

HOLLYWOOD STARS & STRIPES

by
Mark E. McCann

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Mark E. McCann
www.markemccann.com

FADE IN:

EXT. HOLLYWOOD - DAY

A short montage of all the usual sights associated with Tinseltown: the Hollywood sign, the movie studios, the Chinese Theater, Walk of Fame, etc.

JACK (O.S.)
Forget it.

EXT. RESTAURANT

A posh restaurant, and unless you're A-list you're not getting in. Your name had better be Spielberg or Bruckheimer.

KEVIN (O.S.)
(pleading)
Come on, Jack...

INT. RESTAURANT

The inside is even fancier than the outside. Sitting tucked away from the other high-maintenance clientele is JACK PORTER; a portly, Rob Reiner type who is busy trying not to drip any of his fifty-dollar plate of veal parmigiana on his three-thousand-dollar suit.

Across from him, in decidedly less expensive attire is KEVIN WALTMAN, mid forties, a tinge of gray. He's barely touched his rigatoni and leans over the table expectantly. He slides a movie script across the table.

KEVIN
At least read the script before you say no.

Jack wipes his mouth and promptly slides the script back across, obviously more interested in the veal.

JACK
I don't have to read the script, Kevin. Even if I like it, the studio will still say no.

KEVIN
But what if they say yes?

JACK
Then they'll still say no to you.

Kevin sits back in his chair, shoulders drooped.

KEVIN

Why?

JACK

Numbers, Kevin. It's all a matter of numbers.

KEVIN

(scoffs)

Numbers.

JACK

Your last three films tanked at the box.

Kevin looks around, desperately trying to think of anything to counter.

KEVIN

What about my Oscar nod?

JACK

Six years ago... your first film and your only hit. Nothing since. Zilch. Zero. You know what the suits have taken to calling you?

KEVIN

What?

JACK

"One-hit-Waltman."

KEVIN

Cute.

Kevin leans forward to get personal, so far across the table that it earns a dirty look from Jack.

KEVIN

I can do it again, Jack. I'm still a damn good director.

JACK

Never said you weren't. The critics loved those artsy fartsy films of yours.

KEVIN

See?

JACK

Yeah, but Ma and Pa Kettle in Oklahoma didn't. And those are the people who pay to see movies. The critics get in free... the cheap bastards. Numbers, Kevin. It's not talent, it's a matter of numbers. Nobody in town is going to touch you unless you start to produce some.

A WAITER walks toward their table.

KEVIN

I'm going to get this picture made, Jack.

JACK

Then more power to you. Just don't expect any investors to be come banging down your door. If you believe in it that much, then mortgage your house for the cash.

KEVIN

I can't... I did that for my last film.

JACK

Then that should tell you something, huh?

The WAITER presents the check to Kevin, who only looks sheepish, obviously unprepared to pay for it. Jack sighs, rolls his eyes and motions for it.

EXT. RESTAURANT

Kevin steps outside, very unhappy... so much so that he kicks the building. He sighs and heads toward the parking lot. He goes to his Jaguar parked in the Fire Lane and is overjoyed to find a parking ticket stuck beneath the wiper. He wads it up and throws it in frustration.

JACK (V.O.)

Kev, take my advice. Forget about feature films for awhile. Lay low... shoot a few commercials or music videos or whatever. Then, when the time is right, pull a Travolta and come back and knock everybody's socks off.

(MORE)

JACK (V.O.) (cont'd)
 But lay off the artsy fartsy.
 You're loosing your shirt.

KEVIN (V.O.)
 I'm not shooting commercials, Jack.

JACK (V.O.)
 Well, they'll certainly make you
 more money than your last three
 films did.

Kevin climbs in his Jaguar and zips off, TIRES SQUALLING as he bolts into traffic.

And he's promptly pulled over by a MOTORCYCLE COP.

INT. KEVIN'S OFFICE - DAY

Movie posters adorn the walls, three "artsy fartsy" types: LEFT OF RIGHT, QUIET OBSESSION, and OUTER SCREAMS OF THE INNER MIND. Only one has any commercial look to it: WW II-K. All four proudly declare themselves to be: "A film by Kevin Waltman."

Kevin paces back and forth behind a large mahogany desk with a phone pressed to his ear.

All around him, MOVERS are busy packing up furniture. Which is odd because nothing looks like it's been packed up to move. It hasn't. The Movers take the personal items and set them on the floor.

