mimes this, Charlotte *tsk-tsk*s sympathetically.

DARSH (CONT'D)

Is your daughter still visiting?
From college?

CHARLOTTE

Penelope could only stay four days
(for some reason). Two of which she
was with her father. Who of *course*
made a point of taking her to Peter
Luger's Steak House both nights.

Now *Darsh* *tsk-tsk*s sympathetically. In the grocery box,
Prentiss comes upon a shampoo bottle.

PRENTISS

I didn't ask for this. Charlotte
always brings me my shamp --

Charlotte GASPS. Hands to her face (as in Edvard Munch's
"The Scream") she backs away.

CHARLOTTE

That is SO full of chemicals I
could go into toxic shock just
being in the same *room*!

PRENTISS

Really, Charlotte -- how can anyone
be so irrational?

Carrying the shampoo to the kitchen, he "fearlessly" pours it
down the drain with a self-aggrandizing flourish.

PRENTISS (CONT'D)

There, you see? All gone.

Darsh looks from Prentiss to Charlotte then back again.

DARSH

Did the *parents* have issues also?

PRENTISS

("gallantly")

Now see here, Darsh, my sister may be a tad eccentric but she hardly has "issues".

JUANA

(at the window)

Looks like somebody new moving in across the street.

Prentiss moves to the window, picks up the binoculars.

PRENTISS

Another ragingly vulgar Wolf of Wall Street-type, no doubt.

IN THE STREET

A MOVING VAN has double-parked in front of the building across from Prentiss'. Two MOVERS are carrying a beautiful Biedermeyer couch down the ramp.

PRENTISS (CONT'D)

It pains me to admit I'm having couch envy.

The Movers set it next to a Barcelona chair with a painting resting against it and a small sculpture sitting on it.

PRENTISS (CONT'D)

(grudgingly)

The art isn't bad either.

A Mover is carrying a box that tips over. A collection of LP's spills onto the sidewalk.

PRENTISS (CONT'D)

Vinyl! And a superb music collection somewhat resembling my own!

The BUZZER. Rushing to get it, Prentiss get tangled in a pair of spindly chairs and takes a header -- *almost* crashing into the armor before getting his footing.

He opens the door to. . .a complete stranger (GRETA MILGRIM). An attractive young woman (mid-20's), she has an easy, direct, charm. She carries a courier bag with the Metropolitan Museum logo and wears a photo ID on a lanyard.

GRETA
Mr. Porter?

PRENTISS
Who are *you*?

GRETA
Greta Milgrim.

She holds out her hand for shaking; Prentiss nods at the Purrell dispenser. She looks over, and gets his meaning right away. As she disinfects her hands:

GRETA (CONT'D)
They sent me over from the Met to deliver your gauntlet and pick up whatever you need to send back.

PRENTISS
Where's Eugene?

GRETA
I guess he's off the payroll?

PRENTISS
Nonsense, I didn't fire him.

JUANA
You did. At *least* 100 times.

PRENTISS
I've fired you *1,000* times, you're still here, aren't you?

Greta is unlocking the courier bag.

GRETA
I think they said he quit.

PRENTISS
What?! That's not possible! He was on the curator track, he had a brilliant future, what could *possibly* possess him to quit?

Awkward silence -- Juana, Charlotte and Darsh avoid eye contact. Meantime, Greta carefully removes a chainmail gauntlet from the bag.

PRENTISS (CONT'D)
How do I even know you're who you say you are?

GRETA

I'm wearing a photo ID from the Met
and I'm holding a gauntlet?

PRENTISS

What do you know about Arms and
Armor, anyway?

GRETA

Not a thing! I'm just an intern get-
ting some museum credits -- I'm
actually studying graphic design at
the New School. Great apartment, by
the way. So, if you just want to
give me the stuff going back to --

There's a loud JANGLE from the desktop computer.

PRENTISS

Perfect. My Skype call from Dr.
Lindstrom at the Stockholm Museum.
Thanks, Eugene.

Prentiss takes a seat at the desk. Throughout the Skype call,
we are with Greta, observing: Prentiss on his call (with the
blow-up of a Museum workroom behind him); boxes from FedEx,
UPS and Amazon; the Purell dispenser; the several locks on
the door. She's putting it all together.

