

**REBEL
WITHOUT
A
~~CREW~~
DEAL**

Or How a ³⁰~~20~~-Year-Old
Filmmaker with ^{11,000}~~\$7,000~~
^{ALMOST}
Became a Hollywood Player

VINCENT ROCCA

Director of
KISSES AND CAROMS

With the Conversational Insight of
Kevin Smith



TABLE OF CONTENTS

Act 1

Scene 01 Authors Note	1
Scene 02 Introduction To Kevin	2
Scene 03 Dialogue Introduction From Kevin	3
Scene 04 In The Beginning	5
Scene 05 Writing	9
Scene 06 Dialogue Writing	14
Scene 07 PGL	18
Scene 08 Dialogue More Writing	21
Scene 09 Pre-Pre-Production	24
Scene 10 Dialogue Producer And Cinematographer	27
Scene 11 Pre-Production (We Have Money)	28
Scene 12 Casting	34
Scene 13 Crewing	43
Scene 14 Final Stretch	51
Scene 15 Dialogue Making	58
Scene 16 Production	62
Scene 17 Budgets	88
Scene 18 Dialogue Post	90
Scene 19 Post-Production – Editing	94
Scene 20 Festivals Sundance	101
Scene 21 Dialogue Sundance	112
Scene 22 Kevin's House	114
Scene 23 Score 2 Screen	127
Scene 24 Courting	137
Scene 25 Sound	144
Scene 26 Dialogue Thanksgiving 2004	149
Scene 27 Kevin's Review	150
Scene 28 Budget	151

Scene 29 Dialogue Kevin Watches It	152
Scene 30 Festivals To Distribution	155
Scene 31 Dialogue Indie Filmmaker	165
Act 2	
Scene 32 Warner Bros. and National Lampoon	167
Scene 33 Lam-Phony	196
Scene 34 Who's House?	211
Scene 35 Depress-Tribution	219
Scene 36 Dialogue Festivals	232
Scene 37 Distribution Take 2	235
Scene 38 Dialogue Directors Credit	254
Scene 39 Distribution Difficulties	257
Act 3	
Scene 40 Street Date	276
Scene 41 Dialogue Distribution	284
Scene 42 Collection The Beginning	287
Scene 43 Dialogue Money	291
Scene 44 Collections Part Deux	293
Scene 45 Dialogue Bad Movies	298
Scene 46 Collections III	299
Scene 47 Dialogue Other Flicks	305
Scene 48 More Collections	307
Scene 49 Dialogue Titles	312
Scene 50 Collections The Final Chapter	314
Scene 51 Dialogue Successful	318
Scene 52 Collections Forever	321
Scene 53 Dialogue Hack	324
Scene 54 Collections The Next Generation	326
Scene 55 Dialogue Wrap Up	328
Scene 56 Epilogue	329

ACT 1

SCENE 01 AUTHORS NOTE

ROBERT RODRIGUEZ without a doubt influenced this book. After I read *Rebel without a Crew*, I was inspired to keep a Diary, err, uh, to be more masculine, a Journal.

These Journals were originally posted to the *Kisses and Caroms* website, long before they were called BLOGS. Back then it was a way to promote our movie; it has since grown into a no-nonsense account of the real filmmaking process.

Rebel without a Deal covers how a group of friends made their first movie in five days for \$11,000, landed and lost a multimillion-dollar deal with National Lampoon and later released the movie through Warner Bros. where it grossed over a million dollars.

Everything is covered from film school to the idea, writing it and financing it, the entire shoot, postproduction, film festivals, meeting Kevin Smith and suicidal depression. No subject is taboo. This is a real account of no-budget filmmaking, down to profit and loss statements. Enjoy...

SCENE 02 INTRODUCTION TO KEVIN

While working as a register jockey at the Quick Stop mini mart in Leonardo, New Jersey, KEVIN SMITH took \$27,575 and made the feature film *Clerks*. His little movie went on to win the 1994 Filmmakers Trophy at the Sundance film festival, where it was picked up by Miramax and later released worldwide.

Clerks launched Kevin's career and changed his life forever. He has gone on to write and direct such movies as *Mallrats*, *Chasing Amy*, *Dogma* and *Jersey Girl*. He has also served as a Producer on numerous projects including the Academy Award winning film *Good Will Hunting*.

As if that isn't enough, he is also a *New York Times* best selling author.

As you'll soon learn, through the making of *Kisses and Caroms* I had the honor of meeting and getting to know Kevin. At one point I told him I enjoyed his conversations with John Pierson in the book *Spike Mike Slackers & Dykes*. Later, after some begging, he agreed to participate in conversations with me for this book.

If you have ever attended one of Kevin's Q&A's or watched *An Evening with Kevin Smith*, you can imagine a conversation with him, sometimes means just listening to him, because Kevin likes to talk.

SCENE 03 DIALOGUE INTRODUCTION FROM KEVIN

VINCE: When we first met what was your honest impression of me?

KEVIN: Nice guy, ambitious, to a degree. It was nice that you seemed to like film but you weren't one of these cats that are unrealistic about the whole thing.

In order to be an indie filmmaker you need a reasonable degree of unreasonability, because logic dictates that not everyone makes a movie and launches a career from it.

Anybody can make a movie, but not everyone can build something out of it beyond that one movie. So you meet a lot of cats who are unreasonable beyond a reasonable degree of unreasonability, who are like, "Well, I'm going to do this and then get really fucking famous!"

Even when we made *Clerks*, I thought, we'll go to the IFFM [Independent Feature Film Market] and hopefully somebody will buy it and then we'll be off and running. It was never like and then I'm going to be world famous! All I wanted was somebody to pick it up, so I didn't have to pay for the next movie.

And I figured the next movie would be around a hundred grand or something around that. But now based on examples of people that have gone before, myself included, you know the younger generation of filmmakers feels like, "I'm going to make my first film and that's going to kick open the doors to me making three twenty, thirty, or forty million dollar movies." And you can't say that's impossible, because it has happened, but it's rare.

In any given year you can count on one hand the number of break out filmmakers that go from their first film to a more substantially budgeted second film. Those stories breed a lot of these cats that feel like, "I don't need to work. I don't need a job. I don't need a real world job, because everything is taken care of once the world sees how brilliant my movie is."

You had a much more head straight perspective of, "Look I'm doing this, I hope it works out, but I realize that I have a job and that is what affords me to be able to do this stuff." You weren't counting your chickens before they were hatched, so that's why it was easy then and still now to talk to you because you're not one of these cats that are just like, "Give me money to make my movie so I can be like you."

Where I think, dude, if it was that simple, I would sell that formula and become a very very very rich man. Because everybody wants that in this field! Even people that never before showed an interest in filmmaking. They see *Clerks* and they think, "If that idiot can do it, I can do it and I can be rich and famous too."

It's like, if I had planned for it, it never would have happened. It all grew organically out of a happy series of accidents that just happened to pan out

with somebody being there at the right place at the right time. It was more serendipitous than anything else. But people don't want to hear serendipitous; they just want to hear the overnight aspect of the story.

Also I guess there's something kind of misleading about watching *Clerks* because you're thinking, people are just sitting around talking. I can do that. It's true, you can do people sitting around talking but will it be interesting? Will anybody want to see it? Is it going to be funny?

So I meet a lot of cats that are not realistic when it comes to the whole thing and you weren't one of those cats. That's why it's easy to talk to you, because you had your head on straight. You didn't really seem to have any confused perception about what you were owed. You know what I'm saying? You knew that, "I'd be lucky if our movie gets picked up."

VINCE: True.

KEVIN: A lot of cats don't feel that way.

SCENE 04 IN THE BEGINNING

I was the youngest of three boys. My family wasn't rich by any means. My Father sold above-ground swimming pools and my Mother worked at an insurance company.

