

**THE CSSC PRESENTS:**  
**WINNING**  
**SCREENPLAYS**  
**{HOW TO WIN A SHORT FILM**  
**SCRIPT COMPETITION}**



**PRODUCER: DAVID CORMICAN**

**VOL. II**

# Something Pointless

By

Neil Graham

*1st Place Entry*  
*2009/10*

PROPERTY OF:



INT. DULL LOOKING SCHOOL, CLASSROOM - DAY

Scratched wooden desks, a greying black board and air tinged with chalk dust.

Thirty bottle-green uniformed pupils write words into wide-margined exercise books.

A YOUNG MALE PUPIL stares at the clock: TICK, TICK, TICK. A YOUNG FEMALE PUPIL chews away at her pencil.

At the front of the classroom, FROWNING BOY struggles to get TEACHER'S attention.....too late: a trickle of pee runs down Frowning Boy's leg. It forms a pool of yellow under his desk.

A FEMALE PUPIL sees the wee on the floor. She thrusts her hand into the air to alert Teacher.

Frowning boy frowns.

FADE TO:

INT. BLAND OFFICE - DAY

OLD MAN sits at his plastic desk. He is 60. He is dressed smartly and has a kind face. He stares out of his small window at a grey concrete wall.

On his desk sits a small carriage clock. Engraved on the clock are the words "30 years of service."

He sighs. His attention returns to the computer screen.

OLD MAN (V.O.)  
I have a theory.

INT. TRAIN - NIGHT

Old Man sits on the crowded train. He looks out of the window at the view of the city. The train crawls along.

EXT. STATION - NIGHT

Old Man alights from the train in the suburbs: red brick and strip lighting.....anywheresville.

OLD MAN (V.O.)  
It is just a theory, mind.

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

Old Man walks slowly along a street. He passes the dull looking school. No lights are on. He walks on further.

He stops outside the entrance to a small housing estate.

Either side of the entrance to the estate stands a long, ugly wall: red brick, but discolored by the wear and tear of city life. Old Man stares at the wall contemplatively.

OLD MAN (V.O.)  
Every day, you should try to do  
something utterly pointless.

INT. FROWNING BOY'S HOUSE, KITCHEN - NIGHT

A large pair of dignified spectacles stare down on Frowning Boy. The eyes behind the spectacles look disappointed. The eyes and the spectacles belong to MALE PARENT. Male parent holds a note from the school in his hand.

FEMALE PARENT looks on with a little more sympathy. However, that tweed suit and the over-educated wrinkles in her brow do their best to hide any compassion.

MALE PARENT  
Again? Again?

Frowning boy frowns.

MALE PARENT  
Go to your room.

INT. FROWNING BOY'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Frowning boy sits on his bed. Only the light from the window illuminates his sad face. He can hear the faint arguing of his parents below. He frowns.

INT. OLD MAN'S HOUSE, KITCHEN - NIGHT

Old Man is with OLD MAN'S WIFE. She is of similar age. They sit quietly at the table eating a simple meal.

OLD MAN (V.O.)  
I am not talking about work: the  
daily routine. That has a point.  
We all have to eat.

Old Man stands up and clears away the plates.

OLD MAN

Cocoa?

OLD MAN'S WIFE

Oh yes please.

Old Man makes the cocoa.

OLD MAN (V.O.)

I think, perhaps, that if you do just one pointless, meaningless, unimportant thing....it will make you appreciate the million and one other moments in life that little bit more.

INT. FROWNING BOY'S HOUSE, KITCHEN - NIGHT

Tension. Male Parent puts on his coat.

MALE PARENT

No, you have a word with him. I've had enough. I really have.

INT. FROWNING BOY'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Frowning boy still sits on his bed. He listens and hears the front door close. He frowns some more.

INT. OLD MAN'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Old Man is in bed. Old Man's Wife sleeps. Her gentle breath fills the silence. Old Man stares up at the ceiling.

The ceiling fades away revealing a sky full of glowing stars. One star shines more brightly than any other.

OLD MAN (V.O.)

This is my theory. By doing something completely without point, with no end in mind, we will better be able to see how wonderful and full of purpose everything else can be.

All the stars begin to shine brightly. The bedroom is awash with light. Old Man turns over and closes his eyes.

