

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



PRODUCER: DAVID CORMICAN

VOL. III

ELIJAH THE PROPHET

By

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1st Place Entry
2010/11

PROPERTY OF:



EXT. SUBURBAN STREET - EVENING

The last bits of daylight in suburbia.

A MAN stumbles toward a parked HONDA SEDAN.

He wears a long white robe and sandals. Grizzled, graying hair. Looks like a Reagan-era aging hippie, the sort that turned to booze once pot became too much of a hassle.

This is ELIJAH THE PROPHET.

DAVID GOLDBERG (V.O.)
Every Passover, we set an extra
place at our table and pour a glass
of wine for our very special guest.

It takes him a few tries to get the car door open.

INSIDE THE CAR:

Elijah reaches into the glove compartment.

Bunched up inside, rolls of WHITE PAPER. Endless names and addresses hand written, going on and on down the line.

He pulls a pen from his robe, and crosses off one name. Starts the car and takes off with a jolt.

DAVID GOLDBERG (V.O.)CONT'D)
It is said that Elijah the Prophet
will return "before the coming of
the great and terrible days of the
Lord," foretelling the arrival of
the Messiah.

The Honda SWERVES and JUMPS THE CURB, nearly smashing into the car parked in front of it.

DAVID GOLDBERG (V.O.)CONT'D)
Elijah visits our seder each year
to remind us of the joy of living a
righteous life.

Elijah strokes his face, trying to sober up.

EXT. THE GOLDBERG HOUSE - MINUTES LATER

He gets out of the car and SLAMS the door.

Drunkenly strides his way up the lawn. He reaches into his robe, pops a bunch of Tic-Tacs into his mouth.

ELIJAH
(chewing)
Omm, nom nom nom nom.

INT. THE GOLDBERG HOUSE/ DINING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

A beautifully set seder table with all 14 members of the extended GOLDBERG FAMILY. Standing at the head is DAVID, the booming patriarch.

He checks the time on his watch,

then looks to MADELYN, the little girl seated at the other end of the table with the rest of her cousins.

Between them at the center of the table - a monstrously large WINE CUP, filled to the brim.

DAVID GOLDBERG (CONT'D)
So, we now ask the youngest member
of our family, Madelyn, to go to
the door and welcome Elijah the
Prophet into our home.

MADELYN'S MOTHER silently motions for her daughter to go.

INT. THE GOLDBERG HOUSE/ FRONT HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

The door CREEKS open.

Madelyn, peers out. To her surprise,

NO ONE IS THERE.

EXT. THE GOLDBERG HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

She peeks her head out into the dark. Still nothing.

Slowly, she walks out into the front yard.

As she is looking around, ELIJAH tiptoes with his back hugging the side of the house. Stealthy drunk.

He slips behind her unnoticed, leaving the door open.

Madelyn gazes out at the junkyard HONDA next to all the familiar relatives' more luxurious cars.

INT. THE GOLDBERG HOUSE/ DINING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Conversations fly back and forth across the table.

Rounding the corner, ELIJAH APPEARS, WATER PISTOL DRAWN.

The talking ceases.

He aims the gun at the terrified children.

ELIJAH

Whoooo's the first born?

(beat of uncomfortable
silence)

Just kidding folks. Not this guy.

Not tonight anyway.

Sighs of relief as he puts away the water pistol.

ELIJAH (CONT'D)

Chag Samayach everyone!

A chorus of greetings. David slaps him on the back affectionately.

DAVID GOLDBERG

On behalf of my entire family,
Elijah, it is truly great to have
you...

David trails off as Elijah starts walking around the table, working the room like a pro:

He talks fast, slurring his words, not leaving time for anyone to respond.

All handshakes and back slaps.

Elijah laughs at his own jokes and the GOLDBERG family laughs with him. He pulls up the sleeve of his robe, revealing a plastic digital watch.

ELIJAH

Jeez, will ya look at that. Hate to
say it folks, but I've gotta be on
my way.

He starts to walk out of the room, then TURNS ON A DIME and heads back, slapping his forehead in self-deprecation.

(CONTINUED)

ELIJAH (CONT'D)
Of course!

Elijah takes the large wine cup at the center of the table.

ELIJAH (CONT'D)
To our health!
(raises the glass)
L'chaim!

EVERYONE
L'chaim!

HE DOWNS THE WINE in a heartbeat.

ELIJAH (CONT'D)
(wiping his mouth)
Aaaaand good night.

He TAKES A BOW, and walks out into

THE HALLWAY

Quickly, slipping into an alcove, as MADELYN walks by. He heads for the door, strolling casually, stumbling a little.

MADELYN (V.O.)
It's empty! Elijah came! He came!

He looks back toward the dining room.

ELIJAH
Nailed it.

EXT. THE GOLDBERG HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Elijah steps onto the front porch, shit-eating grin. SUDDENLY, he GRASPS at his chest

and HUNCHES OVER ready to throw up into the bushes. It passes, and his composure comes back.

