

**THE
CHRISTIAN
ZOMBIE
MOVIE**

THE SCRIPT

The Christian Zombie Movie

by

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"And a beacon of light shone before them and wrote upon the walls a message which all the people beheld and understood to be the handwrit of the Lord."

Hezekiah 3:16

FADE IN:

EXT. AFRICAN MAASAI VILLAGE - NIGHT

AFRICAN NATIVES run amok. Terrified. In their midst are two odd things. The first is RAYMONE a loud New Yorker with a MiniDV camera and tripod. He yells frantically at his PA's:

RAYMONE

Grab that audio kit, Amelie, move, move! Let's go! Leave the dolly track, Zachary, grab the dailies and run! Leave the dolly track!

Loaded down, they scurry to a nearby wooden shanty. On their heels plods the second odd thing about this village... a real live AFRICAN ZOMBIE! The RATTLING CHAINS around its wrists are a persistent reminder of its every harrowing move.

INT. AFRICA MAASAI VILLAGE - SHANTY - SAME TIME

Raymone, Zachary and Amelie drop their gear and immediately barricade the door. Amelie wedges the audio boom pole across the frame as Raymone and Zach slide an old dresser in front.

Then they huddle on the floor, backs to the dresser.

ZACHARY

Where's Jeremiah?

AMELIE

Who's Jeremiah?!

RAYMONE

Why, Jeremiah, why?!

Raymone makes the sign of the cross at their loss. They sit closer together, breathing hard, listening. The screaming villagers fade into the night. It's quiet. Too quiet.

RAYMONE (CONT'D)

I...I think it's gone.

BAM! A fist POUNDS on the door from the outside, rattling it on its hinges. The three SCREAM. Something outside MOANS a spine-chilling, throat-gargling moan.

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON (V.O.)

Do you remember the exact spot you were when you first heard God's call on your life? I sure do.

One thing is certain: Raymone and Zachary and Amelie are not having fun anymore. Their SCREAMS fade as OMINOUS PULPY ORGAN MUSIC SWELLS and we...

SMASH CUT TO:

INSERT TITLE: "THE CHRISTIAN ZOMBIE MOVIE"

EXT. MEGACHURCH USA - SUNDAY MORNING

Ominous ORGAN RIFF resolves into a traditional church HYMN. Outside, it's like an Urban Outfitters meets Burning Man.

CHURCH GOERS in skinny jeans and beanies and expensive kicks enter the modern warehouse.

TITLE: "6 Weeks Earlier"

INT. MEGACHURCH USA - CHILDREN'S MINISTRY - SAME TIME

Children's ministry. It's a war zone. With detached resolve, S. MICHAEL ACKERSON, 30s, walks through a sea of kids. Crying kids, fighting kids, pretty kids, ugly kids.

He makes his way through the door as an APOLOGETIC MOM hands a SNOTTY SCREAMING toddler across to a MINISTRY VOLUNTEER.

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON (V.O.)

Ah, children's ministry. They say there's nothing like a good day in the nursery. And this was nothing like a good day in the nursery.

Someone hands him an apron and he fastens it on with practiced ease. Across the room he sees some brace-faced TEEN GIRLS changing a diaper. Michael tosses them a towel.

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON

You're gonna need this.

They both look confused until the BABY BOY erupts like a WHALE SPOUT. The two teens are SQUEALING and dodging baby pee as they struggle to get things under wraps.

Michael shakes his head.

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON (V.O.)

Amateurs. Sigh. Anyway, this is where it happened.

(MORE)

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON (V.O.) (CONT'D)

This is my church, the First Church
of the Most Highly Anointed,
Incorporated. T-M.

INT. MEGACHURCH USA - AUDITORIUM - MORNING

A DECENT CROWD attends the Most Highly Anointed service.
Lights are low except the neon shapes along the wall;
accented by fog machines, laser lights and a PULSING BEAT.

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON (V.O.)

It was one of those hipster non-
denom churches with a coffee bar in
the lobby and a worship service
that felt like a 90s rave--

A HIPSTER PRAISE LEADER with a beanie talks through the alt-
rock worship song bridge as an elaborate multimedia
presentation popcorns on the wall-screens behind them.

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON (V.O.)

--Or a TedTALK.

(re: Rebecca)

And check the Proverbs 31 hottie
with the body. Relax, that's my
wife, Rebecca. My lobster. She's
got my whole heart. And if my Grand
Canyon University theology is
correct, she's also got one of my
ribs.

REBECCA ACKERSON, a very pregnant 30ish fireball, makes her
way awkwardly into the middle of a row full of people...

REBECCA

Sorry. Sorry. That's the last trip
to the bathroom, I promise. God
bless you. Excuse me. God Bless.

...drinking the whole time from a fancy Yeti thermos with a
retractable straw and chewing on crackers.

INT NURSERY - MORNING

Michael holds two kids under his arms and chasing a third.

MICHAEL

Zechariah, put that down. Moses!
Do not hit Noah on the head. Leah,
apologize to Rachel this minute.
Cain? Don't even think about it.

Cain is about to launch from a bookshelf onto his brother's back. Michael catches him mid-leap. Cain kicks him and runs. ELIJAH tugs his pant leg. He stoops down.

ELIJAH

Jada is writing on the walls.

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON

Now, Elijah, every time you tattle-tale a Karen gets her wings.

ELIJAH

She's using her poop.

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON

Sigh. Thank you, Elijah.

Michael types into a keypad on the wall. We FOLLOW THE SIGNAL through the intricate duct-work and wiring and end up at:

INT. AUDITORIUM - SAME TIME

The wireless RECEIVER begins blinking.

It's all pretty still right now in stark contrast to the 3s class. The SENIOR PASTOR has what appears to be a baby shark latched onto his tattoo'd arm, part of his illustration.

SENIOR PASTOR

(stage whisper)

And believe me it will. Don't let it. Don't let it. Don't let it. Brothers and Sisters don't let temptation sneak up...and bite.

Rebecca's restaurant-like PAGER VIBRATES and she SQUEAKS LOUDLY. All eyeballs are on her. She whips out a bib from her pocket and waves it like a prayer hanky...

REBECCA

Whoo, preach it..!

She is "Amen'd" from some other ZEALOTS in the crowd. She gathers her stuff like a bag lady and exits.

REBECCA (CONT'D)

(whispering)

Excuse me. Child emergency. God bless you. Kid Pager. Sorry.

She shows the pager to everyone like it's a hall pass.

INT. CLASSROOM - DAY

Precious JADA has ziploc bags strapped to her hands and she's wrapped in several large towels to conceal the mess. Michael has big rubber yellow gloves on to handle the toxic toddler.

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON
Here, Mamasita, you take this.

Michael hands her over to Rebecca.

REBECCA
Uh oh, what happened, Jada?

Rebecca gives her kisses on her fat cheeks.

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON
Picasso here smeared poop all over
the walls and her face and hands.

Rebecca recoils from the kisses, spits a little. Michael waves "bye" and Jada waves back with little ziploc hands.

REBECCA
Tsk. We'll see you at home, dad.

Michael turns back to the wall of pooh. He slides a pull-up diaper over his head covering his nose and mouth. He looks through the leg holes like a Dollar Store Spiderman. He kneels down with a sponge.

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON (V.O.)
Some of you won't believe me, but
that's where it happened. Kneeling
there at that poop wall, God spoke.

Michael stops scrubbing the walls mid-stroke and just stares.

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON (V.O.)
Not just a word or a bible verse or
something...it's like he downloaded
a whole movie into my head. All at
once. Fwoom! From Fade In to the
post credit scenes. It was weird.

Michael slowly starts scrubbing the walls again.

INT. CLASSROOM - LATER

Finished. Michael puts the final touches on the classroom. A man resembling an HISPANIC MR. CLEAN pokes his head in.

H MR CLEAN

Michael, I hear you had some excitement in the class today.

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON

The poop-arazzi struck again.

H MR CLEAN

Ha. Well, you missed a real move of God today, bro. Great message from Pastor. He gave us both barrels ...bloom bloom.

H Mr Clean gets real serious.

H MR CLEAN (CONT'D)

Oh hey, listen, brother. Pastor wanted me to ask you... we've got our Missions Banquet coming up in two weeks and he'd like you to put together another Ministry Video.

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON

Two weeks? Eesh. I don't think I'm gonna be able to help on that one. That's, that's...is there a budget?

H Mr Clean laughs like that's the funniest joke ever.

H MR CLEAN

Seriously, we can't wait to see what you come up with. Remember, no one said ministry was easy. You're a blessing!

He smiles, smacks the half-door a couple times and heads out before Michael can respond.

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON

Oh, I love the ministry. It's the people I'd like to murd--Miss Judy, so good to see you, God bless you.

Saintly Miss Judy walks by, waving. He kills the lights.

INT. ACKERSON HOME - SHOWER - DAY

Michael stands under the spray of water. Leaning back against the tile, staring.

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON

It's like I can see the whole movie still. I mean, that's the voice of God. Right?

Rebecca stands up applying shampoo to her hair.

REBECCA

The poop... talked?

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON

Tsk. No, just--it was the voice of God okay but I think he got the wrong number. I don't have time to make a Christian movie. Or money. What am I, a Kendrick brother?

REBECCA

Honey, would you rinse Jada?

Michael bends down and lifts Jada up into the water.

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON

And now on top of everything else I've got the Missions Banquet video.

REBECCA

Haha. I thought you weren't gonna volunteer for that this year.

(mocking his voice)

"I'm setting boundaries, babe!"

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON

It's for missions! Hello. Garbage babies in Nicaragua and orphans living in the trash need this video. Unwed teen mothers, homeless people...the puppet team.

Rebecca rinses her hair.

REBECCA

So, that's it? "Sorry, God. I can't make your movie and impact the world as we know it because I'm too busy doing free church videos?"

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON

That is not what I sound like. Besides, we're about to land the big Keeble Kibbler Doggie Dental Treats video at work and that's a \$150K video! What's so funny?

Rebecca rings some excess water from her hair.

REBECCA

Okay, Star Wars. Luke's on that beach planet, right...

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON

Tatooine...

REBECCA

Whatever and his parents have just been....

She pauses, puts her hands over Jada's ears.

REBECCA (CONT'D)

Cooked to death and all the little monkey children get pew pew pew by the bad guys...

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON

Did you even watch the movie--

Rebecca pulls his chin towards her to look in his eyes.

REBECCA

What does Luke do? He had a funeral to plan, he had to rebuild his AirBNB, the sand gypsies were taking over the home owners association, he was engaged to be married and what did he do?

She takes Jada from him.

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON

Mos Eisley spaceport.

REBECCA

Yes! Mos Icecream spaceport. You keep busy doing the work of the Lord, but when the Lord of the work shows up, you better do what he says. Are you finished in here?

She turns off the water.

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON

What? No, I haven't done anything-- Luke was never engaged.

Michael turns the water back on. Rebecca and Jada exit.

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON (CONT'D)
So, it's just like that?

REBECCA (O.S.)
Just like that.

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON
Follow the call, no matter what?

REBECCA (O.S.)
Follow the call. No matter what.

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON
Sigh. Alright, tomorrow I'll give
my 2 weeks notice to Mr. Biggelby.

Rebecca opens the shower door abruptly.

REBECCA
Come again..?

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON
I can't do it all. If I'm gonna
make a movie, I've gotta quit the
corporate video job, babe. Hey, ya
mind, you're letting in a draft.

He nudges the door, smiling. Her image through the shower
door doesn't move. She slowly slides it back open.

REBECCA
How are we gonna live without a
paycheck? What about insurance? For
this?

She pats her huge belly for emphasis.

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON
WWLD, my wife always says....What
Would Luke Do?

Michael closes the door, super smug.

REBECCA
Nooooooooo...you are--that is out of
context!

He smiles as the door CLANGS shut.

EXT - DESERT PLACE - MUCH LIKE TATOOINE - DUSK

In this FICTIONAL LAND, Michael stands poised on a rock,
looking out into the setting twin suns of Tattooine.

For all intents and purposes, Michael IS Luke Skywalker. But not Luke Skywalker. You know, for copyright purposes.

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON/LUKE
That's it, by George! I'm gonna go to Mos Icecream spaceport, hire a space pirate and his seven foot gorilla to transport me to the secret base, rescue the smoking hot and equally capable princess, jump into my other ship, blow up the deathball and then I'll make sequels... and then prequels... and then... prequel sequels and...

An R2D2 unit next to him BLEEPs and WHIRRS his concern as a sand gypsy can be heard CALLING OUT in the distance.

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON (V.O.)
Welcome to the crossroads. The toughest decision in the world to take that leap of faith into the great unknown, even though many others have done it before--and most even lived to tell about it.

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON/LUKE
(to R2D2)
Ew, what do you mean... *SISTER?!?*

Luke and Artoo scoot away.

INT. WOODSHOP - 10,000 B.C. - NIGHT

Rebecca, for all intents and purposes, is the ARCHANGEL GABRIEL. She hovers above a table, her voice BOOMS when she speaks. And she is exasperated with Michael who is NOAH.

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON/NOAH
A... boat?

REBECCA/ANGEL GABRIEL
A big boat. An ark.

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON/NOAH
Of the covenant?

REBECCA/ANGEL GABRIEL
No the other one; the floating zoo.

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON/NOAH
Because wet stuff is gonna come down from the sky...?

REBECCA/ANGEL GABRIEL
Yes, it will be raining.

Trying to comprehend the foreign concept.

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON/NOAH
"Raining" will come down from the
sky and flood the earth. Is the
"raining" coming down right now?

REBECCA/ANGEL GABRIEL
No, you imbecile!
(checks herself)
Sigh. It's gonna be some time.
You'll know it when you see it.

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON/NOAH
Some time two months? Five years?

Noah takes a sip from a stein.

REBECCA/ANGEL GABRIEL
Forty years!

Noah spews his drink.

REBECCA/ANGEL GABRIEL (CONT'D)
Give or take.

Noah contemplates a moment and then SLAMS the mug down.

