

MAGNANIMOUS

"Pilot "

By

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EXT. NEW CENTURY PICTURES - STUDIO ENTRANCE - DAY

Hollywood, 1942. A major studio in the golden age, complete with giant sound stages, backlots and various department buildings.

At the front of the lot are large intricately carved columns that welcome and intimidate those queuing up to enter.

A small traffic jam has formed at the security checkpoint. A line of Cadillacs are bumper to bumper, and at the front of the line is WAYNE MONAHAN JR (19). Short, pudgy, prone to anxiety and sweat.

He leans out his car window, talking to a SECURITY ATTENDANT.

WAYNE  
(spelling)  
M-O-N-A-H-A-N.

The attendant frowns at a clipboard he holds in his hands. He flips over a page.

ATTENDANT  
What department did you say?

WAYNE  
Production. Baxter Bryce's office.

The attendant flips through another page.

HONK! Wayne jumps in his skin and glances back at the car behind him. He makes a small "I'm sorry" gesture to the cars behind him.

WAYNE  
Could I just pull through while we  
sort this--

Attendant shakes his head.

ATTENDANT  
If you ain't on here.  
(re: clipboard)  
You ain't in there.

WAYNE  
I am on there, I'm supposed to be on  
there, I was told I would be on  
there. I was told, they told me--

ATTENDANT  
Alright, alright, hang on.

The attendant picks up a phone in his booth.

Wayne checks his watch, his anxiety growing.

INT. BAXTER'S OFFICE - NEW CENTURY PICTURES - DAY

A phone RINGS.

ELAINE DABLE (late 20s) picks up the phone.

She's classically beautiful with an edge -- jaded, dry, her emotions typically muted.

ELAINE  
(on phone)  
Baxter Bryce's office.

And what an office. Spacious and well lit. Giant windows overlooking the campus. A lounge area with Elaine's station, resides next to an adjoining office for more private meetings.

FREDDIE SHEPCUTT (early 30s) an associate producer with a weasel face, nervously smokes a cigarette and paces back and forth in front of Elaine's desk.

He stops pacing and looks her way when she answers the phone.

ELAINE  
(on phone)  
What's the name?

She checks a file.

ELAINE  
(on phone)  
Yes, he is. Send him on up.  
(beat)  
Yes, thank you.

Elaine hangs up. Freddie goes back to pacing.

FREDDIE  
Where the hell is he?

ELAINE  
I don't know.

FREDDIE  
You saw the returns?

ELAINE  
I did.

FREDDIE  
It's a nightmare. Where the hell is he?

ELAINE  
I don't know.

FREDDIE  
It's your job to know.

ELAINE  
It isn't.

FREDDIE  
You call his house?

ELAINE  
Once or twice.

FREDDIE  
Where the hell is he?

ELAINE  
I don't know.

RING. RING. Phone. Elaine answers.

ELAINE  
Baxter Bryce's office.  
(beat)  
No, I'm sorry he's out of the office  
at the moment. May I take a message?

Freddie goes back to pacing.

ELAINE  
(on phone)  
I'll let him know.  
(beat)  
Thank you. Goodbye.

She hangs up, and glances at Freddie pacing.

ELAINE  
You're wearing out the carpet.

FREDDIE  
(thinking he's clever)  
Never had a woman complain.

ELAINE  
Course not, one would have to date  
you first.

He shoots her a dirty look.

FREDDIE  
Watch it or you'll find yourself out  
on your keister.

ELAINE  
I don't work for you.

FREDDIE  
Not yet.

ELAINE  
Oh, you're a rising star.

FREDDIE  
Darn right.

ELAINE  
Did you see the returns?

They lock eyes. She gives a slight smile.

There's a KNOCK at the doorway entrance. Standing in the  
doorway is Wayne.

WAYNE  
Hi. Um... I'm--

ELAINE  
Wayne Monahan. You're in the right  
room.

She crosses around her desk.

WAYNE  
I'm late, I'm sorry -- they didn't  
have my name...

ELAINE  
Elaine Dable.

He shakes her hand.

WAYNE  
(by habit)  
Wayne Monahan.

ELAINE  
I know.

WAYNE  
(feeling stupid)  
Right.

FREDDIE  
Wayne Monahan? Like *the* Wayne  
Monahan?

Wayne nods.

WAYNE  
I'm a junior.

FREDDIE  
Wayne Monahan is your pop?

ELAINE  
(to Freddie)  
That's what junior means.  
(to Wayne)  
This is Freddie Shepcutt, no need  
memorizing the name, he'll probably  
be gone by the end of the day.

Freddie gives her a scowl. He extends his hand to Wayne.

FREDDIE  
(with pride)  
Associate producer.

ELAINE  
(softly)  
For now.

Wayne shakes Freddie's hand.

Freddie grimaces at the touch of Wayne's sweaty palm.

WAYNE  
Sorry.

Wayne wipes his palms on his pants.

ELAINE  
Wayne is our new office boy.

FREDDIE

An office boy? A Monahan as an office boy?

(to Wayne)

What, does your father hate you or something?

WAYNE

Uh... that's kinda personal.

Awkward beat.

FREDDIE

I was foolin'.

WAYNE

Oh.

Beat.

ELAINE

You can take a seat if you like Mr. Monahan.

INT. HALLWAY - NEW CENTURY PICTURES - DAY

Elevator doors pop open and out steps BAXTER BRYCE (30s). Looks at home in a suit; fast talker and a chain smoker. At present, he looks hungover. Rings around his eyes, unshaven face, and disheveled hair peeking out under his hat.

He carries a handmade canvas bag balled up under his arm. He saunters over to...

INT. BAXTER'S OFFICE - NEW CENTURY PICTURES - CONTINUOUS

... his office. Wayne, Freddie and Elaine still present.

BAXTER

Morning.

FREDDIE

Where have you been?

BAXTER

Mexico.

FREDDIE

Mexico?

BAXTER  
Wasn't my idea, believe me.  
(then)  
That's for you.

Baxter pulls out an alebrije (carved wooden animal) from his tote bag. He holds the beautifully painted elephant up to Freddie's face.

FREDDIE  
It's an elephant.

BAXTER  
It most certainly is. You're welcome.

FREDDIE  
We got back the numbers from Sweet Sabotage.

BAXTER  
I heard.  
(to Elaine)  
And for you.

Baxter sets a giraffe on her desk.

ELAINE  
You have messages.

BAXTER  
And you're welcome too. Bunch of ingrates.

He heads to his desk, Elaine and Freddie follow after him.

FREDDIE  
And you saw the numbers?

BAXTER  
I did.

Baxter tosses his hat toward a coat rack in the corner. It's way off, Elaine snatches it in midair and plops it on the hook.

BAXTER  
It's a nightmare. And the reviews are worse.  
(to Elaine)  
What are the messages?

He takes off his coat and shirt and starts shaving with an electric razor.



ELAINE

Gene called. Twice. Wanted to know where you were.

BAXTER

And where'd you tell him I was?

ELAINE

Out screwing his mom.

BAXTER

Good.

ELAINE

I'm lying. That's a habit you're giving me. I told him you were scouting locations for Joan of Arc.