He flips his CAR KEYS in his hand. Chuckles to himself as he looks up at the sky.

INT. ELIJAH'S CAR (PARKED) - LATER

He settles into the driver's seat, checking his face in the mirror. The years have been kind.

Elijah goes into the glove compartment, bursting open with the over-stuffed paper rolls. He puts a CHECK next to DAVID GOLDBERG AND FAM.

Many more names to go.

EXT. ELIJAH'S CAR - CONTINUOUS

The engine coughs to life. Elijah drunkenly attempts a K-turn out of the neighborhood, and hits the CURB in front.

Hard.

He jerks and weaves his way through the neighborhood. Behind Elijah's car, ANOTHER CAR'S HEADLIGHTS come on.

It looks - and cautiously follows - very much like an UNMARKED COP CAR would.

INT. ELIJAH'S CAR (MOVING) - NIGHT

Driving along a suburban road.

Elijah picks up speed. His driving is getting shakier.

The CAR STEREO is BLARING a rough 'n' tumble blues song. He pounds his hands on the dashboard, handling the steering wheel with his wrists.

He continues down the road, half-humming the tune. Singing a lyric here and there, when he remembers.

In the side mirror,

HEADLIGHTS FLASHING.

EXT. SUBURBAN ROAD - CONTINUOUS

Elijah's car makes a HUGE SWERVE, and

THE UNMARKED COP CAR reveals itself with FLASHING RED AND BLUE LIGHTS.

INT. ELIJAH'S CAR (MOVING) - CONTINUOUS

Oblivious, Elijah cranks up the stereo. His hand-drumming

POUND POUND POUNDS furiously, out of sync with the rhythm of the music.

The flashing lights FLICKER in his rear view mirror.

Elijah checks out the back window of the car, and then, whips forward again.

A couple seconds of dreadful reflection.

ELIJAH

...On this night of all nights?

EXT. SUBURBAN ROAD - CONTINUOUS

Elijah pulls his car over on the side of the road. The cop car follows.

The door slams and Elijah watches the POLICE OFFICER approach in the side mirror.

POLICE OFFICER

Please turn off the music sir.

Elijah slips up on the stereo nob, making the music louder before cutting it out completely.

POLICE OFFICER (CONT'D)

License and registration.

He reaches into the glove compartment for the registration. The giant list spills out onto the floor.

As Elijah goes on searching, further layers of paper roll out onto the passenger seat.

Success. He finds the proper documents, blowing off the dust before surrendering them.

The officer eyes his license: "ELIJAH THE PROPHET", with a picture of the prophet doing his best to look like one.

POLICE OFFICER (CONT'D)

Do you know why I pulled you over...Mr. Ellee Jah?

Elijah is taken aback when the cop fails to recognize him.

(CONTINUED)

ELIJAH

Well, uh...it's actually just
Elijah. As in, Elijah the Prophet.

POLICE OFFICER

(irritated)

Do you know why I pulled you over?
You've been swerving since you left
that neighborhood up the hill.

Elijah figures the cop will get it, sooner or later.

ELIJAH

Passover comes but once a year.
Well, actually twice, but, ya
know...

He laughs, offering the opportunity for the cop to lighten
up, but Elijah quickly trails off as the officer continues
to stone face him.

POLICE OFFICER

Have you had anything to drink
tonight sir?

ELIJAH

Only in between every other breath.

POLICE OFFICER

Sir, step out of the car.

ELIJAH

(grumbling)

You want me to get out of the car,
I'm getting out of the car.

POLICE OFFICER

Yes. That's what I said.

Elijah climbs

OUT OF THE HONDA,

Stretching his hands up toward the sky. The cop glances over
the license again. Elijah strikes a self-serious "prophet"
pose, trying to match the picture in the LICENSE.

No recognition. He turns his attentions back to the sky,
waving his hands.

(CONTINUED)

POLICE OFFICER
Turn your back to me slowly and
place both of your hands up against
the vehicle.

ELIJAH
Quiet please.

POLICE OFFICER
Excuse me?

ELIJAH
(on his tippy toes)
I'm conjuring lightning.

POLICE OFFICER
Are you not hearing me correctly? I
said hands up against that car!

ELIJAH
It's a secondary means of
identification. Chill.

POLICE OFFICER
(reaching for his gun holster)
I'm going to count to three.

ELIJAH
Hey man, I've taken a lot of shit
from a lot of quasi-deities, but
there is only...

POLICE OFFICER
One...

Elijah squints and focuses intently on the officer.

ELIJAH
...or maybe, if you want to throw
Jesus in the mix, I'd say...

POLICE OFFICER
Two...

And then, HE SEES THE OFFICER'S BADGE.

OFFICER MURPHY. Definitely not a Jew.

Elijah looks at the badge. Then to the cop. Then to the
badge. Then straight forward.

(CONTINUED)

ELIJAH

Fuck.

