

FADE IN:

on a black screen with the the word "Ralph."

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. MUSEUM -- DAY

FITZ stands, looking at a sculpture of an oriental dragon. He is slightly unkempt, though by no means dirty. There is something manic and cynical in his stare, matched by a sweetness and innocence that tics across his face occasionally - bursting through like a brief glimpse of sunlight on a cloudy, thundering day.

He looks at the dragon. The dragon looks back.

And looks.

And looks.

Finally Fitz reaches a breaking point.

FITZ

I hate it when inanimate objects
talk to me. Especially dragons.
They're the worst. Pretentious
bastards everyone.

As he continues to speak,

VARIOUS IMAGES OF DRAGONS

are displayed, some painted, some sculpted, some trinkets.

FITZ (V.O.)

How strong they were, how beautiful,
how goddamned honorable. Yada yada
yada. Then they give you this long
sob story about how they were hunted
down like vermin, like nothing better
than rats and all they ever wanted
to do was to come up with a Grand
Unified Field Theory.

VARIOUS IMAGES FROM MOVIES

are shown, all of them scenes of people "slaying" dragons.
(If the rights to do this are too expensive, various drawings
and paintings should be substituted. The same suggestion
goes for any other montage mentioned that require media
sources.)

FITZ

glares at the oriental dragon.

THE ORIENTAL DRAGON

glares back.

FITZ

then smiles.

FITZ

And eat a few virgins. Oh, yeah,
they'll cop to that one.

Fitz's voice continues over the image of a

CHILD'S DRAWING OF A DRAGON AND A DAMSEL IN DISTRESS

with the various parts of the picture labeled in crude,
child's handwriting.

FITZ (V.O.)

But as soon as they do they'll go on
and on and on about how, because
they could see into the future, they
would only eat virgins who were going
to die an even more unpleasant and
tragic death within a year.

FITZ

smiles at pair of old women as they walk past him. Both women
are clearly uncomfortable under Fitz's gaze.

FITZ

More unpleasant than being eaten by
a dragon? Yeah, right. Have you ever
smelled a dragon's breath?

He waves wildly at the old women as they go around a corner.
Then takes a medicine bottle out of his pocket, opens it and
swallows a pill.

FITZ (V.O.) (CONT'D)

The medication was supposed to keep
them away. But here I am, at the
fucking museum listening to some
damn dragon blather on. His name.
Is. Ralph.

THE ORIENTAL DRAGON

stares quietly at Fitz, then in a voice ominous and
reverberating . . .

RALPH (V.O.)

Yes, Ralph

FITZ

grimaces and shrugs.

FITZ

It's not like he was talking, more like *communicating*, you know, that mind to mind crap.

Ralph continues to speak over a

SERIES OF SHOTS

which show images mirroring or complementing the ones that Ralph mentions.

RALPH (V.O.)

It is a name that predates your species by millennia. One of the Ancient Names and not to be mocked by some pup of a human who knows nothing of the great Mysteries of the Universe. I have seen the Aurora Borealis from the inside, you pitiful man child. I have touched the Edge of the World with my wings and dived to the Nether Regions of the Seas, you silly misnomer of a species. Homo Sapiens Sapiens? I don't think so. My name is not one to be judged by such as you.

FITZ

watches the approach of a YOUNG GIRL.

FITZ

Jesus! Just a bit touchy there, aren't you Ralphy boy? But then, they all are.

The Young Girl stops in front of Fitz who leans down to tousle her hair.

FITZ (CONT'D)

And everyone of them has such a stupid name. I mean, they're dragons right?

The YOUNG GIRL'S MOTHER approaches as rapidly as she can without actually running, snatches the Young Girl's hand and leads her away from Fitz. The child looks back and waves. Fitz waves back.

FITZ (CONT'D)

You'd think they'd all have cool names, but it's all . . .

SERIES OF SHOTS

of paintings of regal looking dragons with their "stupid" names underneath or to the side.

FITZ (V.O.)
 "Ralph" and "Leon" and "Dudley" and
 "Ernestine" and "Lotti." I always
 laugh at fantasy stories . . .

A number of generic fantasy names move variously across the screen in greater and lesser "fantasy-ish" fonts.

FITZ (CONT'D)
 . . . that use grandiose sounding
 names for dragons. Obviously none of
 those authors ever talked to one.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. FITZ'S APARTMENT -- NIGHT

The apartment indicates intelligence limited by a disordered mind. It contains hundreds of books and dozens of crude drawings. Fitz sits at a paper and magazine strewn roll-top desk, clicking away at a manual typewriter. Next to the typewriter is a pewter dragon around eighteen inches high. Occasionally he stops typing and leans close to the dragon. Nodding solemnly, he then begins to clack away once more.