INT. FROWNING BOY'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Frowning Boy stares up at his imagined starry sky. A beam of light connects a random number of stars. The connections form a gigantic MONSTER. The Monster growls and slashes out at Frowning Boy below.

Frowning boy takes shelter under the covers.

INT. OLD MAN'S HOUSE, KITCHEN - DAY

Old Man sits at the kitchen table. He is dressed in his suit ready for work. Old Man's Wife brings him a single boiled egg, some tea and toast.

Old Man chops off the top of the egg with his knife. He scoops out the egg and stares at the empty eggshell.

Old Man places the eggshell carefully beside his plate and eats his egg.

OLD MAN'S WIFE

OK?

OLD MAN

Oh yes.

EXT. UGLY WALL - DAY

Old Man stares at the ugly wall at the edge of his estate. He is contemplative. He takes the eggshell out of his pocket. He opens his briefcase and removes some blue-tack. He secures the eggshell firmly to the wall with the blue-tack.

He stares at the small white eggshell lost in the vastness of the red brick.

EXT. STREET - DAY

Frowning boy hides behind a slatted fence at a street corner. He peers through a knot-hole, and sees some 200 yards of wide open space.

He peers round the fence: still just open-space in front of him.

He looks one final time, and then sprints off across the open space.

Half-way across, FOUR SLIGHTLY OLDER KIDS jump out from behind a wall. SLIGHTLY OLDER MALE KID #1 trips Frowning Boy. Frowning Boy hits the floor hard.

Frowning Boy tries to get up, but he is thwarted at every attempt.

SLIGHTLY OLDER MALE KID #2  
Just stand up. Whoops. He's over again. Why can't you stand up? You must be retarded.

SLIGHTLY OLDER FEMALE KID #1  
Got nothing to say spastic? Can't you talk? Hold him down.

Three of the kids secure Frowning Boy to the floor. Slightly older Female Kid #1 sits on top of him.

SLIGHTLY OLDER FEMALE KID #1  
Open his mouth.

The older kids force open Frowning Boy's mouth. Slightly Older Female Kid #1 spits directly into Frowning Boy's mouth: a thick green loogie. The other kids laugh. They take some soil and rub it into his face and across his shirt.

SNAP. The four slightly older kids take photos of Frowning Boy with their mobile phones.

They walk off.

INT. SCHOOL TOILETS - DAY

Frowning Boy stands alone in the school washroom. He removes his shirt, and places it into the sink. He turns on the tap. From his knapsack he routinely removes a clean shirt. He puts this on.

He washes his shirt thoroughly. He removes the wet shirt and places it inside a carrier bag. He places the carrier bag inside his knapsack.

He frowns.

FADE TO:

INT. OLD MAN'S HOUSE, KITCHEN - DAY

Breakfast. Old Man carefully opens his egg.

He places his hand into a small plastic bag and removes a small tin of paint. It is yellow.

He also removes a small paintbrush. He opens the paint carefully and paints the eggshell.

OLD MAN'S WIFE  
What's that you're doing there?

OLD MAN  
Testing a theory.

OLD MAN'S WIFE  
(not prying)  
Sounds interesting?

OLD MAN  
I think it is. I think it is.

EXT. UGLY WALL - DAY

Old Man sticks the yellow eggshell next to the plain colored egg shell. Two small egg shells in a vast sea of red brick.

EXT. STREET - DAY

The Four slightly older kids stand by the slatted fence. Frowning Boy stands in front of them like a rabbit trapped in the headlights.

INT. HEADMISTRESS' OFFICE - DAY

Frowning Boy sits in the HEADMISTRESS' neat and tidy office. He is sporting a bloody nose and bruised cheek.

HEADMISTRESS  
Are you going to tell me what happened?

Frowning Boy frowns.

HEADMISTRESS  
Who did this to you?

Frowning Boy frowns a little bit more.

HEADMISTRESS  
OK. Go back to class. Go on.

FADE TO:

EXT. UGLY WALL - DAY

Old Man attaches another colored egg shell to the wall. There are now 26 eggshells: in couples scattered across the wall.

Frowning boy cycles up to the wall. He stares at the Old Man. He stares at the wall.

He frowns and cycles away.

INT. HEADMISTRESS' OFFICE - DAY

Frowning Boy's parents sit in the headmistress' office.

HEADMISTRESS  
We're very worried.

