

OUT OF TEMPER

an original feature screenplay by

Michael Alberstadt

Michael Alberstadt
25660 Dundee Road
Royal Oak, MI 48067
(248) 763-6019
mike@creativesmith.com

In the darkness, a gun fires.

FADE IN:

INT. BARN - CONTINUOUS

A wooden chair lies on its back. Blood drains from the body tied to it and pools on the sawdust-covered floor.

MAN (O.S.)
Find him a comfortable ditch.

INT. TAXI - MORNING

ARCHIE CLARK (late 30s) throws an overstuffed messenger bag onto the seat and climbs in. A beefy white guy. Rough hewn face. Weary eyes. He stabs a slip of paper at the CABBIE.

ARCHIE
This address.

He speaks with a distinct Canadian accent. Smooths his tattered blazer. Adjusts his tie. Drums his fight-ravaged fingers on the seat. Checks his tie again.

Notices the cabbie watching him.

ARCHIE
You have a beef, buddy?

CABBIE
You're The Enforcer - meanest bruiser in the NHL!

ARCHIE
Watch the road.

CABBIE
You were my hero growing up.

ARCHIE
Then you need a better class of hero.

CUT TO:

INT. SHELTER - NIGHT

An institutional space for the homeless and forgotten. Archie sleeps with other vagrants in rows of cots.

ARCHIE (V.O.)
You wouldn't pick The Enforcer up in
a ratty blazer at a bus station.

An INDIGENT reaches for the messenger bag beneath Archie's
bed. Archie's hand shoots out. Grabs the indigent's wrist.

ARCHIE (V.O.)
You'd pick him up at The Plaza.

The indigent tries to run, but Archie pulls him to the floor.

ARCHIE (V.O.)
Or the Ritz.

Archie attacks like a cornered bear. STAFFERS rush to
separate them.

EXT. COUNTY JAIL - EVENING

Archie steps into a cold drizzle. Scruffy beard. T-shirt.
He pulls on a hoodie with "EXETER HOCKEY" on the front.

CABBIE (V.O.)
Well, you look just like him.

Archie shoulders his messenger bag. Shuffles into the night.

ARCHIE (V.O.)
I hear that all the time.

EXT. ALLEY - NIGHT

Archie searches a dumpster. Sniffs a damp chunk of bread.

ARCHIE (V.O.)
At restaurants? There is always a
kid with a napkin and a Sharpie asking
for an autograph.

Archie climbs into a dirty cardboard box and eats.

ARCHIE (V.O.)
I humor them. Sign some illegible
squiggle.

EXT. STREET CORNER - DAY

Archie holds a cardboard sign: "HARD WORKER. HUNGRY."

CABBIE (V.O.)
I suppose you'd be rich after, what,
twelve years..?

ARCHIE
-- Sixteen.

An SUV pulls up. A MAN motions to Archie. Asks a question.

ARCHIE (V.O.)
Sixteen hard years as an NHL bruiser.
No, if I was The Enforcer?

Archie lifts his shirt. Reveals a ripped torso with too few
meals on it. The man licks his lips.

ARCHIE (V.O.)
I'd be on Easy Street.

LATER, IN THE SUV

ARCHIE (V.O.)
I'd never have to work again.

The man tempts Archie with a twenty. Archie checks the area.

ARCHIE (V.O.)
To scrounge for a living.

He pockets the money. The man yanks open Archie's pants.

ARCHIE (V.O.)
But I'm not The Enforcer.

CUT TO:

INT. PAWN SHOP - DAY

CABBIE (V.O.)
You think the Stanley Cup is heavy?

A PAWNBROKER studies an NHL Championship ring.

ARCHIE (V.O.)
No, it's light as tin foil. In that
moment it was -- I bet it was unreal.

PAWNBROKER
Is this real? Who'd this belong to?

Archie shrugs. The broker hands Archie a wad of cash.

EXT. BUS STATION - DAWN

Archie steps off a bus with urgency.

ARCHIE (V.O.)

If I was The Enforcer, my life would
be very different.