FITZ (V.O.)
 I tried to sell a story once. A dragon
 story.

EXT. POST OFFICE -- DAY

Fitz paces back and forth in front of the steps several times. Muttering softly to himself. Buses pass by. People avoid him. Finally, he goes into the building.

FITZ (V.O.)
 I didn't even make it up, it came
 straight from the dragon's mouth. It
 was all true . . .

INT. DINER -- DAY

Fitz sits at the counter, a cup of coffee in one hand and a piece of paper in the other. The COOK looks bored and only a bit nervous that Fitz will spill the coffee all over the place as he speaks.

FITZ
 and those bastards said that I should
 learn more about the genre before
 submitting. Fucking *Fantasy and*
 (MORE)

FITZ (CONT'D)

Science Fiction Magazine. Not my fault Dudley sounds like some mix between William F. Buckley and Ted Koppel. But no . . .

EXT. OUTDOOR PLAZA -- DAY

Fitz stands next to several people who refuse to look at him.

FITZ

. . . can't have a dragon story that's true, right. What do those bastards know anyway right? Reminds me of that line in that movie . . .

A SECOND MOTHER walks with YOUNG BOY. In one hand, the Boy holds his mother's hand, in the other, he holds a balloon. As they approach Fitz, the Boy loses his grip on the balloon. Fitz, moving fast, grabs the string and hands it back to the Boy. His verbal patter doesn't miss a beat.

FITZ (CONT'D)

what was it? Damn, I can't remember the name of the movie, you know the one, where Jack Nicholson says "You want the truth? You can't handle the truth." Anyway, that movie.

INT. FITZ'S APARTMENT -- NIGHT

Fitz sits at a small Formica table eating a peanut butter and jelly sandwich while staring at a small, black and white television that sits on the table. The sound is turned off.

INT. FITZ'S APARTMENT, BATHROOM -- LATER

Fitz spits toothpaste. Rinses and looks at his gaunt reflection. A tear rolls down his cheek. He pulls the cord on the light and the apartment goes black.

FADE OUT:

to a black screen with the word "Mama."

FADE IN:

INT. MAMA'S BEDROOM -- DAY

MAMA lies in bed as sunlight streams in, shadows etch themselves across the room from the blinds. She is a pretty woman, but with dark circles under her eyes and a tired, worn out look.

YOUNG FITZ enters, a tentative and nervous boy of 8. He carries a small platter with a grapefruit, tea and two pieces

of toast. Mama maneuvers, tiredly, to a sitting position and takes the tray, setting it on her lap. Young Fitz stands next to the bed. Waiting.

FITZ (V.O.)

Mama didn't ever talk to dragons.
But when she stopped taking her pills,
she had lengthy conversations with
elves.

INSERT

of a picture of an elf with the words "Elf. Not Dragon" scrawled in a messy, child's print.

INT. MAMA'S BEDROOM -- NIGHT

This Mama is three years younger and energetic. She puts on a show for an enthralled 5 YEAR OLD FITZ. She prances and mimes her adventures with the elves, telling magic with her body and her eyes.

FITZ (V.O.)

She used to tell me stories when I
was a kid. I liked it when she did
that.

INT. MAMA'S BEDROOM -- DAY

She pushes the tray away, food half-eaten. Young Fitz takes the tray and watches his mother.

FITZ (V.O.)

She didn't do it very often when she
was taking the pills. She didn't do
much.

EXT. CHURCH -- DAY

Young Fitz holds his Mama's hand as they walk to the doors of the church. People glance their way and turn, quickly. Their furtive glances obvious and judgmental. Mama ignores the looks with a quiet, sad dignity, while Young Fitz squirms with embarrassment and anger.

FITZ (V.O.)

Everybody used to call Mama crazy. I
didn't like that. Not one fucking
bit. I used to go after anybody who
said that . . .

As Young Fitz and Mama enter, a sharp and rodent-looking woman turns to her companion and says something, then smiles at Young Fitz.

INT. CHURCH -- DAY

The small church is about half full. The MINISTER is a sour looking man who clearly enjoys a sense of spiritual power. Young Fitz is staring, murder in his eyes, at the RODENT-LOOKING WOMAN who had insulted his Mama.

