

# **A SNAKE IN PANTYHOSE**

Writing Sample From The  
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BLACK:

Even before we see him, the voice of our narrator, WILLIAM FASBENDER, 22, radiates gay. But he isn't.

WILLIAM (V.O.)

The power struggle between men and women has been going on since the Garden of Eden. Even to this very day, there are only two moments when both parties have an equal say in their relationship... when they each agree the answer is no...

FADE IN:

INT. NAMELESS WOMAN'S BEDROOM - THURSDAY MORNING

Still dark. Alarm clock reads: 5:30. Wide awake...

RODNEY RANDOLF, 22. Irresistibly pretty. Impossibly slim. Stares at the ceiling. Steals a glance at his prior night's CONQUEST... asleep naked.

WILLIAM (V.O.)

... and when they both decide the answer is yes.

The lady unleashes a loud, ugly snore.

ROD

Lovely.

Rod slides out of bed.

EXT. SAN FERNANDO VALLEY, APARTMENT BUILDING - MORNING

Rod eases out as the sunrise peeks over the horizon. Opens the door of a gleaming high-end roadster. Pulls crumpled lace panties from his shirt pocket, tosses them onto the passenger seat. Starts the car, lowers the roof. A window opens in the building. Disheveled, his bedmate leans out.

NAMELESS WOMAN

Hey!

Rod smiles, waves, pulls away hastily.

NAMELESS WOMAN (CONT'D)

Call me!

EXT. PANTRY RESTAURANT - MORNING

Showered and changed, Rod pulls into the lot across the street from the Downtown Los Angeles landmark, parks. Box of donuts

on the seat next to the panties. Rod pockets the lingerie, locks the car. Crosses the street, callously bypasses startled PATRONS lined up along the side of the restaurant.

WILLIAM (V.O.)

Few of us actually recognize the  
love of our life when we first lay  
eyes on them.

INT. PANTRY RESTAURANT - MORNING

Rod pushes past crowded tables. Yields to a WAITER with a tray full of breakfasts, trapped next to a gloomy couple...

LARRY TUTHILL, 28. A granite block in a business suit, chiseled to a fragment as his world collapses. His delay gives Rod a chance to size up the cause of the guy's misery...

Amanda MANDY Chasen, 24. All business. Her tailored suit covers a rockin' body. Hair pulled back for a bookish, career-first look. Terse features make her mind-set clear.

LARRY

I don't get it, Mandy. We fit  
perfectly.

MANDY

I don't have time to be a couple right  
now, Larry. It's not you. It's me.

ROD

Harsh.

Daggers shooting from his eyes, Larry looks up.

LARRY

Do you mind?

ROD

Sorry, amigo.

Larry turns back to Mandy.

LARRY

Are you sure about this?

MANDY

Can't we just be friends?

Rod takes a couple of steps, then backtracks.

WILLIAM (V.O.)

Sometimes, though, we recognize who  
the love of our life is not.

ROD  
You can do so much better, Larry.

LARRY  
Fuck off!

ROD  
You're the boss.

Larry half rises. Rod hustles away to join his friends...

James JIMBO Parker, 22, the alpha dog in any other group but not here. All business in a suit. With him...

Frankie SWATTER Slater, 22, a guy's guy, the get-along type who rounds out any decent posse.

Rod settles into a waiting chair.

JIMBO  
Making new friends early today?

ROD  
With friends like her, I'd need body armor. I see everybody got home okay.

SWATTER  
What a zoo the Valley is. I can't wait 'til Saturday night.

JIMBO  
I'm kinda bored with it.

SWATTER  
That's the desperate cover of a man who didn't score.

JIMBO  
All I'm saying is we could try something new once in a while. I hear Club L.A. downtown is sick.

SWATTER  
That place is so out of our league.

JIMBO  
I thought our Rod Man could score anywhere. Let's check it out Saturday.

ROD  
The Valley works fine for me, Junior.

SWATTER  
Tell me you unleashed the python.