MALE PARENT  
Yes?

HEADMISTRESS  
I have spoken to all his teachers. And well. No one has ever seen him smile. Does he smile at home?

MALE PARENT  
That's absurd.

HEADMISTRESS  
Is it?

MALE PARENT  
Of course, it is.

HEADMISTRESS  
Oh, good. What makes him smile?

MALE PARENT  
Well there's.....there's, isn't there?

Silence.

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

Old Man alights from the train and walks along the street. He stops. He has an intense fit of coughing. He removes a handkerchief from his pocket and covers his mouth.

He stops coughing.....the handkerchief is covered in blood.

OLD MAN

Oh dear.

EXT. UGLY WALL - NIGHT

Frowning boy cycles up to the ugly wall. He stares at the wall looking at the random arrangement of eggshells.

He looks puzzled.

INT. OLD MAN'S HOUSE, KITCHEN - DAY

The kitchen table. Old Man's Wife boils an egg.

OLD MAN

May I have two eggs today please?

Old Man's Wife looks at him a little odd.

OLD MAN

Would it be too much trouble to have two eggs from now on?

Old Man removes a tin of red paint from his little plastic bag.

EXT. UGLY WALL - DAY

Old Man removes from his pocket two blood-red eggshells. He places them onto the wall, away from the initial clustering of eggshells. The red shells are more difficult to see against the brick.

Across the street Frowning Boy watches.

INT. CLASSROOM - DAY

A TEACHER returns graded papers to his pupils. The Teachers chucks a paper onto Frowning Boy's desk. The paper is graded "E".

TEACHER

You may beyond our help boy, what do you think?

Frowning Boy frowns.

INT. DOCTOR'S OFFICE - DAY

On the doctor's mahogany desk are several x-rays and medical reports. He looks at Old Man with compassion and sympathy.

DOCTOR  
Not long. You haven't got long.

INT. OLD MAN'S HOUSE, KITCHEN

Old Man sits with his Old Man's Wife. She has her arms around him. She sobs quietly.

FADE TO:

INT. OLD MAN'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Old Man lies awake looking up at the ceiling. On the bedside table stand all sorts of medicines. Old Man's Wife sleeps.

Old Man struggles out of bed and sits on a chair next to his bed.

He looks on at his wife. He leans across and gently moves the hair away from her face. He is careful not to wake her.

INT. KITCHEN

He takes a single egg out of the fridge. He removes a sauce pan from the cupboard. He fills the saucepan with water.

The egg bounces about in the simmering water.

INT. HALLWAY

Old Man puts on a coat over his pyjamas. Each movement is an effort.

EXT. UGLY WALL - NIGHT

The sun starts to creep over the horizon. Old Man places the egg shell on its own: in the left hand corner of the wall. There are 70 eggshells on the wall.

He stares at the new eggshell: it temporarily glows more brightly than all the others.

The sun shines on Old Man's face. It gives him a healthy glow on his cheeks and a glint in his eyes.

Old Man smiles a hearty smile. He nods in appreciation.

EXT. GRAVEYARD, FUNERAL - DAY

A snow covered graveyard. A small group of people, dressed in black, stand around a grave. Old Man's wife stares at the coffin as it is lowered into the ground.

INT. OLD MAN'S HOUSE, BEDROOM

Old Man's Wife stands in the bedroom. It is quiet. She moves to:

INT. KITCHEN

Old Man's Wife stands in the kitchen. It is quiet.

She sits. She stands. It is quiet. She looks inside the fridge and sees some eggs.

She boils an egg. She watches the water boil slowly.

She sits at the kitchen table. The egg has been scooped onto a plate. She paints the eggshell.

EXT. UGLY WALL - DAY

Old Man's Wife stands at the wall. She hesitates, as she decides where to put her eggshell.

She does not know. She hesitates some more.

She puts the eggshell next to the solitary shell in the corner of the wall. She smiles.

Frowning Boy arrives on his bicycle. He stops at the wall.

FROWNING BOY

Where is the old man?

OLD MAN'S WIFE

He's not here any more.

YOUNG BOY

Oh.

They both look at the wall.

YOUNG BOY

Are you doing it now?

OLD MAN'S WIFE

I don't know.

FROWNING BOY  
Would it be OK if I did it? If I  
can get an eggshell?