FITZ (V.O.)

. . . used to go after them with my teeth, put a nice bite mark on their arm or their leg.

EXT. CHURCH -- LATER

Organ music spills out of the church doors. The Minister stands at the door, looking smug as he greets his parishioners. First Mama and then Young Fitz shakes his hand and begin to walk away, but they are stopped by a GENTLE MAN, who speaks a few soft words to Mama. As they speak, Young Fitz sees the Rodent-Looking Woman come out of the church and shake hands with the minister. Fitz shudders, bares his teeth and takes off like a rocket, runs fast and lands a vicious bite on the woman's ass. Pandemonium as the Woman shrieks and collapses into the Minister's arms. Mama quickly drags Fitz away, scolding him for the benefit of the people around them, but barely restraining a wide and supportive grin. As they both go around the corner of the building, Fitz and Mama burst into laughter. The joy of scoring a point against the vicious world.

INT. MAMA'S BEDROOM -- EVENING

Mama is propped up and staring blankly at a small black and white television (yes, the same one). Young Fitz lies on his stomach on the bed, drawing a picture of a Princess surrounded by mighty but tiny Warrior Elves.

MAMA

Fitz.

The boy freezes. Unsure of what is about to happen, a caution accumulated over the years.

MAMA (CONT'D)

Fitz. Let. Can. I. Let Mama see what, what you are drawing.

He smiles, eager at the attention and moves to sit next to his Mama, drawing pad propped against his knees.

YOUNG FITZ

That's you, Mama, and those're the elves.

He flips a page backwards, revealing a picture of the same Princess riding a dragon in the sky, a small boy riding in front of her.

YOUNG FITZ (CONT'D)

And that's you and me flying a dragon
away from all the bad, mean, stupid
people.

Mama smiles, a tear staining her cheek. She bends close to her son, kisses him softly on the cheek and whispers in his ear.

MAMA

Never give up. My little valentine.
Never let them tell you anything.
Just keep going my sweet, lovely
prince. Never give up.

Young Fitz looks up at her with the all the strength and courage of innocence.

YOUNG FITZ

I won't Mama. I promise.

FADE OUT:

to a black screen with the word "Her" written.

In blackness a voice sings "My Funny Valentine." There is the clink of glasses and murmur of voices.

INT. JAZZ CLUB -- NIGHT

The place is sleek and modern, but smoke-filled and dark. On a small stage, THE SINGER is performing. A small jazz combo plays behind her. Fitz sits at a small table, a Bass Ale in front of him as he builds a small building out of matchbooks. Though he is doing this, he gives the very strong impression that he is utterly and perhaps even tragically, caught up in The Singer's performance.

The song ends and Fitz is the first to applaud, carelessly knocking over the little matchbook house and nearly spilling his beer. As The Singer takes a break, the combo begin an instrumental.

Fitz sips his beer as The Singer is mobbed by a number of good looking and young . . . well, the word "suitor" would be a bit too high-class for them, let's merely call them "hopefuls." She is clearly enjoying the attention without taking any of them seriously.

She notices Fitz, smiles, and then waves. She obviously knows him. He waves back, but turns away quickly, embarrassed. Swigs his beer and returns to building with his matchbooks.

FITZ (V.O.)

The truth is. I think I love her.

THE SINGER

is laughing, surrounded by admirers.

FITZ (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 And it scares the shit out of me.
 Scares me more than talking dragons
 or the fact that my own race

MONTAGE OF POLITICIANS AND TALK SHOW HOSTS

FITZ (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 is a bunch of morons who are so busy
 fucking themselves

MONTAGE OF WAR IMAGES

FITZ (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 that by the time they realize what
 they've been doing it will be too
 late and

IMAGE OF NUCLEAR EXPLOSION

FITZ (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 Poof. The cockroaches get their
 chance.

THE SINGER

turns to look directly at Fitz.

FITZ (CONT'D)
 Those fears are manageable. A few
 pills, some cynical, superior and
 sarcastic remarks made at some poor
 slob's expense and I can cope. But
 this . . .

THE SINGER

turns away. We see

FITZ

rebuilding his matchbook structure. He speaks the following
 quietly, sharing his feelings with only the small and silent
 matchbooks.