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON/NOAH
Okay, I'll do it. I mean, Darren
Aronovsky might butcher the movie
version... but know what? I'm in.

Noah grabs a wooden mallet and exits.

EXT. LORRAINE, FRANCE - OLD OLD DUSTY CHURCH - EARLY 1400S

Rebecca kneels on the floor, leaning against her sword before
an amazing stained glass window. She wears brown leather
armor and for all intents and purposes she is JOAN OF ARC.

A single shaft of light illuminates her. Blinding. She
clumsily dons some RAYBANS to cut the light. In so doing she
knocks over some candles, burning herself a bit in the
process. Heavy French accent...

REBECCA/JOAN
Ouch, ow, Je suis on fire! Je suis
flambé--oh never mind I got eet...

She grabs the holy water and douses her cloak. She resumes her prayer hands.

REBECCA/JOAN (CONT'D)
 Okay, now, Lord, you want to do
 what to zee English pig-dogs?

ANGEL MUSIC begins to swell and she cuts it off.

REBECCA/JOAN (CONT'D)
 Wait, arrête arrête stop--

She rummages in her satchel for a feather pen and parchment.

REBECCA/JOAN (CONT'D)
 Okay, go on... c'est magnifique!
 SLAY magnifique! Ooh hon hon hon!

ANGEL MUSIC begins again. She furiously scribbles notes.

EXT. ENGLISH COUNTRY HILLSIDE - 1940 - DAY

For all intents and purposes, Michael is ERIC LIDDELL talking to his SISTER from "Chariots of Fire" played here by Rebecca in fast-talking trans-Atlantic accents.

REBECCA/SISTER
 Eric Lucille Aubergine Liddell, I
forbid you to run in that Olympic
 foot race. We have missions work to
 do. Heathens to save, you old so-
 and-so.

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON/ERIC
 Sorry, toots. God made me fast.
 Like Usain Bolt. And when I run I
 feel God's pleasure. On the level.

REBECCA/SISTER
 Who the deuce is Usain Bolt?

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON/ERIC
 Nevermind that, see! Where's my
 Hokas!

Eric walks out with fiery purpose. Sister weeps dramatically.

INT. MATRIX - BLACK LIMO - NIGHT - RAINING

Michael sits with Rebecca inside a Limo. For all intents and purposes they are NEO and TRINITY. But, you know, not. Ahem.

He stops, deep breath, turns around, gives God a thumbs up in the sky and then enters.

INT. EAGLEVISION VIDEO - DAY

Mr. Biggelby sits behind his large desk as Michael KNOCKS gently on the door.

MR. BIGGELBY
Michael, how was your weekend?

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON
Interesting. Listen, I--

MR. BIGGELBY
Your wife have that baby yet?

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON
No, haha, I told her if she waits any longer the kids gonna come out shaving.

They share a laugh, bigger than it should be and then the laughter wanes and Biggelby continues, seriously.

MR. BIGGELBY
It's such an expensive process. A blessed, wonderful, expensive process. Can you imagine having kids with no insurance, no job? That's a few baskets short of a picnic if you ask me. You'd have to be a complete idiot a moron a tool in this economy, can you imagine?

Michael turns to camera for a sidebar:

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON
(into camera)
Okay, that's not exactly what he said in real life but you get the point, right? Stakes are high. Life and death. Blah blah blah.

MR. BIGGELLS
Anyway, what did you want to talk about?

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON
Well, it's like...I was cleaning up some poop off the walls...

MR. BIGGELBY

That reminds me, we landed the Keeble Kibbler Doggie Dental Treat project. It's all yours. Congrats.

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON

Ah, th-thanks?

MR. BIGGELBY

And keep this under your hat, but Mindy thinks they may even be interested in some TV commercials, too! Cha-ching!

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON

Ha. Yeah. Well... good.

The phone begins to RING. Biggelby looks at the caller ID.

MR. BIGGELBY

Oh, that's my boss. The wife, haha! Seriously, I better take this.

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON

Okay, well I will make like a baby... and head out.

Mr. Biggelby laughs and walks him to the door, closing it behind him. Michael leans against it and THUMPS his head a couple of times in anguish. Mr. Biggelby opens the door holding the phone and Michael almost falls inside.

MR. BIGGELBY

Yes?

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON

Sorry. Nothing. Leaving.

He moves on quickly.

INT. MEXICAN RESTAURANT - DAY

Michael sits with his bff/mentor BILLY, 40-something. He looks like Jesus, if Jesus had made it to 40, and also did NATGEO level cinematography. Billy DRUMS the table.

BILLY

So what's the big news?

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON

I think I'm going nuts.

BILLY
That's old news. Gimme new news.

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON
I'm thinking about quitting my job
to make a Christian movie.

BILLY
Hm!

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON
A Christian *Zombie* Movie.

BILLY
Reeeeeeeally.

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON
Zombies in Africa.

BILLY
Oh yeah! Of course, African Zombies
are--look, maybe start at the
beginning.

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON
It's just...I've got this film idea
stuck in my head. I can't shake it.

BILLY
Christian Zombies? So, the zombies
start out bad, the usual zombie
sins: stealing brains, dealing
drugs at zombie parties, then they
find Jesus, get saved and then
what? Start an evangelical Zombie
Ska band?

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON
No, they're not....it's a Christian
movie and it's a zombie movie. The
zombies aren't christians. The
zombies are actually demon-
possessed dead people.

BILLY
I see.

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON
Don't look at me like that, it
wasn't my idea!

BILLY
Oh. Christian Zombies...that was
God's idea?

The WAITER drops off Billy's water, the chips and salsa.

BILLY (CONT'D)

Do it.

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON

What?!

BILLY

Why not?

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON

Why does everyone keep saying that?
There's a million reasons why not.
And I don't see anyone else
quitting their cushy jobs to go
make a Christian zombie movie.

BILLY

That's cause we're not the crazy
ones. Look, there's 12 disciples in
the boat, but only one of them gets
out to walk on the water with
Jesus. Ploop! Buh-bye, Peter.

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON

Why do I have to be Peter? I don't
wanna walk on water.

BILLY

Wimp.

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON

Wimp? You. Wimp. Hah.

Michael takes a big scoop of salsa and eats it.

BILLY

That's the spicy one.

Michael's mouth is on fire. And he has no drink. Billy holds
up his water.

BILLY (CONT'D)

Would you like some water, Simon
Peter? Hm? Well, get out of the
boat, Peter. Get out of the --

Michael grabs the water and guzzles it down, glaring at Billy
best he can. As he chews the ice...

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON

I can see now, Peter didn't get out
of the boat. He was pushed!

Michael wipes his mouth dry.

INT. EAGLEVISION VIDEO - CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

Michael sits at the conference table with co-workers MINDY and ALICE. On the phone is DEBORAH their client.

MINDY

Guys, we're just super-pumped that you have green-lighted this Keeble Kibbler Doggie Dental Treats video.

DEBORAH (ON PHONE)

Yayyyyyyy, we are too. And we'd like to drill down to the granular level and circle back to nail down some details. Did you get the box of treats we shipped over?

Mindy immediately goes into silent freak mode, looking for the treats. Michael lifts a Fedex box up and shakes it, nodding. Doggie Chews RATTLE around inside. Relief.

MINDY

Got them right here.

DEBORAH (ON PHONE)

How about the pitch deck we emailed this morning?

Mindy punches the mute button, rifling through stacks of papers. Michael starts to speak but keeps getting cut off...

MINDY

What pitch deck?

ALICE

I haven't seen a pitch deck.

Michael leans toward the speakerphone and punches off the mute. The activity around him freezes.

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON

Deb, we've got that pitch deck right here sitting in our inboxes.

Mindy and Alice reference their laptops. Relieved. Mindy makes it up as she goes along.

MINDY

Um. We took a look at it earlier and it all looks...fabulous.

Michael shakes his head. Seems like his life is one wall of poop after another.

DEBORAH (ON PHONE)
 Awesome. Here's what we were
 thinking...have any of you ever
 seen "The Bachelor"?

Mindy clearly has not. Alice nods.

ALICE
 ZOMG, that is one of my favorite
 shows ever.

She signals "gag me" to Mindy.

DEBORAH (ON PHONE)
 Well, what we were thinking was
 instead of The Bachelor what if we
 did...The Kibbler. You could
 pretend to interview the doggie
 treats and pair them up with the
 right-sized dog. With a rose!

Michael rubs his head as if its about to explode. Mindy and
 Alice are worried for him but speak up.

MINDY
 Thaaaaaat would be hilarious!

ALICE
 The Kibbler! That's great! The
 whole concept gives Michael so much
 to go with in the initial treatment
 process, right Michael?

Michael stands.

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON
 Would you excuse me a second?
 (whispers)
 Y'all keep talking.

MINDY
 Deborah, Michael is going offline
 for a hot minute, but what is your
 timetable for production?

Michael leaves.

INT. EAGLEVISION - LARGE STAGE

Michael enters the large stage. The cyc wall and floor are
 painted white. He walks to the center of the cavernous void
 and SCREAMS. He stops and waits and SCREAMS again.

A door opens behind him and a PA runs in with a headset.

PA
I'm sorry, we're filming on the
next stage. Do you mind?

Michael SCREAMS again. The PA exits quickly in fear. Michael
drops to his knees.

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON
God, what are you doing to me?

Michael flops onto his back, stares at the ceiling. DING.
Materializing from nowhere, playing with his lightsaber:

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON/LUKE
You think I had an easy choice?
Leave my home and follow some kooky
homeless man across the galaxy?
"Hello there, I am a space wizard,
come get in my cargo plane, little
farm boy." But, hey, it worked out.

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON
You had a lightsaber. If I had a
lightsaber I could take over the
galaxy, too. It was a no-brainer.
Hm, go fly spaceships or stay here
on the boring beach planet with
rodents of unusual size....

DING. Michael as Noah enters, holding two small animals.

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON/NOAH
I was supposed to talk my friends
and neighbors into helping me build
a floating zoo so that when the
"raining" came we could escape.

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON
You had animals lining up two-by-
two. And your father-in-law owned a
shipyard. You had everything.

Ding. Michael as Eric Liddell shows up.

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON/ERIC
Every religious bone in my body--

Michael sits up.

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON
Stop! You know what? I'm happy for
all of you. Really.
(MORE)

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON (CONT'D)

You heard from God, or the force.
You made your choice and lived
happily ever after.

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON/ERIC

I actually died in a Chinese
concentration camp during the war.

REBECCA/JOAN

I was fire-burned dead on a stick.

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON

Come on! That's not--the point is
it's not you, now. It's me. I'd
give anything to realize I was a
superhero with telekenetic power!

Luke and Neo point to each other confused as to who he's
talking about.

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON (CONT'D)

You're not helping! You're not
inspiring me you're ACKGK--

He suddenly grabs his neck, unable to breathe.

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON/NEO

Whoa...!

Luke leans in, a little perturbed.

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON/LUKE

I find your lack of faith
disturbing.

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON/ERIC

Let the kid go, see. He's got moxy.

REBECCA/JOAN

Non, perhaps just a few seconds
more. Hon hon hon.

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON/NEO

Enough.

Luke releases Michael from his choke hold. Michael collapses
to the ground.

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON

Just go. Leave me alone.

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON/NEO

It only hurts, dude, because you're
fighting it so hard.

The mythic wisdom characters turn and go. Luke gestures "I'm watching you" with two fingers and then vanishes.

INT. ACKERSON HOME - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Michael lays in bed wide awake. He checks the clock.

INSERT CLOCK: 1:15am

He lays back down. Rebecca rolls over, sleepily.

REBECCA
Your eyes are open.

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON
Shhh. I'm sleeping.

REBECCA
What's the matter, sweetie?

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON
I came this close to punching Luke Skywalker today.

Rebecca is still half-asleep and losing the battle.

REBECCA
You're talking gibberish. Go nigh nigh. You need rest.

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON
For what? Keeble kibbler doggie dental treats?

REBECCA
Yawn. You can figure it out tomorrow when your dragon lollipops the zoo in the toaster...

Snore. She's asleep again. Michael gently climbs out of bed.

INT. LIVING ROOM - LATER

Michael sits in front of a laptop. The blank screen stares back at him. He takes a deep breath and in perfect courier 12 formatting he types: "The Christian Zombie Movie."

He stares at it some more and then gets up and leaves the room. When he comes back he's eating some Froot Loops from the box. Chomping and thinking. Chomping and thinking.

INT. BEDROOM - LATER

Rebecca turns over and feels the vacant space where Michael should be. She notes the light from the living room and then checks the clock. It's 4:30am.

REBECCA

Ugh. Surrounded by crazy people.

She happily takes up both sides of the bed and goes to sleep.

INT. LIVING ROOM - LATER

Michael eats a bowl of popcorn and reads his latest section.

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON

(reading)

"Zach: Where is everyone? Amelie:
Well, the villagers spread out to
search for the Zombie creature.
Zach: That may be their last
mistake. The words were no sooner
off his lips than Zach turns and
there in the darkness beside--"

Michael suddenly registers something in his own peripheral vision. He SCREAMS and launches popcorn everywhere. Little Jada stands there holding her blankie. Looking tired.

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON (CONT'D)

Jada, what are you doing up?

JADA

I have to go baf'room.

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON

Alright, let's go.

JADA

Why daddy scream? Like "Aaah!"

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON

Because you showed up like children
of the corn over there. Let's go
potty.

Michael lifts her up and they start back upstairs.

INT. BATHROOM - LATER

Jada sits on the huge toilet staring at everything around her. An assorted sticker collection decorates the wall beside her. Michael sits on a stepping stool facing her.

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON
Are you done yet?

JADA
No.

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON
Are you done now?

JADA
No.

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON
Now?

JADA
Why daddy has pocket on his shirt?

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON
To put stuff in it.

He takes some toilet paper and stuffs it in there.

JADA
Giggle. Why daddy put toilet paper
in him's pocket?