PRENTISS (CONT'D)

Herr Direktor, hur står det till?

DR. LINDSTROM

(Swedish accent)

We are so pleased you were avail-
able to determine the provenance of
our gauntlet, Mr. Porter.

PRENTISS

*Tack så mycket. Herr Doctor? I'd
love a little more time with the
gauntlet, call me a perfectionist?*

DR. LINDSTROM

Exactly why we sent it to you!

They say their good-byes and Prentiss rings off. Greta is
charmingly -- indeed disarmingly -- plain-spoken.

GRETA

I get it. You're just like my
Uncle Leo! *Agoraphobic.*

The air is sucked from the room. Charlotte gasps. Juana has clapped her hand over her mouth. Prentiss is outraged.

PRENTISS

What?!

GRETA

Afraid to leave home 'cause you might have a debilitating panic attack and/or humiliate yourself publicly?

PRENTISS

I *know* what it means!

CHARLOTTE

(to Greta, breathlessly)
I can't believe you just threw down the gauntlet like that!

DARSH

(confused)
She's *holding* the gauntlet.

PRENTISS

Shut up!

BLACK OUT/END OF ACT I

ACT II

INT. 7 B - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Exactly where we left off.

GRETA

I didn't mean to upset anybody.
Uncle Leo's doing great since he went into therapy -- he just went on a cruise!

Turning his full attention to Greta (to nip this in the bud before its spreads), Prentiss adopts a reasonable, almost paternal manner. He comes to the *height* of his eloquence -- utterly convincing.

PRENTISS

With all respect to Uncle Leo, I have nothing in common with the
(MORE)

PRENTISS (CONT'D)

man. Do I stay inside more often than not? To be sure. By *choice*. Think how much more work I get done here than amid the gossip, the intrigue, the randomly shifting alliances of the workplace (where, on average, they say, 21 minutes of work is done a day). Not to mention how much more time- and cost-efficient it is to *shop* online.

(Darsh sighs, despairingly.)

PRENTISS (CONT'D)

In this age of Facebook, Facetime, Amazon, texting, FedEx, Faxes, streaming video, eBooks, Twitter -- why would anyone face the routine degradation of the modern world if he didn't *have* to? The endless lines? The packed airplanes? The gridlocked traffic? SARS and headlice and derelict public toilets?

(a "modest" shrug)

It seems I'm good enough at my job to get away with it. But believe me, Greta. If someone were to give me even *one good reason* to go out, I'd do it in a heartbeat.

JUANA

Here's the new neighbor.

Prentiss rushes to the window, snatches the binoculars from Juana, AND LIGHTNING STRIKES. He staggers. He whispers, reverentially "Oh. My."

THROUGH THE BINOCULARS

We see HER. Chatting with the Movers, gamely pitching in by grabbing a large-but-tasteful floor lamp. She has a charming smile. An athletic gait. An air of taste and intelligence.

When she disappears into the building, Prentiss drops the binoculars onto their strap and turns back into the room. He is dreamy-eyed and pale. Charlotte is freaked out.

CHARLOTTE

You're in shock! It's that *shampoo!*

Prentiss doesn't even hear her. His tone is both resolute and strangely calm.

PRENTISS

I've just seen the woman I must meet. And *marry*. From this moment on, that is my purpose in life.

GRETA

(utterly confused)

. . .Shampoo?

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. EAST 79TH STREET - THROUGH BINOCULARS - LATE AFTERNOON

IN THE BINOCULARS we see time has passed; they are closing up the MOVING VAN. As the beloved New Neighbor finishes signing the manifest on a clipboard, Greta approaches, introduces herself, and hands her a handwritten note. We hear:

PRENTISS (O.S.)

Hurry up! She's reading my invitation now!

INT. 7 B - LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

As Prentiss -- now wearing even *nicer* clothes -- turns back into the room, Juana polishes the good stemware, Charlotte loads all her stuff back into her enormous hemp bag and Darsh is unloading another box from the bodega.

CHARLOTTE

You know, she just moved in. I don't want you to be disappointed if she doesn't rush right over.

PRENTISS

Obviously you haven't read it.

Looking over at Darsh, Prentiss knits his brow.

PRENTISS (CONT'D)

What're you -- ??? I asked you to bring up some *delicacies*!

