

THE PENNSYLVANIA STATE UNIVERSITY
SCHREYER HONORS COLLEGE

DEPARTMENT OF FILM-VIDEO AND MEDIA STUDIES

THE BRIEFCASE
A Feature Screenplay

ADAM BOUC
Spring 2011

A thesis
submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements
for baccalaureate degrees
in Film-Video and English
with honors in Film-Video

Reviewed and approved* by the following:

Rod Bingaman
Senior Lecturer
Thesis Supervisor / Honors Adviser

Sanford Schwartz
Associate Professor of English
Second Reader

* Signatures are on file in the Schreyer Honors College.

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this thesis was to provide a creative outlet in exploring and honing my screenwriting craft in a way no other course at Penn State University currently offers. The result is this 43 page screenplay. Like most writers I find labels inaccurate and limiting, but forced to classify the movie that the text of this document represents, it would probably be considered a comedy-mystery-thriller. My hope is that every reader is able to find something he or she can relate to in these words, because like Tom and Richie, everyone has encountered the absurd and been forced to find ways to cope; some are just more successful than others.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT.....i

THE BRIEFCASE
A feature screenplay.....1

ACADEMIC VITA.....44

EXT. FUTURE CITY - DAY

A blood red sky - the skyline is harsh and glimmering. NICK BURKE clenches his jaw. He's wearing a tuxedo and shades as he speeds down a back alley on a hoverbike.

NICK BURKE
(talking into his shoulder)
What's the situation Zinga?

ZINGA (V.O.)
Two smuggler crews dead ahead boss!

NICK BURKE
This is gonna sting.

As he bursts from the alley he takes the bike by the handlebars, leaping off and hurling it at the smuggler's armored vehicle. It explodes, to the dismay of the nearby smugglers. A hailstorm of bullets rains down in all directions, and the android smugglers transform their arms into turrets.

ANDROID / SYLVIA VANDERNILE
Let me stop you there.

THE SCENE MELTS TO

INT. CLASSROOM - DAY

SYLVIA VANDERNILE wears all black, with a bright green accent scarf draped over her turtleneck. Everything she says she also gestures. Her hands and rich sing-song voice form a constant performance art piece. TOM, 25, is the person she is addressing. He bears a striking resemblance to G-rob. His boyish looks are betrayed by a tiny soul patch, messy hair half in his eyes.

Tom is surrounded by women dressed in varying levels of "the swishy artist look." The most obscenely dressed is MESLIA, who sits immediately on his left. The twelve students sit in a circle, each with their own battered wooden desk, their teacher on a swivel chair in the center.

SYLVIA VANDERNILE
Our duty as playwrights is to
documentarize life. We record it
and it becomes real. Plays are
happening all around us, but it is
our task to reach out and pluck
them from the hive mind
consciousness.

The sound of BEES floods the air, her voice drifting in and out. Her lips move, but only some of the words are intelligible through the bees. She is gesturing at Tom, trying to push something at him it seems, then speaking in American Sign Language.

SYLVIA VANDERNILE (CONT'D)
This...waves...never...stillborn...
his...vacuum...listening?

Tom shakes his head, blinks, trying to concentrate.

SYLVIA VANDERNILE (CONT'D)
Thomas - look into my eyes.

He does. She's back to normal.

SYLVIA VANDERNILE (CONT'D)
Your play is not happening now. It
needs to take place now, in this
moment.

TOM
Well, it *is* set in the future, so
I-

SYLVIA VANDERNILE
Chh-chh-chh-ah-ah-ah!
(Beat)
Close your eyes.

Reluctantly, he does.

SYLVIA VANDERNILE (CONT'D)
Open them. Has anything changed?
No. It is still now. It will never
not be now. And THAT is why your
play must take place now, and
nowhere else.

She stares at him hard.

SYLVIA VANDERNILE (CONT'D)
You look like you want to say
something.

TOM
Well, I mean I guess my only-

SYLVIA VANDERNILE
I'm sensing a lot of negativity
coming from here. Let's move on.
Meslia! You're on, first page and
we'll discuss.

MESLIA

Punctuation restricts my creative forces, so I've chosen to omit any from this piece. Pauses, questions and climaxes should be evident entirely from the words.

She throws back her scarf dramatically, then unfurls a tattered scroll. She begins to read hypnotically, often changing her voice from low to high.

MESLIA (CONT'D)

Enter Aphrodite, clothed in furs. Pain! Pain, bloodtears ruins ruins, ancient ruins, infertility! She drops her top layer, revealing a bright red layer underneath. A desert beat, stone's throw, you say I'm lacking, but I'm whole just as I am, I need nothing to complete me.

She begins TAPPING a rhythm on her desk that sounds like a heartbeat but gradually increases tempo, often raising her eyes to the ceiling, her voice becoming more robotic.

MESLIA (CONT'D)

Your steel, it's far too, far too COLD! COLDNESS WREAKS A DEVIL'S path to mammary mammary mammary mammary, break them from the teat, there is nothing left, mammary, a dry desert, spent, spent, broken. I will rise again.

The drumming has stopped. Meslia closes her eyes, bows her head. Sylvia Vandernile, eyes wide, looks around the room.

SYLVIA VANDERNILE

Wow. Give her a hand! Remarkable improvement.

The class APPLAUDS. Meslia smirks at Tom.

SYLVIA VANDERNILE (CONT'D)

Yes! These words are hitting me - NOW! I feel the impact. Bashing me over the head.

Tom sees a mugger standing behind Sylvia Vandernile, raising a lead pipe overhead.