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON
It's probably a metaphor look are
you done yet?

JADA
No, I got more poopos.

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON
Oh boy. Can't wait.

He pokes at her playfully. She giggles.

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON (CONT'D)
So, Jada. Seriously. You think
daddy should quit his job and go
make a movie?

Jada nods sleepily.

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON (CONT'D)
You do? Why?

JADA

Daddy don't go work. I miss you,
boojoo.

She leans forward and hugs him. He tries to keep her balanced on the toilet.

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON

Hm. Maybe you should talk to my boss. You wanna talk to Mr. Biggelby?

JADA

You're silly dad.

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON

So are we through here or--?

Jada nods yes. Michael stands to clean her up.

INT. BEDROOM - MORNING

The morning sun paints bright patterns on the wall and floor. Rebecca's spot in the bed is now empty. A disheveled lump that can only be Michael SNORES.

Jada climbs up onto the bed and jumps right onto Michael's stomach, rousing him abruptly and painfully.

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON

Aaaaaugh! My pancreas!

Jada, seated on his stomach, takes that as a sign to continue and starts hopping up and down.

JADA

Giddyap horsey!!

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON

Ow, ow. Stop, Jada, horsey can't breathe.

He grabs her and lowers her gently to the floor.

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON (CONT'D)

Go tell mommy to give you a poptart!

Jada SQUEALS out of the room.

INT. KITCHEN - LATER

Jada climbs into her chair to finish eating a bowlful of cereal. Rebecca sips some hot tea, thoughtfully.

REBECCA
 Hey look, Jada, isn't that the
 famous filmmaker from Keeble
 Kibbler Doggie Dental Treats?

Michael scratches his head and GRUNTS. His bed head is even more cartoonish this morning than most others. She smiles.

REBECCA (CONT'D)
 Rough night?

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON
 No. Rough morning, thanks to little
 miss hulk smash over there.

He grabs Jada and kisses all over her neck to her delight.

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON (CONT'D)
 Nom nom nom nom. You?

REBECCA
 Mm. I slept all right. Spent most
 of the night alone.

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON
 Zombies, babe. The zombies took me.

REBECCA
 And now you is one.

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON
 So witty. So clever before 11am.

He kisses her on top of her head. He grabs the biggest coffee mug he can find. She takes a deep breath.

REBECCA
 So I've been thinking.

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON
 Uh-oh.

REBECCA
 I don't want you to quit your job.

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON
 Twist.

REBECCA

No, I want you to be able to make your movie. But right now we do need money and insurance. And--
 (she grimaces)
 --the check engine light came on.

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON

Uck! How many times I gotta tell you, just ignore that light. That's what I do.

REBECCA

Ha. Look, you can work on the script on the weekend. Or at night.

Michael just stares at her, nodding.

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON

Finally! Somebody is talking some sense around here. Steady paycheck. Insurance. That's what I'm talking about. It's a good plan. No lightsabers. No floating zoo. No Chinese concentration camp. And nobody gets hurt.

Rebecca stands to clear the table.

REBECCA

Anyway, maybe next year we'll be in a better financial position. That gives you plenty of time to write the script and raise money and get a crew and all that. Right?

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON

(whiney)
 But I was gonna go into town and pick up some power converters.

She's learned to wait these things out.

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON (CONT'D)

I mean, yeah, preachin' to the choir, babe. Top Gun high five?

As they pass they high-five like Mav and Goose. But sloppy.

INT. ACKERSON HOME - SHOWER - DAY

Michael stands under the spray of water. Leaning back against the tile, staring.

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON

God's not gonna be happy that I'm
not doing his Christian Zombie
Movie, is he?

And suddenly from out of nowhere, TYLER PERRY'S MEDEA enters the shower beside him. Fully dressed. Only it's not her (him?) but it looks like them, for copyright and satire purposes only. Unless TP is available! Anyway, she's got on her Sunday-go-to-meeting clothes and she ferociously scrubs her arm with a loofah.

MEDEA

Mm! White folks always talkin bout
Zombies. What you need is a good
end times, hell a-breakin loose
revelation movie! Hallelu-yer.
Move.

Michael steps back and Medea rinses the loofah.

MEDEA (CONT'D)

You want to be extra original?
Make it a musical. And star Denzel
Washington. Mm-hm I could drank
that man's bathwater. Mm.

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON

An end times musical? That seems
ridiculous...

MEDEA

(singing into loofah)
"There's no time to change your
mind, the Son has come and you've
been left behind..."

Michael smacks her with her loofah.

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON

Out! Get out of here.

The shower door opens suddenly and Rebecca stands there, looking around the shower.

REBECCA

Everything okay in here?

Medea is gone, a figment of Michael's over-active imagination. He starts scrubbing his neck with the loofah.

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON

Fine.

REBECCA

Uh huh.

Rebecca eyes him suspiciously and then closes the door.

EXT. EAGLEVISION - DAY

Michael walks up the sidewalk. The closer he gets the more of an internal struggle it is. Finally, he stops right in front of the door. Co-worker JOE walks past and holds the door.

JOE

Morning, Michael. Coming in?

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON

Nah. Not yet. You go ahead.

Joe laughs and enters.

INT. EAGLEVISION - LOBBY - SAME TIME

Joe passes Sarah the receptionist.

JOE

How's it going, Sarah?

SARAH

Shakin' and bakin'.

Outside, Michael jumps around and flails about -- punching and kicking. Then he opens the door and calmly sticks his head in, making sure to keep his feet outside.

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON

Morning, Sarah.

She's been watching him.

SARAH

Hey, Michael. Mental breakdown much?

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON

Ha, could you send Mr. Biggelby out? I need to talk to him.

SARAH

Sure. Let me just...

Michael closes the door. He waits. Mr. Biggelby walks with Sarah into the lobby and then he exits.

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON (V.O.)

Boi-yoi-yoing! That's it. Right there. Don't miss it. That's me taking the path less travelled by. That's me quitting my day job. Following my bliss. That's me saying "Goodbye Keeble kibbler doggie dental chews" and hello Christian Zombie movie. And poverty. And disaster. It's funny, for something so extraordinary, it seems pretty lame watching it now.

Mr. Biggelby puts a hand on Michael's shoulder. They shake hands. Smiles. Understanding.

INT. ACKERSON HOME - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Rebecca storms from the living room to the kitchen. She's so mad she has to... scrub something clean. She yanks the drip catchers from beneath the stove burners. Michael follows.

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON

It was an accident.

Rebecca wheels on him. Maybe "mad" is not the right word. Perhaps "livid" is better.

REBECCA

How do you 'accidentally' quit your job?

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON

Babe, I was suffocating. I literally could not go another step toward the building. I'm just as shocked as you are.

It takes every ounce of her strength to censor herself. She squeezes the cleanser angrily and it leaks onto the floor and then the stove. She scrub scrub scrubs away.

REBECCA

We talked about it. We came up with a plan. We had a plan, Michael. Now what? Because this...
(indicating her belly)
...won't wait.

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON

I've still got a plan, thank you very much. We've got savings.

(MORE)

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON (CONT'D)

We've got another paycheck coming in two weeks and I've already got free-lance work lined up with Billy and the Baptists. We're gonna be fine.

REBECCA

You should have talked to me first, Michael.

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON

I... did talk with you first.

REBECCA

Do you want me to punch you?

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON

Babe, if it will make you feel--

She SLUGS him in the stomach.

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON (CONT'D)

--Ow. My pancreas! Again! What's with you people?

REBECCA

This baby will not suffer because of this, you hear me? We're going to every checkup, every doctor's appointment and exam. This kid's gonna attend the best preschool and probably Harvard, do we have an understanding?

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON

Yes. Harvard Preschool. It's all part of the plan. Believe me.

Rebecca gives up and walks out. Michael picks up a stove piece that's still sudsy.

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON (CONT'D)

You missed a spot.

Rebecca walks back in straight for Michael and he recoils to defend himself. But instead, she hands holds out package.

REBECCA

Pastor Miguel dropped this off for you, today.

Uh-oh, she's sneering. He takes it, suspiciously. She exits.

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON
What is it?

No answer. Michael opens it up and there's a thousand photos in there. And a note which he reads, suddenly overwhelmed.

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON (CONT'D)
Awwwchh! It's for the Missions
Banquet video.
(off the pictures)
They don't want a video, they want
a flippin' Power Point. This'll
take forever just to digitize.

REBECCA (O.S.)
(mocking)
"It's for missions babe. They have
to have a video."

Michael glowers, unamused.

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON
Laugh it up. I bet Spielberg
doesn't put up with this from Mrs.
Spielberg. I bet he busts a little
Close Encounters right in her
Amistad annnnd I'm talking to
myself.

He stuffs the photos back into the package.

INT. EAGLEVISION VIDEO - MICHAEL'S OFFICE - DAY

Michael packs a milk crate full of pictures and things from around the office. He hears a LIGHTSABER turning ON and OFF.

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON
What do you want, Imaginary Jedi?

Luke sits perched on a desk behind Michael.

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON/LUKE
Didn't think you had it in you.
You know, your wife seems to be
leaning a bit to the dark side.

Fwoooooosh, Fwish. Fwoooooosh, Fwish goes the lightsaber.

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON
Don't you have a job to do? I'm
sure Palpatine's got another death
star out there being built. And
don't lecture me about family...

Luke grabs a rubber stress ball with the force and slowly lifts it up.

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON (CONT'D)
 ...you who had the hots for your
 own sister and then your dad cuts
 your hand off--

Luke flings the stress ball and hits Michael in the forehead with it. SQUEAK.

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON/LUKE
 Careful. Sarcasm leads to dad jokes
 and dad jokes lead to youth
 pastors.

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON
 Dude--

Luke holds his hand up. Michael stops short just as Alice walks in.

ALICE
 I'm not interrupting, am I?

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON
 Nah. Just packing up.

ALICE
 I thought I heard talking.

Luke is nowhere to be seen.

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON
 I talk to myself a lot. It all
 started when I was back in 'Nam.

ALICE
 Where's that? Virginia?

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON
 Yyyyyes.

ALICE
 So it's true then, you're leaving
 us? We were finally going to get to
 work on a project together.

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON
 I know. It's good, though. It'll be
 all right, I think. It's not like
 I'm dead, just freelance. Oh, here,
 I made up some business cards for
 my new company.

He hands her a card.

INSERT: "NuThang Productions"

ALICE
Nothing Productions?

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON
Ha. It's actually NuThang... like
New Thing..?

Mindy walks in, ignoring Michael all together.

MINDY
There you are, Alice.

ALICE
I was saying goodbye to Michael.

MINDY
Who? Oh you mean the jerk that's
leaving us high and dry on the
Keeble Kibbler Doggie Dental Chews
account?

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON
You know, Mindy, of all the interns-
promoted to-producer in an insanely
short amount of time you're one of
them.

Mindy snatches the card from Alice.

MINDY
Nothing productions? Yeah, Joe says
you're gonna make a movie or
something? Don't you need money for
that? And, I dunno, talent...?

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON
If you build it, Mindy, they will
come.

MINDY
That's the dumbest thing I've ever
heard.

ALICE
Aw, I'm gonna miss this will-they-
won't-they banter!

MINDY
They won't

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON
They won't.

She squishes Michael and Mindy into a hug.

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON (CONT'D)
Call me if you nerds need anything.

MINDY
Well, Alice, I guess it's just the
two of us now.

	MINDY (CONT'D)	ALICE
Girl boss!		Girl boss!

They high five and FREEZE themselves for several long seconds.

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON
Nice. Perfect time for a music
sting out into an act break... if
this was a sitcom. From the 80s.

MINDY
(not moving)
You're gonna miss this.

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON
Hahaha probably.

They unfreeze and giggle and exit. Michael's smile slowly melts into a troubled expression. Fwoooooosh, Fwish.

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON (CONT'D)
I'm doing the right thing, right?

No answer from Luke.

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON (CONT'D)
I mean, this was my mission field
for 4 years. Building relationships
and Mindy's right. I'm leaving them
high and dry just when things are
taking off.

Fwooooooosh, Fwish.

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON/LUKE
It's not your call. Yes, they'll
bump around a bit, it'll get messy,
then they'll figure it out.

Michael picks up one of his boxes.

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON
Hey, help me carry out a box?

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON/LUKE
I'm a jedi knight. Not a forklift.

Luke is gone. Michael calls after him.

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON
Han should have let you freeze to
death on Hoth!

The stress ball smacks him in the head again. SQUEAK!

INT. ACKERSON HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAY

MONTAGE OF MICHAEL CALLING AROUND FOR FUNDING.

-- Michael sits at the computer on the phone. He's referencing a list of names on a whiteboard beside him. First up, "World Wide Pictures."

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON (ON PHONE)
Good morning. I am a Christian
filmmaker, I'm looking for funding
for my Christian Zombie Movie.
Hello?

-- Michael stands ready to pitch #2. "David Cunningham"

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON (ON PHONE) (CONT'D)
Hi, Yes. I'm a Christian filmmaker
and -- hello?

-- Michael perches on the couch. "Grandma"

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON (ON PHONE) (CONT'D)
-- Actually I think we have enough
end times movies, grandma. But if I
change my mind I can put you down
for twenty whole dollars...? Bless
your heart.

-- Sitting in his chair with Jada on his lap. She's got a
blankie, sucking her fingers.

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON (ON PHONE) (CONT'D)
Really? No kissing and no cussing,
sure. How do we feel about
tastefully done shower scenes?

-- Leaned back in chair, feet up on the wall. Rebecca comes
by and SWATS them down.

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON (ON PHONE) (CONT'D)
 Oh yeah, a Christian "Avatar", that
 would be--haha. Oh, with Gary
 Busey? Yeah, he's the Kirk Cameron
 of Leonardo DiCaprios.

-- Leaning forward, really into it.