DARSH

(*exactly!*)

Potato chips, pretzels, Funyuns, wine-coolers --

PRENTISS

No, no, *no!*

He starts plucking the snacks off the counter one by one and stuffing them back into the bag -- jamming them really.

PRENTISS (CONT'D)

Run down to Gufstafson's Gourmet and buy a Camembert, a Neufchatel, a baguette, a bottle of good pro-seco and a box of chocolate truffles. Have them put it on my tab.

DARSH

(jealous, hurt)

So, you have a tab with them, too?

Standing, Charlotte dusts her hands, all packed up.

PRENTISS

Charlotte, dear, I'm going to have to ask you to leave, now.

CHARLOTTE

What?

PRENTISS

I'm sure you don't want to be dressed like *that* the first time you meet your sister-in-law.

CHARLOTTE

This is how I *always* dress!!

As he begins guiding her to the front door, she protests.

CHARLOTTE (CONT'D)

Cruelty-free is beautiful!
(he's still guiding her)
What makes you so sure she's coming? She just moved in this second!

PRENTISS

Chop-chop! As Sun Tzu tells us, 'Opportunities multiply when they are seized.'

The buzzer rings. He freezes. He whispers fiercely.

PRENTISS (CONT'D)

Don't embarrass me!

Prentiss smooths his hair. Takes a deep breath. Opens the door. It's Greta. Alone.

PRENTISS (CONT'D)

What time is she coming? Use the Purell.

GRETA

(using the Purell)
She's not coming.

PRENTISS

What? Why?

CHARLOTTE

(under her breath)
Told you.

GRETA

Her name's Veronica. You're right. She's totally cool. And beautiful! So many neighbors've asked her to come by for a drink she decided to have a little wine and cheese thing at her place at 6:00.

PRENTISS

NOOO! Did you get her email? Her cell number? Her Twitter tag?

GRETA

She's kind of old-school. No cell. No email. Hates the Internet.

PRENTISS

My God, she's beyond fascinating.

Prentiss is pacing, so much to take in!

GRETA

She teaches History at Columbia. Her specialty is Medieval Europe.

By this point, Prentiss is beside himself.

PRENTISS

Wait. Not -- not Veronica Shultz Carlyle who wrote Juliet's Balcony? That book is a touchstone for me!

GRETA

That's her.

PRENTISS

(beside himself)
What are the chances?!

GRETA

Amazing, right? Good luck! So, now, then, if you just want give me the stuff that's going back to the --

PRENTISS

Anything else she said I should know, anything at all?

Greta hesitates.

PRENTISS (CONT'D)

Out with it!

GRETA

I asked her why she didn't like the Internet and she said, "It's turned us into a race of shut-ins."

Prentiss stops pacing, looks like he's been hit in the gut.

PRENTISS

So, she doesn't like --
(he won't say it)
-- that type?

Prentiss looks tortured. He grabs the binoculars.

THROUGH THE BINOCULARS/WINDOW

More torture. A handsome Stockbroker type introduces himself.

PRENTISS (CONT'D)

Back off, you son-of-a-bitch!

GRETA

It's obviously none of my business, I'm practically out the door. But what Uncle Leo did? The "technique?" You don't think about your destination, just a step or two in front of you. You know, *Baby Steps*.

JUANA

Baby steps. Yes. *Pasos de bebé*. It works! When my third son Raffy was *teeny-tiny* and afraid of the subway noise, like a mini mouse --

PRENTISS

Enough with *pasos de bebé*! I'm the world's foremost authority on Medieval Weaponry. I've committed Sun Tzu's "Art of War" to memory, not
(MORE)

PRENTISS (CONT'D)
to mention the complete battle
plans of Napoleon, Hannibal and
Ghengis Khan. Baby steps, indeed!

Pulling the binoculars from his neck, he sets them down on the sill and imperiously marches to the front door (taking bold, non-baby strides). Everybody watches, wow! Fearlessly, he whips the door open. . .And freezes.

After a long moment it seems clear he's riveted to the spot.

CHARLOTTE
Good start, Prentiss, bravo.
(bustling to the kitchen)
Let me brew you some green tea.

Charlotte starts the tea. Prentiss is still staring into the hallway, frozen -- perhaps too humiliated to turn back.

