

The Spaniard Who Spoke Not

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EXT. FOREST NEAR AZTEC CITY - 1520

A wide shot of the jungle canopy in Costa Rica. We move forward over the tree tops. TRIBAL MUSIC builds. A great pyramid pierces the canopy and as we move closer, natives can be seen running up the steps. The music builds, more of the Aztec buildings come into view. Many natives run frantically, some grabbing weapons, others taking the children and hiding. The sky darkens as great storm clouds fill the sky. The tribal drums grow in intensity and we are moving at a quick pace toward the ocean shore. The only light that can be seen is by the crashes of lightning against the jungle trees. With each flash of light, images are inserted. Some of battle, some of the great CORTEZ. With the last flash we see the Spaniard in front of a large group of Aztec warriors holding a sword in defiance and charging a line of Cortez and his soldiers. The tribal drums cease and only a deep bass line can be heard. Everything grows black and there is nothing. After a moment a few VOICES can be faintly heard. The SOUNDS of WAVES CRASHING against a ship pierce the silence. One last flash of lightning reveals the Spanish Galleons approaching the shore. The music builds in one final blast and several more scenes of battle and our hero are seen. Then as his sword swings out from his arm, a CGI effect of his sword cutting the film appears. The title emerges..."The Spaniard." Fade to black. Everything goes silent. In the background we HEAR distant DRUMMING and SCREAMS. Cut to medium crop: An Aztec priest, tribally painted and plumed with a face like a demon. Behind him are fires from the forest filling the sky with smoke. We follow him as he walks up the temple steps. He sheaths his two swords with his blood soaked hands, smiling as he enters a hallway lined with burning torches. He continues into a dark corridor becoming a silhouette and the silhouette grows until there is no light.

SUPERIMPOSE: "Coming Christmas Day!"

INT. TELEVISION STUDIO - SET OF THE #1 NIGHT TALK SHOW - CONTINUOUS

Pull back from monitor. Reveal: Audience members wearing Spaniard costumes, i.e., Conquistador outfits and Aztec native costumes giving raucous standing ovation. DESMOND LOCKHEART, 53, is being interviewed by a popular nighttime talk show host.

HOST

It looks like you've got some fans.

DESMOND

I believe Steven Ferrel and his novel would deserve that credit.

Crowd explodes into uncontrolled applause.

DESMOND

(Standing. To Crowd.)

You know! It's 80 years old and still going strong! The jungle will burn! Swords will clash! Arrows will fly! Freedom will be defended at all cost! And... "The blood we lose to Cortez stains his hands but enriches the ground. And from this ground shall grow the future."

Crowd roars with cheers.

HOST

People. People. Desmond, the novel has been discovered and rediscovered by generations of students. I'm told it was a best seller for 37 weeks when it was first published. Do you think you did it justice?

DESMOND raises his eyebrow to the crowd. They lose control.

HOST

Calm down or we will cancel the sacrifice to Quetzalcoatl.

DESMOND

I'm impressed. You've either read "The Spaniard" or you have intimate knowledge of the Aztec gods.

HOST

Cihuacaotyl had an after hours party in the hills last month.

DESMOND

Serves great pate'.

HOST

Speaking of delicious morsels: Annabelle Gomez. I understand that she, in her debut film, has earned more money than many of her male veteran counterparts.

DESMOND

When you see her performance you will agree that she earned every penny. She was a real pleasure to work with.

HOST

I'm sure she was. Although with a budget of over 300 million dollars, you had to put the money somewhere.

DESMOND

Good catering is hard to come by.

HOST

So you fed the country then?

DESMOND

And clothed them, too. In fact, I brought you a little something.

Pulls out a "Spaniard" T-shirt and passes to the host. Host gives a look to the offstage producer for approval.

HOST

(to the band leader)

Cancel my appointment at Armani's.

He pulls the T-shirt over his suit jacket and models to audience.

HOST

Is this sexy enough, ladies?

Cheers and wolf whistles come from the crowd.

HOST

(to the band leader)

Cancel my account at Armani's.

Sits back at desk.

HOST (TO DESMOND)

Okay, back to your career. Your father is considered one of the greatest filmmakers of all time. You are a legend in Hollywood in your own right. You've made thirty two films, four of which have been in the top 20 highest grossing of all time. You've been able to start your own studio and compete strongly with the big studios.

HOST(cont'd)

"False Harbor" and its sequels
 "Long Cold Winter" and "The Village
 Flag" revolutionized the genre of
 Political Dramas. Your movies
 always seem to come at the world in
 a way that makes them fresh and
 new.

Pulls out and reads a cue card.

HOST

A diversity of movies like the
 brilliant romantic comedy
 "Finishing Sentences", The World
 War I drama "Elysian Fields" about
 a group of soldiers waiting to
 charge from the trenches, "Your
 Death in Turn" blah... blah...
 blah... OK, Who compiled this? You
 don't have "Heartland" on here!