INT. ELIJAH'S CAR (PARKED) - NIGHT

From the back seat of Elijah's car, there's nothing to see but dark night sky, until...

ELIJAH'S FACE SMASHES UP AGAINST THE WINDOW wincing in pain. Behind him, Officer Murphy cuffs Elijah.

ELIJAH

Are you fucking kidding me? I have a fucking job to do!

EXT. SUBURBAN ROAD - CONTINUOUS

The officer leads Elijah over to the cop car.

OFFICER MURPHY

I will remind you of your rights.

ELIJAH

Rights? I have divine fucking rights you piece of shit!

Murphy opens the backdoor of his car and VIOLENTLY SHOVES Elijah into the car. Elijah continues screaming through the glass as the officer SLAMS THE DOOR.

INT. COP CAR - CONTINUOUS

ELIJAH

Do you have any idea what you're fucking doing?

Officer Murphy locks up Elijah's car.

ELIJAH (CONT'D)

You are messing with some serious Old Testament shit you sonofabitch!

Elijah watches as the cop stands against the back bumper of the Honda and lights a cigarette. Smiling.

ELIJAH (CONT'D)

"And Elijah said unto all the people, come near unto me. And all the people came near unto him. And he repaired the FUCKING altar of

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

ELIJAH (CONT'D) (cont'd)
the Lord that was FUCKING broken
down." You FUCKING TWAT!

Either the cop can't hear him through the windshield, or he doesn't care.

ELIJAH (CONT'D)
Do you know who I work for? Do you
have any fucking clue who I work
for? You are fucked! You are so
fucking fucked!

INT. THE LEVY HOUSE/ DINING ROOM - LATE EVENING

Same exact setup as the GOLDBERG SEDER, but different people and different decor. The patriarch, BRIAN, stands as David did in the Goldberg house.

BRIAN LEVY
"Behold, I will send you Elijah the
Prophet before the coming of the
great and dreadful day of the
Lord."

CUT TO:

INT. COP CAR - NIGHT

The POLICE SIRENS echo into the night as the car takes off.
Elijah's eyes are rolling back. He's starting to pass out.

BRIAN LEVY (V.O.)
"And he shall turn the heart of the
fathers to the children, and the
heart of the children to their
fathers, lest I come and smite the
Earth with a curse."

CUT TO:

INT. POLICE STATION/ JAIL CELL - LATER

Bare bones set up: bed, toilet and a full plastic cup of water left out.

Murphy drags a half-conscious Elijah and steadies him up against the bars, using his free hand to open the cell.

(CONTINUED)

Dead, drunken weight. Yet somehow, even when Murphy removes his hand, Elijah floats as if held up by a string.

BRIAN LEVY (V.O.)CONT'D)

And so every year, we leave an extra setting at our table to welcome into our home - and into our lives - both Elijah the Prophet and his teachings.

CUT TO:

INT. THE LEVY DINING ROOM - NIGHT

Brian looks to KATIE, the cutest little girl, sitting at the other end of the table with her older cousins.

He then notices CLOCK on the wall. The seder is running behind schedule.

BRIAN LEVY

(rushing things along)

Now we ask that the youngest member of the Levy family, Katie, go welcome Elijah personally into our home.

HER PARENTS urge her on, and Katie scuttles off to the front door. Everyone smiles, ONE OF KATIE'S AUNTS pulls out a camera and gives an encouraging thumbs up.

Eventually, the chatter subsides. There's no sound.

No Elijah. Everyone waits in nervous anticipation.

THE DOOR SLAMS SHUT.

CUT TO:

INT. POLICE STATION/ JAIL CELL - CONTINUOUS

Officer Murphy force-feeds Elijah the cup of water, spilling all down his chin. Soaking his robe.

CUT TO:

INT. THE LEVY DINING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Footsteps coming. Elijah's wine cup at the center of the table. Untouched.

KATIE'S MOTHER elbows HER HUSBAND sharply in his ribs, motioning to the cup. There's no time to hesitate.

Dad takes down the full wine glass like a champion collegiate drinker, nearly choking in the process.

He's proud of himself for a moment. But it's too late.

Katie watches in horror from the threshold of the family dining room. She saw the whole thing. The magic is dead and so is her entire belief system:

PASSOVER HAS BEEN RUINED FOREVER.

She CRIES OUT,

a parade of tears gathering along her cheeks.

Katie's ferocious sobbing FADES INTO THE SOUND OF GAGGING...

CUT TO:

INT. JAIL CELL - EARLY MORNING

Elijah on his knees, hugging the jail cell toilet, spilling his GUTS into the can.

ELIJAH
(singing, vomiting)
I am a poor...

Gag, splash, repeat. He groans and comes up for air, slumping his back to the toilet.

ELIJAH (CONT'D)
*... wayfaring stranger. Traveling
through, this world alone. There's
no sickness, toil or danger. In
that bright land, to which I go...*

His singing gradually trail off.