GRETA
You know what? This is a nice,
safe block. Maybe --

CHARLOTTE
Penelope, Prentiss has had a very
trying day -- he hates surprises.

GRETA
"Penelope?"

CHARLOTTE
Oops! That's my daughter. All the
way out at UCLA (even though she
was admitted to NYU). Sometimes she
has trouble understanding me too.

GRETA
Riiight. Well, all I was gonna say
to your brother was --
(turning to Prentiss)
Why not take a quick inventory of
what's going on down there in real
time? Then there won't be any sur-
prises, see what I mean?

She picks up the binoculars aims them through the window.

GRETA (CONT'D)
First, you'll go past that nice
little Italian cafe where some
sweet "ladies who lunch" are just
sitting down at an outside table.
One of 'em has a cute poodle.

As Greta narrates his journey, emphasizing how safe every stop is, we PUSH IN on Prentiss and see what *he's* seeing. [This is something we will often do, for Prentiss has the Don Quixote-like tendency to turn windmills into dragons.]

A CONTINUOUS POV SHOT takes him out the door onto the street -- a kind of APOCALYPTIC, MICHAEL-BAY CGI SHOT that moves through a FROZEN TABLEAU of HORROR *completely* counter to Greta's Pollyanna-ish narration:

1.) At the "lovely Italian cafe," MOB HIT MEN (in suspended animation) blast away in an Umberto's Clam House-style massacre. Plus, the poodle has gotten free and is leaping at our scrotum, teeth bared.

GRETA (V.O.)

Then, you'll pass KID CITY -- those little moppets with sippy cups and cuddle "friends" --

2.) The PRESCHOOLERS who burst from the INDOOR PLAYGROUND also in suspended animation (everybody is) have gone full "LORD OF THE FLIES" -- shirtless, in ragged cut-offs, carrying hand-made spears and torches, their faces and bodies daubed in mud. . .and blood.

GRETA (V.O.)

If you were to have a problem on the street (which you won't) I'm looking at a kindly doorman helping a lady with her groceries.

3.) A mustached DOORMAN wields a BUTCHER'S KNIFE at our neck. In his wake, a WOMAN lies among bloody Gristede's bags.

4.) SIRENS, SCREAMS, HELICOPTERS and GUNSHOTS begin to drown out Greta's voice so that key phrases just poke through, like "neighborhood-friendly bank branch," "cozy Starbucks", etc:

5.) Outside the BANK, ROBBERS IN SKI MASKS burst out through the plate glass, guns blazing, while a SWAT TEAM in scary RIOT GEAR fires back from the street, *their* guns blazing.

6.) A CAB DRIVER out of "Mad Max" mows down pedestrians.

7.) An explosion has rocked Starbucks: patrons clutching *grande mochas* fly through the air chased by FIREBALLS.

8.) We hear an UNGODLY ROAR as a GIANT SINK HOLE opens up at our feet and sucks us into oblivion. Then Greta's cheerful, encouraging voice filters back in:

GRETA (V.O.)

And then you're there!

BACK TO SCENE - 7B

We are on Prentiss face, frozen in terror.

CHARLOTTE

Now you are in shock. I should run down to Ling Chow and get some of that Dim Sum you find so soothing.

PRENTISS

(snaps out of it)

Nobody's in shock, I was *thinking!*

Striding to his computer, he reverts to his default setting -- assured, commanding, *kingly*. He types as he speaks:

PRENTISS (CONT'D)

I need all of you to take a role in Operation Reverse Trojan Horse.

GRETA

Does "all of you" mean --

PRENTISS

Yes!

She shrugs, okay. (Frankly, she seems a little curious about what's next).

PRENTISS (CONT'D)

Is there an element of risk in the Reverse Trojan Horse? To be sure.

He flips the big screen around to show the others a Google Satellite shot of the block.

PRENTISS (CONT'D)

But as Gen. Patton said, "A good plan violently executed *now* is better than a perfect plan executed next week." If everyone does his or her part, Veronica will be right here in 7B by nightfall.

BLACK OUT/END OF ACT TWO

ACT III

INT. 7 B - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Pacing, Patton-like, Prentiss is briefing his "troops".

