Screenwriting for ART 299x

An Honors Thesis (HONRS 499)

by

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Abstract

Learning how to tell a story is not merely something that requires raw talent. It is a skill that is developed with much practice and patience. Movie scripts are a particularly special medium used for telling stories. Unlike a novelist, who usually has full control over the story, a screenwriter's job is done when the script is finished. Once it is handed over to the director, everything runs according to his or her interpretation. I have been fortunate enough to experience a glimpse of what a screenwriter's life is like for myself at a relatively young age.

In the summer of 2009 I enrolled in ART299x, an immersive course with a large amount of other students from various areas of expertise, in order to create an independent short animated film. I have loved telling stories all my life, so I asked to be the screenwriter. This was my main role in the course, even though I did have other responsibilities. Through the weeks that I wrote and discussed the story with the director, the script evolved from its initial concept into the final draft that was used to help create the film. This thesis is a collection of all the drafts of the script that I wrote for the film, including the final copy. In order to give the reader an idea of how the story progressed and ended up in its final state, I included brief explanations of each draft to show why or how each one is distinct from the rest of the drafts.
Acknowledgements

I would like to thank my advisor, Andy Beane, for his unwavering attention in helping me though this project.

I would like to thank the director of the film, Jason Higgs, for his patience in the classroom and for helping me get the story to where it ended up.

I would like to thank my fiancé, Daniel Lakes, for helping me with the idea for this project in the first place and for all his encouragement.

I would like to thank my parents for all their support, for helping to keep me focused, and for reminding me of my priorities in the grand scheme of things.

Lastly and most importantly, I thank Jesus Christ, my Lord and Savior, for being the perfect provider, the rock of my salvation, and the one who has all things in subjection under His feet. His lovingkindness is everlasting.
Forward

Learning how to tell a story is not merely something that requires raw talent. It is a skill that is developed with much practice and patience. Movie scripts are a particularly special medium used for telling stories. Unlike a novelist, who usually has full control over the story, a screenwriter’s job is done when the script is finished. Once it is handed over to the director, everything runs according to his or her interpretation. I have been fortunate enough to experience a glimpse of what a screenwriter’s life is like for myself at a relatively young age.

In the summer of 2009 I enrolled in ART299x, an immersive course with about thirty other students from various areas of expertise, in order to create an independent short animated film. I have loved telling stories all my life, so I asked to be the screenwriter. This was my main role in the course, even though I did have other responsibilities. Through the weeks that I wrote and discussed the story with the director, the script evolved from its initial concept into the final draft that was used to help create the film. My experience in the course was one that I learned a lot from.

Admittedly, I went into the course the first day with a few rookie expectations. I was told in advance that the course would mimic an animation pipeline in the real workforce, but I anticipated that the first week would at least be spent getting acquainted with everyone and easing into our respective roles. Since the course was only ten weeks long however, every moment was crucial. This was not a time for improving social skills, and this was no ordinary course. Within the first week, we had discussed different story concepts and narrowed all of them down to one choice. We were given an overview of our work schedule from week one to week ten. We were divided into different groups according to our skills and went to the appropriate locations throughout campus in order to do the work laid out for us. As the screenwriter, I was allowed to go anywhere I was comfortable writing – an interesting perk.

I was surprised to find that the concept chosen for the story was one of my own. Even so, things did not go as I imagined. In the heat of brainstorming story
ideas with the rest of my fellow classmates, I had blurted out the theme “Trash to Treasure.” I originally had the idea in my mind of a hobo wandering the streets of a New York-style city, collecting trash and ignored by society. At the climax, all he had been collecting would be revealed as something beautiful, otherworldly. I had imagined him building a place to live in Central Park, an attractive dwelling that didn't really look as if it were made out of garbage. Each day, the police would come and tear it down in order to keep the park tourist-friendly, and each day the hobo would go find things to make a new home. It was a looping plot – an advantage for a short film. But as the rest of the class began to discuss the idea, the story became a trash man who used the garbage around him to make something interesting: perhaps a collection or a piece of art. No one had quite figured this out. The framework was up to me.

The director and I discussed the story concept for several hours in the first week, and with his direction I slowly began to carve out a simple plot from the materials the rest of the class had agreed upon. Once a basic plot was established, I was left alone to write everything out. Coming up with the script was nothing like I had imagined. Instead of being able to slowly dream up an exciting story all my own, I found myself sitting in the Atrium with one of my concepts (much altered by the rest of my classmates) and was expected to write up a first draft before the beginning of the second week.

The first draft that I turned in to the director and Professor Beane was a more detailed version of what had been thought up the week before: A nameless man working in a trash yard decides one day to start fusing different pieces of garbage together, and at the end of three days, the story climaxes with him performing music with a handmade backup band to an audience of his own construction. Very different from what I had originally thought. As with any first draft, there were many loose ends to tie up. Since the film was basically silent, I found little need to assign a name to the main character, at least not until later. I decided to give him the occupational moniker “Mr. Trash.” This was only a small detail to fix. The bigger problem with the initial draft was one I was aware of before I turned it in. Structurally, characters in any story need a motivation or reason for
their actions. It makes them more satisfying to the audience. The director and I had discussed this point. Even though I had brainstormed different motivations, the director thought the script would be fine with Mr. Trash having no motivation. I wasn’t sure if I was supposed to disregard him and be stubborn enough to stand by my own reasoning. Reluctantly, I left the character without a reason for making his garbage audience in the first draft.

