

"THE SECOND DRAFT"

By

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FADE IN:

EXT. PARK - NIGHT

Mossy grass and tall withering trees flank gravel paths. Yellow and brown leaves whirl in the air.

A light drizzle wets the ground. Small lanterns light the paths, casting anamorphic shadows.

CRAIG (30s), about as mellow as they come, strolls along a deserted path, leash in hand -- a German Shepherd at the end of it.

The dog sniffs the grass, runs to a tree and squirts a healthy load of urine on the rustic bark.

CRAIG  
'We done here?

The dog looks up for a moment but buries its snout back in the grass and sniffs on.

Craig unclasps the leash, finds a bench and sits down. He pulls out a plastic poop bag and sends the dog an anticipating stare.

CRAIG  
Just say when, boy.

The dogs runs around, chases its tail, tongue hanging from its mouth. It spots a squirrel and chases it into a row of bushes.

Craig looks up as the night reveals the CRUNCHING sound of footsteps.

Cast in silhouette, a man approaches. He stops and lights a cigarette.

The orange flame reveals a set of cold eyes -- both locked on Craig.

Craig sees this, shifts uncomfortably on the bench. He turns to the bushes.

CRAIG  
Come here, boy.

No response from the dog.

The man proceeds toward Craig, sits down next to him.

THE STRANGER (50s), rugged and chiseled, nods to Craig.

THE STRANGER  
'Evening.

CRAIG  
Hey.  
(to dog)  
Come on, boy.

The Stranger offers Craig a cigarette.

CRAIG  
No, thanks. Don't smoke.

THE STRANGER  
Really? How do you know?

CRAIG  
Come again?

The Stranger waves him off.

THE STRANGER  
Forget about it.

He takes a long drag, blows the smoke out through his nose. Craig turns away while keeping his eyes trained on the man next to him.

The Stranger mumbles something to himself, makes a weird hand gesture and chuckles.

Craig scoots a bit further away from him.

THE STRANGER  
Not very original is it?

CRAIG  
What is?

THE STRANGER  
This. Us. You. Me. A deserted  
park...at night.  
(sighs)  
Talk about cliché, huh?

CRAIG  
Yeah...

THE STRANGER  
It's been done, you know?

CRAIG  
If you say so.

THE STRANGER

Oh, that's right. This is your first scene. Yeah, I remember my first one.

The Stranger's eyes go distant as he smiles to himself.

THE STRANGER

It's kinda confusing, huh?

CRAIG

I --

THE STRANGER

Doesn't matter, it'll be over pretty soon.

Craig rolls his eyes.

CRAIG

Okeydokey.

He whistles to the dog.

CRAIG

Let's go, boy.

The Stranger tilts his head and eyes Craig intensely.

THE STRANGER

'You scared or something, kid?

CRAIG

(fakes a laugh)

I'm not scared. I just need to get, like, home.

He whistles again.

THE STRANGER

Don't bother. It's not gonna come over. He won't let it.

CRAIG

He?

THE STRANGER

Yeah, the guy upstairs.

Craig stiffens.

CRAIG

God? You're talking about God? What are you? Jehovah's Witness or something?

THE STRANGER

No, not God. I'm talking about Rob The Writer.

CRAIG

Rob...?

THE STRANGER

Yeah, you know, the writer.

CRAIG

Right. The writer.

Craig gets up, scans the bushes.

CRAIG

Look, obviously whatever it is you're smoking, pal, it's working.

THE STRANGER

Nice one. You came up with that yourself, didn't you. I know Rob, he couldn't come up with something funny even if he stole it.

CRAIG

Uh-huh.

Craig proceeds to the bushes, tries to look through the thick vegetation. Too dark.

The Stranger gets up and follows him.

Craig peeks over his shoulder, sees The Stranger approaching. He quickens his pace. So does The Stranger.

Craig spins around, grabs The Stranger by his collar and jerks him close.

CRAIG

What the hell is it with you? I don't know what you want from me and frankly I don't --

THE STRANGER

No no, I don't want anything from you. I'm just here to kill you.

That landed. Craig swallows, let's go of The Stranger.

CRAIG  
Kill...me?

THE STRANGER  
(straightens his shirt)  
Uh-huh.

He looks up and sees Craig's pale face. He pads him affectionately on the shoulder.

THE STRANGER  
Hey hey, I'm not gonna do it now. Not here. Okay?

Frozen, Craig nods.

THE STRANGER  
And it's not like I wanna but I gotta, you know? It's just the way the story goes.

The Stranger leans close to Craig, gives him a sly smile.

THE STRANGER  
Hey. You wanna see something?

He yanks out a pistol from his coat pocket.

Craig shrieks and stumbles backward, loses his footing and falls into the bushes.

THE STRANGER  
Whoa whoa. You okay?

He helps Craig to his feet, dusts him off.

THE STRANGER  
You okay, kid?

No response.