Throws the card over his shoulder.

HOST

If they don't have "Heartland"
 they're just not doing their job.
 You have won just about every award
 film has to offer...

DESMOND

No, I've never won an Oscar for
 directing.

HOST

Wait, you didn't win for
 "Heartland"? That is the best film
 I have ever seen. I've thought
 about quitting this gig just to
 live that movie. A man trying to
 find himself by travelling the
 world and becoming a new person in
 every place. And that motorcycle...

DESMOND

We still own that.

BAND LEADER

"Influence: The Miles Davis Story"
 was amazing.

HOST

I can't believe they passed you over but what I really can't get over is that bike. Any chance I could stop by the Ranch sometime?

DESMOND

Anytime, but you'll have to ask my wife about the bike.

HOST

Elaine Fox. She was the love interest in that right?

DESMOND

She still is. The bike was an engagement present.

HOST

Oh really? Wow! It must be nice! Well, it looks like that's all the time we have folks. I would like to thank the Zamboni Ballet Club and Canine Contortionist Fluffernutter for being here. And special thanks to Desmond Lockhart IV for visiting with us... Always a pleasure.

DESMOND

The honor was mine.

HOST

Don't forget to check out the epic "The Spaniard," opening Christmas day. Have a great night!

EXT. STARDUST THEATRE - OPENING NIGHT - CHRISTMAS DAY

Reporter ARNOLD DOBSON steps from a black limo and walks to the crowd that has gathered in front of a recently renovated classic style movie theatre now holding the only screening of "The Spaniard". He speaks to the camera.

DOBSON

Greetings, all. I stand now in front of LA's oldest operating movie theater to bring you, the viewer, to what has been called, "The most anticipated movie opening since 'Star Wars.'" As you can see, fans of this classic novel have arrived in droves in hopes of seeing their most beloved characters on the big screen for the first time.

He walks through the crowd.

DOBSON

It's amazing. You see people of all generations here. Young and old alike have waited hours patiently and now only have to wait another hour and a half. This is... now look at this.

DOBSON turns to see a pair of fans dressed in period costume, holding fake swords and dueling.

DOBSON

Even the extremists are here. The energy is incredible. Many here are also hoping to catch a glimpse of Desmond himself. That's right. Because of many of the delays in post production, they had to forego the private screening and went directly to the opening night. We hope that many others in the production will show their faces as well.

He spots three men standing just inside the doorway. They are well dressed and are opening the doors to the theatre.

DOBSON

Oh, we are lucky here, ladies and gentlemen. I've spotted Desmond Lockheart and the two writers of this film standing just inside those doors. Let's see if we can get a few words from them.

He pushes through the crowd and walks through the door.

INT. STARDUST THEATRE - LOBBY - NIGHT

DESMOND stands with the two young writers DOUG, 26 and NICK, 26, greeting people at the entrance right behind the ticket lady. NICK spots the camera and nudges DOUG to look and smile.

DOBSON

Gentlemen. Excuse me, gentlemen, Arnold Dobson. Might I ask a few questions for the fans out there that weren't lucky enough to be here tonight?

DESMOND motions for him to come aside out of the line where they can stand and talk.

DESMOND

Welcome, Mr. Dobson. Glad you could make it tonight to help us promote this great film.

DESMOND shakes ARNOLD'S hand.

DOUG

Have you gotten your ticket yet?

DOBSON

Call me Arnold. Well, I was also one of those unlucky fans who must wait until after opening weekend.

NICK

Well, I'm sure we might be able to rustle up a few chairs for you and your cameraman, but no cameras. Right? We wouldn't want anything to leak onto the Internet.

DOBSON

You know, I can tell you boys are from the midwest. Now, I understand...

DOUG

That's right, go Illini!

DOBSON

Very good. Now, as I understand it, This film has had many setbacks. Looking back, is there anything you would have done differently?

DESMOND, DOUG and NICK look at each other and smiles break across their faces.

INT. Hospital ER

SUPERIMPOSE:14 months earlier

Faces of several nurses hover over the body of DESMOND LOCKHEART. One nurse is trying to adjust the oxygen mask.

NURSE #1
Tell Dr. Remoray that we have a
code blue in room two.

NURSE #2
Someone should go and talk to his
wife. She is frantic. I...

NURSE #1
I'm losing a pulse, someone get
that door!

They rush through the door to Desmond's room. His eyes open for a second and then close.

INT. HOSPITAL ER - LATER THAT NIGHT

Desmond's wife ELAINE, 48, stares through the window from the hall at her husband. Her purse almost slips from her grasp, as she wipes a tear away. Dr. Remoray walks to her side.

REMORAY
Mrs. Lockheart? Dr. Remoray. I'm
sorry we had to meet under these
circumstances. I came as soon as I
could.

He holds his hand out to shake and she doesn't notice. She keeps her eyes on DESMOND.

ELAINE
Will he be alright?

REMORAY
It was close going there for a time
but he's going to be fine.

She turns and a smile breaks onto her face. He pulls a tissue out for her. She wipes the mascara from her cheeks.

ELAINE
Really? They told me that...

REMORAY

There are going to have to be some changes though.

ELAINE

Changes?

REMORAY

Lifestyle changes.

ELAINE

What do you mean?

REMORAY

His blood pressure is 180/120 and he has developed an arrhythmia. I know your husband has a reputation as one of the hardest workers in his field. You could say I'm a fan. But if he doesn't slow down he's going to stop. Please, sit down.

He motions to her to join him on the sofa across the hall. She looks at him for a moment.

ELAINE

I would prefer to stay here so I can see him.

The doctor opens his file.

REMORAY

This is not his first time experiencing chest pains. He has a history of stress-related ailments. He needs to slow down so he can have time to heal.

ELAINE

My husband is in charge of one of the largest independent film studios in Hollywood. Of course he has stress issues...

The doctor closes his file again.

REMORAY

I'm sorry if this scares you, but I'm just trying to save his life. These things don't just go away.

REMORAY(cont'd)

He will not survive another attack like this one, but with diet and lifestyle changes, he can still live a long and healthy life. He can still contribute to society just in other, less stressful, ways. I don't want there to be a next time when I have to be the one to... Let's just not have a next time. We will keep him a few days for observation. If you like, I can have them bring in another bed for you.

ELAINE

Please. Doctor, I am sorry, it's just so much...

REMORAY

No need to apologize. I'll make sure you are kept informed. He's strong. He'll be okay. Let us do the worrying. Why don't you go in and see him now. I know he would like to see you.

She turns back to the window. She takes a moment and then adjusts her suit coat and fixes her hair. She puts on a big smile and walks in.

INT. LOCKHEART MANSION - DESMOND'S STUDY - FOUR DAYS LATER

ELAINE walks in through the study doors in her nightgown carrying a tray with a cup of tea and some pills. DESMOND sits behind his desk in a bathrobe with a cigar in his mouth listening to a classical opera on the stereo. He sees her walk in and tries to hide the cigar.

ELAINE

Don't even try to come up with any excuses.

DESMOND

I wasn't going to light it.

He throws the cigar into the trash can beside his chair. She places the tray in front of him.

DESMOND

How is my Angel this evening?

He pulls her into his lap being playful. They hold each other tight. He starts to nibble at her ear.

ELAINE

Now, don't get any funny ideas. You know the doctor said you weren't supposed to do anything strenuous.

DESMOND

Fine. We'll compromise. We'll only do it three times.

He continues to nibble but she playfully smacks him to stop. He ceases and they stay in each other's arms.

ELAINE

So, are you really going to slow down this time?

DESMOND is about to speak but she cuts him off.

ELAINE

...And none of this, "But Angel, just one more time" business. You forget, I know you better than you know yourself.

He leans in to kiss her on the cheek. She smiles. She turns around and they kiss.

DESMOND

Mmm. You certainly know me better than my other mistresses.

She playfully slaps his leg and jumps off his lap.

ELAINE

Oh, you are full of yourself tonight.

She begins to walk out, but stops.

DESMOND

Honey, I'm just kidding. I'm done. Finished. No more films for me.

She notices the sad look on his face. Behind him, all the awards he has achieved throughout his career are placed on shelves along the wall in a beautiful display. There is one illuminated, empty spot in the center of this shrine next to his Academy Award for "Best Actor". He walks over to the wall and runs his hand over the dust on that spot.

DESMOND

The Academy gave my father two awards for best director, but no matter how hard I tried, I couldn't even get one. I've always fallen short.

She walks to his side and wraps her arms around him.

ELAINE

You have given joy to millions around the world. I can't think of a single movie that you did not pour your heart and soul into as both an actor and director. Each film isn't just a film to you. It is you. You are a great director and you don't need an academy to tell you that.

DESMOND pulls away and faces her.

DESMOND

Then why is this place empty?

She grabs his hand in hers and places it on his heart.

ELAINE

The real question is, why is this space still empty?

She pulls her hand away.

DESMOND

You fill that emptiness, ELAINE. Everything that Lockheart Ranch has accomplished, we have done together. I wouldn't change that for anything. It's just... My father could never show me his love, but role after role, movie after movie, I tried to earn it. Then, I thought I could earn that love from my peers in the form of an Oscar, but yet again, I fall short. In trying to obtain their respect I almost forgot the one person who gave it to me freely. It's you, Angel. And I want you to know I will never take that for granted ever again. I love you, Elaine.

ELAINE

I know. Twenty-five years has shown me that.

DESMOND

...But when my father was my age, he...

She draws his face close to hers.

ELAINE

You are not your father, Desmond. You may be like him in some ways, but you have surpassed him in many more. You are a great man. You have to be. Darling, why else would I put up with you?

They laugh and she pulls him into her arms in an embrace. As they hug, DESMOND's hands start to work their way slowly downward.

ELAINE

Dez.

His hands work their way back to where they started.

ELAINE

I'm going to go to bed, now.
(Looks at DESMOND)
To sleep. Don't stay up much longer.

DESMOND kisses her and walks back over to his desk.

DESMOND

I'll be there shortly. I'm just going to clean up here a bit. Besides, if I'm just producing now, you're going to have to be used to me pulling late nights.

ELAINE

Well, you're not producing anything tonight... So I expect you soon.

ELAINE exits. DESMOND starts tidying up. He sweeps a stack of papers with his arm into the trash can. They all fall into the bin except one script. DESMOND bends down to pick it up and throw it out, but hesitates and instead turns it around to the front cover. On the cover are two simple words, "The Spaniard" in bold type. He begins reading the script and soon sits down on his chair.

Time elapses as he is clearly immersed in the script. Night leads to day as he paces back and forth reading the script. He collapses onto his chair when he is finished.

DESMOND

My, God. This is the best script I ever read. Who wrote this?

He turns to the cover page revealing the names.

INT. MIDWEST - APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - FOLLOWING AFTERNOON

Open on the names of DOUGLAS MCKAY and NICHOLAS LEMEAR on a phone bill stamped final notice on the front, taped to the fridge. Pull back to see the rest of the apartment. The kitchen and living room are separated by a large couch. NICK sits in an armchair glued to the TV. Their roommate ROSS, 28, is sprawled across the couch with a bag of chips laying on his chest. They watch an old tape of an Academy Awards ceremony. DOUG walks out from the bedroom wearing "Flash" pajama bottoms and a towel around his neck. He has just finished showering. He walks to see what they are watching. He sees the show and laughs to himself.

DOUG

So, we a little stressed?

He looks at NICK for an answer. ROSS notices that NICK is ignoring DOUG and sits up.

ROSS

He hasn't heard back from the temp agency yet.

A tight bodied young woman pokes her head out from the bedroom.

SARA

Hey, Douggie, is the bathroom open?

DOUG turns and nods. The young woman waves at ROSS and NICK. ROSS returns the wave. She enters the bathroom.

ROSS

Who's that?

DOUG

Oh, that's Cind... Samanth...
Carla...

SARA

(from bathroom)

Sara!

DOUG
(to SARA)
I knew that!
(to NICK)
Dude, don't worry. They'll call.
Besides, I've been working overtime
so we're good for a little while.
I'm heading to the store. You need
anything?

NICK manages to pry his eyes from the TV for a moment.

NICK
Yeah. Sorry. Can you pick up some
milk? Oh and 2% this time. I hate
that skim crap. Oh and some
squeezy cheese!

ROSS notices that DOUG is without a shirt and cringes in mock
horror, covering his eyes.

ROSS
Whoa, hey man. Cover those man
nipples.

DOUG jests with ROSS rubbing his nipples with his fingers.

DOUG
I'm sorry, am I turning you on?

DOUG continues to prance around ROSS.

ROSS
Dude, that's just wrong, man!

DOUG
Hey, at least I'm wearing pants.

DOUG turns his head sharply to NICK.

DOUG
I'm not the one who walks out onto
the porch in my underwear to see
how the weather is outside.

He whips NICK with the towel.

NICK
Hey, I just want to find out how I
should dress for the day. You
know... "Do I need a long sleeve
shirt? Can I wear shorts?"

The phone rings in the background. DOUG and NICK face each other and engage in a game of rock, paper, scissors. DOUG loses and walks over and picks up the receiver.

DOUG
Hello? Yes, it is.

ROSS
Nick, why do you watch these things? It's all a popularity contest.

NICK
You have no idea what your talking about.

ROSS
A buddy of mine told me that sometimes they don't even watch the movies. They vote on who they like.

NICK
I vote you shut the hell up.

ROSS's attention moves to DOUG who is bursting with excitement. He tries to tell ROSS something in mime so as not to interrupt the caller.

ROSS
You need a hat?

DOUG repeats the message again in mime.

ROSS (CONT'D)
Dude, I have no idea what you're trying to say.

DOUG, frustrated, starts snapping his fingers toward NICK. NICK doesn't respond. DOUG grabs a dirty spoon from the table and tosses it at NICK hitting him in the arm.

NICK
Hey! What the hell...

NICK turns to DOUG miming exactly the same thing he did to ROSS. NICKS eyes widen and his jaw drops. He jumps out of his chair and runs to DOUG'S side.

NICK (CONT'D)
Desmond Lockheart is on the phone? He wants to talk to us about the script we sent him!?!

ROSS
How the hell did you get that
from...? Whatever.

He moves to the phone.

DOUG
Uh, huh... Yes. Oh, we can
definitely be there tomorrow. Mr.
Lockheart thank... Desmond, thank
you very much for calling.

NICK sticks his face into the phone.

NICK
...Yes, we look forward to speaking
with you.

DOUG
(Whispering)
We are speaking to him.

NICK
I mean... seeing you! Looking
forward to seeing you. Thank you.

DOUG hangs up the phone and the three stand there for a
moment. They all start yelling.

DOUG/NICK/ROSS
We're going to Hollywood!!!

INT. LOCKHEART RANCH - MANSION - TWO DAYS LATER

ELAINE storms down the stairs with DESMOND following close
behind. ELAINE is carrying two suitcases.

ELAINE
I'm not going to sit around here by
myself waiting for another phone
call from the hospital.

DESMOND
Honey, I promise this WILL be the
last one.

ELAINE slams the suitcases to the floor and turns to face
DESMOND.

ELAINE
That's the problem. It's always
going to be the last one.

ELAINE(cont'd)

It's been the last one for the past seven years. This isn't a job for you anymore. This is an obsession.

DESMOND

Call it what you want, but when I started this I had one goal. And I still have yet to achieve....

DESMOND points to the empty spot where his "Best Director" award will someday go.

ELAINE

Dez, you're going to go down as one of the best actors and directors of all-time. Why can't you leave it at that?

DESMOND

Just one more.

ELAINE

I know what this obsession could cost me. Maybe it's time you think about what this obsession might cost you.

ELAINE picks up her suitcases.

ELAINE (CONT'D)

I'll be at my mother's.

ELAINE turns and storms out. Her heels are loudly heard as she walks rapidly down the hallway.

DESMOND

Honey, I'm just trying to make us both happy.

ELAINE

(Loudly)

I'll be happy when that all-consuming studio of yours is burned to the ground!

EXT. LOCKHEART RANCH - JUST BEFORE NOON - SAME DAY

A taxi pulls onto the 800 acre LOCKHEART ranch. DESMOND'S mansion rests on a hill on the left of the parking lot to LOCKHEART studios. NICK and DOUG exit the taxi and stand in awe at the seven buildings in the studio lot. They are greeted by LOCKHEART'S assistant DENISE, 34.

DENISE

Good afternoon. Welcome to Lockheart studios. My name is Denise. I'll have someone get your bags. If you'll follow me, I'll take you right in. Was your flight okay?

NICK

Fantastic. I've never flown before.

DOUG

No kidding, I couldn't tell from the death grip you had on my arm.

NICK

Oh and how many drinks did you have?

DOUG

That was to drown out your whimpering!

NICK hits the bag out from DOUG'S hand and runs ahead to walk with DENISE. They continue to argue.

INT. LOCKHEART STUDIOS BUILDING ONE - MIDDAY

DENISE walks the two through a maze of halls lined with various movie posters of films produced by LOCKHEART studios. NICK is stopped in his tracks by a poster of one of his favorite films.

NICK

OH MY GOD! An original movie poster of Jorge Lucasi's "Galactic Battles"!

DOUG halts as well and faces NICK. He pretends to hold a sword of some kind. NICK follows suit and they pace around each other as if they are about to sword fight.

DOUG

No. I am your...

DENISE stops at the corner and looks back at the two.

DENISE

Right this way, gentlemen.

The two stop and quickly follow.

INT. OFFICE OF DESMOND LOCKHEART - MID DAY

DENISE opens the door and DOUG and NICK walk in. She laughs to herself at their excitement.

DENISE
Desmond will be with you in a moment. Would either of you like anything to drink?

DOUG and NICK walk around the room in awe.

DENISE
Well then, I'll just have something brought in.

She exits. They take a seat in front of the desk. After a moment, DESMOND walks through the door, cigar in his mouth and well dressed. He holds in his hand the script of "The Spaniard."

DESMOND
Welcome, gentlemen.

He moves in to shake hands. They compose themselves and greet the handshake.

NICK
Mr. Lockheart, thank you so much for flying us out here to see you.

NICK shakes his hand with great enthusiasm.

DOUG
I can't tell you what an honor it is to meet you, sir. We have to be your biggest fans.

DESMOND frees his hand from NICK's and gestures for them to have a seat.

DESMOND
Please, call me Desmond. Have a seat.

They all sit. DENISE enters with a tray full of coffee cups and a hot tea for DESMOND.

DESMOND
Thank you, Denise.

She exits. He continues.

DESMOND

I can't tell you what an honor it is to meet you both. I have to say that this is, perhaps, the greatest screenplay I have ever read. Nothing is lost. It is just so tightly woven and truly does justice to the novel.

DOUG

Well, Nick is the one you should credit for that. He is the most talented writer I know. I feel lucky he wants to work with me.

NICK

Thank you for the compliment, Doug, but really we are a team. We have known each other since kindergarten. We've wanted to make films our entire lives.

