

FINAL ASSIGNMENT

Written by

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INT. PROFESSOR'S OFFICE, UNIVERSITY - DAY

In a small one-space room, old FILMMAKING AND SCREENWRITING BOOKS are all over, pushed in the shelves and piled up on the desk. An OLD CLOCK hung on the wall.

DR. IVANOV, 58 years old screenwriting professor, is reading a screenplay assignment on his computer at the desk.

He takes some notes on a pad while reading. Outside on the hallway, we OVERHEAR FOOTSTEPS approaching.

The footstep stops, and someone knocks at the door.

DR. IVANOV

Come in.

The door opens, GREG TREVOR, 23 years old screenwriting student, walks in with his BACKPACK on his shoulder.

Dr. Ivanov glances at Greg through his glasses.

DR. IVANOV (CONT'D)

Hey Greg, how's your internship search going?

GREG

Uhh, I'm not really searching it right now, sir. It looks like there aren't many out there.

DR. IVANOV

The studios might tighten up a little bit now. Anyway, let's take a look at your assignment.

Dr. Ivanov, on his computer, opens another file titled "TRAPPED IN by G.Trevor".

He looks at Greg's script, scrolling down the pages. But only after forty some pages, the writing stops in the middle of the sentence and the rest of the pages are left blank.

DR. IVANOV (CONT'D)

Look, I can't give credit to anyone who doesn't finish the assignment. You have to complete writing a full feature film script. 40 pages are not acceptable at all.

GREG

That's all I got, sir.

DR. IVANOV

Listen. How about that I'll give you five more days to finish your script. Just write as much as you can, okay?

GREG

Sorry, but I'm not gonna finish the god damn script.

Greg turns around and steps toward the door.

Dr. Ivanov grabs Greg on his backpack.

DR. IVANOV

Wait, you can't leave like that. Don't you understand you can't graduate from the school unless you pass my class?

GREG

Yes, I certainly do...and I don't care.

DR. IVANOV

What's the matter with you?

GREG

Nothing. I just gotta go to work, that's it.

DR. IVANOV

You gonna waste all four years of college?

GREG

Waste? You know what's waste? A screenwriting degree, which won't get me a job in the film.

DR. IVANOV

So, you still want to be a screenwriter?

GREG

...

DR. IVANOV

You got to tell me what's on your mind.

Dr. Ivanov pulls out a short stool.

DR. IVANOV (CONT'D)
Greg, please.

Greg sighs, then sits on it and plumps his backpack on the desk.

Dr. Ivanov slides down his glasses on his big nose, looks him in the eye.

GREG
I just don't want to write anymore.
I think I'm dropping out too.

DR. IVANOV
Why don't you want to write anymore? You're one of the most passionate students I have.

GREG
I, I just don't have time for writing now. I gotta work, find another job or two. Everything's expensive here.

DR. IVANOV
You know you can always find time for writing, no matter what. Even though you said you don't want to write anymore, you still carry those heavy SCREENWRITING BOOKS in your backpack, don't you?

Dr. Ivanov glances at Greg's backpack.

DR. IVANOV (CONT'D)
And I taught you opening up yourself is a part of screenwriting process, right?

Greg hesitates but slowly opens his mouth.

GREG
... My time is up.

DR. IVANOV
I told you I'll give you little more time to finish it.

GREG
No, it's not really about finishing the script. It's about giving up my dream. They told me to get a life.

DR. IVANOV

They?

GREG

My family. They own a neighborhood liquor store in a small town in New Mexico, which's been a fourth generation family business. They say it's about carrying on the tradition, but for me, that's such a boring life. I can't lock myself up and keep doing the same goddamn things everyday like my dad does.

Dr. Ivanov starts taking some notes on his pad while listening to Greg.

GREG (CONT'D)

My grandpa died when he was stocking the shelves. Sorry, but I can't. Growing up there, there's nothing to do, except movies. Watching movies only gave me excitement. I wanted to make great action movies, wanted to live my life like a movie. That's why I came to LA.

DR. IVANOV

Like running away from there, being free and living your own life?

GREG

Exactly. I'm not leaving here, never. I had a big argument with my parents over the phone... Now I have to figure out my life here, how to keep staying. I'm not going back there, hell no.

Dr. Ivanov finishes taking notes and takes off his glasses.

DR. IVANOV

Well, I still think you should complete your screenplay.

GREG

I can't write. It's messing my mind so much that I can't think of the story, don't know what my character's gonna do.

DR. IVANOV

Yes, Greg. You've already got it all. You got everything you need to write about.

GREG

What do you mean, sir? I just told you I can't think of anything other than my own life.

DR. IVANOV

Take a look at the notes I just wrote.

Dr. Ivanov shows his pad to Greg. It says, "Oppressed, Locked up, Breaking out, Running away, Freedom, Dream."

GREG

...? Yes, I know those are my feelings I told you, but so what?

DR. IVANOV

And your screenplay's about a jailbreak story, isn't it? Can't you see? Your script is about you.

GREG

...

DR. IVANOV

I guess you just need to write about yourself. You don't know how the story's going to end yet, what's going to happen to the character, but you will find out by writing it.

Greg brightens up.

GREG

Dr. Ivanov, can you wait till the next weekend?

Greg gets up and rushes to the door.

DR. IVANOV

Wait! Your backpack.

Greg comes back in and snatches his backpack from Dr. Ivanov. He runs out from the office. We OVERHEAR FOOTSTEPS running on the hallway.

INT. PROFESSOR'S OFFICE/UNIVERSITY - DAY (A WEEK LATER)

Dr. Ivanov is reading a script in his computer, and Greg is sitting next to him.

Dr. Ivanov finishes reading and turns to him.

DR. IVANOV

Well, it's definitely a rush job and got some typing mistakes. But I can certainly feel the energy and passion in this screenplay.

Greg smiles and his eyes are sparkling.

GREG

I split the protagonist into three different characters to represent each of their own wishes.

DR. IVANOV

Yes, indeed. And what I especially like about is the ending. It's such a unique idea.

GREG

I didn't even know how to end it when I started. But it came out of nowhere.

DR. IVANOV

I've been studying screenwriting for years, but I have never thought that a prisoner who has successfully escaped at the end, returns back to face the warden, the antagonist.

GREG

It feels like the character decided by himself. After they break out, the lead character let the other two runaway and returns back to the prison. He needs to talk to his nemesis face to face in order to understand each other, maybe clarify their misunderstandings. That's the only resolution for this character and the story.

Dr. Ivanov smiles.

DR. IVANOV

Well done. By the way, it's not an A screenplay, but I can give you a B.

GREG

No way, sir. It's gotta be, at least a B+.

They look at each other, and laugh together.

GREG (CONT'D)

Thank you so much, Dr. Ivanov. I've learned a lot from you.

DR. IVANOV

No, you've learned by yourself from writing this script.

GREG

Yes, I learned a lot, probably I learned the most important thing. Now it's the time for me to go to face my own reality and resolve.

Greg opens his suitcase and takes out a big text book. He puts it in front of Dr. Ivanov.

GREG (CONT'D)

And you were right. I kept the text books with me all the time. It's like a lucky charm and always encouraged me.

Greg grabs his suitcase and gets up, start walking to the door.

Dr. Ivanov talks to him on his back.

DR. IVANOV

Are you going to come back for the graduation ceremony?

Greg turns around and smiles.

GREG

I'll send you a card.

Greg leaves out of the office. The suitcase roller wheel sound echoes in the hallway, leaving away.

Dr. Ivanov is left alone in his office. He grabs a pen and write down something on the note pad, "Fact is stranger than fiction".

But he tears it off and crumples, tosses it in the trash can with a satisfied expression on his face.

The clock on the wall keeps ticking.

END.