THE STRANGER  
Anyway, you can say a lot about Rob, and most of it would be true, but he sure know what's what.

He turns the shiny weapon over in his hand.

THE STRANGER  
A Desert Eagle. Fifty caliber. Pretty nice, huh?  
(MORE)

THE STRANGER (CONT'D)

(looks up)  
Wanna hold it?

Craig looks at him in total disbelief.

THE STRANGER

Yeah, you should definitely hold it.  
Come here.

He grabs Craig's right hand, stops.

THE STRANGER

You're ain't left handed, are you?  
(shakes his head)  
What am I asking you for? How would  
you know?

He glides the Desert Eagle into Craig's sweaty palm. He stands back, observes, awaits a response.

THE STRANGER

So? What do you think?

Like a Jack-In-The-Box, Craig whips the gun up, points it at The Stranger's face.

CRAIG

Get the fuck away from me!

THE STRANGER

Whoa. What's this?

CRAIG

Get away from me!

His panicking eyes dart back and forth.

THE STRANGER

What's wrong?

CRAIG

Don't come near me!

The Stranger holds up his hands.

THE STRANGER

I haven't moved an inch, kid. Calm  
down.

Craig looks over his shoulder, slowly backs away from The Stranger.

CRAIG

You're insane.

THE STRANGER  
Actually, I --

Craig bolts away, kicking up dust with each step.

THE STRANGER  
-- ain't.

The Stranger sighs.

Craig sprints along a grass covered plateau, leaps over a low hedge and turns right down an aisle of trees.

His feet pound the ground with full force, air pumps in and out of his lungs.

He runs. And runs. And runs.

The aisle goes on forever.

CRAIG  
(winded)  
What the hell?

He turns left, storms down another aisle. He screeches to a halt. In front of him, the aisle fades into endlessness.

CRAIG  
What is this?

Out of breath, he leans against a tree.

THE STRANGER (O.S.)  
You done?

Startled, Craig tumbles to the ground. The pistol glides across the gravel and comes to a rest at The Stranger's feet.

He bends down, picks it up and sticks it down his pants.

THE STRANGER  
Come on, get up.

He extends a hand and helps Craig to his feet.

THE STRANGER  
'The hell you running for? There ain't nowhere to go.

CRAIG  
You said you were gonna kill me.

THE STRANGER

Yeah...

(gives him the "duh" look)  
...but not now.

Craig's lips tremble. Tears gather in his eyes.

CRAIG

Why?

THE STRANGER

What do you mean? Why what?

CRAIG

Why do you wanna kill me?

THE STRANGER

I told you, kid, it ain't up to me.

Tears stream down Craig's face.

CRAIG

I don't understand. Why --

THE STRANGER

Look. All I know is that Rob wants you  
dead and he wants me to kill you, so --

CRAIG

(hysterical)  
Why?!

The Stranger lights another cigarette.

THE STRANGER

Why? Well...because. Hell, I don't  
know why, okay? Just the way the story  
goes.

(checks his watch)  
Look, we should be getting back.

He nudges Craig along who follows in an almost catatonic state.

CRAIG

Who's this Rob anyway? I mean, what  
did I ever do to this guy? I've never  
even heard of him.

THE STRANGER

Not many have, I'll tell you that. And  
if he keeps putting out junk like this  
nobody ever will, believe you me.

Craig stops.

CRAIG

I don't have a fucking clue what you're talking about. Who's Rob? And who the fuck are you?

THE STRANGER

I'm The Stranger. Rob's the writer.

CRAIG

What fucking writer?

The Stranger sucks a big gulp of smoke into his lungs

THE STRANGER

Rob wrote this. You, me, this whole place. It's all just a figment of his imagination. We don't exist.

He leans in close to Craig and lowers his voice

THE STRANGER

We're characters in a screenplay.

Craig looks up. Chuckles, then bursts into laughter. The pitch reaches a manic state.

CRAIG

Oh, shit. I thought you were for real. But you're just a fucking retard.

He leans against the tree and holds his stomach while laughing out loud.

Fed up, The Stranger flips the cigarette away and kills it with his heel.

THE STRANGER

Yeah? What's the dog's name? How did you get here by the way? Where do you live?

Craig's laugh dissolves into a half-hearted chuckle. He stops. Looks up, puzzled.

THE STRANGER

See what I mean?

CRAIG

Phff, that's not...I have a name, stupid. Yeah, that's right. I'm Craig.

THE STRANGER

Craig what?

CRAIG

Craig...

(searches)

Craig...

The Stranger looks around, kills time with an annoying whistling tune.

CRAIG

Shut up. You're fucking confusing me here.

THE STRANGER

Hey, sorry, kid.

The Stranger backs away, gives Craig a little space.

Craig looks to the sky, contemplates. He shakes his head, bites his lip.

CRAIG

This isn't happening.

THE STRANGER

It sucks, I know.

CRAIG

If we're not real then how the hell do you know so much?

