

Still Life WITH
WOODPECKER

Because outlaws don't dig shelves.

STILL LIFE WITH WOODPECKER

A Richard Rudy Presentation

...FIN

C: +1 917 319 1879
E: richardrudy@gmail.com
©2017 RICHARD RUDY ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.

@howdoyoumakelovestay?...

CONTENTS

Summary	1
Why Not Now?	2
Cast	4
Look & Feel	7
Mood Board	12
Sound & Score	13
Design & Artwork	15
Current Script	17
Reimagining the Script	21
Analysis of a Scene	24
Director's Notes	25
Appendix:	
SCENE: Script	26



WHY NOT NOW?

...Outlaws, princess punk & risky business.

Cinema has always been the most powerful stage to deliver a shock to the system. 'Bonnie & Clyde', 'Easy Rider', 'Fight Club', 'Twelve Years a Slave', all challenged convention and smashed that cultural nail in a little further. They stood up and out, solely through compelling stories and technique, and in turn respected the financial rewards they asked.

The equation 'smart money + smart story = smart cinema' = smart audience = more money' has never been more applicable than to today's market, ask 'Moonlight' - cinema needs its outlaws.

And 'Still Life' could be the most dangerous type of film possible, original and without equal.

And that is exactly what the film needs to be in its composition, execution and presentation in order to cut through the marketplace.

Its primary market will be literate, artistically adventurous people in their 20's, 30's and 40's, people who'll pay to see movies with a distinct point of view. But, it's secondary market is open to anyone who's ever been in love!

The film must have an experimental and savvy approach to marketing. A24 have had huge success releasing niche, lower-budgeted films and 'Still Life' would benefit from emulating their focused production and distribution approach.

But most importantly, it needs to be sculpted by a smart pair of hands; mine, obviously!

'Still Life' needs to be a new-age, timeless, cut & paste, it needs to be a cinematic outlaw.

Whilst most of Robbins' work would benefit moreover from a opulent, dirty, princess punk, anarchist's love story!... as a film. But, it requires a non-traditional approach to make it work which demands a calculated risk... Risk?! Nowadays?... Sounds risky... You're better off completely giving up on any chance of originality and inventiveness in cinema.

But if that's true then we need to stop using the term 'cinema'. and we should just forget about ever having another 'One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest', another 'Goodfellas' or another 'Trainspotting', because the only way any of those films worked was through their innovative approach to structure, both written and visual, and a calculated risk.

And in this risky American classic, lies a chance to breath life back into cinema.





'Punk rock is not the clothes or the music. Punk rock is an attitude, the 'don't-give-me-any-bullshit-'cause-I-can-see-right-through-to-the-heart-of-the-situation' attitude... We're sick of all the bullshit. Give us some truth.'

~ Joe Strummer



'As long as there are matches, there will be fuses.
As long as there are fuses, no walls are safe.
As long as every wall is threatened, the world can happen.
Outlaws are can openers in the supermarket of life.'

~ Bernard Mickey Wrangle



CURRENT SCRIPT

CHARACTERS:

- I just don't care about the characters in this draft. In general, the characters feel small, redundant and stripped of their spark. The script sets up the main character's peculiarities and then rarely plays with them, or more importantly, against them. The characters occasionally threaten to create sparks, only to back down at the last second. The script seems happier to settle for short-term, crude gags, than exploring the real comedy and drama that such rich, complex characters offer.
- The script undermines the characters growth and integrity by not developing their personalities, in turn, sabotaging any empathic response from an audience. The first time I felt any sense of connection between Leigh-Cheri and Bernard was on page 74, making this love story D.O.A.
- Leigh-Cheri's maturity into womanhood is primarily examined, in the novel, through her relationships and yet there is barely any discernible difference between her character and interactions with Bernard or Aben Fazel. We never learn how these wildly different men affect her growth as a woman. Instead, her motivations for wanting love maintain a perpetual childlike quality, entirely void of any degree of growth.
- There is no real sense that Bernard is an outlaw. Moreover, this version of Bernard makes him feel more like a common criminal. This ridicules the character's very essence by making him a victim rather than a true outlaw. Bernard even states that an outlaw would 'refuse to be victimised'.
- The potential ramifications of Bernard's 'supposed death', in this draft, are completely and utterly wasted in terms of emotional impact for both Leigh-Cheri and the audience.