Footsteps echo outside his cell. Elijah looks up toward an unseen POLICE OFFICER:

JACKIE, a sassy desk cop, humming quietly to herself.

(CONTINUED)

JACKIE
Prophet. Elijah.

ELIJAH
Jack-ay.

It takes all of Elijah's strength to raise his arm in thanks. The clank of KEYS in the LOCK, and the door opens.

JACKIE
Harbinger of drunk and disorderly fuckin' conduct.

ELIJAH
Love of my life.

Elijah clasps the jail cell bars for support.

JACKIE
You ever gonna grow up, sugar?

ELIJAH
I'm a young man, Jackie. Peaking,
in fact, not plateauing.

JACKIE
Mmm hmm.

ELIJAH
So, ahhhh... think you could spot
me a little bail money?

She looks up at him, unsure if he's coy, or still too drunk to think everything out.

JACKIE
Your own personal savior has
rescued your boisterous ass. Once
again. So get on out of my jail.

Jackie hands him an envelope with his few possessions... car keys, cigarettes. His lighter.

Elijah smiles to himself and looks up.

ELIJAH
Lord, deliver me from bondage.

EXT. POLICE STATION - MORNING

Elijah steps out the front door of the police station and takes a deep breath. Freedom.

LIGHTS UP A CIGARETTE and savors the taste. He looks out toward the street.

A PIMPED-OUT, MONSTER SUV pulls up, tinted windows and all.

Elijah kills the cigarette and heads around to the driver's side.

The window cracks.

A HAND comes out from the darkness, tapping along on the side of the car. The driver remains hidden.

ELIJAH (CONT'D)
 Hey, ah, thanks for bailing me out.
 Again. I know you can't be
 everywhere at once, but yeah. You
 did me a real solid chief.

No response from the driver.

ELIJAH (CONT'D)
 Come on, let's roll. Second night
 seder starts in nine hours. Aaaaand
 I'm gonna need a fuckin' mimosa.

The hand stops tapping.

ELIJAH (CONT'D)
 How about some breakfast? You dig
 breakfast. I could do some bacon
 and eggs, then maybe we'll hit up a
 tittie bar or something.

The window opens up a little more and the hand disappears back into the dark.

A LONG PAPER LIST drops out from the window. Hitting the ground, rolling out.

Elijah picks up the end and starts reading.

ELIJAH (CONT'D)
 "The Abelson Family", "Berger",
 "Brightman", "Cohen". Whoa, whoa,
 chief. This is all the way out in
 Sherman View Plains. With the Honda
 impounded, I mean. My podiatrist
 would flip a shit, you know?

(CONTINUED)

The driver turns on his car stereo. More gritty blues.

Elijah tries the backseat door. It's locked.

ELIJAH (CONT'D)

You know I was only kidding about
the bacon.

The SUV from behind: License plate reads "ONE".

With a screech of the wheels, the giant vehicle speeds away.
In its wake, the paper list flaps in the wind.

Elijah looks down at his sandals. Then, from the daunting
paper list to the SUV, disappearing into a glorious sunrise.

ELIJAH

God dammit.

THE END

STRANGE MUSIC

By

Ira Henderson

2nd Place Entry
2010/11

PROPERTY OF:



EXT. SIDEWALK - DAY

Three folding chairs sit on the sidewalk in front of a large, low-rent apartment building in the city in late summer. In the chairs are SHIRLEY (58, overweight), PERRY (64, unshaven, always with beer in hand) and PEGGY (66, chain smoker).

A taxi pulls in to the curb in front of the lawn chairs. It is full of boxes and suitcases. GRACE (19, straight-laced and shy) gets out. She and the taxi driver unload the car onto the sidewalk as Shirley, Perry and Peggy watch, aloof.

As soon as the taxi is unloaded the driver takes off, leaving Grace in a cloud of exhaust. She stifles a cough and smiles meekly at the three in lawn chairs, who barely acknowledge her. She grabs a box and a suitcase and walks awkwardly into the building.

Shirley, Perry and Peggy eye Grace's things as she moves them into the building. There is a dismantled music stand, a box full of classical music exercise books, a box with several photos of a high-school band and smiling friends with classical instruments, a plaque won for musical achievement, a metronome, and a trumpet case. There are also some newer books, course-readers and orientation booklets from a local University.

As Grace takes the last box into the building, Perry leans over in his chair to watch her. Peggy punches his shoulder. Shirley chuckles. Perry shrugs.

INT. APARTMENT - DAY

Grace's boxes are piled up haphazardly in a small bachelor apartment. The place is sparsely furnished with a bed, a small dresser, a hotplate on top of a mini-fridge, a desk, one chair and one window.

Grace opens a box of pots and pans, looks at the hotplate, closes the box and puts it beside the fridge. She opens a large suitcase full of clothes, looks at the small dresser, closes the suitcase and puts it under the bed. She picks up a box of bathroom supplies and goes into the bathroom.