Growing up I thought of us as poor, but looking back we never went without food, we owned a VCR and had a subscription to SelecTV. So I guess we were middle class. However we lived in Reseda, California, which wasn't exactly the right side of the tracks, so maybe we were lower middle class, otherwise known as 'the wealthy poor.'

This was back when TV consisted of three networks and four locals all broadcast to our VHF rabbit antenna. Cable TV didn't exist yet, but SelecTV did. It was a subscription movie service that required a funny UHF antenna and a set top box. SelecTV came on around five in the evening and played lots of R-rated movies until three in the morning.

I watched just about everything on this wonderful little set top box. *North Dallas Forty*, *Stone Cold Dead*, *Grease* and *10*. Lots of movies I shouldn't have seen at the tender age of six, but I did anyway, some with my parents knowledge, some without.

Mom and I loved scary movies. We spent hours watching such movies as *Friday the 13th*, *Halloween* and *The Hills Have Eyes*. I loved being scared, but I still got nightmares, which ultimately drove me into my parent's bed for protection.

In my Father's quest to keep the nightmares at bay and thus keep me out of his bed, he subjected me to comedies like *Blues Brothers*, *Up in Smoke* and *Airplane!* The latter two we watched many times.

It was also the '80s so of course my Dad had a collection of triple X movies. My older brother, Bill would often raid Dad's stash when my parents were away. Consequently, I had been subjected to hardcore pornography by the ripe age of eight. Poor me!

Bill's corruption also extended to the theater. I remember one afternoon Bill bought two tickets for us to see *For Your Eyes Only*, because it played across the hall from the movie we snuck into, *Stripes*.

Stripes had a huge impact on me. Yes John Candy and Bill Murray were hysterical but more than that, way more, I was enthralled by the shower scene. Completely naked girls pranced around on the big screen. Sure I had seen porn before, but that was on a small television. This was larger than life. I told Bill I wanted to be an editor just so I could see the raw footage. Then he explained the crew got to see it live. It blew my mind.

Scholastically, I wasn't shaping up to be much of a student. I was a very disruptive class clown and often got referred to the counselor's office. By the

eighth grade I had so many referrals they bulged out into multiple folders and made it difficult for the counselor to close the file cabinet.

One day I came to school with my hair bleached, which violated the school dress code. They threatened to suspend me and I argued that bleached bangs were part of my family culture. They said my Mom had to come to school to discuss the matter. Mom is a bit rebellious herself, so she bleached her bangs for the meeting. When she entered that office, the counselor's mouth about hit the floor. I never got suspended.

Even so, I still didn't spend much time at school. I ditched a lot and stayed home to watch movies. I'd watch our recorded VHS library over and over. I can't tell you how many times I saw *National Lampoon's Animal House*. I could use the cliché that it was until the tape wore out, but come on, that never happens.

When I did attend school I challenged authority. Most of my classroom antics were at the expense of the teacher, which naturally amused my fellow students. One day it reached a pinnacle. In the middle of math as Mr. Van scolded me, I looked at him from across the room and shouted, "Fuck You!" The class cheered. I was referred to the counselor's office again.

The counselor glared at me. There was no way my Mom could justify this. The F-word just doesn't fit into any culture. I was sent home for a few days to think about what I had done.

News of my expletive spread fast and I became a legend. I was the subject of gossip. Kids laughed and thought my outburst was cool.

In spite of my referral history the school agreed to give me a second chance. The catch was, I had to deliver an apology to Mr. Van in front of the class. I was horrified. To heckle from my seat is one thing, actually taking the stage was another. Unfortunately, the alternative was expulsion and while my parents were tolerant of bleaching, ditching and bad grades, they wouldn't stand for expulsion.

I wrote the apology, stood in front of the class and delivered it. I stuttered, shook, became weak in the knees and in general was scared out of my mind. When I finished, the class roared with cheer. The news of the apology spread faster than the F-word and I became legendary.

Around this time, I met the love of my life. Although neither of us knew it. I still remember the day I was introduced to this leggy tan surfer girl donning a pink Town & Country shirt and a white skirt. Her name was Deanna and she had the face of an angel and the legs of a supermodel. She made the clouds part and the winds still, but I digress this isn't a gushy love story, it's about filmmaking.

At about fourteen, I started to mix songs and spin records at house parties. I copied remixes on the radio and MTV to learn how to re-edit songs.

Teachers used to tell me I couldn't learn anything by copying, but I didn't believe that. Pablo Picasso is known for saying "Good artists copy, great artists

steal." Copying others taught me how things work. I would take something, break it down and make it mine. Much like reverse engineering.

Ninth grade is about the time I gave up on school. I slowly stopped going. I needed to prepare and recuperate from weekend parties so I'd take Fridays and Mondays off leaving three days a week of attendance to promote the parties. By the eleventh grade my attendance for the entire year totaled three whole days.

At 16, Deanna and I had started dating full time. I needed money to go out, but the party scene had slowed and with too much school to catch up on, it became time to get a real job.

My Dad got me a full time gig at the swimming pool company that he managed. I was a grunt warehouseman at the bottom of the totem pole. However, if there were a lot of customers and the warehouse duties were complete, I was able to get on the sales floor and help people. This is where I learned to be a salesman.

With one of my sales commission checks I bought a video camera. I took it to theme parks to tape the shows. Real actors I could actually film! I had this idea that I could shoot a performance from many angles then assemble a video of the show to look like a movie.

I tried to use two VCR's to edit the show, but the cuts jumped and looked horrible. It was not like editing music. This turned me off to video editing, but I was still an avid shooter.

Eventually I gave up on the idea of being a filmmaker. It was my belief that the only way to make movies was to go to four years of college (without swearing at anyone) and then if you were lucky, the studios would let you play with the expensive toys (and you could swear at everyone).

Since I was a ninth grade dropout, I stood no chance of getting into college, much less film school. I became content with my job as a retail salesman and assumed I would settle into that life, the life of my Father.

By 19, Deanna and I bought our first house together. We worked very hard to make a life for ourselves and were well on our way to adulthood. Thankfully our parents were supportive and helped out.

One day, Deanna's parents gave us their old Mac Plus computer. I dove head first into computing. It wasn't long before I realized that I might be able to assemble an editing system, something simple that could do cuts and wipes. I tried to gather information and hoped I could retrofit the Mac Plus, but everyone laughed at me.

People told me I needed a new state of the art \$100,000 system. But I wondered, "What did they edit on in the old days?" So I went on a hunt and pieced together a 40MHz Mac Quadra 840av with a Targa 2000 card and two 9GB hard drives. The system cost me about \$3,000.

During this time I started to learn web page design and Photoshop. With all this knowledge and cool tools, I badly wanted to do something more than edit my home movies. I wanted to make movies, but how? I couldn't afford scripts. I couldn't afford actors and even if I could, they would laugh at my equipment.

Then one day I saw an ad in the back of *Playboy* for a "Lake Havasu Spring Break" video. When it arrived I saw wild coeds get crazy in public for everyone to see and film. It amazed me.

I had a camera, I had an editing system and now I had access to actors in the form of naked women, all I needed was a way to get on the lake.

In 1994 I bought a cheap, used, barely running \$1,200 boat so I could head out to Havasu and film this stuff. I had never been on a boat, much less to Havasu, but despite the boat's troubles, we managed to party and get some good shots.

Afterward, my friends constantly bugged me to start a video company. They said I could copy what the other companies were doing. But I knew nothing about the video business. So instead, I focused my energy on opening a retail game room store with my Father and Breaktime Billiards was born.

The billiard business put food on the table but it sure wasn't a windfall of cash. I could've probably made more money working for someone else. However, being a business owner afforded me the luxury of time off.