When Professor Beane looked the script over, he was of the same opinion that I was: there was no reason behind Mr. Trash’s actions, and this was a bad thing. The director still disagreed. At that point, I realized that there were some sacrifices I wasn’t willing to make. I finally gathered up enough guts to oppose him, and after much debate and an unwillingness to compromise, I won the argument. In hindsight, I felt silly for not standing my ground in the first place. After all, the director was a fellow student. What had I been afraid of? If this was all for the sake of the story, it was a fight worth having.

My new assignment was to come up with a good reason for Mr. Trash to build his audience and perform for it. It was difficult to find something that didn’t seem contrived. I came up with a list of different ideas and decided on Mr. Trash waking up to find an eviction notice on his door, in order to motivate him to spend his last days doing something worthwhile. This was written into the second draft of the script, and work done on animating the story continued as usual.

I read over the script many times and was bothered by how drab it seemed. It didn’t quite pull the audience in as far as I was concerned. I wanted to add an interesting twist to liven the story up and tie it together more. I thought about Mr. Trash’s utilization of the garbage around him to create a world he enjoyed. I decided to write a version of the script that had him utilize even the eviction notices on his door as part of his grand finale by making them into wardrobe pieces for his backup band. This was the script’s third draft. I thought the idea worked because it further pushed the idea of Mr. Trash turning the bad situations around him into good ones. When I pitched it to the director and Professor Beane, however, they said they had discussed the idea of the backup band and thought it would be much too hard to animate. They wanted me to make Mr. Trash’s act a solo one, and the director asked
me to remove the idea of the eviction notice wardrobe. I was disappointed that my idea wouldn’t be able to work. I learned that even though there was a time fight for my own ideas, in the end the director has the final say, and sometimes there are limitations that everyone has to work around. I began to wonder how this felt for people who worked professionally, and I felt I was getting an insightful glance into what I could be doing someday. I found myself determined to continue and do my best. When the story was first being constructed, the director and I had toyed with the idea of using the various noises of the garbage smashing machines in the junkyard as accompanying music to the film. Because Mr. Trash was now a solo act at the finale, I decided to incorporate these smashing sounds into his climax. The director thought this was a great idea, so it was written into the fourth draft of the script.

At this point, I thought the script was pretty much finished. I had been assigned to various other tasks with the Visual Communications team during the few weeks left, and my work as a screenwriter seemed to be done. Professor Beane, however, had been looking over the script and said that it still needed something. The reasoning behind why Mr. Trash played an instrument seemed nonexistent, and he wanted this detail cleared up. He suggested a 1940s-style radio broadcast at the beginning of the film that provided exposition into Mr. Trash’s past as a famous musician who ruined his own career. I was admittedly reluctant. For one thing, I knew that exposition was often very good at killing a story. If everything is explained in the beginning, there is no hook to catch the audience’s attention. For another, audiences expect to be shown what’s going on in a film instead of being told. It makes them feel as if they are part of the story rather than outside of it. I suggested a panning camera shot of different piles of garbage in the junkyard with scraps of newspaper headlines revealing Mr. Trash’s past in order to incorporate the “show, don’t tell” rule of film. Once again, the director brought up the point that this would be very hard to animate. Difficulty in animating was a roadblock that I began to find particularly frustrating. I wrote out a local news broadcast that told the story of the main character’s musical career. Now that the film had a vocal piece, it was the right time for the main character to have a legitimate name. Thus, Mr. Trash was
now the musician Harold Hatchfield for the script's sixth draft. Many revisions were made of this broadcast. By the final copy of the script, it had evolved from a breaking news story into a lighthearted “Where Are They Now?” style of radio program. The narrative was made more epic to fit the 1940s style of broadcasting and to give the program more humor.

Through the process of writing this script, I learned a number of things that I will hopefully be able to utilize when I go out into the workforce. I learned things from this experience that are useful no matter what job I choose. Working as a team, though difficult, is often necessary. There are some things worth standing up for, but there are also compromises to be made. Specifically, I learned that as a scriptwriter, your story rarely stays yours. Once it is out of your hands, the final copy will probably look nothing like the one you turned in. Sometimes, you must work around limitations of time and other things. If you don't find that you're in love with the final story that's being used, you shouldn't be hard on yourself about it. A large group of college students aren't necessarily going to turn in a masterpiece for their first work. Most importantly, you can't walk away from an experience like this empty-handed. This thesis is a collection of all the drafts I wrote for the film, and hopefully a revealing glimpse into my experience as the screenwriter for ART299x. Though some parts of it may have been stressful, it was a fulfilling experience that I would not have traded for any peace of mind.
Draft I Explanation

In the first draft of the script, the main character is without a real name and works toward a goal without any motivation for doing so.
Junkband Story
(Draft I)

By
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EXT. JUNKYARD - DAYBREAK

A large but typical junkyard surrounded on all sides by high walls topped with barbed wire. Piles of trash are scattered about. A whistle blows loudly.

ZOOM IN ON:

EXT. SHACK - DAYBREAK

At the edge of the junkyard sits a rickety shack. The front door forcefully swings open, revealing MR. TRASH, an older man with a lanky frame and wearing a garbage man’s suit. Exuding confidence, he wears a determined grin and both hands are on his hips. He takes a deep breath and surveys the junkyard.

MONTAGE - MR. TRASH BUILDING SOMETHING

-- -- EXT. JUNKYARD - DAY - Mr. Trash picks up a colander and examines it.

Wearing a welding helmet, Mr. Trash welds two pieces of metal together. He pushes the helmet up off of his face, wipes the sweat from his brow, and examines his work with a solid nod.

Mr. Trash is twisting two pieces of metal together to form a spiral two feet long.

Mr. Trash nails two boards together.

END MONTAGE

EXT. SHACK - EVENING

Mr. Trash makes his way back into his shack for the night. He opens the front door, but before going inside, he surveys his work with a smile. He closes the door behind him.