OLD MAN'S WIFE  
Absolutely.

INT. FROWNING BOY'S HOUSE, KITCHEN - DAY

Frowning Boy stares at an egg simmering in a pan of water.

Frowning boy paints the egg. He paints it a variety of  
colors. It looks lovely.

EXT. UGLY WALL - DAY

Frowning boy stands in front of the wall.

He places his eggshell in the middle of the wall. He steps  
back to get a better view. He looks at his eggshell in  
relation to all the other eggshells.

Frowning Boy smiles.

FADE OUT.

# **Minus Lara**

By

Surita Parmar

*2nd Place Entry*  
*2009/10*

PROPERTY OF:



INT. DEPARTMENT STORE. DAY

A GIRL clad in a frumpy parka browses a dreary department store. She comes across a cheap looking child's synthesizer in the marked down bin.

She looks across the room and catches the eye of a young male SALES CLERK wearing an orange store uniform. She smiles at him shyly. His face remains unfriendly, and she hurriedly drops her eyes.

She looks back at the synthesizer, switches on the power button, and fiddles with the key. Soon she is hesitantly tapping out the first few bars of "Lara's Theme" from Doctor Zhivago. She stops.

An OLD WOMAN nearby smiles at her and gestures for her to continue.

OLD WOMAN  
Go on, that's lovely!

The girl begins to play the leitmotif once more and begins to play with confidence. As she continues, she hears faint orchestral accompaniment to her playing, and suddenly stops in fear and surprise. She looks either way, but everyone is oblivious and absorbed in their own activities.

She resumes the last few notes of the tune and the orchestral accompaniment resumes, louder this time. She taps on the last note and holds it for a few seconds, and the orchestral music is likewise sustained.

She looks up to see the sales clerk gazing at her. An orchestral version of "Lara's Theme" swells through the room. People immediately drop what they're doing and begin to waltz. Snowflakes flutter from the ceiling.

The girl and sales clerk weave their way towards one another through the dancers, staring into the others' eyes. She removes her parka and he removes his orange smock to reveal Russian period clothing.

They clasp hands and begin to dance in circles, and throngs of waltzing couples whirl about them. The flowing skirts of the women whirl into colourful rosettes, culminating with the sales clerk and girl in the middle.

The sales clerk and girl slow the pace of their dancing. He leans his head to kiss her.

The music abruptly becomes sombre and forbidding in tone. A loud YELL is heard, and the girl looks up to see SECURITY GUARD #1 and SECURITY GUARD #2 approaching them. They seize upon the girl and sales clerk, and a chase gives way.

The girl and sales clerk are pursued throughout the store aisles. After a moment of pursuit, security catches the sales clerk and tears him from the girl's arms. They carry him away.

The girl sobs and runs after the guards as they haul the clerk towards the store exit. Their eyes meet once more and they stretch their arms out to the other.

The music abruptly ceases and the store is as prior. Customers are quietly browsing aisles and purchasing products. There is no snow or security in sight.

The sales clerk stands before the girl, once more clad in his orange smock and gazing at her with hostility.

STORE CLERK

You gonna pay for that?

He motions to the toy synthesizer.

GIRL

No. Er, I'm sorry.

The girl leaves the store amidst weary looking, indifferent customers entering and leaving.

# **The Kicker**

By

Jagdeep Dhadli

*3rd Place Entry*  
*2009/10*

PROPERTY OF:



FADE IN:

INT. WRITER'S ROOM IN TV STUDIO - DAY

It is 1968. In a cluttered room, a record player with albums strewn everywhere takes over a side table. A dartboard and clippings of the Kennedys, Lyndon Johnson, Nixon, The Who, Marlon Brando and other celebrities of the day adorn the walls.

There are four writers gathered in the room smoking. MERRICK (29) with thick Buddy Holly glasses and longer hair, RANDY (25) with a goatee and faded jeans, as well as two others VERNON (21) and CLAIRE (22). An ASSISTANT walks by and pops his head into the room.

ASSISTANT

One hour to show time. Let's make 'em laugh everybody!

The writers exchange uninterested glances at each other. The assistant leaves.

MERRICK

So what does everybody have?

VERNON

I got the lead in about TV dinners.

Merrick nods approvingly. Randy shoots Vernon a sarcastic look.