BAXTER

Liked the first one better, but that works too.

FREDDIE

We might be able to boost the numbers in the second-run territories. Do a big campaign, marketing push.

BAXTER

That's good money after bad.

(then)

Who's the potato sweating on my couch?

Freddie and Elaine look back to Wayne.

FREDDIE

Wayne Monahan.

BAXTER

Monahan?

Baxter gestures for Wayne to approach.

ELAINE

New office boy.

FREDDIE

The reviews are gonna kill us if we don't start getting some traction.

ELAINE

Your brother called, sounded important.

BAXTER  
(to Elaine)  
Uh-huh.  
(to Wayne)  
Hi.

WAYNE  
Hello Mr. Bryce, I'm Wayne Monahan.

FREDDIE  
Junior.

Baxter gives him a quick look over.

BAXTER  
How old are you?

WAYNE  
Uh, nineteen.

BAXTER  
Your name keeping you out of the war?

WAYNE  
No sir. My physical is.

BAXTER  
Why do you want to work in the  
pictures?

WAYNE  
I like the pictures. Isn't that why  
you work here?

BAXTER  
No.

Wayne is taken aback.

WAYNE  
You don't like the pictures?

Baxter shrugs.

BAXTER  
Not particularly.

Baxter pulls out a fresh suit from a closet in his office.

ELAINE  
Also, Mona Westwick called.

BAXTER

Who?

Baxter starts to take off his pants. Elaine turns around to face away.

ELAINE

Westwick.

BAXTER

Who?

ELAINE

Hollywood Reporter, reporter.

BAXTER

Wayne, did you see where the coffee was out there?

WAYNE

Oh, I don't drink coffee.

BAXTER

I do.

Takes a moment for it to click with Wayne.

WAYNE

Oh, right. Gotcha. Uh...

Wayne exits.

BAXTER

(yelling after him)

Pinch of sugar.

(to Elaine)

So what'd she want?

Her back is still to him.

FREDDIE

(to Elaine)

He's talking to you.

ELAINE

What did who want?

BAXTER

The Reporter, reporter.

FREDDIE

Wants to hang us by the Sabotage numbers.

ELAINE  
(correcting tone)  
Wants a comment.

FREDDIE  
Rubbing our faces in it. Little  
bitch.

ELAINE  
It's her job.

FREDDIE  
It's schadenfreude.

BAXTER  
Hey, no German in this office, don't  
you know we're at war?  
(to Elaine)  
What'd you tell her?

ELAINE  
I told her--

She turns around, sees that Baxter is still not wearing  
pants and spins right back around.

ELAINE  
(irritated)  
Are you going to put some pants on!?

BAXTER  
Probably. What'd you tell her?

ELAINE  
I told her you weren't available for  
comment.

BAXTER  
I wasn't *available*?

Baxter quickly puts a pair of pants on.

BAXTER  
No details? Turn around.

She does.

BAXTER  
No details, just that I wasn't  
available?

ELAINE  
Just that.

BAXTER

Why would you say that? Why would you tell her that I wasn't available?

ELAINE

Probably because you weren't available.

BAXTER

But you don't *tell her that*. Get her on the phone. I'm available, get her on the phone.

Elaine exits.

FREDDIE

Talking to her is a bad idea.

BAXTER

No, looking like we're hiding is a bad idea.

FREDDIE

Listen, if we put together a big campaign, a tour with the cast in the second-run territories, make a whole spectacle of it--

BAXTER

(sternly)

The film is dead. What don't you get about that? The only question now is who's responsible, and if you're running around trying to fix it, they're going to think you are.

Baxter's phone CHIMES.

ELAINE (O.S.)

Mona Westwick.

Baxter picks up the phone.

BAXTER

(on phone)

Mona, how you doing?

(beat)

Good, good. So what do you want?

(beat)

Yeah. I heard about that too.

(MORE)

BAXTER (cont'd)

(beat)

Well, I'm not sure I'm the best  
person to talk to, this was more  
Gene's baby.

Freddie gives a slight smile. Wayne enters with the cup of  
coffee and sets it on Baxter's desk.

Baxter nods in appreciation to Wayne. Wayne stands where he  
is, waiting.

BAXTER

I got sidelined for Joan of Arc.

(beat)

Yeah, real passion project for Monty.

(long beat)

Uh-huh.

He cups the receiver, looks to Wayne.

BAXTER

What are you doing?

WAYNE

... nothing.

BAXTER

What should you be doing?

WAYNE

I don't know.

BAXTER

Go find out.

(on phone)

Well, I don't know what you want from  
me Mona.

Wayne exits.

BAXTER

(on phone)

I know what you know, that it came in  
a little soft. We're not too worried.  
It has legs. Positive word of mouth,  
it'll land where it needs to. Gene  
knows what he's doing.

(beat)

Alright. Yeah. Good luck.

(beat)

Bye.

Baxter hangs up.

FREDDIE  
He's gonna come at you.

Baxter nods.

BAXTER  
You gotta fight to get on the lot,  
you gotta fight to stay on it.

He checks his watch.

BAXTER  
(yelling out to her)  
Elaine, where am I supposed to be  
right now?

INT. SCREENING ROOM - NEW CENTURY PICTURES - DAY

Flickers of light from a projector illuminates the room. A handful of EXECS and CREATIVE TYPES smoke their cigarettes and watch dailies in comfortable chairs.

GENE HEMMER, (40s) tough, experienced, and a tenacious executive takes a seat behind Baxter.

He leans in toward Baxter, talking in hushed tones.

GENE  
Hey.

Baxter looks back.

BAXTER  
Hey.

GENE  
How was the location scout?

BAXTER  
Uneventful.  
(beat)  
You see the returns?

GENE  
I did. It's a nightmare.

BAXTER  
Any ideas how to turn it around?

GENE  
Maybe.

Baxter nods.

BAXTER

Then I'll trust you with it, I got my hands full with Joan of Arc.

Gene eyes him.

GENE

Important project. Who does Monty want for the lead?

BAXTER

Rita Faire.

Gene snorts.

GENE

MGM will never loan her out to us.

BAXTER

She's perfect though.

GENE

Yeah, most unattainable girls are.

Beat.

GENE

What about Ethel Renner?

Baxter freezes. Then casually takes a drag on his cigarette.

BAXTER

Not for this part.

GENE

I thought you liked her?

BAXTER

I do. Not for this part.

GENE

Got to plug her in somewhere, what with what we paid for her.

BAXTER

So you use her. She's talented.

GENE

I'll pass.

Gene leans in closer.



GENE

You know how long I've been here?

BAXTER

Long time.

GENE

You think you're smarter than everyone else, fancy yourself some kind of wunderkind.

BAXTER

No German please, we're at war.

GENE

Seventeen years tomorrow. That's how long I've been here. And you better believe, that for me, Baxter... there's gonna be a tomorrow.

Gene rises to his feet.

GENE

Good luck with Joan of Arc.

He exits.

Baxter sits for a moment, deep in thought, smoking his cigarette. Then, he bolts up and rushes out.

INT. BAXTER'S OFFICE - NEW CENTURY PICTURES - DAY

Baxter rushes into his office. Elaine jumps to her feet when she sees him. He brushes past her and grabs a Wheeldex from his desk and starts quickly tearing out contact cards from it.