PRENTISS

The Reverse Trojan Horse is seldom attempted. A general must believe his opposing general, being of impeccable character, will actually return the "lost" gift.

DARSH

General?

PRENTISS

Since we know Veronica to be of *exquisite* character, we're over that hurdle.

CHARLOTTE

Do we know that, dear? No offense, you've never met her.

PRENTISS

Had Don Quixote met Dulcinea when he undertook *his* mission?

DARSH

You mean Don who lives in 5A? I think he's Don *Feldman*.

PRENTISS

Here's how the Reverse Trojan Horse will work.

As Prentiss lays out he plan, we see it roll out in quick efficient cuts, "OCEAN'S 11" style.

COMMENCE MONTAGE: INT. 7 B - DAY

Prentiss stuffs banknotes into a wallet.

PRENTISS (V.O.)

I'll put enough cash in the wallet to insure Veronica feels honor bound to return it.

In a desk drawer, Prentiss finds a photo I.D. He admires it briefly before inserting it in the window of the wallet.

PRENTISS (V.O.)

To sweeten the pot, I'll add a simple, candid photo of myself.

We see the picture -- obviously a professional job, beautifully lit, impossibly handsome, like a mini headshot.

EXT. EAST 79TH STREET - DAY

Now Juana is speaking to the (Hispanic) DOORMAN outside Veronica's building. She is wearing earbuds.

PRENTISS (V.O.)

Since Veronica must procure wine and cheese by 1800 hours (less than an hour from now!) Juana will instruct her friend Diego to direct her to Gufstafon's when she asks him to recommend the closest place.

Juana slips Diego a 20.

PRENTISS

Juana will have Diego recommend the 2009 *Cave Beau Soleil* pinot noir, well-priced but and with a fruitiness that pairs well with cheese.

As Juana gives Diego another 20, WHIP PAN to see Veronica approaching, carrying an (empty) canvas shopping bag.

INT. GUFSTAFSON'S GOURMET SHOP - THE COUNTER - DAY

The 50ish CLERK (male, pony tail) puts a bottle of wine into a bag while Charlotte signs a check. (She wears earbuds too.)

PRENTISS (V.O.)

At the same time, Charlotte will pay for a purchase at Gufstafson's with my personal check.

As Charlotte shows the photo in the wallet:

PRENTISS (V.O.)

When asked for I.D. she will mention, in passing, I'm even more handsome than in the photo.

On her way out, Charlotte pauses at the red wine, coyly sticks the wallet between two bottles.

PRENTISS (V.O.)

She will then *plant* the wallet with the *Beau Soleil* pinot, mere moments before Veronica arrives to insure she is the one who discovers it.

Two beats after Charlotte exits frame, we see Veronica enter, find the wallet, flip it open to the ID with its handsome photo (and the address of 7B). [Veronica is always photo-

graphed from a slight distance or obliquely, so that we feel, like Prentiss, she is frustratingly just out of reach.]

INT. DARSH'S BODEGA - DAY

Darsh, also wearing earbuds, rings up a sale for a Customer who never once looks up from her texting (Darsh is annoyed).

PRENTISS (V.O.)

Darsh will remain in the bodega on the off-chance Veronica fails to find the wallet but needs to buy soda, paper towels, or the like.

INT. 7 B - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Greta sits at the computer, wearing a headset, looking deadly serious as she studies the screen, types, clicks.

PRENTISS (V.O.)

Greta will man the communications matrix here at Central Command.

Now, RACK ONTO Prentiss, at the window, also wearing a headset and peering through his binoculars.

PRENTISS

I will be in constant contact with all of you to insure everything goes according to plan.

EXT. GUFSTAFSON'S GOURMET SHOP - DAY

The door flies open and Veronica bursts out, staring at Prentiss's photo in the wallet, looking utterly smitten.

PRENTISS (V.O.)

Our "boots on the ground" will report Veronica's progress --

Beaming, Veronica races across the street. WHIP PAN to find Charlotte reporting on her phone. Then quick cuts to Juana, on the street and Darsh, peering out the window, as Veronica passes, also reporting on their phones.

INT. APARTMENT 7B - LIVING ROOM

PRENTIS (V.O.)
 -- giving Greta and me time to shut
 down the communications matrix, and
 for Greta to vacate the premises.

