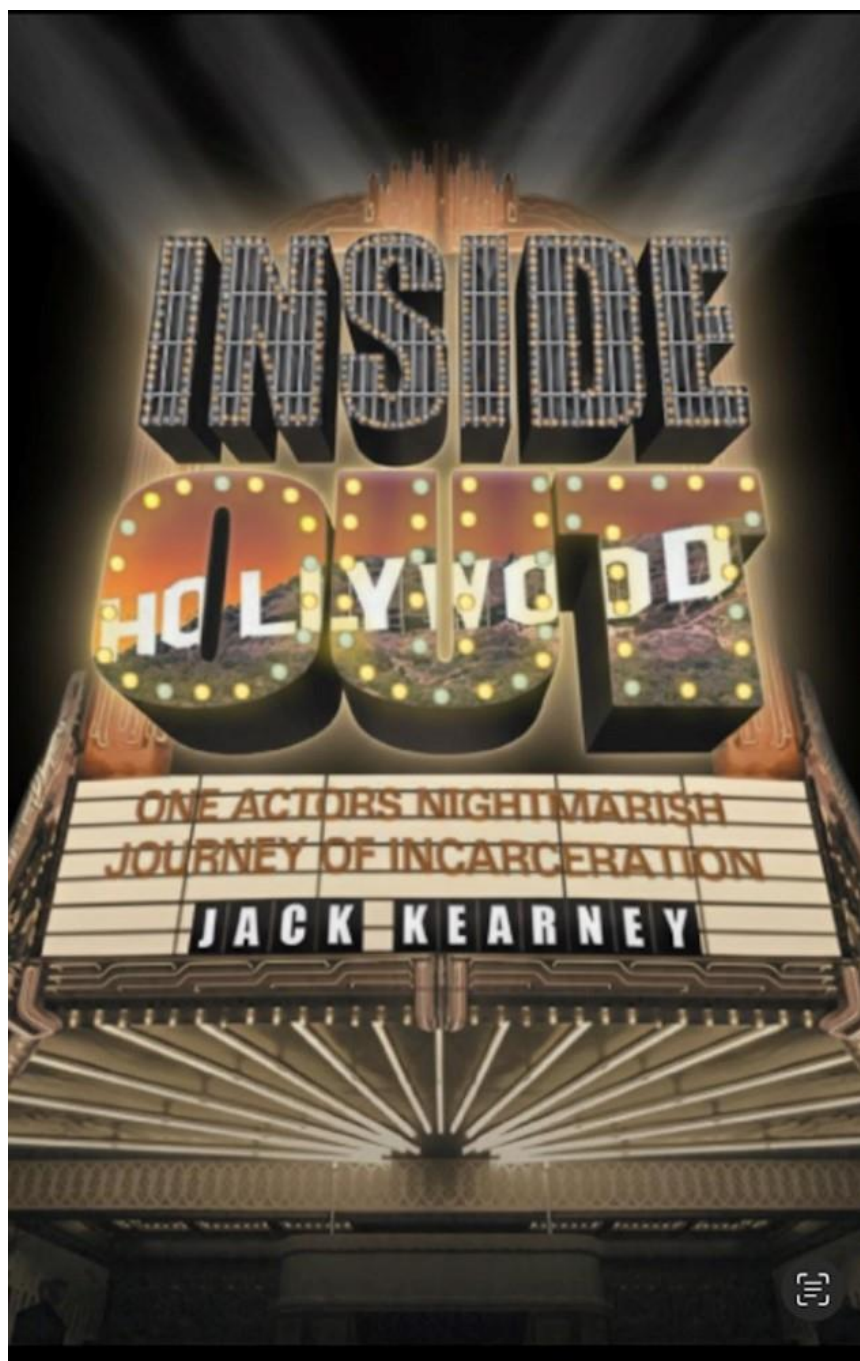




INSIDE OUT



JACK KEARNEY

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Dreamers rarely rule the world, but they can change it, Jack Kearney

DEDICATION

For my daughter, Shannon.

Love you from the core of my heart, God bless you, My Love!♡

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The year was 1978. Jimmy Carter was president, Sony introduced the Walkman, and the nation's pastime became waiting in line for gas. It was also the year of the release of a little-known documentary about a group of juvenile delinquents and their three-hour session with actual convicts called "Scared Straight."

Danny Belson is a trained actor who is also the rarest of the rare, a working one. He is turning the big 3-O soon, and his rugged good looks have always made casting agents type him as a bad boy. So, during his career, he was used to having cuffs on. But these were the real thing, and they were secured tightly to the seat in front of him. Tight enough so that when the bus surged forward, they dug into his skin. As the bus pulled out of the LA County Twin Towers Correctional Facility, Danny knew where they were heading—he had been there once before—the Medium Security Federal Prison in Lompoc, California. All that Danny could do was stare out the window, fight the urge to cry, and think about what could have been.

This was finally his year. All his hard work was starting to pay off. The countless toilets he had cleaned, thousands of advertising pens he had sold, and endless tables of yokel tourists he had waited on were finally behind him. Also, he had landed a recurring role on a major soap and finally had broken through LA's crony ninety-nine-seat theater barrier. He had already had leading roles in several critically acclaimed plays. As the transport bus slowly rumbled on, the familiar sites of Los Angeles reminded Danny of his first year in Tinzletown



After graduating from SF State in '72, Danny moved to LA. Although with his looks and manner, most of his friends and professors thought he would do much better in New York, Danny was scared to make that kind of a leap of fate. He had always felt that he would be able to crawl home if, by some unbelievable stretch of the imagination, he was to fail somehow. Armed with all his great reviews, Danny figured it would only take a couple of months to land

a good agent. Even while performing on stage, everyone would comment that he had the it factors and that the camera would eat him up. From his deep blue eyes that had a bit of squint from his refusal as a youth to wear his glasses to his just-under-six-foot muscular frame, Danny had always known that Hollywood was calling.

To keep his days free to attend the numerous auditions sure to follow, he took an early-morning janitorial job at a well-known department store. After mailing dozens of head shots and spic-'n'-spanning hundreds of toilets, Danny was starting to feel the gut-wrenching reality that all the thousands of wannabes that had traveled the star-studded sidewalks before him had experienced. "*What if I'm not as good as I think I am? Do you have any idea how many great actors ever make it?*" Danny, never lacking confidence, answered his own questions by doubting the very fabric of the Catch-22 Hollywood mill. You can't get your foot in the door unless you have an agent, and of course, no agent is going to even look at you unless you have your card. Yes, the holy grail for any actor is their SAG card.

On top of all that, the only other avenue to get seen by the makers and shakers in the business, getting a major role in a ninety-nine-seat Equity Waiver production seemed to be drying up. He was getting plenty of callbacks but was coming up short in final casting. The thing that was really getting his goat, though, one of his major pet peeves, the guys, for the most part, getting these exalted roles weren't good enough to even understudy for Danny. So, to stay in tune, Danny did what the bulk of aspiring migrating talent does: auditioned for one of the hundreds of inexpensive workshops held once a week in Santa Monica, Hollywood, and all over the valley.

Although you're told that, from time to time, some big shot — the person who runs the workshop — will drop in, it never happens. Danny went through several workshops before landing a space in Ellie's. She was not a bullshitter, although she always claimed that she was the one who discovered Tommy Lee Jones because he had once attended her workshop. All Danny knew was that she was a hell of a teacher.



As the bus rumbled along, the big black guy seated next to Danny started talking. The low guttural voice abruptly brought him back to the present. As he cautiously acknowledged his presence, keeping sure not to stare, Danny couldn't make out if this linebacker was talking to him or just talking. This guy was huge, so knowing the horror he had heard about prison, he decided to pretend to listen at least. After what seemed like an eternity, Danny still had no idea if the guy was talking to him or not. Danny began to ease back into his own thoughts and turned to once again glare out the window, as the sound of his voice became more and more muffled.



During the following year, the workshop and copies of *Dramalogue* were all that kept Danny in touch with the quest for his dream. Ah, yes, the *Dramalogue*. Every entertainer's bible. Every week, they would publish all the auditions and upcoming events in the show business. Danny, like so many hopefuls, sent out his headshot and résumé to all of the dozens of PO boxes listed, praying that someone would at least give him an audition. The *Logue* also ran tryout listings for open calls and theater auditions. New York might have Broadway and Off Broadway, but they don't come close to the number of small theaters that LA offers.

The ninety-nine-seat-limit productions were started to give performers a chance to show themselves to the business movers and shakers, in hopes that they were just what they were looking for. The reason they stay under a hundred for audience seating is to abide by the Equity rule known as equity waiver. Whereby artists can perform on stage, even if they are Equity members, and get paid about twenty bucks per performance, to show casting people and agents what they have. Danny had recently been called back three times for the lead in *Golden Boy*, a perfect vehicle for him. A young man whose dream is to become a virtuoso violinist discovers he also has a knockout punch. Due to family circumstances, he is forced to choose between his

passion and surviving the mob-controlled world of boxing. When he was called in to read the role of a punch-drunk fighter, he knew that he didn't get the part. This part was a significant role, however, and Danny gave a terrific audition... to no avail.

The other love of Danny's life was shooting pool. It was at a small beer bar where he was a regular that Danny's luck was about to change. He met a guy who, although he had no interest in acting, turned out to be someone who was invited to a lot of Hollywood parties.

Vince was an East Coast transplant whom Danny would later use as a model for the Brooklyn thug characters that he would play on numerous cop shows. Vince prided himself on shooting bar table 8-ball. That was what brought them together. Both of them loved to shoot multiple rail shots on the 8. From the very first time they discovered this preference, these two guys from opposite coasts became bar buddies. A bar buddy is defined as someone who is your best friend anytime you see each other at the bar. As their friendship grew and they began to learn more about each other, Vince invited Danny to a party he was going to the following night. When Danny heard that it was at the home of an independent filmmaker, he jumped at the chance.

Immediately upon their arrival, Vince split from Danny, leaving him to discover this underground world for the first time. It was the first time that he saw openly gay couples really making out. He was not upset or offended, though, because after all, being an actor, he had friends who were gay. They just never really flaunted it at the cast parties that Danny had attended in the past. Danny was comfortable with who he was and took pride in the fact that he had never judged people on who they were, not what they were. Danny went immediately to the kitchen to put away the case of beer he had brought. As he started to file the cans away, careful to hide a few in the crisper and freezer, he heard a very sexy voice say, "Now that's what I call class." Glancing over the refrigerator door, Danny beheld one of the best-looking older women he had seen since he had played

Mercutio in a San Francisco production of Romeo and Juliet and he had bedded Lady Capulet.

Veronica Morris-Strutzenberg was a gorgeous forty-five-year-old model-turned-actress, ex-wife of Charles Strutzenberg, studio head of Columbia, who could easily pass for early thirties.

As Danny closed the fridge door, all he could see was a redhead. For him, there was nothing better than a natural blonde, a very rare species, and beautiful natural redheads, the rarest of rare. Crossing toward her, Danny tried desperately to keep looking into her gorgeous green eyes, as he expertly scanned her amazing body. She was wearing tight jeans and a low-cut blouse, sexy but not trashy.

As Danny crossed to her, his eyes couldn't help but roam to the enticing crevice that formed between the two perfectly shaped orbs that were slowly inhaling and exhaling the closer he got. "It's obvious that it takes one to know one" was Danny's response, while silently praying, *"Please don't let these voluptuous beauties have freckles."* When he got directly in front of her, she quickly slid her foot up the wall, resting her knee just short of Danny's crotch. "You like your beer cold... Hi, I'm Ronnie." She held out her beautifully manicured hand, and Danny took it gently in his, saying, "I won't disrespect you by saying, but I like my women hot. Hi, Ronnie, I'm Danny." As she began to laugh, Danny got a better look at her captivating smile and pouting lips. "Let me guess, you're an actor!"

Before Danny had time to respond, Ronnie took him by the hand and directed him through the crowd into a beautiful cathedral ceiling room and out to the backyard patio. Danny let out an audible sigh. He had never seen a backyard that was literally the size of a football field. As two topless babes ran by and jumped into this massive pool, Danny almost missed the introduction that Ronnie was attempting. Getting back down to earth, Danny garbled, "What... what... I'm sorry, what were you saying?" By this time, Ronnie was tugging on his arm and yelling,

"Danny, Danny, I was trying to introduce you to my boyfriend, Gerald."

Now she he had his undivided attention! Her boyfriend? As he reached for the extended hand in front of him,

Danny couldn't help but notice that he was shaking hands with a younger and prettier version of himself. All of the fantasies he had in the kitchen were now melting away on the patio. If that wasn't bad enough, Ronnie proudly declared, "He is going to be the next big star of this town, Danny. I put him in the lead of my current production of *Golden Boy*." Danny felt an insensitive dagger rip through his stomach as Ronnie continued, "Honey, I thought Danny might be right for the gangster Fuseli, we do need an understudy... Oh look, there's Winston, I just need a few moments with him... You two get to know each other." Ronnie flitted off, leaving the two men dumbfounded.

Stroking his ego, Danny let Gerald do all the taking because he was trying not to show his devastation. He had finally been made aware of the whole sickening Hollywood game, and it cut deeper than any woman's scorn ever had. All he could think was, three callbacks for the part that this asshole was handed on a silver platter.

"So, what happened?" Danny interrupted, "Did she see your audition, and it was love at first sight?" "No, dude," Gerald replied with a big smile, "she produced it for me. That's how everything is done in this town. Of course, it's against the rules to precast, so they always have to go through the sham of auditioning. Mostly to fill the small parts, though." Danny was just about to floor this guy when Ronnie sauntered back into the picture.

"It's nice to see you boys getting along so well." Without a thought of what it might project, she put her arm around Danny and planted a luscious, prolonged kiss on his cheek. "What do you think, honey? Let's have Danny over for drinks after this bash starts to fizzle. What do you say?" "I'm up for it if Danny is." Gerald let out a grunt.

Now, Danny might have been naive when it came to the backroom deals of Hollywood, but he had no trouble reading a proposition when he saw one. Figuring he was caught in a bisexual

situation, something he had no problem with, but was just not into. He declined. "I really have to go find my friend I came with, but it was nice meeting both of you, and good luck with the play." Gently taking her hand and kissing it, Danny looked deeply into Ronnie's green pools then slowly began to walk away. "You're one hell of a woman, Ronnie."

She follows him, reaches into her clutch, and grabs a card and a pen. She writes on the back of the card and hands it to Danny. "Here's my card, baby. One of my friends is directing a motorcycle action flick starring David Carradine. Go to this address on Monday at about ten and give the casting person my card."

Totally flabbergasted, Danny looks at the card and then replies, "Is Gerald in this one too?"

"You poor dear," she says as she touches Danny's cheek, "Gerald is too pretty for this one. But you are just what they are looking for." Ronnie then planted a swift but very sexy kiss on Danny's lips. "Now you be sure to call me and let me know how it went." She then turned abruptly to see if Gerald had caught it, and planted an even bigger one on him. Danny and Ronnie would become very close over the next few years, especially after Gerald's star had come crashing down. And yes, Danny did eventually find out that she not only had a sparse patch of freckles, but also that she was, of course, a natural redhead.



Suddenly, the bus was full of screaming maniacs, and Danny was once again forced back to his insane reality.

Some college-age girls were passing the bus in an open '70s Cadillac convertible and, realizing they had a captive audience, had removed their tops and were giving these poor souls a farewell show. Knowing the subject of his reminiscing, Danny was not that impressed, and as the girls sped away and the guards restored order, he once again recreated his happier times.



Monday couldn't get there fast enough for Danny. Knowing it was a biker film, he cut the sleeves off his Levi jacket, put on a pair of jeans, and put on his oil-stained cowboy boots that he wore when he owned his '65 Triumph 500. He got there early—only to see a line of jeans and boots that stretched out the door and around the block. Fighting his way to the front sign-in, he did as Ronnie had instructed and showed the woman with the clipboard the card.

A mousey bleach blond with black roots glanced up through her horn-rim glasses and said, "You know Mrs. Strutzenberg?" Danny retorted, "Who?" The woman was now sizing Danny up and said, "The ex-wife of the head of Columbia Studios... the producer of this picture."

Realizing what had just occurred, Danny was quick to answer, "I met Ronnie at a party, and she thought that I would be perfect for one of the bikers."

The woman abruptly stood up and directed Danny to take one of few obviously reserved chairs. "Wait here until your name is called." When Danny asked if there were any sides to study, she grabbed his headshot and simply said, "Someone will call you shortly."

Danny had heard those words many times while waiting, sometimes for hours, to see an agent or casting person for what was known in the business as a general interview. He remembered the time that a well-respected casting lady called him in for a forty-minute general, because she thought he had a Kirk Douglas quality about him, and she was tired of seeing nothing but New York type thugs. At the end of the interview, Danny remarked that he was a great Brooklyn thug, to which the woman retorted. "Why should I cast you when there are thousands of actual actors from Brooklyn in my files. I'll definitely keep you in mind if we ever need a WASP, though." Danny, of course, never heard from her again, even after she became the head of casting for *Streets of San Francisco*. But this time was

different. Danny had a big shot recommending him, and his only worry was that Strutzenberg didn't hate his ex.

He didn't have that long to contemplate his future, because in no time at all it was upon him. He walked into a room he was not unfamiliar with. Plain, drab walls and two-fold-up tables in the middle, with one-fold-out chair stationed in front of the tables. Danny saw that four people were laboring over mounds of head shots at the fold-up tables in front of them. He could see that his own headshot was now being passed around as a grayish-haired middle-aged man took control. "I am Chester Michelson, the director of *Death Race 2000*, and I must say that Ronnie's eye for talent seems to be improving. You have quite an impressive stage background. SF State is a very well-respected institution. Danny, I can see you in a few roles, but the one we all agree would best suit our needs and your lack of film experience is the part of Slider. We have a small problem, however, although he is a part of the gang, his lines are spread out throughout the film, so we don't really have a side for you to read from. You're a trained actor ... do you perhaps have a monologue you can perform for us?"

All Danny could think of was something an old journeyman character actor once told him, that every actor worth his salt will get his one chance to prove himself. Danny knew that this was his moment.

Now, as a trained actor, Michelson was right about being prepared with a monologue. In fact, Danny had two to choose from. He could go with a standard that he knew everyone in the room had seen a hundred times, or roll the dice and give them something he had written that he had been working on. It was based on a question that had long plagued scholars. Whatever happened to the brothers from *Death of a Salesman*? He had played Happy in the Bay Area to rave reviews. His version of Happy was just as talented as Biff's; he had simply chosen the wrong sport. He was an all-star baseball player, while his brother excelled in football, which was Willy's favorite sport.

After a brief contemplation, Danny made his decision. “I have something that I have been working on, but I’ll need a shirt.”

Calling out to one of the flunkies in the back of the room, the director yelled, “Give him your shirt, Ralph.”

Ralph reluctantly started to oblige by beginning to take off his tie, when Danny cried out, “Leave the tie, please.” “Yeah, just pull the fucking thing over your head, and let’s get on with it.”

Danny, sensing that Michelson is becoming annoyed, quickly tore off his jean vest and pulled the shirt over his head as he set the scene. As he starts giving them a little background on the monologue, he hears the whole room exhale and groan, realizing it is something he has written.

“Picture Happy ten years after Willy’s death.” Danny has taken on a serious tone. “He married the store manager’s daughter and now lives in a mansion on Long Island. We quickly learn that he has fulfilled all of his father’s wishes. He *is* Willy.” As Danny takes a moment to get into character, you could hear a feather drop.

Danny, now in character, staggers in and pretends to pour himself a drink. As if to toast, Danny holds his hand in the air and verbalizes as if he had a few too many already. “Here’s to you, Pop.” As if realizing he is too loud, he shushes himself and then says, “We mustn’t wake the old ball and chain.” He starts to laugh as if he were a child who had just gotten away with something. “She thought I was out at a sales meeting.” His voice now takes on a devious guttural sound as he sits in the chair and looks around. “The secret is to never let them catch you, Pop. I work damn hard, and I deserve a little fun sometimes. Besides, it’s nothing like what you and Mom had; she was your queen.” He pauses briefly, then. “How is Mom? I bet you took heaven by storm. You two are living the high life up there, I bet. So don’t you worry about ole Hap, he will never get caught. By the way, I go by Harold now. Friends call me Harry. My father-in-law thought that Happy wasn’t an appropriate name for a merchandise manager.” He darts up. “How about that, Pop, I made it just like I always said I would.” Falling back down in his chair, Happy yells, “Why didn’t you

ever like baseball?” He is now crying real tears. “I was all -city third baseman and you never came to one of my games . . .”

Danny is interrupted by a teary-eyed director yelling, “Cut!” Danny, not realizing how moved the entire room is, dejected and feeling he has blown his one big chance, slumps back into the chair. He was thinking that he was cut off halfway through his scene because they weren’t buying it. The next thing that Michelson said totally floored Danny.

“Danny, it’s not often you get to see a real actor who knows his craft deliver such a rich and powerful piece , and to think you also wrote it. I can only say that I wish I had the pleasure of watching your performance of Happy. If your monologue is any indication of the various levels you played, it must have been something to see.”

Suddenly, he breaks into applause that is naturally followed by everyone in the room. “I wish we had more time to see it in its entirety, but we have to move on.” Danny has come down to earth again and stands, takes off the shirt and hands it to its owner, and, pausing to put on his vest, he thanks the room for giving him the opportunity. Michelson is not paying attention because he is too busy talking to his AD and snapping his fingers. “Where’s the sides for Marcus? You’re not going anywhere just yet. After seeing that, I’m convinced that you can play one of the most pivotal parts in the entire film. You see, the film takes place in the future, the year is 2000. We are dealing with modern-day gladiators on motorcycles. Marcus is the loudmouth second-in-command who, when all is on the line, turns out to be a coward. This is a very important major role, but I think you can handle it.” As he hands Danny two pages of the script, he interjects, “It says here on your résumé that you can ride a bike. That’s no bullshit, is it, because we don’t have time to teach anyone?”

Now beaming with pride and confidence, Danny replies, “Yes, sir, I practically lived on one for four years.” With a director’s wave, Michelson says, “That’s great. Now, what I want you to do is go out and take some time to get to know Marcus. No rush now. When you’re ready, come back in and read those pages.” Danny turns and

walks out as if being carried by wings. At this point, most people would be thinking of thanking Jesus. Danny couldn't help but put him second this time. His first thank-you was to Ronnie.

For sure, due to his current status, Danny has and continues to put Jesus, or God, or his Creator, in all of his thoughts. There is no doubt that a person facing an uncertain future will most certainly be praying to someone. As Danny looked around at his stark reality, a chill ran through him like the jolt one gets from the surprise attack in a good, scary movie. Danny had the kind of look that always attracted the assholes looking to prove their manhood. Although he was just under six feet tall, his broad shoulders and muscular build made him always seem bigger. That was an excellent quality to have on stage and in film, but not so much in bars or other places where Neanderthals gathered. He again fights back the urge to cry as he gazes around at all the cavemen he is surrounded by. So, Danny once again turns his head to stare out the window, as the world he no longer is a part of goes whizzing by, and he can get back to one of the greatest days in his life.

Danny floated out of the audition room, grasping the two pieces of the actual script, and immediately saw a couple of dozen biker-type actors sitting anxiously waiting for their name to be called. It didn't take long before the mousey gatekeeper called out another name. "Skip Henderson... Henderson, as a huge guy covered in tattoos, walks to her. "You're next, good luck... Danny, Hun... just let me know when you're ready... and take your time, as you can see we've got all day."

Danny walked outside, and it was pretty apparent that he had been in that room for quite a while. The line was half as long, and now the area had the look of a Hell's Angels conference, as most of the actors were now just hanging around. Armed with unbelievable confidence and the precious sides, Danny walked far from the gang and found a quiet little park bench to ponder his character. He was not apprehensive at all. Now they were in his wheelhouse. Danny hadn't always been good at cold readings, but he was now. It took a

lot of hard work and a tip from a college professor, but he had become an impressive cold reader. His teacher suggested a visual workout for reading anything with only a few minutes to prepare. This was any actor's nightmare, being the right type but unable to make the character come to life because you're fumbling with the words. Just like working one's muscles, this exercise had to be practiced on a regular basis. You simply get used to picking up any written page, and by a quick glance down, you can memorize several lines on that page. As with anything worth doing, you must be diligent and consistent with your workouts.

At first, you will find that you will only be able to pick out and digest a few words, but after some time, your mind will allow you to memorize one or two or more lines at a glance. This gives the actor the ability to not worry about the words and target the meaning of them, thus making your character come alive right in front of your auditioners.

After an hour or so, Danny felt sure enough of his studying to go make his bones. He had to be able to show a distinct difference between Marcus the braggart on one hand and Marcus the true coward on the other hand. He had never been given two separate pages to read before, but due to his extensive training, he was ready. He was riding high when he told the gatekeeper he had returned. She acknowledged him and said he would be next. After what seemed like an eternity, the doors opened, and a guy who was sort of Danny's type walked by him as he entered and closed the door behind him. Instead of getting apprehensive, Danny smiled and thought, Bring it on.

As the assistant to the AD read along with Danny, it was apparent to all present that they were watching a true artist use words and emotions to create a canvas of believability. His Marcus had just the right flare of braggadocio that was both cutting and flamboyant. When he read the side that revealed his cowardice, it was done with the kind of layers he had captured earlier in his monologue, the whole

time being able to look up from the pages for a major part of the reading without missing a beat.

The buzz started immediately after he concluded his reading. Danny knew that he had nailed it. Like the ballplayer who hears the crack of the bat, he knows he has hit a home run. Whatever happened at that point is out of his hands, but for now, at this very moment, he knew he could make it in Hollywood. It seemed that the director felt the same way. “Danny, that was great, just what we’re looking for. I don’t even have to check with the rest of the staff; I’m certain we all agree with my decision. We don’t need a callback. We think you’re the perfect fit for Marcus.” He is interrupted by the assistant to the AD, who begins whispering back and forth. “Danny, it seems we have a small problem.”

Danny’s legs almost gave out from under him as the word problem penetrated his mind. “They know I’m a fraud,” Danny guessed. That damn SAG card. They have figured that his one credit on film was a role that he had taken for free, with the promise of the elusive Screen Actors Guild qualification.

“It seems,” Michelson continued, “your résumé doesn’t seem to list your agent.”

Well, it seemed that Danny’s horror was a bit misplaced. But he didn’t have an agent. He had been on several interviews since getting his SAG card, but they all had the same spiel. When he got more credits, they would be happy to represent such a future star. Danny had to think fast. He knew without proper representation, his house of fraudulent cards would come crashing down all around him. The one that came instantly to mind was the Goldstein Agency. Harold Goldstein was not an A-list agent like William Morris or ICM, but he was well-known. Danny remembered how impressed he was as he entered this massive office, larger than any stage he had ever been on. It was the stereotypical Hollywood setting. There, sitting behind an oversized antique desk, sat a little Jewish guy smoking a cigar as big as his arm, and being waited on by a voluptuous secretary. As Danny

gets fully engrossed in his thoughts, he is once more brought to the present dilemma by the sound of Michelson's voice.

"You do have an agent, don't you?" Danny doesn't skip a beat! "I just signed with Harry Goldstein."

Turning his attention back to the people at the table, Michelson inquires. "Do we have Goldie's number?" The guy who had lent Danny his shirt yelled out, "I'll get right on that, boss." Michelson then turned his attention back to Danny. "You can't forget these important details in the future, son. If Ronnie didn't recommend you, your headshot may have been tossed. Now we'll call Goldie tomorrow, but you'll have to be patient for a couple of months before we send out the contract." He lets out a chuckle as he continues, "Remember, not all the auditions are going to go this smoothly, and this is a big cast, so bear with us. But as far as I'm concerned, you got the part, and we'll see you in a couple of months." Danny lunges forward, shakes his hand, acknowledges the rest of the team, and darts out of the room.

As with most Hollywood stories, Danny never got the opportunity to play Marcus. He did, however, get an important and ecential agent out of the deal. Danny's hunch had paid off. He figured that no agent in his right mind would turn down the kind of money that one of the principals in a film would demand, just on a minor technicality. After receiving the call and hearing the rave reviews, Goldie had no choice but to call Danny in and sign him on the spot. He congratulated Danny on his ingenuity and began getting him to work right away. They weren't major, but they were paid union jobs. He landed a few local buyout commercials and one shot for the Japanese market. Theatrically, he got a few lines here and there. He was also starting to go up for East Coast thugs.

After a few months had passed, Danny, still waiting for the go-ahead in what could become his breakout role, asked Goldstein to call Michelson.

As if to toss it to the side, Harry answered him. "I'm sorry, kid, didn't I tell you what happened?" Danny was numb. "No, Goldie,

you didn't tell me." Goldie rebukes Danny as if he were scolding a child. "Only certain people get to call me Goldie, kid, and you ain't one of them. When you're a star, we'll discuss it again. Now this is what happened to your movie."

Danny listened to his agent nonchalantly crush all his dreams as if he were reading a scandal from the pages of the Hollywood Reporter. It seems that after his star-making performance in *Bound for Glory*, David Carradine decided he was too big to play a futuristic motorcycle-wheeling gladiator. He was sued and ended up playing the part for more money, naturally. In the meantime, Strutzenberg had sold all the rights to *Death Race 2000* to a producer who turned it into a tits-and-ass movie that has become a semi cult hit.

The gladiator team was mainly topless, and there wasn't a character named Marcus in the entire film. After breaking his heart, Goldstein offhandedly mentioned that he had an audition for a recurring role on a soap tomorrow. And the rest, as they say, is history. Danny got the soap and works about three or four times a month.

He also has played minor roles as thugs in all the well-known cop shows and hasn't yet landed a national commercial, but he's getting close. With Ronnie's help, he has also appeared in many Equity Waiver productions.



Danny is once again jolted back to reality as he examines the hopelessness of his future. He would give anything to be scrubbing toilets and struggling again. He had come so far, and now it was all laid to waste. In the years after signing with Goldstein, he had started to make a decent living. He was able to quit all the manual labor work he deemed survivor jobs and concentrate on developing his craft and advancing his career. Danny never really cared for success. He always wanted to be respected by his peers and work as close to full-time as any actor ever does. He knew he was not there yet, but he was well on his way.

he is nowhere near his physical type. "This is Mark. Mark, this is the next big star in this town, my buddy, Danny." As the two men shake hands, Danny makes an inquiry, "So has Ronnie picked out what play she plans to feature you in?"

Before Mark has a chance to chime in, Ronnie responds, "Actually, he's a playwright, Danny. Maybe he can write you a hit."

Mark finally has a chance to speak. "My play is about a high school champion chess club, and somehow I don't see you as a teacher."

Danny, sensing a familiar but unjustified rivalry, cracks back. "Oh, I don't know, you should see me in my glasses." Ronnie jumps in to try to lower the temperature. "Great show, Hun... we must be going though."

This time, as she departs, Ronnie gives Danny the old foreign two-cheek fake departure kiss. As they get lost in the crowd, Danny spots his co-star, a beauty named Monica Fielding, and gives her a warm hug. "Great job, Monica." Pulling away quickly, she starts to brush by him and throws him a bone. "You too, Danny." Paul Newman worked with his lifelong love, Joanne Woodward, and married her shortly after the filming of *A Long Hot Summer*. As Monica disappeared into the crowd that came to see her, Danny thought about Paul and Joanne's lasting love. There was no way that was going to happen here. Besides being a total prima donna, she was already married to some fat cat stockbroker.

Danny makes his way back to his makeup table. Any indication that he was not yet a star was evident in the fact that he did not have his own dressing room and was sharing a long table filled with everyone's scattered makeup. As he started applying cold cream to remove his face, a captivating natural blonde, whom he had just recently met, embraced him from behind. "Oh, Danny, you were wonderful. You said you were an actor, but I had no idea you could act." Danny grabs her arms that are wrapped around him, causing her bountiful breasts to compress a little in his back. "Thanks a lot," he says with a playful laugh. "You know what I mean. In this town,

everyone's an actor." She turns him around and plants a long, sensuous kiss on his lips. Danny stands up, wipes the cold cream off her face, and they both proceed to laugh.

"I know what you mean. When I was a waiter, I used to..." Danny stops his thought because a more critical matter has just made his presence known. "Harry," Danny yells as his agent meanders toward them.

Harry was never in a hurry, except when it came to ripping open his commission check envelopes. Danny gives Holly's arms a loving squeeze to send her on her way. "Listen, babe, I'll meet you outside in a couple of minutes. I need to talk to my agent and finish up here." "Okay, star."

She goes to kiss Danny again, but seeing his face still had residual cold cream, she declines. Harry looks like a lost puppy as Holly gently brushes against him and exits. "You were great, kid," Harry says with all the gusto of a college proctor. Danny doesn't even acknowledge his halfhearted compliment and starts looking over the heads of the crowd.

"So, were they out there?" Harry is deadpan. "There were a lot of people out there, kid." Danny is like a child begging to know what gift their father is hiding behind their back. "You know, the people from the soap."

Giving in, Harry smiles. "Yeah, they said something about expanding your character, but I'll believe it when I see a contract." Danny is now showing his frustration physically. "Expanding?"

What the hell does that mean? As it is, I only get three days a month. What are they going to expand it to... five?"

Harry, forever the pragmatist, says, "I don't know, kid. They're interested, that's enough. In the meantime, I got you a reading for a commercial on Monday."

Danny is quick to respond, "Ah, Harry, I told you no more commercials, I want to do serious and meaningful roles."

Harry scolds back, "Listen, you little shit. You'll do what I say... or don't you like living at the beach and driving that sporty car? It's work! And work is money. Or maybe you prefer going back to schlepping tables like you were when I signed you? " Danny stands his ground. "We're not all in it for the money. There's such a thing as art, you know." "That's the trouble with actors," Harry chides back, "they have no brains. I've got half a dozen clients who would die to be in your shoes. You want to be in the shadow of someone else. And then I got one has-been, who was in the top three years ago, but now can't even get arrested. Take what you can get, kid." "I just don't want to be typed." Danny defends his position.

"How can you be typecast?" Harry is physically disturbed, and his voice actually increases in volume. "You're a talented nobody with a few credits. This is national exposure, and it's a sure thing."

Perking up, Danny grabs Harry's arms and gives him a little shake. "A national, why didn't you say so in the first place?" Harry steps back, regains his composure, and hands Danny the directions. "A group I've worked with in the past is doing an aftershave. They saw your local beer spot, thank your manly or some such crap."

As Danny looks over the paper, Harry continues, "Don't be late. In fact, go early in case there is a side to look over... and dress manly." Danny secures the directions in his wallet and gives one last plea, "Okay. But you'll work on the soap people, right?"

"Sure, kid." Harry, for a brief moment, seems almost father-like, tapping Danny's cheek. But then his real colors begin to show themselves, as he starts his exit. "Just make sure at the party tonight you introduce me to that lovely woman who just left."

Danny shook his head as if it were something that he had heard before, then snapped, "You bastard."



A small smile forms before Danny hears the rattling of the bus and realizes where he is again. He looks around to make sure none of

his fellow inmates have caught him in his moment of weakness, but, seeing all the men basically staring out their windows, Danny closes his eyes again and starts to reminisce.



There are those in the business who think of the majority of agents as nothing more than talent pimps. They send out your headshot in hopes that their client is what the director-johns are looking for. So, they don't get overwhelmed with a deluge of pictures; they enlist the help of a casting director. Their job is to weed out the talent that definitely doesn't meet John's expectations. There are very powerful casting giants that can make an actor's career; however, most of them are nothing more than glorified headshot-sorting secretaries. They have been told what the director is looking for in most cases, and to the detriment of the actor, many of them don't have the imagination to vary from the template. Examples of this are the color of hair and eyes, weight, height, and even the presence or absence of facial hair. You would be surprised how many actors who are perfect for a specific role never get the chance because their hair color is wrong, and this secretary can't envision the person in any other way than the headshot reveals.

Danny arrived at his commercial audition on Monday about 20 minutes before his scheduled time. He went directly to the model-like brunette who was in the middle of signing in a big hulk of a man in a plaid shirt. As Danny looked around, he noticed that all the other actors mulling around were also in flannel and plaid. Another thing he saw, which brought that old familiar knot in his stomach, was that they were all over six feet tall. Something was beginning to look very familiar to him. This had happened to Danny on numerous occasions, and even when people had actually met him in person. After observing him either from the audience, seeing his tape, or even looking over his pictures, many would comment on how he looked much bigger on stage or on film. But Harry said that this was a sure thing, so these guys must be here for another part. When it was Danny's turn to give his headshot and résumé to the dark-haired