SYLVIA VANDERNILE (CONT'D)

Tom.

The mugger disappears.

SYLVIA VANDERNILE (CONT'D)

You see what I mean Tom? When I say
our writing needs to happen now?
This very second?

TOM

Yeah.

She studies him carefully.

SYLVIA VANDERNILE

No...I don't think so.

She looks at her watch.

SYLVIA VANDERNILE (CONT'D)

Excellent work today all of you,
except Tom, of course, the rest of
you are really making strides
forward as artists.

As the others gather their things, Tom sits glaring straight ahead.

INT. TOM AND RICHIE'S ROOM - NIGHT

Someone is SNORING lightly in the background. Tom sits glaring straight ahead at his computer screen, which is HUMMING away. It is an ancient Gateway desktop. There is only one word in the word document: Zilch. Backspace, he erases it.

INT. TOM AND RICHIE'S ROOM - DAY

A slight BUZZING. Tom blinks slowly, turns off his crescent-shaped alarm. There is a light SNORING coming from a lump on the other side of the room. Tom sighs and gets up.

INT. TOM'S BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

Tom is brushing his teeth, looking at them in the mirror. Suddenly the lights go out, total black. He stops. Brush, brush, spit.

EXT. TOM'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Tom bursts out of the house, the screen door clattering behind him, and begins striding across the lawn in his PJs and slippers. The house is a tiny cream-colored ranch that has seen better days.

A croaking CAW distracts Tom. He looks up in time to see two crows, one pursuing the other as it hurls crookedly through the air. They continue squawking; the victim's voicebox is heavily damaged.

They swoop alarmingly close, but as Tom is stepping back an unmuffled engine ROARS into life behind him, as the neighbor across the street guns his souped up "classic," causing Tom to jump. When he looks back the crows have disappeared, so he continues across the lawn.

A hundred yards away on another street is a small shack with a blue neon sign, advertising "Psychic." He walks toward it, wrenches the uncooperative door open, and enters.

INT. MACARIA'S PSYCHIC READINGS - CONTINUOUS

Inside it's dim and smoky. In fact, aside from a few slivers of daylight creeping in from the cracks in the walls, there is only one tea candle providing any light. AUNT MACARIA is perched on a small throne of cushions in the corner, smoking hookah, looking much like the female version of the caterpillar in *Alice in Wonderland*. As Tom enters, she puts down the pipe.

TOM

Aunt Macaria, can I-

AUNT MACARIA

Shh-don't say it. Of course.

TOM

But I haven't even-

AUNT MACARIA

Darling, I know, I've been expecting you.

She gestures to the empty cushion pile opposite her as proof. Tom does his best to balance himself on the unruly pile of cushions.

TOM

I wanted to-

AUNT MACARIA
Have your palm read.

She closes her eyes and holds out both hands. Tom rolls his eyes and gives her his hand. She begins tracing the lines, reading by touch alone, murmuring quietly.

TOM
Aunt Mac-

AUNT MACARIA
Chh-chh!

This goes on for about ten seconds before she abruptly releases him, eyes flashing wide with a big grin.

AUNT MACARIA
I thought I remembered right!

TOM
Remembered what?

AUNT MACARIA
Now is when your life line splits - very unusual. Two separate paths. It means a dramatic change, but one that must come from you.

TOM
Um, but what kind of change-

Macaria reaches across the table and slaps him in the forehead.

AUNT MACARIA
What did I just say? It must come from you! Even if I had the answer I couldn't say.

TOM
(rubbing his head)
So you're saying this is a turning point?

AUNT MACARIA
You could also go straight. One path is very short though, see?
(indicating on his hand)
Try to avoid that one.

TOM
Oh sure, I'll just sidestep it as it were, now that I know about it.

Macaria locks eyes, then leans across the table.

AUNT MACARIA

Listen: I believe in you. Just because the rest of this family hasn't gotten anywhere in life doesn't mean you won't.

TOM

Thanks...I think.

AUNT MACARIA

Yes? Is there something else?

TOM

The, uh, the electricity's out again.

AUNT MACARIA

Yes, I know. Why do you think I lit this candle?

TOM

Dramatic effect?

AUNT MACARIA

It's that time of year again - Jupiter's aligned with Neptune. I warned your uncle, you'll have to take it up with him.

TOM

Okay...thanks Aunt Mac.

Tom stands, turns to leave.

AUNT MACARIA

Oh, and Tom?

Tom turns back, in the process tripping over a mini Buddha statue. He rights it.

TOM

(from the ground)
Sorry, what?

AUNT MACARIA

Watch where you're going.

INT. TOM AND RICHIE'S ROOM - NIGHT

Tom is on his bed doodling by candlelight. RICHIE enters very quietly from behind Tom's bed. Richie is barefoot, wearing a beanie, holding skateboard under one arm. He's sporting a red Rosenberger's Markets uniform. Richie comes up behind Tom, leans over his shoulder to see what he is doing, then licks his fingers and reaches over to the candle.

RICHIE
(whispering)
Lights out.

As Richie says this and snubs the wick, Tom gasps, but is cut short by the chokehold Richie puts him in. They struggle briefly before Tom taps the bed and Richie releases him, chuckling.

TOM
You ass, you scared the- I was
trying to work!

RICHIE
Trying and succeeding aren't the
same thing bro.

Richie moves to the other side of the room where his bed is and starts undressing.

TOM
Yeah, well-

RICHIE
What's with the candle anyway, Mom
got you doing seances now?

TOM
Your dad forgot about the bill
again.