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON (ON PHONE) (CONT'D)
 And then when they get back to
 America, she turns into a zombie.
 (A beat)
 Yeah, I know right. I'm glad you
 like it!
 (A beat)
 No, that's it. Yeah, one large
 Hawaiian and one large extra
 pepperoni should do it. Thanks.

He hangs up the phone.

EXT. CARY, NC - BAPTIST STATE CONVENTION BUILDING - DAY

Michael walks up to the front door. As he opens it, a long
 long line of BLUE HAIRS come straggling out. He nods at them,
 accepts the "thank you, young fellah" and "trout swimming
 upstream" comments then enters after the wheelchair buzzes
 passes.

INT. BAPTIST BUILDING - SAME TIME

Michael walks past the receptionist, SANDY, on the phone who
 waves, happy to see him.

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON
 (whispering)
 Hi, Sandy. You doing okay?

She gives him the thumbs up. He winks and continues on
 through a door marked "Video Production".

INT. BAPTIST BUILDING - EDIT SUITE - SAME TIME

Billy is at a huge edit desk cutting together his latest
 masterpiece. Michael enters.

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON
 No, no, Billy, don't get up!

BILLY

I'm gonna have to lock those doors.
They keep letting in the riff raff.

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON

I noticed that...all those blue
hairs! Did they come through here?

BILLY

They did. And I just happened to
show them an S. Michael Ackerson
original -- "Baptists on Mission:
Possible".

Michael scowls.

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON

That old thing? Ew. That explains
all their rude gestures as they
walked by.

BILLY

They loved it. One lady said it was
the greatest thing since "Anne of
Green Gables."

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON

Which one, the blind one? I believe
it. So whatcha got for me.

BILLY

This is your lucky day.

Billy lifts a box of tapes up onto the desk.

BILLY (CONT'D)

What better way to learn about the
Christian film market than to watch
Christian Films.

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON

Is that VHS? Where did you get all
these?

BILLY

I checked them all out from our
Resource Library. They're due back
next Friday to Ms. Myrtle Faye.

Michael picks out some of the tapes.

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON

(reading)

"Lake of Fire"?

(MORE)

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON (CONT'D)
 "Apocalypse Car Wash"? "The Mark of
 the Beast"... didn't they use these
 in Guantanamo Bay?

BILLY
 Easy. This is your competition.

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON
 (reading)
 "Hiding place". Hey, I've seen that
 one, that was actually good.
 "Chariots of Fire"... I know that
 dude... and then we're back to
 "Escape from Hell". Great. But no
 Christian zombie movie.

BILLY
 No Christian Zombie movie. Yet.

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON
 Yet.

BILLY
 Also...

Billy leans back and picks a sticky note off the desk.

BILLY (CONT'D)
 Interesting phone call I had today.
 Gazilla Brothers.

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON
 God bless you.

Michael takes the number.

BILLY
 No, that's their name. Couple of
 Christian filmmakers from
 Philadelphia. On their way to NC to
 work on a feature. They'll be in
 town next week and wanna talk shop.

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON
 Could be God.

BILLY
 Could be odd.

Michael hands him one of his new business cards.

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON
 Well, feast your eyes on this.

BILLY
Nothing Productions?

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON
It's New Thing! Why does everybody--
you remember DC Talk? God is doing
a NuThang?

BILLY
Oh, no, sir, I only listen to
Christian music.

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON
They are--

Billy taps on the keyboard and cranks the speakers. A GOSPEL
CHOIR starts rockin' out.

INT. BAPTIST BUILDING - OFFICE - SAME TIME

A table full of OLD WOMEN have an assembly line going. One
folds the papers, another stuffs the envelope, another
stamps, and the last woman files it in a box.

They stop to listen to the invasive GOSPEL BEAT that thumps
through their walls. Utensils on their desk begin to vibrate
along the surface. They look a little concerned.

INT. ACKERSON HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Movie night. Michael brings a notepad and pencils. Rebecca
has a bowl of popcorn and dumps in a bag of gummi bears. They
sit on the couch and pull a comfy blanket across themselves.

REBECCA
I can't believe we are passing up
"American Idol" for --

She checks the box...

REBECCA (CONT'D)
"Thief in the Night." Looks a
little spooky.

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON
It's not spooky... it's from the
Bible, you wimp.

Michael pushes play. The movie is not rewind. In fact its
cued to a part where a gigantic scorpion tail comes through a
front door of this person who is SCREAMING.

Rebecca grabs the remote and clicks it off, smacking Michael.

REBECCA
I don't do horror.

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON
It's not horror. It's end times.

REBECCA
Pass. What else you got?

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON
"Last Flight Out?" Bush pilot
rescues medical missionary from
drug dealers. Christian drama
tropes ensue.

REBECCA
Sounds like that last Rambo. Didn't
he already save the missionaries?

She struggles to get up, Michael pulls her back down as he stands and swaps out the tapes in the VHS player.

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON
Relax. It's World Wide Pictures.
That's Billy Graham, babe. It'll be
top notch!

He sits back down beside her.

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. ACKERSON HOUSE - LIVING ROOM NIGHT - LATER

Rebecca is all smiles! Happily MUNCHING her handfuls of popcorn/gummies. Michael wants to gouge his own eyes out.

REBECCA
(sarcastic)
What a great movie!

Michael groans and reads from his iPhone.

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON
Yeah, right. This movie tanked so
bad it single handedly killed off
World Wide Pictures. Dead.

REBECCA
"It's top notch, babe. It's Billy
frikkin Graham." Haha, help me up.

Michael pushes her butt away from the couch to help her achieve escape velocity. She waddles away.

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON

What happened to Christian art? We used to have Sistine Chapels and Mona Lisas and now we've got "The Omega Code."

REBECCA (O.S.)

You sound like those two grouchy muppets. Heckle and Jeckle.

Michael looks through the box of tapes.

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON

No, babe, Statler and Waldorf and they were obviously prophets. You think God wants his name attached to these? At least he's got "Chariots of Fire" and "The Mission".

Ding.

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON/ERIC (O.S.)

Actually, "Chariots of Fire" was not a Christian Film.

Michael looks behind the couch where Eric Liddell stretches in his white "Chariots of Fire" outfit.

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON

What?

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON/ERIC

Yeah, "Chariots of Fire" and "The Mission" were made by the same production company, Enigma. Not a Christian Film company. Not a Christian film.

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON

But a film about Christians.

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON/ERIC

Of course.

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON

Okay, and next you're gonna tell me that "The 10 Commandments" isn't a Christian film?

Eric just looks at Michael, eyebrows raised.

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON (CONT'D)

What?!?

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON/ERIC
Hate to burst your bubble, Cecil B.
DeMille was Jewish, not Christian.

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON
Why is everyone else telling our
own stories better than we are?

Eric stands and heads out the door.

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON/ERIC
Why, indeed. Anyway, gotta run.

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON
What exactly are you training for--

It's too late. Eric's gone. Michael sits down at the computer with his bowl of popcorn and starts it up. Rebecca enters behind him and kisses his neck.

REBECCA
Did you go outside? I thought i
heard the front door.

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON
No. It was "Chariots of Fire" dude.

Doesn't even register with her.

REBECCA
Mm. Are you getting the van checked
tomorrow? I don't want the engine
to blow up.

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON
I betcha 100 bucks that Spielberg
doesn't drive a minivan.

REBECCA
Promise me you'll get it checked
tomorrow.

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON
Alright, I'll get it checked.

REBECCA
Tomorrow!

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON
Tomorrow!

REBECCA (O.S.)
Okay, I'm going to bed you coming?

He's about to respond and then a bra lands on his head.

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON
Woman, where are your clothes?

REBECCA (O.S.)
I betcha 100 bucks you've got
something that Spielberg can't
have.

Michael closes the laptop and runs out peeling his shirt off.

EXT. CAPITOL BLVD - DEALERSHIPS - DAY

Michael sits at a stoplight in his minivan which is making
some weird CAR NOISES. He looks up and sees a HONDA REPAIR
shop. But, right next to it he sees a BMW DEALERSHIP.

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON
Hm. What would Spielberg drive?
What should the President of
NuThang Productions drive? Hmm.

The light turns green and he guns it past the Honda entrance.

INT. BMW DEALERSHIP - DAY

Michael enters and approaches the first desk where NOLAN is
on the phone. He signals "one second" as he wraps up. Michael
walks over to a giant birdcage housing a beautiful parrot.

NOLAN
That's Caesar. He is 32 years old!

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON
What! He's the same age as me. We
might be twins.

NOLAN
Maybe, one thing for sure is you
never figure when you get a pet at
14 years old that it will be with
you for the next 30 years.

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON
Does he talk?

NOLAN
Won't shut up.

PARROT

Wanna beer?

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON

A beer? I think your bird is hitting on me.

Nolan laughs.

NOLAN

Yeah he's an alcoholic but he sells a lot of cars so we keep him on the payroll. Speaking of, I saw you eyeballing our 325 out front. Shall we?

Michael and Nolan walk outside.

EXT. BMW DEALERSHIP - SAME TIME

A gorgeous little 325i glistens in the sun. Nolan stands by while Michael circles it appreciatively. It's intoxicatingly beautiful.

NOLAN

I just reduced it from 16-9 down to 13-9 because we frankly need it off the lot. Caesar is tired of looking at it.

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON

13-9? For a beamer? That's a steal.

NOLAN

Great condition. Let me make a copy of your drivers license and you can take her for a spin.

Michael reaches for his wallet, hands Nolan his license and Nolan goes inside. Michael takes a minute to do a closer inspection.

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON (V.O.)

I could hear God talking to me again. And he really wanted me to have this Spielberg Director's car. I had to look the part! And honestly, who am I to argue with the Creator of the Universe? Or Caesar the parrot?

Michael rubs the shiny BMW logo on the hood, smiling.

EXT. CAPITOL BOULEVARD - DAY - TRAVELLING

A beautiful silver 325i cruises down the road. The license plate reads: "Directr"

INT. BMW - TRAVELLING

Michael talks into his headset as he whisks in and out of traffic. Even though its an auto-transmission, he finds great pleasure taking it through the tip-tronic gears.

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON

(on phone)

Yes Mr. Spielberg. I'm glad you called me back. Here's the pitch, Jaws... the Prequel. It's "Finding Nemo" meets "Anaconda"...

His phone RINGS for real. He fumbles to pick up and accidentally hits an AC button that blows AIR really loudly.

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON (CONT'D)

(on phone)

Hello? Hold on babe, I can hardly hear you.

He flicks some more buttons and the doors lock and the radio comes on.

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON (CONT'D)

What? Why, yes of course I did. The van is as good as new! Yeah, just like that. How much? It was a steal, you're not gonna believe it. But, I've got a script reading now and then I'll be home after.

He succeeds in getting the radio off, but the windshield wipers are on, scraping RUBBER on dry glass.

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON (CONT'D)

I am the greatest husband. Just remember that for later. Love you, too.

He hangs up quickly and presses some more buttons as his seat compresses him into the steering wheel.

INT. DOWNTOWN DURHAM - OLD TOBACCO WAREHOUSE - DAY

Elevator doors open and Michael steps out quickly with his arms full of scripts, spilling everywhere.

He makes a beeline for a table in the middle of the cavernous space where ANDREA and some other LOCAL ACTORS and MICHELLE THE P.A. sit idly.

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON
 Sorry, I'm late. Car stuff.
 Michelle, could you--?

He hands a stack of scripts to Michelle.

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON (CONT'D)
 Hello, Andrea. Congrats on the tv
 show. So glad you could still join
 us.

Andrea lifts up her large sunglasses and seats them atop her perfect, blond locks. Her smile could melt butter.

ANDREA
 You haven't heard? It's Andi now.
 And I would not miss your big debut
 movie, S. Michael Ackerson!

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON
 Okay, Andi it is... ahem...

Michael blushes and then CLAPS authoritatively, jolting a few others.

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON (CONT'D)
 That was loud. Welcome everyone to
 NuThang Productions. Some of you
 are wondering what you're doing
 here. Some of you have no clue what
 this is about or what's going on.
 But enough about me.

Polite laughter.

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON (CONT'D)
 Ahem, okay. I'm Michael, and I am
 writing-directing a Christian
 Zombie Movie...

CHAIR SCRAPE. An OLD FUDDY DUDDY grabs her cardigan...

OLD FUDDY DUDDY
 I'm out.

...and exits. Michael swallows hard and continues.

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON
 ...I've, uh, asked you all here for
 this read-through of the script.
 (MORE)

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON (CONT'D)

So I can hear it out loud. Take it for a spin. See where the potholes are. Or, should I say, plot holes. Ha.

More silence. One ACTOR STUD raises his hand.

ACTOR STUD

So, we've been cast in this movie?

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON

No, not yet, actual casting is later, this is purely to test drive the script, the dialogue and to--

ACTOR STUD

Have you got a budget?

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON

Budget? Yes. I do have a budget. Actual funding? Like money from a bank? Soon. Ish.

ACTOR STUD

Let's jet, babe.

Actor Stud and Model Girl grab their coats and leave. And then there were eight left.

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON

Anyone else?

SHAKESPEAREAN MAN

You said there would be food?

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON

Sandwiches are on the way, yes.

Shakespearean Man, dressed in a UPS uniform, is satisfied with that answer. So are the others.

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON (CONT'D)

Alright, you've all got the scripts. You've all got parts, we can work out the kinks as we go. Let's kick it over to Bob.

Shakespearean man dons his glasses, rifles to the first page of the script and begins reading in a deep resonant voice. The english accent is too cool.

SHAKESPEAREAN MAN

(reading)

"The Christian Zombie Movie."

He flips the page. Michael winks at Andrea.

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON
It's gonna be good.

Andrea nods.

SHAKESPEAREAN MAN
(reading)
"Fade in. Exterior African Plains.
Night. A full moon emerges from a
cloud casting a cool blue haze over
the night-scape. Native African
footsteps timidly approach a
weeping wattle tree with a basket
of raw meat. Beneath the tree lies
a rotting corpse. The chains around
the corpse don't make much sense
until the body begins to move."