Greta turns off the computer, grabs the boxes she is supposed to return to the museum, runs out. Prentiss smooths his hair, assumes his regal bearing, and walks, coolly, to the door. The the buzzer sounds.

BACK TO SCENE - INT. APARTMENT 7B - DAY

Back in present time, Prentiss stuffs the cash in the wallet.

PRENTISS
 We don't have much time. Questions?

CHARLOTTE
 Is that an *alligator* wallet?

PRENTISS
 Your beloved Uncle DeWitt gave it
 to me *years* ago (before he valued
 animals over his own flesh and
 blood). Any *other* questions?

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. EAST 79TH STREET/LIVING ROOM 7 B - LATE AFTERNOON

THROUGH BINOCULARS we see Veronica come out of the building carrying a canvas shopping bag, just like in the montage! She looks for, and spots, Diego, just now pocketing \$40.

PRENTISS
 Right on schedule. Patch in
 Charlotte?

Greta hits the keys and Prentiss hears CHARLOTTE'S VOICE

CHARLOTTE'S VOICE
 Oh that's a flattering invitation
 but I always bring my brother sushi
 on Friday night.

Prentiss narrows his eyes.

CLERK'S VOICE
 How's about Saturday night?

Eager to keep the plan in play (and possibly to keep a suitor from stealing his devoted sibling) Prentiss breaks in:

PRENTISS
 (into the mic, urgently)
 Charlotte, have you planted the
 wallet with the wine yet, over?

INT. GUFSTAFSON'S GOURMENT SHOP - CONTINUOUS

Charlotte is relieved to have an excuse to get away from the pony-tailed Clerk. She raises her finger to her earbuds to indicate she has a call as she backs out of the store:

CHARLOTTE
 (into the earbuds)
 Done and done!

INT. 7 B - LIVING ROOM

Prentiss at the window.

PRENTISS
 (headset)
 You say "affirmative, over" to
 avoid confusion.
 (to Greta)
 Now I need Juana.

EXT. EAST 79TH STREET - CONTINUOUS

Walking away from Diego the doorman, Juana hears Prentiss.

PRENTISS (V.O.)
 Diego is on-board? Over.

JUANA
 For \$40? You bet he is.

PRENTISS (V.O.)
 "Affirmative, over." Does *no one*
 here know basic radio protocol?

Veronica approaches Diego -- just like in the montage. However, that handsome Stockbroker steps up to her, again.

INT. LIVING ROOM/E. 79TH STREET - CONTINUOUS

PRENTISS

It's that odious hedge-fund guy,
again.

Now the Old Woman Known as Dick Cheney arrive in a cab and Diego rushes over to help.

PRENTISS (CONT'D)

Dammit, Diego's helping Old Lady
Dick Cheney out of her cab.

GRETA

. . .Who?

The mustached DOORMAN we saw in Prentiss' fantasy (wielding a knife) exits the building, pulling on his cap, just coming on duty. Veronica spots him, heads that way.

PRENTISS

No! She's going to ask Mustache Hannibal Lecter where to go instead!

GRETA

Mustache -- ??

PRENTISS

I've had my eyes on him for *weeks* --
I'm positive I saw him on that cable
show, "Murderers in Our Midst"!

Hannibal points to the bodega across 79th. Prentiss winces.

EXT. EAST 79TH STREET

Charlotte has left Gustafson's and is crossing the street.

PRENTISS (V.O.)

She's going to Darsh's instead.
Retrieve the wallet. Repeat:
retrieve the wallet! Over?

Sure enough, Charlotte can see Veronica looking for a break in the (two-way) traffic so she can cross the street.

CHARLOTTE

Yes, I mean "over" (or something).

Rushing back to Gustafson's, she shakes her head, mutters:

CHARLOTTE (CONT'D)
 This guy's gonna think I've
 reconsidered.

INT. THE BODEGA/7 B - CONTINUOUS

We CUT BETWEEN Darsh in his shop and Prentiss pacing.

PRENTISS (V.O.)
 Veronica is headed your way! Keep
 her there until Charlotte can bring
 the wallet. Over!

DARSH
 Over what?

INT. GUFSTAFSON'S GOURMET SHOP

Frantic, Charlotte looks everywhere for the wallet, between
 the bottles, on the floor, etc. It's gone!! She rushes to
 the counter. The Clerk smiles.