RICHIE
(getting in bed)
Oh-that makes more sense. Well, I
need to get some sleep anyway,
early shift, so you'll have to
not-write somewhere else.

TOM
(sighing)
Fine.

He gets up, flicking on a lighter. Grabbing his roolly chair he pulls it out of the room, down the hall, and into a tiny closet space that has a messy desk. He sits, lighting his candle again, and stares at the page.

INT. TOM AND RICHIE'S ROOM - DAY

Black. A slight BUZZING. Tom wakes up to a fly crawling around his ear, his forehead glued to the desk. He sits bolt upright, flipping his broken roolly chair over in the process. He sits up and stares at the clock - 1:31PM.

TOM
Shit, shit, shit, shit!

He rushes around in a flurry undressing, redressing, tooth brushing, paper grabbing, fish feeding, stumbling out the door.

INT. COLLEGE BUILDING - DAY

As Tom is rushing into the building, Sylvia Vandernile is rushing out - they collide and she drops the large cardboard box she was carrying. Tom stoops to pick it up, but is brushed aside.

SYLVIA VANDERNILE
Tom! Don't worry about that, I've got it.

TOM
Dr. V, so sorry I'm late-

SYLVIA VANDERNILE
(hurrying off)
Nevermind, men have done far worse things than knock me over before.

TOM
(calling after)
What-uh, is class cancelled then?

She bolts outside without a second glance. Tom turns toward the classroom, then back to the direction Sylvia Vandernile went. He begins walking down the hall when two FBI types round the corner from the far side, sprinting at him.

AGENT MARKOWITZ
You there! Sir!

They're almost on top of him.

AGENT MARKOWITZ

Did you see a woman with a box just now?

TOM

(pointing)

Yeah, my playwrighting professor, she went...

The men rush past Tom and out the door. Tom looks after, then looks down the hall. He starts walking down it, curious. He reaches Slyvia Vandernile's office. The door is open, bare. He takes a step in, eyes widening, mouth drops open.

INT. VANDERNILE'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

On the desk lies a wide open leather briefcase full of neatly stacked cash.

Tom takes a step back and looks both ways down the hall. Empty. He steps inside and goes to the cash. He can smell it. He looks back once more.

INT. COLLEGE BUILDING - DAY

He is speedwalking down the hall with the briefcase, but maybe too conspicuously, he slows down. Voices, he jams himself up against the wall, into a dark recess. They pass.

A girl, earbuds in and book open, happened to look up in time to see him press himself against the wall, and is still watching. He tries to hold the briefcase out of view of her as he gives her an awkward two-finger wave, but in the process trips over a large recycling bin, sprawling to the floor and knocking plastic bottles everywhere. The briefcase goes flying, but stays shut.

Heads poke out of doors and bystanders stop what they're doing. Hurriedly, he tries to collect the nearest bottles and lopsidedly arranges the lid on the bin before grabbing the briefcase and ducking out of the building.

EXT. COLLEGE PARKING LOT - CONTINUOUS

Scanning the parking lot, he's picking up speed again, but slows as he reaches his car.

The door slams. Tom just stares at the building, hands on the wheel. He glances at the passenger seat (the briefcase),

back to the building. Tom ducks down - one of the agents rounds the corner of the building and seconds later the other comes from the other side. They meet in the middle, hands up and reenter the building. Tom looks at the briefcase again.

INT. TOM AND RICHIE'S ROOM - DAY

Tom is staring at the open briefcase on the desk in front of him. The doorknob jiggles which breaks his spell and he slams the lid shut, trying to shove the briefcase below as Richie comes in.

RICHIE

Whoa dude, what was that?

TOM

What?

RICHIE

I know you're hiding something.
(circling the desk)
That briefcase.

TOM

It's nothing, really-

Richie gets him in a headlock.

TOM

Let's not go into this again-

RICHIE

Gotta be something, nothing isn't
nothing, it's always something.

TOM

Seriously can we just-
(Richie squeezes harder)
Okay! Okay!

Richie lets go and Tom rubs his neck before grabbing the briefcase and placing it on the desk. Richie looks at it expectantly. Tom looks at Richie as if to say "be my guest," so Richie undoes the clasps and lifts the lid.

RICHIE

Holy shit!

Richie fingers a stack, picks it up and smells it.

RICHIE
Is this real?

TOM
It *looks* real.

Richie puts the stack down, slams the lid shut.

RICHIE
Explain.

TOM
It was sitting open on my
professor's desk - I wasn't
thinking, I just took it and ran.

RICHIE
This is like grand theft...money,
man. You stole-
(gesturing at the case)
a lot of money - from your
professor?

TOM
Well, she was probably a drug
dealer anyway.

Richie stares at him.

TOM
How else would she get all this?

RICHIE
Hard work?

TOM
So she keeps her life savings in an
open briefcase on her desk, in
crisp stacks?

RICHIE
That is a little weird...

TOM
Plus, I saw these two FBI guys
chasing after her.

Richie steps back.

RICHIE
Woah, woah, woah, when did this
happen?

TOM

Just before I went in her office.

RICHIE

And what were you doing at the scene of a crime?

TOM

I had class! Or we were supposed to - when she ran past me I thought I'd go see if she had taped a note to the door or anything.

RICHIE

Why don't you just start from the top.

Tom takes a deep breath.

TOM

Okay. I drove to school for playwrighting class. As I was going in, my professor ran into me and dropped some stuff. She booked it and then out of nowhere-

RICHIE

Out of nowhere?

TOM

-down the hall these two suits come running and ask me if I'd just seen a woman carrying something and I said, "Yeah, my professor, she went that way." Then I walked down the hall to her office, and her door was open...and there was the briefcase.