Rod smiles, pulls the panties out of his pocket.

SWATTER (CONT'D)

Awesome!

JIMBO

Scoring strange isn't everything.

SWATTER

Oh, kiss my ass. You're just jealous.

JIMBO

Fuck yourself, Swatter.

SWATTER

I'm guessing you already did,  
Jimboner.

ROD

Who crapped in your corn flakes today?

JIMBO

Oh, it's a beautiful day in the  
neighborhood, Rod Man.

The waiter settles next to the table, pencil and pad poised.

WAITER

And, of course, a beautiful day begins  
with a hearty breakfast.

SWATTER

I'll have the usual.

JIMBO

Me, too.

ROD

Me four.

WAITER

Big spenders. Wait. There's only  
three of you.

SWATTER

We're meeting Billy for lunch.

WAITER

And how does that cover his tip?

WILLIAM (V.O.)

It doesn't.

SWATTER

We'll take care of it, of course.

WILLIAM (V.O.)

No, they won't.

The waiter shakes his head as he walks away.

WAITER

Retirement chalet in the Alps, here I come.

ROD

Billy's been real scarce lately.

JIMBO

You never pay attention. He's busy being queerish.

ROD

Whoa! Billy's gay?

JIMBO

He says it's a professional upgrade. And he wants to be called William.

ROD

How is going mo a career move?

JIMBO

Remember when we graduated? We planned to make a difference and get rich.

SWATTER

That was sweet... 'til we figured out we needed jobs to pay for our shit.

JIMBO

A job isn't a career unless it takes you somewhere. Billy sold his car to pay for some office space. It's a bold decision. He seized the moment.

ROD

If success means switching teams, I say hell no. It's just too desperate.

JIMBO

Says the man ducking the repo truck to hold onto his ride.

SWATTER

Speaking of which... dude, pick me up for lunch. I need to arrive in style.

ROD

I'll be there. And you don't have to worry about me, Junior.

JIMBO

You aren't paying attention, Rod Man. You can't trade easy scores for rent. At the end of the day, it's all about the Benjamins.

SWATTER

True that.

ROD

Give it a rest for ten minutes, mom. I haven't even had breakfast yet.

SWATTER

Yeah, Jimbo. Don't get your panties in a bunch.

He shoots the panties Rod tossed him at Jimbo's head. Jimbo ducks. The panties land in Mandy's plate. Larry picks up the panties and stands slowly. Swatter's eyes pop as Larry lumbers toward him.

SWATTER (CONT'D)

Those aren't mine.

Larry surveys the trio. Circles behind Rod.

LARRY

I told you to leave us alone.

ROD

Hey, thanks pal. We were looking for those. Here you go, Jimbo. Try not to get so excited next time.

Larry clamps a meaty paw on Rod's shoulder.

ROD (CONT'D)

Oh, damn.

MANDY

Larry, don't...

SWATTER

Yeah, Larry... don't.

Larry stretches the panties over Rod's head. Mortified, Mandy gets up and storms out. Jimbo follows her with his eyes as Larry stuffs his check into Rod's shirt pocket.

LARRY

C'mon, Mandy. What am I supposed to do?

ROD  
This is so undignified.

Larry leaves as the waiter returns with three bowls of cereal.

WAITER  
Interesting choice of hat, sir.

ROD  
Can I get that to go?

WAITER  
Do we look like a take out restaurant?

ROD  
Then I've lost my appetite.

He slinks past the waiter.

JIMBO  
I guess we're done here.

Jimbo and Swatter follow Rod out.

WAITER  
So much for living the dream.

EXT. SIGNS O' THE TIMES - MORNING

Rod guides his roadster down a drab downtown L.A. industrial street. The low building housing the shop he works for marked: *SIGNS O' THE TIMES - What's Your Sign? We Can Make It!*

In the parking lot past the building, a tow truck idles.

ROD  
Oh shit!

Recklessly, he guides the roadster across the oncoming traffic. Pulls into an alley across the street.