INT. BATHROOM - DAY

Grace turns on the light.

The bathroom is very small. There is a sink, a toilet, a shower stall, and no room for anything else.

Grace looks around the bathroom, looks at the box in her hands, drops the box, sighs and turns off the light.

INT. APARTMENT - DAY

Grace opens the window. Street noise floods in from the courtyard outside. She sits down heavily in the chair and looks around at her new home dejectedly.

Suddenly, Grace gets up, puts her music stand together and puts an exercise book on it, sets up her metronome and brings out her trumpet. The street noise fades out and the tic of the metronome rises as Grace stares at her sheet music. She begins with a slow scale, then another.

On the second scale a faint piano joins her. Grace stops and listens. Silence. She starts again. The piano joins again. She stops again. The piano keeps going, getting louder.

Grace goes to the window. The sound of the piano echoes too much in the courtyard for her to pinpoint its origin. The scale ends and the piano stops.

Grace plays one note. The piano responds with the next in the scale. Grace hits the next note. They progress together through the scale, then stop.

The piano plays an arpeggio. Grace smiles and responds with another.

EXT. SIDEWALK - DAY

Shirley, Perry and Peggy listen to the music. They nod to each other in approval.

INT. APARTMENT - DAY

Grace and the piano play a few call-and-answer arpeggios, getting progressively faster and more complicated and taking on a swing beat.

The piano breaks into a jazzy swing rhythm. Grace tries to improvise something over it but has trouble. She goes slowly and choppily along for a few bars, hitting a couple of sour notes, until the tic of the metronome, which is now completely off the beat, becomes distracting.

Grace stops the metronome.

The piano continues for a few beats, then stops.

The piano plays a scale. Grace responds, sullenly. The piano plays the scale with a swing beat, incorporating the jazzy rhythm. Grace responds in kind. They continue in a call-and answer fashion, the piano picking out short riffs over the constant rhythm and Grace imitating with the trumpet.

EXT. SIDEWALK - DAY

Shirley, Perry and Peggy tap their feet, slap their knees and swivel in their chairs to the music.

INT. APARTMENT - EARLY EVENING

After playing for quite a while, Grace is out of breath and her lips are numb. She has trouble hitting higher notes.

INT. APARTMENT - EVENING

After a little while longer, Grace has trouble playing at all. She stops, panting and smiling.

The piano plays an inquisitive upward trill. Grace responds with a tired honk of the trumpet. The piano trills again, then hits one low note four times, imitating a clock chime. Grace responds with four honks then falls onto the bed.

EXT. SIDEWALK - DAY

The next day. Shirley, Perry and Peggy set up their chairs and look at their watches. Peggy lights a smoke.

INT. APARTMENT - DAY

Grace is unpacking the last of her things, putting university notebooks on the desk. The alarm clock goes off, showing four o'clock. It beeps four times before she turns it off.

Grace takes out her trumpet, toots it four times, and waits. Nothing. She raises it to her lips again.

EXT. SIDEWALK - DAY

Shirley, Perry and Peggy listen as the trumpet toots four times. Perry cracks a beer.

INT. APARTMENT - DAY

Grace lowers her trumpet and sighs. She moves toward a half-empty box of stuff, but is stopped by four chords from the piano.

EXT. SIDEWALK - DAY

Shirley, Perry and Peggy hoot and chuckle. Shirley opens a bag of chips.

INT. APARTMENT - DAY

The piano moves into a swinging jazz rhythm. Grace tries improvise. Being too ambitious, she hits a few sour notes.

She gets embarrassed and discouraged. She stops playing. The piano stops.

The piano plays a flashy riff, then a simplified version, a four-note version, an octave, then simply hits the same note, improvising a staccato rhythm over the constant base line. This all in a few short bars.

The piano then hits the note once, pointedly, waits for a bar, repeats the note. Grace responds with that note. The piano responds with the same note twice. Grace imitates. The piano plays the same note four times. Grace imitates again. Getting more comfortable, Grace begins some simple improvisation on her own.

The music continues through the next few scenes. Grace improves throughout.

EXT. SIDEWALK - DAY

Perry is dancing stiffly as the two ladies clap and hoot at him.

INT. APARTMENT - DAY

The next day. The alarm clock beeps four times, to the beat of the music, before Grace shuts it off, tossing her University backpack onto the bed.

Grace blows four notes on the trumpet.

The piano responds with four chords.

They roll right back into the music.

EXT. SIDEWALK - DAY

The next day. Shirley is dancing with Perry. Peggy laughs hoarsely and happily.

INT. APARTMENT - DAY

Next week. Grace is swinging to the rhythm, smiling, eyes closed.

Days pass to the rhythm of the music. Grace's clothing becomes hipper and less straight-laced. The alarm and the four repeated notes become a theme.

EXT. STREET - DAY

Grace walks to the beat of the continuing music, smiling. She turns in to the University.

INT. REHEARSAL ROOM - DAY

The jazz music is sharply interrupted by a slow and boring Ode to Joy.