RICHIE

Good job, you really had me there for a second.

TOM

Richie, do you seriously think I would lie to you?

RICHIE

...maybe.

TOM

It's the truth.

RICHIE
So the only explanation is your
theatre professor's a drug dealer.

TOM
Can you think of a better one?

They both stare at the briefcase.

RICHIE
Maybe it's just a prop.

TOM
The thought had crossed my mind.

Richie opens the case, takes out the same stack.

RICHIE
Gimme a twenty.

TOM
Don't have one.

Carefully, Richie slips one out of the band and holds it up to the light, eyes squinting, tongue out. After a moment he lowers it.

RICHIE
Well, I dunno what I'm looking for.
(gesturing at the President)
Is this guy right?

TOM
Andrew Jackson? Yeah, he's supposed
to be on the twenty.

RICHIE
That's a good sign then.

TOM
Why don't we just go look it up?

RICHIE
No, I have a better idea.

EXT. CONVENIENCE STORE - DAY

Richie and Tom are standing in front of a change machine, Richie is inserting the twenty. The machine accepts it, spits out one ten, a five, and five ones. Richie picks them up.

RICHIE
Case closed!

TOM
I guess so...

RICHIE
So what are we going to do with it?

TOM
We?

RICHIE
Have you counted it?

Tom looks over at him.

INT. TOM AND RICHIE'S ROOM - DAY

Both of them are sitting on the floor the briefcase between them, alternating taking stacks out.

RICHIE
38...

TOM
39...

RICHIE
40...

TOM
41...

RICHIE
42. That's...that's pretty much,
isn't it?

TOM
Yeah...a lot.

RICHIE
(turning over his final stack)
Hey, look at this.

There's a little post-it on the back.

RICHIE
"If lost, please call
737-629-1504." Dude, maybe we
should call.

TOM
Yeahhhhh, but it's not lost, we
found it.

RICHIE
It's not ours.

TOM
But what do you think these people
will do when they found out we're
the ones who took it?!

RICHIE
You're the one who took it.

TOM
Ok, fine, but what do you think
drug dealers would do if I just
show up and say, "Here, I found your
briefcase!"

RICHIE
Give you a reward?

TOM
I doubt that.

RICHIE
Well, we can't just keep it.

TOM
Can't we?

RICHIE
Well, what if they find out you
took it?

TOM
How?

RICHIE
Did anyone see you walk out with
it?

TOM
I don't...think so.

RICHIE
See.

TOM
I was careful!

INT. COLLEGE BUILDING - DAY

Flashback to Tom tripping over the recycling bin in the hall.

INT. TOM AND RICHIE'S ROOM - DAY

RICHIE

And the briefcase was just lying there open on her desk?

TOM

Yes.

RICHIE

Seems awfully convenient.

TOM

Awfully convenient? Are you suggesting this is all one huge setup to...to get me in trouble?

RICHIE

I'm not suggesting anything.

(beat)

Maybe we should call the cops.

TOM

And say what? "Hi, we found this briefcase full of money, well actually we stole it - thing is, we think maybe it belongs to some drug dealers."

RICHIE

So then what *do* we do with it?

TOM

I don't know-

RICHIE

What if we-

TOM

Just give me a minute to think.

RICHIE

Okay, but if we're not going to call to return it, can I have, like 60 bucks?

TOM
For what?

RICHIE
...sick shades.

Tom squints. Richie pulls a puppy face.

TOM
...alright, fine. Guess it can't hurt. And I *would* like to get the lights back on...

Richie counts out three bills and gets up. Tom closes the case. The next few hours pass quickly around Tom, as he sits on the ground, holding the briefcase, Richie coming in and out, occasionally talking to him, changing clothes, listening to music, wearing his new sunglasses and taking a nap. Soon it is dusk, and Tom is still in the same position. Richie stirs on the bed.

RICHIE
What time is it?

Tom breaks from his trance and looks at his watch.

TOM
Almost 8.

RICHIE
Dude, you were supposed to wake me at 6:30!

TOM
Oh, sorry.

Richie sits up.

RICHIE
Did you at least decide what to do?

TOM
Well...I-

He is interrupted by the old Batman theme song, looks down, picks up his phone, and answers.

TOM
Hello?

GRAVELLY VOICE (V.O.)
(Cockney)
You've got something of mine and I want it back.

The line clicks - dead. Tom lowers the phone.

RICHIE
Who was that?

TOM
I think we should call the number.

EXT. GRUNGY DUPLEX - DAY

Leafless shrubs line a rubble-strewn yard. A large dead tree takes up most of the yard. It is covered in crows, silent. Two all black vans are in the driveway. A dog BARKS ominously from somewhere. Tom and Richie are parked across the street. Richie is wearing his new shades.

RICHIE
Those crows are freaking me out.

TOM
It's called a crow funeral. They only do that when one dies nearby.

RICHIE
Why'd you have to tell me that?!
It's bad enough there's a whole flock.

TOM
...actually, a group of crows is called a murder.

RICHIE
Don't mess with me man.

Tom sticks the key back in the ignition.

TOM
You know, we could just go home.

RICHIE
That'll only make things worse later.

TOM
You're right.

Slowly, Tom pulls the key back out. He puts it away and Richie hands him the briefcase. Tom opens his door, goes to get out. Richie is watching him. Tom turns around.

TOM
Well?
(beat)
Aren't you coming?

RICHIE
This is your deal man.

Tom swings the door partway shut.

TOM
Oh c'mon, you bought the shades!