ALLEY

Rod parks in an empty spot behind a garment factory. An angry SEAMSTRESS, 40, lunges out the back door as he gets out of his car holding the donut box.

SEAMSTRESS  
Hey, you! This is private property.  
You can't park here.

Startled, Rod looks across the street. Calmly smiles the third most devastating smile in his arsenal. The flattered Seamstress blushes at his attention.

ROD

It's just for ten minutes. I've got business across the street. Surely you can let it slide, can't you?

SEAMSTRESS

You got to be gone by the time the boss gets back or he'll tow you.

ROD

We wouldn't want that. Thanks.

He tones the smile down and walks away. The Seamstress goes back inside with a girlish skip in her step.

SIGNS O' THE TIMES, PARKING LOT

Still carrying his donut box, Rod walks past the tow truck. In the driver's seat, a brawny Amazon goddess in coveralls... REPO BABE, 35. She hoists herself down from the cab.

REPO BABE

Hold it right there, Randolph.

ROD

Oh, hi.

REPO BABE

Don't hi me. Where are your wheels?

ROD

I took the bus today.

REPO BABE

Do they park busses in alleys now?

ROD

Did I say I took the bus? Silly me. They moved my parking space.

REPO BABE

That's okay. My rig's mobile.

Rod flashes his second most devastating smile. She absorbs it without flinching.

ROD

Look, I've got a big commission due in a couple of days. I can cover the payments next week. Couldn't you look the other way 'til then?

REPO BABE

I guess I could develop a blind spot... for a small consideration.

ROD  
Same as last time?

REPO BABE  
Nice, but no. I want to go out  
somewhere classy first. I wouldn't  
mind a little Saturday night arm  
candy.

ROD  
I'd love to, but I've promised the  
guys I'd go with them to Club L.A.  
on Saturday.

Repo Babe kisses Rod on the cheek.

REPO BABE  
Then Friday it is. Good doing business  
with you, babe. I gotta roll. Time  
to yank the wheels out from under a  
real deadbeat.

ROD  
Lucky for me you have a generous  
nature.

REPO BABE  
Not every slot machine pays off like  
you, sweet face. See you tomorrow  
night.

INT. SIGNS O' THE TIMES, PLANT FLOOR - DAY

Carrying the donut box, Rod walks through the plant. Surrounded  
by printing and fabricating equipment so antique it belongs  
in a museum. Cheap Halloween decorations hang on the walls.

WILLIAM (V.O.)  
If college is supposed to be the  
best four years of your life,  
everything which follows is inevitably  
an anticlimax. This small comfort  
turns the disappointment of diverting  
from one's intended career path toward  
a job which pays the rent into a  
manageable triumph for any graduate.

Looking up from a group assembling poster boards for delivery,  
a middle-aged FEMALE EMPLOYEE spots Rod's donut box.

FEMALE EMPLOYEE  
Donuts!

EMPLOYEES throughout the shop shut their stations down and  
rush toward Rod. Their boss, shop owner HECTOR FERNANDEZ,

50, sprints out of the glass enclosed corner of the show which serves as his office.

FERNANDEZ

Hey, hey, hey. Who said anything about a break yet?

FEMALE EMPLOYEE

Rod's brought donuts, Mr. Fernandez.

FERNANDEZ

Oh, well that's entirely different. Our customers waiting for their orders can wait. There's donuts!

The employees look at each other and shrug. The company's DELIVERY PUNK, 20, snatches the box from Rod.

DELIVERY PUNK

Sounds good to me.

The employees swarm the box. Fernandez can't win.

FERNANDEZ

There'd better be a jelly donut in there when you vultures get done.

Rod holds up a small bag he lifted from the box.

ROD

Or you could just take this one.

Fernandez takes the bag gratefully.

FERNANDEZ

You're a good man, Randolph. I don't care what anybody else says.

ROD

Why? What are they saying?

Fernandez looks in the bag. Disappointed.

FERNANDEZ

This is a maple bar. I hate maple bars.

ROD

Sorry. I thought you...