EXT. SHACK - DAYBREAK

Mr. Trash again bangs the front door open with a grin and immediately gets to work.
EXT. JUNKYARD - DAY

More frenzied than the day before, he grabs objects from the junk around him. He drops a large pile of things onto the ground and gets to work. He rips pieces of paper into shapes. He screws plastic bottles onto wooden boards with nuts and bolts. He pulls a tire off of an old car. He accidentally breaks a glass bottle. All the while, he wears a happy face.

EXT. JUNKYARD - EVENING

Stretching his back as he walks, Mr. Trash heads back to his shack for another night’s rest.

EXT. SHACK - DAYBREAK

Mr. Trash throws the door open so hard that it falls off one of its hinges. He does not notice, but instead rushes into the junkyard wringing his hands excitedly.

EXT. JUNKYARD - DAY

Mr. Trash meticulously arranges his creations into rows. The sun slowly moves across the sky.

EXT. JUNKYARD - EVENING

Mr. Trash climbs up a low metal wall onto a platform and disappears behind a hanging tattered sheet.

CUT TO:

BEHIND SHEET - EVENING

Mr. Trash combs his hair back with a rusty garden rake. He examines the rake, runs his fingers along the rust, and rubs a little of the rust onto his cheeks. He grabs a large side of cardboard lying on the floor and begins painting on it with paint from a old paintcan.

CUT TO:
IN FRONT OF SHEET - EVENING

Mr. Trash's arm reaches around the sheet and places the cardboard onto a makeshift easel.

CLOSEUP SHOT - CARDBOARD SIGN

The sign reads "One Night Only"

EXT. JUNKYARD - EVENING

A stage has been constructed, complete with large tattered curtains. Off to the side of the stage stands the cardboard sign on the easel. A spotlight fizzles and comes on, focusing on the center of the curtain. Mr. Trash flings them open at the center and walks out with a grin and a cardboard banjo.

CLOSEUP SHOT - FACE

In total silence, Mr. Trash's face slowly transforms from happiness and excitement to nervousness to utter terror. He licks his lips, wrings his hands, and stares around with enormous shifting eyes.

What he is looking at is revealed to be a large audience comprised of the garbage he has been building with over the past few days.

The spotlight fizzles and shuts off. Mr. Trash is still panicky, frozen by stage fright.

CLOSEUP SHOT - RAINDROP

A drop of rain hits the head of one of the audience members and slides down it. More follow.

Soon there is a downpour. Mr. Trash looks at his audience and begins to hear the rain as applause. A smile starts to creep over his face. The spotlight flickers back on.

Mr. Trash clears his throat, beams reassuredly, and pulls a cord on the side of the stage. The curtain comes up behind him, revealing a backup band created by garbage. Mr. Trash begins to play a catchy song on his banjo and switches his band on to play a steady accompanying rhythm. The rain continues to pour, and the applause and the music carry on through the credits.

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Draft II Explanation

In the second draft, the still-so-called "Mr. Trash" has a motivating reason to work toward his goal.
Junkband Story
(Draft II)

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EXT. JUNKYARD - DAYBREAK

A large but typical junkyard surrounded on all sides by high walls topped with barbed wire. Piles of trash are scattered about. A whistle blows loudly.

ZOOM IN ON:

EXT. SHACK - DAYBREAK

At the edge of the junkyard sits a rickety shack. Taped to the front door is a sign reading "Eviction Notice: 2 Weeks" with a lot of fine print following. The front door opens, revealing MR. TRASH, an older man with a lanky frame and wearing a garbage man's suit. He yawns and stretches in the morning sunshine. The notice catches his eye, and he reads it over. He surveys the junkyard before him, deep in thought. The discouragement shown on his face slowly grows into a smile. He begins to walk toward the piles of garbage.

MONTAGE - MR. TRASH BUILDING SOMETHING

-- -- EXT. JUNKYARD - DAY - Mr. Trash picks up a colander and examines it.

Wearing a welding helmet, Mr. Trash welds two pieces of metal together. He pushes the helmet up off of his face, wipes the sweat from his brow, and examines his work with a solid nod.

Mr. Trash is twisting two pieces of metal together to form a spiral two feet long.

Mr. Trash nails two boards together.

END MONTAGE

EXT. SHACK - EVENING

Mr. Trash makes his way back into his shack for the night. He opens the front door, but before going inside, he surveys his work with a smile. He closes the door behind him.

EXT. SHACK - DAYBREAK

A whistle blows. The front door swings forcefully open and Mr. Trash steps out with a grin. Another eviction sign is posted on top of the previous one: "1 Week." He barely glances at it before heading to the junkyard and getting to work.
2.

EXT. JUNKYARD - DAY

More frenzied than the day before, he grabs objects from the junk around him. He drops a large pile of things onto the ground and gets to work. He rips pieces of paper into shapes. He screws plastic bottles onto wooden boards with nuts and bolts. He pulls a tire off of an old car. He accidentally breaks a glass bottle. All the while, he wears a happy face.

EXT. JUNKYARD - EVENING

Stretching his back as he walks, Mr. Trash heads back to his shack for another night's rest.

EXT. SHACK - DAYBREAK

Yet another eviction notice is posted on top of the last two. It reads "1 Day." Mr. Trash throws the door open so hard that it falls off one of its hinges. He runs to the junkyard wringing his hands excitedly.

EXT. JUNKYARD - DAY

Mr. Trash meticulously arranges his creations into rows. The sun slowly moves across the sky.

EXT. JUNKYARD - EVENING

Mr. Trash climbs up a low metal wall onto a platform and disappears behind a hanging tattered sheet.