Richie takes them off and tucks them in his collar.

TOM
You mean you're just here for moral
support, you're going to let me
solo this and get shot in some
crummy-

RICHIE
You want us both getting shot?

TOM
Ideally not.

Tom opens his door and looks at Richie once more.

RICHIE
...alright, let's go.

They both get out, Richie walks around the front and they cross the street. Both can't help but glance at the multitude of crows who seem to mark their approach. They walk through the messy yard, up the porch steps and reach the door. Finding no doorbell, Tom looks at Richie and knocks softly. Richie knocks harder. The door violently opens a crack, a red eye regards them suspiciously.

GREFF
Oy, wotcher want?

TOM
(holding it up)
Um, we're the ones who found your
briefcase.

GREFF undoes the chains, swings the door wide open. He is tall, wide and unshaven.

GREFF

C'mon.

He turns to lead them in.

TOM

(holding it out)

Uh, here you go.

GREFF

Ain't mine. Boss'll want ter see yer.

TOM

Oh, that's okay, we're kind of in a rush-

Greff swings around.

GREFF

(raising his voice)

Didn't yer 'ear me mate?
Boss.'ll.want.ter.see.yer.

TOM

Right, my mistake!

INT. GRUNGY DUPLEX - CONTINUOUS

They rush in after him. The interior is dark, grimy and barely furnished. A sound like a man WHIMPERING comes from their right as they proceed down a long hallway and enter a windowless room with one wooden chair and just the one door.

GREFF

Wait 'ere. 'E'll want ter thank yer
in person wen 'e's done 'is
appointme't.

Greff leaves, closing the door. The handle clicks and a bolt slides into place.

TOM

We're gonna fucking die.

RICHIE

Maybe he *does* want to thank us.

Tom sets down the briefcase.

TOM

Right-

(moving to the door, jiggling
the knob)

We are LOCKED IN.

Tom sinks against the door, head in hands.

TOM

Man, I'm sorry, I shouldnt've
brought you into this.

RICHIE

You're right, you shouldnt've.

Tom looks up. Richie is wearing the sunglasses.

TOM

You're wearing those again?

RICHIE

May as well go out in style.

Richie sits down.

TOM

Think-think-try to think of
something.

RICHIE

(not sarcastic)

Say no more, I'm already in my
happy place.

TOM

No-wait. We could prop chair
against the door.

RICHIE

Yeah. And how do we get out?

TOM

Damn.

FOOTSTEPS approach. Tom scrambles away from the door as it is unlocked from the outside. Richie stands up and puts a hand on Tom's shoulder. The door opens. In steps Greff, followed by BRIGGS, shorter but wider and covered in tattoos. They plant themselves on either side of the door. VAN, in a wheelchair, wheels in between them. Unlike them he is wearing a double-breasted suit and sports a pointy Van Dyke.

VAN
 (Cockney, not as strong as the
 henchmen's)
 Two of you, eh? Double the
 pleasure. Greff, bring in anuver
 chair.

Greff goes out. Van wheels over to the briefcase, picks it up, strokes it, then hands it over to Briggs, who opens it and begins examining the contents. Greff quickly returns with the other chair.

VAN
 Have a seat.

They do.

VAN
 Well, this is a relief. Thank
 Christ you lads found it, I was
 lookin' all over for the damned
 t'ing! Where was it?

TOM
 Just, uh, well-

RICHIE
 On the street.

Van stares them down.

TOM
 Yeah, just laying on the street and
 I was like - that's wrong, I mean
 that's bad, can't let somebody's
 nice briefcase just lie in the
 middle of the street to get run
 over.

RICHIE
 Run over, right.

An awkward silence.

TOM
 And then we found the note
 and...here we are!

VAN
 And how'd you get involved?

RICHIE
I'm just here for moral support.

VAN
Of course. I'm Van, what're yer names?

TOM
Tom.

RICHIE
Richie.

VAN
Tom, do you like my new wheels?
He spins around to show off the gold plating.

TOM
Uh yeah, very nice.

VAN
Do I look like a man to be trifled with?

TOM
No.

RICHIE
I'd say no too.

Van snaps his fingers and Greff and Briggs reach outside the door. They each go to one of the boys with handcuffs and rope.

VAN
And you'd be right! Greff and Briggs here'll show you wot you've won.

TOM
Oh, that's alright, we're good...

RICHIE
Woah, dudes, can't we work something out?

Both Richie and Tom rise try to stand but the henchmen hold them down in their chairs.

VAN
That's just wot we are doin'.

First they tie them to the chairs, then they cuff their ankles together through the chair, and then their hands. The floorboards creak as Van wheels around the chairs.

VAN

I guess you nancies think the world is yer oyster, right? You can just sit there behind yer fancy specs lying through yer teeth?

TOM

Not at all.

RICHIE

I'd take them off if I could.

Van leans in close to Richie as if to say "What did you say?"

RICHIE

My bad!

VAN

Now I want the truth! I'm not goin' to ask ag'in. 'Ow'd you come upon my briefcase?

TOM

It was in my professor's office, I took it from there!

Van turns on Tom.

VAN

You think cause I'm a cripple you can walk all over me boy?

TOM

It's the truth!

VAN

Your time to talk is over!

Van wheels in real close till Tom averts his eyes. Van grabs him by the chin, turns his head.

VAN

I don't like thieves. And that's what you are - a dirty little thief.

RICHIE

Yo man, you've got the wrong guys!

Greff and Briggs start chuckling.

VAN

I've got the wrong guys? I'm sorry.
I guess this is all a big
misunderstanding. Greff untie them,
Briggs, bring in the balloons.