FERNANDEZ

Come with me, son.

His co-workers smirk as Rod follows his boss into the office.

## SIGNS O' THE TIMES, OFFICE

Fernandez picks a pile of pink message slips from his desk. Seated behind the desk, ALLEN BURNS, 80-something in a crisply pressed suit from a different era. Smiles the toothiest salesman smile in the world.

BURNS  
Where's my donut?

FERNANDEZ  
You still don't work here, Allen.

BURNS  
No wonder your business is dying.

FERNANDEZ  
Get out of my chair, Allen.

BURNS  
Suit yourself, Hernandez.

FERNANDEZ  
How you gonna sell a customer when you can't even remember their name?

BURNS  
If you were a customer, I'd remember your name.

FERNANDEZ  
Get out of my office, Allen. I've got all the salesman I need right here.

ROD  
Thanks, Mr. Fernandez.

FERNANDEZ  
Shut up, Randolph. Good bye, Burns.

BURNS  
One of these days, you'll realize how bad you need me.

FERNANDEZ  
Out.

BURNS  
Persistence pays.

FERNANDEZ  
Out!

Burns leaves.

ROD  
Where'd you find that relic?

FERNANDEZ  
Never mind him. Sit down, son.

Rod sits uncomfortably. Fernandez perches on the desk.

FERNANDEZ (CONT'D)  
Look, Randolph, I like you. You show up when you're supposed to and the customers are comfortable with you.

ROD  
I'm comfortable with them, too.

FERNANDEZ  
Maybe too comfortable. You think you can breeze through the day on your good looks without paying any attention to details. You better clean up this business with your finance company, Mr. Randolph.

He hands Rod a phone message slip.

FERNANDEZ (CONT'D)  
This can't keep happening.

Hands him another phone message slip.

FERNANDEZ (CONT'D)  
I'm not your answering service.

Hands Rod another phone message slip.

FERNANDEZ (CONT'D)  
And I don't want to see any more tow trucks in my driveway.

Fernandez sits behind his desk.

FERNANDEZ (CONT'D)  
Good sales reps are hard to find, son. I fired the last one after three days. Most don't last longer than a month. You've been here six. What I'm saying is you've got a future here if you want one. Just clean up your act.

ROD  
I'm barely making ends meet on my commissions.

FERNANDEZ  
That's easy to fix, son.

ROD  
You'll give me an advance?

FERNANDEZ  
No, Mr. Randolph. You'll get out there  
and sell, sell, sell. Beat the bushes.

ROD  
Couldn't you just give me an advance?

FERNANDEZ  
I could, but then I wouldn't have  
work for my other employees to do.  
This way is better. Get out there.  
Bring in new business.

Fernandez gets up, leads Rod to his office door.

FERNANDEZ (CONT'D)  
Take all next week. Phone in your  
orders. Expand our territory. You  
can do it. Thanks for the donuts.

SIGNS O' THE TIMES, PLANT FLOOR

Rod heads for a table with a wrapped pile of window signs.  
The Delivery Punk slides them to him.

DELIVERY PUNK  
You have a drop-off to make.

ROD  
Isn't that your job?

DELIVERY PUNK  
Not my customer.

Fernandez framed in his office doorway, bellows...

FERNANDEZ  
Sell, sell, sell, Randolph.

ROD  
Yes, boss.

DELIVERY PUNK  
Kiss ass.

ROD  
No more donuts for you.

DELIVERY PUNK

I meant that in the most affectionate way possible.

ROD

Sure you did.

DELIVERY PUNK

I did. Really. Kiss ass. Kiss ass. How is that not a compliment?

ROD

I want my donut back.

The Punk opens his mouth, sticks his tongue out.

DELIVERY PUNK

It's all yours.

Rod lunges for him. He takes off. Rod picks up the pack. Fernandez bellows again...

FERNANDEZ

Sell, sell, sell, Mr. Randolph.

INT. GOLDINGS DEPARTMENT STORE OFFICES - DAY

Carrying the bundle under his arm, Rod enters the executive suite of a local retailer. Knocks on a cubicle door.