Grace is one of several bored classical music students, staring at their sheet music, playing mechanically. She is the hippest looking person there, surrounded by khakis and lumpy starched shirts.

The conductor marks a rigid beat. He starts tapping the beat sternly on his music stand. The tapping gets louder, irritating Grace, echoing the metronome. Grace stops playing. Nobody notices.

INT. APARTMENT - DAY

Grace returns in silence, depressed. Her alarm goes off, showing four o'clock. The piano trills happily four times.

Grace responds with four long, sad notes that move into a slow bluesy improvisation. The piano comes in, responding in kind, supporting the new sad feeling.

EXT. SIDEWALK - DAY

Shirley, Perry and Peggy listen sympathetically. Peggy takes Perry's hand. Perry begins to hum low.

INT. APARTMENT - DAY

Grace stops playing and sighs. She lies back on her bed and stares at the ceiling.

EXT. UNIVERSITY - DAY

The piano continues. The trumpet returns as Grace arrives and pauses in front of the University, then trudges in.

INT. REHEARSAL ROOM - DAY

The slow sad jazz continues as the bored classical music students play silently.

Grace, watching her score, raises her trumpet to her lips, plays for a bar, then lowers it again and sighs.

INT. REGISTRAR'S OFFICE - DAY

Grace stands in line with other bored students.

When it's her turn, Grace slaps down a Declaration of Change of Major form. It gets stamped, signed and sealed.

The music speeds up and gets happier as Grace struts out of the office.

EXT. SIDEWALK - DAY

Music continues. A moving truck is loading near the folding chairs. Grace struts past Shirley, Perry and Peggy, who are bored. Perry looks at her behind, notices that she's carrying a trumpet, perks up and turns to the others.

INT. APARTMENT - DAY

Music continues. Grace plays enthusiastically.

EXT. SIDEWALK - DAY

Shirley, Perry and Peggy all dance happily. The moving truck pulls away past them. The piano stops.

INT. APARTMENT - DAY

The alarm goes off four times. Grace plays four notes. Silence. She plays an inquisitive upward trill. Silence.

EXT. SIDEWALK - DAY

Shirley, Perry and Peggy stand very still, confused. Another inquisitive trill is heard.

INT. APARTMENT - DAY

Grace plays one last shrill trill. Silence. Grace honks grumpily, drops her trumpet into its case and falls onto her bed.

EXT. SIDEWALK - DAY

Shirley, Perry and Peggy slump back into their folding chairs.

INT. APARTMENT - DAY

The next day. The alarm goes off again. Grace plays four notes. Nothing.

EXT. SIDEWALK - DAY

The next day. Shirley, Perry and Peggy sit expectantly as the alarm is heard going off and the trumpet is heard four times. Silence.

INT. APARTMENT - DAY

The next day. The alarm goes off, more slowly this time. The sound of the alarm fades and is replaced by the ticking of the metronome.

Grace pulls two pieces of the old music stand from under the bed and puts them together. She pulls out a jazz music book and places it on the stand. She plays a slow and rigid version of It Don't Mean a Thing (If it Ain't Got That Swing).

EXT. SIDEWALK - DAY

The music and metronome continue. Shirley, Perry and Peggy look at each other. Peggy lights a cigarette. Perry cracks a beer. Shirley opens a bag of chips. They all settle into their chairs.

INT. REHEARSAL ROOM - EVENING

The trumpet and metronome continue. Grace is playing in a jazz sextet. The five other hipsters are all grooving, smiling and bopping. Grace is sullen.

EXT. DOWNTOWN STREET - NIGHT

Trumpet and metronome. Grace walks past neon signs and caged windows, her trumpet case under her arm. She walks to the slow tic of the metronome. The music fades and the traffic noise rises. The metronome persists.

Grace walks past a crowded bar. A whisp of jazz with a familiar staccato four-note theme is heard through the noise of the bar. Grace stops and looks back, listening.

INT. JAZZ BAR - NIGHT

Noise and familiar jazz. Grace comes in, listening. She is stopped by the doorman, shows her i.d. and pays the five-dollar cover. She tries to get a look at the stage but can't see much through the dense crowd. She leans against the wall, listening.

The drummer hits the snare four times. The bass player plucks a note four times. The pianist plays four chords. Grace blasts out four times on the trumpet. The band stops.

There is a hush in the bar. Heads swivel around to see who has interrupted. Grace blushes and looks bashfully at her feet. A husky chuckle comes from the stage. Lithe, grizzled fingers play four chords, then move quickly into a familiar rhythm. The piano picks out a simple riff. Grace elaborates on it skillfully. The husky voice laughs as the music continues.

INT. JAZZ BAR - NIGHT

LEO (59, wiry, wearing a faded suit) laughs as he plays the piano and sways to the rhythm on stage.

Grace, on stage with Leo, belts out a flashy riff. Leo hoots and they smile at each other.