ELAINE

Monty called.

Baxter looks back to Elaine.

ELAINE

His office. Immediately.

Baxter nods and hands her the wad of contact cards.

BAXTER

Hold on to these for me. If things go sideways call Bernie right away, tell'em I'm branching out on my own and to start the paperwork.

(MORE)

BAXTER (cont'd)

(beat)

I want to be in business by the end  
of the day.

Elaine looks concerned.

BAXTER

It's just a precaution.

Baxter heads out.

INT. LARGE HALLWAY - NEW CENTURY PICTURES - DAY

Baxter straightens his tie as he approaches a set of large  
double doors.

Just as he reaches them, Freddie exits. They lock eyes.  
Freddie breaks the gaze and awkwardly shuffles past him.

Baxter glances back at him. His jaw tightening, then he  
plunges into...

INT. MONTY'S OFFICE - NEW CENTURY PICTURES - CONTINUOUS

A large, spacious room, with dark wood paneling, and a large  
desk that is raised on a platform.

Standing at the desk is MONTY WIETZMAN (60s) old, but has  
lost none of the fire in his belly.

Positioned around him, is a cadre of LAWYERS and BEAN  
COUNTERS.

Baxter lights himself a cigarette, like it's for his  
execution.

BAXTER

Alright, so what's all the hubbub  
Monty?

INT. BAXTER'S OFFICE - NEW CENTURY PICTURES - DAY

TWO MEN in suits barge into Baxter's office.

ELAINE

Excuse me...

They brush past Elaine and start going through Baxter's  
stuff, separating personal items from work items.

Elaine watches for a second and then quickly snatches up the phone.

INT. MONTY'S OFFICE - NEW CENTURY PICTURES - DAY

Monty stares down at his desk.

MONTY

What was the contract for Ethel Renner?

Baxter shrugs his shoulders.

BAXTER

That's not my purview.

MONTY

But you pushed for her.

BAXTER

I--

MONTY

Twenty-five hundred a week for two years. Minimum of three pictures, the first one being My Lady Valentine.

BAXTER

It's a good picture, it's gonna do big numbers.

BANG! Monty slams his fist down hard on the desk.

Beat.

MONTY

(to bean counter)

How much we spend on that picture?

BEAN COUNTER

One million, two hundred fifty-eight thousand, nine hundred and seventy-six dollars.

MONTY

And today, I get a heads-up from the Los Angeles Times that Hedda Hopper is running a story in her gossip column that *our star* -- a star that you pushed for -- our star, of a picture that cost me one million...

Monty points to Bean Counter.

BEAN COUNTER  
...two hundred fifty-eight thousand,  
nine hundred and seventy-six  
dollars--

MONTY  
Is fornicating with a colored man.

Long beat. Baxter's brow furrows.

BAXTER  
How did Hedda find out?

MONTY  
You knew about it, before we even  
signed her. Didn't you?

Monty locks eyes with Baxter.

BAXTER  
That's what Freddie told you.

MONTY  
Are you gonna deny it?

BAXTER  
No. I didn't see it as an issue.

MONTY  
Don't pretend to be sanctimonious,  
this is business.

BAXTER  
She was right for the part.

MONTY  
There is no part! There is no  
picture! I'm sitting on a film that  
cost me ONE POINT TWO MILLION DOLLARS  
THAT I CAN'T RELEASE NOW!

Baxter takes a long drag on his cigarette. He exhales.

BAXTER  
If you were smart Monty, you'd be  
more concerned with who tipped off  
Hopper than me.

He snuffs out his cigarette and heads for the exit.

MONTY  
Where the hell are you going?

Baxter turns back.

BAXTER  
What? You need to actually say the words?

Baxter exits and nearly runs into a SECURITY GUARD. He looks the guard up and down.

BAXTER  
(mumbling)  
Alright then.

INT. BAXTER'S OFFICE - NEW CENTURY PICTURES - DAY

Baxter rushes back into his office with the security guard following behind him.

He spots Elaine and then notices his office. The place looks ransacked. A cardboard box of his personal items rests on his desk.

BAXTER  
Did you call Bernie?

ELAINE  
He's waiting on a name.

BAXTER  
How about Screw You Monty Productions?

ELAINE  
I'll check if it's available.

Baxter grabs the box of his personal items.

ELAINE  
If not, maybe BB Pictures? Baxter Productions?

BAXTER  
I don't care, you can pick it. We got to move quick here, c'mon grab your stuff.

Elaine arches an eyebrow.

Baxter stops. He looks back at her.

There's an awkward beat.

ELAINE  
(softly)  
I still have my job.

BAXTER  
No. You have a job. Your job was  
working for me, and that job is  
moving shop.

She doesn't reply, her eyes dart away.

BAXTER  
You really want to work for *Freddie*?

ELAINE  
I didn't really want to work for you  
when I started.

He glowers.

BAXTER  
Fine.

He snatches the giraffe he gave her from off her desk.

BAXTER  
I'm taking this.

He stuffs it in his box and heads for the door.

ELAINE  
(tenderly)  
Hey.

She crosses around her desk and gives him a hug. Secretly,  
she slips the contact cards he gave her into his coat  
pocket. Baxter notices. The security guard doesn't.

ELAINE  
Good luck.

He nods and heads out, with the security guard following  
closely behind him.

INT. PRODUCTION LOBBY - NEW CENTURY PICTURES - DAY

Elevator doors open and Baxter steps out carrying his box,  
with the security guard behind him.

He spots Wayne walking in.

BAXTER  
(calls after him)  
Monahan!

Wayne looks up, surprised.

BAXTER  
You like the pictures right?

WAYNE  
Uh... yeah.

BAXTER  
You want to be a producer?

WAYNE  
What?

BAXTER  
Director? Writer?

WAYNE  
Uh...p-- uh...producer.

Wayne suddenly notices the guard and the box of personal effects.

WAYNE  
Did you get fired?

BAXTER  
Of course not.

The security guard grabs Baxter's arm, and nudges him toward the exit.

BAXTER  
I'm going independent, and I want you on my team.

WAYNE  
Me?

BAXTER  
You come with me right now, I'll make you a producer. Today. What do you say?

WAYNE  
Gee I dunno.

BAXTER

You don't *know*? It's an obvious choice Wayne.

The security guard gets a little more physical, working Baxter toward the door.

BAXTER

Office boy to producer in a day, it's never been done. Once in a lifetime opportunity.

WAYNE

Well yeah, but...

Security guard is really working Baxter now.

BAXTER

I need your answer. In or out Monahan? In or out?

Wayne bits his lower lip, summing up the courage.

WAYNE

Out! Or... in! Out there, with you! I'm in!

Wayne smiles like it's the bravest thing he's ever done.

Baxter smiles back.

BAXTER

Welcome aboard Mr. Producer.  
(then)  
Here.

Baxter hands Wayne the box of his personal items.

BAXTER

Carry that.

And together they march quickly out of the building.

EXT. NEW CENTURY PICTURES - PAY PHONE AREA - DAY

Baxter hurriedly crosses to a set of public phones on the lot. A winded Wayne tries to keep up, still carrying Baxter's box.