CUT TO:

BEHIND SHEET - EVENING

Mr. Trash combs his hair back with a small rusty garden rake. He examines the rake, runs his fingers along the rust, and rubs a little of the rust onto his cheeks. He grabs a large side of cardboard lying on the floor and begins painting on it with paint from a old paint can.

CUT TO:
IN FRONT OF SHEET - EVENING

Mr. Trash's arm reaches around the sheet and places the cardboard onto a makeshift easel.

CLOSEUP SHOT - CARDBOARD SIGN

The sign reads "One Night Only"

EXT. JUNKYARD - EVENING

A stage has been constructed, complete with large tattered curtains. Off to the side of the stage stands the cardboard sign on the easel. A spotlight fizzes and comes on, focusing on the center of the curtain. Mr. Trash flings them open at the center and walks out with a grin and a cardboard banjo.

CLOSEUP SHOT - FACE

In total silence, Mr. Trash's face slowly transforms from happiness and excitement to nervousness to utter terror. He licks his lips, wrings his hands, and stares around with enormous shifting eyes.

What he is looking at is revealed to be a large audience comprised of the garbage he has been building with over the past few days.

The spotlight fizzes and shuts off. Mr. Trash is still panicky, frozen by stage fright.

CLOSEUP SHOT - RAINDROP

A drop of rain hits the head of one of the audience members and slides down it. More follow.

Soon there is a downpour. Mr. Trash looks at his audience and begins to hear the rain as applause. A smile starts to creep over his face. The spotlight flickers back on.

Mr. Trash clears his throat, beams reassuredly and begins to play a catchy song on his banjo, accompanied by the mechanical rhythms of the junkyard machines. The rain continues to pour, and the applause and the music carry on through the credits.
Draft III Explanation

In the third draft, Mr. Trash utilizes the eviction notices (the motivation for his goal) in the climax to further enhance his performance and provide a satisfying twist to the audience.
Junkband Story
(Draft III)

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EXT. JUNKYARD - DAYBREAK

A large but typical junkyard surrounded on all sides by high walls topped with barbed wire. Piles of trash are scattered about. A whistle blows loudly.

ZOOM IN ON:

EXT. SHACK - DAYBREAK

At the edge of the junkyard sits a rickety shack. Taped to the front door is a sign reading "Eviction Notice: 2 Weeks" with a lot of fine print following. The front door opens, revealing MR. TRASH, an older man with a lanky frame and wearing a garbage man's suit. He yawns and stretches in the morning sunshine. The notice catches his eye, and he pulls it from the door and reads it over. He sighs, and his hands fall to his sides. He surveys the junkyard before him, deep in thought. The discouraged frown on his face slowly grows into a smile. He looks glances at the notice in his hand, then folds it up and puts it in his pocket. He begins to walk toward the piles of garbage.

MONTAGE - MR. TRASH BUILDING SOMETHING

-- -- EXT. JUNKYARD - DAY - Mr. Trash picks up a colander and examines it.

Wearing a welding helmet, Mr. Trash welds two pieces of metal together. He pushes the helmet up off of his face, wipes the sweat from his brow, and examines his work with a solid nod.

Mr. Trash is twisting two pieces of metal together to form a spiral two feet long.

Mr. Trash nails two boards together.

END MONTAGE

EXT. SHACK - EVENING

Mr. Trash makes his way back into his shack for the night. He opens the front door, but before going inside, he surveys his work with a smile. He closes the door behind him.
EXT. SHACK - DAYBREAK

The front door swings forcefully open and Mr. Trash steps out with a grin. Another eviction sign is posted on the door: "1 Week." As before, he takes it from the door, folds it up, and puts it into his pocket. He heads to the junkyard immediately and gets to work.

EXT. JUNKYARD - DAY

More frenzied than the day before, he grabs objects from the junk around him. He drops a large pile of things onto the ground and gets to work. He rips pieces of paper into shapes. He screws plastic bottles onto wooden boards with nuts and bolts. He pulls a tire off of an old car. He accidentally breaks a glass bottle. All the while, he wears a happy face.

EXT. JUNKYARD - EVENING

Stretching his back as he walks, Mr. Trash heads back to his shack for another night's rest.

EXT. SHACK - DAYBREAK

Yet another eviction notice is posted on the front door: "1 Day." Mr. Trash throws the door open so hard that it falls off one of its hinges. He begins to rush happily into the junkyard but soon remembers to turn back and take the notice off of the cockeyed door. He folds it and puts it into his pocket and runs to the junkyard wringing his hands excitedly.

EXT. JUNKYARD - DAY

Mr. Trash meticulously arranges his creations into rows. The sun slowly moves across the sky.

EXT. JUNKYARD - EVENING

Mr. Trash climbs up a low metal wall onto a platform and disappears behind a hanging tattered sheet.

CUT TO:
BEHIND SHEET - EVENING

Mr. Trash combs his hair back with a rusty garden rake. He examines the rake, runs his fingers along the rust, and rubs a little of the rust onto his cheeks. He grabs a large side of cardboard lying on the floor and begins painting on it with paint from an old paint can.

CUT TO:

IN FRONT OF SHEET - EVENING

Mr. Trash's arm reaches around the sheet and places the cardboard onto a makeshift easel.

CLOSEUP SHOT - CARDBOARD SIGN

The sign reads "One Night Only"

EXT. JUNKYARD - EVENING

A stage has been constructed, complete with large tattered curtains. Off to the side of the stage stands the cardboard sign on the easel. A spotlight fizzes and comes on, focusing on the center of the curtain. Mr. Trash flings them open at the center and walks out with a grin and a cardboard banjo.

CLOSEUP SHOT - FACE

In total silence, Mr. Trash's face slowly transforms from happiness and excitement to nervousness to utter terror. He licks his lips, wrings his hands, and stares around with enormous shifting eyes.

What he is looking at is revealed to be a large audience comprised of the garbage he has been building with over the past few days.

The spotlight fizzes and shuts off. Mr. Trash is still panicky, frozen by stage fright.

CLOSEUP SHOT - RAINDROP

A drop of rain hits the head of one of the audience members and slides down it. More follow.

(CONTINUED)
Soon there is a downpour. Mr. Trash looks at his audience and begins to hear the rain as applause. A smile starts to creep over his face. The spotlight flickers back on.

Mr. Trash clears his throat, beams reassuredly, and pulls a cord on the side of the stage. The curtain comes up behind him, revealing a three-member backup band created by garbage. They are all wearing paper hats.

CLOSEUP SHOT - PAPER HATS

A closer look at the hats reveals snippets of print from the eviction notices.

Mr. Trash begins to play a catchy song on his banjo and switches his band on to play a steady accompanying rhythm. The rain continues to pour, and the applause and the music carry on through the credits.
Draft IV Explanation

In the fourth draft, the eviction notices remain, but the utilization of them is removed from the script. The backup band at the climax is also replaced by the rhythmic noises of the junkyard machines.
Junkband Story
(Draft IV)

By

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ZOOM IN ON:

EXT. SHACK - DAYBREAK

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MONTAGE - MR. TRASH BUILDING SOMETHING

-- -- EXT. JUNKYARD - DAY - Mr. Trash picks up a colander and examines it.

Wearing a welding helmet, Mr. Trash welds two pieces of metal together. He pushes the helmet up off of his face, wipes the sweat from his brow, and examines his work with a solid nod.

Mr. Trash is twisting two pieces of metal together to form a spiral two feet long.

Mr. Trash nails two boards together.

END MONTAGE

EXT. SHACK - EVENING

Mr. Trash makes his way back into his shack for the night. He opens the front door, but before going inside, he surveys his work with a smile. He closes the door behind him.

EXT. SHACK - DAYBREAK

A whistle blows. The front door swings forcefully open and Mr. Trash steps out with a grin. Another eviction sign is posted on top of the previous one: "1 Week." He barely glances at it before heading to the junkyard and getting to work.
EXT. JUNKYARD - DAY

More frenzied than the day before, he grabs objects from the junk around him. He drops a large pile of things onto the ground and gets to work. He rips pieces of paper into shapes. He screws plastic bottles onto wooden boards with nuts and bolts. He pulls a tire off of an old car. He accidentally breaks a glass bottle. All the while, he wears a happy face.

EXT. JUNKYARD - EVENING

Stretching his back as he walks, Mr. Trash heads back to his shack for another night’s rest.

EXT. SHACK - DAYBREAK

A whistle blows. Yet another eviction notice is posted on top of the last two. It reads "1 Day." Mr. Trash throws the door open so hard that it falls off one of its hinges. He runs to the junkyard wringing his hands excitedly.

EXT. JUNKYARD - DAY

Mr. Trash meticulously arranges his creations into rows. The sun slowly moves across the sky.

EXT. JUNKYARD - EVENING

Mr. Trash climbs up a low metal wall onto a platform and disappears behind a hanging tattered sheet.

CUT TO:

BEHIND SHEET - EVENING

Mr. Trash combs his hair back with a small rusty garden rake. He examines the rake, runs his fingers along the rust, and rubs a little of the rust onto his cheeks. He grabs a large side of cardboard lying on the floor and begins painting on it with paint from a old paint can.

CUT TO:
IN FRONT OF SHEET - EVENING

Mr. Trash’s arm reaches around the sheet and places the cardboard onto a makeshift easel.

CLOSEUP SHOT - CARDBOARD SIGN

The sign reads "One Night Only"

EXT. JUNKYARD - EVENING

A stage has been constructed, complete with large tattered curtains. Off to the side of the stage stands the cardboard sign on the easel. A spotlight fizzes and comes on, focusing on the center of the curtain. Mr. Trash flings them open at the center and walks out with a grin and a cardboard banjo.

CLOSEUP SHOT - FACE

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What he is looking at is revealed to be a large audience comprised of the garbage he has been building with over the past few days.

The spotlight fizzes and shutts off. Mr. Trash is still panicky, frozen by stage fright.

CLOSEUP SHOT - RAINDROP

A drop of rain hits the head of one of the audience members and slides down it. More follow.

Soon there is a downpour. Mr. Trash looks at his audience and begins to hear the rain as applause. A smile starts to creep over his face. The spotlight flickers back on.

Mr. Trash clears his throat, beams reassuredly and begins to play a catchy song on his banjo, accompanied by the mechanical rhythms of the junkyard machines. The rain continues to pour, and the applause and the music carry on through the credits.
Draft V Explanation

In the fifth draft, a radio broadcast gives a brief exposition about the main character's past. This gives the audience further insight into the main character. Mr. Trash is given an actual name: Harold "Harry" Hatchfield, and the script's title has also been changed from "Junkband Story" to the better-fitting "One Night Only."
One Night Only
(Draft V)

By

Danielle Wright

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The sound of an old radio fades in with a gradual increase in volume.

ANNOUNCER

...But the real question is, where is she now? Fair Miss Fairholm, once the glittering starlet of the silver screen is now a Missus. Too bad, fellas! She spends her days quietly on the coast of sunny California with her husband and two daughters. Let's hope they grow up with their mother's looks!

And now for a gander into the strange life of musician Harry Hatchfield. Touring the country with his crowd-pleasing tunes and adored by all, Mr. Hatchfield was a shining success. But the fairy tale didn't last. The musician took to the stage one night with an outrageous brand of music the likes of which had never been heard before, much to the chagrin of audiences countrywide. His disappointed fans kept faith in his tried and true classics, but the star ploughed brazenly onward with his strange new shenanigans, and the crowds steadily disappeared. Like a deep gash in the hull of the mighty Titanic, Mr. Hatchfield's career began to sink to the icy depths of infamy. His last performance was said to be so atrocious that he packed away all his melodies and left the limelight once and for all.

Where is he now? A ghost in the history of music, a man completely vanished after his final bad night. His whereabouts remain unknown. Will he ever return with a worthy tune to the shining concert halls?

The sound of the radio fades out.
EXT. JUNKYARD - DAYBREAK

A large but typical junkyard surrounded on all sides by high walls topped with barbed wire. Piles of trash are scattered about. A whistle blows loudly.

ZOOM IN ON:

EXT. SHACK - DAYBREAK

At the edge of the junkyard sits a rickety shack. Taped to the front door is a sign reading "Eviction Notice: 2 Weeks" with a lot of fine print following. The front door opens, revealing HAROLD, an older man with a lanky frame and wearing a garbage man’s suit. He yawns and stretches in the morning sunshine. The notice catches his eye, and he reads it over. He surveys the junkyard before him, deep in thought. The discouragement shown on his face slowly grows into a smile. He begins to walk toward the piles of garbage.

MONTAGE - HAROLD BUILDING SOMETHING

-- -- EXT. JUNKYARD - DAY - HAROLD picks up a colander and examines it.

Wearing a welding helmet, HAROLD welds two pieces of metal together. He pushes the helmet up off of his face, wipes the sweat from his brow, and examines his work with a solid nod.

HAROLD is twisting two pieces of metal together to form a spiral two feet long.

HAROLD nails two boards together.

END MONTAGE

EXT. SHACK - EVENING

HAROLD makes his way back into his shack for the night. He opens the front door, but before going inside, he surveys his work with a smile. He closes the door behind him.

EXT. SHACK - DAYBREAK

A whistle blows. The front door swings forcefully open and HAROLD steps out with a grin. Another eviction sign is posted on top of the previous one: "1 Week." He barely glances at it before heading to the junkyard and getting to work.
EXT. JUNKYARD - DAY

More frenzied than the day before, he grabs objects from the junk around him. He drops a large pile of things onto the ground and gets to work. He rips pieces of paper into shapes. He screws plastic bottles onto wooden boards with nuts and bolts. He pulls a tire off of an old car. He accidentally breaks a glass bottle. All the while, he wears a happy face.

EXT. JUNKYARD - EVENING

Stretching his back as he walks, HAROLD heads back to his shack for another night's rest.

EXT. SHACK - DAYBREAK

A whistle blows. Yet another eviction notice is posted on top of the last two. It reads "1 Day." HAROLD throws the door open so hard that it falls off one of its hinges. He runs to the junkyard wringing his hands excitedly.

EXT. JUNKYARD - DAY

HAROLD meticulously arranges his creations into rows. The sun slowly moves across the sky.

EXT. JUNKYARD - EVENING

HAROLD climbs up a low metal wall onto a platform and disappears behind a hanging tattered sheet.

CUT TO:

BEHIND SHEET - EVENING

HAROLD combs his hair back with a small rusty garden rake. He examines the rake, runs his fingers along the rust, and rubs a little of the rust onto his cheeks. He grabs a large side of cardboard lying on the floor and begins painting on it with paint from a old paint can.

CUT TO:
IN FRONT OF SHEET - EVENING

HAROLD’s arm reaches around the sheet and places the cardboard onto a makeshift easel.

CLOSEUP SHOT - CARDBOARD SIGN

The sign reads "One Night Only"

EXT. JUNKYARD - EVENING

A stage has been constructed, complete with large tattered curtains. Off to the side of the stage stands the cardboard sign on the easel. A spotlight fizzles and comes on, focusing on the center of the curtain. HAROLD flings them open at the center and walks out with a grin and a cardboard banjo.

CLOSEUP SHOT - FACE

In total silence, HAROLD’s face slowly transforms from happiness and excitement to nervousness to utter terror. He licks his lips, wrings his hands, and stares around with enormous shifting eyes.

What he is looking at is revealed to be a large audience comprised of the garbage he has been building with over the past few days.

The spotlight fizzles and shuts off. HAROLD is still panicky, frozen by stage fright.

CLOSEUP SHOT - RAINDROP

A drop of rain hits the head of one of the audience members and slides down it. More follow.

Soon there is a downpour. HAROLD looks at his audience and begins to hear the rain as applause. A smile starts to creep over his face. The spotlight flickers back on.

HAROLD clears his throat, beams reassuredly and begins to play a catchy song on his banjo, accompanied by the mechanical rhythms of the junkyard machines. The rain continues to pour, and the applause and the music carry on through the credits.
Draft VI Explanation

In the sixth draft, the radio broadcast is reoriented to sound more like a gossip station than a news station, and a more creative vocabulary is used.
One Night Only
(Draft VI)

By

Danielle Wright

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The V.O. of an old 1940s style radio announcer fades in with a gradual increase in volume.

ANNOUNCER

...But the real question is, where is she now? Fair Miss Fairholm, once the glittering starlet of the silver screen is now a Missus. Too bad, fellas! She spends her days quietly on the coast of sunny California with her husband and two daughters. Let’s hope they grow up with their mother’s looks!