By 1998, I had grown a little bored with billiards and got the filmmaker itch again. I decided to pursue this video stuff. I felt I was now skilled enough to build a website and edit videos. I gathered three friends together and we created "Weiser and Company" and its flagship, *Buttweiser.com*, was born.

Buttweiser's birth was not easy. On our second trip to Havasu, the law smacked us. \$10,000 worth of gear was confiscated. This turned out to be a blessing. We got press from newspapers, radio and television. The adult industry took notice of us and we became players.

While financially Weiser and Company wasn't a huge success, it was a lot of fun and taught us a lot about the movie business.

We managed to produce 14 titles and self-distribute those straight to fulfillment distributors. Some even broke the Top 20 on the Adult Video charts.

Then late in 2001 I received a flyer for the DOV S-S SIMENS film school that claimed everything you need to know to make a movie could be learned in two days. And get this: A High School diploma wasn't necessary to attend the course.

Shortly after, my partner and friend, MICHAEL HUTCHINSON and I were attempting to repair my crappy boat. As we were doing our best to procrastinate and keep our fingers clean, I mentioned the school. Problem was the \$400 tuition. Michael looked at the boat, then looked at me and said, "We have \$800 in the company checking account." Done! It was time to pull out of porn and make a real movie.

SCENE 05 WRITING

Saturday November 3, 2001

Michael and I start our first day of the Dov S-S Simens two-day film school. Alfred Hitchcock once claimed you could learn everything you need to know about filmmaking in three days. Dov believes it can be done in two.

Day one consists of Producing, Budgeting, Scheduling, Directing, Shooting and Editing.

It's very interesting, Dov is really a softy but his teaching persona is really harsh. This caused a few people to walk out in the first ten minutes of class. A very stupid move, because if you aren't satisfied at the end of the day, Dov will give you a full refund.

Michael and I consider this tactic. This is a Weiser and Company business expense and we nearly spent its last penny for the both of us to take this class. So maybe we'll bail out at the end of the day, get the refund and we'll have half the knowledge to make a flick and still have money to fix the boat.

As it turns out though Dov is very engaging and has many great insights into Film. It is like spending a day with someone who really knows his stuff and lets you pick his brain. The only drawback is Dov constantly repeats himself. Frankly, if he didn't, it could be a one-day film school. Then again maybe he does this to emphasize certain topics.

Dov did manage to beat into my head that the most important thing is the script. "You need a great script!" He'd yell, "If it ain't on the page it ain't on the stage!" Now this really screwed me up because I'm not a writer. Hell, I dropped out of school in the ninth grade. If it weren't for spell check and my editors, what you're reading now would be incomprehensible.

If the script is the most important item, I'll need to learn how to write or find someone who can. Maybe Michael can? He is after all a college graduate and a substitute teacher. Probably the smartest dude I know.

We got a lot of valuable information today and we both feel it would be wrong to ask for a refund. Dov is worth every penny. Plus if tomorrow is like today we should get tons more information.

Sunday November 4, 2001

Day two consists of Publicity, Festivals, Awards, Distribution and Financing.

Today mostly bored me. However Michael and the class seemed to enjoy it. The lecture was about finance and such. I'm not much of a numbers guy. I love the complexity of math but I hate paperwork. My Father does Breaktime's books and Michael does *Buttweiser's*.

This class covers how to get the money and be a salesman. Although Dov's tips are good ones, I've been in sales for years and this class didn't teach me anything I didn't already know.

His master plan to find the money is to pitch rich people, like your dentist. I don't even have a dentist. Plus, I'm shaky on investors. It seems like they would breathe over my shoulder. I think we can finance this on credit cards, but Dov says it will cost \$300,000 to make a 35-millimeter movie. So I don't know, but I'm not worried about money now. I'm worried about the script.

I stop taking notes today because I can't make sense of yesterday's scribble. Dov offers a cassette special on his entire course for \$99. I figure I'll buy the tapes and they will serve as my notes.

By the end of the day "I'm a producer with numerous projects in various stages of development." Dov taught us to say that. "The mere thought of making a story into a movie is a project in development," he intones.

Monday November 12, 2001

The Film School tapes are a bit different from the class. I'd actually like to take the class over, but for now I listen to the tapes.

I have yet to write anything. Dov said we should read 30 to 50 scripts. If we don't know what a script looks like how can we know when it's good? I have actually never even seen a script. Since I'm now a Producer, I suppose I should at least look at one. Besides, it could really help when I try to write one.

Saturday December 8, 2001

I watched *El Mariachi* and listened to the commentary. I love Robert Rodriguez. This guy is great. He took his dream and \$7,000 to mega box office dollars.

If he can make *El Mariachi* for \$7,000, we can do it too, right?

His advice is to make a list of all the elements at your disposal, such as locations, props and equipment. Then write the script around those elements. Sounds like good advice. I have a house and a Billiard store. Hmm?

Sunday December 9, 2001

I watch HBO's new TV series, *Project Green Light*, religiously. It's a reality show that follows the moviemaking process. The show couldn't have come at a better time in my life.

Today's episode just enrages me. The episode is about budget and they need to make cuts. Pete Jones is the winning writer/director who is getting his movie made. He refuses to shoot in California and make it look like Chicago. He insists

it be a period piece set in 1976. I can't imagine why it can't be changed to California and to 2001. I think he is just being a whiny little writer.

I yell at the screen, "Give me the script and the million dollars and I'll make the movie and have money left over!"

I must admit, it's not fair of me to judge. I haven't read the script and if I were Pete I would probably try to get more money too. I suppose I'm just jealous because if I had that opportunity I'd want to make the movie for nothing and turn it into a box office hit.

If you make a \$20,000 movie that grosses \$2 million, you're a big deal! If you make a \$1 million dollar movie that grosses \$20 million, you're no big deal.

There are tons of million dollar movies that fail, but a \$20,000 movie can NEVER be a failure. It can always be sold to the video market, like Robert Rodriguez intended to do with *El Mariachi*. You only need to sell 2000 units at \$10 a pop to recoup \$20,000 and that should be easy.

Ultimately it would be great to sell out to a studio, but if we can't, then we'll sell units to the fulfillment houses like we did with porn.

I also watched *Desperado*. It's pretty much a remake of *El Mariachi*, but better. Like *Mariachi*, Rodriguez spent pennies and made it look like millions. I next watched *The Brothers McMullen* with commentary. It was very interesting how Edward Burns did it. It's weekend filmmaking at its best. He cast his friends and himself so he'd know they would always be there. That's another good idea.

Wednesday December 19, 2001

I wrote my first scene today. Based on a conversation I had with two girls. As we chatted, the subject got racy, then it got dirty. We talked about swinging and blow jobs in dressing rooms. It inspired me. Hopefully I can use it somewhere.

Thursday December 20, 2001

I just finished reading Robert Rodriguez's *Rebel without a Crew* and I immediately want to re-read it. It's a great book and a very inspiring read.

Friday December 28, 2001

I just read the *Clerks* screenplay. It scares me because it's so good. Kevin Smith is amazing with dialog and I don't think I'll ever be able to write that well. But I figure if I can write 10% as well then at least my movie will be better than a lot of the crap out there.

Sunday December 30, 2001

Project Green Light has become my Sunday night torture. I love the show but I get so aggravated at it.

Tonight's episode showcased Pete's first day of the shoot. They chose a bad location for a first shoot and a bad first scene to shoot. It involved two kids under an elevated train.

What amused me most is that everyone kept asking Pete questions. Rodriguez wrote in his book, that one of the reasons Hollywood movies take so long is because you get asked a thousand questions a day. The reason he was able to shoot *El Mariachi* in such a short time and for so little money is because he had no one to berate him with questions. He only answered to himself.