Neither budge.

VAN

Who are you with?

RICHIE

What?

VAN

(clipping him on the ear)
Wot outfit! Nobody steals \$50,000
of MY MONEY for kicks!

TOM

We're not with anyone! That's what
we've been trying to tell you!

VAN

Oooh, wrong answer there, hope it
was worth your legs.

He signals to Greff who leaves the room.

BRIGGS

It's not all 'ere boss.

VAN

Wot?

BRIGGS

Somethin's missing.

RICHIE

56 dollars - I spent it on the
shades.

VAN

You spent MY MONEY on specs?

RICHIE

Take 'em!

VAN
I think I will.

He slides them off and tries them on. Tom and Richie hold their breath.

VAN
'Ow do I look?

RICHIE
Cool.

TOM
Very cool.

VAN
Actually, they feel pretty good.

Greff returns, carrying a cricket bat. Van turns to him.

VAN
Greff, wotcher think?

GREFF
Not bad.

VAN
Alright, good 'un on the specs, mate.

GREFF
Boss, little situation out back.

VAN
You and Briggs handle it, right?

GUNSHOTS erupt nearby.

VAN
Aw hell. You two sit tight, we'll be right back.

He wheels out quickly, flanked by the bodyguards. They leave the door open. The SHOTS continue. Tom and Richie are momentarily stunned. Then they start violently squirming in their chairs. Richie begins rocking side to side until his chair topples over and breaks.

TOM
Shit man, good thinking!

He too begins rocking as Richie struggles out of the debris and onto his feet.

RICHIE
Hang on bro, I'll push you over.

He starts hopping unsteadily at him just as Tom is about to fall over from his own momentum. They collide in midair and land in a heap on the floor, Richie on top of Tom, on top of shattered chair.

TOM
Ugh!

RICHIE
My bad.

Richie rolls off and both struggle unsuccessfully to stand, comically bumping into one another, cuffs getting tangled, trying to use one another to gain their balance.

RICHIE
C'mon-

TOM
I'm trying-

RICHIE
Just a little-

TOM
Wait, YOU wait-

RICHIE
I've almost got it-

TOM
Damn!

RICHIE
Alright, now push off there-

TOM
Take my arm-

RICHIE
I'm going down!

Eventually they reach door.

TOM
I've got the handle!

RICHIE
Go, go!

They slide with the door as it swings shut, but afterward manage to pull one another up against the wall, Tom leaning on Richie. Breathing heavily, they take a second. The gunshots have subsided.

TOM
You ready?

RICHIE
Let's do it.

They open the door and peek in opposite directions, then start hopping wildly down the hallway toward the exit.

EXT. GRUNGY DUPLEX - CONTINUOUS

They're at the car, Tom fumbling with the keys.

RICHIE
C'mon, c'mon!

TOM
I'm aware!

He gets his door, tumbles in and reaches across to undo the lock on Richie's door. Richie plunging in causes Tom to drop the keys in the cup holder.

TOM
Shit!

He reaches, but his cuffs get caught on the gear shift. Richie grabs them and jams them in the ignition. The car bursts into life.

RICHIE
Here here, go go!

Tom finally wrenches himself free and guns it, their car speeding down the empty street, doors clattering open and shut.

INT. TOM'S CAR - CONTINUOUS

Both are leaning dangerously far to the left as Tom takes the first right much too fast.

TOM
Close your door!

RICHIE
Close your door!

TOM
I'm driving!

RICHIE
Fine!

Richie reaches for the door but there is a loud BANG as it is suddenly ripped off as the car veers too close to a parked car.

RICHIE
AHHHH!

TOM
Okay, nevermind, take the wheel!

Richie does and Tom slams his door shut. They shoot straight through a 4-way stop and the opposing traffic HONKS. Tom takes the wheel again. He looks in the rearview mirror.

TOM
Are they following us?

RICHIE
(turning around)
I don't think so...

Richie paws at his seatbelt, Tom looks over.

TOM
Are you trying to put your seatbelt on?

RICHIE
I HAVE NO DOOR!

TOM
Good point, safety first.
(beat)
I have to say, driving with two feet is actually pretty fun.

Richie finishes buckling himself in and leans back.

RICHIE
(beat)
Man!

TOM
What?

RICHIE
Was that an awesome getaway or
what?

TOM
(looking over)
It was, wasn't it?

RICHIE
We're like - secret agents man!

TOM
Totally!

INT. GRUNGY DUPLEX - SIMULTANEOUS

The room they escaped from is empty as floorboards CREAK and FOOTSTEPS approach.

VAN (O.S.)
Right, then, where were we?

Van wheels into the room somewhat bloodier than before,
flanked by Greff and Briggs, also disheveled.

They're greeted by a sight of broken chair bits and tangled
rope.

VAN
Shit.

INT. TOM'S CAR - SIMULTANEOUS

They've made it onto the highway.

TOM
I can't believe we're still alive!

RICHIE
But now what - they know who we are
- they got your number, they can
obviously find us.

TOM
You're right, we can't go home.

RICHIE
 What? We've at least got to warn
 Mom and Dad!

TOM
 I'm sure she's seen it coming.

Richie is stunned. Tom glances over.

TOM
 I'm sorry, that was out of - that
 was stupid, here-
 (handing him his phone)
 -call her.

Richie takes the phone, dials.

INT. MACARIA'S PSYCHIC READINGS - SIMULTANEOUS

Aunt Macaria dances with wild abandon to loud TRIBAL music.
 The phone RINGS quietly till it falls off it's little perch
 on a tree stump.