Baxter fishes into his pockets and pulls out some coins. He plops them in the phone and pulls out the contact cards from his pocket.



He finds what he's looking for and dials.

BAXTER  
(on phone)  
Yeah, Baxter Bryce for Jack Warner.

Wayne sets the box down next to Baxter and wipes the sweat from his brow.

Baxter hands Wayne a contact number.

BAXTER  
(to Wayne)  
Get Selznick on the phone.

Wayne snatches the card. Baxter flips Wayne a coin, Wayne misses the catch, the coin falls to the ground, bounces and rolls off. Wayne chases after it.

BAXTER  
(on phone)  
Well, who is available? This can't wait.  
(beat)  
Alright get me Hellinger.

Wayne gets the coin and turns back to Baxter.

BAXTER  
(on phone)  
Hey Mark, Mark, it's Baxter.

WAYNE  
This is a peso.

Baxter glares at Wayne and furiously points to another pay phone. Wayne immediately starts rifling through his own pockets and pulls out some coins.

BAXTER  
(on phone)  
You're looking for a leading lady for the Flynn picture right?  
(beat)  
I know but Jack's not in.

Wayne dials the number on his card.

WAYNE  
(on phone)  
Hello? Yes, hello? I'm calling for Mr. Selznick.

BAXTER

(on phone)

You're going to get a call from  
Monty, he's gonna loan out Ethel  
Renner. Don't take the deal.

WAYNE

(on phone)

Wayne Monahan.

BAXTER

(on phone)

He knows you're in a bind, and you'll  
snatch her. She's toxic.

WAYNE

(on phone)

Why am I calling? Umm...

Wayne looks to Baxter for help.

BAXTER

(to Wayne)

Calling for me.

(on phone)

I'm doing you a favor, trust me.

WAYNE

(on phone)

I'm calling on behalf of Baxter  
Bryce.

BAXTER

(on phone)

You'll know why in the Times  
tomorrow. Then, you'll owe me. Got  
it?

Wayne holds out his phone to Baxter.

WAYNE

It's Selznick.

BAXTER

(on phone)

Don't be bullied into making a deal.  
Tell Jack. Bye.

Baxter grabs the phone Wayne is holding.

BAXTER

(on phone)

David, Monty's trying to dish Ethel Renner to Warner. Once that doesn't work, he's coming to you. Don't take the deal.

(beat)

It's bad. Stay clear. Who else would be interested?

(beat)

What about RKO?

(beat)

Uh-huh.

(beat)

I don't have relationships over there. I did you a favor, now do me one, forward the message, Monty's trying to pull a fast one.

(beat)

Never better. Why?

(beat)

Alright. Bye.

Baxter hangs up and turns to Wayne.

BAXTER

Where's your car?

EXT. PARKING LOT - NEW CENTURY PICTURES - DAY

Baxter and Wayne quickly walk through rows of parked cars.

BAXTER

She's coming in to renew her contract this afternoon. She's flying in to Lockheed -- you know where that is?

WAYNE

(star struck)

Claudette Biddle...

BAXTER

Hey, pay attention. Lockheed Air Terminal. She doesn't leave without you making the deal. So what do you tell her?

WAYNE

(recalling)

I tell her New Century has been mismanaging her.

BAXTER  
Right. And?

WAYNE  
And that she's a star.

BAXTER  
(correcting)  
*A leading lady.*

WAYNE  
Leading lady.

They reach Wayne's car, Wayne puts Baxter's box inside his car.

BAXTER  
Offer her *max* ten hundred a week --  
don't go over that. Got it?

WAYNE  
Ten hundred.

Baxter heads off.

BAXTER  
(calling back)  
Don't go over that.

WAYNE  
(to himself)  
Right.  
(beat)  
Claudette Biddle

Wayne self-consciously starts fixing his hair.

I/E. YEWDELL'S HOUSE - DAY

A house more run-down than deserving of its age.

Baxter knocks.

No answer, he glances around at the neighborhood.

Then, the door opens. LEWIS YEWDELL (20s) looks older, haggard, dressed in a dirty wife beater and slacks. A bottle of beer in his hand.

BAXTER  
Good, you're home.

Lewis squints his eyes at Baxter, perplexed.

LEWIS  
What are you doing here?

BAXTER  
Joan of Arc. I need a screenwriter.

LEWIS  
You fired me.

BAXTER  
Yeah, that's how I know you need the work.

Beat.

BAXTER  
Can I come in?

Lewis makes room for him.

Baxter steps inside.

The place is bare. A chair in the living room. Beer bottles on the ground.

Baxter takes it in.

BAXTER  
Love what you haven't done with the place. You at least have a typewriter, right?

LEWIS  
Yeah.

BAXTER  
Good. And you know the story? Joan of Arc?

LEWIS  
Vaguely. New Century wants me back?

BAXTER  
No, I'm not with them anymore.

LEWIS  
Who you with?

BAXTER

I'm with me. Good news for you, my policy on sobriety at work is a little less strict than New Century's.

LEWIS

That's sad if that's good news for me. Joan of Arc, wasn't that Monty's passion?

BAXTER

Now it's mine. You have paper?

LEWIS

Yeah. Haven't been doing much writing lately.

BAXTER

I'll pay you three hundred dollars a week to take it up again.

LEWIS

Three hundred?

BAXTER

Yes. Joan of Arc.

LEWIS

I think I could do that.

BAXTER

Good. You start today. I need it by the end of the week.

Baxter makes a move for the exit.

LEWIS

A week?

BAXTER

Bring the pages by the office tomorrow.

LEWIS

Where's your office?

BAXTER

I don't know yet. I'll be in touch.

And with that, he's out.

INT. LOCKHEED AIR TERMINAL - DAY

Wayne nervously stands next to a DRIVER holding a sign that reads, "CLAUDETTE BIDDLE."

After a moment CLAUDETTE BIDDLE (20s) wearing a white dress and large hat, is followed by an entourage of airport SERVICE MEN, carrying her luggage.

Claudette is small framed, with a mousey voice. Cute, but no leading lady. She approaches her driver.

WAYNE

(nervous)

Miss Biddle. My name is Wayne Monahan. I'm a... *producer* with Baxter Bryce.

CLAUDETTE

Who?

The driver grabs her bags. Wayne makes himself useful and grabs a couple as well.

WAYNE

You don't know me, but I'm with Baxter Bryce.

CLAUDETTE

Who?

WAYNE

Baxter Bryce. He produced many of your pictures at New Century.

CLAUDETTE

Oh. Yes. I'm heading over there now actually.

They head out toward the car, Wayne follows.

WAYNE

Yes. I know. But you shouldn't. I mean... you shouldn't sign with them, they've been treating you rotten -- at least I sure think so -- and so does Mr. Bryce.

CLAUDETTE

Don't you work for New Century?

They reach the car and put the luggage in the trunk.

WAYNE

No. Mr. Bryce has gone independent.  
He wants to make you an offer. Says  
you've been mismanaged by New  
Century.

CLAUDETTE

The other studios don't seem to think  
so.

WAYNE

They're wrong.