And now for a gander into the strange life of musician Harry Hatchfield. Touring the country with his crowd-pleasing tunes and adored by all, Mr. Hatchfield was a shining success. But the fairy tale didn’t last. The musician took to the stage one night with an outrageous brand of music the likes of which had never been heard before, much to the chagrin of audiences countrywide. His disappointed fans kept faith in his tried and true classics, but the star plowed brazenly onward with his strange new shenanigans, and the crowds steadily disappeared. Like a deep gash in the hull of the mighty Titanic, Mr. Hatchfield’s career began to sink to the icy depths of infamy. His last performance was said to be so atrocious that he packed away all his melodies and left the limelight once and for all.

Where is he now? A ghost in the history of music, a man completely vanished after his final bad night. His whereabouts remain unknown. Will he ever return with a worthy tune to the shining concert halls?

The sound of the radio fades out.
EXT. JUNKYARD - DAYBREAK

A large but typical junkyard surrounded on all sides by high walls topped with barbed wire. Piles of trash are scattered about. A whistle blows loudly.

ZOOM IN ON:

EXT. SHACK - DAYBREAK

At the edge of the junkyard sits a rickety shack. Taped to the front door is a sign reading "Eviction Notice: 2 Weeks" with a lot of fine print following. The front door opens, revealing HAROLD, an older man with a lanky frame and wearing a garbage man's suit. He yawns and stretches in the morning sunshine. The notice catches his eye, and he reads it over. He surveys the junkyard before him, deep in thought. The discouragement shown on his face slowly grows into a smile. He begins to walk toward the piles of garbage.

MONTAGE - HAROLD BUILDING SOMETHING

A) EXT. JUNKYARD - DAY

HAROLD picks up a colander and examines it.

B) EXT. JUNKYARD - DAY

Wearing a welding helmet, HAROLD welds two pieces of metal together. He pushes the helmet up off of his face, wipes the sweat from his brow, and examines his work with a solid nod.

C) EXT. JUNKYARD - DAY

HAROLD is twisting two pieces of metal together to form a spiral two feet long.

D) EXT. JUNKYARD - DAY

HAROLD nails two boards together.

EXT. SHACK - EVENING

HAROLD makes his way back into his shack for the night. He opens the front door, but before going inside, he surveys his work with a smile. He closes the door behind him.
EXT. SHACK - DAYBREAK

A whistle blows. The front door swings forcefully open and HAROLD steps out with a grin. Another eviction sign is posted on top of the previous one: "1 Week." He barely glances at it before heading to the junkyard and getting to work.

EXT. JUNKYARD - DAY

More frenzied than the day before, he grabs objects from the junk around him. He drops a large pile of things onto the ground and gets to work. He rips pieces of paper into shapes. He screws plastic bottles onto wooden boards with nuts and bolts. He pulls a tire off of an old car. He accidentally breaks a glass bottle. All the while, he wears a happy face.

EXT. JUNKYARD - EVENING

Stretching his back as he walks, HAROLD heads back to his shack for another night's rest.

EXT. SHACK - DAYBREAK

A whistle blows. Yet another eviction notice is posted on top of the last two. It reads "1 Day." HAROLD throws the door open so hard that it falls off one of its hinges. He runs to the junkyard wringing his hands excitedly.

EXT. JUNKYARD - DAY

HAROLD meticulously arranges his creations into rows. The sun slowly moves across the sky.

EXT. JUNKYARD - EVENING

HAROLD climbs up a low metal wall onto a platform and disappears behind a hanging tattered sheet.

CUT TO:
BEHIND SHEET - EVENING

HAROLD combs his hair back with a small rusty garden rake. He examines the rake, runs his fingers along the rust, and rubs a little of the rust onto his cheeks. He grabs a large side of cardboard lying on the floor and begins painting on it with paint from an old paint can.

CUT TO:

IN FRONT OF SHEET - EVENING

HAROLD's arm reaches around the sheet and places the cardboard onto a makeshift easel.

CLOSEUP SHOT - CARDBOARD SIGN

The sign reads "One Night Only"

EXT. JUNKYARD - EVENING

A stage has been constructed, complete with large tattered curtains. Off to the side of the stage stands the cardboard sign on the easel. A spotlight fizzles and comes on, focusing on the center of the curtain. HAROLD flings them open at the center and walks out with a grin and a cardboard banjo.

CLOSEUP SHOT - FACE

In total silence, HAROLD's face slowly transforms from happiness and excitement to nervousness to utter terror. He licks his lips, wrings his hands, and stares around with enormous shifting eyes.

What he is looking at is revealed to be a large audience comprised of the garbage he has been building with over the past few days.

The spotlight fizzles and shuts off. HAROLD is still panicky, frozen by stage fright.

CLOSEUP SHOT - RAINDROP

A drop of rain hits the head of one of the audience members and slides down it. More follow.

(CONTINUED)
Soon there is a downpour. HAROLD looks at his audience and begins to hear the rain as applause. A smile starts to creep over his face. The spotlight flickers back on.

HAROLD clears his throat, beams reassuredly and begins to play a catchy song on his banjo, accompanied by the mechanical rhythms of the junkyard machines. The rain continues to pour, and the applause and the music carry on through the credits.

THE END
Final Copy Explanation

In the seventh and final draft, World War II is casually mentioned within the broadcast to better orient the audience to the setting. The vocabulary is further punched up to make the broadcast more entertaining. The junkyard noises in the climax's backup band are also better explained throughout the script.
The V.O. of an old 1940s style radio announcer fades in with a gradual increase in volume.