Dov also taught us that when filming starts you'll get asked a barrage of questions and questions cost money. He said the first rule of directing is to say, "That's a good point, let me see what I can do and I'll get back to you." Then just walk away and never get back to them. If you say "NO" that will only incite an argument which will waste more time. If you tell them you'll get back to them, they will wait and wait and wait and that will end the discussion.

Thursday January 17, 2002

Up to now I've written random bits and jokes in a plain word processor, but today I imported everything into Final Draft. I will now forge ahead with all my might and get a script done.

The good news is I have it all planned out in my head—The complete story. Rodriguez advised to make a list of locations available and write around them. Dov said keep it simple and do a one room stage play.

And so, for lack of a better title, *Breaktime Billiards The Movie* is born. It's sort of a romantic comedy about sex.

The story revolves around my Billiard store. It's about Zack who dumps Jennifer, his girlfriend of two years because he wants to sow his wild oats like his best friend David. Jennifer wants him back, so she arranges a threesome with Tara to prove his oats can be sown with her. David, a quasi-gigolo gets into all kinds of girl trouble, which results in an enraged husband who hunts him down at Breaktime with a shotgun. Meanwhile, odd customers come in all day and Eddie, the lovable yet stupid grunt worker adds some humor.

I finished the day with 16 pages written, which is supposed to translate to 16 minutes. Only 74 more to go before we have a feature film.

Sunday January 20, 2002

Over the last three days I've written constantly. I write at the store all day between customers. It's amazing how the puzzle comes together and how easy it flows. Of course, for all I know the screenplay sucks. I manage to get to page 49 when I leave Breaktime.

Finally by the wee hours of the morning I finished *Breaktime Billiards The Movie*. I think the story is great but my worst fear is here, it's only 62 pages long. I'm short 28 pages, but on the bright side it leaves room for everyone's input.

Monday January 21, 2002

I let Deanna finally read the script. This will be the first time she's seen any of it. I've kept the story under wraps until now.

I wait patiently as she reads. By patient I mean I stare at her tapping my foot. She chuckles a few times and bursts out laughing once. I briefly inquire; it's the ball smelling scene.

When she puts it down I quiz her. She suggests I add more customer scenes and go into depth on the characters.

Back to the writing board.

SCENE 06 DIALOGUE WRITING

VINCE: When I write, I begin writing jokes and bits unsure of where they'll end up. Then I get an overall plot idea and plug them in. What's your...

KEVIN: Writing process? With *Clerks II* I knew the beginning, I knew that it would open with the store burning down. I knew that I wanted to do the dance sequence. I knew it would end with them behind the counter and with us pulling back to black and white. Then I had to figure out how to get from point A to B to C.

VINCE: So it was a series of bits and jokes?

KEVIN: Pretty much. I tend to write dialog and the dialog for me winds up dictating the plot. As I am writing the dialogue, I think, "This is an interesting notion to me," and it spins off into another notion and becomes a scene. It's not just based on what they are saying but based on what it inspires in me.

I'm writing and Randall says something. It winds up becoming the porch monkey discussion. I think "That's funny to me and I have to bring that back later on."

Suddenly it becomes a plot point where later on he has it written on the back of his shirt and he's trying to take porch monkey back, then it plays into the donkey show as well. It happens more organically than not.

VINCE: When you write a script, who reads it first?

KEVIN: Scott Mosier's always the first.

VINCE: Before your wife?

KEVIN: Yeah. Oh, Jen, I fully recognize and acknowledge that Jen is not the primary audience for what I do.

VINCE: She's not?

KEVIN: I don't feel the need to get it in front of her first. I learned that on *Jay and Silent Bob Strike Back*.

I gave her the first draft of *Jay and Silent Bob Strike Back* and she said, "It's a movie for teenage boys." And I was like, "Well, not what I want to hear, but I guess kind of true." So now I kind of work on something and she'll read what I officially submit.

In the case of *Red State*, I wrote the first 86 pages, then stopped, because I had gone through all of my notes and outline and I didn't know where I was going to take it.

I gave it to Mosier to read and while Mosier was reading it, I let Malcolm Ingram read it as well, because Malcolm was close to the source material, in as much as he made *Small Town Gay Bar*. I also gave it to Bryan

Johnson to read and I never do that. I never let people read it until it's at least done, at least the first draft's kind of done, there's an ending to it. But Bryan is a big horror buff, so I wanted to see what he felt.

It was helpful to hear what Malcolm and Bryan had to say. But basically what they said was, "This rocks. Nobody's ever going to make it." Malcolm sent me an Instant Message that said, simply, "I dare you."

VINCE: [laughs]

KEVIN: *Red State* is just not an easily marketable movie.

VINCE: They didn't give you script notes back?

KEVIN: Mosier's the one that gives me script notes. Mosier will read it and say, "This thing doesn't tie into this. I realize the way you write you had an idea here that you changed there, so you've got to go back and fix it. This is long, you should hack out some of this." Not so much story points, but logic issues and stuff like that.

VINCE: Right.

KEVIN: So then I finished it based on the feedback I got from those three guys. Mosier took that and read it from top to bottom.

He went over it and kind of drew lines through it where he said, "You're repeating yourself here. This is unnecessary." And this was a weird script to do it on, because it's easier with the dialogue-heavy comedies where he's like, "It's just a matter of losing some of the dialogue, because you will button a joke five times and you only really need one, so pick the best button. I think this one's the funniest." He helps me tame it down, in terms of page count.

With *Red State*, I was only at 96 pages. So we went through the notes again. I went through his notes and they were not so much story notes but plot points and stuff like that. I remember at one point he said, "I think, in this moment, somebody would notice if they didn't have a cartridge in a machine gun."

So we went back and forth for a few minutes on whether or not this character should be surprised that he's missing a cartridge in the machine gun and that's why it doesn't work, or there should be an alternative reason why he doesn't wind up firing.

VINCE: The logic issues and things.

KEVIN: Yeah, yeah and it wound up making it more interesting.

So then I went back and re-drafted, based on Mosier's thoughts. Like with anything, sometimes he and I completely disagree...

There's one long scene where this girl needs help. She has to explain her plan pretty damn precisely to this dude, who wouldn't in his right mind help her if not for the dire situation they were in.

So I put myself in that person's head and I thought, "I would have to thoroughly explain exactly why I'm doing this, the repercussions of what happens if we don't do this and why I need his help and what's going to happen to him if he doesn't follow." I went through it logic by logic point and Mosier felt it was over-explained. He said, "Look, the audience knows what she's saying."

VINCE: Right.

KEVIN: My argument was, "But the character that she's talking to has not been exposed to all of this. She needs to explain it to him." Mosier's complaint was "Still, you're making the audience sit through something they saw and now it's retold via this girl."

VINCE: You need that "start the explanation, fade to something else, come back" sort of scene.

KEVIN: Which you couldn't do, because it's the type of moment where "time is of the essence." So it was a place where I said, "Look, I'll trim it back, but I think this is going to work and I think I need this in order to make it work." So we kind of disagreed on it, but he's never taken the stance, "If you don't fucking change this, I'm out of here!"

So I re-drafted and then it wound up being 89 pages, which is what we submitted.

VINCE: You took notes from Mosier, you rewrote and that was it? You just bounced back and forth, only with Mosier?

KEVIN: Yeah, pretty much. Mosier's the only guy.

VINCE: Nobody else?

KEVIN: No, like I said, I let Malcolm and Bryan read it and when I rewrote, I took their thoughts into consideration, but they didn't really have heavy critiques. There were the general critiques that I always get, which are, "This scene goes on too long. These people are talking way too much."

Which, in this movie, more than any other, is going to stick out like a sore thumb. Bryan said, "Look, this dude's preaching scene is genius. The stuff he's saying is so insanely great. However, there's too much of it. You have to pick the best shit. I can't even tell you what that is, because I want to see him say it all, but I realize that 15 pages is a little much."

VINCE: You have a 15 page monologue?

KEVIN: Yeah.

VINCE: Are you shitting me? [Laughs]

KEVIN: He's a preacher [Laughing], but that came down considerably.

VINCE: So how many pages is it now?

KEVIN: I think it's about six. Which is still kind of long, but it makes sense. The preacher's stuff was in my wheelhouse, not so much the content of what he says.

Malcolm commented, "It's awfully scary you can write this anti-gay dialog as well as you do." I explained, "It has nothing to do with anti-gay. You have one guy standing up there speaking in a monologue, which is what I do. Basically remove the content of what is being said and it's *Clerks*. It's Randall without Dante. It's what is in my wheelhouse."

VINCE: I think once you completely understand one position you can completely understand the opposition.

KEVIN: Right, flip side totally. My defense was, "Dude it just makes sense." I get to monologue in a way I've never been able to monologue before. I've never written for a preacher and that's what they do for an hour at a time, they'll sit up there and preach fire and brimstone. It's not a dialogue it's a fucking monologue.

This is so in my wheelhouse I should write preacher movies from here until the day I die.

VINCE: Maybe you will, maybe that's what will win you your Oscar.

KEVIN: Never, certainly not with this.

SCENE 07 PGL

January through September, 2002

Over the past eight months, I managed to finish *Breaktime Billiards The Movie* now with its new official title *Kisses and Caroms*. It's a billiard term about balls banking off each other and off the cushions, much like our characters do.

I had handed the script out to one friend at a time and got their feedback. It's now up to 94 pages and in it's fifth and final draft. The story never changed, it just got polished.

In April I registered it with the Writers Guild and began passing copies out to all my friends. It has been well received and many have laughed out loud. Only one didn't like it, but that's because he felt it wasn't his cup of tea.

I also sent it to the US Copyright Office, which has to be done before I can submit it to *Project Green Light*. Yep, another *PGL* contest begins on September 19, 2002. That is what prompted me back to this diary, err, uh, journal.

Thursday September 19, 2002

At 1 a.m. I log on to *PGL* to upload my script and reread the rules and regulations. At the time of upload I am asked to include a log line for the script. Clueless as to what a log line is, I call a writer/producer/actor friend of mine, JAY BEEBER.

Jay says it's an "elevator pitch." If I were between floors in an elevator with a producer, how would I describe the whole script in one sentence? I have no idea. How the hell am I suppose to describe my entire script in one sentence??

I start work on a log line. When I think I have it, I call Jay back for his input but apparently I'm still clueless. So off to the Internet I go. I search for other log lines and any help I can find on the subject.

I learn that great log lines contain a hero, the hero's flaw, an opponent, a life changing event, an ally and a battle. Apparently great stories contain these and if your story has them then it should be easy to write the log line. I also learn that every story should have a subjective plot and an objective plot. Apparently I was actually supposed to write this stuff before I wrote the script. I guess I did things backwards.

So, the first thing I do is figure out what my subjective and objective plots are. I think the subjective is: Zack realizes all his fantasies in Jennifer. The objective is: The antics of the billiard store.

Now I list all the criteria and fill it in, like this:

(Hero) Zack

(Flaw) Wants to be a Playboy

(Opponent) Jennifer - Girlfriend

(Life changing event) Threesome

(Ally) David and Tara

(Battle) Relationship

(Subjective) Zack realizes all his fantasies in Jennifer

(Objective) The antics of the billiard store.

I build all the criteria into this log line:

Jennifer arranges a threesome with a sexy co-worker, so her wannabe Playboy ex-boyfriend can see that she's the Playmate of his dreams. The awkward next day, the story unfolds in front of offbeat customers and co-workers at a local billiard shop. Zack, blinded by his penis, thinks that their relationship is best left alone. Through the antics of his best friend, Zack realizes all his fantasies in Jennifer, but is it too late?

What's the problem here? It's four sentences and 73 words long. A log line is suppose to be one to three sentences and 25 to 35 words long.

I scoured the net once again for more log line information. I find a guy who claims that every script can be reduced to one sentence. His advice is to find and include the Who, What and How in the log line. So once again I fill those in:

Who is the lead character? - Zack.

What is his problem? - He needs to realize the girl of his dreams.

How will it get solved? - Through the antics of the billiard shop.

And with that I have my "Elevator Pitch":

A woman arranges a threesome to show her ex-boyfriend that she's his dream girl, but blinded by his penis, he thinks that their relationship is best left alone. Through the antics of offbeat characters at a billiard pro shop, he realizes all his fantasies in her, but is it too late?

Friday October 25, 2002

It's been over a month since I submitted and today *PGL* chooses the top 250.

I log on to see if I am chosen. Either they changed my script's title or I didn't make it. I assume it's the latter.

I'm totally bummed. I know the odds were stacked against me but I really thought I stood a chance. My script is good and commercially viable.

Deanna and I went to see the movie *Jackass*. I kept the depressing news to myself, no need to bring her down.

Jackass turns out to be one of the funniest flicks I've ever seen. I laughed my way out of depression. I marvel at how great the digital footage looks blown up to 35mm. It amazes and inspires me.

Some scenes were shot with a SONY PC100 camera, which I currently own. If that camera can look that good on the big screen, then maybe I can make *Kisses and Caroms* myself on digital.

On our way home I am pumped. I tell Deanna about my failure on *PGL* and she gives me the sympathetic "Sorry." But all is okay now. *Jackass* looks great and I will make *Kisses and Caroms* myself!

Today is the big turning point. *Jackass* is the milestone. Digital is the new frontier. Kevin Smith shot *Clerks* on film for \$27,000. Rodriguez did *El Mariachi* for \$7,000. I think I can shoot *Kisses and Caroms* on digital for \$10,000. Am I crazy?

Wednesday November 6, 2002

I chat with my Father-in-law, Hewitt, about movies. I am a bit reluctant but I tell him I'm going to make a movie. He laughs. He asks me how I intend to do that. I tell him I will shoot it for \$10,000 and we'll sell it to a studio. If not, we'll self-distribute like we did with porn.

He says he has a cousin who went to film school and made a short that cost more than \$10,000 and they haven't been able to recoup that. I explain that shorts have no financial outlet.

He asks how I plan to make a full movie cheaper than his cousin's short. I explain we do it all the time with porn; we'll just treat it the same way.

He claims those movies are different. It costs a lot of money to make movies, millions even, how will I do what others can't? I respond that actually others do and tell him about *Clerks*, *El Mariachi* and *Blair Witch Project*.

He asserts that those are rare exceptions and movies are a bad investment.

SCENE 08 DIALOGUE MORE WRITING

VINCE: Have you ever read a filmmaking or screenwriting book?

KEVIN: I read Spike Lee's books. He did a book *on She's Gotta Have It*. He did one called "*Uplift the Race*" which was about making *School Daze* and then the *Do the Right Thing* book which was incredibly helpful. Although he doesn't really talk about the process of writing as much as he talks about the process of filmmaking.

I never read a book on how to write a screenplay. I tried to read David Mamet's book but all his films are esoteric, this book was basically a transcript of him speaking to a class. It was hard to follow, where I just felt, "It can't be this complex."

So when I wrote, I wrote the way people spoke and how I had conversations with my friends and what it led to. When I sat down to write *Clerks* for the first time, I felt, "This just makes sense to me."

The biggest hurdles were, when do you put in Interior or Exterior, when do you write Fade Out. And I very rarely, if ever write, "Fade out" because someone is always talking too much.

But figuring out format, how much goes on a page, how far down the page does it go, stuff like that is what I would look up. I bought other people's screenplays at comic book conventions and looked how they were laid out, like the *Silence of the Lambs* script.

This is long before they started doing those screenwriting programs.

VINCE: Right. You sat at a word processor and typed.

KEVIN: Yeah.

VINCE: So you don't know where your first act ends, the second act ends, you don't know where the first, second, third act is? You're just like, "We got here, we got here, we got a scene, we got an idea, we write?"

KEVIN: Yeah, pretty much, it just comes organically. Mosier is very fond of pointing out, "You have an innate instinct for story structure. It just works, because it shouldn't work, especially the way you write, but you know how to tell a story."

Even though there is nothing really going on in some of the stuff that I write, it just winds up shaping itself into the three act structure, but never intentionally. I don't even figure out what the acts are until I am done with the script.

VINCE: Screenwriting books and courses say you should start with writing your logline, then you break down your three act structure, then you break down your characters, your subjective plot, your objective plot, all of this stuff.

KEVIN: Right and those cats win awards, because they work off structure and they know how to tell a story. I don't know. That shit never worked for me. I tried looking at the McKee book at one point, but I just felt, "I don't think this is right, it's too rigid."

Sometimes, it just helps to go with the gut, to go with the instinct, to go with "I think this is right." It's why it was nice that there was nobody on our crew that could say...

VINCE: "You're doing it wrong."

KEVIN: Exactly. Nobody knew any better. As you go on, people try to get you to be more formulaic. Not so much in the negative sense of formulaic, but just like, "Well, look, you've got one long first act and then all of a sudden it all resolves itself in a very quick second act." That doesn't bother me, I just say "Well, if that how it is, that's how it is".

But sometimes it helps to avoid that shit, because you get hung up on them telling you, it should be this way so I'm going to conform and it's stifling.

VINCE: Right.

KEVIN: It stifles you... stifles you where you're like I don't know how to do that. I'd rather do what I want to do, what I know how to do.

VINCE: I think a lot of writers and filmmakers have that problem. They try too hard to write the perfect screenplay according to these books. Because people ask me all the time, "How do you write?" And I say, "You just sit down and write. Some days you write and some days you don't, so you nap and then you write."

KEVIN: If somebody came up to me and said, "I will give you \$10 million to write a book on screenwriting," \$10 million is a sweet hunk of change, but I'd be like "Can it be about anything else but how to write?" Because I can't describe it. It's like the line in *Good Will Hunting* where Will says, "When it came to stuff like that... I could always just play."

Some people do this well; some people do that well. I just sit down and it happens. I can't break it down into a process, because my process is different from everybody else's process. But there are people that swear by that McKee book.

VINCE: And they—

KEVIN: —win awards. John Cleese was able to write *A Fish Called Wanda* after reading McKee's structure. I thought, "Wow! *A Fish Called Wanda* is a good movie."

Who knows how much of it he got from that class? You know what I'm saying? Not so much the content, but in terms of how that story is laid out.

VINCE: Right.

KEVIN: I don't know, personally I don't go for it, but for other people, anything that gets your motor going or makes you think that you're that much closer to your goal, I'm all for.

So if you feel that taking McKee's story class is going to make you a better filmmaker, then by all means take it, because it's all about self-perception. A great deal of Indie Filmmaking is about believing, because nobody else does.

You can't say, "I've got experience," because you don't. You have to kind of believe in it. I don't mean posing as a filmmaker. It is believing that you are a filmmaker, so that other people jump on and believe it with you. If you're the person making the flick, you're in charge. You've got to be a leader. Everyone you want to work with has to believe you know what you're doing.

So you can't say, "Well, I read this in a book where I think I know what I'm doing." You have to be sure.

I started being a filmmaker before I rolled frame one. I had a very important discussion with my sister; one of those moments you look back on and realize, "Wow! Thank God that happened."

I was talking to my sister and she asked, "What are you doing these days?" I said, "I was thinking about being a filmmaker," and she asks, "What do you mean?"

"Well, I've seen a lot of Indie flicks and I think I can do it. I want to be a filmmaker." She said, "Well, just be a filmmaker." I said, "Well, yeah, that's what I'm trying to be, a filmmaker."

She says, "No. Be a filmmaker. Don't try to be. Don't want to be. Just be a filmmaker. Every thought you have, every move you make in your life, every decision you make, make it from the position that you are a filmmaker."

And I thought, "That sounds artsy-fartsy and stupid," but she was absolutely right.

From that moment forward, I started thinking, "Okay, I'm a filmmaker. This is what I do. Every decision I'm making is based on me being a filmmaker. I decide things as a storyteller."

And it helped a great deal, because I really wasn't technically a filmmaker, but I believed it so other people did too and that's how the movie got made.

VINCE: Right. I lie to myself. I tell myself I can do this. Then I start believing it. And the people around me begin believing it and on day four or five when I'm in doubt, they begin regurgitating the lie back to me. And I'm like "Yeah, that's right. We can do it. Why? Because we can."

KEVIN: Right.

SCENE 09 PRE-PRE-PRODUCTION

Monday January 20, 2003

I don't have any money yet, but I've officially hired my first employee. Thankfully he works for free. Michael has been charged with the role of Producer.

In his search to figure out how to be a proper producer he found a book that recommends he assemble a breakdown chart in Microsoft Publisher. It lists the props, scenes and who is in them.

I didn't have the heart to tell him that Final Draft spits out the same lists. It's probably best anyway, as the manual labor brings him closer to the material.

Monday January 27, 2003

I give Michael a scene numbered shooting script. Now he can work on budget and schedule it. He'll take the numbered script and cut it up into scenes, then pile those scenes into shooting days. Then based on those shooting days, we'll project a budget.

I think we'll shoot on the DVX100, Panasonic's new 24p digital camera. This way I can edit in house. I figure the camera is like \$3,000. So maybe I can put that on a credit card and we can shoot the movie for close to that? What else do we need? Food? We can do that homemade and other small stuff can be put on a credit card too. After all, *Clerks* used credit cards.

I hope to simultaneously shoot a *Project Green Light* style documentary on the making of *Kisses and Caroms* as well as compile this journal into a book. This way at the very least we'll have a "how to" product.

Saturday February 1, 2003

I begin to storyboard *Kisses and Caroms*. I start off very ambitiously, very detailed, but as I progress the details fade, my hand cramps and I've only done 28 boards, taking me to scene 2. I have a total of 56 scenes, so I'm a long way away.

It's obvious I need to figure out a better way to do this, because this SUCKS!

Dov says, "If you want to be a Director then you have to storyboard. Storyboarding is Directing with a pencil."

I make notes on the script as to which scene matches each board. I number each board 1.1, 1.2, 1.3 (scene 1 shot 2, scene 1 shot 3). I write these numbers next to their scenes on the script. This way when I scan the boards into the computer, I can name them by number, then edit the boards into a movie using the script as a guide. I'll import audio from a script reading and re-time the

boards to match the audio. It'll be a simple animated movie. I wonder if this is how the pros do it.

Sunday February 2, 2003

I tell Michael I think we can make this movie for under \$10,000 and shoot it in five days. At first he isn't sure, but he's as crazy and as clueless as I am. So he's on board.

Why only five days? Kevin shot *Clerks* in 21 days but it was at night and on film. We can close Breaktime and shoot during the day. This way we won't be tired. Digital is also faster than loading film. I've shot porn before and that moves quickly, so why can't we do this in five days?

Tuesday February 4, 2003

Michael assembled the breakdown charts in scene order. This way he can streamline things to be most cost effective. No reason to pay people to be on the set if we don't need them.

We'll also need to know how many people will be around and when so we can plan meals.