#snapdecision

REIMAGINING THE SCRIPT

Thunderous, choice cuts & final bangs.

Adapting often means marauding. The process is one of permutation; to take the gist of the idea and transform it into something that packs a stronger visual punch.

Robinson's literary psychopaths are already laden with visual flair and magic, so the key to adapting 'Blue Velvet' lies in 2:55:30, boiling down its essential themes into an even more impactful version of the novel's messily rich plot; and in considering the construction of the edit prior to writing to help create a unique framework for the screenplay.

An example of an appropriate base edit to build upon would be the 'Last Day as a Vice Guy' sequence at the end of 'Goodfellas', when Henry is on an all day long, cold-up mission, before finally being arrested by the FBI.

To capture the spirit of the novel it is vital the next draft, at the very least, includes, plays with, and against its major themes:

- The secondary nature of love – told through Leigh-Chen & Bernard's love, cigarettes and memories, among others.
- Our connection to nature and spirituality – told through the phases of the moon, the pyramids, Hawaii and even blackberries.
- The importance of choice – told through each character's arcs.
- The loss of innocence vs the need to question institution & challenge social control – told through Leigh-Chen's evolution from teenager to princess & Bernard's rhetoric and ideals.
- The importance of every object/still life – told through visual similes, montages and stylistic repetition.