CLERK
 Lovely lady, glad you came back!

CHARLOTTE
 Sorry, not what you think. Did you
 find a wallet? Near the pinot?

CLERK
 The pinot noir? Or pinot grigio?

CHARLOTTE
 Does that mean you found one?

CLERK
 Not really.

CHARLOTTE
 Was anybody here since me?

CLERK
 Mm -- just those nuns who come in
 whenever they run out of the com-
 munion wine over at St. Ignatius.

CHARLOTTE
 (already racing out)
 Park and 83rd, right?

INT. 7 B - LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Prentiss is pacing frantically.

PRENTISS
 (into the headset)
 Charlotte do you read me? Do you
 have the wallet!? Over!

EXT. E. 79TH STREET - CONTINUOUS

Running toward Park Avenue, Charlotte speaks between gasps.

CHARLOTTE
 I'm *getting* the wallet!

INT. 7 B - LIVING ROOM

CHARLOTTE (V.O.)
 (with static)
 I think I'm almost out of range.

PRENTISS
 (half-crazed, into headset)
 Say OVER. Contact me the SECOND
 you're back in range, we're almost
 out of time, over!

The front door BUZZER sounds.

PRENTISS (CONT'D)
 Now *what?!*

He hurries to the door (almost taking a header into the suit of armor, again) swings it open. A sweet, tiny old NUN is there, holding the wallet.

NUN
 Oh, hello.

Prentiss snatches the wallet from her tiny hands (she looks a little shocked), slams the door, rushes back to Greta.

PRENTISS
 Take this to Darsh's. When you see
 Veronica say "Oh, nice to see you
 again," hold her gaze and drop this
 into her shopping basket. Got it?

GRETA
 Yeah, of course.

PRENTISS

Now show me how to use this!

GRETA

Command C is Charlotte, D is Darsh,
J is Juana. When you talk push
this, when you listen push that.

PRENTISS

Alright, go go GO!

As she rushes out, Prentiss sits in front of the Mac.

PRENTISS (CONT'D)

(into the headset)

Darsh, is she there yet? Tell me
what's happening!!! Over!

INT. DARSH'S BODEGA/7 B (INTERCUT)

Darsh hears Prentiss in his headset as he watches Veronica
shopping (just off-camera). He whispers.

DARSH

She seems disappointed in the wine
and cheese selection.

PRENTISS

(under his breath)

There's a shock.

The bell over the bodega door rings again.

DARSH

Here is Greta now.

Greta quickly passes through the frame. Darsh "narrates".

DARSH (CONT'D)

They are speaking and Greta is
coily slipping her the wallet.

PRENTISS

(into the headset)

When she shows you the wallet, I'm
going to tell you EXACTLY what to
say. Do NOT go "off script" by even
one word, do you understand, over?

DARSH

Yes, word for word, I under --

Darsh's voice suddenly drops out.

CHARLOTTE'S VOICE
 (staticky)
Prentiss, can you hear me?

PRENTISS
 Stay off this line, do you hear?!
 Over and out! Over and OUT!

When he releases the mic, he hears Veronica talking to Darsh.

VERONICA (V.O.)
 -- love "mom & pop" stores, they're
 rarer and rarer in Manhattan.

INTERCUT WITH: THE BODEGA

DARSH
 (lightbulb going off)
 Now I'm thinking *that's* the problem
 with business -- no "mom" in my
 "mom & pop"!

Prentiss listens keenly:

VERONICA (O.S.)
 Well you're still pretty young. . .
 Anyway, do you know the man this
 wallet belongs to?

PRENTISS
 (into the headset)
 "Yes, Prentiss Porter, in 7B. This
 man is practically [**Charlotte says**
"Prentiss?"] an encyclopedia of all
 things Medieval."

Annoyed Charlotte broke in again, Prentiss waits anxiously
 for Darsh to repeat his words.

DARSH
 Yes, Prentiss Porter, in 7B. This
 man is practically. . . Medieval.

PRENTISS
 (off-mic)
 God, what an idiot!
 (on-mic)
 "I mean this sincerely. His is a
 life that should be [**Charlotte:**
"Prentiss?"] celebrated, over."