FITZ (CONT'D)
 I feel myself being pulled out of my
 body whenever I see her. My stomach
 rolls around and around like a dog
 playing on the grass. My heart stops,
 races, stops again and then feels
 like it's going to explode out of my
 chest. My throat feels like I
 swallowed a glass of sand and I start
 (MORE)

FITZ (CONT'D)
 to tremble. And if she touches me!
 Forget it. It's all I can do not to
 fall into some kind of cataleptic
 shock. I can't even begin to imagine
 what would happen if she kissed me.
 I'd die. Really, just fucking die
 right there. Fall down dead and start
 feeding the worms.

Fitz's face is held still by the thousand conflicting emotions generally lumped under the words "fear" and "love." Somewhere in the background, she starts singing again. The matchsticks fall to the table and the floor.

INT. DOCTOR'S OFFICE -- DAY

Obviously a psychiatric facility. The DOCTOR sits behind his desk, looking at Fitz's file. There is a LARGE ORDERLY stationed by the door, arms crossed, looking like he enjoys kicking small puppies. Fitz sits in a chair, trying his best to look like he gives a shit.

FITZ (V.O.)
 My doctors say I have a quote

As Fitz speaks the following words we see an

EXTREME CLOSE UP

of the Doctor's lips moving in slow motion but synced with Fitz's voice.

FITZ (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 TENDENCY TO EXAGGERATE THINGS

FITZ

looks directly at the camera.

FITZ (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 Unquote.
 (beat)
 What do they fucking know?

EXT. CITY STREET -- NIGHT (MOVING)

Fitz is walking rapidly along the sidewalk. It is late, but there are still a few drunk students, some homeless, and a few hustlers on the streets.

FITZ
 No, really, that's not just a
 rhetorical question that I'm asking
 into empty space like some idiot
 philosopher pondering the nature of
 (MORE)

FITZ (CONT'D)

the universe, drool dripping down my chin and eyes glazed with the search for truth. Just what do these fuckers know? Do they know the electricity of her hand lightly touching my cheek? Or the void I fall into every time I look into her blue eyes, a void that rips me apart atom by frigging atom until I'm nothing but nothing in a good way?! Do they know anything about that swirling feeling I get in the middle of my chest, not where my heart is but where my heart feels, whenever she laughs at one of my stupid jokes, laughs for real, not 'cause she's being polite or anything like that? And do they have the slightest fucking clue as to what it feels like

MONTAGE OF IMAGES MATCHING THE FOLLOWING IMAGES, FAST AND SHARP LIKE SNAPSHOTS CUTTING INTO FITZ

FITZ (CONT'D)

To lie in bed and picture being with her, walking on the beach, holding hands, kissing her, making love to her

EXT. CITY INTERSECTION -- CONTINUOUS

A flashing red light.

FITZ

And then remembering that I'm crazy and that dragons talk to me and that I'm never ever going to be anything but what am.

INT. FITZ'S APARTMENT -- LATER

Fitz lies, fully clothed, on top of his bed. He cradles a small micro-cassette recorder. It is playing a tinny and barely heard recording of The Singer from earlier in the evening singing "My Funny Valentine."

FITZ (V.O.)

And I'm angry and I'm sad and happy all at the same time 'cause even if I know what's impossible, I can still dream and she's still in my life and that counts for something, even if we, she I can't . . .

INT. DOCTOR'S OFFICE -- DAY

Fitz smiles like an idiot child at the Doctor as he stands up and moves to the door.

FITZ (V.O.)

No. They don't know anything about that and so when I say I'd die if she kissed me then

INT. PSYCHIATRIC FACILITY -- CONTINUOUS

Fitz exits the Doctor's office, followed closely by the Orderly, as soon as the door closes, Fitz's smile crumbles and he turns to the Orderly

FITZ

Don't even start, ok. Just a word to the wise, 'cause I'm not in the mood.

INT. FITZ'S APARTMENT -- NIGHT

Fitz is typing on his typewriter lit only by one bare bulb. The tinny sound of The Singer from the micro-cassette recorder is heard. He types out the following words:

And I'm not even going to tell her name. So There.

It's a very pretty name.

Fitz stops typing. Raises a finger to his lips.

FITZ

Shhh.

INT. FITZ'S APARTMENT -- LATER

Fitz sits on the floor, surrounded by books and magazines. In a manic mood, he cuts pictures and words to pieces and glues them to a large sheet of paper creating a collage. He is using Elmer's glue and it is squelching everywhere, getting on his fingers and the floor. Everything starts sticking to everything else. Voices, barely heard, whisper through the room naming things. Mother, Lover, Crazy, Glue, Radio, John, Fitz, Scissors, Thorazine, Chlorpromazine, Mellaril, Polixin, Fluphenazine, Compazine, Stelazine, Haldol, Haloperidol.. The sound swirls around Fitz, the barest level of audible.