THE STRANGER

Okay, look. Rob...you know...

CRAIG

The Writer?

THE STRANGER

Yeah. He's written something like thirty scripts, give and take. Well, he hasn't exactly finished them. He gets, like, halfway through and then he runs outta ideas. And I've been in at least half of 'em. Between you and me...he ain't no that good. I guess that's why he keeps using me. I'm a pretty cool character if you ask me.

CRAIG

And kind of scary too.

THE STRANGER

(chuckles)

Yeah, I spice it up, don't I? Well, anyway. This is what they call a second draft. I've already been through this in the first.

CRAIG

Whoa, you've already killed me once?

THE STRANGER

What? No, not you. In the first draft I killed this really hot femme fatale kinda broad. And we were in a motel, not a park. Don't know why he ditched that. I thought it was awesome.

CRAIG

So...what's gonna happen now?

THE STRANGER

Well, Rob had to go see a guy about a mule, he'll be back in a couple of minutes though.

The Stranger shrugs.

THE STRANGER

Then I guess we have to do this for real. I just wanted to shoot the breeze before we got it on. While there was time.

He checks his watch again.

CRAIG

Is there...anyway I can get out of this?

THE STRANGER

Sorry kid.

Craig takes a deep breath, reaches over and grabs the gun from The Strangers pants.

THE STRANGER

I think we've been down that road once before, kid.

Craig swallows and presses the barrel against the side of his own head.

THE STRANGER  
Okay, now that's kinda stupid, kid.

CRAIG  
Maybe. But if I'm not real then what  
does it matter? At least I'll die by  
my own terms.

He closes his eyes -- his finger tightens around the trigger.

THE STRANGER  
Hang on, kid.

Craig's eyes pop open, a glimmer of hope sparkle in them.

CRAIG  
Yeah?

THE STRANGER  
The safety's on.

CRAIG  
Oh.

The Stranger flicks the safety off.

THE STRANGER  
There you go.

Craig shuts his eyes tight and squeezes the trigger. It doesn't  
move. Exerting great strength, he gives it another go. Same  
result.

Craig looks at the gun.

CRAIG  
You messed with it.

THE STRANGER  
I didn't do shit.

He yanks the gun from Craig's hands, points it into the air and  
fires off three deafening rounds.

THE STRANGER  
Works just fine. I'm guessing your  
character just ain't suicidal is all.

Defeated, Craig sags against the tree. He slides down to a  
squatting position and buries his face in his hands.

The Stranger lights a new cancer stick and squats next to Craig.  
He pads his shoulder.

THE STRANGER  
Just the way the story goes, kid.

Craig looks up, his eyes red and puffy.

CRAIG  
How do we...do it?

THE STRANGER  
The killing?

Craig nods.

THE STRANGER  
Well, he hasn't written it yet but I reckon I'm gonna come on over, sit down and talk to you real nicely, you know, just to make you feel secure and all. Rob usually lets me play it real cool, slowly reveal that I'm a hitman, sent here to kill you for some idiotic reason.

The Stranger shakes his head.

THE STRANGER  
I know, sounds like crap, right? But that's the way he writes them. No plot, no character development. Total nonsense.

Craig reaches over and grabs the cigarette from The Stranger's lips. Sucks it hard.

CRAIG  
Does it hurt? Dying, I mean?

THE STRANGER  
Don't know, never tried it. It all depends on how Rob writes it. He might wanna make it real messy, have you lie there on the ground, spewing up blood.

Craig coughs.

THE STRANGER  
Or he might do it like, one shot one kill, you know? At any rate I just wanna --

The Stranger looks up.

THE STRANGER

He's back.

Craig looks up too -- sees nothing but a black sky.

The Stranger gets up, extends his hand. Craig grabs it, gets up as well.

THE STRANGER

Well, kid, this is it.

CRAIG

Yeah.

THE STRANGER

Look, it's nothing personal.

CRAIG

I know, it's just the way the story goes, right?

THE STRANGER

That right. Actually, I think you're pretty okay, kid.

CRAIG

(smiles)

Thanks.

THE STRANGER

Who knows, maybe we'll work together in another script.

CRAIG

I would actually like that.

THE STRANGER

You take care, you hear?

The two men give each other a short embrace and run back to their positions.

EXT. PARK - NIGHT

Mossy grass and tall withering trees flank gravel paths.

THE STRANGER strolls along, leash in hand -- a German Shepherd at the end --

THE STRANGER

What the fff...?

Cast in silhouette, a man approaches. He stops and lights a cigarette.

The orange flame reveals CRAIG's set of cold eyes -- they stare straight at The Stranger.

THE STRANGER

Ah-Ah, this shit ain't happening.

Craig walks up to The Stranger, pulls out a Desert Eagle, fifty caliber. Shrugs.

CRAIG

Guess we're on the third draft now,  
huh?

FADE TO BLACK

THE END