DESMOND

This is the first script that I feel has captured the ideals and subtleties of the original author. I'm in awe of this work. Do you mind if I ask how you were able to get the rights? For decades filmmakers have been trying to make this film. It has been one of the most tightly guarded properties in history.

NICK

That's a funny story actually...

DOUG

Nick wrote a paper in college about "The Spaniard" and its author.

NICK

It was my Master's thesis, studying the impact of the novel on society in the early part of the century and how its effects can still be felt. I've read that novel at least a dozen times.

DOUG

So, anyway, Nick is giving his presentation on his paper.

NICK

Thesis.

DOUG

Yeah, whatever. Well it also happens that the granddaughter of the author is an old alumnus and donor to the school. She was there at Nick's presentation.

NICK

She approached me afterward and felt I had really captured her grandfather's message well. You can imagine I was rather flattered and we began to discuss the broader aspects...

NICK fumbles with the coffee cup and saucer in his hands.

DOUG

Well the point is they immediately clicked. She loved the paper and, after their meeting, felt it was time to retell her granddad's great story on the big screen. She asked if we would be interested in trying to write a screenplay and, after seeing our final draft, gave us exclusive rights. She, of course, would get a hefty sum in return.

NICK

Though she's not in it for the money. She's had plenty of offers before. She was more interested in the quality and integrity of the script and production.

DESMOND walks around to the front of the desk and leans against it facing the two writers.

DESMOND

That's amazing. Now, I noticed in your letter that you didn't just want to sell. You were hoping...

NICK

We were hoping to take part in filming in whatever way we could. She insisted that we stay involved to protect the work.

DOUG

You know, we would like to be script supervisors, or act as an associate producer or something.

DESMOND

Well, I would really like to purchase the rights from you. I have my own production staff and...

NICK

Mr. Lockheart... Do you know what it's like to know you could be great at something, but you never get a chance to prove it.

DESMOND begins to respond but NICK stands up and starts pacing, almost in his own little world.

NICK

It's like you're a kid playing ball with your Dad. He throws you a pitch and when that bat connects with the ball and you see it sail out of your yard, you just know... "I could do this." But you live in the middle of nowhere and your school doesn't have a team. Your family doesn't have enough money to send you to college and you never get to learn the game. You just feel this emptiness in your chest. I feel that.

DESMOND looks at the empty spot on his mantle. NICK stops pacing and looks directly at DESMOND.

NICK

I feel that every day of my life. So you see, I could just sell my writing and live well, but I want to be given the chance to learn. To shine. I want to make films and achieve what I KNOW I can achieve.

DOUG walks over and stands next to NICK.

DOUG

I'm with him. We're sorry if we wasted your time...

DESMOND

Hey, no, not at all. Nick, I know what you're feeling. I can see your passion and that you believe in yourself. I too feel your passion and have given it some thought. You want to be a part of this film; that's fine with me. Let's talk about some of the thoughts I had on the production.

DESMOND pushes intercom button.

DESMOND

Denise, can you send in my notes?

DESMOND turns back and smiles at the two. The double doors to the side of the office open and a stream of staff members walk in pulling several pasteboard covered in photos and sketches. A table is wheeled in featuring a miniature model mock-up of the Aztec city. Others enter carrying several portfolios with costume designs and so on.

DOUG and NICK look at each other in amazement and then smile. They all sit back down.

EXT. COASTLINE, COSTA RICA - MONTHS LATER

DOUG and NICK stand with DESMOND and his Art Department Manager EVA DELANEY, 46, watching the construction of the Spanish Galleons. DESMOND seems sad.

EVA

Desmond? You don't like how they look?

DESMOND

(composing himself)

I just thought that Elaine might have called by now. She would love to see this.

DOUG and NICK have no idea what to say. They just turn their attention back to the boats.

MONTAGE

DESMOND works with ROBERT GILLIAR, 42, his stunt coordinator, to show the 62 extras what they will be doing in their upcoming battle scene.

The assistant director, VICTOR ARMSTRONG, 38, introduces NICK and DOUG to JARED HOWE, 59, the famous actor playing Cortez.

NICK and DOUG meet ANNABELLE GOMEZ, 23, a small-theatre actress chosen for the role of the Aztec Princess. They engage in the rock, paper, scissors game to see which of them gets to ride next to her. They grab her things and head off in a taxi to the hotel.

EXT. COSTA RICA - FOREST - NIGHT - NINE WEEKS INTO FILMING

DESMOND, VICTOR ARMSTRONG and a minimal crew set up for some shots of DESMOND running through the forest. DOUG and NICK arrive on a four-wheeled buggy. The engine is turned off. They hear VICTOR YELLING for help. They run to find DESMOND is lying on the ground clutching his chest. VICTOR and the others hover over his body. One is trying to get a signal on his cell. Another is frantically looking for a hand radio.

NICK
What happened?

VICTOR
He was running; then he just fell!
He yelled out in pain and now he's
barely conscious. We need to get
him to a hospital!

DOUG
I'll get the truck!

DESMOND reaches out to grab DOUG'S arm to stop him.

DESMOND
No, get my bag and look in the
front pocket. There is a card
there, call that number. Tell the
man on the other end what happened
and let him know we will be at the
hotel shortly.

VICTOR
Desmond, I really think we need...

DOUG
Sir, we really should get you to...

DESMOND lets go of DOUG'S arm and his body goes limp.

DESMOND

Please just call him. Victor, we can't let this get to the crew. Take care of it will you?

VICTOR thinks it over.

VICTOR

Okay, but if you get worse, I'm taking you to a hospital.

The three help him up and drag him over to the truck. DESMOND looks at NICK.

VICTOR

Go, call him. I'll meet you all at the hotel.

NICK and DOUG scramble to DESMOND'S bag. DOUG turns it upside down to empty it. NICK stops him.

NICK

He said in the front pocket.

DOUG stops and gently lays the bag on the ground. They find the card and look at the number. The card is all white with only two words on the front. MR. BLACK. They turn it over to see the number.

EXT. COSTA RICA - FOREST TRAILS - NIGHT

DOUG drives the four-wheeler at high speed through the trails in the forest. NICK sits next to him trying to call the number on the card.

DOUG

Damn these trails! They all look the same!

NICK reaches to the dash and pulls down a faceplate to reveal a GPS screen. He punches a few buttons and within seconds, a map pops up with directions to the beach front.

DOUG

How did you...

He is interrupted by NICK who has connected to MR. BLACK.

NICK

Hello? Yes. Hi, or hello, Mr. Black? My name is Nick, I am calling for Desmond Lockheart...

NICK(cont'd)

Yes, well he had what we think is a heart attack in the forest... well yes, we wanted to take him to a hospital... Yes, he is on route to the hotel as we sp... OK, well do you...

He is disconnected.

NICK

He hung up. He just said, "understood" and hung up. What do we do now?

DOUG'S eyes grow wide as he sees the big dip right before the dune.

DOUG

We hang on!

The buggy jumps high in the air and comes sailing down onto the beach filled with costumed cast members, gear, tents and a large galleon being pulled to the shore. Crew members come and meet them at the buggy.

INT. COSTA RICA HOTEL - LOBBY - TWO HOURS LATER

DOUG and NICK walk into the hotel lobby and are met by VICTOR who had been waiting near the elevator. He runs to meet them.

VICTOR

So, did you dismiss the crew for the night?

DOUG

Yes, we told them that we will continue Monday.

NICK

We didn't say anything about Desmond.

VICTOR leads them to the elevator.

VICTOR

I don't know who he had you call, but he's in good hands.

NICK

He got a doctor to come to the hotel?

VICTOR
In a manner of speaking.

The elevator door closes.

INT. COSTA RICA HOTEL - DESMOND'S SUITE - CONTINUOUS

The elevator door opens and the three walk out. DOUG and NICK stop. They can't believe what they are seeing. VICTOR waves them into the main room. There are several nurses and doctors working on setting up machines. DESMOND lies on a hospital bed and is being fed an IV into his arm. Another nurse gently places an oxygen mask over his face. Two of the nurses are men in army fatigues. DOCTOR HONEYWELL notices the three standing there and approaches.

HONEYWELL
Hello. Which of you is "Victor"?

VICTOR steps forward.

VICTOR
Yes, I'm Victor. How is he?

DR. HONEYWELL shakes his hand and is handed a clipboard from a passing nurse.

HONEYWELL
I'm afraid Desmond suffered a major cardiac arrest. He has lost consciousness and has yet to wake. We have him stabilized for now. His vitals are looking a little better, but it's really too soon to tell. I saw a wedding ring on the end table, has anyone gotten a hold of his wife?

VICTOR
Uh, no, she is back in the states. They are separated and I think she is with her mother who is struggling through chemo right now. I don't even know the number. Is he...

HONEYWELL
Look, I wouldn't worry if I were you. It seems as though he's fighting this and I assure you we will do everything possible to help him recover.

VICTOR

Thank you, Doctor. We'll be here if you need anything.

They shake hands again.

HONEYWELL

I'm sure I'll be speaking with you again.

He starts back towards the bed. He stops and turns.

HONEYWELL

Oh and when you talk to Black, tell him I expect a big bottle of Scotch for Christmas this year.

He smiles and returns to work. VICTOR walks to where DOUG and NICK have found seats out of the way and the three watch them work through the night.

INT. COSTA RICA HOTEL - DESMOND'S SUITE - EARLY NEXT MORNING

DESMOND opens his eyes. DOUG, NICK and VICTOR have not left their seats. They watch as many of the nurses and doctors change into different costumes. One dresses into a janitors outfit and hides some of the medical supplies in his mop bucket and exits. Others get into formal wear and leave as guests after a long night of partying. They disappear into the hotel.