KEVIN
 (into phone)
 He said no... but don't worry, I've still got a few other contacts to try. We're not dead yet. Your client has written a wonderful script and I'm going to get it made one way or another.

Kevin starts to sit down, but a Mover takes his leather chair right out from underneath him before he can.

KEVIN
 Can you not leave me the damn chair for a minute?

The Mover only shrugs.

MOVER
 Come up with a grand and a half and we'll leave it all.

Mover carries the chair to the door.

KEVIN

Jerk.

(into phone)

Huh? No, not you.

As Mover exits, a man in a suit walks up to the door; THOMAS SMITH, mid thirties, arrow-straight. He looks around to see if he has the right place, then steps in and looks at the posters as he patiently waits for Kevin.

KEVIN

(into phone)

Yes, I realize the option expires tomorrow. I was hoping you guys could give me a few more days... you know, kind of a... courtesy.

(beat, winces)

Five grand? Yeah, I know it's in the contract, but...

A Mover picks up some items off the desk and hands them to Kevin while another Mover clears the surface of papers and knickknacks. They each grab an end and carry the desk away.

KEVIN

(into phone)

Look, I'm right in the middle of something. I'll call you back, okay? Don't worry, I'll find the money. Just don't sell the script to anyone else, okay?

Kevin sighs as he looks around his now barren office. He notices Smith standing in the middle of it all, patiently smiling at him.

SMITH

Moving?

KEVIN

Well, I'm not, but the furniture certainly seems to be going places. You're not here to repossess anything are you?

SMITH

No, sir I'm not. My name is Thomas Smith. You're Mr. Waltman?

Smith extends his hand and Kevin looks at it distrustfully.

KEVIN
Do I owe you money?

SMITH
Not a penny.

Kevin takes his hand, though still unsure about this guy.

KEVIN
Well, then you're in the minority.

Kevin starts to pick up his odds and ends off the floor.

SMITH
It's an honor to meet you, Mr.
Waltman. I've seen all of your
films.

Kevin has to snort.

KEVIN
Now you're in an even smaller
minority.

Kevin stops and looks around for a spot to put everything,
but there's only the floor. He sighs and drops it. It
hasn't been a good day.

KEVIN
Look, Mr. Smith, I don't mean to be
rude, but I've a few things going
on right now. What can I do for
you?

SMITH
Actually, I think it would be more
appropriate to ask what it is that
I can do for you.

That certainly catches Kevin's attention.

EXT. LOS ANGELES - LATER

A black limousine glides through the busy city streets.

INT. LIMOUSINE

Kevin and Smith sit in the back. Kevin looks around,
impressed but still unsure.

KEVIN
So, Mr. Smith, who do you work for?
Paramount? Universal?

SMITH
Washington.

Kevin certainly wasn't expecting that.

KEVIN
Seattle?

SMITH
D.C.

Now Kevin looks suspicious.

KEVIN
Government?

Smith smiles. Kevin curses under his breath.

KEVIN
Look, my accountant is the one who
does the books. He said all those
deductions were completely legal.

SMITH
Wrong department, Mr. Waltman.

KEVIN
Not the IRS?

SMITH
No.

But Kevin still looks uncomfortable.

KEVIN
FBI?

Smith laughs, enjoying himself.

SMITH
Department of Defense. My official
title is Assistant to the Principal
Deputy Under-Secretary of Defense
for Personnel and Readiness.

Kevin almost has to shake his head to clear it of the govern-
babble.

KEVIN
You're kidding.

SMITH

Not at all. It's an actual title.

KEVIN

I bet you have a hell of a time fitting all that on a business card.

SMITH

Indeed.

Kevin still doesn't get the connection.

KEVIN

So what could the Department of Defense possibly want with me?

The limo stops and Smith opens the door.

SMITH

I'm here to offer you a job.

EXT. RECRUITING CENTER

The limo has stopped in front of a military recruiting building. All branches of the armed services are here: Army, Navy, Air Force, Marines... even the Coast Guard.

Smith and Kevin exit. Kevin is more puzzled than before.

INT. RECRUITING CENTER

Uniformed PERSONNEL from all branches of service are milling about, talking on the phones, filing forms. Kevin and Smith walk through the offices.

KEVIN

I'm a little old to join the military don't you think?

Smith motions around.

SMITH

Tell me what you see, Mr. Waltman.

Kevin isn't quite sure what Smith is fishing for.

KEVIN

Um... Army people?

SMITH
Yes... and Navy, and Air Force, and
Marines. But what's missing?