ROD

Trick or treat.

TIA LESTER, 40, harried executive. Hard-bitten beauty. Looks up from her desk. Smiles with relief.

TIA

Tell me you got it.

ROD

I got it.

He offers her the bundle.

TIA

You saved my life. Those morons at corporate sent us signs with snowflakes all over them. Who gives a shit about snow in L.A.?

ROD

Skiers? Ice Pirates? Hula Dancers?

Tia slides the invoice out of the bundle.

TIA  
Talk about pirates.

ROD  
It was a rush job!

TIA  
We're trying to make money here, you know. Is there something you can do about this?

Rod picks up the invoice. Lines through the figures.

ROD  
Special customer discount.

TIA  
I like the sound of that.

ROD  
Just remember who gets the job done when you need it.

TIA  
Is that service available after hours, too?

ROD  
I suppose it could be.

TIA  
I really like the sound of that. I'm really busy right now. Big trade show in town next week. But let's talk soon.

Rod mutters as he leaves her cubicle. His cell phone rings.

ROD  
I'll bet there's no commission for her special service, either. Speak to me... Swatter... yeah, I remember, dude. I'm on my way.

EXT. DOWNTOWN L.A., STREET - DAY

Top down, Rod basks in the noon sun. Swatter taps on the passenger door in time to the music on the sound system.

SWATTER  
Such the sweet ride.

ROD  
Only the best for you, my man.

SWATTER

Damn straight.

ROD

You didn't have to call me, dude. I was on a sales call.

SWATTER

Like you ever remember anything.

ROD

I remember what I need to.

SWATTER

Blah blah blah.

ROD

I do not blah blah blah!

SWATTER

You blah blah.

They drive toward the glass and steel center of the L.A. Fashion industry: the California Mart. The car's phone rings.

ROD

Speak to me.

WILLIAM (O.S.)

Where the hell are you? My pet mice are more punctual than you!

ROD

Quit your squeaking, Billy. We're pulling in right now.

WILLIAM (O.S.)

Call me William. I'm going to assume you mean into the parking garage with Swatter and not into some skank you happened to smile at.

SWATTER

I like his version better.

ROD

We'll be right there.

He cuts off the call.

SWATTER

See? I'm not the only one.

ROD

You can blow me, Swatter.

SWATTER  
That's Billy's job now.

INT. CALIFORNIA MART, CONCOURSE - DAY

Rod and Swatter stroll along the long corridor. Signs on the walls announce a Halloween Costume Competition.

SWATTER  
Doesn't it seem weird that Billy's still raising mice just because he couldn't watch the class boa eat them in high school biology?

ROD  
No weirder than us still calling you Swatter because you couldn't pronounce your last name when we were five. Here we are.

GLAD RAGS RESTAURANT

Rod leads Swatter into the dining room off the main concourse. Jimbo already at their table with William. Crisp in a pastel shirt and vest. His haircut just as precise. His skin pale compared to his friends.

WILLIAM  
Right on time. Not.

ROD  
We aim to please, Billy.

WILLIAM  
Then please call me William.

JIMBO  
Some of us only have an hour for lunch, you know.

ROD  
You could have started without us, Junior.

WILLIAM  
We're not savages.

SWATTER  
You're looking good, Billy.

WILLIAM  
Call me William, damnit.

A waiter approaches with menus. Looks exactly like the waiter from the Pantry.

WAITER  
Menus, gentlemen?

SWATTER  
What are you doing here?

WAITER  
It's lunch time. I serve. You eat.  
Then you all tip generously.

JIMBO  
Of course we will.

WAITER  
World cruise, here I come.

He walks away.

ROD  
So, what's this I hear about you  
going over to the other team?

WILLIAM  
Why don't you find the building P.A.  
system and announce it, ass.

ROD  
Inquiring minds got to know.

JIMBO  
It's brilliant really. Tell him.