VICTOR

Well, Desmond's secret is safe, but for how long? What do we tell the crew?

NICK

Well, we could continue filming scenes that don't include Desmond. We could say he is feeling under the weather and he insists we go on without him.

The three agree and they return to their rooms. Dr. HONEYWELL remains in the room with two assistants.

INT. COSTA RICA HOTEL - DESMOND'S SUITE - TWO DAYS LATER -
EVENING

DOUG and NICK sit in the living room of DESMOND'S suite. They stare through the French doors to DESMOND'S bedroom where he has been moved. DR. HONEYWELL finishes handing DESMOND some pills and exits through the French doors leaving them cracked.

HONEYWELL

Good evening, gentlemen. He's just going to rest for now. The angioplasty went well. I am pleased with his progress and he'll be up and about in another day or two. I'll see you in the morning.

Dr. HONEYWELL exits the room. Silence fill the room until NICK can't take it any more. He pulls his bag over to his chair and pulls out a VHS tape of the 1997 Academy Awards. DOUG watches for a moment.

DOUG

What is it?

NICK looks at DOUG in disbelief.

NICK

I am stressed. I'm sitting in another country, in a hotel room. I'm sitting here looking at my hero, a man I've seen as invincible lying helpless in a hospital bed fighting for his life. I'm watching what was to be our finest hour slip away. I'm wondering if we will ever get another opportunity like this again. I'm wondering if we are just destined not to work in film. I'm disgusted that all I can think about is how this affects us. And I hate that right now I'm being selfish. So yeah, I'm a little stressed and upset.

They are interrupted by the sound of DESMOND stirring in the bedroom. They can see through the doors that he has sat up and pulled the end table next to the bed. He has pulled the phone to him. They lean in closer in the hopes to hear what the fate of the film might be.

DESMOND
Hey, Angel. It's me.

They almost fall out of their chairs to hear what is being said.

DESMOND
No, I'm fine. How is Mom?...
Feeling better? That's good. Make
sure to give her my love, will
you?... Mr. Black called, huh?
Well, if anyone could find you... I
swear I am fine. It's just that...

Desmond stops and breaks down crying.

DESMOND
You were right, Elaine. I should
have just stopped. I never should
have started this project. If I
had just listened to you earlier, I
wouldn't be in this situation right
now.

DESMOND lies down on the bed while NICK and DOUG try to remain unnoticed in their eavesdropping.

DESMOND
...You're my wife. Of course you
think I'm a great director. I just
wish for once that my peers
believed it too. I honestly wanted
to win the award but in attempting
to do so, I wound up losing you
instead. And that's a price I was
not willing to pay.

ELAINE (V.O.)
(Loudly through phone)
You never lost me, Desmond!

DESMOND smiles and is relieved.

DESMOND
...You'll only be at Mom's for a
few weeks?... No, that's fine!
Great! Great! I'll be home when
you get back... No, the doctor said
I couldn't finish the movie even if
I wanted to. But that's not the
worst of it.

He sits back up and looks over at the two sitting in the other room.

DESMOND

Worst of all, I failed these two great young men. They send their screenplay out to only one person... Me. And I built their hopes up that this would be the greatest film ever made. We have gotten so close these last months and now I have to go in there and tell them their dream just died. It will break their hearts... I know, I know. I'll tell them when we get back to the ranch. They should at least be able to enjoy the rest of their trip... I love you too, Angel. I'll call you when we get back. Bye.

He slowly hangs the phone up and stands to adjust his robe. He walks over to the french doors. DOUG and NICK scramble to look as though they had no idea DESMOND was awake. He reaches the doors and smiles.

DESMOND

Gentleman, don't worry, I'm feeling much better. You can get some sleep.

DOUG

(feigns surprise)

Oh! Hey, Desmond! Alright, if you're sure you don't need anything. We'll get some sleep.

NICK

Yeah, I'm beat. Good night.

DESMOND

Thanks.

DOUG

For what?

DESMOND

For pretending you didn't hear that. Good night, boys.

He closes the door and returns to his bed.

INT. COSTA RICA HOTEL - DESMOND'S SUITE - CONTINUOUS

DOUG and NICK sit quietly staring at the french doors. NICK pulls his chair next to DOUG and speaks.

NICK

We have to do something.

DOUG

What? You heard him, he can't finish the film. We've filmed for almost 10 weeks. Do you have any idea how much it would cost to go back and start again?

NICK

I'm not talking about the film, I'm talking about him. We have to help him. Did you hear the sadness in his voice? He's a broken man and just because a bunch of yahoos at the Academy couldn't see what a great director he was.

DOUG

(shocked)

Are you saying that the Academy made a mistake?

NICK

This is no time for jokes. I'm saying that this is no longer about us, or this film. We have to get him that award.

DOUG

But, how? We can't finish the film.

NICK

I got an idea.