FITZ (V.O.)

If there's one thing that the dragons have taught me, its the power of names. And the doctors. Oh yeah, those doctors love to name things, to control things with their diagnosis and their prescriptions and their little Latin phrases and their jargon

(MORE)

FITZ (V.O.) (CONT'D)
as they prance around like witch
doctors

Pause.

FITZ (CONT'D)
Only witch doctors know more about
real stuff than any of these arrogant
MDs with their oh-so-sincere looks
that go right past you until you
want to scream in their face and
wave your arms around just so they
know there's another human fucking
being in the room, not just a case
number.

Pause.

FITZ (V.O.) (CONT'D)
Don't do it though. Trust me. It
only makes more trouble than it's
worth. Really.

Pause.

FITZ (V.O.) (CONT'D)
Or don't trust me, I don't fucking
care, learn the hard way.

INT. FITZ'S APARTMENT -- LATER

Glue caked fingers type slowly:

So I'm not gonna give you her name cause then you cant take
her from me.

FITZ
I may be crazy. But I'm not stupid.
Shhh.

FADE OUT:

INT. MUSEUM -- DAY

We are back where we started. Fitz is still talking to people
as they pass by. Mania only occasionally breaking through,
but he contains it.

FITZ
The world could use a few more crazy
and a lot less stupid. I tell you.
It's like the other movie with the
guy from *Bosom Buddies*.

(MORE)

FITZ (CONT'D)

Yeah, that one about that stupid-ass fuckup who has his shit served on a golden platter. Gump. Chump. Dump. Rump. Lump. Sump-pump. Get the picture? I hated that movie. Swore off shrimp for a whole month. On principle. I may not have sold a story and I may not have a girlfriend but I've got principles. Which is more than I can say for most of the sorry, fucked up, idiotic, asinine, mindless schmucks who go around our sad little planet screwing it all up for the rest of us. Assholes.

(beat)

Not one word from you Ralph. I mean it. I've got a killer headache and besides its not your part of the movie.

MONTAGE OF SEX AND LOVE IMAGES FROM MOVIES

FITZ (V.O.) (CONT'D)

The way I see it is that we're all being poisoned. Forget all this violence crap in the movies and on t.v., the real danger is how they give us love. I mean it. Really, just look at the shit they pump out. Where I come from most of what lovers do in movies is called stalking. And all the polite raping they do, "no, no" turning into some unspoken "yes" as he passionately grabs her and kisses her and off they go, humping like rabbits despite all the fear and resistance in her voice. Where I come from you go to jail for shit like that, but not in the fucking movies.

INT. RISD MUSEUM -- CONTINUOUS

FITZ

Mama taught me all about real love and that it's long and stupid and boring. Dangerous too.

INT. MAMA'S LIVING ROOM -- NIGHT

SERIES OF IMAGES:

Mama being hit.

A man passed out surrounded by bottles of beer.

Mama being raped.

Mama being discarded.

Shouts and screams.

Anger and a young boy's fear.

FITZ (V.O.)
Love, Mama said

INT. FITZ'S APARTMENT -- NIGHT

FITZ
... is like a knife in the back,
hurts like hell, but when you take
it out and the blood pours out, you
want it back.

INT. JAZZ CLUB -- NIGHT

Another night. The Singer is on stage singing Cole Porter's "Night and Day." Her voice and the sounds of the club are muted, far away. The sound of a HEARTBEAT.

FITZ (V.O.)
So I know, ya' know, I know that
it's all bullshit and that no matter
what I feel, if she and I were ever
. . . to, ya' know . . . I'd grow to
poison her and she'd poison me and
together we'd send each other to
hell with silent accusations and
anger and slaps and violent, post-
fight sex. So it stays in my head,
locked up with all the rest of the
world, the dragons and the . . .the
other things. Locked up and tight so
that it won't get out. Pretty pictures
that keep me warm at night in the
land of make-fucking-believe.

FITZ

looks directly at us.

FITZ (CONT'D)
Do you believe me? Anyway . . . I
lied before.
(beat)
I know I love her.
(beat)
And it scares the hell out of me.

Immediately the sound of the club and her voice comes full volume and the heartbeat cuts out.

As she sings, his face relaxes, something inside Fitz unwinds and he lets the beauty of her voice, the sadness of the song wash over him. It is enough.

For the moment.

FADE OUT: