

# THE FOURTH WALL

Original Screenplay  
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Revised Draft  
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TITLE OVER BLACK:

"Nothing at last is sacred but the integrity of one's own mind." Ralph Waldo Emerson, Self Reliance.

TITLE FADES TO STATIC.

INT. THEATER STAGE- DAY

We see three walls of a theater set, unfinished, on an otherwise empty stage. WE MOVE AROUND IT, clockwise, framing at last the empty house of seats.

TITLE READS:

THE FOURTH WALL

As the title dissolves, there is now one lone patron, BENSON, mid 30s, casual, a bit confused. He has a program on his knee, and he looks at it.

PROGRAM READS:

The Fourth Wall

As he SCANS DOWN IT, WE SEE some of our necessary lead in titles.

MATCH DISSOLVE:

INT. THEATER- NIGHT

As Benson looks up from the program, there is a packed house, and the curtain call of a show. He is still dressed the same, in the same spot, holding his program. He looks around confused.

INT. THEATER BACK DOOR- NIGHT

We see Benson leaving the back of the house amid the audience after the show. We FOLLOW HIM out the door and around...

INT. THEATER LOBBY- NIGHT

It's a red lobby full of people CHATTERING and moving generally out.

As Benson moves through it, he bumps into a College Student, who shoots him an annoyed glance. WE FOCUS TIGHTLY ON the student's ratty black T-shirt, on which white block letters read "DENIAL."

The Student moves on, and Benson turns around the space, lost.

BENSON  
(To himself)  
Okay...

The crowd has thinned slightly, and standing in a semi circle before him are a few OLDER PATRONS, and an actress, AUDREY, mid thirties, holding an armload of flowers. They all applaud him.

PATRON  
Bravo! (etc.)

He is confused, but smiles politely, then looks over at Audrey, who clearly knows him. She looks displeased.

INT. MOVING CAR- NIGHT

Benson is driving and Audrey is the passenger. They've apparently been riding in silence.

She puts her hand on his shoulder and he looks at it. It's awkward. She removes it after a bit.

INT. APARTMENT- NIGHT

The door opens and Audrey passes through and into the kitchen in a dreamy state. Benson comes after, jingling the keys in his hand.

He looks at the place, a bit confused- then sees a basket on a table, and puts the keys in it.

He then turns towards the kitchen.

BENSON

Um-...

He's unsure of what to say. As we CUT BACK MEDIUM, we see he still holds his KEYS. He looks at them, and the basket, confused.

He goes over and carefully puts the keys back into it. He watches it.

AUDREY (O.S.)

Benson- bring the champagne already!

He looks after her voice, into the kitchen, and finds he ONCE AGAIN HOLDS THE KEYS IN HIS HAND.

Benson then goes over, with measured steps, and carefully puts the keys back into the basket. Then watches it suspiciously.

AUDREY (O.S.)

Benson?

He now quickly steps out into the kitchen.

INT. KITCHEN- NIGHT

As Benson passes into view, he's now wearing a suit, and carrying a bottle of champagne and a corkscrew. This strikes him as a surprise, and he looks at his clothes.

There is also now the SOUNDS OF A SMALL DINNER PARTY.

INT. LIVING ROOM- NIGHT

Benson passes out of the kitchen into a small dinner party. Perhaps some of the theater patrons are here, as is Audrey, dressed quite differently, and looking much happier. She laughs with ETHAN, mid thirties, a handsome theater hipster.

He looks up at Benson and quiets down, but Audrey just smiles warmly and gets up and leads him over.

AUDREY

Hey baby, did you get lost?

Benson looks at her with a silly grin, not sure what to make of the goings on. He is about to suggest something strange is afoot, when she leans her head into him, warmly. She smiles at Ethan, who seems uncomfortable before the display of affection.

AUDREY

Ben, you remember Ethan, right?

He is about to answer (of course he does not), as Ethan sits up and takes the bottle and the opener.

ETHAN

We've met like four times, Dre.

She sits back down (out of frame) with Ethan. Benson looks around the party- seeing HAROLD, an unusual looking character in a black suit with a red tie, clearly out of place.

He smokes, and stares straight at Benson, knowingly.

Benson is fixated in the man's glare, when Audrey tugs on his sleeve and indicates he should sit down.

INT. BATHROOM- NIGHT

Benson, still in his party suit, is washing his face in the sink.

As he rises up (INTO CLOSEUP), we see he is in:

INT. DIFFERENT BATHROOM- DAY

...a public restroom. He is attired differently- in a colorful jogging suit. He looks around, in shock. In his pocket, he pulls out a baggie of cocaine and a pistol...

BENSON

What the fuck is going on.

He looks around and it's a shitty public restroom. There's some PAINFUL MOANING from a closed stall.

EXT. CITY- DAY

This is a run down urban core. Benson comes out into the sunshine and it is busy. He squints, and looks around.

Across the street, staring at him (still in his suit) is Harold. He is staring right at him.

BENSON

Hey! You! Yes- stay right there!

Benson struggles to make his way across the street, but now Harold is gone.

In a nearby STORE WINDOW, a TV shows a newscast of APOCALYPTIC FOOTAGE (ultra violent and chaotic footage in a news update framework). Benson presses against the glass, watching it.

In the REFLECTION OF THE STORE WINDOW, WE NOW SEE Harold, standing in front of a bunch of Men in Suits. They are watching Benson, in the glass, and a Nurse stands with them.

Benson snaps his head back around, but they are not there.

BACK IN THE GLASS: they are now gone from here, too.

Exasperated, he walks away and looks around the area, FOCUSING IN, at last, on a giant grocery store (POV).

INT. GROCERY STORE- DAY

Benson and Audrey are walking along, cutely attired, buying groceries. For Benson, his sudden appearance here is shocking. He stops and looks all around, and then at Audrey, who is amused.

She tries to push the cart on, but he is immobile.

AUDREY

What's wrong?

BENSON

What the hell is going on.

AUDREY

What?

Benson approaches and takes her arm, like they're being watched.

BENSON

I'm really sorry- "Dre" is it? I have no idea what is going on.

She is amused. She acts as if this might be a prank he pulls.

AUDREY

Well, we were going to pick up juice and veggie burgers here in frozen foods.

She opens a freezer door and grabs several boxes of "Apollo Veggie Burgers."

BENSON

You remember coming in here?

AUDREY

In where?

BENSON

In this store.

AUDREY

(Laughs)

Yes, I do. Are you feeling all right?

BENSON

No. No, I'm not.

He looks at his finger and sees a WEDDING RING. She has one, too.

BENSON

We're married.

Making fun, she looks around, then whispers secretively.

AUDREY

Hush! No one's supposed to know, remember!

He believes her.

AUDREY

Benson! What the hell is wrong with you?

BENSON

I'm not messing around, I swear. I think something is wrong with me. My head.

She looks at him, almost unable to buy his sincerity.

EXT. PARKED CAR- DAY

Benson gets in their car and closes the door. Audrey is digging through groceries in back and brings out a pair of protein bars. She gives one to him.

It's labeled "Apollo People Chow." He looks at his with concern as she eats.

AUDREY

I'm sorry, I'm just really having trouble believing that all of a sudden you have complete amnesia. Did I miss where something heavy hit you in the head?

He starts the car, absent-mindedly, and the radio comes on.

NEWSCASTER (V.O.)

In the last five hours, we have confirmed the widespread explosion of rioting all over this country and abroad. (etc)

He listens for a second to the radio. She looks at it quizzically.

AUDREY

What's that?

NEWSCASTER (CONT'D)

Homeland Security executive Michael Mikemike reinforces to please continue to exercise extreme caution when leaving your homes, as we remain in a heightened state of alarm across the country.



AUDREY

Jesus!

BENSON

Something is wrong. I saw this on a television screen- just-

He turns the radio off.

AUDREY

Benson! Turn it back on!

BENSON

Look at me and please tell me your name. I'm so sorry.

AUDREY

It's Audrey, Ben.

BENSON

Audrey. Dre.

AUDREY

You never call me that.

BENSON

What?

AUDREY

Dre.

BENSON

I think this is... in my head. All of this. I'm just- in one place- and then I'm in another. I can't explain it.

AUDREY

You're not messing around.

BENSON

No, I swear to you.

She touches his forehead.

AUDREY

You feel okay.

BENSON

I highly doubt this is a head cold  
here.

AUDREY

Sorry.

Outside there is a SCREAM, and a BAG LADY, terrified,  
suddenly crashes against their windshield.

AUDREY

Jesus Christ!

BAG LADY

(Outside)

Help me! PLEASE!

Behind her another shape appears, an absurdly attired  
VAMPIRE. He comes in and bites her neck, SHOWERING THE  
WINDSHIELD IN BLOOD.

Audrey SCREAMS.

EXT. STORE PARKING LOT- DAY

Benson leaps out of the car, taking no further notice of the  
chaos on the front of the car. He comes quickly around the  
other side, opens the door, and pulls Audrey out.

She is still gasping and pointing, but he pulls her away.

WE FOLLOW THEM, WILDLY

He looks around, and across the street, SEES A RESTAURANT.

AUDREY

Benson! Benson! What the hell is  
that!

BENSON

Come on. Follow me.

INT. SMALL MOM AND POP RESTAURANT- DAY

They enter a dark, dingy restaurant, which is almost  
completely empty. One SHADY MAN sits alone in the back,  
eating.

As they enter, there is a TV SCREEN showing MUTED apocalypse footage. Audrey looks at it, but Benson just politely indicates "two" to the lone EMPLOYEE, the definition of apathetic.

INT. BACK OF RESTAURANT- DAY

They are seated at a dirty table. Benson rubs it with some napkins, and finally opts to just toss them on the floor. He sits, and Audrey, now confused too, sits across from him.

SIDE ANGLE

They look at each other, stunned.

Benson looks over at the Shady Man (mid thirties, mirrored sunglasses) who sits alone and motionless. He looks like an out-of-date FBI agent. He ignores them.

Audrey looks at Benson, who can only smile. The Employee returns with two menu cards, ready to take their order.

BENSON

(Amused)

Uh, we'll need a minute.

The Employee leaves listlessly. Benson LOOKS AT THE CARD, and it has only two choices: Hamburger and Fries- \$9.99 and then a line and below it Kung Pao Chicken- \$9.99. He flips the card over a few times, and then laughs.

BENSON

Are these the specials or something?

She's staring at him, not even bothering with the menu card.

AUDREY

Ben, what the fuck is going on.

BENSON

Oh, I have no idea. I must have some kind of amnesia or something. I keep just, appearing places- and- ... well, we were at a play, for example.

AUDREY

A play? Which one? Was it  
Streetcar?

BENSON

What? No. I don't know. I didn't  
even see it!

AUDREY

What's-

She looks at the stranger again, still motionless, and drops  
her voice.

AUDREY

What's going on outside?

BENSON

I have absolutely no clue.

The Employee returns.

AUDREY

(Suddenly very polite)

Oh! I'll take the chicken, please.  
Not too spicy, and an Apollo  
Eruption brand iced tea.

BENSON

I'll have the same, thanks.

The Employee leaves with the cards.

BENSON

Is there really just two things on  
the menu?

AUDREY

What are we going to do? We've got  
to get you to a doctor.

BENSON

That sounds like a great idea.  
Audrey, I'm so sorry, I don't  
remember anything. Do we live in  
that apartment- where the dinner  
party was?

AUDREY

I have no idea what you're talking about. Yes, we have an apartment.

She leans over and kisses him, very concerned.

AUDREY

This is all like a strange dream. I don't like it.

His hands have stuck to the tabletop. He lifts them gingerly.

BENSON

Tell me about it. I'm going to wash my hands.

AUDREY

Be careful.

He starts to go, but stops and looks at her.

BENSON

Hey, don't go anywhere, okay?

AUDREY

I won't. Hurry up, please.

INT. BATHROOM- NIGHT

Benson pushes open the door to find he's now in another bathroom at a club. MUSIC POUNDS FROM THE OUTSIDE. Inside, men are clustered together snorting coke. Benson freezes immediately, now clad in a ridiculously sparkly black shirt and hipster attire. He immediately turns and pushes the door back open behind him.

INT. BUSY HIPSTER BAR- NIGHT

The place is packed. Benson is frustrated, starts pushing through the crowd.

BENSON

Audrey!

INT. FRONT OF BAR- NIGHT

Audrey is at the bar, wearing a black dress. She's sipping a martini as Benson arrives, takes her arm and pulls her out.

AUDREY

Hey!

EXT. STREET- NIGHT

They emerge from a very nondescript metal door into an unpleasant neighborhood.

There are faint sounds of a GUNSHOT and BREAKING, and Benson turns and starts leading her along.

AUDREY

Hey! What's the deal, man!

BENSON

We've got to get somewhere alone.

AUDREY

I take it we're done at the Bang Bang?

A SIREN SOUNDS, and a squad car, LIGHTS FLASHING, rolls slowly along beside them. Audrey stops and covers her ears and Benson looks at it dumbly.

Two straight- faced COPS ride inside, in mirrored sunglasses and cheesy suits. One of them is the Shady Man from the restaurant.

Benson smiles and waves at them, they don't react. OVER THEIR RADIO, A VOICE REPORTS LOTS OF PROBLEMS.

Benson and Audrey turn off down an alley.

EXT. HOTEL- NIGHT

An establishing shot of an urban dive hotel.

INT. HOTEL ROOM- NIGHT

Benson ushers Audrey in and closes and locks the door. She looks annoyed. She wanders into the bathroom. He scouts out the rest of the room.

Turns on the TV. It's the same Apocalypse PROGRAMMING. He turns the VOLUME DOWN LOW, and flips the channels. We can HEAR, in the BG, the same thing in different languages.

