

# **UP TO ME**

A SCREENPLAY

BY

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Black Box Theater, Int. Night

DYLAN JACOBS (early twenties) stands onstage in front of a chalkboard. In front of him, there is a stool.

DYLAN

I suppose I could begin with the truth.

DYLAN writes the words "THE TRUTH" on the blackboard and underlines them.

DYLAN (Cont'd.)

I took one writing class in my life. The first thing the teacher did was write rules on the board: "Always tell the truth," he said, "But make sure it sounds like a lie."

Dylan writes the phrases he utters on the blackboard.

DYLAN (Cont'd.)

"Write what you know, but pretend you don't know it." "Use your own autobiography," he said, "but pretend it's someone else's." This above all: *Never* tell a story in the first person. Because, when you do, you destroy the suspense; the audience will always know that no matter what happened, the narrator survived—he's there to tell the story.

DYLAN carries the blackboard off, places it offstage, then walks to the stool, sits down.

DYLAN (Cont'd.)

I said what about *Sunset Boulevard*, what about *American Beauty*, *All Quiet on the Western Front*? Yeah, he said, but those writers knew what they were doing; you're just starting out.

He stands and walks toward the black backdrop.

DYLAN (Cont'd.)

But I can't think of a way to tell this story other than the way it happened to me. Exactly as I remember it. Just three summers ago.

(a pause)

I suppose I could start with the apartment on Fairfield.

CUT TO:

Fairfield Apartment, Ext. Day

We see a red brick three-flat on Fairfield Avenue, a quiet, tree-lined street in a working class section of Chicago's West Rogers Park.

DYLAN (v.o.)

The apartment where I lived with my mother when she wasn't drinking with Leonard at Alibi's...

CUT TO:

Alibi's Cocktail Lounge, Int. Night

EVELYN JACOBS (mid-40's) is seated at a table, smoking, as LEONARD (early 50s) walks from the bar toward her, carrying two shots of Wild Turkey. He places a shot in front of her. They down the shots, then LEONARD leans over and kisses her.

DYLAN (v.o.)

And my sister Sarah, when she wasn't out with Brian.

CUT TO:

Fairfield Avenue, Ext. Evening

DYLAN sits on the front steps of the Jacobs' apartment building. A red Camaro pulls up and screeches to a halt. Driving the car is BRIAN (mid-30s). He has a mustache and wears shades. He guns the accelerator as SARAH runs out of the building toward the car.

BRIAN

Hey, Miss Beauteous Tits.

SARAH and BRIAN kiss. BRIAN shifts into drive and zooms down the street.

DYLAN

...Or Stuart...

CUT TO:

The Jacobs' Apartment, Int. Night

Through the open doorway to Sarah's bedroom, we see SARAH having vigorous sex with STUART (early twenties). As STUART thrusts, the camera pulls back to reveal DYLAN at doorway. He shuts the door.

DYLAN

...Or some raging asshole named Curt...

CUT TO:

Curt's Bedroom, Int. Night

We see the denouement of an argument in a seedy, unkempt room—full ashtrays and empty liquor bottles. SARAH, half-naked, watches, then cries out as DYLAN throws a punch at CURT, who falls backward on his bed. He puts a finger to his lip; it is bleeding. DYLAN grabs a coat to cover SARAH, then leads her toward the door. SARAH breaks away from DYLAN and hurries to the bed to check on CURT. She wipes away the blood from his lip and they huddle together. DYLAN watches for a moment, then walks out the door, closing it behind him.

He leans against the shut door and speaks into camera.

DYLAN

Or I could start with the house.

CUT TO:

Schenkelman's House, Ext. Night

DYLAN rides his bicycle up the driveway of an opulent North Shore home, then dismounts, and starts running toward the front door.

DYLAN (v.o.)

The house by the lake, where Emma lived with Schenkelman.

DYLAN reaches for the door knocker, bangs it three times. But the door is ajar, and it swings open, revealing the orange glow of a cigarette within.

CUT TO:

The Theater, Int. Night

DYLAN stands in front of the black backdrop.

DYLAN

Or I could start out with Jack Kerouac.

CUT TO:

Dylan's Room, Int. Day

DYLAN stands in his room, reading from *The Dharma Bums*, by Kerouac. From another room, we hear EVELYN and SARAH arguing, cabinets and doors slamming shut.

DYLAN (v.o.)

Whose books I read whenever the arguments in the kitchen got too loud.

DYLAN reads aloud from Kerouac, as if rehearsing a monologue. His voice is heard over the arguments.

DYLAN

"...Hopping a freight out of Los Angeles at high noon one day in late September 1955, I got on a gondola and lay down..."

CUT TO:

Theater, Int. Night

Dylan stands with his back against the black backdrop. He speaks to the audience.

DYLAN

But instead, I'll begin at the beach. No matter what happened during the day, it seemed me and Perry always wound up there.

DYLAN slowly pulls the black backdrop to reveal what lies behind it.

CUT TO:

The Beach, Ext. Early Evening

DYLAN and PERRY (about 17) sit against the rocks, staring out at Lake Michigan. They drink cans of beer and watch the water. The skyline of Chicago is visible to their south. Behind them, through trees and some underbrush, a fence encircles Schenkelman's house.

PERRY

That's the problem with every city, man. Every city's too damn small. The whole country. The world, when you look at it, is just this fuckin' big.

DYLAN

Yeah.

PERRY

Where you go wrong is you think it's a problem. But when you see how small it is, you start seeing how you can own the whole thing. All you need to learn is how to start being an asshole, not caring about bullshit. This day forward, I'm gonna be one Ayn Randian motherfucker. I'm gonna be rich and I'm not gonna feel guilty.

DYLAN

How're you gonna do that?

PERRY

I'm gonna be a motherfucking pirate.

DYLAN (v.o.)

That summer, before Perry was going off to college and I was gonna do whatever I was gonna do, Perry was my best friend, so I have no qualms about saying he was the most full-of-shit guy I have ever met. Every week it was a new plan.

CUT TO:

Animal Cruelty Center, Ext. Day

PERRY and DYLAN are standing outside the cages, looking at the dogs and cats.

PERRY

Do you know how much dog breeders make? Those are some tall dollars, my man.

CUT TO:

Sperm Bank, Ext. Day

DYLAN stands on sidewalk outside sperm bank as PERRY walks out the front door with money.

PERRY

Sperm donation, man. Pay at the pump. You pump; they pay.

CUT TO:

The Beach, Ext. Evening

As before, DYLAN and PERRY sit against the rocks, drinking. The sun is setting behind them. PERRY gazes resentfully at the mansions nearby.

PERRY

Look at those houses, man. Private beaches, every single one. Fuckin' pirates. How do you get the scratch to buy one of those? Be a thief or be a whore. Pick one. Me, I'm thinking whore. You?

DYLAN drinks.

DYLAN

So what're you gonna do with the summer?

PERRY

What're we doin' with the summer?

DYLAN

Okay, we.

PERRY

I got it all figured out.

DYLAN

Yeah?

PERRY

We're building a boat.

DYLAN

Fuck you.

PERRY

Oh ye of little faith. They laughed at Galileo, too, ass-wipe. You asked, I answered. So no: fuck *you*. A boat. We build the goddamn thing, fly the Jolly Roger, sail all the way to Michigan like Huckleberry Motherfucking Finn. Sail it every night. Past all these houses, all these private beaches. Drift until we get some place good.

DYLAN

That'd be good.

PERRY

It *will* be good.

DYLAN looks at his watch, finishes his beer, stands. He props up his bicycle.

PERRY (Cont'd,)

Where you think you're goin', puss-puss?

DYLAN

I got that thing I gotta do.

PERRY

What thing?

(a pause)

Oh, you mean that audition you're not gonna get?

(DYLAN nods)

You got a face made for radio, my man. I don't know why you even waste the time.

DYLAN

All right, Captain Aubrey.

PERRY

Fuck you.

DYLAN

Okay, Captain Hornblower.

PERRY

Fuck you more.

DYLAN begins walking his bike away from the rocks.

PERRY

(Calling after him)

Hey, what time you finish, drama boy?

DYLAN shrugs, mounts bike, begins to ride. We see a Jack Kerouac book in his back pocket—*The Subterraneans*.

DYLAN

I'll call you.

PERRY

(Pointing to his groin)

Call this.

DYLAN bikes away; PERRY drinks and looks out at the water. As DYLAN rides, we catch a glimpse of the house that he passes (Schenkelman's). There is a light on in an upstairs window, and a YOUNG WOMAN silhouetted against it.

CUT TO:

Sheridan Road, Ext. Evening

DYLAN bikes, slowly at first. He takes a piece of paper out of his back pocket: an audition notice from the *Chicago Reader*—"AUDITIONS FOR *WASHED UP ON THE SHORE*, A NEW PLAY BY AWARD-WINNING PLAYWRIGHT MARCUS FREEDMAN. WEDNESDAY, JUNE 6, 7-10PM AT CHASE PARK FIELDHOUSE. CALL FOR APP'TS."

DYLAN looks at his watch. It is 6:40. He bikes faster. The sun has nearly set as he curves around Sheridan Road, the lake to the east, the mansions of Evanston to the west.

As DYLAN bikes past Calvary Cemetery, and crosses the border from Evanston into Chicago, we hear the RINGING OF HIS CELLPHONE. DYLAN screeches to a stop at the Howard Street traffic light. He looks at his cellphone display: "MOM HOME."

DYLAN

Shit.

CUT TO: