F.P.I.: FILM PRIVATE EYE

"Superman & The Desperate Girlfriend"

FADE IN:

EXT. DETECTIVE OFFICE - EVENING

Everything is shown in the classic Film Noir black and white. Glass window houses a crappy neon sign. The word "Private" shines weakly; the word "Eye" flickers. In contrast, a strong neon sign next door named "Fortunes" shows how successful the palm reader's business is.

Looking through the blinds of detective agency window, an early 30s, fashion forward, business-casually dressed man, DEVIN V. DUNCAN, packs his personal and office belongings in cardboard boxes.

DEVIN (V.O.)
See me there? I'm Devin V. Duncan. I used to be a private detective....

As Devin voice over continues, he becomes larger and larger and the office zooms in closer and closer. It is as though an invisible barrier has crossed through the window and landed softly inside...

INT. DEVIN'S OFFICE

DEVIN (V.O.)
... Why? Picture a beautiful white swan. You picturing? Good. Now picture it being suffocated in a thick coat of black oil after that BP spill. That's how this lousy economy suffocated my career.

He hangs his fedora hat low, hoping it hides the look of a man who is depressed and defeated.

DEVIN (V.O.)
Don't want to admit it, but my friend Sid is right. I let my closed eyed dreams blind my open eyed reality. As a result, I can't stop bumping into failure.

He takes down his NY State detective license on the wall and his 2009 Humphrey Bogart Award with his name displayed prominently at the bottom.

DEVIN (V.O.)
People. They don't want detectives anymore. They want forensics, DNA. They want CSI. There was a time when detective agencies were ubiquitous. They were on every corner. Now Bank of America is on every corner.

As he stores his license and award in the nearest box, loud knocks pound on the door. Devin barely looks up. A silhouette of a man lurks on the other side of the door.

MAN (O.S.)
Hey, Duncan.
(beat)
Duncan! I know you're in there. If you don't get me the money by Friday, you're outta here!

The shadow disappears, leaving a dark rectangular shape on the door. Devin waits a beat, goes to the door and unhinges the lock.

DEVIN (V.O.)
That was Bill Ray. I like to call him "B. Ray"....

A sheet of paper falls from the door. It lands on one of his shoes.

DEVIN (V.O.)
... He liked it too, until three months ago. That was the last time I paid the rent....

The letter is an eviction notice.

DEVIN (V.O.)
... Now it's "Mr. Ray."

He picks it up, slams the door.

DEVIN (V.O.)
Amazing how a year without clients can change a relationship.

He crumples it up, throws it into the wastebasket.

He crosses back to his desk, resumes his packing. He opens a desk draw. Takes out a few empty beer bottles and wrestling magazines.

Getting tired, Devin sits in his recliner chair behind his desk. He moves an empty pizza box aside and opens his laptop, goes on Facebook.

DEVIN (V.O.)
I've put ads on Craigslist, made a Facebook page, and completed my damn LinkedIn profile.

He lands on a page of a woman named "Cara Saxton." Her status reads "married." He fixates on numerous pictures of her and her husband smiling, laughing and kissing.

DEVIN (V.O.)
All I've managed to gain is a broken heart, an inbox full of spam and a bunch of weirdos following me on Twitter.

His head plops on the desk.

DEVIN
(muffled)
Face it, Devin. Time to close up shop.

He ignores the few light knocks at the door. They faintly reach his ears. Sounds of a person turning the door knob tests his patience.

DEVIN
(gruff)
It's open.

The door slowly opens, revealing a beautiful, 29 year old socialite, ALICIA ANDERS.

DEVIN (V.O.)
Do I have to say it?
(sighs)
Alright. Fate steps in.

Alicia enters, taking in the sparse room, not sure if she has entered the right office.

DEVIN (V.O.)
Actually, she saunters in.

She walks to the cheap, plastic chair inches away from Devin's desk.

ALICIA
Are you a Dick?

Her voice prompts Devin to raise his head. He stares. Silent. Closes his laptop.

ALICIA
(louder)
Are you a Dick?

Devin, still silent, checks her out from head-to-toe.

DEVIN (V.O.)
I don't really hear her from my ringside view of her perfect legs. Damn.

Alicia picks up on Devin's curious gaze. She sits.

DEVIN
Depends on who you ask. Some think I'm a dick, others think I'm a detective.

ALICIA
Aren't "dick" and "detective" the same thing?

DEVIN
Not since the 1940s. Let's see if I qualify for either, Miss...

ALICIA
Anders. Alicia Anders.

Devin's eyes light up in recognition.

ALICIA
Yes, THAT Alicia Anders.
(beat)
I need you to help me save my relationship.

DEVIN
How am I supposed to do that?

ALICIA
I need you to help me bridge the gap between me and Jason.

DEVIN
Jason?

ALICIA
Westerbrook.

Devin's eyes light up again.

ALICIA
Yes. He's Gary Westerbrook's son. I've tried everything to bond with him, but wild parties and reality shows are all that Jason thinks of whenever he sees me. I must show him that I'm worthy of being in his father's life.

DEVIN
What makes you think I can help you win over the son of an airline tycoon?

ALICIA
I recently moved in with Gary. Jason will be staying with us for a week. He hates me, but I love his father. I want to show Jason that I can be his friend. Jason's really into comic books. Gary saw he was reading a Superman one. Jason loves watching movies with his father. I want Jason to enjoy his time with us. I suggested watching a superhero movie together would be a good start. Since Gary mentioned "Superman Returns" is the latest Superman movie, I'm thinking about choosing it, but I'm not sure if it's any good.

Devin talks over Alicia.

DEVIN (V.O.)
One of New York's "who's who" actually braved the cab ride below 34th street? As I talk over Alicia's honey coated voice, she rambles on about how she fears her lack of a relationship with Jason will turn her relationship with Gary more fragile than a pair of hose. She has to know...

ALICIA
There has to be some way Jason and I can relate to each other. Finding the right superhero movie shouldn't be too hard for you, right? This movie has to be something Jason will love or I may have to kiss the best relationship I've had in my adult life good bye. So, I have to know...

They talk at the same time.

DEVIN (V.O.)
... is "Superman Returns" the right choice.

ALICIA
... is "Superman Returns" the right choice.

He stares at her for a long beat, wondering if she's putting him on. But Alicia's eyes are telling him the opposite.

DEVIN (V.O.)
Something in Alicia's eyes tell me my suspicion about her is as off as a tone deaf singer's chances of winning "American Idol."

Devin sits.

DEVIN
Why do you want a detective?

ALICIA
I need someone who's trained to find clues, has the knack to solve complicated puzzles, can pinpoint which plot points make or break a movie.

DEVIN
A detective?

ALICIA
Well, I figured like cops, you detectives stop at nothing to uncover specific details. Imagine me playing detective.

DEVIN
It would be like Kim Kardashian taking a job with the paparazzi.

ALICIA
Plus you're equipped at recounting your cases with written reports. Writing a movie review isn't too far off, is it?

DEVIN
Not to mention, movie critics aren't contractually obligated from leaking everything you've just said to the press.

ALICIA
You're the only agency in the city that hadn't put me on hold, laughed, or hung up.

DEVIN
That was you? Thought you were another crank.

She rummages through her purse, pulls out a wad of money and gives it to him.

ALICIA
That's fifteen hundred. I'll give you another two thousand once you've completed the case.

Devin has never seen this much money before. He's not sure what to say.

ALICIA
This to insure that our business here won't air on TMZ.

DEVIN (V.O.)
As much as I want to cling onto my self respect, Alicia prods it by dangling a bunch of hundred dollar bills between her dainty, manicured fingers.

ALICIA
One more thing. Can you somehow collect opinions from real Superman fans about this movie? It would help me become more knowledgable about these movies in general and will, hopefully, communicate with Jason better.

DEVIN
(relents)
Yeah. I guess. When do you need this by?

Alicia's face bursts into a grateful smile.

INT. DEVIN'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Devin enters, tries to not freak out.

DEVIN
48 hours?

DEVIN (V.O.)
48 Hours. I loved that movie. I'll never forget Eddie Murphy surrounded by rednecks in a Honkey Tonk bar. Ever. Now he's best known as a animated donkey driving an Ogre crazy.
(beat)
Anyway, I have until Friday to prevent my career from flat-lining. The breaking out in hives look isn't what you'd associate with a sleuth who once tricked a murderer to confess his sins.

He crosses to the couch, opens the laptop sitting on the coffee table. He goes on a Netflix-like movie downloading site, searches then clicks for "Superman Returns". The process bar crawls.

Frustrated, he lounges way back on the couch, legs stretched out... waiting. His cell phone rings. He peeks over to the caller id. It reads "SID." He ignores it.

DEVIN (V.O.)
Man, that progress bar crawls slower than a drunk stumbling into a taxi.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. DEVIN'S APARTMENT - NEXT MORNING

Devin sleeps as movie credits roll.

DEVIN (V.O.)
I can't help it. Watching Kryptonian crystals rise out of the ocean had the same affect as watching congress argue on C-Span.

Suddenly, a nearby light switches on. Everything changes from black and white to color. Groggy, Devin's head slowly rises.

A stunning redheaded woman dressed like a glamorized amazon warrior, wearing knee and elbow pads, comes into focus.

WOMAN
Flick off, Devin. Time to get up.

Devin stares at her as if she's a mirage.

DEVIN
Cara?

Devin admires the mysterious woman from head-to-toe.

DEVIN (V.O.)
Not that I don't want to cop a quick feel. I just can't get why Cara, my old flame from high school, is dressed like a wrestling chick.

DEVIN
A lot has changed since the tenth grade.

CARA
Sure has. Now get your ass over here.

Devin crosses to Cara with an incredulous look, gives her a hesitant hug.

DEVIN
Ass? You say "ass" now?

CARA
"I" didn't. You did. I mean, you were thinking it.

DEVIN
That made as much sense as...
(fishes for the right word)
As...

CARA
That right there is why I'm here. Look at you. You're a mess. I'm you're lifeline. I'm not going anywhere.

DEVIN
What are you? Are you here or I'm dreaming that you're here?

Cara goes to Devin, bashes her elbow in his face.

DEVIN (V.O.)
She smashes a better elbow than Macho Man Randy Savage from the top rope.

CARA
Feel that?

Devin nods.

CARA
Then I'm really here.

He rubs his sore jaw.

Cara's confident stature begins to falter. Devin looks puzzled. He senses something weird about her. It's almost as if they are connected somehow.

DEVIN
Hey, what's with you? You look like how I feel. What are you? In my brain?

CARA
I'm not <u>in</u> your brain. I <u>am</u> your brain. The better half, that is. I'm here to put
(MORE)

your creativity over and give you some balls.

DEVIN (V.O.)
If this were a case to find the raging lunatic it would be solved right here and now. 'Cause that raging lunatic is me.

She looks around the room. Her movements slow down.

DEVIN
In other words, you're my muse.

Cara sounds more labored with each sentence.

CARA
I'm not your muse or your alter ego. I'm that spark in your right hemisphere that has helped you come up with witty stuff like... like...

Her words and actions are at a loss. She staggers to the door.

DEVIN
Where are you going?

CARA
Need brain food. Need coffee and donuts.

DEVIN
Not hungry.

CARA
Stop lying. I'm your brain. See me? Hi.
(barely moves fingers)
I'm your brain without food.
(moves her lethargic arms)
Any questions?

DEVIN
Ain't going.

Cara drags herself over to Devin.

DEVIN (V.O.)
As Cara comes closer, I'm thinking she's gonna lay into me for sure. But her hard, cold eyes give way to the warmth of the Cara I used to know. I so missed that. I so miss her. Still.

CARA
(empathetic)
Staying here won't stop Sid from pestering you about that job. He'll keep calling you until the ringing drives you crazy and you'll cave like you always do.

DEVIN
No, I won't.

CARA
Yes, you will.

DEVIN
(sincere)
He's only trying to help me.

Cara moves closer to him. Inches away from his ear.

CARA
(slow and deliberate)
No food. No ideas. No movie review. No money. No. Detective. Agency.

Devin sighs, knowing he has to leave. He goes to the door. Cara staggers behind.

INT. COFFEE SHOP - MAIN AREA - MORNING

SID, a sloppy, late-30s man, dressed in a wrinkled and stained chef's apron, tied around his waist.

Devin and Cara enter. He veers to get some coffee. Cara lumbers behind. Devin pours it into a giant cup. He searches the counter for the coffee creamers. He doesn't find any.

DEVIN
(to Sid)
Where's the creamer?

SID
(shouts)
Hey, Ty. There's no creamers out here.

INT. STORAGE ROOM

The 17 year old TY, dressed in an MMA t-shirt (Affliction, Tapout, etc.), practices some advanced MMA moves. He grabs a six-pack of paper towels stacked above some unopened boxes and does a flying knee, knocking the paper towels to the floor.

SID (O.S.)
Ty! Need those creamers out here now!