CLAUDETTE

Public don't seem to think so either.  
They're all clamoring for Garlands,  
and Hepburns -- what they got, that I  
don't got?

WAYNE

Nothing that I can see.

Claudette gets into the back of the car.

CLAUDETTE

You're sweet.

The driver promptly closes her door, separating Wayne from  
her. He doesn't know what to do.

The driver climbs into the car.

WAYNE

Uh...

Her door opens.

CLAUDETTE

Are you getting in or what?

INT. SOUND STAGE - DAY

BRRRRRRRING - a bell rings out. A FIRST A.D. addresses a set  
filled with GRIPS, G/ES, ACTORS and EXTRAS.

FIRST A.D.

That's a break for lunch.

Baxter sits in a chair, watching people clear out of the  
room.



VIRGIL LEHMAN (40s) a man with considerable heft, both physically and professionally, makes his way to Baxter.

VIRGIL  
You're in my chair.

Baxter jumps up from his seat.

BAXTER  
Thanks for seeing me.

VIRGIL  
Mmm.

Baxter looks around at the set.

BAXTER  
Going on your own seems to be working well for you.

VIRGIL  
I love it. I can go where I want to go, I can do the projects I want to do. Anyone doesn't like it, I can tell them to kiss my ass.

Baxter smiles.

BAXTER  
Yeah, getting a taste for that myself.

VIRGIL  
So, did you walk out or get thrown out?

Baxter eyes him.

BAXTER  
I threw myself out.

Beat.

BAXTER  
Joan of Arc. I want you to megaphone it.

Virgil sniffs.

VIRGIL  
You have a script?

BAXTER  
Lewis Yewdell is almost finished with  
it.

VIRGIL  
Ah, you got Lewis? I like Lewis.

BAXTER  
Everyone likes Lewis.

VIRGIL  
Except Lewis.

BAXTER  
He's the anomaly.  
(then)  
So what do you think?

VIRGIL  
I'll be straight with you Baxter, I  
don't care for you. I never have.

BAXTER  
Well, I'm not asking you to marry me.

VIRGIL  
(a little too  
defensive)  
What'd you say?

BAXTER  
If this is about How Green Was My  
Valley, you weren't right for it. I  
did you a favor.

VIRGIL  
A favor?

BAXTER  
It wasn't right for you. It woulda  
gone sideways, your stock would've  
fallen.

Virgil stares at Baxter.

VIRGIL  
Guess we'll never know.

Beat.

BAXTER  
Alright, maybe I made a mistake with  
that one. But I won't on this one.  
(MORE)

BAXTER (cont'd)  
You're the director for this picture.  
You're perfect for it.

Virgil sniffs.

VIRGIL  
You want me to consider it, you  
better show me some respect.

Beat.

BAXTER  
I thought I already did.

VIRGIL  
No. You didn't.  
(beat)  
Say please.

Long beat.

BAXTER  
Please.

Virgil sniffs again.

VIRGIL  
Try again. Maybe this time on your  
knees.

Baxter glowers and heads for the exit.

VIRGIL  
(calling after him)  
Too proud, that's your problem.

INT. CAR - DAY

Wayne sweats, riding along next to Claudette. She stares out the window. He stares at her, can't take his eyes off her.

CLAUDETTE  
Would you stop staring at me.

WAYNE  
Sorry.

He looks straight ahead.

WAYNE  
Haven't seen a movie starlet before.

CLAUDETTE

That doesn't say much for your  
production house.

WAYNE

Well I'm new.

CLAUDETTE

(flatly)

How very exciting.

WAYNE

It is. Riding next to Claudette  
Biddle. It's hard to believe.

She smiles.

CLAUDETTE

You're really smitten ain't ya?

WAYNE

I think you're wonderful. I've seen  
all your movies -- well -- most of  
them anyway. Tiger Lily. The Great  
Beyond. In Lieu Of A Kiss.

She scoffs.

CLAUDETTE

You'd hardly notice I was in that  
one. Blink and you'd miss me.

WAYNE

Oh, well I noticed.

(beat)

I think it's crazy you're not more  
front and center.

She gives him a look.

WAYNE

Sorry, I mean, I think you're a  
leading lady is all.

CLAUDETTE

You mean that?

WAYNE

Absolutely I do. You're pretty...

She glances at him...

WAYNE

... I mean, you're talented. And that's what Mr. Bryce -- what I -- what we are offering you. One year contract. One thousand dollars a week.

CLAUDETTE

Lead?

WAYNE

Yes.

CLAUDETTE

My name above the titles?

WAYNE

... I don't know if I can promise that.

CLAUDETTE

I would want my font at least equal in size to the title.

WAYNE

Well... I'm not sure about that, but I can ask.

She looks at him, considering. Skeptical.

CLAUDETTE

Lead role in pictures that never release is no step up.

The car comes to a stop. The driver steps out and circles around to her and opens her door.

WAYNE

They'll release.

CLAUDETTE

And how many pictures have you produced?

Beat.

WAYNE

None. But, we're new.

Claudette thinks for a moment.

CLAUDETTE

Thank you for your offer.

She steps out of the car.

Wayne is crestfallen.

Suddenly, she stops. Turns around.

CLAUDETTE  
Thirteen hundred a week and you have  
a deal.

Wayne looks up, surprised.

WAYNE  
Um...

Finally...

WAYNE  
I can do that.

INT. BAXTER'S OFFICE - NEW CENTURY PICTURES - DAY

Elaine watches as Freddie decorates his new office.

RING. RING. Elaine answers.

ELAINE  
(on phone)  
Baxt-- Freddie Shepcutt's office.

BAXTER (O.S.)  
The hell it is.

Elaine gives a slight smile.

INTERCUT AS NEEDED from Baxter's old office to...

INT. BAXTER'S NEW OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

A small CREW, a mix of electricians and painters are working  
in the b.g. getting his office up and running.

Baxter sits at his desk, legs propped up.

BAXTER  
You miss me yet?

ELAINE  
Miss your sense of style. Freddie's  
redecorating.

BAXTER

Has Ethel Renner been suspended?

ELAINE

Gees, you're forward, ain't you ever heard of foreplay? You do realize that you are now a competitor, right? And that I could get in serious trouble for discussing the inner workings of this office with you. At least pretend to sneak it out of me. Seduce a girl.

BAXTER

You have lovely hair. Is Renner suspended?

Elaine rolls her eyes.

ELAINE

Not yet.

BAXTER

Did he dump her off?

ELAINE

No. I think you saw to that.

BAXTER

Did you hear I signed Claudette?

ELAINE

I did. Is this just spite or do you actually have a business plan?

Baxter thinks for a moment.

BAXTER

Is spite a bad business model?

Lewis crosses over to Baxter, he hands him a couple of sheets of paper. Baxter takes them and looks them over.

ELAINE

Not sure it's sustainable.

BAXTER

Neither is being magnanimous.

ELAINE

Alright, so you can break things, but are you going to build something?

Baxter considers.

BAXTER  
Working on it.  
(then)  
Anyway, thanks for the inside track,  
secret super spy. You have nice gams.

ELAINE  
Swoon. Bye.

She hangs up. Looks back to Freddie, a thousand thoughts swirling in her head.