RANDY

Vern, it's important if you're going to make fun of TV dinners you make the joke more interesting than TV dinners themselves. Claire?

CLAIRE

Liz Taylor and Richard Burton are having problems. She is holding open auditions for new husbands starting July first.

Randy pauses.

RANDY

Still waiting for the punchline. Nope? Great, a joke with no discernible hook. Well, that's been working for this show for two years. Why change now?

Merrick, rather sheepishly, clears his throat.

MERRICK

It's good, Claire. I like it. What have you got, Randy?

RANDY

Glad you asked, Merrick. I was going to do a bit about President Johnson meeting with the Mexican Prime Minister, who was severely disappointed to find out that was the famous 'El B.J.' everyone was talking about.

This garners a solid laugh from Vernon and Claire, but not Merrick.

RANDY (CONT'D)

But I don't think Dick is quite ready for that yet. So I'll take the lead in from Vern with the bit about Rockwell's portrait of Johnson.

MERRICK

I prefer Vernon's actually.

RANDY

Yeah, well I prefer humor so my joke's the lead-in. So, Merrick - what have you got?

MERRICK

Nothing yet...I'm, um, still polishing some ideas.

Randy studies Merrick's face for a moment and looks over the paper he's been scribbling on during the meeting.

RANDY

Okay, not a great monologue, but not our worst. We still don't have a kicker, though.

Suddenly outside the office there is an excited gasp of a YOUNG GIRL and a few camera flashes.

RANDY (CONT'D)

Dust off your knee pads, kids. King Dick is here.

In through the door, dressed in a dapper suit, enters DICK ROLOSEN (50) the host of the show. He still has make-up napkins tucked into his shirt collar and two nebbish, sycophantic AIDES at his side with clipboards.

DICK

All right, hippie scum, please tell me you've got a killer monologue for America's number one host here!

RANDY

Is Carson in town?

DICK

Shut up, Randy.

Dick grabs the paper off the desk as Randy lights up a cigarette. Dick peruses the jokes quickly.

DICK (CONT'D)

For fuck's sake, you hacks! Is this the best you can do? The only highlight is this Rockwell opener. Where's the goddamn kicker? Last night's kicker fell dead. And I will not walk to my desk in a miserable fucking silence again! You hear me?

RANDY

It fell dead because you stuttered on the word 'protest' - the joke was flawless.

DICK

The joke was bullshit. We're giving people entertainment here not being fucking social commentators. Do I look like Walter Cronkite to you?

RANDY

Absolutely not. He's trustworthy and likable.

Dick ignores this comment.

MERRICK

I loved your reaction after the joke fell flat, Mr. Rolosen. It was priceless. The audience loved it, it really saved the monologue.

DICK

Kid, I don't need another tongue in my ass. That's why I got these two.

Dick points to his two Aides.

DICK (CONT'D)

What I need is a quality kicker. And where's your stuff anyway, Merrick? You used to be golden. Since Randy got here you dried up like that Steinem broad's cunt.

Claire raises her eyes at this, aghast. Merrick and Randy offer sympathetic looks, but Dick keeps barreling on.

DICK (CONT'D)

where's your head at lately? Aren't you a Jew, kid? Where's the fucking comedy?

MERRICK

Um, I'm actually only half Jewish.

RANDY

So, I guess that makes you Jew-ish.

Dick hands the paper to one of his Aides.

DICK

Get this to cue cards. Look, Randy I put up with your shit because you're the only writer on this show worth his salt and You've gotten golden kickers over the past few weeks.

This hits Merrick hard, he eyes Randy enviously. Dick now addresses the room.

DICK (CONT'D)

But don't fucking forget your place, kids. You and your pinko friends haven't formed a union yet. I can fucking erase you from this show. Okay, it's now less than an hour to show time. I need the best joke you people can muster and I need it yesterday. Happy writing.

Dick grabs the cigarette out of Randy's mouth and exits the room smoking. Randy pulls out another from the pack and stares up at the other three looking at him expectantly.

RANDY

You heard the dick. Get cracking.

## INT. MERRICK'S OFFICE - DAY

Merrick enters his small office unkempt with books and papers and decorated with two large posters of Bob Dylan and Lenny Bruce, he sits down in front of his typewriter.