INT. TOM'S CAR - SIMULTANEOUS

Richie hangs up, confused.

RICHIE
 She's not picking up!

TOM
 That's weird-

RICHIE
 I'll try the house!

TOM
 Um...

Richie is listening.

RICHIE
 Busy?!

TOM
 Electricity's out - remember?

RICHIE
 Oh, right. You don't think-

TOM
I don't think - I don't think
what?! I'm *trying* to think-

RICHIE
I mean that THEY...

TOM
That THEY? We *literally* escaped
five minutes ago. What could've
possibly happened in five minutes?

Richie raises his eyebrows. He looks seriously at Tom.

RICHIE
You don't know these guys, dude. We
don't know what they're capable of!

Tom scoffs.

TOM
I seriously doubt that ANYONE could
kidnap both your parents in a span
of five minutes.

RICHIE
Kidnapping?! Who said anything
about kidnapping?

Tom's cellphone rings in Richie's hand, an unknown number.
They both look at it. Richie makes a face: "you see?"

TOM
Well - answer it!

Slowly, Richie raises it to his face, Tom glancing from him
to the road, and presses "accept."

DISTORTED VOICE (V.O.)
Run if you like, but I will find
you, and it'll only make things
less pleasant when I do.

The line clicks - dead. Richie goes white, lowers the phone.

TOM
What, what is it? Is it-

RICHIE
I think you should get an unlisted
number, man.

TOM
What?!

RICHIE
It was them again-

TOM
Who?

RICHIE
The dudes - the bad dudes!

TOM
Well?

RICHIE
They said running's a bad idea.

TOM
...Well duh it's a bad idea! Bad
idea for them! Was that all?

RICHIE
Well, yeah-

TOM
Pffft. So we just don't go home.
How are they going to find us?

RICHIE
...They do have our door.

TOM
Yeah, you're right, that is
true...but it's not the door with
the little serial numbers, right,
that's this door?

RICHIE
I dunno what you're talking about.

TOM
The numbers! Every car has a serial
number-like a fingerprint-

RICHIE
So?

TOM
So! ...I dunno, I guess that's
actually irrelevant. The point is,
how would you find a car from just
the door?

RICHIE

Well, it's easier than finding a car that's not missing a door.

TOM

Okay, okay fine-

RICHIE

(holding up his hands)
And how are we going to get rid of these?

TOM

I don't know yet...

A siren BLARES - a police cruiser is close behind in the rearview mirror. Richie turns around.

RICHIE

Shit.

Tom starts to pull over.

TOM

Wait, no this is good! We should be going to the police anyway!

They slow to a stop.

TOM

We'll just explain everything, and it'll all be cool. Hey, maybe we'll be the ones that bust a major crime ring! Just act cool.

Richie looks at his own cuffs.

RICHIE

Even about the briefcase?

TOM

Well, obviously not the briefcase...we found it on the street, like we told the mobsters.

The officer taps on the window.

TOM

Oh!

(Tom grins and waves through the glass)

Sorry!

He cranks down the window with some difficulty. OFFICER DIM is glaring down at them with some confusion. He is tall, middle-aged, Military cropped hair, dressed in a standard State Trooper uniform.

OFFICER DIM
What in the hell?

TOM
Thank God you stopped us Officer-

OFFICER DIM
Wait.

TOM
Funny story! I can see how this looks pretty weird-

OFFICER DIM
Son, let me do the talking!

Tom does the locking the lips gesture. Officer Dim regards him warily, puts a hand on his belt.

OFFICER DIM
First...I assume you know why I stopped you?

Tom and Richie look at each other, shrug. Officer Dim leans down on the window, looking around inside.

OFFICER DIM
This vehicle is not fit for highway travel.

Tom looks confused.

RICHIE
Oh, because of the door!

Officer Dim points a warning.

OFFICER DIM
Second, what,
(gesturing at their cuffs)
is this?

Richie and Tom both look like they want to talk, but can't. Officer Dim rolls his eyes.

OFFICER DIM
You may speak.

TOM
 (simultaneously)
 Ok, so like I was saying, funny
 story-

RICHIE
 (simultaneously)
 Here's the thing, sir, we were just
 saying, how are we-

OFFICER DIM
 ONE at a time.
 (pointing at Richie)
 You.

RICHIE
 I was just saying to him, now how
 are we going to get these off
 before you-

OFFICER DIM
 You put these on each other?

TOM
 No! It's kind of weird but-

OFFICER DIM
 Quiet. I want to hear him explain.

RICHIE
 Okay, this is what happened. We
 show up at this shady place - he
 made me come, he didn't want to go
 alone - and when we get in there,
 these two big burly guys sit us
 down, tie us to a chair and put the
 cuffs on-

Officer Dim puts a hand up to silence him.

OFFICER DIM
 Look, I don't know what you queers
 do in private, and I don't wanna
 know.

Richie and Tom look at each other.

TOM
 Oh, we're not gay! We're cousins!

Officer Dim looks even more horrified.

OFFICER DIM
Alright, step out of the vehicle,
both of you.

Officer Dim opens Tom's door.

TOM
But - wait! He didn't-

OFFICER DIM
Sir, I'm asking you to step out of
the vehicle. Can you follow
instructions?

Tom and Richie both get out, Richie leaning against the car.
Officer Dim grabs Tom's arm.

OFFICER DIM
(pulling him along)
Come on.
(looking at Richie)
You, wait there.

TOM
(hopping along)
If you would just let us explain-

OFFICER DIM
You can explain at the station - I
don't want to hear it.