KEVIN
Guns and bombs?

SMITH
Recruits, Mr. Waltman. There are
no recruits here.

Kevin looks around, realizing for the first time that everybody but he and Smith are in a uniform. Smith ushers Kevin into a side office.

INT. RECRUITING OFFICE

A room full of posters, each trying to sell a branch of service to the young masses. Kevin is seated at a table while Smith digs around in a case at the end.

SMITH
It's like this all over the
country. The war is what's hurting
us. Nobody wants to join a
volunteer army knowing they'll be
shipped off to fight in a desert
halfway around the world.

KEVIN
Can't say I blame them.

Smith takes out a rolled up poster and tacks the top corners to the wall.

SMITH
Honestly? Neither can I.

KEVIN
This is all very interesting Mr.
Smith, but what exactly am I here
for? You said something about a
job...

Smith lets the poster unroll and Kevin finds Tom Cruise and Kelly McGillis staring at him. It's a Top Gun movie poster.

KEVIN
I think that picture already got
made.

SMITH

Indeed it did. It was the smash hit of 1986 and it made a ton of money. But it also did something else... something very important.

Smith clicks a remote and an LCD projector brings up an image on a screen on the other side of the room. It's a line graph, showing recruiting trends for the eighties. There's a sharp upward spike in the year 1986.

SMITH

After the release of Top Gun, enlistment in the U.S. Navy rose a staggering thirty-three percent.

KEVIN

Let's hear it for Tony Scott.

SMITH

Let's hear it for Kevin Waltman.

KEVIN

Excuse me?

SMITH

That's right, Mr. Waltman. That's the job I have to offer you. We want you to do for our recruiting numbers what Top Gun did in 1986.

Kevin doesn't know how to react. Is this guy for real?

KEVIN

(looking around)
Where's the camera hidden?

SMITH

Pardon me?

KEVIN

This is a set-up right? Who put you up to this?

SMITH

No joke, Mr. Waltman. We want to hire you to make a movie. A movie that will not only get kids into the theater, but into their local recruiting offices as well.

Kevin start laughing and stands up.

KEVIN

You've definitely got the wrong
guy, Mr. Smith.

SMITH

I don't believe I do. Your first
film was about a group of
Generation X teenagers who get
pulled into their computers and had
to experience World War II for
themselves. Brilliant.

Kevin only shakes his head, dismissive.

KEVIN

I was young and needed a job. I
don't do those kind of pictures
anymore. Are you going to give me
a ride back to my office or do I
have to call a cab?

SMITH

I'm prepared to give you much more
than that.

KEVIN

It would take more than that. You
obviously haven't done your
homework.

SMITH

Why is that?

KEVIN

Because, One: I don't much care for
the military. My father was in the
military and he was an asshole.
Two, I certainly don't care for
war, let alone trying to get kids
to sign up for it. And Three...
(stumped)
I'll think of three later. But the
answer's no. Go get Riddly Scott.

SMITH

He said no.

Kevin blinks, then shakes his head.

KEVIN

Well, looks like I'm in good
company then. Now, that ride?

EXT. KEVIN'S OFFICE - LATER

The limousine sits curbside and Kevin exits. The rear window rolls down as he passes by. Smith sticks his hand out with a business card stuck between two fingers.

SMITH
Mr. Waltman...

Kevin looks at it with no interest.

SMITH
I'm not the IRS, Mr. Waltman... but
I do know their number.

Kevin looks nervous, until Smith grins at him.

SMITH
Just take the card in case you
change your mind, please? At least
then I can tell my boss that I
tried.

Kevin has to snort. He snags the card and the limousine pulls away.

Which reveals what's happening across the street. A TOW-TRUCK DRIVER is lifting Kevin's jaguar up on his wrecker.

KEVIN
Hey!

Kevin starts to run across the road, having to dodge HONKING traffic. Kevin makes it across just as Tow-Truck Driver hops in the cab and starts to take off. Kevin runs alongside, but Tow-Truck Driver only glances at him through the open window.

KEVIN
Hey! That's my car!

TOW-TRUCK DRIVER
No, it was your car. Now it's the
bank's car!

The wrecker accelerates and Kevin huffs and puffs, unable to keep up. Finally, he has to stop and watch his car as it slowly disappears down the road. Kevin throws a fit.

KEVIN
Son of a... mother... damn it!