BENSON

Audrey, honey, do you remember  
having Kung Pao chicken across from  
the grocery store earlier today?

No reaction. He looks at the TV, it's the SAME PROGRAM, only different languages on every channel. He KEEPS FLIPPING absently.

BENSON

Dre?

INT. HOTEL BATHROOM- NIGHT

Benson peers in and Audrey's shooting heroin in between her toes. He freaks out.

BENSON

Hey! What the fuck are you doing?!

He grabs her and drags her, much to her annoyance, from the bathroom.

INT. HOTEL ROOM- NIGHT

He pulls her out and points her at the TV.

BENSON

Do you see this?! Do you remember  
this?! We were going to go to the  
doctor, remember?! You kissed me  
nicely, and said "Hurry up, please"  
or something!

In a tizzy, he recreates the caring little peck. She looks at him dumbly.

AUDREY

I don't want you to give me shit just because I still like to go out and have fun and you're always depressed.

BENSON

What? What the hell are you talking about? I'm not depressed.

AUDREY

Oh, really? Is that it? Because you seem to be plenty interested in the girls on set. What's her name? The super. Moira?

Though she's looking right at him, Audrey does not appear to be answering him.

BENSON

Audrey. I'm not depressed. I'm going FUCKING NUTS!!

She waits her turn, looking at him like she's listening to something he's not saying. He laughs a mad laugh and waves at her face. She doesn't flinch.

AUDREY

All right. Fine. YOU stay in, then, and I'LL go out. You can sit in your little fucking pity pit and wallow and drink and chew up your nose all night if you want! Every night. I don't give a fucking shit!

Benson now realizes she's just another part of the craziness, and he backs away, horrified. AUDREY CONTINUES TO HAVE THE FIGHT BY HERSELF, in the B.G.

AUDREY

I DON'T CARE! Why do we ALWAYS have to talk about THAT? (etc).

Benson backs away, NOTICING THE TV IMAGE has changed. He squats before it and TURNS UP THE VOLUME. It has a TEST WHINE.



It is now a blue toaster screen, with white block letters which read:

IF YOU CAN READ THIS, YOU MIGHT BE EXPERIENCING TECHNICAL DIFFICULTIES. PLEASE DIAL 555- HICCUP.

Benson backs away, and turns to reach for the phone, revealing:

Harold, sitting in a hotel chair, beside the phone. Benson YELPS.

Audrey now, in the b.g., goes back to the bathroom and SLAMS THE DOOR.

BENSON

How the hell did you get in here?!

HAROLD

I've been here the whole time, Mr. Benson.

BENSON

Mr. Benson? You know what's going on, don't you. Tell me what the fuck is happening to me!

HAROLD

You have got to calm down, Mr. Benson, please. My name is Harold. I can assist you to assist yourself, but the evidence is overwhelmingly in support...

BENSON

Harold? Assist me to assist myself? What's going on? Why am I jumping all over the fucking place? What's wrong with-

He looks for Audrey, noticing she's gone.

BENSON (CONT'D)

What the hell is wrong with my wife?

HAROLD

Please, Mr. Benson, try to calm down. Please, take a seat.

BENSON

I don't want to take a seat! I want to... I want, you know, to be able to just- not go anywhere, for, maybe five minutes?

HAROLD

You were in the restaurant for three minutes. That is the longest you've stuck anywhere.

BENSON

How did you know that!

Harold reaches into his coat pocket and pulls out a large horse pill.

HAROLD

I would like for you to take this.

Benson knocks it out of his hand.

BENSON

I'm not taking a damn thing. I want you to explain what is happening to me.

HAROLD

You must please try to calm down. Then, things will be more clear to you. Please, take this.

Harold repeats the same exact motion, pulling out the pill again.

Benson pauses a moment, then takes the pill from him. Harold looks at his watch.

HAROLD

That's good. You're slowing down. We've been in this hotel room now for over three minutes. If you can calm down, you will start to remember things, I promise you.

Benson looks at him, then at the blue television screen. It TURNS OFF suddenly. Harold now has the remote.

BENSON

This pill- it will help me  
remember?

HAROLD

Yes, it could expedite things.

Benson takes it. Then goes over and opens the drapes. The  
VIEW IS OF THE DESERT. He closes them again quickly.

Benson turns around and Harold is gone. He looks around the  
room, and then starts to reveal some effect from the  
medication.

THE IMAGE DRAGS; AUDIO DISTORTS- as a swoon hits him.

QUICK FLASH- 35MM STILLS

We get very short cuts of blood very close, a poorly packed  
bag, a messy altercation, a green car exterior. These appear  
over Benson collapsing into the chair (abstract POV of hotel  
room- this should be almost incoherent still).