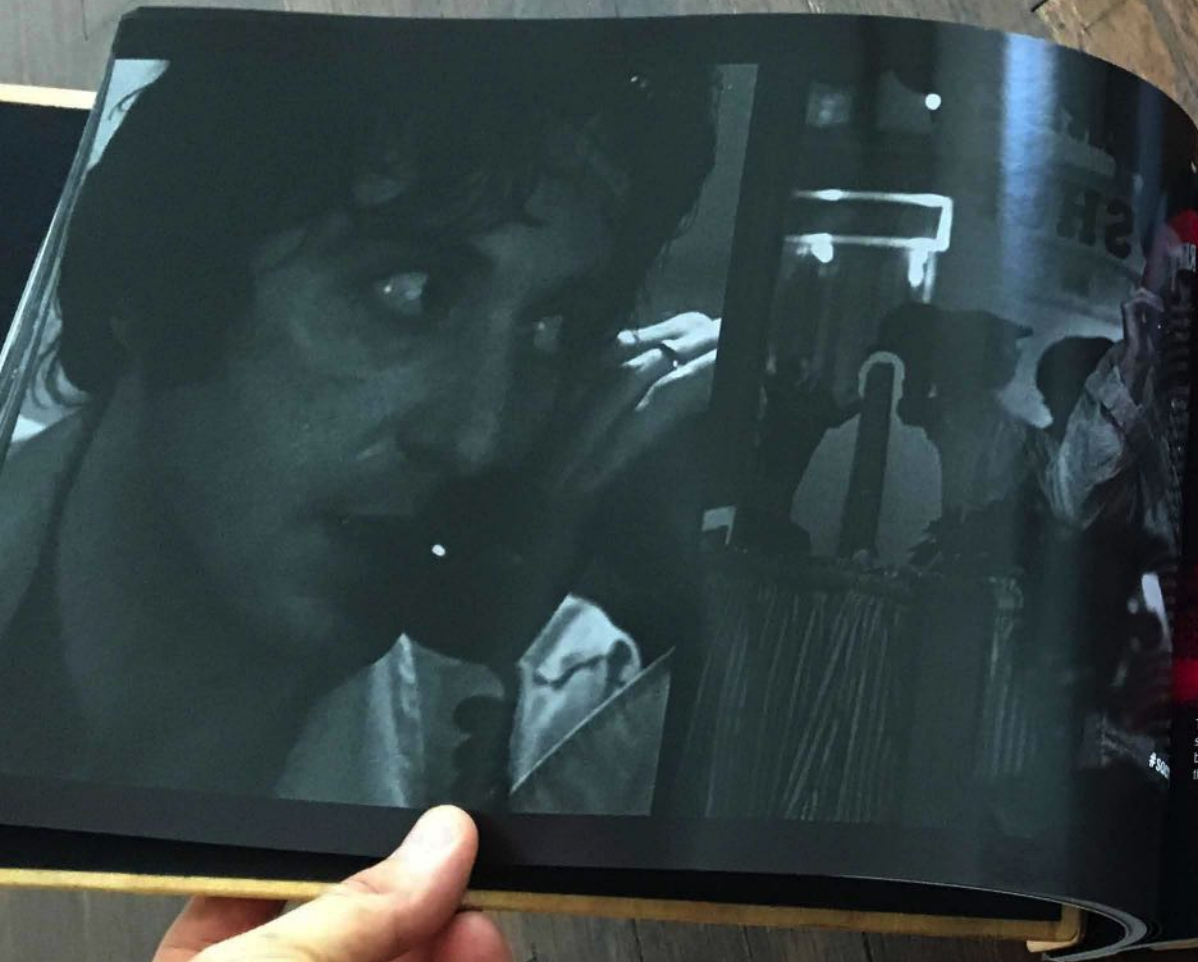
#strikingsex

REIMAGINING THE SCRIPT

The script definitely needs:

- To run at a break neck speed, the 'nothing's-moving-quick-enough' frustrations of youth – to the 'I-never-want-this-to-end' first flushes-of-love – to the drawn out despair of your first broken heart – to the selfish, intense focus of discovery & experimentation with your own identity – to the back-and-forth battle of dealing with the decisions of adulthood.
- To be written subjectively to help an audience feel as if they're part of the story, whilst making them question who to empathise with in the film.
- The comedy needs to be very specific, driven by and embedded in the drama – and vice versa. Even minor jokes or abstract comedy, must have a specific reason to be included and drive the characters and story forward.
- Illustration does not always illustrate: it can also deprive the audience of the urge to imagine. The essential sexual encounters in the novel need to be cleverly included in the story without being gratuitous or even literal; successful eroticism in cinema relies on seducing the viewer into complicity.
- Play with and celebrate the necessary and valid age-gap between Leigh-Chen and Bernard. This can be achieved by developing their emotional and physical push and pull throughout the story as they question the definition of true love and how to make love stay whilst fighting life's attempts to test their devotion. If their dynamic is written with emotional intelligence, then their age difference will become irrelevant and in fact become a huge benefit to the story, rather than a awkward Hollywood cliché.

