

Scene One

An apartment in Cannes, France. The first week in May. CAMERON, a documentary filmmaker in his mid-30s, wearing a Werner Herzog t-shirt, is working at a computer, trying to edit his film. He stares at the screen, rubs his head, eats fries and drinks a soda.

CAMERON. Fuck ... fuck!

He pounds the table with his fist.

(under his breath) Fuck fuck fuck fuck fuck fuck fuck fuck!

He paces around the room, kicks the furniture, etc., all the time watching the screen as if it's a wild animal he has to keep his eye on. He returns to the computer.

Okay. Okay okay okay okay. Okay *fuck* okay.

He makes a cut.

Yes! Okay ...

He tries to play back the edit but something goes wrong.

No ... oh no ... Undo ... fucking undo! FUCKING UNDO!

A BUZZER at the front door. CAMERON answers it to reveal BEN, a young editor in his 20s. BEN holds a rucksack and travel bag. He looks as though he hasn't slept much.

Ben! Thank God you're here. It's Ben, right? Ben.

BEN. Yeah.

CAMERON heads back to the computer.

CAMERON. The fucking thing froze when I tried to make a cut and it won't let me take it back.

BEN approaches the computer.

BEN. Did you try undo?

CAMERON. It won't let me undo! It turned a soft grayish color and then it ... fuck!

BEN. Can I ... ?

CAMERON steps out of the way. BEN solves the problem with a few keystrokes.

CAMERON. How did you ... ? Thank you, Ben. You're awesome. Thank God you're here. Have a seat. Drop your shit wherever. We're in trouble, Ben. Except it's alright because you're here now. How are you? Do you need anything? How was your flight? Are you hungry? Thirsty? What do you need?

BEN. Just the ... ?

CAMERON. *(points)* La toilette is right down there, first door on the left.

BEN. Can I *[leave my bags]* ... ?

CAMERON. Do anything you like. Treat this place like it's your own. How was your flight? Oh shit ... that's right, where's ... ?

CAMERON finds a key.

Your key. What about your phone? Is it ... ?

BEN. It's ... I got this international pricing plan.

CAMERON. Good, good. Just come and go however you want. Help yourself to whatever you need. You don't have to ask for anything.

BEN. So, can I ... ?

CAMERON. Go! Go!

BEN exits, towards the bathroom. CAMERON takes out his phone, scrolling through pages. SOUND OF TOILET FLUSHING off-stage. BEN appears a few moments later.

Holy shit.

BEN. What is it?

CAMERON. Filmmaker Magazine posted an article about me.

BEN. Oh yeah? *(Pause.)* What does it say?

CAMERON. They named SchizOphelia one of the top films of the decade.

BEN. That's great!

CAMERON. They mention Wes Anderson, of course, since he ... He should be in Cannes soon ... I'll introduce you.

BEN. That would be amazing.

CAMERON. This is not a bad article, actually.

CAMERON puts his phone away.

How are you? Have you slept?

BEN. Um ... not much. It was like a fifteen hour plane ride. I was seated next to this crying baby ... plus we missed our connection / in Germany, so ...

CAMERON. Well, you're here now. That's the important thing. Take a breath. Relax. Breathe. Have a seat.

BEN. Okay. Yeah.

CAMERON. How much do you know about the situation?

BEN. Um. Mostly just what Nick told me.

CAMERON. Which was what?

BEN. Just that, um ... you need an editor to step in, / obviously ...

CAMERON. Uh-huh. What else?

BEN. Nothing really. He mentioned you had some trouble with your previous ...

CAMERON. Libby.

BEN. Okay. / He didn't –

CAMERON. She had to leave the project. Actually, I had to fire her.

BEN. Oh. Sorry. That's ...

CAMERON. I'd rather not delve into details if you don't mind.

BEN. Yeah, no. Totally. / That's cool.

CAMERON. Alright, look: I believe in loyalty, okay? I'm all for giving credit where it's due to the people who helped me get here. And Libby put in two years on this project and I'm not saying she isn't talented. She's extremely talented. She just allowed her emotions to cloud her judgment and I can't have some chick's hormones or whatever getting in the way of making this film be the best film it can possibly be. And I fully admit I'm not entirely blameless in this thing, either. I might have let things go too far. We probably shouldn't have been sleeping together. I thought she could handle it and I was wrong. At the time I didn't realize she couldn't separate the work from what was going on with us. And once she began taking the work in a completely negative direction going entirely against the grain of the material – anyway, I told Nick the situation and he thought it would be best to make a clean break and begin from scratch which is where you come in. And I'll be honest with you, Ben, I haven't seen much of what you've cut but Nick says you're fast and you're good and that's exactly what we need right now. So here's the deal: *(brief pause)* We've got exactly *seven days* to completely re-edit the entire fucking film. Not too big a task, huh? I mean, God created the world in seven days, right?

BEN. Six, actually.

CAMERON. What?

BEN. Six days. On the Seventh Day He rested.

CAMERON. Are you religious?

BEN. Um, not ... not particularly. Are you?

CAMERON. I wouldn't say I'm religious but I'm extremely spiritual.

BEN. Yeah, I get that.

CAMERON. *(brief pause)* You've seen SchizOphelia I'm assuming.

BEN. I have! Definitely.

CAMERON. *(brief pause)* And?

BEN. And ... it's brilliant! It's a brilliant film. I mean it's amazing. It's one of the

best documentaries I've ever seen. It's probably one of the best films I've ever seen, period.

CAMERON. Well ... I did my best. This film is similar. Like *SchizOphelia*, it's based on hundreds of hours of video footage, Super 8, photographs, audio recordings ... But this film – *our* film – while definitely a companion piece, is really its own animal. I'll admit most of the footage is B-roll from *Ophelia* but much of it was shot afterwards. The primary difference is that where the first film was mainly about my sister's autism, this film focuses almost entirely on my father and his mental breakdown. Tell me about yourself, Ben. How did you get into editing? You went to film school, didn't you? / I believe Nick said ...

BEN. Um, yeah, I went to Columbia —

CAMERON. You should know your degree will do you absolutely no good here. We don't need any fucking *theories*. I want you to be an artist, Ben, not a machine. You know what Herzog said when he made *Fitzcarraldo*?

BEN. I do, actually, / he said —

CAMERON. He said – (*impression of Herzog*) – “If I abandon this project now I would be a man without dreams and I don't want to live like that. I either live my life or end my life with this project.”

BEN. (*Brief pause.*) Right.

CAMERON. Why did you take this job, Ben? It couldn't have been for the money.

BEN. I took this job ... um, can I be honest with you?

CAMERON. Yeah yeah yeah.

BEN. Um, honestly, I took this job to work with you. That's all I want – to do what you do – to take documentary cinema to a higher art form. I mean, when Nick called me and said you were taking the film to the Cannes / Film Festival —

CAMERON. Yes! That's absolutely right. We're in the Cannes Film Festival motherfucker. The Festival de fucking Cannes. The most prestigious festival in the world. And there is no way I'm letting Libby or anyone else fuck it up. I'm not looking for a miracle worker, all right? The footage is good. It's almost *too* good. That's why – we've just got to find a way – you and me – of shaping it into something beautiful. What do you say?

BEN. Um ... yeah ... yeah. It sounds good.

CAMERON. You don't sound sure.

BEN. No, I am, definitely!

CAMERON. I have a good feeling about you, Ben. Don't ask me why. What's your story? How was your flight? Was it difficult getting away on such short notice?

BEN. Well, actually, my fiancée wasn't too thrilled about just picking up / and leaving on such –

CAMERON. Your fiancée?

CAMERON takes out his phone and begins filming BEN.

BEN. Um, yeah ... Emily.

CAMERON. When are you getting married?

BEN. In the Summer. We're having the ceremony in Hawaii.

CAMERON. Nice.

CAMERON changes the angle of the phone to include himself in the frame.

BEN. Yeah, I mean, people think it's going to be like super expensive but honestly compared to the ridiculously extravagant wedding her parents – Are you filming me?

CAMERON. I film everything. Does it bother you?

BEN. Um ... no ... I guess not.

CAMERON. What does she do? Your fiancée.

BEN. Emily writes for television. She's amazingly talented. She's literally saved at least two shows from cancellation.

CAMERON sees something on his phone.

CAMERON. Shit.

BEN. What's wrong?

CAMERON. Nothing. I just got an email from Spike Jonze. It could be bad news. You were saying?

BEN. If you want to read it ...

CAMERON. Thanks, this will only take a second.

CAMERON reads the email on his phone.

BEN. Is it ... ?

CAMERON. Everything's cool. He's going to be at the screening.

BEN. Oh. Great.

CAMERON. He'll be a good person for you to meet.

BEN. I'd love that.

CAMERON. Go on. Tell me more about Em ... ?

CAMERON puts his phone away.

BEN. Emily. She's here, actually, in Cannes. Hey, um, I meant to ask, how hard would it be to get her a pass / to the festival ... ?

CAMERON. You'll have to talk to Nick about that.

BEN. Okay. Sure.

CAMERON. So this is the thing. Before things got all fucked up with Libby, she cut a five-hour version of the film I'm in fucking love with. If it was up to me, I'd submit the five-hour version and we'd be done here. They'll let me do it, too, the festival people are awesome, they're open to anything.

BEN. Have you thought about, I don't know, cutting it up, maybe turning it into a mini-series ... ?

CAMERON. I have, but we've got a very good chance of selling the American Distribution rights. Sundance picked up SchizOphelia and they're definitely interested in this one. So our first priority, obviously, is succeeding at this festival. And frankly, even if we could turn it into a series, I see this as a *movie*, I want people

to see it in a *theater near you*, not staring at a fucking laptop while they check their email ...

BEN. No, totally, / I get you.

CAMERON. Not that I've got anything against technology per se. My father actually tried to push me into computers, if you can fucking believe that. But fortunately my first semester of college I took some film classes and I took some LSD and this one class I took, they showed a bunch of classics, Citizen Kane, all that bullshit, but then they showed us little documentary called Harlan County, U.S.A.

BEN. I've seen it.

CAMERON. You have? It's great, / isn't it?

BEN. It is. It's awesome.

CAMERON. That film is what first got me into documentaries. And I know my own films aren't exactly fighting for the rights of coal miners, but I do feel that I'm serving humanity in my own way. And getting to meet Barbara Kopple and eventually work for her was one of the greatest things to ever happen to me. Want to get the lights?

CAMERON goes to the computer.

BEN. Are we ... ? What are we doing?

CAMERON. This is the five-hour version.

BEN. We're watching it now?

CAMERON. You need to take another piss?

BEN. Um ... no, I'm good.

CAMERON. Just keep in mind this isn't a finished product, there's no end credits and the music is temporary but on the other hand I don't want it cleaned up too much I want to maintain the raw quality of the original so it's pretty much perfect the way it is.

BEN. Is it cool if I put my stuff away?

CAMERON. Put it away where?

BEN. Um ...

CAMERON. We only have one bedroom. I hope you don't mind sleeping on the couch.

BEN. Oh. No, / that's ...

CAMERON. Hit the lights, will you?

BEN turns out the lights.

Ready? Here we go.

CAMERON starts the film.