ANNOUNCER

... in for a treat, as Lena Fairholm graced the stage and said hello to our brave boys in blue. Her crooning pipes and gorgeous gams kept the troops captivated. Careful now! Fair Miss Fairholm, once the glittering starlet of the silver screen is now a Missus. Too bad, fellas! When not entertaining our troops, Mrs. Fairholm spends her days quietly on the coast of sunny California with her husband and two daughters. Let's hope they grow up with their mother's looks!

And now for a gander into the strange life of musician Harry Hatchfield. Touring the country with his crowd-pleasing tunes and adored by all, Mr. Hatchfield was a shining success. Tragically, the fairy tale didn't last. The famed musician took to the stage one night with an outrageous brand of music the likes of which had never been heard before, much to the chagrin of audiences countrywide. His disappointed fans kept faith in his tried and true classics, but the star plowed brazenly onward with his strange new shenanigans, and the crowds steadily abandoned him. Like a deep gash in the hull of the mighty Titanic, Mr. Hatchfield's career began to sink to the icy depths of infamy. His last performance was said to be so atrocious that he packed away all his melodies and left the limelight once and for all.

Where is he now? A ghost in the history of music, a man completely vanished after his final catastrophic night. His whereabouts remain unknown to this very day. Will he ever return with a worthy tune to his crowds in the shining concert halls?
The sound of the radio fades out.

EXT. JUNKYARD - DAYBREAK

A large but typical junkyard surrounded on all sides by high walls topped with barbed wire. Piles of trash are scattered about. A whistle blows loudly.

ZOOM IN ON:

EXT. SHACK - DAYBREAK

At the edge of the junkyard sits a rickety shack. Taped to the front door is a sign reading "Eviction Notice: 2 Weeks" with a lot of fine print following. The front door opens, revealing HAROLD, an older man with a lanky frame and wearing a garbage man's suit. He yawns and stretches in the morning sunshine. The notice catches his eye, and he reads it over. He surveys the junkyard before him, deep in thought. The discouragement shown on his face slowly grows into a smile. The smashing machines and other various machine noises from the junkyard begin to pound out a strange mechanical rhythm. HAROLD begins to walk toward the piles of garbage.

MONTAGE - HAROLD BUILDING SOMETHING

A) EXT. JUNKYARD - DAY

HAROLD picks up a colander and examines it.

B) EXT. JUNKYARD - DAY

Wearing a welding helmet, HAROLD welds two pieces of metal together. He pushes the helmet up off of his face, wipes the sweat from his brow, and examines his work with a solid nod.

C) EXT. JUNKYARD - DAY

HAROLD is twisting two pieces of metal together to form a spiral two feet long.
D) EXT. JUNKYARD - DAY

HAROLD nails two boards together.

EXT. SHACK - EVENING

All is quiet. HAROLD makes his way back into his shack for the night. He opens the front door, but before going inside, he surveys his work with a smile. He closes the door behind him.

EXT. SHACK - DAYBREAK

A whistle blows. The front door swings forcefully open and HAROLD steps out with a grin. Another eviction sign is posted on top of the previous one: "1 Week." He barely glances at it before heading to the junkyard and getting to work. The junkyard machines smash rhythmically once more.

EXT. JUNKYARD - DAY

More frenzied than the day before, he grabs objects from the junk around him. He drops a large pile of things onto the ground and gets to work. He rips pieces of paper into shapes. He screws plastic bottles onto wooden boards with nuts and bolts. He pulls a tire off of an old car. He accidentally breaks a glass bottle. All the while, he wears a happy face.

EXT. JUNKYARD - EVENING

All is quiet. Stretching his back as he walks, HAROLD heads back to his shack for another night's rest.

EXT. SHACK - DAYBREAK

A whistle blows. Yet another eviction notice is posted on top of the last two. It reads "1 Day." HAROLD throws the door open so hard that it falls off one of its hinges. He runs to the junkyard wringing his hands excitedly. The machines in the junkyard smash and pound more noisily than ever.
EXT. JUNKYARD - DAY

HAROLD meticulously arranges his creations into rows. The sun slowly moves across the sky.

EXT. JUNKYARD - EVENING

HAROLD climbs up a low metal wall onto a platform and disappears behind a hanging tattered sheet.

BEHIND SHEET - EVENING

HAROLD combs his hair back with a small rusty garden rake. He examines the rake, runs his fingers along the rust, and rubs a little of the rust onto his cheeks. He grabs a large side of cardboard lying on the floor and begins painting on it with paint from an old paint can.

CUT TO:

IN FRONT OF SHEET - EVENING

HAROLD's arm reaches around the sheet and places the cardboard onto a makeshift easel.

CLOSEUP SHOT - CARDBOARD SIGN

The sign reads "One Night Only"

EXT. JUNKYARD - EVENING

A stage has been constructed, complete with large tattered curtains. Off to the side of the stage stands the cardboard sign on the easel. A spotlight fizzes and comes on, focusing on the center of the curtain. HAROLD flings them open at the center and walks out with a grin and a cardboard banjo.

CLOSEUP SHOT - FACE

In total silence, HAROLD's face slowly transforms from happiness and excitement to nervousness to utter terror. He licks his lips, wrings his hands, and stares around with enormous shifting eyes.

(CONTINUED)
What he is looking at is revealed to be a large audience comprised of the garbage he has been building with over the past few days.

The spotlight fizzes and shuts off. HAROLD is still panicky, frozen by stage fright.

CLOSEUP SHOT - RAINDROP

A drop of rain hits the head of one of the audience members and slides down it. More follow.

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HAROLD clears his throat, beams reassuredly and begins to play a catchy song on his banjo, accompanied by the mechanical rhythms of the junkyard machines. The rain continues to pour, and the applause and the music carry on through the credits.

THE END