Michael focuses intently on every word. Mouthing along.

SHAKESPEAREAN MAN (CONT'D)
(reading)
"Suddenly a loud moan bubbles up
from the corpse."

Michael snaps and cues Michele the P.A.

MICHELE THE P.A.
Uhhhhhhnn.

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON
C'mon, bigger.

MICHELE THE P.A.
Uhhhhhhhhhhhhnnnn!

SHAKESPEAREAN MAN
(reading)
"The villager drops the basket to
the ground and runs away as fast as
she can. Clouds pass back over the
moon, plunging the area into utter
darkness."

Michael's phone begins to RING -- everyone checks their own phones.

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON
Guys could we please keep our
phones off -- oh, that's me. Okay,
keep going, Bob.

He ducks his head under the table for privacy, whispering.

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON (CONT'D)

Hello?

SHAKESPEAREAN MAN

(reading)

"Interior. First Church of the Most
Highly Anointed. Men's Bathroom.
Day."

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON

(on phone)

That sounds great. Look, can I call
you back later?

Michael tries hard not to stare at Andrea's legs but those
golden stems are right there next to him.

SHAKESPEAREAN MAN

(reading)

"Zachary the preacher's kid douses
a cigarette in the toilet when he
hears someone enter."

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON

(on phone)

Really? 3 o'clock? Good. Byeeee.

ANDREA

(reading)

"What's up, mother-fathers!"

A TEENAGE ACTOR picks up his part.

TEENAGE ACTOR

(reading)

"Uh. Yo fam, what's a snack like
you doin in a crib like this,
bruh?"

Michael sits back up mouthing the words right along with
them.

ANDREA

(reading)

"Jeremiah sent me. No cap."

TEENAGE ACTOR

(reading)

"Bet. You got the cheddar."

SHAKESPEAREAN MAN

(reading)

"Holly takes a wad of cash from her bible and waves it at Zach. Zach grabs it and fishes a ziploc bag of marijuana drugs from his coat pocket and hands it to her."

ANDREA

(reading)

"Cool cool cool. Low key you're pretty legit. For a preacher's kid."

Michael pumps a fist in the air. It's working.

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON

Yeah! Preacher's kid. That's great. Let's, uh, awesome, let's continue.

They all flip to the next page together.

INT. DOWNTOWN DURHAM - OLD TOBACCO WAREHOUSE - LATER

Everyone's gone but Andrea, Michele the P.A. and Michael. Michele walks out with all the scripts in one hand, a sandwich in the other hand.

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON

Thanks, again, Andi. This was so helpful. You have no idea.

ANDREA

Not a problem, S. Michael Ackerson. It's a great script. Be fun to work together, again.

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON

Oh and Michele, I need a couple of those to take with me to a meeting.

Michele stops, returns. Michael takes a couple off the top.

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON (CONT'D)

Thanks, Michele. You're awesome.

Michele walks out waving her sandwich.

MICHELE THE P.A.

Say it with baked goods!

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON

That's our motto.

Andrea collects her purse and heads toward the elevator.

ANDREA

You coming, Mr. Director?

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON

Not yet, I'm gonna stick around a few minutes before I head out to my next meeting.

ANDREA

Well, call me. Tah-tahhh.

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON

I will call you... and your tah-tahhhs...

The elevator door closes and he realizes what he said.

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON (CONT'D)

Oh crap--

MEDEA(O.S.)

Quick, what is the first rule of directing?

Michael wheels around. Medea sits atop a table leafing through the script.

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON

First rule of directing? I dunno. Wear comfortable shoes and a dress?

Medea hops off the table and walks over. Michael takes a step back.

MEDEA

First rule of directing... do NOT fall in luuuurv with your lead actress.

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON

What?!? I'm...she was, wait, what?!

MEDEA

Leave the shawties alone! No bootie calls.

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON

Of course I'm not--that's a dumb--I am married!

He holds up his ring. Medea is unshakeable.

MEDEA

This rule is cardinal. It cannot be bent, it will not be broken.

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON

I can't believe I'm being lectured by a drag queen. Well, if you know so much about directing--

Michael spins around, but Medea has vanished.

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON (CONT'D)

I hate it when they do that.

He picks up his scripts.

ANDREA (O.S.)

Do what?

Michael jumps. Andrea has returned.

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON

When they, uh, sneak up on me like that. I thought you were ta-tahh.

ANDREA

Didn't mean to spook ya.

She stretches past him to grab a cell phone off the table and waves it.

ANDREA (CONT'D)

Wouldn't want to forget this. Tarantino could be calling. Or Fincher. Or Ackerson. Ta-tahhh, again, Mr. Director.

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON

S-see ya. Again. Miss Very Professional Actress person.

She smiles as she returns to the elevator. Michael watches her go and then turns, almost running into Medea again.

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON (CONT'D)

Would you cut that out?!

MEDEA

First Rule, Zombie boy.

Medea holds up a finger for emphasis.

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON
Go away. Stop messing with my head.
That goes for all of you!

MEDEA
Tsk. Mmm-hm.

He picks up his stuff and exits, leaving Medea sitting alone atop the desk, swinging her legs back and forth, merrily.

INT. BAPTIST BUILDING - EDIT SUITE - DAY

Michael enters, flailing his arms about.

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON
Holy crap, I am so pissed--piss--
Episcopalian...is a denomination.

He sees a small covey of BLUE HAired LADIES emerging from the engineering room with Billy -- who shoots him the evil eye.

BILLY
So that's where all the magic happens, ladies. And speaking of magic, look who's here. None other than the President of NuThang Productions, the mastermind behind such timeless hits as "What is the Baptist Building" and "Families Making a Difference".

Some "OOHS" and "AHS" from the small, appreciative crowd.

BILLY (CONT'D)
Make sure you shake his hand on the way out.

Michael grabs the door and holds it while every one of them shakes his hand and passes by. One offers a pen for an autograph. He signs and smiles as she grabs his cheek and gives it a shake.

ELDERLY FAN
God bless you and your family.

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON
Oh, he does, Ma'am. He does.

He closes the door behind him and Billy cracks up laughing.

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON (CONT'D)
I think I just signed a Waffle House receipt.

Billy grabs a folder and heads toward the door.

BILLY

No time for small talk, we've got a meeting on the 3rd floor.

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON

The executive floor? With who?

BILLY

Oh, just someone who saw "Facing the Giants" and thinks they may want to fund a Christian Movie.

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON

A Christian Zombie movie?

Billy holds the door.

BILLY

I might not mention that part first thing. Or second or third thing...

They exit.

INT. BAPTIST BUILDING - 3RD FLOOR - THE BIG OFFICE - DAY

Billy and Michael walk into the posh receiving area. An 87 year old EXECUTIVE SECRETARY spins around in her chair, having a time straightening up to the desk.

Billy grabs two mints from the jar and hands one behind his back to Michael.

BILLY

Good afternoon, Ma'am. Lovely to see you, again.

EXECUTIVE SECRETARY

These new chairs are gonna be the death of me, William.

BILLY

Take your time.

She makes some final adjustments to the height of her chair and then she's ready to talk.

EXECUTIVE SECRETARY

There now, what can I do for you boys?

BILLY

We're here to see Dr. Turnfeld

EXECUTIVE SECRETARY

And do you have an appointment.

BILLY

Yes ma'am we do and it started
about 5 minutes ago.

She looks up at him, scrutinizing.

EXECUTIVE SECRETARY

Late, huh?

BILLY

I'm not gonna lie to you, gorgeous.
It was his fault.

He points to Michael, who is a deer in headlights. The Executive Secretary takes a deep breath to let loose a good solid dressing down. Billy quickly adds--

BILLY (CONT'D)

I told him it's not the way we do
business around here.

The executive secretary seems pleased to hear this.

BILLY (CONT'D)

And he apologized. Profusely.

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON

Profusely.

At that, she disarms.

EXECUTIVE SECRETARY

Well, then let me ring Dr. Turnfeld
and let him know.

She pushes a couple of buttons on the phone and gets a weird SIGNAL TONE. Billy and Michael exchange a look. She hangs up to start over and punches a new sequence. Same TONE.

EXECUTIVE SECRETARY (CONT'D)

(very loud)
Dr. Turnfeld?

DR TURNFELD (ON PHONE)

Yes, ma'am?

EXECUTIVE SECRETARY
 (very loud)
 Your 3 o'clock appointment is here.

DR TURNFELD (ON PHONE)
 Very good, send them on in.

EXECUTIVE SECRETARY
 Right through that door.

BILLY
 Thank you ever so kindly.

She smiles as Billy moves on, holds up a warning finger to Michael. Michael moves quickly past.

INT. BAPTIST BUILDING - 3RD FLOOR - THE BIG OFFICE

DR. HOLLISTER TURNFELD III steps from behind the desk. He's not nearly so deep as he is wide. It's a Southern Baptist thing. He's got a bearpaw of a hand that he shakes with Billy and then Michael.

DR TURNFELD
 Gentlemen. Welcome. Welcome.
 Please have a seat.

BILLY
 Thank you for seeing us, Dr.
 Turnfeld.

DR TURNFELD
 Any time, Billy. Great to see you.

BILLY
 Great to be seen. And this is
 Michael Ackerson.

DR TURNFELD
 Michael Ackerson the filmmaker?

BILLY
 Michael Ackerson the Christian
 filmmaker.

DR TURNFELD
 I love what you did with the Family
 Missions piece. I was moved by the
 music and the poetic cinematography
 and, frankly, the donations have
 been through the roof.

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON
 Ha. Well, sir, if they're not
 throwing their wallets at the
 screen we haven't done our jobs.

Dr. Turnfeld returns and perches on his desk pressing a
 button on the phone.

DR TURNFELD
 (into speaker)
 Ms. Lumley?

Ms. Lumley can be heard loudly through the office door, but
 not on the intercom.

EXECUTIVE SECRETARY (O.S.)
 Yes, sir?

DR TURNFELD
 (into speaker)
 Could you wrestle us up some coffee
 and maybe some pie from the kitchen
 if there's any left?

EXECUTIVE SECRETARY (O.S.)
 I'll be right in.

DR TURNFELD
 (into speaker)
 Bless your heart.
 (to the boys)
 She's a precious saint of God. I'm
 gonna miss her when she goes.

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON
 Is she retiring?

DR TURNFELD
 Never! But Lord knows old as she
 is, she's bound to kick the bucket
 any minute.

Suddenly upbeat.

DR TURNFELD (CONT'D)
 Billy tells me the Lord's laid it
 on your heart to make a Christian
 movie.

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON
 Well, yes sir. He has. I was
 sitting there cleaning up a wall of
 p--

BILLY
 (under his breath)
 Cough. Skip it. Ahem.

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON
 I was in Sunday school and it just
 came to me.

DR TURNFELD
 Wow.

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON
 A whole movie idea flashed before
 my eyes.

DR TURNFELD
 That is really something.

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON
 After that, I told the Lord if he
 wanted me to make a movie, I'll do
 it. So, I quit my job and wrote the
 script and here I am.

DR TURNFELD
 Marvelous. Mm. It's magnificent the
 way the Almighty orchestrates. The
 way he improvisationally
 deconstructs who we are and
 subplants it with his own triune
 essence. Who he wants us to be.

Michael's lost.

DR TURNFELD (CONT'D)
 What's it about?

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON
 I'm sorry?

DR TURNFELD
 This movie God gave you. It must
 be, pardon my vernacular, the bomb
 diggedy.

(to Billy)
 I've got two teenage sons, you
 know, they're good boys. Their
 extraordinary vocabulary is quite
 the communication impediment
 between us.

Billy and Michael nod appreciatively.

DR TURNFELD (CONT'D)
So, what's your film about.

Michael swallows hard, looks at Billy and then carefully chooses every word.

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON
Again, not so much "my film" I believe as the story that God wants to tell.

Dr. Turnfeld waves his hand to continue.

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON (CONT'D)
It's about these preacher's kids or PKs. One Sunday, one of the PKs gets caught selling drugs in the church bathroom...

DR TURNFELD
Oh my.

Michael pauses, thrown off.

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON
So, his dad the Pastor decides that instead of a spring break at the beach, his son will go on their annual missions trip to Africa to bring supplies to the families they support...

DR TURNFELD
Missionaries...that's good...

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON
...when they get there, this one village is really happy to see them. "The Christians are here, the Christians are here..."

Chiming in.

DR TURNFELD
..."the Christians are here"...

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON
...yes, and they take them outside the village to this old weeping wattle tree where there's a--

The door CRASHES open and the Executive Secretary enters pushing a cart of coffee and food stuffs.

DR TURNFELD

Oh, come on in, put that cart right over here, Ms. Lumley.

(to Michael)

Please continue, continue.

Ms. Lumley CRASHES and BANGS the cart closer to them.

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON

Right, so they go up to this tree where there's a dead body chained up to it. But the body is still moving because there's, there's demonic activity inside it. Like it's a, it's a--

Crash crash. Now she hands up a cup and saucer to Dr. Turnfeld and it RAT-TAT-RATTLES all the way into his hand. Then, all the noise suddenly ceases.

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON (CONT'D)

--well, it's a zombie!

EXECUTIVE SECRETARY

Oh my word.

DR TURNFELD

Thank you, Ms. Lumley. We can take it from here.

He takes her gently by the arm to lead her back out.

EXECUTIVE SECRETARY

The word says whatsoever things are pure and holy to think on these things....

DR TURNFELD

You are absolutely right, Ms. Lumley. I'll take care of everything.

The Executive Secretary shoots a look back at Michael. Michael shrinks in his chair. Turnfeld closes the door behind her.

DR TURNFELD (CONT'D)

Ms. Lumley has a point.

Michael stands quickly.

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON

Dr. Turnfeld, Jesus called the Pharisees whitewashed tombs.

(MORE)

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON (CONT'D)
Beautiful on the outside but inside
they are the walking dead--

Turnfeld waves dismissively.

