

CLIMATE CHANGED

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EXT. DOCK - MAN-MADE SLUDGE LAKE - NIGHT

Dark and moonless.

A four-door sedan screeches to a halt in front of a dimly lit dock that extends out into a black abyss.

Two goons, MUSTACHE(30s) and SKINHEAD(30s) get out of the car. Muffled cries come from the trunk.

EDMUNDS (O.S.)

Let me out of here!

Mustache opens the trunk. A pair of legs shoot out and kick him in the stomach.

MUSTACHE

Oof!

(to Skinhead)

Why'd we have to draw the short straw on this guy?

SKINHEAD

Just grab him.

They both grab the legs and pulls out PROF. ISSAC EDMUNDS(60s). There's a sack on his head and his hands are zip-tied. He squirms and falls to the ground.

EDMUNDS

Unhand me!

Edmunds' wallet falls out. Mustache and Skinhead don't notice.

They drag Edmunds along the dock to a motor boat floating in a manmade lake filled with black muck.

EDMUNDS (CONT'D)

Where are we, and who are you?  
What's that smell?

They heave Edmunds into the boat, then jump in.

Skinhead unties the rope from the mooring and Mustache starts the outboard motor.

They turn on their flashlights to light the way. The boat pushes through the toxic sludge.

MUSTACHE

He's right. This place does stink.

SKINHEAD

Shut up!

Mustache shuts off the motor and Skinhead pulls the sack off Edmunds' head. Edmunds winces at the stench as he looks around into the lake of black sludge.

EDMUNDS

My God. What do you want?

Mustache extends a clipboard with a sheet of paper on it. Skinhead shines his flashlight on it.

EDMUNDS (CONT'D)

No. I told him I won't endorse that report. The level of damage this will cause is incalculable --

They grab him and start to lift him over the side of the boat.

SKINHEAD

C'mon doc. It's one signature.

Head inches above the sludge.

EDMUNDS

No-no-no-no-no! Alright, alright!  
I'll sign.

They pull Edmunds back into the boat, he signs. Skinhead restarts the motor.

EDMUNDS (CONT'D)

You don't understand, the level of damage this will cause is incalculable --

The goons turn to Edmunds and swat at him with their flashlights.

MUSTACHE

Shut up!

SKINHEAD

Shut up!

Edmunds tries to avoid the blows and falls out of the boat.

SKINHEAD (CONT'D)

Shit! What'd you do that for?

MUSTACHE

Me? You hit him first.

SKINHEAD

Just find him.

MUSTACHE

You fucking kidding me with this?

They shine their flashlights into the muck looking for Edmunds. His head pops up above the "muck" line.

EDMUNDS

Help!... It will... destroy the... environment...!

He sinks below the surface before they can react. Bubbles appear on the surface.

MUSTACHE

Great. Now what? We reel him in and fish him out?

SKINHEAD

Christ. Start her up and let's get outta here.

Edmunds black, muck-covered hand reappears out from the water and grasps the side of the boat but quickly slips off.

Edmunds sinks back under for the last time, his mouth wide open.

KIDS (V.O.) PRE-LAP

Yeaaaaah!

MAX (V.O.) PRE-LAP

I can't hear you...

Edmunds disappears for good in the muck.

INT. COMMUNITY CENTER - DAY

A group of Ten EIGHT-YEAR-OLD KIDS, including the birthday boy, ASHER and ANNOYING KID, sit on the floor hopped up on sugar screaming with delight.

Six PARENTS, including ASHER'S MOM, watch from the back of the room.

MAX BRICKER(30s), a tender mass of restrained angst, wears a rainbow sequined tux shirt with red suspenders. He stands behind a short podium.

MAX

I said, who's ready for some magic!?

KIDS  
Yeaaaaaah!!!

MAX  
I hear Asher's going to get a big  
cake today. But where is it?

The kids looks around, but no cake in sight.