INT. DIRTY MEN'S ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Archie stands at a sink in his underwear. Completes a shave.
Pulls a fresh package of briefs from his messenger bag.

ARCHIE (V.O.)

Very different.

Two THUGS see an easy target in Archie - and attack.

MOMENTS LATER...

Archie shoves the second thug into a stall on top of the
first one. Returns to the sink. Rinses blood off his hands.

EXT. BUS STATION - LATER

Archie, in ruffled shirt and blazer, strides past hustlers
and derelicts. Toward a cab. Reaches for the door.

EXT. MAIN STREET - MORNING

Archie slams the door of the cab. Looks up at "COCOA POWER"
- the peeling pink facade of a shabby chocolate shop.

A WINO reclines against it.

Archie takes in the street. One sign shop with stunning
flowerpots - the other shops tired or vacant. A billboard
at the end of the street stands bare.

Sunlight catches every flaw in Archie's outfit. He opens
his wallet. Fingers one bill. Motions for the cabbie to
wait. Rummages through his messenger bag.

A pair of BVDs drops to the pavement.

CABBIE

Have a nice life, Mr. Clark.

The cab leaves. Archie and the wino both grab for the BVDs. They grapple. Archie threatens with his fist as a PATRON leaves Cocoa Power.

PATRON

HEY! LET HIM GO!

Archie puts up his hands. The wino shoves Archie into the gutter beside a UPS van. Throws his bottle at Archie. Flees.

Satisfied, the patron sashays away.

Archie climbs from the gutter. Straightens his clothes. Notices a wine stain and tries to wipe it off.

Pissed, he shoulders his messenger bag. Strides toward Cocoa Power. Grabs the doorknob.

Sees the rainbow flag sticker on the window...

The door flies open, banging Archie's knee. MAX (30s), a studly UPS delivery guy, exits with an armful of boxes.

MAX

Hold the door, would ya buddy?

He does. Max fires an appreciative smile at Archie. Archie returns it. Regards Max a moment. Then limps into:

INT. COCOA POWER - CONTINUOUS

Another PATRON elbows Archie out of the way as he takes in the chaotic scene.

A riot of SHOPPERS place orders at a candy counter. Others queue noisily at a marble-topped espresso bar. Frilly boxes of pink and brown, cellophaned hearts and red-foiled kisses jam glass shelves.

A fanciful Cupid holding bow, arrow and a "BE MY VALENTINE, BITCH" sign hangs suspended from the ceiling.

JOHNNY (early 30s), a compact Nordic dream in work shirt and pink apron - backs into Archie, arms loaded.

JOHNNY

The shelter is up the street.

ARCHIE

I'm a new hire, not a tramp.

JOHNNY

Then you need a new tailor. Hold that door, or get outta my way.

Archie steps aside. Surprised, Johnny shoves out the door – eyes glued to the new hire.

Archie spots a tray of samples and devours four of them. Wipes his teeth with a napkin.

He approaches MIMI (19), a wispy sales associate, as she deftly handles the coffee crowd.

ARCHIE

Looking for Vanessa?

Mimi points to VANESSA (50s) – a black force-of-nature who packs orders with grace and style.

ARCHIE

Vanessa? Archie, the new marketing guy. Is there somewhere we can talk?

VANESSA

Now? Hell, no.

She shoves a pink apron into Archie's hand. Assesses him with some trepidation...

VANESSA

Lordy, I am a fool for starting a newbie on Valentine's Day. Can you even run a damn register?

ARCHIE

Take money. Put in drawer. Repeat.

VANESSA

Save that attitude for your mother. Card reader. Bar code scanner...

An overweight NERD steamrolls to the counter.

NERD

Hey, muscle head -- you got these Oreos in dark?

ARCHIE

Milk and dark, sir. Two-piece and nine-piece but, honestly, don't you and your Warcraft buds deserve that heart piñata on the corner shelf?

NERD

What -- where? Oh, awesome!

The Nerd makes a beeline. Vanessa gapes at Archie.

ARCHIE

Your web site sucks, but the product info isn't bad.

VANESSA

Don't test me -- and don't eat the samples. I saw your ass.

ARCHIE

I, uh...

(to a patron)

Is that all, ma'am? Those truffle kisses are shouting your name...

EXT. COCOA POWER - EVENING

Archie exits with Mimi and OKSANA (late 40s) - a severe woman, gray hair, nicotine smile. Mimi locks up.

MIMI

Get a drink with us?

ARCHIE

Sorry, I don't -- I gotta unpack.

Bummed, Mimi nods. Oksana dismisses Archie and the two women stroll up the street.

INT. SHELTER - LATER

A desperate place, perhaps a former flophouse. Archie plods to the desk. The lecherous MANAGER checks him out.

ARCHIE

You have room tonight?

MANAGER

Ten bucks. No food. No drugs. No sex -- between residents...

Archie counts his funds. Pays the fee.

MANAGER

Oh, and the showers are broken.

INT. COCOA POWER - MORNING

Vanessa watches as Archie examines the facade outside. He strides in. Vanessa checks her watch.

VANESSA

Ten minutes early. You live close?

ARCHIE

Walking distance. This street has seen better days.

She judges yesterday's outfit. Gives him a sniff.

VANESSA

Did you shower?

ARCHIE

So, we switch from Valentine's to, what, St. Paddy's?

VANESSA

Get real with me. I did my research: career-ending injury, compensation fight with the Players Association. An assault charge.

ARCHIE

I plead to a misdemeanor...

VANESSA

-- Shouldn't a person of your renown have two damn pennies to rub together?

ARCHIE

You hired me with all my flaws and warts. So what say we cut the banter and get on with it?

SHIPPING AND RECEIVING - MOMENTS LATER

Vanessa introduces Johnny. They shake hands gamely. Johnny scratches his neck, flexing his bicep for Archie's benefit. Archie notices.

ARCHIE
Yesterday was crazy, eh?

JOHNNY
Busiest day of the year, bud. All
downhill from here.

THEN, THE PRODUCTION DEPARTMENT

A shabby upstairs room. Shelves of ingredients, huge blocks
of chocolate, tempering units and stainless work stations.

Vanessa motions for Oksana to join them.

VANESSA
Oksana manages all the production.
Did you meet Archie yesterday?

OKSANA
(unimpressed)
Yes. I did.

THEN, HIS NEW OFFICE

A cramped closet overwhelmed with samples, binders and
cookbooks. An out-of-date Apple rests on a beat-up desk.

VANESSA
Your home away from home.

Archie peers in with growing skepticism.

FINALLY, A STOREROOM

A windowless room. Old equipment and back stock pack one
end. Light filters in from an attached washroom.

VANESSA
My former flat, now storage. What
did I say the salary was?

ARCHIE
You didn't.

VANESSA
\$25K a year, ninety days probation,
40% off on product. It's what I can
afford at the moment. Take it, or...

ARCHIE

-- I'll take it. And my past issues?

VANESSA

Are past. There's a lavatory so
wash up. Today, you make coffee.

INT. COCOA POWER - LATER

Archie, now in a pink apron, hands Vanessa an espresso. She sips it. Adds it to the rejects on the counter.

VANESSA

Better. Try a couple more.

Mimi listens as she stocks shelves. Johnny delivers chocolate shamrocks to her. Slips behind the counter. Sneaks a rejected espresso.

PETER (60s), an elegant man in a couture suit, strides in.

PETER

Vanessa, is it rush week? I just stepped over two PIKES and a Theta Chi -- wait, a new barista? I hope you belong to my church.

ARCHIE

I'm agnostic.

PETER

Mmm -- pity. Hello, Johnny...

JOHNNY

Peter. Newbie's pretty in pink, eh?

ARCHIE

When in Rome, shipping boy.

Vanessa shoos Johnny away. Archie serves Peter an espresso.

ARCHIE

I'm Archie. Marketing guy and probable jack-of-all-trades here.

PETER

Wonderful! Are you master of one?

ARCHIE

One or two.