WILLIAM  
I'm never going to get anywhere in  
this industry as a straight man.

ROD  
Fine. You do only punchlines from  
now on.

WILLIAM  
Not that kind of straight man, ass.

SWATTER  
Have you seen all the sweet meat  
around here? Some of them look like  
models, Billiam.

WILLIAM  
William! They are models, you  
accessory to an ass.

SWATTER  
Call me William, damnit!

WILLIAM

Ass. Models don't want horndogs  
hanging around while they're changing.  
I have to be invisible. Nobody cares  
when you're gay, so... oh shit!

William dives behind his menu as a cluster of MAKEUP ARTISTS enters the restaurant. All sass and flash. In their center, the queen of the hive... ALICE, 33. Her striking appearance runs a distant second to the supreme confidence she wields as a battering ram.

SWATTER

Who the fuck is that?

WILLIAM

Shut up, you ass. Those are the  
glamour pros. I can't afford to  
provoke them.

ROD

Looks like easy prey to me.

WILLIAM

Oh, Rod, please don't. It's bad enough  
I have to compete with them for gigs.

JIMBO

Like that's going to stop him.

Imperially, Alice surveys the room as she takes her seat. As her gaze reaches Rod, he shoots his third most dazzling smile. Her nose lifts, but her eyes shine.

WILLIAM

Oh, no you didn't.

SWATTER

I believe he just did.

ROD

I just want to get her number.

WILLIAM

I have a better idea. Let's have a  
nice, quiet lunch.

SWATTER

This is the perfect place to feed  
the beast.

JIMBO

I guess this means we're not going  
to eat.

SWATTER

What happened to seizing the moment,  
Jimbo?

ROD

Come on, William. We're surrounded  
by top quality talent. If that honey  
is off limits, then show us around.  
Hook your brothers up.

WILLIAM

Rod, please... I'm begging you. Forget  
about your pocket python for an hour.  
Talk some sense into him, Jimbo.

JIMBO

You know what? I'm feeling frisky. I  
don't think the Rod can close the  
deal in here.

SWATTER

All right! I hear a challenge.

WILLIAM

Take it easy, boys. Let's all just  
cool down.

ROD

Don't worry, William. I wouldn't  
dream of embarrassing you.

WILLIAM

If only I could believe that.

JIMBO

Let's make this worth William's while.

ROD

What do you have in mind, Junior?

JIMBO

Forget about that easy target across  
the room.

WILLIAM

Alice is a fat fuck anyway.

JIMBO

Here's the play... William shows us  
the lay of the land. I pick out a  
scalp. If you score a date...

ROD

Her number.

JIMBO

Okay, her number... I do whatever William wants. If you don't, you do.

SWATTER

Think of it, William. Win or lose, one of these guys will be your bitch.

ROD

Come on, William. You've got nothing to lose.

William sighs, sets down his menu.

WILLIAM

Oh, all right.

SWATTER

You're the man!

He looks around. Sees the glamour squad staring at him.

SWATTER (CONT'D)

The very, very gay man.

WILLIAM

Why don't you just buy a gun and shoot me, Swatter.

William slinks toward the door. His friends follow eagerly. The waiter intercepts them.

WAITER

Have we lost our appetites again?

SWATTER

We need to watch our waists, anyway.

WAITER

I guess my dreams will have to wait.

CALIFORNIA MART, CONCOURSE

William leads his friends slowly down the grand salon.

WILLIAM (V.O.)

Fate is a capricious son of a bitch. It comes at you with knuckles bared and teeth barred and you can't fight back.

SWATTER

This is like fishing in an aquarium.

WILLIAM

That's the main showroom where the designers will present their preview shows next week.

Jimbo surveys the lobby. At the far end of the lobby... Ding! Haughty SUPERMODELS move through the concourse like royalty. Leading them, their lord and master for the day...

GALVUS, 38, a legend in his own mind. A weasel wearing a rainbow. This flamboyant tyrant claps his hands briskly.

GALVUS

With me now, ladies. Time is fleeting.