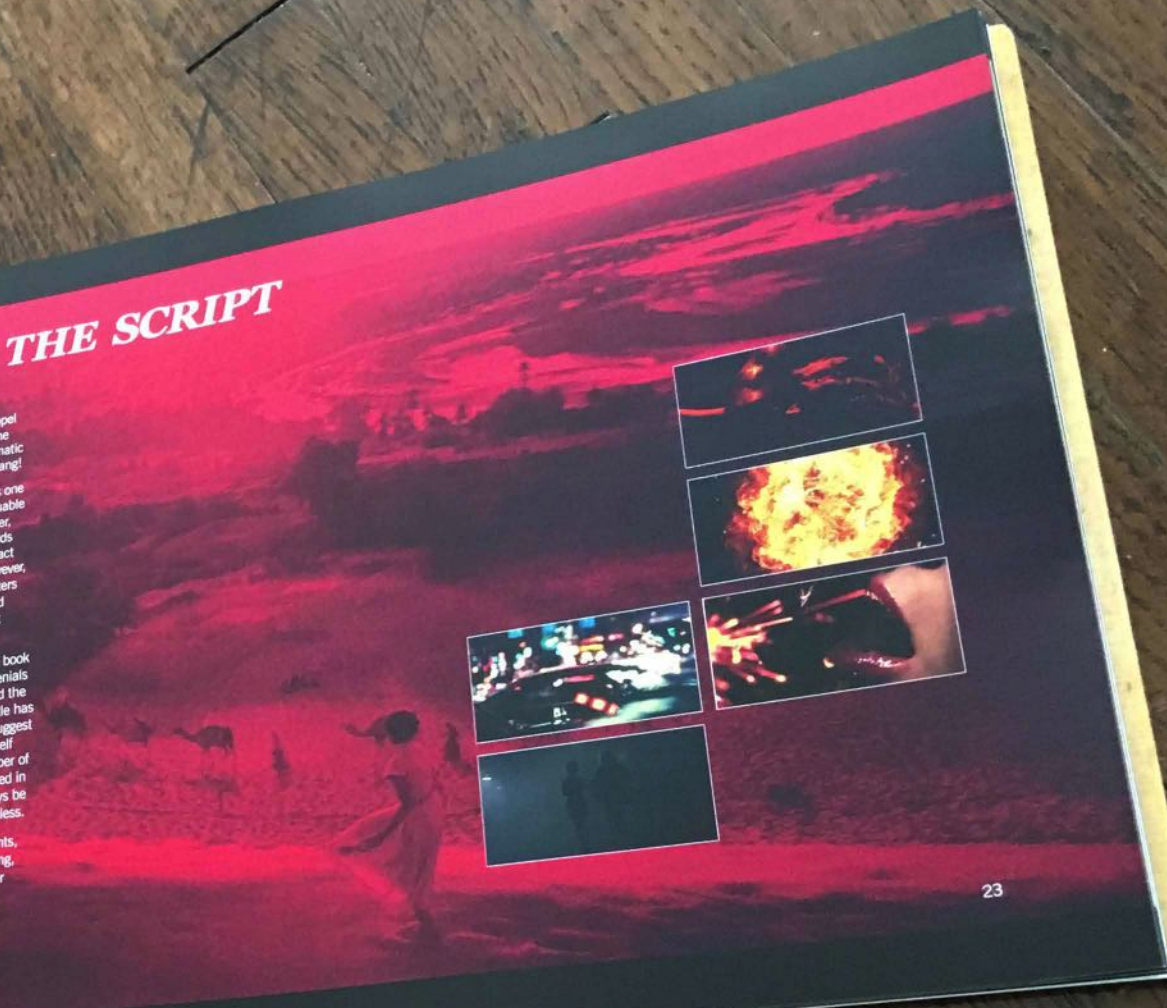


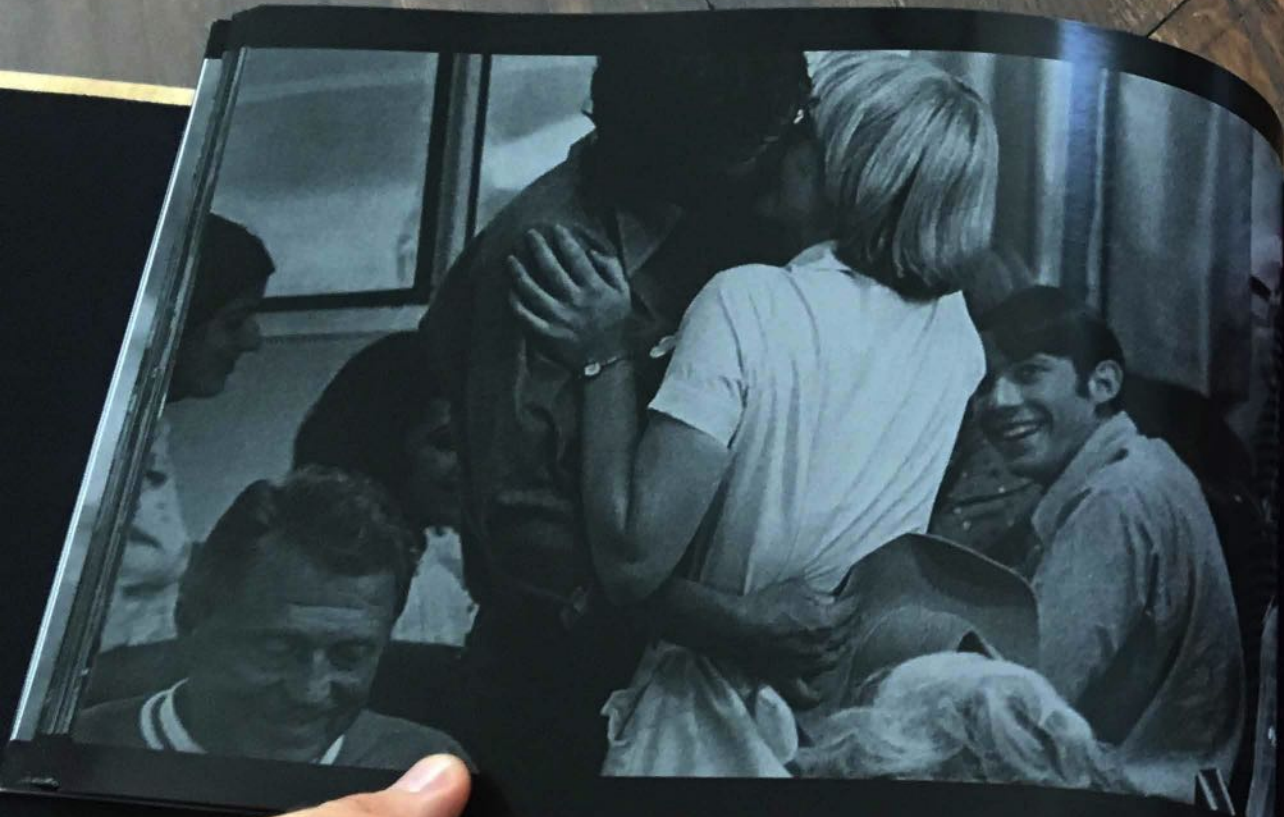


REIMAGINING THE SCRIPT

- The script needs to finish at the earliest point possible to create the strongest negative space after the credits to propel the audience into contemplation of their own relation to the film's main question. And with 'Still Life' the perfect cinematic conclusion would be to end the film, quite literally, on a bang!
- Far from being un-cinematic, voice-over, when used well, is one of the greatest contributions of the sound era and is invaluable in helping cinema approach fiction's first person. However, in an already dense adaptation, a third person narrator adds a layer of separation that is perhaps unnecessary and in fact makes the film feel less subjective. There is no reason, however, that sporadic voice-over cannot be spoken by the characters themselves. This in turn would ground the characters and comedy in the present and only increase our involvement and empathy with their story.
- The story can, and should, be updated to modern day. The book was uncannily accurate in its depiction of the traumas, denials and frustrations of people's connections to each other, and the world around them, back in the early 80's. Sadly, very little has changed since then. It's actually even more accurate to suggest that attitudes today have worsened. Whilst the update itself doesn't need to be explicitly highlighted, there are a number of 80's-centric motifs from the novel that can easily be updated in a canny redraft. However, the primary focus should always be to make sure the love story, as in the novel, remains timeless.

There are numerous other character and comedic adjustments, shifts of tone and structural rearrangements that need altering, but will be better expressed in the flow of a new draft, rather than being dragged out here in bullet points.





DIRECTOR'S NOTES

...For choice, *Disney World & arses!*

As much as this pack speaks to my desire, commitment and determination to bring 'Still Life' to the screen, there was a point when I realised I had no choice. 3 points in fact:

- The night after the wondrous Peter O'Toole went upstairs for a drink with the big man, I came across one of his interviews with Charlie Rose on YouTube. Peter told Charlie the story of how he'd discovered what the most important word in the world was. And hearing his answer solidified every idea I had been working on for the past few years: it has become the focal theme of my work ever since. And then on page 190 of 'Still Life' there it was, in capital letters no less, as the answer to everything: 'CHOICE!'

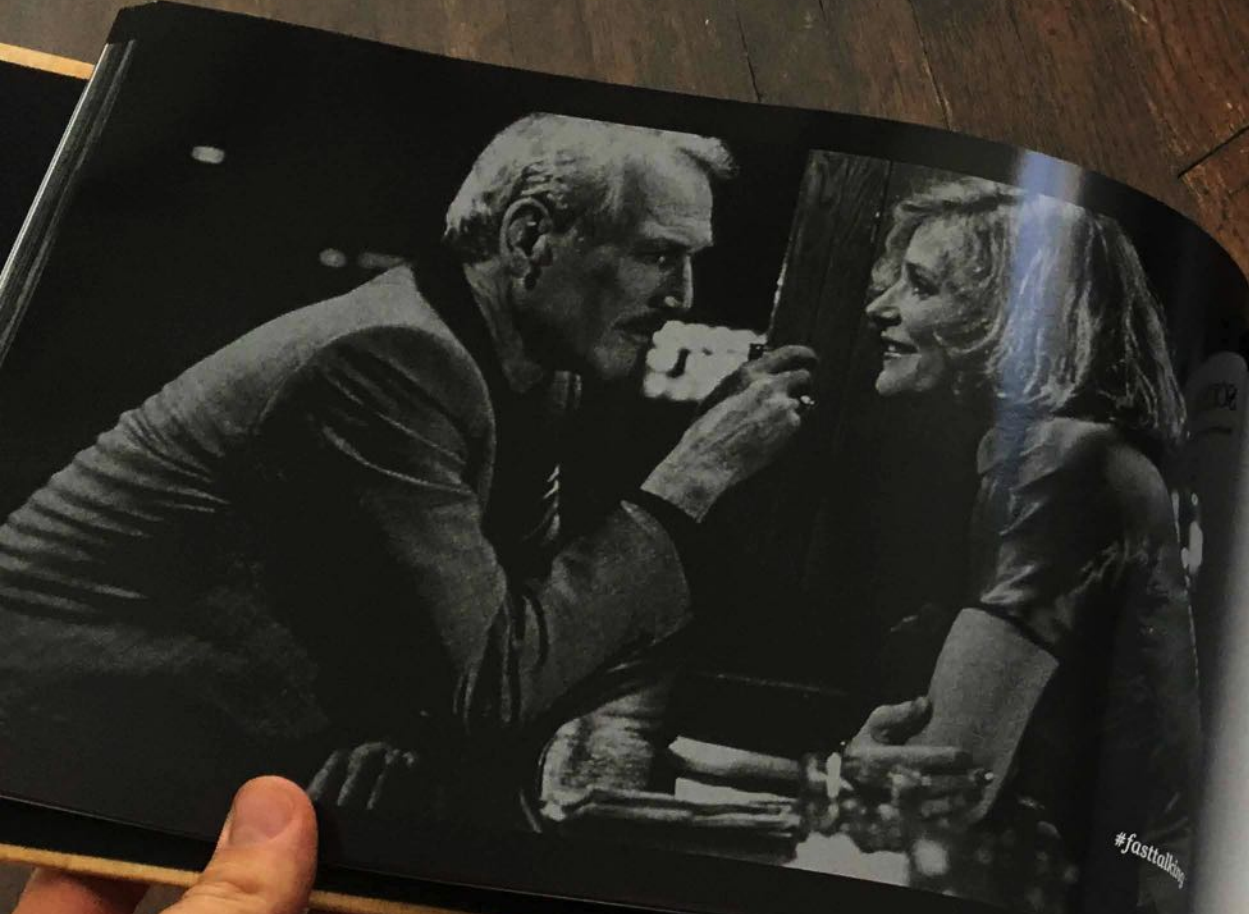
- I've recently, finally, quit one of my oldest dearest friendships. After 19 failed attempts I am now, officially, an ex-smoker and 'Still Life' is my ode to my long, lost love.
- And then there's my mildly psychotic mother who hit me on the back of my head when I was 8 years old in Disney World Florida, and told me to 'never to stare at people, even if they are horribly fat, and never to trust ginger-haired people!...' I've never, really, gotten over that. But 'Still Life' is my chance to right that horrific, racist, red-ism and finally make the memory of my childhood happy again.

Beyond these glaringly serendipitous signs, I know how 'Still Life' should look, how it should feel, how it runs and how to deliver it to an unsuspecting audience in a way that will blow their minds. 'Still Life' needs a firm hand; one that is not afraid to weather it's volatile nature; a hand that knows exactly when to throw it to the audience for maximum effect.

If everything in life can be boiled down to either love or fear, then in a world sold and driven by fear, we need love more than ever. Mr. Robbins has managed to encapsulate the madness and exhilaration of the 'L' word, laying bare it's mysteries in a dialogue and adventure that resonates with anyone who reads it, even nearly 40 years after it was first published.

He uncovered the humour and wonder behind the greatest and worst emotion that we all experience in some way, somehow, whether we planned for it or not. And in an age where we say more but love less, we all could do with a little outlaw kick up the arse!... And if 'Still Life' can help us find a few more ways to help make love stay, then maybe we'll have a lot more people barking at the moon!





SCENE: SCRIPT

Woodpecker sees Red, written by Richard Rudy

INT. SEATTLE AIRPORT - SECURITY CHECK - DAY

INSERT - SIGN ABOVE X-RAY BODY SCANNER: PLEASE, NO JOKES

The TSA OFFICERS securing the Security Check are seriously annoyed; all work, no laughs. BERNARD loads his jacket and Donald Duck sunglasses into an X-ray tray and shuffles forward to the X-ray scanning queue behind a blue collar GUY. Bernard's eyes open the checkpoint as he flicks a book of matches in his hand. He pulls his T-shirt down, making sure the 7 sticks of dynamite strapped to his chest are covered.

On the other side of Security Check, in the X-RAY AREA, BERNARD spots the back of LEIGH-CHERI's 'red' mane, and GULIETTA, as TSA OFFICER 1 examines their bags. It's clear by Leigh-Cheri's body language that she's insulted to wait.

...Red' in the X-Ray Area; the Guy's vacant disposition; 2 civilians away from X-Ray discovery; the 'no jokes' sign; think Bernard. -think!... No stops flicking his matchbook.

BERNARD
(aimed at the Guy's ear)
A priest, a politician, and a clown, walk into a bar. The bartender says, 'What is this, some kind of joke?'

The Guy stifles a snigger, but doesn't turn round.

BERNARD (CONT'D)
Three blondes walk into a building. You'd think one of them would've seen it.

A shocked giggle ruins the Guy's sullen mouth. TSA OFFICER 2, blonde, female - manning the body scanner - stares him down.

BERNARD (CONT'D)
What do you call a blonde with a brain?

GUY
(back to Bernard)
What?

BERNARD
A golden retriever.

The Guy can't hold it any longer and bursts out laughing.

BERNARD (CONT'D)
Shh, don't laugh.

#fasttalking

2.

Bernard elipses his matchbook into the Guy's trouser pocket, just before the Guy's called up into the body scanner.

Bernard turns his attentions to Leigh-Cheri and Gulietta.

BERNARD (V.O.) (CONT'D)
(to himself)
Please! Mary, Mary full of grace let me. Fuck. Mary? What's the difference between an in-law and an outlaw?... Outlaws are wanted.

Bernard chuckles at his own joke, as;

INT. SEATTLE AIRPORT - SECURITY CHECK, X-RAY AREA - DAY

The airport scanner REEPS, pinning the matchbook on the Guy. TSA Officer 2 hits full on anti-terrorist-pat-down-mode, as;

TSA OFFICER 1
AAAAAAAAHHHHH!!!

TSA Officer 1 opens Gulietta's wicker basket and TOADY, her toad, jumps for freedom onto TSA Officer 1's chest and then back out into the now panicked crowds in the X-Ray Area.

Bernard's eyes light up at the magic of mayhem; TSA Officer 2 and her colleagues dive left and right, chasing after Toady - it's now or never for Bernard!

Scanning every eyeball in the X-Ray Area, in ninja slow-mo, Bernard waits until they're all turned away to slip like an eel through the body scanner, straight into the darting crowd of CIVILIANS and TSA OFFICERS that are in hot-toad-pursuit!

Bernard ensures that his contribution to the chase only causes more chaos; knocking over trays, bags, anything in his path. He even catches Toady, 'accidentally', throwing him the 'toad train' veers back across the X-Ray Area.

Free and clear, Bernard grabs his glasses and jacket from the unmanned trays. He glances back, but 'red' is lost in the toad-chasing-circus. He elipses away into the bewildered crowd in the Departure lounge, as Toady continues to elude capture and elicit screams.

INT. SEATTLE AIRPORT - SECURITY CONTROL, X-RAY SCANNER - DAY

Caught and duck taped to a tray, Toady moves along the conveyor belt headed for X-ray. Gulietta clutches a picture of Toady to her chest, praying through streams of tears, as Leigh-Cheri tries reason;