Michael hopes to get G.W. BAILEY to be in the movie. G.W. is best known as Captain Harris in the *Police Academy* movies. His IMDb (Internet Movie Database) STARMeter popularity rank is 3,696, which seems pretty good. We'd have one of Hollywood's top 4000 actors in our flick!

Michael goes way back with G.W. He grew up with his son MARTIN BAILEY and considers G.W. a second father. I'm not sure what G.W. will cost us, or if we can afford him, but it would add a name to our production and make selling it easier.

Michael also wants Laurie Wallace to play Tara. It's a good choice. Laurie is known as the Playboy Party girl. Her IMDb STARMeter rank isn't so good at 13,632.

Michael met her on the Bourbon Street Playboy balcony at Mardi Gras during a *Buttweiser* shoot. I'm not sure if we can afford her either, but at least we'd be able to use the 'Playboy' name to sell this flick.

Saturday February 8, 2003

Michael is figuring out the budget. We're shooting for a five or six day schedule. I tell him if we go six, we're shooting the sequel too. So keep it to five. Less days = less meals = less money.

He's printed up a budget sheet from an expensive Hollywood movie to use as a guideline. He figured an expensive movie lists everything so it can serve as a

master list. This way nothing is forgotten. As he goes through it, he just takes out the stuff that doesn't apply to *Kisses and Caroms*.

Monday March 10, 2003

Michael informs me Weiser and Company is negative \$700 in its bank account. We're near bankruptcy. I've ignored the company and focused my energy on this flick. I haven't edited and released a *Buttweiser* title in so long that I can't even remember what the last one was.

Neither one of us have any idea what to do. We're both broke. I can pull the money off a credit card, but Weiser and Company is already in debt to me.

We decide to sleep on it.

Tuesday March 11, 2003

Michael got a call from a guy who sells penis enlargement pills. He's been looking for soft core videos that appeal to his main demographic, college guys.

Michael told him we could redesign a box just for him and even include a commercial for his products at the head of the video. The guy was ecstatic.

Wednesday March 12, 2003

Today the guy sent Michael a purchase order for 50,000 units at \$2.50 each.

We've found a deal to duplicate these at \$0.65 cents apiece. So a whopping profit of \$1.85 a unit for a total profit of \$92,000. However the order is missing a key ingredient, the deposit.

Michael calls the guy and he says he is in the process of wiring the money.

Thursday March 13, 2003

We've received no money yet. We've bounced some checks so we really need it.

Seems stupid to think we can make *Kisses and Caroms* when we can't even pay our bills.

Friday March 14, 2003

Woo Hoo! Today is an incredible day. A week ago we're BROKE and today we hit the LOTTO. A 50% deposit of \$62,500 has been wired into our account.

The other half is to be paid prior to shipment in about a month. If he doesn't pay, we don't ship. Our cost for the DVD's is \$32,500. So we're already in the black. Oh what a relief.

Kevin sold his comic book collection to make *Clerks*, Rodriguez sold his body to make *El Mariachi* and we sold porn to make *Kisses and Caroms*.

SCENE 10

DIALOGUE PRODUCER AND CINEMATOGRAPHER

VINCE: How did you get involved with Scott Mosier and Dave Klein?

KEVIN: I went to the Vancouver Film School in February of '92 where I met Mosier and Dave. I didn't hang out with Dave much, but I got to know Mosier over the four months I was there. When I dropped out I told Mosier, "Hey man I write a script, you write a script, I'll come out and help you and you come out and help me."

VINCE: He was just a guy you connected with?

KEVIN: Just a guy I met in school and connected with. I really liked him and I thought he had his head on straight.

So I started writing *Clerks* while I was working at the Quick Stop and that was July to October of 1992. Then I sent it off to Mosier and he dug it so I said, "All right, let's make it."

Mosier had finished Vancouver Film School and he became friendly with Dave. So Mosier suggested Dave to shoot *Clerks*.

I had been looking at the classified section of a filmmaker magazine where people placed ads for work. There was a guy named John Thomas, who had shot Whit Stillman's first film, *Metropolitan*. John is a DP [Cinematographer] for hire and I think he was five grand a week or something like that and he came with his own package. Maybe less, maybe it was three grand a week. But I was like "Shit, man, this is the dude that shot *Metropolitan*. This guy knows how to shoot a movie. Let's use this guy."

Mosier's response, "Let's do it with Dave. Dave isn't going to cost that much. He isn't going to cost anything except the gear rental and putting him up."

Then Mosier made a good point, "John Thomas has made films before. We haven't. So this dude might come in and take over the show," and that appealed to the paranoia in me. I said, "You're right. This mother fucker might try to take over."

VINCE: [chuckles]

KEVIN: So I said, "All right, let's go with Dave." Because at least all three of us, who are the engine of the flick, are on the same level... amateurs, rank amateurs.

VINCE: You didn't know any better.

KEVIN: Not at all.

SCENE 11 PRE-PRODUCTION (We have money)

Sunday April 6, 2003

Michael introduced me to his fellow substitute teacher, ERIC CLARKE, as a possible Director of Photography for *Kisses and Caroms*.

Eric graduated from the California State University of Northridge film school and has done a few projects in 16 millimeter and digital. He has some good suggestions about shots and is really interested in our movie. As long as his reel looks good I think I'll welcome him aboard. After all I don't know any other DP's and I have no clue where to find one.

Eric works with local community theatre groups, so he knows a bunch of actors. Plus he has connections to lights and other stage equipment, which might help out our budget. Who knows, maybe Eric is the hookup we need.

Meeting Eric is actually kind of scary. Not that Eric is scary, but up to this point the only people who I've talked to about the movie are family and friends. But here is this outsider who I'm hiring to work on the flick. It's a big step.

Saturday April 12, 2003

Michael, Martin and I met up at our friend's wedding in Las Vegas. Michael and Martin are actually already in town to spend a week with the Sunshine Kids. The Sunshine Kids is an organization that gathers kids with cancer from all over the country and takes them on field trips.

Michael and Martin volunteer as drivers/chaperones for the kids. Martin's father, actor G.W. Bailey is Executive Director of the Sunshine Kids.

Michael brought the *Kisses and Caroms* script for G.W. in hopes that we can get him to play Dr. Bob. But Michael seems very apprehensive that G.W. won't do it. In the past, Michael seemed positive about it. I'm not sure if he is just nervous about asking G.W. or if it is the stress of getting G.W., or maybe both? Either way I try to pump him with encouragement.

I think Michael is afraid of disappointment, afraid that G.W. won't come through for him.

I instruct Michael to tell G.W. he co-wrote *Kisses and Caroms*. Maybe G.W. will feel a higher obligation to do the project if Michael has written it.

At the wedding reception I invite the groom's little brother Chris to eat with us. We chat about his band, Desolate Chaos, which has similarities to KoRn. They are really good and I'd like to use a song for the soundtrack. He seems receptive, but he has to talk it over with the rest of the band.

Monday April 14, 2003

I get back to storyboarding, but I am only able to get 12 boards done and get to scene 15.1. I look over all the boards and it's a mess. There are too many different styles of drawings and I think this might be confusing to watch. I need to make it consistent.

Michael said Eric called. Eric had a writer friend of his read *Kisses and Caroms*. Apparently he has jotted down some script notes and wants to talk to me about them. I wonder if writers often do this for other writers?

Tuesday April 15, 2003

Michael tells me he gave G.W. the script last night. This morning G.W. told him that he'd read the script before bed and would finish it on the flight home, but he is interested in doing it.

So it looks like we have G.W. Bailey as Dr. Bob. Woo Hoo! But also very scary! As I get off the phone with Michael I feel the nerves kick in. The more people who get involved with this, the more real it becomes and the harder it is to back out.

Plus G.W. is the real deal. How am I supposed to direct him? He can probably teach me how to direct.