TOM
Aren't you even going to say the
Miranda rights?

OFFICER DIM
(opening the door)
You're not under arrest - yet. I'm
just taking you into custody.
Whatever this is, it's going to
take a lot of paperwork...

Officer Dim pushes Tom into the backseat.

TOM
(sitting up)
Well, can you at least uncuff us
then?

OFFICER DIM
Oh yeah, let me just get out my
skeleton key.

He slams the door and walks over to Richie.

RICHIE
(hopping)
I like your hat.

Officer Dim looks at Richie, takes his hat off and puts it under his arm.

OFFICER DIM
Thanks.

He opens the door and shoves Richie into Tom. They look at each other.

TOM
You give the worst explanations.

The sirens start up and the cruiser drives off into the sunset.

INT. GRUNGY DUPLEX - NIGHT

Officer Dim and OFFICER MEADOWS walk around, shining their flashlights into every corner. Tom and Richie trail them. Officer Meadows is younger with a clean shave and a kind face. The entire building is empty. They enter the room in which they were held captive. It too is bare.

RICHIE
This is where they tied us up!

TOM
There were bits of
wood...everywhere...

Officer Dim and Officer Meadows look at one another, Officer Dim shaking his head.

RICHIE
I swear officers!

TOM
They must've packed up, there's no
other explanation.

OFFICER DIM
I think there's one, I think
there's several.

Tom steps in front of Officer Dim.

TOM
 Look, why would we make this kind
 of story up?

OFFICER DIM
 To waste taxpayer money and my
 time.

He exits briskly.

OFFICER MEADOWS
 Don't mind Officer Dim - troubles
 at home. He's usually not this
 cranky.

He walks out as well, Tom and Richie following. Officer Dim
 is in the driver's seat, listening to the police RADIO.

TOM
 But you're not just going to drop
 the whole case, are you?

OFFICER DIM
 Tim, hurry up, we've got an 11-80.

RICHIE
 What?

OFFICER DIM
 We can't take you to the impound,
 you'll have to find your own way.

TOM
 You're leaving us here?!

OFFICER MEADOWS
 (with his arm on the passenger
 door)
 I'm sorry, we've done all we can do
 with the information you've
 provided. There's no evidence of
 any criminal activity on the
 premises; and no signs anyone's
 even been in the building in years.

Officer Meadows gets in.

RICHIE
 But it's the truth!

OFFICER DIM
 (revving up the cruiser)

(MORE)

OFFICER DIM (cont'd)
 Look, we have their descriptions -
 gold-plated wheelchair, Cockney
 accents...we'll be on the lookout.

They pull off, leaving Tom and Richie standing alone in the dark, rubble-strewn driveway.

EXT. HIGHWAY - NIGHT

Tom and Richie hike on as the occasional car whizzes past.

EXT. POLICE STATION - NIGHT

Their pace has slowed. The station, mostly dark, seems a long way off. They approach at a crawl.

INT. POLICE STATION - NIGHT

They enter looking dogged. Richie flops down in a chair near the door, while Tom pulls himself to the counter where the night shift DISPATCHER sits. The Dispatcher is a scrawny kid, intent on something on his computer screen. It's minesweeper. After a moment, he looks up.

DISPATCHER
 Oh, you're back?

TOM
 Where's the impound?

DISPATCHER
 (pointing)
 Just down the road 6 miles.

Richie groans.

DISPATCHER
 Where's Officer Dim and Meadows?

TOM
 (turning to go)
 Called away.

DISPATCHER
 (remembering)
 Oh, that's right.

Richie gets up as Tom nears the door.

DISPATCHER
You're not going to the impound,
are you?

TOM
(turning around)
Yeah?

DISPATCHER
Didn't they tell you? Your car's
not there.

RICHIE
What?

DISPATCHER
Yeah, it's missing - stolen I
guess. Wasn't there when they went
to tow it.

Tom SCREAMS, the world spinning. The lights get brighter,
flicker and stabilize.

Tom tries to talk - can't. Unintelligible NOISES flow.

Someone is hushing him.

INT. HOSPITAL - INDETERMINATE

Things start to come into focus. He is staring at a white
ceiling.

AUNT MACARIA
Glad to see you're awake.

He looks over at her. It is the first time he has ever seen
her dressed in clothes one might wear in public. He tries to
sit up a bit, gives up.

TOM
Where's Richie?

AUNT MACARIA
Close.

TOM
Thank God.
(beat)
Thank God. So this was all a dream.

AUNT MACARIA

No, it all happened, just as you
remember it.

Tom turns to her a little too fast.

AUNT MACARIA

You passed out in the station - had
a minor seizure.

Tom leans back in the hospital bed. High above him, a crow
sits watching.

CUT TO BLACK

ACADEMIC VITA of Adam Bouc

Adam N. Bouc
2851 Dogwood Drive
Coopersburg, PA 18036
anb5136@gmail.com

Education: Bachelor of Arts Degree in Film/Video, Bachelor of Arts Degree in English
Penn State University, Spring 2011
Minor in Theatre
Honors in Film-Video
Thesis Title: The Briefcase: a feature screenplay
Thesis Supervisor: Rod Bingaman

Awards:
President's Freshman Award
Dean's List
Phi Beta Kappa

Presentations/Activities:
Directed 4 shows with No Refund Theatre: *Dirk* adapted by Adam Bouc (an adaptation of Douglas Adams's *Dirk Gently's Holistic Detective Agency*), *Sleuth* by Anthony Shaffer, *Black Comedy* by Peter Shaffer, and *God* by Woody Allen
Historian for No Refund Theatre