DR TURNFELD
I've got all that, son. But Ms.
Lumley still has a point. The point
is its gonna be a tough sell out
there to the Evangelical Christian
audience.

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON
But, surely you--

Billy grabs his arm to make him sit. Michael checks himself.

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON (CONT'D)
It is a tough sell to Ms. Lumley.
But this film is not for the Ms.
Lumley's out there. What about your
own boys? What would they think?
They are the real target audience.

Turnfeld pops a cookie from the tray into his mouth.

DR TURNFELD
Last week, my boys brought home the
wildest video game you've ever
seen.

He leans in conspiratorially.

DR TURNFELD (CONT'D)
I actually played one round with
them where I was this promiscuously
dressed young lady in a shopping
mall full of Zombies.

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON
Yes! Zombies are big! Very popular.
Zombies.

DR TURNFELD
I made them take it back to the
store.

Michael grimaces. Dr. Turnfeld stands thinking. He pops
another cookie.

DR TURNFELD (CONT'D)

We've got a special fund, it's a discretionary fund and essentially it's money we lose end of the year if we don't spend it. It's earmarked for investment and I just, I just, my heart's cry is for today's youth. Reaching out to them on their own level. So many of them aren't going to listen to an old fogey like me in a pulpit. Bless their little hearts. Just not gonna happen. But they'll listen to you and they'll sure as heck fire listen to a Christian Zombie.

Michael perks back up.

DR TURNFELD (CONT'D)

Here's what we're gonna do then, and not a word of this to anyone you hear me?

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON AND BILLY

No. Not a word. No, sir.

They all lean in and Turnfeld begins outlining his plan for the film.

INT. BAPTIST BUILDING - LOBBY

Billy and Michael scoot past Sandy the receptionist on their way to the Video Production area. The door closes.

INT. BAPTIST BUILDING - OFFICE - SAME TIME

Another table full of OLD WOMEN have an assembly line going. One folds the paper, another stuffs the envelope, another stamps and the last woman files it in a box.

An invasive GOSPEL BEAT starts pounding and thumping through the walls. Utensils on their desk begin to vibrate along the surface.

EXT. BAPTIST BUILDING - LATER

Billy and Michael walk out together. They walk past Michael's BMW to get to Billy's black, humble Chevy Van.

BILLY

Look at that fancy beamer. Must be a tv evangelist in town.

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON

Mm.

BILLY

We should scratch it. You know for Jesus.

Michael jumps between Billy and beamer.

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON

What?!? No, I won't let you damage... your Christian witness.

Billy eyes him suspiciously. He fake jabs towards the BMW with the key again.

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON (CONT'D)

No!

Billy stands back, smugly.

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON (CONT'D)

What? Say it.

BILLY

Nothing. I'm just wondering, when is Joel Osteen gonna need his car back?

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON

Har har hardy har har. They should have held you under a little longer when you got baptized.

BILLY

Doesn't matter what I think. What does Mrs. NuThang think of it?

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON

Um.

Awkward pause. Billy raises his eyebrows in surprise.

BILLY

Oh no you di'int!

Michael scrunches his face sheepishly.

INT. ACKERSON HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Michael enters the front door. The place is kind of a mess. He sees little piles of clothes everywhere.

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON
Rebecca? Jada?

There's no sound in the whole house. Well, except for Medea's singing....

MEDEA
"There's no time to change your mind, the son has come and you've been left behind...."

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON
Zip it, Medea. Where's Rebecca?

MEDEA
Rapture. Poof! She's gone. They're all gone. Classic midpoint twist! Gone. All except for you.

Michael starts hyperventilating.

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON
Liar. Rebecca!?!

He runs upstairs, but the rooms are empty. He runs back downstairs, picking up one of the piles of clothes, hugging it close.

He hears a TOILET FLUSH and Rebecca comes around the corner from the bedroom holding Jada. Her eyes are red, she looks a little rough.

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON (CONT'D)
Rebecca! You're still here.

Michael runs up to her, but she passes Jada off to him and keeps walking.

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON (CONT'D)
Rebecca? What's the matter, babe?

She collects her purse and things.

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON (CONT'D)
Hey. What's wrong. Where are you going?

REBECCA

It's Tuesday night, Michael. Where do I always go on Tuesday night?

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON

Oh, ladies bible study. Shoot, I forgot about that. Sorry. You're not gonna be too late if you hurry. Especially in the brand new--

REBECCA

That's not why I'm upset.

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON

Then...what?

REBECCA

Why didn't you tell me Andrea was going to be at your script-reading today?

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON

What?

Michael searches to catch up quick. No dice.

REBECCA

I saw an email from her in your inbox. Said how much *fuuuuun* she had today, how you're so *amaazing* and *smaaaaaart* and *funny* and she can't wait to make a movie with you.

Michael's a little flattered.

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON

Really?

Rebecca shoves past him, angrily.

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON (CONT'D)

I mean...wait! No, it's not like that. Stop.

He grabs her arm and she turns to him.

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON (CONT'D)

It's not like that. It's strictly professional. It's business. That's it. She is not a problem. No booty calls. I promise you... I promise you and Medea.

She searches his eyes and begins to soften. Then his cell phone starts to RING. She picks it up and looks at it:

INSERT PHONE DISPLAY: "Andrea"

She clouds up again --

REBECCA

Tell it to your *girlfriend!*

-- throws the phone at him and storms out.

INT. ACKERSON HOUSE - KITCHEN

Michael sits beside Jada at the table. They share a bowl of cold mac & cheese and chicken nuggets shaped like dinosaurs.

JADA

Mommy mad to you, boojoo.

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON

Yeah, cause boojoo's a flippin' idiot.

JADA

What flippin'?

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON

Uh, never mind.

JADA

Are you happy to me, daddy?

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON

Yeah, I'm happy to you, Jay-jay.
Are you happy to me?

JADA

Yeah, silly goose. Honk!

She squeezes his nose hard with cheesy fingers. He grabs a dino-chicken, pretend-making it talk.

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON

(big dino voice)

Are you honkin my friend, honky?
Well I am a honkasaurus rex and
I'll eat your whole honkin face nom
nom nom nom.

She giggles and thrashes as the honkasaurus "attacks".

INT. ACKERSON HOUSE - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Moonlight casts an ethereal glow about the room. Rebecca sleeps with her back to Michael. Michael is turned toward her, eyes wide open.

Suddenly he feels a presence and turns to see a MAASAI WARRIOR in a ceremonial mask standing by his bed. Michael INHALES SHARPLY and braces himself, but the Maasai does not attack. He only turns and walks from the room.

Michael checks back with Rebecca, but she is fast asleep. So, curiously, he rises and follows.

INT. ACKERSON HOUSE - LIVING ROOM

The Maasai stands in the middle of the living room and points toward Michael's computer. Michael walks over and looks at the computer and then back at the strange warrior who speaks to him in Swahili.

MAASAI WARRIOR

(subtitled)

We need to work on certain inaccuracies in the tale of the Walking Dead of Africa.

Surprisingly, Michael answers back in perfect dialect.

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON

(subtitled)

This story was given me by Great Spirit. It does not require help... even from Great Maasai Warrior like yourself.

The warrior shakes his spear and rattles some bracelets on his arm and ankles and dances a small circle.

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON (CONT'D)

No, no, no. That's not--

(subtitled)

The under story of the love relationship between white hero and white female is solid.

MAASAI WARRIOR

(subtitled)

White Trash friend no need to die early. Walking Dead of Africa kill too soon. Need to draw out upon triangle of love.

Michael spins around to the computer.

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON
Now that's an interesting point.

Michael begins typing into the computer. He stops and turns around again.

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON (CONT'D)
Have you ever seen one? An African
zombie?

The Maasai warrior RATTLES his bracelets. He takes a pouch from his belt. Removing some contents he throws a handful into the fireplace which explodes into a blazing fire.

The light casts a huge shadow on the wall behind him and he begins to SING and MIME an intricate shadow story and dance that chills Michael to the core.

At the end, the fire goes dark, the flames die down and the Maasai Warrior is gone.

Michael sits alone in the dark.

INT. MEGACHURCH USA - AUDITORIUM - MORNING

Worship service. Rebecca gets into the MUSIC immediately raising her hands and singing. Michael watches her hypocrisy in disgust. He stands there like a sourpuss. He starts to look around a little and sees another SOURPUSS MAN standing a few rows back.

Suddenly he hears some CHAINS RATTLE and a rotted fleshy hand slides around the man's shoulder and a Zombie rises behind him and pulls him down. Michael shows some concern, but no one else seems to notice. He looks around some more and another SOURPUSS WOMAN stands with arms crossed.

The RATTLE returns and a Zombie grabs her and pulls her down. Michael looks around and sees his own folded arms.

ZOMBIE
I see you, S. Michael Ackerson.

He looks up suddenly afraid as a RATTLING approaches and clammy undead hand slides around his neck. He is bodily lifted up and SCREAMS silently but no one can hear him.

He is just about to be munched by the zombie when we--

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. ACKERSON HOUSE - BEDROOM

Michael wakes up suddenly in a sweat. He looks around to get his bearings. Rebecca's not in the bed. He climbs out.

INT. ACKERSON HOUSE - SHOWER

Michael timidly enters the shower, watching Rebecca wash and rinse her face. She finishes, grabs a towel and exits the shower without a word. Michael shakes his head and rolls his eyes, frustrated.

He stands under a spray of hot water rinsing himself off. As he turns to face the other direction Andrea pops in, washing her hair. Smiling coyly.

ANDREA

Sure had fuuuuuun with you today at the script reading, S. Michael Ackerson, you're so amaaaazing and smaaaaart and funny and I can't wait to make a movie with you.

Michael turns back under the spray, rubs his eyes under the water and turns back to her only now there's a zombie there which ATTACKS.

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON

Get off me!

The Zombie GROANS AND GURGLES, which surprisingly Michael understands as he struggles to keep it from biting.

ZOMBIE

(subtitled)

Your inciting incident and lack of subtext makes me want to bite your face off.

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON

Auugghh.

They wrestle right out of the frame.

INT. ACKERSON HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - MORNING

Michael wakes up suddenly at the computer. The mouse pad is stuck to his forehead. He peels it off and checks everything around himself. It appears he is awake for real this time.

But he's on edge now. He rises and walks out of the room, spinning this way and that to make sure he's not being snuck up on.

Rebecca emerges from the bedroom.

REBECCA

Don't forget we've got the big ultrasound today at 2:30.

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON

What time?

REBECCA

Two. Thirty.

She heads into the kitchen.

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON

Wait a second, I've got an investors meeting at 2. How is that gonna work? Can't you move it? Do I need to even be there?

Rebecca comes out of the kitchen and stands in front of him.

REBECCA

Today we find out the sex of the baby. We listen to the baby's heartbeat and try to explain to Jada that this is her new brother or sister. It's been planned for six weeks. Cancelling three hours before is not an option. Any questions?

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON

Couldn't you tape it or something?

She walks out, seething.

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON (CONT'D)

Kidding! That was a joke.

SLAM. The bedroom door closes again. Michael turns to the desk and mindlessly picks up some bills sitting there, one in particular catches his attention.

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON (CONT'D)

How did we get 2 months behind on Verizon? We just paid them.

REBECCA (O.S.)

Well, maybe we should switch. I'll go out and buy new cars and have lunches and you stay home and do finances and change poopy diapers.

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON

Sigh. Okay, maybe you should give me your receipts.

He hears some commotion in the room, the door unlocks. Michael barely ducks a purse thrown his way--

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON (CONT'D)

You missed--

--but catches the wallet in the face. Bedroom door SLAMS again. Michael lays on the floor.

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON (CONT'D)

Ow! I'm calling Focus on the Family and reporting you. Shirley Dobson's ghost is gonna come over here and kick your--

The radio BLARES from the bedroom.

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON (CONT'D)

Praise the Lord.

He dabs at his eye, checking for blood.

INT. MEXICAN RESTAURANT - LOBBY - DAY

Michael enters the restaurant. He looks a little rough as the HOST greets him.

HOST

How many, my friend?

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON

Three. I'm meeting some people.

HOST

What's the name?

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON

Gazilla Brothers.

The host's smile fades into a pucker.

HOST
Yes, your Philadelphia friends are
already here.

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON
Oh boy. Sounds like they've already
made quite an impression.

HOST
Apparently our salsa is not the
real salsa.

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON
Yikes.

They move across the dining floor.

INT. MEXICAN RESTAURANT - TABLE - DAY

The host leads Michael over to a table where ZACHARY and
RAYMONE (yes, that Zachary and Raymone) rise to meet him.

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON
(to ZACHARY)
Keith?

ZACHARY
Zachary. Zachary Gazilla.

They shake hands.

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON
(to Raymone)
Keith?

RAYMONE
Raymone Gazilla. And you're Keith?

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON
No, I'm Michael. Ackerson.

RAYMONE
Who's Keith?

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON
None of us, apparently.

RAYMONE
Please sit.

They all get comfortable.

RAYMONE (CONT'D)

First thing we've got an NDA we need you to sign before we go any further.

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON

For what? We're just talking about generic film production. No need to lawyer things up. Right? So, Philadelphia, born and raised, on a playground where you spent most of your days--

RAYMONE

I don't want to waste your time, Keith. Have you ever seen this before?

Raymone pulls out a DVD and hands it to Michael to inspect.

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON

"Apocalypse Car Wash," oh, sure. When I was researching Christian films I saw this. Dude there's bad and then there's bad.

RAYMONE

Zach and I made that movie.

Michael winces.

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON

Like, but baaaaad to the bone. The good bad. Can we start over? I need a mulligan.

He smiles, they don't.

RAYMONE

We take our films very seriously.

ZACHARY

Very seriously.

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON

Wait, "films" plural?

RAYMONE

Zach and I have shot eight feature films all together now.

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON

Back the truck up! Wow.

RAYMONE

So you could say we know a thing or two about making movies.

ZACHARY

A thing or two.