He looks up at a noose he has hung in the middle of his ceiling. Pinned to the rope is a handwritten note reading "WRITE OR DIE". More importantly to Merrick, however, is that the noose is framing: his wall clock which is ticking despotically away.

He types the letter 'h' and then grabs the paper and crumples it up and tosses it and loads another into the typewriter. The assistant walks by in the hall.

ASSISTANT

We're 40 minutes away people!

Merrick places his hands over the keys. But he is being attacked by visions of the more talented Randy gaining kudos and accolades from all those around him.

Merrick is knocked out of his jealous daydream by Randy bursting through his office door.

RANDY

Merrick, I got it. We're golden.

MERRICK

Already?

## INT. BACKSTAGE OF TV STUDIO - DAY

Merrick and Randy walking at a brisk pace, with Vern and Claire in tow make it backstage. Randy places his golden kicker in a file folder laying beside an ELDERLY MAN who is engrossed transcribing jokes onto large cue cards.

CLAIRE

You're amazing, Randy!

VERNON

Yeah, Randy. You really saved our asses this time.

Merrick is apoplectic with jealousy. He stands apart from the trio and their lauding of Randy.

CLAIRE

Another show over!

VERNON

Let's retire to the Batcave, shall we?  
I've got some grass.

They walk off leaving Merrick behind, who eyes Randy bitterly. Randy catches a glimpse of his co-writer as he is leaving and offers a cocky "I don't know how I do it" shrug.

When he is alone, Merrick quickly looks around the studio where no one is noticing him and grabs the paper from the folder without the distracted Elderly Man noticing and flees.

INT. MERRICK'S OFFICE - DAY

The hanging noose swings slightly as Merrick enters his office with a devilish grin upon his face. He rips the paper containing Randy's joke apart and sits down at his typewriter. He begins pounding the keys. He finishes his opus quickly and then types at the bottom: "BY RANDY NASH".

The assistant can be heard in the hall.

ASSISTANT

Okay, everybody! We're 30 minutes away!

INT. WRITER'S ROOM IN TV STUDIO - DAY

Randy and Claire are playing darts. And Vern is lying on a sofa staring at nothing, as Merrick enters.

The door bursts open and Dick storms into the room and throws a piece of paper in Randy's face and grabs him by the collar pushing him up against the wall. Vernon continues to remain motionless on the sofa.

RANDY

What the fuck, Dick?

DICK

Shut the fuck up, you commie fag hippie!  
What is this bullshit! I worked too goddamn hard getting to where I am to have it ruined by a bunch of college kids who are too busy dropping out to be fucking funny!

RANDY

What the hell are you talking about?

DICK

Your fucking joke, asshole! Robert Kennedy and Martin Luther King meet Heller Keller in heaven? They start making cracks about her ass and tits? What that fuck is that! And then God grants her hearing back and she says: "I didn't think they'd let niggers and micks into heaven!" Have you lost your fucking mind! This is TV, goddamn it!

RANDY

I didn't write that shit, you dick! I wrote some bullshit one-liner about the election this year - the same typical garbage you always have on this show!

DICK

Fuck you, Randy! It's 25 minutes to show time! Get me a goddamn kicker or get yourself the fucking want ads on your way out!

Dick hears a rip and looks at the armpit of his suit jacket which he has torn in the scuffle.

DICK (CONT'D)

Fuck! Get me Wardrobe!

Dick storms out and slams the door, Merrick is overcome with guilt. He tries to help Randy who has fallen to his knees, but gets pushed off.

RANDY

Get the fuck off me, Merrick! You fucking washed-up turncoat! You haven't been funny for years - you're fucking lucky I'm here to make you look good! All of you!

CLAIRE

Randy--

RANDY

Fuck you too! You guys trying to sabotage me? It's not my fault I'm the only one with talent around here.

Randy, who still has a dart in his hand throws it at the board, getting a bull's-eye and then storms out as well slamming the door behind him.

After the intense exchange, Vernon finally exhales a billowy plume of smoke.

VERNON

People talk loud.

Claire, visibly upset, leaves the room placing a dart on the table as she leaves. Merrick, wracked with guilt, picks up the dart and chucks it at the board. It hits awkwardly and bounces off to land on the floor. Vernon starts to laugh.

INT. MERRICK'S OFFICE - DAY

Merrick walks into his office like a condemned man into a cell. He sits at his desk and robotically loads a sheet into his typewriter. He begins typing:

"Dear Mr. Rolosen, I hereby offer my resignation effective..."