Shirley, Perry and Peggy are dancing on the crowded dance floor.

The bass player plucks out a slick groove.

The drummer tics off a solo that slides into four sharp snare hits. Four plucked bass notes. Four notes from Grace. Four chords from Leo.

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By

Sundae Jahant-Osborn

*3rd Place Entry
2010/11*

PROPERTY OF:



FADE IN

CAPTION: MONDAY

A nerdy nine-to-fiver, NIGEL, exits his apartment building clearly on his way to work: cheap briefcase, suit far too short, mug of coffee. As he tries to exit gracefully through the revolving door his ridiculous tie gets stuck in the turn and the coffee in his tacky Simpsons coffee mug spills down his sleeve and all across the floor. He tries to casually wipe the mess to one side with his worn, dated shoe. A doorman just shakes his head.

Outside, Nigel looks up at a clock on a tower. As soon as it starts to chime he checks his bad imitation "Rollex" watch, smiles to himself at its accuracy, and shuffles off with an air of deluded confidence, his beady eyes taking in everything and everyone around him.

As he strolls past a high, protruding fence with barbed wire and spiked glass at the top, he squints, swearing he hears something.

A faint chanting. He looks around but nobody else passing by seems to hear anything.

He backs up and walks past again curiously. He clearly makes out distinct deranged voices repeatedly chanting.

DERANGED VOICES (O.S.)
Thirteen, thirteen, thirteen.

Again, other city PEDESTRIANS buzz pass without hearing a thing. He gives up and heads away with a shake of his head.

CAPTION: TUESDAY

Nigel, wearing the same dumb suit and another cheezy tie is again struggling to free his briefcase from the revolving door of his building the next morning. Doorman just shakes his head as usual.

Again, he checks his watch outside. But the chime doesn't exactly coincide. He taps the watch irritably and looks concerned, before walking off briskly.

Nigel approaches the same high protruding fence... this time more slowly, eyes darting round curiously.

As he reaches it he instantly recognises the same deranged chanting...

DERANGED VOICES (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Thirteen, thirteen, thirteen.

He cocks his head to the side of the fence to make sure he's hearing correctly.

A WOMAN in a power suit passes him, talking on her mobile phone. He steps in front of her.

She stops and glares at him.

NIGEL
Please. I know this sounds strange, but... can you hear it?

WOMAN
What?

NIGEL
The voices.

WOMAN
(to phone)
Hang on a second, Alex.

She lowers her phone and gives Nigel an evil look.

She listens. It's stopped. There's nothing. Complete silence.

WOMAN (CONT'D)
Stay away from me, you creepy little man.

She hurries away from him and returns to her phone conversation, a quick nervous look back over her shoulder.

WOMAN (CONT'D)
Alex, the lunatics have taken over the asylum.

Just as she leaves earshot Nigel hears the chanting resume...

DERANGED VOICES (O.S.)
Thirteen, thirteen, thirteen.

He tries to peak through the fence, but there are no cracks to see through. As he does the chanting gets louder and more deranged...

DERANGED VOICES (O.S.) (CONT'D)
(louder)
Thirteen, thirteen, thirteen!

Freaked out, Nigel finally races off behind another pedestrian with a frantic look over his shoulder.

CAPTION: WEDNESDAY

Nigel dashes out the revolving door too quickly, tearing his short pants in his rush. Doesn't care.

Racing past the clock tower, he is focused on his new obsession.

He approaches the fence even more apprehensively, and watches in amazement from a distance as a handful of PEDESTRIANS whizz past it, none of them noticing anything.

He pulls himself together, a deep breath, and he tries to ignore the fence like everyone else. But - just as he begins to walk near it, the chanting resumes even louder and more deranged than before. He stops in his tracks.

DERANGED VOICES (O.S.) (CONT'D)
(even louder)
Thirteen, thirteen, thirteen!

A little OLD LADY carries on past him slowly, oblivious to any noise. He stares at her in disbelief, then grabs her arm.

NIGEL
Dont YOU hear it?!

She swats him down hard with her umbrella and carries on slowly down the street.

Nigel pulls himself to his feet and looks around. There is now no-one but him and the deranged chanting. He can't stand it anymore. He notices a tree limb jetting out high above the top of the fence, leading into the hidden abyss. He has to investigate or go mad.

We hear his heart thumping loudly and exaggerated heavy breathing as he darts off-screen and returns with a giant traffic cone.

Clambering up onto it and slipping off several times, he eventually climbs up to the tree and manoeuvres himself towards the limb with his briefcase still in hand.

The chanting escalates feverishly.

DERANGED VOICES
(very loud)
Thirteen, thirteen, thirteen!!

He presses on, frantically pulling his body along the limb.

His briefcase gets caught just over the fence, snagging on a branch. He leaves it.

The chanting gets excitedly hysterical...

DERANGED VOICES (O.S.) (CONT'D)
(hysterical)
Thirteen, thirteen, thirteen!!!