EXT. GLORIA'S HOUSE - NIGHT

A nice house in the hills, not quite a mansion but pretty darn close. Kevin reluctantly walks up the lighted walk and RINGS the bell. After a few moments someone looks out the peephole, and Kevin gives it a sardonic smile.

The door opens just enough for GLORIA to stick her head out. She's mid-forties and, judging from the anti-wrinkle cream plastered to her face, looks to be a high-maintenance woman who refuses to yield to any aspect of aging. From the contemptuous look on her face upon seeing Kevin, the animosity is mutual.

GLORIA

I suppose you got the papers.

KEVIN

What is that on your face?

GLORIA

Wrinkle cream.

KEVIN

Why? You've got enough wrinkles as it is.

Gloria opens the door scornfully and steps forward like she's going to deck Kevin. She's wearing a bath robe that falls open, revealing that she has a red nightie beneath. Kevin looks at her chest with some annoyance.

KEVIN

Did you get a boob job?

Gloria quickly pulls her robe tight.

KEVIN

How much did those cost me?

GLORIA

What do you want, Kevin?

KEVIN

I need the Mercedes.

GLORIA

What? Get out of here!

KEVIN

Come on, Gloria, as much money as your bloodsucking lawyers milked me for, the least you can do is let me borrow my own car.

GLORIA

That is my car, and no you can't use it! You have a lot of nerve, you know that?

KEVIN

I had to have a lot of nerve to marry you.

Gloria starts to protest, but she's interrupted by TED, a way younger man whose chiseled features tell us that he obviously spends too much time at the gym. He gives Kevin a friendly enough smile.

TED

Hello, Kevin.

Kevin grunts, not caring to reciprocate the good will.

KEVIN

Ted.

TED

(to Gloria)

Everything okay, babe?

GLORIA

Everything's fine, hon. I'll be back in a sec'. Kevin was just leaving.

TED

Oh, that's okay... you want to come in, Kev?

GLORIA

No!

KEVIN

No, thanks. If I can just get the keys, I'll be on my way.

GLORIA

I said forget it.

TED

Keys for what?

KEVIN

I need a car.

KEVIN

That shouldn't be a problem. We have three.

GLORIA

No!

TED

Two people can't drive three cars,
right, Kev? Too hard to shift!

Ted snorts a little too much at his weak attempt at humor. Kevin looks at Gloria as if to say, "You picked a winner, honey... all brawn and no brain."

TED

Something wrong with the Jag, Kev?

KEVIN

It got traded for a newer model.
I'm sure that's something we all
can relate too, isn't it, Ted?

GLORIA

Kevin!

TED

Look, Kev, if you need some wheels,
you're more than welcome to borrow
my car for a few days.

KEVIN

Wow... a wife for a car, what a
deal. I'll take it... but I think
you're getting gypped.

Gloria stares daggers at Kevin. Ted only grins.

TED

Hold on, I'll get the keys.

KEVIN

Thank you, Ted. It's nice to know
we'll both be riding something of
each other's tonight.

Ted only laughs stupidly as he disappears, leaving Kevin and Gloria to stand in an awkward silence. Then Ted remembers:

TED

What papers?

GLORIA

You haven't got them yet?

TED

No. What papers?

GLORIA

I had my attorney file for more alimony.

Kevin only shakes his head... it just keeps getting better.

KEVIN

So what am I paying for now, the boobs, the collagen or the liposuction?

GLORIA

Don't start, Kevin. Just sign the agreement... it'll cost you more in lawyer fees to contest it.

KEVIN

Blood from a turnip, Gloria. Why don't you put Hercules to work? What does he do, anyway?

GLORIA

He keeps me happy, for one thing.

KEVIN

A fresh set of batteries on the night-stand would do that.

Gloria starts to slap him, but Ted shows up and tosses Kevin a set of keys.

TED

Here you go, Kev.

KEVIN

Thank you, Ted.
(to Gloria)
And thank you for nothing.

Kevin starts to head down the walk and she yells after him.

GLORIA

You'll get the papers tomorrow!

He won't give her the satisfaction, throws over his shoulder:

KEVIN

Squeeze the rock all you want, Gloria... only Moses could get water from it.

EXT. BAR - NIGHT

Kevin pulls up, squashed inside some tiny, broken-down pile of junk that's three sizes too small. He curses as he has to unfold himself to get out.

KEVIN

How the hell does he fit in this damn thing?

INT. BAR

A few PATRONS sit at the bar, temporarily bidding their problems bon voyage as they set sail on a sea of alcohol.

Kevin saunters in and looks around. He finally spots GAYLIN, an older man with gray in his hair and even more in his beard. Judging from his droopy shoulders and even droopier eyes, he's been at the bar for some time. He nurses his scotch as he prattles on, oblivious to the fact that the young BARTENDER isn't listening.

GAYLIN

Now everything is this digital crap. Digital phones, digital music... digital movies. It's just not film, damn it! It doesn't look the same! You want a cheap porno, shoot it on digital. But if you want a movie that by god looks like a movie-

Kevin pulls up a stool beside Gayle.

KEVIN

Then call the best damn DP in the business.

Gaylin looks, sees who it is through the alcohol haze.

GAYLIN

The best, huh? Apparently not!

KEVIN

Now, Gaylin... get over it already. Who cares what the Academy thinks, anyway?

GAYLIN

Piss on the Academy. The Academy wouldn't know talent if it bit them on their pompous, oversized asses.

(MORE)

GAYLIN (cont'd)
Nothing but a damn popularity
contest, anyway.

BARTENDER
(to Kevin)
What can I get for you?

KEVIN
Whiskey sour. And another whatever
for him.

GAYLIN
Good man.

Bartender prepares the drinks.

BARTENDER
So what exactly is a DP, anyway?

GAYLIN
Director of Photography, my young
squire. Yours truly.

KEVIN
Twice nominated for an Oscar.

GAYLIN
And twice shot to hell by arrogant
snobs who know nothing of
filmmaking.

BARTENDER
Oh, I get it. You're like, the
cameraman, right?

GAYLIN
Good god.... anyone can work a damn
camera, lad! A DP is an artist.
Their job is to keep incompetent
directors like him from ruining a
film.

Bartender serves them their drinks.

BARTENDER
So you two make movies?

GAYLIN
We made movies. Past tense. I'm
retired.

KEVIN

Nonsense... he's just waiting for the right project to come along to get him back on his horse.

GAYLIN

You're much too early to start trying to sell me on your latest film, Kevin. I'm not near drunk enough.

Behind the two older men, a giggling YOUNG MAN and YOUNG WOMAN enter the bar and takes a seat at a booth. Young Man occasionally glances over at Kevin.

KEVIN

Then down that one and hurry on to the next. I'm here to get you piss-ass drunk until you agree.

GAYLIN

It will take far more than this.

KEVIN

Then we'll drink til we puke, then start all over again.

GAYLIN

Good man. Here's to you.

They toast and each downs their drink.

KEVIN

(to bartender)
Another please.

Bartender begins to pour another.

GAYLIN

So, my friend... how's the life of a once-successful director who's now struggling to rebuild a failing career?

Kevin sighs, rubs his face.

KEVIN

Still struggling, I'm afraid. You wouldn't happen to have five grand handy, would you?

GAYLIN

If I did, I would be in far greater company than yours.

KEVIN
Can't argue with that.

Young Man finally works up the nerve to approach.

YOUNG MAN
Excuse me... I'm sorry. Aren't you
Kevin Waltman?

KEVIN
Well, I used to be.

YOUNG MAN
Oh, my gosh! This is amazing! I
love your films.

KEVIN
Thank you.

GAYLIN
You actually paid money to see his
tripe?

YOUNG MAN
Well, no. I'm a film student.
We've watched them in class.
They're classics.

GAYLIN
Rubbish. They're pure drivel,
saved only by good photography.

YOUNG MAN
Could I trouble you for your
autograph?

KEVIN
Sure.

Kevin grabs a napkin from the bar and signs it.

YOUNG MAN
So, Mr. Waltman, any advice you can
offer an aspiring filmmaker?

Kevin thinks about it, nods, then motions for him to lean
close. Young Man does so, eagerly anticipating some jewel of
knowledge. Kevin whispers in his ear.

KEVIN
Run.

Young Man pulls back.

YOUNG MAN

What?

KEVIN

Leave LA. Now. Pack your dreams
before some corporate suit with
dollar signs for eyeballs smashes
them to pieces.

Kevin hands him the napkin. Young Man looks confused, nods
and slowly backs away, slinking back to his booth.

GAYLIN

Not quite the words of inspiration
he was looking for, I'd say.

KEVIN

Nobody ever said the truth was
kind.

Gaylin lifts his glass.

GAYLIN

I'll drink to that.

They toast and drink.

KEVIN

You going to DP my next project?

GAYLIN

Not a chance.

KEVIN

(to Bartender)
Another round.