INT. DARSH'S BODEGA

DARSH

I mean this sincerely. His is a
life that should be. . . over.

VERONICA (V.O.)

(a little freaked out)

You know what? Maybe I should let
you return the wallet.

Pre-lap a screamed "NOOOOOOOOO!"

INT. 7 B - LIVING ROOM

Prentiss clenches his fist and HOPS up and down, literally
hopping mad with frustration.

PRENTISS

NO! NO! NO! NO!

He CRASHES INTO the suit of armor. Entangled, man and armor
collapse as one to the floor, clanging and shrieking loudly.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. 7 B - LIVING ROOM - EVENING

Prentiss is nervously devouring the cheese and bread. Darsh
and Charlotte are putting the suit of armor back on its
stand. Juana is clearing the (unused) stemware. Greta is near
the computer, packing up her things at the end of the day.

CHARLOTTE

You're going to have to forgive us
at some point. We did just what
you asked!

GRETA

You're gonna meet her. I have very
good instincts about love matches
(quietly, with a sigh)
(when it comes to *other* people).
Didn't your idol Sun Tzu say "A
journey of 1,000 miles starts with
a single step"? 'Think I saw it in
a fortune cookie, once. It's only
50 steps across the street!

PRENTISS

First of all, that was *Lau* Tzu, a
pacifist. Secondly, jaywalking is
(MORE)

PRENTISS (CONT'D)
 tantamount to suicide. I'd need to go up the block, cross the street and come down the other side. It's like the bloody Bataan Death March!

GRETA
 (tapping computer keys)
 More like 4,172 steps.
 (she stands up)
 Anyway, good luck! I'm sure they'll send somebody great over in the morning. What am I taking back to the Museum now?

PRENTISS
 Nothing. There is no return delivery. And I already told them you'll be my new assistant.

GRETA
 (surprised)
 I'm flattered but -- this isn't even close to my field. Interns are supposed to pick up work skills --

PRENTISS
 Graphic design. So, advertising?

She shrugs: probably. As he speaks, Prentiss unthinkingly tears open the bag of Funyuns and starts eating *them*.

PRENTISS (CONT'D)
 A field where poaching clients is the *rule*. Full of Machiavellian schemers without a shred of loyalty. There're no survival skills you might learn from the likes of me?
 (more Funyuns)
 Unless you think it'd be more *fun* sorting Sharpies and upgrading software for some wretch hunched over a drafting table all day, every day.

GRETA
 Wow, you don't take any prisoners, do you? Can I sleep on it?

PRENTISS
 As long as you say yes.

He really wants her to say yes. Digging deep into the Funyun bag, cramming them in his mouth, nervously, Prentiss suddenly has a moment of self-awareness.

PRENTISS (CONT'D)

My God, what's become of me? I, who once dined every Tuesday night at *Tour d'Argent*, then a nightcap at Maxime's?

DARSH

(philosophically)

They say you have to hit bottom.

Despite the source, this seems to resonate with Prentiss. He looks over at Charlotte, lovingly putting away the raisins and muffins she brought him; at Juana, dutifully refilling the Purell dispenser; at Darsh, carefully putting empty water bottles in a bodega box -- well-worn routines. He looks at each of them with a kind of fond ruefulness.

He puts down the Funyuns bag, dusts his hands, walks to the front door. They're all watching, but they've seen this routine before. He opens the door. He dangles his big toe over the threshold. One beat. Another.

Summoning his strength, he winces, and mutters very quietly:

PRENTISS

Can't believe I'm saying this.

(then, louder)

My name is Prentiss and I -- am an agoraphobic.

A COUNTER appears on the screen. When he touches his toe to the hallway floor, it clicks to **0001**.

As Prentiss falls back into the apartment, exhausted (but elated!) everybody hugs him and cheers him on.

He points to the sofa, dramatically. They move, as one, to the couch (sort of like the finale of "The Mary Tyler Moore Show") till Prentiss is close enough to collapse onto it.

PRENTISS (CONT'D)

Thank you, thank you all -- I couldn't have done it without you! And so selfless!

(without irony)

After all, none of you has a *thing* to gain when I leave this apartment!

As he grants them all a beneficent smile of sincere gratitude, they all (bite their tongues and) smile, too.

BLACK OUT/THE END