SWATTER

You've got to be kidding me. What a peacock. Emphasis on pee.

WILLIAM

You ass. Galvus may not be a top designer, but he could be my paycheck someday.

ROD

See anybody I should favor, Jimbo?

Jimbo surveys the parade. Smiles slowly as he spots Mandy, jacket off, hair down, reading glasses on. Her attention locked on *Rage*, the fashion industry trade she carries as she follows her group while pushing a rack of designer rags.

JIMBO

We have a winner... her.

SWATTER

Hey isn't that... ? Hey!

Jimbo nudges him hard. Rod misses it as he sizes Mandy up. Focused on her pleasingly curved body in comparison to the slender models, it's no surprise he doesn't recognize her.

ROD

Are you sure?

JIMBO

I'm sure, brother.

ROD

Stand back, Junior. Let me show you how it's done.

Rod steers an intercept course.

WILLIAM

Mandy Chasen is the fashionista's apprentice. She's so totally career focused, he doesn't stand a chance.

JIMBO

This is going to be great.

SWATTER

That's kind of cheating. You know she already hates him.

JIMBO

Can I help it if he never looks above the neck?

Naively, Rod approaches the models. They notice him. He smiles. Each of them smile back. He passes. Mandy trails behind pushing the rack, consumed by her reading.

MANDY

Oh, Daddy... no.

ROD

Oh, mama... yes!

Mandy glances up as Rod blocks her way. Not sure why he looks familiar until he flashes his most winning smile.

ROD (CONT'D)

Hi. Can I give you a hand?

MANDY

No thanks. I've got it.

ROD

It's no trouble.

MANDY

Not as much trouble as you are.

ROD

It just looked like you've got your hands full.

MANDY

It's under control.

Mandy spins, drops her magazine. She lunges for it, the rack sails into a wall. Rod swoops to retrieve it. Runs every watt of charm he can through his smile.

ROD

I can be very helpful.

MANDY

Look, I'd already be where I'm supposed to be if it hadn't been for your help. I don't mean to be rude, but these samples can't be replaced and I'm not going to hand them over to just anybody.

ROD

I'm not just anybody.

MANDY

Right. You're some nobody who won't mind his own business. I can do better.

She turns, pushes the rack with a piercing squeal of the wheels. Across the lobby, even Rod's friends cringe.

SWATTER

Denied!

JIMBO

Looks like the Rod Man is your bitch now, William.

Rod rejoins his friends as the showroom doors close.

ROD

So what's it going to be, William?

William looks at a Costume Contest banner. His smile dawns.

WILLIAM

You're going trick or treating. Be here tomorrow at noon. Don't forget to bring your razor.

EXT. DOWNTOWN L.A., STREET - FRIDAY, MID-DAY

As Rod drives toward the California Mart, his phone rings.

ROD

Speak to me.

WILLIAM (O.S.)

Where are you?

ROD

Doesn't anybody trust me to show up?

WILLIAM (O.S.)

No. Where are you?

ROD

Pulling in now like I promised instead  
of doing my job like I'm supposed  
to. Don't pop a seam.

INT. CALIFORNIA MART, FASBENDER STYLISTICS HALLWAY - DAY

Rod finds the office. Hand lettered sign on the door:  
*FASBENDER STYLISTICS - Not Just Another Pretty Face*. He  
knocks. William pulls the door open from the inside.

WILLIAM

Get your sweet ass in here.

ROD

I could get you a good discount on a  
professional sign, you know.

WILLIAM

Do I look like I can afford a sign?

FASBENDER STYLISTICS

Rod enters a cramped but neatly organized workshop. Wigs  
cover one wall. Organizer drawers hold every cosmetic  
available. A habit trail maze filled with white mice set up  
on a table in the corner, a rack of dresses beside it.

WILLIAM

Sit your fine behind down, sweetie.  
Surrender to the magic.

ROD

What am I going to be?

William holds up a dress as Rod sits sullenly on a stool.

WILLIAM

My bitch, of course.