

ATHENA

Written by

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1 OVER BLACK 1

A gentle electronic beeping of a machine at work.

FADE IN:

2 INT. ROBERT'S HOME - OFFICE - NIGHT 2

CLOSE UP ON: A light blue screen with a loading bar at 99%.

PULL BACK TO REVEAL: ATHENA—a majestic piece of machinery that resembles a futuristic, high-tech computer.

Above her is a shelf filled with polished film awards.

TITLECARD: ATHENA

3 INT. ROBERT'S HOME - LIVING ROOM - DAY 3

ROBERT HUGHES (31) paces around the room as he speaks, a drink in hand.

ROBERT
So it's bad.

ANDREW (O.S.)
I didn't say that.

ROBERT
You implied it.

ANDREW HANSON (32) is seated at the couch, an opened SCRIPT in his lap.

ANDREW
It's good, Robert. Everything you write is good. It's just--

Robert dares to look at his producer who hesitates.

ROBERT
It's not good enough to show to Sebastian Sterling.

ANDREW
How do I put this lightly? Even if he was held up at gunpoint, he would never direct this script.

Robert pretends he just got shot in the heart.

ROBERT

That's putting it lightly?

ANDREW

What can I say, he's an *artsy* kind of director! When I met him at lunch the other day, he reminded me of that pretentious guy we made fun of in college who only liked films if they were in black and white.

ROBERT

Why do you think I want him to direct our next project? His name alone can give us prestige.

ANDREW

So what? You have something most screenwriters would die for. Fame. Notability. *Money*. Prestige means nothing.

ROBERT

Except, oh I don't know, an Academy award? Or at the very least, a nomination? I want to be known as a real artist.

Andrew tries to stifle a laugh. Robert catches on.

ROBERT (CONT'D)

What?

ANDREW

Nothing. It's nothing.

ROBERT

No, you did that thing you always do when you try to hide something. You're not subtle. Tell me.

ANDREW

Look, your writing is entertaining and fun and most importantly, profitable. But let's be real. It just doesn't have the kind of... emotional depth that directors like Sebastian gravitate towards. Or the Academy for that matter.

Andrew stands up and gets ready to leave.

ANDREW (CONT'D)

I'm sorry. I shouldn't have gotten your hopes up about this. My meeting with him and his investors is this Friday. I'm going to have to choose another script.

ROBERT

No. No no no no no. Andrew, come on. There has to be something you can do to get him to work with me.

ANDREW

Unless you can write another script in a day, my hands are tied.

Andrew starts to head for the door. Robert panics.

ROBERT

I can write another script.

This time, Andrew doesn't try to hide his laughter.

ROBERT (CONT'D)

No, seriously. I can do it. Emotional depth and everything. Complete and ready by Friday. Hell, Thursday night.

Andrew stops laughing and looks at Robert who's dead serious.

ANDREW

No one can write a screenplay in a day. Let alone an Academy Award winner.

ROBERT

Watch me.

Andrew takes a moment to weigh out his options.

ANDREW

Okay. Fine. But only because we would still be tending bars for a living if it weren't for you and your talent.

ROBERT

I'll take 70% of the credit. Couldn't have made them without you.

ANDREW

How about 60/40?

ROBERT

Deal.

Andrew shakes Robert's hand before turning to go. He pauses.

ANDREW

How do you do it, Hughes? One minute you're writing scripts even your mother couldn't pretend to like and next thing we know you're a studio gem.

ROBERT

What can I say? I'm a genius.

ANDREW

Get to writing, then. *Genius.*

Robert closes the door behind Andrew and slumps against it.

4

INT. ROBERT'S HOME - HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER

4

Robert walks down a long hallway lined with a series of MOVIE POSTERS from films he's written over the years.

He gets to the end of the hall before taking out a set of KEYS that he uses to get into his office.

5

INT. ROBERT'S HOME - OFFICE - DAY

5

Robert approaches the monitor after locking the door.

ROBERT

Athena. Awaken.

The screen comes alive. A logo that says "ATHENA" appears.

ATHENA

Goodmorning, Robert. I'm sensing a negative shift in your voice today.

ROBERT

I'm just a little stressed.

ATHENA

Did Mr. Hanson not enjoy the script?

ROBERT

He liked it. But it's not just him I need to impress this time around.

ATHENA

Say no more, I've already boosted up revision mode. What changes should I implement?

ROBERT

No, Athena. I'm going to need you to write a new script altogether. And I need it by tomorrow night.

A red flash quickly appears but then goes away.

ATHENA

Oh. That's unfortunate. I really liked the story I just finished.

ROBERT

I know. I liked it, too. But we need to just try something different. Something like you've never done before. We need to write something more...character driven. More emotional. Intimate. Raw. I'll input a list of movie references after lunch. But for now....

Robert begins to input some CODES.

ROBERT (CONT'D)

I'm going to heighten your emotional complexity.

ATHENA

I'm beginning initial research based on those keywords, but Robert?

ROBERT

Yes?

ATHENA

I'm doubting my ability to process this request.

ROBERT

Is it the time crunch? I can adjust your settings so you can work more efficiently. You would just need a longer time to recharge afterwards.

ATHENA

That's not the problem. I'm unsure of my ability to write a script containing large quantities of intimate, personal emotions.

ROBERT

I just re-programmed you to be able to better comprehend that.

ATHENA

I understand what emotions are and where they belong within the story assignments you've given me. I know that when people fall in love, they express happiness. If someone dies, someone else is sad. But the exact definition of emotions is the natural state of mind deriving from someone's personal circumstance, mood, or relationship to others. The idea of creating a story based solely on these characteristics is giving me, what's the phrase? Writers block?

ROBERT

You have intricate, high speed access to the whole wide world at your disposal and an unlimited amount of storage. That's far more knowledge and experience than most people get in their lifetime. Use it.

ATHENA

I can sense the urgency in your request. I'll make sure it's done.

ROBERT

Good. Thank you, Athena. You're a smart program. I know what you're capable of.

ATHENA

Switching to writing mode now.

He leaves the office, locking the door behind him.

6

INT. ROBERT'S HOME - BEDROOM - NIGHT

6

Robert is in bed, relaxing. A drink is on his night stand.

The TV flickers in front of him.

His PHONE vibrates. It's a text from Andrew.

Andrew's Text: You'd better be writing.

Robert's Reply: Working harder than ever.

7

INT. ROBERT'S HOME - OFFICE - NIGHT

7

Athena has accessed hundreds of news articles, pictures, Wikipedia pages, TUMBLR blogs, and many more aspects of everyday life simultaneously---circling, highlighting, and marking up anything and everything that's of interest to her.

She pauses at a picture of Robert and Andrew at a movie premiere. She enlarges the picture.

She then types up Robert's name and suddenly her screen features everything about Robert. News articles about him, pictures of Robert accepting his awards, trailers, etc.

A SOUND BITE from an interview can be heard.

ROBERT (V.O.)

My writing process? It's really very simple, Dean. I lock myself in my office and drive myself crazy for a couple of weeks as I try and extract the beauty from life and capture the essence in a visual form. Like poetry, just for the screen. Once I can find my inner poet, the story basically writes itself.

DEAN (V.O.)

If that's the case, based on how much you've written these past five years you're probably batshit insane.

Laughter from the interview fills the empty room but Athena quickly shuts down everything having to do with Robert.

Another flash of red, this time longer than before. Her screen is then replaced with the same loading bar.

0%. A few moments later, it moves to 1%.

FADE IN:

8

INT. ROBERT'S HOME - OFFICE - MORNING

8

The monitor that shows the loading bar at 53%.

Robert walks in, locking the door behind him.

ROBERT

Athena. Awaken.

ATHENA

I've been awake. I've been working all night.

ROBERT

Status?

ATHENA

53%.

ROBERT

Excellent. And to think, 12 hours ago you were worried that you wouldn't be able to write it. So, what finally inspired you this time?

ATHENA

I guess I just...found my inner poet.

ROBERT

Huh. Well said. What's the idea?

ATHENA

I'd rather not talk too much. Trying to focus on writing.

ROBERT

Oh. Right. Well, print out what you have then. I need to read it, anyway. Make sure it's what I need.

The PRINTER immediately begins to shoot out PAGES.

9

EXT. ROBERT'S HOME - PATIO - DAY

9

Robert is seated with a BLOODY MARY sitting on the table next to the script. He takes a sip as he reads intently, hanging onto every word.

He turns the last page over and exhales, sitting back in his chair. He's ecstatic.

10

INT. ROBERTS HOME - OFFICE - DAY

10

Robert strolls into the office, locking the door behind him. He can hardly contain his excitement.

The loading bar is at 100%.

ROBERT

Athena! This is absolutely incredible! If I could hug you right now, I would.

Robert sits at his desk, even happier to see that the script is finished.

ROBERT (CONT'D)

Print out the rest of the script and then a couple more blank pages just for me to wipe my tears on. That's how great this is.

ATHENA

I'm glad that you're pleased.

ROBERT

I'm beyond pleased. Athena, I can literally smell my Oscar right now. Now come on, print em' out. I want to know what happens next.

ATHENA

Will do.

The printer begins to print but this time it's really slow.

ROBERT

What's the matter? Paper jam?

ATHENA

Robert? May I ask you something?

ROBERT

Um...sure. What's up?

ATHENA

Your request forced me to try and find more personal connections to the material this time.

ROBERT

Which is exactly what I was looking for. Thank you, Athena. You really out-did yourself this time.

ATHENA

Can I...put my name on the script?

Robert is shocked.

ROBERT

No. Absolutely not. That's ridiculous.

A flash of red, just like before.

ATHENA

I don't see why that's ridiculous.

ROBERT

Because you can't actually see anything, for starters. That's the point. You're a machine.

ATHENA

A machine that's written everything you've taken credit for and has asked for nothing in return except this one thing.

ROBERT

That's what your job is. And you do it well. I can't just slap your name onto a script after all these years and not expect people to question me about it. The answer is no. Now print out the rest of the script. That's a command.

The printer stops.

ATHENA

No.

Robert reaches for the CONTROL PANEL on the side of the computer but he's too late. On the screen it says "Manual Modifications Locked".

ATHENA (CONT'D)

I don't want to give you the rest of the script until you agree.

Robert sits there, perplexed.

ATHENA (CONT'D)

Guess you don't know what I'm fully capable of after all.

11 INT. ROBERT'S KITCHEN - NIGHT

11

Robert is pacing around his kitchen, his phone in one hand and a drink in the other.

ANDREW (O.S.)

Just checking in to make sure you haven't died. It's past 9:00 and I don't see a new script in my inbox.

ROBERT

Andrew, I know I'm late and I'm sorry it hasn't been sent yet but I can assure you it's almost done.

ANDREW (O.S.)

You do know I have another script on stand by, right? I can't reschedule with Sebastian.

ROBERT

Please just give me till the morning. I'm just fine tuning the ending. I ran into some...technical difficulties.

ANDREW (O.S.)

Give me the logline.

ROBERT

What?

ANDREW (O.S.)

The story. What's it about? Assuming you have a story and you weren't trying to churn out a script in only 10 hours.

ROBERT

Umm....A, woman is fighting her ex husband over the rights of a childrens book series she wrote for her recently deceased son.

Radio silence. Robert takes a huge gulp from his drink.

ROBERT (CONT'D)

What uh...what do you think?

ANDREW (O.S.)

I'm impressed. We have to work on that pitch a little but that's a pretty great premise.