BAXTER'S NEW OFFICE

Baxter looks at the pages Lewis gave him.

BAXTER  
It's a muddled second act.

LEWIS  
It's history. History is muddled.

BAXTER  
Forget the war.

LEWIS  
Forget the war? The second act is the war.

BAXTER  
We don't need images of the English losing battles right now. Focus on the spiritual. That's what this picture is. Is she crazy, is she divine? Write that.

Lewis sighs.

LEWIS  
Alright. I'll write it. You got anyone who can direct it?

BAXTER  
I'm working on it.

INT. CIRO'S - NIGHT

Swanky 1940s nightclub. Baroque interior. A stage for large live brass bands.



JIMMY PANICHELLI (40s) Italian and looks it. Dangerous and knows it. He sips at a glass of scotch.

Across from him is Baxter.

BAXTER  
You saying it can't be done?

JIMMY  
Anything can be done. But there's  
cost and there's risk.  
(beat)  
He's got friends.

BAXTER  
And you're my friend.

JIMMY  
That's why I'm telling you, it's a  
bad idea. You're stirring up  
something you don't want to stir up.

BAXTER  
Alright, that's the risk. What's the  
cost?

JIMMY  
You're not listening to me.

BAXTER  
Virgil Lehman is my director. How  
much?

Jimmy shakes his head, dismayed.

JIMMY  
To cover the risk? Two hundred G's.

Steep price.

BAXTER  
I can get twenty before. The rest  
after. You take a check?

JIMMY  
If it bounces, so will your body when  
it hits the pavement.

BAXTER  
When can you get it?

JIMMY

Few days, I dunno. I'll try to set something up. Who knows if the rumors are even true.

BAXTER

I believe very strongly in Hollywood rumors.

JIMMY

Hope not the ones about me.

BAXTER

Especially the ones about you. That's how I know you can do this.

Jimmy locks eyes with Baxter.

JIMMY

You sure about this?

Baxter finishes his drink and rises to his feet. He heads toward the exit and then spots RITA FAIRE (20s) standing over by the bar.

She's a leading lady, no question. Oozes glamour.

Baxter saunters up to her.

BAXTER

Miss Faire, well this fortuitous.

RITA

Is it?

BAXTER

What are the chances of bumping into the star of my next picture?

RITA

I'd say about three hundred, twenty-five thousand to one.

BAXTER

Oddly specific.

RITA

That's my flat fee.

BAXTER

Ah.

He extends his hand.

BAXTER

Baxter Bryce.

Rita gives a soft laugh.

RITA

Didn't realize you were Baxter Bryce -- you have even less chance of hiring me.

BAXTER

Why is that?

RITA

Because Louis hates Monty Wietzman.

BAXTER

Good thing I'm not Monty Wietzman.

RITA

But you work for him.

BAXTER

*Worked*. I'm independent now.

RITA

Then you *really* can't afford me.

BAXTER

You underestimate my negotiation skills.

(to BARTENDER)

You have a phone?

(to Rita)

I can be quite charming.

RITA

I'd love to see that someday.

The BARTENDER plops a phone on the counter. Baxter grabs the receiver and dials a number. Rita watches him, intrigued and amused.

BAXTER

(on phone)

Hey, L.B.? It's Baxter Bryce. I need Rita Faire for a picture.

(beat)

I know what time it is Louis. How much do you want for Rita?

(MORE)

BAXTER (cont'd)

(beat)

That much?

(to Rita)

You ain't kidding.

(on phone)

That's hardly market value... well,  
for one she's not that talented,  
mostly gets by on her looks.

Rita gives a slight smile.

BAXTER

(on phone)

And frankly the way you've been  
mismanaging her career, it's a  
miracle she makes what she makes. But  
if you lend her out for Joan of Arc,  
she'll be worth twice that and maybe  
have an Oscar to boot. This is an  
investment Louis, I'm doing you a  
favor. I'll give you a New York  
minute to think about it.

He holds the receiver to his chest, and shoots Rita a look.

RITA

Nobody talks to Louis that way. I'm  
impressed.

BAXTER

Naturally.

RITA

But if that's Louis, then, what's he  
doing sitting over there?

Rita points across the room. Baxter looks, and indeed LOUIS  
B. MAYER is sitting at a table.

BAXTER

Oh, you meant *Mayer*? No this is my  
friend Louis, he used to run France.

(on phone)

Louis I'm gonna have to call you  
back, good luck with the Dutch war.

He hangs up the phone. Rita smiles.

RITA

So there's the charm.

BAXTER

That's the pitch.

RITA  
Joan of Arc?

BAXTER  
Written by Lewis Yewdell, directed by  
Virgil Lehman and starring Rita  
Faire.

RITA  
Joan of Arc was *nineteen*.

BAXTER  
She looks better with age.  
(then)  
What do you think?

RITA  
I don't know.

BAXTER  
Sure you do. You like the idea, you  
like the project, you like me.

She shoots him a look.

BAXTER  
But you're right, I can't afford you.  
I need a trade to sweeten the deal.  
Who does MGM need?

She purses her lips, mulling it over.

RITA  
George Raft.

Baxter winces.

BAXTER  
What about Bogart?

RITA  
They're soft on Bogart.

BAXTER  
Cagney?

RITA  
Raft.

BAXTER  
Not leaving me much wiggle room. I'll  
talk to Jack.

RITA

Be sure to use your charms.

With that, she gets up and walks away. He watches her go.

I/E. BAXTER'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Baxter drives up to his home. Another car is in the driveway, a man sitting on his front porch. It's DAVID BRYCE (30s), Baxter's older brother.

Baxter kills the engine and steps out of the car.

BAXTER

What are you doing?

DAVID

You haven't returned any of my calls.

BAXTER

Yeah... well, I've been busy. I'm starting my own business.

DAVID

Yeah, Elaine told me.  
Congratulations.

BAXTER

Thank you.

Beat.

BAXTER

Well, come on in.

Baxter opens the door and the two of them enter.

LIVING ROOM

David casually glances around the home.

BAXTER

You've been here before, right?

DAVID

Yeah. Once. You didn't have everything... situated then.

(beat)

It's nice. You're a big shot, eh?

BAXTER

Yeah. You wanna drink?

DAVID

Water.

BAXTER

I was thinking something more substantial.

DAVID

I gave up booze. Didn't think the Lord liked it.

BAXTER

Oh. Well, you think the Lord would mind if I had a beer in my own home?

DAVID

Don't flip your wig, I'm not saying anything about you.

BAXTER

Of course you are.

DAVID

I'm not here to pick a fight.

BAXTER

No, that's never what you *intend*--

DAVID

Stop talking before you say something you're gonna regret.

(beat)

I need to tell you something.

BAXTER

Alright. Fine. What?

DAVID

I got drafted.

Long beat. Baxter looks stunned.

Silence that lingers, till finally...

BAXTER

Are you sure?

DAVID

Am I sure? You think that's something people mistake?

Baxter shakes his head in disbelief.

DAVID

They say they need ten million men by next year.

BAXTER

We'll call someone. Maybe I know someone -- we can straighten this out.

DAVID

I'm not weaseling out of this Baxter.

BAXTER

You have kids, David. You have a wife.