He stares at the noose again. He opens the desk drawer and retrieves a pair of scissors and then positions his chair under the rope, he stands atop the chair and attempts to cut it down, but the material is tough and it doesn't seem to be working. Out of sheer curiosity Merrick places his head into the loop to see how it feels.

At that moment Randy bursts into the room

RANDY

Merrick, I got --

The door strikes the chair and knocks it over Merrick gets caught in the noose. He is hanging.

RANDY (CONT'D)

Whoa! Jesus!

Randy quickly grabs Merrick's legs so he stops choking and is able to slip his head out of the lariat, both men then tumble to the floor of the tiny office.

RANDY (CONT'D)

What the fuck are you doing, Merrick?

Merrick is holding his neck gingerly, and breathing rapidly.

MERRICK

I was...I was...brainstorming.

The Assistant walks by and sees the two men huddled on the floor. He is perplexed, but still manages his call.

ASSISTANT

We're 10 away, fellas. Fucking writers.

Randy helps Merrick to his feet.

RANDY

Look, I got it.

MERRICK

The kicker? Are you using your election joke?

RANDY

No, I got a better one now.

Merrick is in awe of Randy, as he quickly chases him down to the set.

INT. BACKSTAGE OF TV STUDIO - DAY

There is a buzz of activity behind the now illuminated curtain. As the writers trek in.

RANDY

Where's Dick?

ASSISTANT

He's getting his jacket fixed. He'll be down soon...I hope. We're 5 away, people!

RANDY

I got the kicker and it's golden. Here, Davis.

He hands the paper to the Elderly Man who pulls out a fresh card and marker and begins to transcribe. Merrick stands away from the commotion and watches Randy. Claire and Vernon walk to him and he speaks to them with an apologetic look on his face, he gives Claire a hug. He says something and the two fellow writers laugh uproariously. Merrick studies their happy faces and the man providing them.

Merrick walks to a monitor now displaying an empty stage. Dick comes down and walks to his place behind the curtain silently. Randy stands by Merrick beside the monitor. The announcer's disembodied voice fills the studio.

ANNOUNCER (O.S.)

Live from wonderful New York City,  
Trammel Baked Beans presents the Richard  
Rolosen show!

RANDY

Merrick. How does the day find you?

MERRICK

It finds me well. You know. Considering.

ANNOUNCER (O.S.)

Now your host - Richard Rolosen!

Applause fills the studio.

Dick tells a joke about Liz Taylor and a few chuckles  
escape the crowd.

Dick then starts another joke.

DICK

It seems that Robert Ken--um...It seems  
that, in heaven...oh. Um....

As Dick struggles, the two writers continue to view the  
monitor. Merrick stands with mouth agape.

MERRICK

You used the joke?

RANDY

Keen observations, as always, Merrick.

MERRICK

Why?

RANDY

'Cause it's funny. You're funny. This was  
never Dick's show to me - it was yours.  
You're the reason I wanted to write here,  
but lately...it doesn't fun for you. Not  
that I blame you.

Merrick is moved.

RANDY (CONT'D)

I don't know...sometimes I look around at  
what's happening in this world and I  
can't abide just sitting here writing the  
same old shit.

MERRICK

Shows like this are where clever people go to die.

RANDY

Exactly.

MERRICK

Well, it's moot, right? I mean, we're obviously fired.

Merrick gestures at the monitor. Randy smiles broadly and finally looks at Merrick.

RANDY

No. We're not.

Randy pulls out a legal looking document from his back pocket.

RANDY (CONT'D)

We're unionized. They voted for it, man. We're here for at least another year. Let's do it, let's make this our show and let's make it fucking golden!

Merrick offers a large smile and nods. Suddenly his eyes go wide with inspiration.

MERRICK

I was thinking a Kicker about Nixon's platform to include an outlawing of voting.

RANDY

Yeah! That's not bad - GOP hires Black Panthers as Republican Convention security, to scare rich white people away from actually having to listen to Nixon speak!

MERRICK

Yeah, yeah! That's good...

For the first time the two writers seem genuinely enthused. They continue to bounce ideas off each other as Dick awkwardly finishes his monologue and walks, in silence, to his desk.

FADE OUT.

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