MAX (CONT'D)  
Aw, we have to find it, don't we,  
kids?

KIDS  
Yeaaaaaah!

MAX  
Hmmh, now where could it be...  
Wait, I think I know.

Max reaches down into his bulging pants and holds out the  
cake and hands it to Asher.

The kids laugh and cheer. The Parents smile.

MAX (CONT'D)  
Okay.

Max hesitates as he looks around the room.

MAX (CONT'D)  
I need a volunteer.

Several kids raise their hands.

ANNOYING KID  
Me. I wanna do it.

Before Max can pick someone, Annoying Kid gets up and stands  
next to Max.

MAX  
Alright. Now watch carefully.

Max holds a straw with a string running through both ends.  
Annoying Kid stands next to him.

ANNOYING KID  
It's just a stupid straw.

MAX  
Yes, it is. Do you know why?  
Because it's not an environmentally  
friendly straw.  
(MORE)

MAX (CONT'D)

Plastic straws are bad for the environment. And did you know the carbon footprint in this room violates every international climate change agreement on the planet --

A Parent clears her throat.

Max refocuses and bends the straw in half. He hands safety-scissors to Annoying Kid who cuts the straw in half, but sees that Max is hiding something.

ANNOYING KID

Hey! You didn't cut the string.

MAX

Heh-heh. Sure I did.

Max forces a smile as he expertly shows the string that was cut in two.

ANNOYING KID

Hey! How'd you do that?

SHOUTS and CLAPS.

FREEZE FRAME:

MAX (V.O.)

This isn't me. I mean... it's not like I' doing this to make a living. More like something you do when you're eight to make your parents happy.

BEGIN MONTAGE:

INT. BRICKER HOME - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Max (8), does a basic magic trick as his MOM (30s) and DAD (30s) watch. Mom smiles proudly as Dad acts like he'd rather be someplace else.

MOM

Such a sweet boy. You are so talented.

DAD

Let's throw the ball around before supper.

MAX (V.O.)  
She encouraged me to do it.

INT. BRICKER HOME - FRONT DOOR - DAY

Max (10) stuffs a bag with a magic wand, handcuffs, etc.

Mom grasps his hand and gently pulls him out the

MOM  
Maxie, you don't want to be late  
for lessons. Let's go.  
(to Dad)  
Remember to feed him dinner. I've  
got another late shift at the plant  
tonight.

Dad sits in a beat up lazy chair.

DAD  
I'm not doing that.

MOM  
(to Max)  
Go wait in the car, Max. I'll be  
right there.

INT. CAR - DAY

Max watches Mom and Dad argue (MOS) as Dad motions to the  
car.

MAX (V.O.)  
Mom took a shitty job at the oil  
refinery so I could take those  
magic lessons. It seemed to pay off  
at first.

INT. HOME - DAY

Max (13) does magic tricks at a kid's birthday party.

INT. SCHOOL STAGE - DAY

Max (16) performs a magic show at an assembly.

Mom and Dad sit watching until Mom coughs up blood and leaves  
the auditorium.

EXT. BRICKER HOME - NIGHT

Dad leaves angrily with his suitcases as Mom yells from the front door. Max watches sadly from his bedroom window.

MAX (V.O.)  
Until one day, the magic died.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

Mom sits up in bed barely able to move or speak. Max (17) sits, leaning over her.

MOM  
...Do one more trick...

MAX  
(holding back tears)  
Mom, I don't think magic'll help  
this time.

MOM  
...but it will help *me*.

OMINOUS MAN (O.S.)  
Excuse me, son.

Max turns around.

MAX  
Who are you?

OMINOUS MAN  
Oh, I'm from your mother's job. I  
need to speak with her alone.

MAX  
(looks at Mom)  
No, I won't leave you.

MOM  
It's alright, Max. It's alright.

Max, shaking with fear, leaves.

INT. HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Max watches Ominous Man open a briefcase and pull out a document for Mom to sign.