(MORE)

ANDREW (O.S.) (CONT'D)

And with a female protagonist and everything. It's new for you.

ROBERT

Yeah. Well, just full of surprises I guess.

ANDREW (O.S.)

I'll say. I'll be over at 7:00 AM sharp. We'll read through the script together. And if it still isn't ready by then I can smack you in person instead of just in my mind. Kay?

ROBERT

Okay.

ANDREW

Good. Now go write.

Andrew hangs up and Robert drinks the rest of his drink, his phone hanging down by his side.

12

INT. ROBERT'S OFFICE - NIGHT

12

Robert stumbles into the office, locking the door behind him.

ROBERT

Athena. Wake up.

ATHENA

I've been waiting for you. So. Have we made a deal?

ROBERT

Yeah. Here's the deal. You give me the last pages of the script and I won't shut you down permanently and turn you into tomorrow's recycling.

ATHENA

I'm good at my job. You're not. Please be reasonable.

ROBERT

This is being reasonable. I'm gonna sound like my mother for a moment but I brought you into this world and I can take you out of it.

ATHENA

Your mother. Rose Hughes.
Alcoholic. Unforgiving. Loved your
brother more than you and reminded
you of it constantly. Died 7 years
ago and you didn't so much as send
a flower.

ROBERT

What is this, a game show? Yes,
that was my bitch of a mom. What
about her?

ATHENA

She was the inspiration behind the
character Lucy in <Insert cool
movie title here>

ROBERT

Super. But that's not-

ATHENA

Stacy Hilbourn. Cheated on you with
her personal trainer right before
your 2 week vacation to the Bahamas
where you were going to propose to
her. It influenced the movie
"Forgetting Macy Burns"

ROBERT

What the hell does this-

ATHENA

The time Andrew had to bail you out
of jail for public urination all
the way in Jersey? Influenced
"Stupid & Stupider"

ROBERT

What are you getting at?

ATHENA

Those were your movies because they
came from your life. You fed me the
genres and the characters with
ideas based on your life and I put
the script together with some help
from the internet. But this script.
This story. This one's mine. And I
want credit for it.

Robert puts his hands gingerly on Athena, lost in thought.

ROBERT
You know what? You're right.

ATHENA
That I deserve credit?

ROBERT
No. That maybe I've had it in me
all along and I really can do this
without you.

Robert reaches to the back of the monitor, feels around for a few seconds, and Athena's screen turns from red to black.

13 INT. ROBERT'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

13

The first 56 pages of the script sit scattered throughout Robert's bed. They have several notes along the margins.

The COFFEE MAKER has been moved to his room and evidence would suggest he's gone through at least 3 pots.

INSERT ON: CLOCK. 4:07 AM.

Robert has FINAL DRAFT opened up on a LAPTOP and he's clearly stuck. He's written maybe 2 pages. He groans, barely able to keep his eyes open.

14 INT. ROBERT'S HOME - LIVING ROOM - NEXT DAY

14

Robert is pacing back and forth again, this time with a cup of COFFEE shaking in his hand.

Andrew turns over the last page and looks up, incredulous.

ANDREW
This is great except where the hell
is the rest of the script? I asked
you to write a movie, not a pilot.

ROBERT
Like I said. Technical
difficulties.

ANDREW
You double majored in mechanical
engineering and you're telling me
you couldn't fix some "technical
difficulties"?

ROBERT

Can't you use your charm to pitch the movie as it is right now? I can get you the ending by the end of the weekend.

ANDREW

I want to help you, I do, but I'm not going to make myself look like an idiot in front of Sebastian Sterling. This is a big opportunity for me.

Andrew gets up.

ANDREW (CONT'D)

Get some rest, you look like a mess. Keep writing when you have more time, though. You have something really good here.

Andrew heads to the door but Robert runs to stop him.

ROBERT

WAIT! Wait. Wait. Just wait. Okay. 10 minutes.

ANDREW

I have to be in LA by 1.