I work on storyboards and discover my problem. I need a key (guide) of the actors so I know how to draw each one of them.

The first thing I should have done before boarding the script is to draw each lead character stick figure with distinctive features and use this as a key. I gave one curly hair, another straight. One girl has big circle boobs, the other little triangle bumps.

I am able to do 52 boards and get to scene 20.1. The key has made life so much easier.

Saturday April 19, 2003

Eric calls, he is very excited and ambitious. He has all these ideas. He keeps suggesting his friends for parts in the movie. I tell him "At this point I'm really only concerned with Dr. Bob and the two female leads. Everyone else is easy to cast."

He seems to be forcing his friends for the smaller customer parts. I explained, "I intended those parts for crew members." He says, "Don't you think it would be better for a professional actor?" I took Dov Simens advice and said, "That's a good idea, let me get back to you." But it's not a good idea. Those roles are either for Name actors that we can pay for a day or for crew to have fun with. If I can get a Name actor to play a small one-day role then I can say "NAME" is in the movie. If not then I'll have one of the Crew do it. It makes the movie more

personal to them and they'll be eager to see it finished and have it see the light of day.

Eric is hesitant then says he has some suggestions for rewrites. I wonder what that means. I tell him I am open to all criticism and suggestions, which I am. I just fear the word rewrite means re-structuring story and I think the story is fine.

Tuesday April 22, 2003

I have lunch with Jay Beeber to discuss *Kisses and Caroms* and bring him on board.

Jay was my go to guy when I needed to write the logline for Project Greenlight. He is the most knowledgeable person I know in the movie business. Jay has experience on major studio sets doing various jobs from acting to casting. He is one of those people that learn everything about a job so he can give it his all. I'm hoping he'll help with casting and possibly producing.

He says he's on board and will help any way he can. He's not as enthusiastic as I'd hoped but hopefully that will change.

Monday May 19, 2003

Michael calls G.W. again to make sure that he is on board with *Kisses and Caroms*. G.W. says he likes the script, but it needs to be toned down. The Sunshine Kids board of directors might have a problem if he does something so racy. Michael tells him we can do a rewrite and tame it down.

Wednesday May 21, 2003

I had Michael call G.W. to ask what exactly he wants toned down. G.W. says he will re-read it and let us know.

Sunday May 25, 2003

I finally register KissesAndCaroms.com. It is about time. Long overdue actually. This will better enable us to communicate to Cast and Crew. Plus it will serve as a business card of sorts to better show people what we're doing.

Tuesday June 3, 2003

Tomorrow is the script read through. Jay, Michael and Eric have lined up some REAL actors to sit around a table and read the script. I'm nervous!

We will set up microphones to record the audio, then I'll edit the storyboards to the live read and we'll get a visual example of how the movie will flow. This storyboarded movie will then be used to better budget/schedule *Kisses and Caroms*. Plus it will also show us where our problems are.

I'm nervous because I need to show up tomorrow with my confidence hat on. I have to project that I know exactly what I'm doing when I'm actually clueless. Okay, I'm not clueless, just inexperienced.

Wednesday June 4, 2003

I finished up the *Kisses and Caroms* web board last night at 3 a.m. and went to sleep. I woke up at noon but it was a restless night so I'm exhausted.

Today is the live read. I'm very nervous and frankly scared to death over it. It's one thing to give the script to people I know and have them read it, they will be diplomatic about the criticism, but to give it to strangers and see how it is received first hand is something else. I'm afraid I'll need to explain the script. I'm afraid people will hate it. I'm afraid people will tell me "This is stupid." I'm afraid of a lot. This is a huge step.

After a day of complications, last minute problems and buying new equipment including \$350.00 worth of new microphones so we look professional, I arrive at Breaktime, hand out a food menu and thank everyone for their participation.

We begin the read through. I am blown away. It is totally unbelievable to hear my words out loud. It is amazing to hear the actors act and react to what I wrote. I keep looking at the script and thinking, damn this is good. Did I write this? People laugh and seem to truly enjoy it. I feel great. I get this sense of renewed vigor for *Kisses and Caroms*. I am fired up. The feeling of having your stuff well received is indescribable.

All the actors and actresses are good. Some are better than others are. One guy is awful. He reads with no inflection and messes up many lines. This is what auditions are all about. Some people are great, some are awful, some have an off day, some aren't right for a part and some make the part. I won't go into details because it is unfair for me to critique anyone on a cold read.

The food shows up at page 50. We break for dinner, chat and get to know each other a little better. I don't stray too far from Michael and Jay because I don't want to strike up conversations about people's performances. I feel I am safe with Michael and Jay. If someone asks, we'll all field the question.

Dinner goes well. For desert I put out plates of cookies because people will do a lot for you if you feed them. At this point, I think we have successfully put up the facade that we know what we're doing.

After dinner, I thank everyone again and we continue from page 50. The second half isn't as great as the first. Their bellies are full and their momentum is disrupted. It is still good. I am still impressed and all around stoked, but it is more of a relaxed pace.

I begin the applause at the end of the read. I tell everyone they are great and thank them. Michael asks if there are any questions or comments. A couple actors feel the script is a little too graphic, but two others think it is great as is.

One guy thinks there are too many parentheticals and directions in the script. He says that if we remove them we'll cut three or four pages out. I'm thinking, "three to four pages? I don't want to cut pages, I want to add pages."

Everyone departs rather quickly. I am actually glad about that. I want time to converse with Michael, Eric, Jay and Deanna about the read.

Everyone thinks it went great. Jay feels it read better than he originally thought. Deanna couldn't concentrate on her schoolwork because the story pulled her away and she knows the script very well. Eric and Michael liked it.

I ask Jay if we handled it well. He thinks we did a great job and impressed the actors. Michael or Jay overheard the actors comment on how high tech the equipment looked. So I guess the facade worked.

We begin a production meeting. This is a huge meeting. Much bigger than I think any of us expected. We have many issues to hammer out.

I make the final decision that it's a five day shoot in August and set the budget at \$10,000. This puts a huge weight on Michael's shoulders, but I believe it can be done and he can do it. Jay is like, "I don't know how you will do that, but okay."

Jay schools us on the casting process. We should place an ad in *Back Stage West*, which is the local actors' trade paper. Actors read the notice and then send in their picture and resume in hope of an audition.

Jay explains that we want to use a business address in the ad and should expect to get a few hundred submissions for each role. He also explains the use of *Breakdown Services* to send our casting notice out to agents and managers for their submissions.

It's called a "breakdown" because the script is "broken down" into the different roles with descriptions of each character.

He suggests we use both *Back Stage West* and *Breakdown Services* but since we are a non-union production, there will be a charge to place the notices, about \$50 - \$75 each. Michael says he'll add it to the budget.

Eric and I discuss lighting and the camera. I'm worried that I might need someone with more experience. Eric is a nice guy, but this is a hell of an undertaking. We need someone who can make video look like film. Eric has never done that.

Michael and I talk about whether to make the movie a corporation in Delaware or California. I leave it to him to figure out. We also discuss setting up a checking account and business license.

Michael, Jay and I talk about our relationship and our roles in making the movie. Michael will be lead producer, Jay second and me third. Jay will be the casting director and that covers the titles and duties for now.

I tell Jay and Michael that I will cut them in for a third of the movie's profits. I put up the cash and they put up sweat equity. After the cash investment is paid off, they will profit as much as I do.

If a soundtrack CD comes to fruition, all proceeds of that go to me, unless they have helped in the making of that CD.

If we manage to publish a book, they will get a cut if they contribute, but if I'm the only writer I take the cash.

A lot of bases are covered and leaps are made. It really feels like this is moving forward and it feels like I've chosen the right group of people to do it. I hope I'm right.

END OF SAMPLE

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