DAVID

I know that.

Long beat.

BAXTER

I could use that drink now.

Baxter exits and David follows him to the...

KITCHEN

Baxter grabs himself a beer from the fridge.

DAVID

I leave for Basic in a week.

(beat)

I was hoping that you'd watch after Annette and the girls while I'm away. Just, check in on them... time to time.

Baxter nods.

DAVID

Annette's gotten some work, so they shouldn't need much of anything, it'd just make me feel better if--

BAXTER

No. She won't have to work. I'll give her two hundred a week.

DAVID

I don't want your money.



BAXTER

I don't care what you want.

DAVID

I'm not a charity case.

BAXTER

Of course you're not, charities are grateful.

DAVID

I'm *grateful*, for the offer--

BAXTER

No you're not.

David gives an exasperated sigh.

DAVID

Alright. I'm not. You're my baby brother, you don't need to be taking care of me.

BAXTER

That's right, baby brother, a big shot. When it should've been you.

Beat.

DAVID

That's what you really think?

BAXTER

I think you took up religion just to set yourself above. So that you could still look down on me.

David stares at Baxter.

DAVID

That's a rotten thing to say.

(beat)

I don't look down on you. I'm proud of you. You're just too dense to see that.

(long beat)

But I do worry about you.

(beat)

Most people don't know the world you live in. But I do. And I worry... I worry what it might do to you. Or what it's done.

Long beat. David seems to squirm, uncomfortable.

DAVID  
I'll take the money.  
(beat)  
Annette would be, mighty grateful for  
it.  
(beat)  
Thank you.

David crosses to Baxter and gives him a hug. It's stiff, awkward, but eventually, Baxter hugs him back.

BAXTER  
Don't do anything stupid over there,  
like try to be noble.

David smiles.

DAVID  
I'll keep that in mind.

INT. BAXTER'S NEW OFFICE - DAY

The finishing touches are being put on his office. Baxter delicately hangs a movie poster on the wall. He steps back to examine it.

ELAINE (O.S.)  
It's crooked.

He looks back, surprised to see her. Then he smiles.

BAXTER  
Whaddaya think?

He gestures around the room.

ELAINE  
I think that poster's crooked.

BAXTER  
You see this?

He points to his desk, with three phones resting on top.

BAXTER  
Multiple lines.

ELAINE  
Impressive.  
(MORE)

ELAINE (cont'd)

(beat)

Be more impressive if they were ringing.

BAXTER

Give it some time. Soon you're going to have your hands full.

ELAINE

I am?

BAXTER

That's why you're here, you want your old job back.

ELAINE

No. I have my old job. I want a new job.

(beat)

I wanna work here. But as a producer.

Baxter eyes her.

ELAINE

I know the business better than most -- I've been watching you long enough. I can do it. And what's more, you know I can too.

Beat.

BAXTER

I don't doubt it. But I can't take you on.

ELAINE

You took on Wayne.

BAXTER

I hired Wayne Monahan Jr, because of Wayne Monahan Sr. He has access to capital.

(beat)

Look around. How many pictures do you think we're cooking up in here?

That sinks in for her.

BAXTER

I don't need another producer. But I do need a secretary.

She stares at him for a long moment.

ELAINE

Fine. Secretary. But with the promise of upward mobility when this thing takes off.

Baxter smiles.

BAXTER

Deal.

ELAINE

And I'm not taking a pay cut -- actually, I want a raise.

BAXTER

A raise?

ELAINE

A dollar an hour increase.

BAXTER

You're picking my pocket--

ELAINE

And I want my giraffe back.

Baxter stares hard at her, considering. Then, he grabs the wooden giraffe off his desk and hands it to her.

BAXTER

Welcome back.

CUT TO:

INT. BAXTER'S NEW OFFICE - DAY

Baxter, Wayne and Elaine are gathered around Baxter's desk. Stacks of trade papers, Hollywood Reporter, Variety, etc cover the desk and Wayne and Elaine sift through them, reading through the headlines.

Baxter is on the phone.

WAYNE

What are we looking for?

BAXTER

Weakness. We got to get a George Raft, with nothing but a Claudette Biddle.

Wayne furrows his brow.

BAXTER  
(on phone)  
Hey Jack, it's Baxter Bryce.

Elaine finds something in a trade paper.

ELAINE  
(to Baxter)  
Andrews Sisters are negotiating with  
Universal.

Baxter shakes off the idea.

BAXTER  
(on phone)  
Glad you heeded my advice on Renner.

ELAINE  
It's holding up an Abbott and  
Costello picture.

Baxter reconsiders.

BAXTER  
(to Elaine)  
Get Cliff Work on the phone.  
(on phone)  
Okay, I'll cut to it. I want you to  
loan out Raft.

Elaine dials her phone. Wayne looks through the trades.

BAXTER  
(on phone)  
What's the flat fee?  
(beat)  
I can't do that kind of cash.

ELAINE  
(on phone)  
Cliff Work please, calling on behalf  
of Baxter Bryce.

WAYNE  
I think I got something.

BAXTER  
(on phone)  
You woulda been fleeced on the Renner  
deal.

WAYNE  
Alice Faye.

BAXTER

(on phone)

You think about how much I saved you  
and then give me a fair number. I'll  
give you a minute.

(to Wayne)

What about Faye?

WAYNE

She got injured.

ELAINE

(on phone)

Cliff, this is Elaine Dable, I'm with  
Baxter Bryce...

WAYNE

She was supposed to be shooting a  
picture for Fox. That's the kind of  
stuff you're looking for?

BAXTER

It's perfect. Call Zanuck. No, not  
Zanuck, call Goetz.

Wayne grabs the contact card and starts dialing.

ELAINE

(on phone)

We hear you're having some issues on  
the Abbott and Costello picture,  
maybe we could help each other out.

BAXTER

(on phone)

Have you thought it over?

WAYNE

(on phone)

Baxter Bryce's office calling for Mr.  
Goetz.

ELAINE

(on phone)

Claudette Biddle. She sings, she  
dances, she's a quick study, and she  
can start shooting tomorrow.

WAYNE

(to Elaine)

What are you doing? You can't trade  
Claudette.

BAXTER  
(on phone)  
Better. Not, great. I'll call you  
back.

Baxter slams the phone down.

ELAINE  
(on phone)  
Hold on.  
(to Baxter)  
Fifty grand for her.

WAYNE  
What? You can't trade her, we need  
her for Joan of Arc.

BAXTER  
(to Wayne)  
I got her to trade her.  
(to Elaine)  
Hundred grand.

ELAINE  
(on phone)  
He says a hundred grand.

Wayne's bewildered.

WAYNE  
But she's Joan, right?

BAXTER  
She's not a leading lady.

ELAINE  
(to Baxter)  
Fifty grand. It's a pretty bit part.

BAXTER  
Tell him a hundred and ten, for  
looking a gift horse in the mouth.

WAYNE  
But I told her she'd get a lead.  
That's why she signed--

Suddenly Wayne hears someone on his phone...

WAYNE  
(on phone)  
Yes, hello?

ELAINE  
(on phone)  
He says a hundred and ten, because  
he's doing you a favor.

