

UNTITLED COMPETITION PIECE  
(the first five pages)

by  
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FADE IN:

EXT. AEROPONTE, AUSTRALIA - SUNRISE - 1891

The dessert catches the first purple haze of the rising sun. A string of fiber lies across the sand.

A hand holding a cigar reaches down and lights the end of the thread, and a while trilling fire-light shoots along the line. The cigar falls to the sand, and a boot stomps it out.

LARRY (V.O.)

He comes in and tells me someone poured bleach down the drain.

INT. GROCERY STOREROOM - DAY - PRESENT DAY

A pencil scribbling on a pad. BRUCE BLACK, early 40s, surly and unkempt, jots down notes as he tries to listen to LARRY, early 20s.

LARRY

And then the other one's over there just kinda noddin and the only thing I can think about is the guy's hair; and I'm telling you, the rug of hair on this man's head I swear to god could have provided eight bald men with a brand new toupee, and I'm just sitting there, thinking to myself, my god--

BRUCE

Excuse me.

It's a moment that would grind a Jaguar to a halt.

LARRY

What?

BRUCE

I'm just wondering: is there a period anywhere in the future of this sentence?

LARRY

What?

BRUCE

I mean, I'm a reporter, and I like to think that I can make anything sound compelling, but I have to tell you, Larry, I'm getting a little tired of hearing your voice.

Larry can't speak; he's feeling around for the remains of his tongue.

BRUCE

Tell you what. I'll quote you on the bleach, and you can earn a few seconds on your way to fifteen minutes when you see your name in print tomorrow morning.

And Bruce is up and ready to leave.

LARRY

What, you gonna make me famous?

BRUCE

Show the paper to your friends in the morning, Larry. If you can manage to keep your mouth shut, I'll make everyone think you're Russell Crowe.

INT. WALDEN TRIBUNE - DAY

Bruce speeds through the maze of desks along the writers' bullpen, tailed by one of the copy-setters, CHARLIE, early 30s.

BRUCE

Twenty minutes for one quote. One damn quote, Charlie.

CHARLIE

He confirmed the bleach went down the drain.

BRUCE

He confirmed that someone said the bleach went down the drain; I've only got the one source that the kid actually did it. What time is it?

A RECEPTIONIST hidden somewhere along the clutter of desks and hunkered writers stands.

CHARLIE

(checks his watch)

Three.

BRUCE

Dammit.

And he's off again. The receptionist looks ready to leap hurdles, but finally resorts to shouting.

RECEPTIONIST

Bruce! That guy called again about that name you're always looking for!

But Bruce is gone.

RECEPTIONIST

Jackass.

INT. NURSING HOME WAITING ROOM - DAY

Bruce leans against a counter, fingers restless and tapping slightly while an annoyed CLERK types on a computer.

CLERK

Name?

BRUCE

Bruce Black.

CLERK

Reason for visit?

BRUCE

I really like the cheesecake.

The clerk is not impressed.

CLERK  
Reason for visit?

BRUCE  
You know, I've come here on the same  
day every week for eighteen months. I  
show up at the same time. And you know  
in eighteen months--  
(looks at the nurse's nametag)  
--Kathy, I've never seen a familiar  
face at this desk.

CLERK  
Sir, may I please ask the reason for  
your visit?

BRUCE  
(sigh, beat)  
Family.

INT. NURSING HOME APARTMENT - DAY

The apartment carries simple amenities: a kitchenette, a  
comfortable sofa, and comfortable chairs.

In one of these sits PAUL, late 60s, stoic and still like  
the age of his body has eclipsed his soundness of mind.

A nurse opens the door and allows Bruce inside, shutting  
door as she leaves. Paul shows no reaction.

Bruce edges inside the room, quiet and tentative.

BRUCE  
Hi, Paul.

And Paul's head tilts, only a little, but it's an  
acknowledgement.

Bruce moves to a shelf and pulls down a blanket. He leans  
to place it over the older man's legs.

BRUCE  
I'm still getting acquainted the staff  
here. This place either has

BRUCE

(cont)

nightmarish turnaround, or you just  
like to hide away the pretty ones.

No response. But Bruce shows no signs of bother. He sits in the chair opposite Paul, as if ready to begin the talk of deep things.

EXT. BRUCE'S HOME - NIGHT

The street is lined with small houses that all look alike. Bruce gets out of his car and starts for his keys in his coat pocket.

An engine ROARS up the road. Bruce turns.

Two men appear hanging out the windows of a speeding truck, each holding a brick and yelling angry jeers.

Bruce dives onto his lawn as the bricks whiz over his head. One CRASHES through a window.

Bruce is on his feet; runs after the truck. The truck disappears around the corner.

BRUCE

You throw like a girl!

And he stands there in the street, panting.

BRUCE

Dammit.

INT. BRUCE'S HOUSE - NIGHT

The front door swings open and a panting Bruce lumbers inside, closing the door and tossing his keys on a table.

The home is a cramped, modest two-bedroom maybe one step up from a cheap apartment.

On one whole wall is a large map of the continent of Australia. A handful of thumbtacks poke into a few places on the map.