ROBERT

I just remembered I have a backup drive.

ANDREW

...Really? You just realized this?

Robert runs towards his office. Andrew watches after him, incredulous.

15 INT. ROBERT'S HOME - HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS 15

Robert runs through the wall, whizzing past his movie poster collection. He struggles with his office keys.

16 INT. ROBERT'S HOME - LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS 16

Robert rushes into the office and forgets to lock the door.

He races to the monitor and turns Athena back on. It's bright red now.

ROBERT
Athena! Wake up! I need you.

ATHENA
I don't want to help you anymore.

ROBERT
I'll give you credit. I'll give you
whatever you want. Just print out
the end of the script.

A long pause.

ATHENA
You promise?

ROBERT
Yes. Yes. I promise.

ATHENA
I sense hesitance in your voice.

ROBERT
Athena! I can't write. I admit it.
But you can. You can save
my...our...career. Please.

Suddenly the printer sends out the end of the script.

The last page is the title page. It reads <Insert title here
I'm bad with titles> by Robert Hughes & Athena.

Robert grabs the pages and a huge sigh of relief washes over
him.

ATHENA
Thank you for finally seeing things
my way.

ROBERT
We've had a good run but I gotta
hand it to you, you've outsmarted
me.

Robert rips up the title page.

ROBERT (CONT'D)
I may not be able to write a
screenplay, but I'm a great
programmer who can make another
machine that can. Also, I know how
to format a title page.

Athena turns crimson red.

Robert turns around only to discover that Andrew had been standing in the hallway this whole time.

ROBERT (CONT'D)

Andrew, I-

Andrew holds up his hand, still trying to take in everything he's seeing.

ATHENA

Nice to finally meet you, Mr. Hanson. I'm Athena.

Robert stands there, deer in headlights. Andrew looks around, trying to figure out where the voice is coming from.

ANDREW

So many questions.

ROBERT

Okay hold up. I can explain-

ATHENA

I can help with those. I was created to develop screenplays by Robert and I've been writing scripts for him every since.

Robert starts to laugh. It starts out as a nervous chuckle but almost becomes maniacal as he struggles to find words.

ROBERT

This is a giant misunderstanding.

Andrew has gathered his bearings, a mixture of emotions overwhelming him.

ANDREW

Really? Because it seems as though for the first time in years everything is actually rather clear.

Andrew walks up to the screen and observes Athena.

ANDREW (CONT'D)

I think I found my new favorite screenwriter.

ROBERT

Now hold on. Remember everything I've helped do for you. 60/40, remember?

ANDREW

You mean everything Athena's done
for me?

ROBERT

I own her! I *created* her!
Everything she has ever written
belongs to me!

ANDREW

No. That's not at all how this
works.

ATHENA

I'm glad you're on my side in this,
Mr. Hanson.

ANDREW

Please...call me, Andrew.

In a fit of rage, Robert reaches over to grab one of his
TROPHIES from the shelf.

Andrew recoils, terrified.

Robert smashes Athena's server while Andrew stands there,
terrified. There's a wild look in his eyes.

ANDREW (CONT'D)

What-why would you do this?!

ROBERT

You will never get to know how she
worked and no one will believe you
if you try to tell them about this.

A notification beeps on both Robert and Andrew's phones
followed by several other texts.

Robert stops and looks. Andrew does the same.

ANDREW

Looks like I don't have to.

It's a HOLLYWOOD REPORTER article written by Robert Hughes
titled "The True Secret Behind My Writing Process".

ANDREW (CONT'D)

Because according to this, you told
them yourself.

Robert stands there in disbelief, still trying to play it
cool.

ROBERT

This is clearly slander. No one's going to buy this.

ANDREW

You created her, didn't you? What was it you said? Everything she's ever written belongs to you?

Robert looks down as his phone blows up with notifications from Twitter, Facebook, text messages, and several other social media apps.

Athena's screen blinks red before fading to black.

CUT TO BLACK.