RAYMONE

Here's what we discovered... your average Christian film goer don't care squat-all about 35mm film versus video. They don't care. They don't care about lighting or tripods or "sound design." They just want to see the 3 B's -- a little Bible, blood and boobies.

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON

Huh. In, uh, that order?

RAYMONE

Especially the Christian audience. They say they don't, but they love it. They want a scripture verse up front, see some of the sinful carnal life, the strip club scene, the affair and then someone gets saved at the end, and boom our job's done.

ZACHARY

Boom. Job's done.

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON

Have you guys ever seen "Ed Wood"? the DP is all "aren't you gonna shoot a second take," and Johnny Depp is all 'People don't notice those things! Cut, print, check the gate, moving on' and... never mind.

RAYMONE

Guess how long it took us to shoot "Apocalypse Car Wash".

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON

I dunno, a week?

RAYMONE

Try eight hours.

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON
I was kidding. You shot a two hour
film in eight hours? How is that
possible?

RAYMONE
We're Gazilla style.

They proudly bump fists together.

ZACHARY
Gazilla style.

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON
Fun. And what is Gazilla style?

RAYMONE
It's our own invented film style.
You get rid of all that fancy
Hollywood crap and get you some
actors that can improvise, you
know? We didn't even have a script.
More like an outline. On a napkin.

ZACHARY
An outline.

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON
You don't say.
(to Zachary)
You don't say.

RAYMONE
Zachary here is my main actor. He
can really Gazilla the scene right
up. I just cut on the camera and
see where the scene plays out.
Gazilla style. It's a God thing.

ZACHARY
Totally a God thing.

RAYMONE
The camera loves itself some
Zachary.

They both share a laugh.

RAYMONE (CONT'D)
So we understand through our
"sources" that you would like our
help making a movie. Let's hear
your pitch.

ZACHARY
What's your pitch?

Michael looks nervously from one to the other, adjusts his chair and leans forward, stalling for time.

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON
Well...

RAYMONE
C'mon, this is Hollywood, baby, we're on an elevator, I'm a top studio exec and you've got two minutes to wow me.

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON
Yeah. So, it's basically...well it's, really summed up in two words...

He uses his hands to splash out a marquee in the sky.

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON (CONT'D)
...Endtimes Musical. Is that two or three words? End. Times. Musical.

Raymone snaps his fingers at Zach who jots it down.

RAYMONE
Oh that's good. That's gonna sell. We're gonna do well with this film, ooh I can feel it. Just, man, you can hear the titles, like "Broadway Bloodbath" or "Doomsday Disco" or you know or "Pitch Perfect Apocalypse!" Ah, I'm getting excited now.

Michael looks on horrified. He makes a split second decision and knocks his glass of water towards his lap.

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON
Ah, look how clumsy. Excuse me fellows, I'll be right back, keep spitballin' those ideas... I like, "Armageddon Outta Here!"

He takes a napkin, patting off the wet spot as he makes his way to the restroom. At the front of the restaurant, he cuts a hard right out the front door, mouths "Sorry" to the host and keeps walking.

RAYMONE

(whispering)

This is amazing. A real divine appointment. You know, if we wanted we could make our own end-times musical. Happens all the time in Hollywood. Two movies come out with similar themes: "K-9" and "Turner & Hooch", "Armageddon" and "Deep Impact"...

ZACHARY

"Thelma and Louise..."

Lowering his voice.

RAYMONE

We could probably beat him to market with our film. And that would actually help him out. Our marketing could smooth out the way for his film.

ZACHARY

Smooth it right out.

RAYMONE

Armageddon Outta here?

They suddenly realize and look out the window as they hear a BMW PEEL AWAY outside.

EXT. BAPTIST BUILDING - DAY

Michael pulls into an empty space.

INT. BMW - SAME TIME

Michael sits there, phone in hand, unable to dial. DING.
Medea sits up in the backseat.

MEDEA

Do it. Call her up. Be the man.
Tell her she's not the boss of you.

DING. A covered silver platter appears in the passenger seat.

JOHN THE BAPTIST HEAD (O.S.)

(muffled)

Excuse me. Excuse me!

Michael lifts off the cover.

JOHN THE BAPTIST HEAD (CONT'D)

Thank you. Now, what are you doing here, Michael?

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON

Are you the head of John the Baptist?

JOHN THE BAPTIST HEAD

Your family needs you right now.

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON

I don't know. We need the money from these guys or we're screwed.

JOHN THE BAPTIST HEAD

You're screwed? Or the movie is screwed? There's a difference, Michael.

MEDEA

Excuse me, John the Baptist head... Jesus called, he wants you to rewrite Revelation when you're not smoking crack.

She puts the lid back on.

MEDEA (CONT'D)

Michael, listen to me and listen carefully. It's time to saddle up your horses. We've got a trail to blaze. Through the wild blue yonder...?

Michael grabs a CD from Medea.

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON

Let's leave Stephen Curtis Chapman outta this.

Michael dials his phone. Medea sits back, flicking the silver cover, triumphantly. DONG!

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON (CONT'D)

(to Medea)

Perfect. Voicemail.

(oh phone)

Hi, it's me. Just getting to my investor meeting. Will try to make it quick as possible and then head to the doctor. Anyway, um, I'll get there when I get there. Bye.

MEDEA

Decisive. Tough love. She is definitely gonna put rat poison in your Froot Loops. I would.

Michael shakes his head and exits.

INT. BAPTIST BUILDING - CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

Michael sits at the table, staring. He looks up at the clock and then checks his watch. "2:05pm" Billy enters with a stack of documents.

BILLY

Okeedoke. Got the script copies right here. Time to rock and roll.

Silence.

BILLY (CONT'D)

You alright? Hello?

Michael snaps to.

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON

Yeah, just a lot to figure out. Just wanna get this over.

Billy looks at him suspiciously. Before he can say anything, Dr. Turnfeld enters and they both stand.

DR TURNFELD

Howdy boys. Before we get too far, I've got some bad news.

BILLY

What's the matter?

MR TURNFELD

The committee on committee investments has turned down my request to fund your film.

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON

What?

DR TURNFELD

They caught wind of it before I could dress it up and present it properly.

(a beat)

(MORE)

DR TURNFELD (CONT'D)

I suspect Ms. Lumley had something to do with it. Bless her little heart.

BILLY

Well, Dr. Turnfeld, thank you so much for your time, anyway.

DR TURNFELD

You know what they say, son, you can always tell a Baptist...

BILLY

...but you can't tell him much.

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON

...but you can't tell him much.

Turnfeld walks out.

BILLY (CONT'D)

Welp, easy come, easy go.

Michael walks out.

BILLY (CONT'D)

Michael?

There's no answer. Billy leaves the scripts and follows him out. After a second, Raymone ducks his head in the door secretively and signals. Zachary follows. They quickly enter and look around the room.

Zachary picks up one of the scripts and hands it to Raymone.

RAYMONE

(reading)

"The Christian Zombie Movie."

(to Zachary)

That little liar liar pants on fire.

He rolls up the script and tucks it inside his jacket pocket and they leave quickly, bumping into Billy as they do.

BILLY

Excuse me.

RAYMONE

Sorry. Sorry about that.

Billy thinks nothing of it and picks up the remainder of the scripts.

INT. DOCTORS OFFICE - DAY

Michael enters quickly, pushing through some CUSTOMERS and approaching the NURSE on duty.

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON
Is Rebecca still here?

NURSE
Sir, there's a line.

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON
My wife. Rebecca Ackerson, 2:30
appointment...is she still here?

The nurse eyes him up and down, not impressed.

NURSE
Are you Mr. Ackerson?

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON
I am.

NURSE
Mm-hm. Well, that poor girl left
about 10 minutes ago. In a taxi.

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON
I'll fix it. I promise. Just, flew
a little too close to the sun.

Nobody knows what he's talking about. He turns and exits slowly.

INT. DOWNTOWN DURHAM - OLD TOBACCO WAREHOUSE - DAY

Michael sits alone in the large vacant space. Outside, the setting sun bathes the room in orange light. Michael reads his script and then throws it across the room.

It lands at the feet of HOLLY, who picks it up and walks it back over.

HOLLY
You dropped something.

Michael looks up, surprised.

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON
I'm sorry, hey, wait...do I know
you?

HOLLY

"What's up, mother-fathers!"

Her signature line. He stands up and walks closer to her, circling. She pulls out a pack of Marlboro Lights, strikes a match off the bottom of her designer boots and takes a puff.

Michael notes her Lara Croft style, her Jesus Tattoo.

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON

I know you. The Tombraider outfit,
cool anime hair, tats and attitude.
You're Holly. I wrote you.

She smiles.

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON (CONT'D)

And there's the million-watt smile.

HOLLY

Aren't you surprised to see me?

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON

Not really. No, I'm pretty screwed
up right now.

HOLLY

You must be.

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON

What?

She hands holds the script up.

HOLLY

Dude, this teen dialogue sucks
dinosaur balls and out of nowhere
the whole thing turns into a
Michael Bay movie in the third act.

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON

Ohhh great. Here we go again.
Getting lectured. By my own
characters.

HOLLY

Why won't you listen to us,
Michael?

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON

Go away.

HOLLY

(off the script)

Who is this girl? This isn't me.
This is some one dimensional
Pollyanna cardboard version of me.
I don't use words like "bullcrap."
I use words like "Bullsh*t" and--

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON

I'm not listening...la la la.

He holds his hands over his ears. She grabs him and spins him around.

HOLLY

What are you so afraid of?

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON

(boiling over)

You are my creation. You do what I
tell you to do. You say what I tell
you to say. You are a figment of my
imagination. You serve at my
pleasure for one purpose and one
purpose only: to tell my story--

WHAP! She punches him in the nose, he falls to the ground, she leans over him offering a hand. He refuses. Does it himself.

HOLLY

When did it become your story S.
Michael Ackerson? I thought it was
God's idea. This? This is garbage.

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON

I will not be abused by my own
characters.

He throws a chair at her but she's not there anymore. She's behind him. She shoves him.

HOLLY

Garbage, S. Michael Ackerson. God
had a story and you, neutered it.
Took out all the meaty, poignant
parts all the edgy messy stuff so
what's left is just this flat,
vanilla snooze fest. What's my job
in this script?

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON
Your job is to be an example of
what not to do! You are a bad
person--

HOLLY
No. My job, apparently, is to be
preached at for 97 pages.

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON
What do you want from me?

HOLLY
I want the truth!

Michael points right into the camera.

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON
They can't handle the truth.

HOLLY
Well they sure as hell don't need
this bullcrap!

She throws his script at him.

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON
Watch your mouth! I will not stand
by and... what are you doing?

She pulls out one of her huge Desert Eagle handguns and racks
one in the chamber and aims it right at him. He smiles.

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON (CONT'D)
You're a figment of my imagination,
you can't hurt me.

HOLLY
I'm doing this for your own good.

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON
Excuse me?

HOLLY
Do you trust me? You have to trust
me or it won't work.

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON
Trust you? What are you talking
about? You're insane!

They're both super heated now.

HOLLY

You wrote me, Michael, remember?
Remember when you first met me?
You were scared of me then, too.
Admit it.

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON

I was not scared. You're just--
(indicating gun)
-- a little much, you know?

HOLLY

Admit it!

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON

Okay I was scared shirtless because
I couldn't control you. I didn't
know what you were gonna do or say
next. You were screwing up my
story. Because your life is a mess.
Because...

(a little choked up)

Because my life is a mess. And I
don't know what I'm doing, Holly. I
don't--

She relaxes. Smiles warmly at his little breakthrough.

HOLLY

Very good. Now, do you trust me?

Michael and Holly stare each other down. He searches her eyes
for something and finally finds it.

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON

Yes, Holly. I trust you.

BLAM! She fires a shot that leaves a smoking contrail
connecting the space between them. It passes through him with
no damage, but rips into a Zombie who was hiding in cloak
mode right behind him.

Maybe inside him, even.

The Zombie staggers back, holding his chest.

ZOMBIE

Uhhhhhhhhhhhhnnn!

Michael turns to see it. Holly fires, again, into its head.
BLAM!

HOLLY

Avoid the trap. Double tap.

The zombie falls to the ground, and explodes to dust. Michael searches his own chest for holes, happy to find none.

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON
What just happened, Holly?

HOLLY
Shh. You don't have to explain everything, Michael.

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON
But --

He turns around to look at the zombie and it's gone. He spins around again and Holly's gone, too. He plops to the ground, picks up the script and Holly's cigarette and lays back.

He takes a deep drag and stares at the ceiling and then COUGHS and COUGHS--

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON (CONT'D)
That is disgusting!

--and throws the cigarette away and COUGHS.

EXT. JEHOVAH JAVA COFFEE SHOP - NIGHT

Michael sits at the coffee bar drowning his sorrows with a large cappuccino. Andrea sits beside him. Shakespearean Man on the other side.

There are balloons and PARTY EFFECTS around the room. Billy and another HELPER are taking down a giant "Congratulations!" banner off to one side. Other familiar faces mingle around as well.

On stage, a lone GUITARIST is pretending he's John Mayer.

SHAKESPEAREAN MAN
Well, thanks for the party, Michael. Sorry the financing didn't work out. Guess I'll have to go back on Monday and see if they've given my job away to a new stock boy. It was fun to dream, perchance to believe even for one fleeting moment of time.

Michael doesn't look up. Shakespearean Man pats his arm, exchanges a sad look with Andrea and leaves.

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON
 You don't have to stick around,
 Andi.

ANDREA
 I know. But that guitar player's
 kinda cute and I'm waiting for him
 to take a break.
 (to the stage)
 Freebird!

Michael doesn't laugh. Doesn't respond.

ANDREA (CONT'D)
 Sigh. Talk to me, Goose.

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON
 No.

She leans in.

ANDREA
 I'm not asking.

Michael sits up a little.

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON
 Do I have to say it? Okay, I'll say
 it... I'm not cut out for this
 writer/director crap. It's like a
 roller coaster from hell. I've
 screwed everything up. My family is
 a wreck, my finances are a wreck.
 And it's all... Medea's fault.