BAXTER  
(to Wayne)  
Gimme the phone.

Wayne complies.

BAXTER  
Bill, it's Baxter. I heard Faye got  
hurt and you're sitting on your  
hands.

ELAINE  
(to Baxter)  
Fifty grand. Take it or leave it.

BAXTER  
(on phone)  
Hang on.

Baxter hands his phone back to Wayne and takes the phone  
from Elaine.

BAXTER  
(on phone)  
Cliff, don't be a fool. You need this  
deal more than I do. I got Goetz on  
the other line making a bid. Call  
back when you want to be competitive.

He hangs up, and grabs back the phone from Wayne.

BAXTER  
Sorry about that, just got off the  
phone with Cliff Work. He wants  
Claudette Biddle, but I want to loan  
her to you.

A PHONE RINGS, Elaine answers.

ELAINE  
(on phone)  
Baxter Bryce's office.  
(to Baxter)  
Seventy-five.

Baxter mimes more money to Elaine.



ELAINE  
(on phone)  
Right direction. Try again.

She hangs up the phone.

BAXTER  
(on phone)  
Hundred thousand.  
(beat)  
You heard me right. You're in the  
middle of production, and every day  
you're not shooting you're throwing  
away money.  
(beat)  
Alright, talk it over. Don't take too  
long, Universal is interested.

Baxter hangs up. The room is silent.

WAYNE  
(softly)  
I told her she'd be a leading lady.  
(beat)  
You had me tell her that.

Baxter lights a cigarette. Doesn't respond.

They all wait.

BBBRRRNG. Baxter snatches it up.

BAXTER  
Baxter.  
(long beat)  
Congratulations Cliff, you got  
Claudette.

Baxter hangs up the phone in triumph. Elaine smiles. Wayne  
slinks out of the room.

Baxter makes another call.

BAXTER  
(on phone)  
Baxter Bryce for Jack Warner. Tell  
him I got his money for George Raft.

INT. BAXTER'S NEW OFFICE - LOBBY - NIGHT

Lewis types away on his typewriter. Baxter is reading  
through several pages of the script.

BANG! Virgil Lehman barges into the office and storms over to Baxter.

Lewis jumps up. Baxter hardly looks up from his script.

VIRGIL

Where are the negatives? And don't act like you don't know what I'm talking about.

BAXTER

Why would I act like that? That defeats the whole purpose. If you want the negatives, I'll give you the negatives.

(beat)

Just say please.

Baxter slides a sheet of paper across his desk and plops a pen down.

Virgil glances at it.

VIRGIL

What the hell is this?

BAXTER

Your contract. I'm signing you. One year, hundred dollars a week.

VIRGIL

(with contempt)

A hundred dollars a week?

BAXTER

Taxes these days are astronomical. I'm doing you a favor. You can negotiate percentages on the profits of the pictures -- that's me, being nice.

Virgil flings the contract off the table.

Long beat.

BAXTER

Too proud, that's your problem.

Virgil scowls.

BAXTER

Sign the contract. Or my next call will be to Hedda Hopper.

Eventually, Virgil sits down across from Baxter. He stewes for a moment and then picks the contract off the floor and quickly signs.

VIRGIL  
You're not the only one with  
connections.

Virgil flings the signed contract at Baxter and storms out.

EXT. BAXTER'S NEW OFFICE - DAY

Wayne sits on the curb, awkwardly smoking a cigarette and staring off blankly.

Claudette Biddle exits the office. Her eyes look red. She heads for her car. As she's get in, she spots Wayne. Their eyes lock -- a mixture of pain, anger, and sadness.

She closes the door and drives off.

INT. BAXTER'S NEW OFFICE - DAY

Baxter looks dressed up. Spiffy. Seated at his desk is BERNIE SCHOLFIELD (60s) Baxter's lawyer and a man of few words. Bernie is organizing files into his attache case.

Rita Faire enters his office.

RITA  
Mr. Bryce.

Baxter glances up and smiles at her.

RITA  
My contract. Signed.

She hands him an envelope.

BAXTER  
You didn't have to run it down here  
yourself.

RITA  
I wanted to.

BAXTER  
Oh?

RITA  
You impressed me. Takes a lot to  
impress me. I'm looking forward to  
working with you.

BAXTER  
Yeah. Unfortunately that might be  
awhile.

RITA  
Oh?

BAXTER  
(to Bernie)  
We ready?

Bernie SNAPS his case shut.

INT. ELEVATOR - NEW CENTURY PICTURES - DAY

Baxter, Bernie and Wayne step onto the elevator. Wayne looks nervous.

WAYNE  
Do I really need to be here?

BAXTER  
Yes. You're intimidating.

WAYNE  
Oh.

Wayne gives a big exhale as the doors close.

INT. MONTY'S OFFICE - NEW CENTURY PICTURES - DAY

Baxter, Wayne, and Bernie enter Monty's office. The usual suspects are there, BEAN COUNTERS and LAWYERS, along with Gene and Freddie.

The trio take their seats across from Monty's elevated desk.

BAXTER  
(salutation)  
Monty.  
(then)  
This is my lawyer Bernie Schofield.  
My associate producer, Wayne Monahan  
Jr.

Bernie snaps open his case and pulls out some paperwork.

BAXTER  
And this is our offer.

Bernie slides it across the table. Monty glances at it.

BAXTER  
We want four hundred thousand for the package.

MONTY  
You think you're gonna sell me back my own picture?

BAXTER  
It's my picture. And yes.

MONTY  
I have half a mind to sue you.

BAXTER  
If you had a full mind, you'd know you couldn't.  
(to Bernie)  
Does he own Joan of Arc?

BERNIE  
No.

BAXTER  
Can he own Joan of Arc?

BERNIE  
No.

BAXTER  
Thanks Bernie.  
(to Monty)  
You don't own the story of Joan of Arc. You can't own the story of Joan of Arc. What you can have is a script. Which I have. An actress, which I also have, a director, which again, I have.  
(beat)  
Four hundred thousand. It's a fair price for the package, especially knowing what passion you have for the project.

Monty scowls.

BAXTER

It'll make money. Maybe even win you  
awards. Everyone wins.

Monty considers.

MONTY

Four hundred thousand.  
(beat)  
Done.

BAXTER

Not quite. One more thing.  
(beat)  
Loan me Ethel Renner. One year. Free  
of charge.

Monty eyes him.

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. ELEVATOR - NEW CENTURY PICTURES - DAY

The elevator doors open and Wayne and Baxter emerge in high  
spirits. Bernie with them, but doesn't seem to care one way  
or another.

EXT. BAXTER'S NEW OFFICE - DUSK

A sign is being erected over Baxter's building. Elaine  
stands on the street, overseeing it.

A car pulls up and Baxter and Wayne jump out of it.

ELAINE

Well?

Baxter's smile says it all. Elaine nods.

ELAINE

Check it out.

She gestures toward the sign.

Baxter pulls out a cigarette, lights it, and stares at the  
sign. It reads in bold print: "MAGNANIMOUS PICTURES."

A smile creeps back on his face.

BAXTER

I like it.

Wayne, Elaine and Baxter stare at the sign, the uncertain and exciting future laid out before them.

FADE TO BLACK.