He carries on crawling along the limb, unable to control his insane curiosity.

He wobbles, unstable, as the chanting reaches a maddening pitch.

A wrong step and a loud snap of the branch.

We hear the guy fall hard. Suddenly the chanting stops. Eerie silence.

Someone or something suddenly snatches down his briefcase swiftly, gracefully from the branch.

A snicker, than more eerie silence.

All is calm.

CAPTION: NEXT DAY

Another city nerd, NORMAN, makes his way past the same fence, goofily humming to himself.

As he strolls past the same high protruding fence he stops, sure he hears something. A faint chanting... but he can't make out the words.

He looks around but nobody else passing by seems to hear anything.

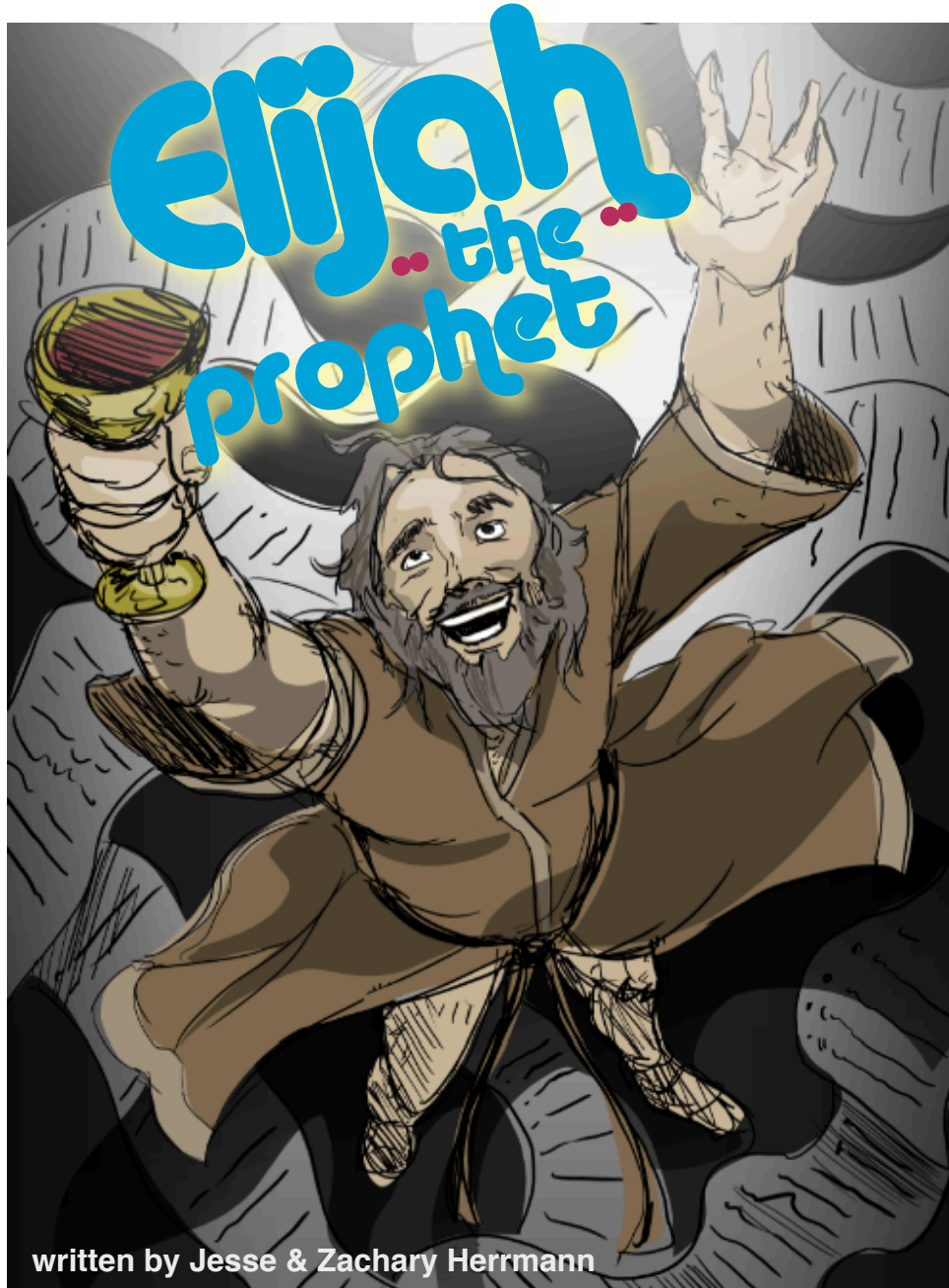
He backs up and walks past again curiously. He is mesmerized. He cocks his head to the fence for a closer listen.

Amidst eerie snickers, he clearly makes out distinct deranged voices repeatedly chanting to him and him only the unmistakable words...

DERANGED VOICES (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Fourteen, fourteen, fourteen.

5.

FADE OUT



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