ANDREA
 Is it, though?

BARRY the bartender rolls up. He's a paraplegic, manipulating
 his wheelchair with a joystick. He has a long scar on his
 neck by his voice box which has something to do with his
 deep, guttural voice.

BARTENDER
 Get you all anything else?

ANDREA
 I think we're done, Barry. Michael
 here was just telling me how
 horrible his life is because he
 didn't get funding to make his
 movie in the first week.
 (MORE)

ANDREA (CONT'D)

Now he's gonna get bad credit, his life is ruined, his kids will have no choice but to emancipate and take up factory jobs in Chicago.

BARTENDER

Aw. That's a real tear jerker. If only my tear ducts hadn't been fragged closed by a roadside IED. Fortunately I keep a spare jar of sympathy tears in the back.

He takes the glasses and rolls away.

BARTENDER (CONT'D)

Sucks to be you, man.

Michael gives Andrea the evil eye.

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON

That's not fair. Can't I be depressed for one minute without you throwing... Barry-palegic in my face?

ANDREA

No, you can't. Because I'm a star and I need a movie. You're a Writer/Director. You've got to do your job so we can all do ours.

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON

Ah, I see, so this really isn't about me. It's all about you.

ANDREA

Bingo.

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON

You think you're trying to make my life easier, but you're not, Andi. Do you know what my wife would do if she saw us together?

ANDREA

I guess I could ask her. She's standing right there by the door.

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON

Wha--?

Michael spins too quickly, falls off the bar stool and recovers to his feet.

ANDREA

Looks like you made the party after all.

Andrea hugs Rebecca like they're old pals.

ANDREA (CONT'D)

Hi, Rebecca. Good to see you, again. Sorry your husband is being a self-absorbed ass hat.

REBECCA

It's just a phase.

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON

Wha--? I'm not--!

ANDREA

I'm gonna head over there and make googly eyes at Sebastien. Y'all work this out.

Andrea walks off. Rebecca sits down awkwardly on the bar stool. Her belly makes it a little weird. Michael sits down beside her.

They sit there for a beat. Not sure how to start.

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON

We weren't-- I mean this isn't--

REBECCA

I know. Andi was worried about me so she called and we had coffee. It was nice.

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON

What in the--?

She covers his mouth with her hand.

REBECCA

Sh. My turn...

(a beat)

So... the ultrasound went well.

He melts.

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON

I am so sorry, Rebecca. I've been an idiot. I don't even want to be a director anymore. It was a stupid idea. Filmmaking is hard. I'm going back to wedding videos and--

(MORE)

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON (CONT'D)

(a beat)

Hey, where's little britches--?

REBECCA

Meemaw's house.

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON

Some party this is. Bob's going to ask for his old job back on Monday. My script is horrible. My wife wants to poison my Froot loops--

Rebecca takes a folded paper out and hands it to Michael. He opens it and sees an ultrasound picture.

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON (CONT'D)

Is this what I think it is? Did they find the Red October?

REBECCA

That's your son.

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON

Son?

Michael fights back a tear. He stands and paces around.

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON (CONT'D)

A son? How can I have a son right now? That kid will have an idiot for a father.

REBECCA

Hey! I love that kid's idiot father.

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON

Aren't you mad?

REBECCA

No, I mean... okay I may have stuffed your favorite shirt down the disposal. With a knife...

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON

No no no not Boba Fett?

REBECCA

Bye Bye Boba.

Michael groans.

REBECCA (CONT'D)

But after Andi and I talked I found out what I really want.

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON

You're leaving me for Andrea?

REBECCA

I want, shut up, I want to be included in the process. All of it. The wins and the losses. My whole world can't be just stale cheerios and alphabet soup and Peppa pig. I want back on the adults team.

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON

Team Ackerson? Babe, you are the team. I want back on your team. Put me in the game, coach.

She nudges against him. He holds up the picture again.

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON (CONT'D)

Seriously, what is that thing, does this kid have 3 legs or what?

REBECCA

Yeah.

Michael sobers up.

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON

Babe, the Baptists don't want to back the film.

REBECCA

So what? Then take it to the Catholics, and then take it to INSP and then to Lionsgate and, hell, even Pure Flix.

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON

Pure Flix will take anything.

REBECCA

Yeah, they'll take it.

Michael spins around decisively and stands up on his chair. Billy has just finished taking down the banner and begun to wad it up.

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON

Billy! Hang that sign back up!

BILLY

Wha-? I sure wish Nothing
Productions would make up its mind--

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON

Listen up people, we've got a movie
to make! Maybe not today, maybe not
tomorrow, but soon and for the rest
of our lives.

ANDREA

I feel like I've heard that speech
before.

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON

Quiet, Ilsa! Look, we are
filmmakers. We don't get it right
on the first take. Or sometimes the
second take. Or the third take. But
we get there. Eventually. The point
is, we got a secret weapon that we
haven't even begun to tap into.

SHAKESPEAREAN MAN

Is it prayer?

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON

I was gonna say our 401ks. But I
promise you we are gonna make this
movie!

A CHEER goes up from the smallish crowd.

SHAKESPEAREAN MAN

You mean I don't have to get my old
job back?

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON

Actually, yes, Bob, I'd still do
that. I've got major rewrites to
do, more financing to secure, a
three-legged baby to birth. Guys,
it might take me a minute to get
everything together. A lot of
moving parts. More than I realized.
More than we realized.

He grabs Rebecca's hand and squeezes.

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON (CONT'D)

But if God wants a Christian Zombie
Movie, he's gonna get a Christian
Zombie Movie.

Another CHEER. Michael looks over behind the bar where only he can see all of his Fantasy friends and story characters looking on approvingly, especially Luke.

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON (CONT'D)

A wise man once said, "Do, or do not. There is no try."

Luke nods at him and raises a glass. Suddenly, Holly runs up to them.

HOLLY

We've got trouble, Michael.

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON

(aside, whispering)

Not now, Holly.

REBECCA

Michael, this sounds important. What is it, Holly?

Michael is dumbstruck.

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON

You can see her?

REBECCA

Sh. What is it, girl? Is it zombies?

Holly turns and points ominously at the door.

HOLLY

Christian zombies!

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON

How many times do I gotta-- the zombies aren't the christians--

SMASH. Suddenly, a small ARMY OF REAL ZOMBIES kicks through the door, smashes through the main window... people run around PANICKED!

HOLLY

Get everyone behind the bar!

Holly tosses a shotgun to Rebecca who levels it at the lead zombie and FIRES. His head explodes and he drops to the ground.

Holly whips out her two Lara Croft Desert Eagle pistols and begins opening fire at the zombie horde.

One particular Zombie is about to grab Billy when he wraps him in the movie poster and a Maasai warrior spears him to the wall!

Michael turns to see the Maasai Warrior kickin butt. Beside him is Joan of Arc, swinging away with her broadsword. On a table beside them is John the Baptist's Head, a knife in his teeth:

JOHN THE BAPTIST HEAD
Arrrrrrrrrrgh!

He can't really do much, but he's in the thick of it anyway.

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON
I'm sorry, John the Baptist head.
I'm not sure you're gonna make the
final cut of this movie.

JOHN THE BAPTIST HEAD
Arrrrrrrrrrgh!

Medea is also popping off shots gangsta style with one hand while swinging that big ol' clutch purse with the other.

MEDEA
Stay dead. Pow. Stay dead! Pow.
Oooh, that one looked like Will
Smith. Ah. Stay dead! Pow.

Michael turns back and three zombies have come between him and the safety of the bar fortress. As they near...

A WHISTLE from behind him grabs his attention. Luke holds up a lightsaber. Michael nods, reaches behind his own back and magically materializes it with the force or however Rey did it in "Rise of Skywalker".

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON
Hahaha that is such bad writing!

Oh yeah! He IGNITES it! FWOOOOSH!

Luke somersaults over the Zombies and lands back to back with Michael and they raise their swords to chop through the army of undead.

FREEZE ON BATTLE

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON (V.O.)
Ack! Holly was right, it did turn
into a Michael Bay movie.
(MORE)

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 Nobody's gonna watch this and yet
 somehow I'm still gonna get sued by
 Lucasfilm! And Tyler Perry.

CUT TO:

INT. ACKERSON HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Michael GROANS at the computer, pulling his hair out.

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON
 I don't know how to end this movie,
 babe!

Rebecca comes across and kisses him on the neck.

REBECCA
 What about those Pennsylvania
 filmmakers that stole the script?
 End it with them. Gazilla style.
 And hurry up, I don't wanna have to
 go to bed alone. Again.

She pulls his face around to hers.

REBECCA (CONT'D)
If you know what I mean.

She moves in for a kiss. He stops her.

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON
 Whoa. Babe. No kissing! Remember
 the Dove Foundation rating
 committee!

REBECCA
 Rate this...

She kisses him anyway. Passionately! And then sashay's off to
 the bedroom.

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON
 Wow. Five stars. 10/10 recommend. I
 think I just got pregnant, too.

Michael watches her go and then turns back around,
 reinvigorated.

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON (CONT'D)
 Whew. Okay.
 (reading/typing)
 (MORE)

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON (CONT'D)

"All is right with the world. Well
all except for...smash cut to..."

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. AFRICAN MAASAI VILLAGE - SHANTY - NIGHT

Raymone, Zachary and Amelie huddle on the floor of the shanty with their backs to the dresser braced against the door.

But unlike the opening scene these three are now played by the BIGGEST HOLLYWOOD STARS we can afford:

ZACHARY/JOHN KRASINSKI

Where's Jeremiah?

AMELIE/EMMA STONE

Who's Jeremiah?!

RAYMONE/JACK BLACK

Why, Jeremiah, why?!

Raymone makes the sign of the cross at their loss. They sit closer together, breathing hard, listening. The screaming villagers fade into the distance. It's gotten pretty QUIET outside the door now.

RAYMONE/JACK BLACK (CONT'D)

I think it's gone!

BAM! A hand POUNDS on the door from the outside, rattling it on its hinges. The three inside SCREAM. Something outside MOANS a spine-chilling, throat-gargling moan.

Suddenly, the opposite wall of the wooden shanty blasts open and Holly steps through looking like Lara Croft "Tombr Raider." She has a Marlboro Light in her teeth and both fists full of supersized Desert Eagle hand guns.

HOLLY/EMILY BLUNT

What's up, mother-fathers! Let's
make like the good shepherd and get
the flock outta here!

Raymone and Zach and Amelie jump up and pass safely behind her as quickly as they can. Holly FIRES some suppressing fire blowing some holes into the front door as she backs out from whence she appeared.

The front door SPLINTERS open and in lumbers...a real live African Zombie! It shuffles forward, RATTLING CHAINS around its wrists and ankles. Horrifying as can be.

As it takes a SWIPE into camera the lens SHATTERS.

CUT TO:

INT. TYLER PERRY SOUND STAGES - DAY

In this closing ONER SHOT camera pulls out from where the super embarrassed Zombie actor has accidentally broken the camera lens.

ZOMBIE

I am so sorry I didn't realize you weren't tracking back with me and misjudged the distance.

CAMERA

No worries, Eugene. That's what insurance is all about.

FIRST AD

That's lunch people. We'll reset and come back in an hour.

The cast buddies up to Michael and Rebecca as they climb down from their director's chairs. Rebecca wears a baby bjorn with sleeping baby inside.

JACK BLACK

Mr. Ackerson we just all wanted to say this has been the most fun we've ever had on our court-ordered community service.

Nods and agreement from the others.

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON

I'm so glad it worked out. In fact if y'all could rack up another DUI I can start writing a sequel.

Laughter all around. Interrupted by Tyler Perry.

TYLER PERRY

My apologies everyone Tyler Perry needs these two for important business.

After they've left.

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON

What's up, boss man?

TYLER PERRY

We've got a problem. Medea won't come out of her trailer except on one condition. She wants a foot rub from Jim Halpert. Divas, amiright?

There's a beat as Michael weighs the options.

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON

Okay, fine. Done.
(shouting)
Krasinski! Head to wardrobe.

John gives a big thumbs up. Tyler Perry smiles real big and follows.

REBECCA

Movie people sure are strange.

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON

You have no idea. Oh, babe you can't leave with that thing.

REBECCA

You're right.

She takes off the baby bjorn and tosses it to a P.A. walking past.

REBECCA (CONT'D)

Jada, can you get this back to props? I guess I'm done pretending.

GROWN UP JADA

No problem, mom.

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON

All right! Let's go eat.

They exit the stage through the gigantic sound doors and climb into a Range Rover with a Christian fish on the back and "Hez. 3:16" on the plates.

Credits roll.

END CREDITS BONUS SCENES

-- EXT. AFRICAN VILLAGE - NIGHT

JEREMIAH comes out of an African Maasai hut with the worst Gazilla zombie makeup. He looks around but nobody is there.

JEREMIAH

Guys, I'm wondering if my character should be more motivated by a childhood trauma or like a speech impediment. The Academy loves that and--

He turns and the REAL AFRICAN ZOMBIE SWIPES at him. CRUNCH.

-- INT. ACKERSON HOME -- BEDROOM - NIGHT

Michael and Rebecca flop back onto the bed out of breath.

REBECCA

Pant, pant. Do you think the film should have a love scene in it?

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON

Should our Christian movie have a love scene? Are you the devil? The Dove Foundation would crucify us!

REBECCA

They do know that Christians have sex don't they?

S. MICHAEL ACKERSON

You know what, let's not spoil the surprise for them. Now, where were we?

They both GIGGLE and crawl back under the covers.

-- INT. AFRICAN MAASAI VILLAGE - SHANTY - NIGHT

African Maasai Village. Inside the shanty. All is quiet up the hallway. Zombie peeks around the corner, hair up in a towel. Bathrobe on. Walks up to camera.

ZOMBIE

(subtitled)

You're still here? It's over.

Chikka chik-AAAAAARRRRGGGHH.

THE END.