

SCRIPT TITLE

Written by

Name of First Writer

Based on, If Any

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TWO OLD-TIMERS

Adapted by

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Based on the Pat Hobby short story "Two Old-Timers" by F.
Scott Fitzgerald

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BLACK SCREEN

SUPER: "Hollywood, 1938"

SOUND of CAR HORN, SCREECHING TIRES, then a CRASH.

FADE IN:

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

Two cars have crunched their front bumpers.

The drivers, PHIL MACEDON (53), natty, once Star of Stars, and PAT HOBBY (49), a rumpled hack screenwriter, get out of their cars.

Both are slightly oiled.

Macedon speaks with the careful affectedness of a matinee idol.

MACEDON

Who taught you to drive, Harpo Marx?

HOBBY

There's a speed limit in this town!
(recognizing Macedon)
Say, you're Phil Macedon.

MACEDON

What of it?

HOBBY

Been a long time, Phil.

MACEDON

Oh?

HOBBY

You don't remember me? Pat Hobby. I was one of the writers on That Kind of Woman. Couple other of your pictures too.

MACEDON

Sorry.

Hobby is devastated Macedon doesn't remember him.

HOBBY

Twenty-one years in the industry
and all I got to show for it is a
car that's now the property of the
North Hollywood Finance and Loan
Company. Was a time back in 1928
I'm getting bids for a private
swimming pool.

Macedon lights a cigarette.

MACEDON

Hell of a business.

SIREN of POLICE CAR pulling up O.S.

It's red light reflects off the two men and their cars.

CAR DOOR OPENS and CLOSES.

SERGEANT GASPAR walks up to the two men.

SERGEANT

Five o'clock in the morning and I
smell liquor in the air.

MACEDON

I was driving home from a friend's
house.

SERGEANT

Hey, I know you.

HOBBY

He came around the corner too fast.

SERGEANT

When I want information from you
I'll ask you for it.

MACEDON

We're both fine. Just a dented
fender.

SERGEANT

Sorry, I'm taking you both to the
station house. You can tell your
stories to the Captain.

Hobby, in inebriated earnestness, makes unintentional bodily
contact with the Sergeant.

HOBBY
Listen, officer, if you'll just --

The Sergeant puts a forefinger into Hobby's chest.

SERGEANT
You'll regret putting your hands on me.

INT. STATION HOUSE - LATER

The Sergeant has locked Hobby in a cell.

Hobby glowers from his confinement, still resenting Macedon's failure to acknowledge their meeting before.

HOBBY
I suppose you don't remember Coleman? Or Connie Talmadge or Bill Corker or Allan Dwan?

Macedon lights a cigarette with the sort of timing for which the silent screen was never surpassed.

He then offers one to the Sergeant, who waves it off.

MACEDON
Couldn't I come in tomorrow? I have a horse I need to exercise.

SERGEANT
(sincerely)
I'm sorry, Mr. Macedon. The Captain is due here any minute. After that we won't be holding you.

Jerks his head at Hobby.

HOBBY
It's just a formality.

SERGEANT
Yeah, it's just a --
(glares at Hobby)
It may not be any formality for you. Ever hear of the sobriety test?

Macedon flicks his cigarette out the door and lights another one.

MACEDON

Suppose I come back in a couple of hours?

SERGEANT

(regretful)

No. And since I have to detain you, Mr. Macedon, I wanna take the opportunity to tell you what you meant to me once. It was that picture you made. The Final Push, it meant a lot to every man who was in the war.

MACEDON

(smiling)

Oh, yes.

SERGEANT

I used to try to tell my wife about the war -- how it was, with the shells and the machine guns -- I was in there seven months with the 26th New England -- but she never understood. She'd point her finger at me and say 'Boom! You're dead,' and so I'd laugh and stop trying to make her understand.

HOBBY

Hey, can I get out of here?

SERGEANT

(fiercely)

You shut up! You probably wasn't in the war.

HOBBY

I was in the Motion Picture Home Guard. I had bad eyes.

SERGEANT

(disgusted)

Listen to him. That's what all those slackers say. Well, the war was something. And after my wife saw that picture of yours I never had to explain it to her. She knew. She always spoke different about it after that -- never just pointed her finger at me and said 'Boom!' I'll never forget the part where you was in that shell hole. That was so real it made my hands sweat.

MACEDON

Thanks.

He lights another cigarette.

MACEDON (CONT'D)

You see, I was in the war myself and I knew how it was. Knew how it felt.

SERGEANT

Yes, sir. Well, I'm glad of the opportunity to tell you what you did for me. You... explained the war to my wife.

HOBBY

(curiosity aroused)

What are you talking about? That war picture Bill Corker did in 1925?

SERGEANT

There he goes again. Sure -- The Birth of a Nation. Now you pipe down till the Captain comes.

HOBBY

Phil Macedon knew me then all right. I even watched him work on it one day.

MACEDON

(politely)

I just don't happen to remember you, old man. I can't help that.

HOBBY

You remember the day Bill Corker shot that shell-hole sequence don't you? Your first day on the picture?

Macedon says nothing, then:

MACEDON

When will the Captain be here?

SERGEANT

Any minute now, Mr. Macedon.

HOBBY

Well, I remember, because I was there when he had that shell hole dug.

(MORE)

HOBBY (CONT'D)

He was out there on the back lot at nine o'clock in the morning with a gang of hunkies to dig the hole and four cameras. He called you up from a field telephone and told you to go to the costumer and get into a soldier suit. Now you remember?

MACEDON

I don't load my mind with details, old man.

HOBBY

You called up that they didn't have one to fit you, and Corker told you to shut up and get into one anyhow. When you got out to the back lot you were sore as hell because your suit didn't fit.

MACEDON

(smiles charmingly)

You have a most remarkable memory. Are you sure you have the right picture -- and the right actor?

HOBBY

Am I! I can see you right now. Only you didn't have much time to complain about the uniform, because that wasn't Corker's plan. He always thought you were the toughest ham in Hollywood to get anything natural out of -- and he had a scheme. He was going to get the heart of the picture shot by noon -- before you even knew you were acting. He turned you around and shoved you down into that shell hole on your fanny and yelled 'Camera!'

MACEDON

That's a lie. I got down.

HOBBY

Then why did you start yelling? I can still hear you. 'Hey, what's the idea? Is this some... gag? You get me out of here or I'll walk out on you.' And all the time you were trying to claw your way up the side of that pit, so damn mad you couldn't see.

(MORE)

HOBBY (CONT'D)

You'd almost get up and then slide back and lie there with your face working -- till finally you began to bawl, and all this time Bill had four cameras on you. After about twenty minutes you gave up and just lay there, heaving. Bill took a hundred feet of that and then he had a couple of prop men pull you out.

The Captain, surprisingly young, stands in the doorway against the first gray of dawn.

CAPTAIN

What you got here, Sergeant? A drunk?

The Sergeant walks over to the cell, unlocks it, and beckons for Hobby to come out.

Hobby blinks a moment.

Then his eyes fall on Macedon.

He shakes his finger at him.

HOBBY

So you see, I do know you. Bill Corker cut that piece of film and titled it so you were supposed to be a doughboy whose pal had just been killed. You want to climb out and get at the Germans in revenge, but the shells bursting all around and the concussions kept knocking you back in.

CAPTAIN

(to Sergeant)

What's it about?

HOBBY

I want to prove I know this guy. Bill said the best moment in the picture was when Phil was yelling, 'I've already broken my first fingernail!' Bill titled it 'Ten Huns will go to hell to shine your shoes!'"

CAPTAIN

(re: blotter)

It says here 'collision with alcohol'. Let's take these guys down to the hospital and give them the test.

MACEDON

(flashing smile)

Look here now, my name's Phil Macedon.

The Captain puts a hand on Macedon's elbow and heads him toward the door.

CAPTAIN

The name is vaguely familiar.

Macedon, annoyed, sets his jaw.

INT. STATION HOUSE - ONE HOUR LATER - DAY

Macedon sulks in a chair.

Hobby leans against the cell door.

HOBBY

What do you do in that big hacienda of yours in the San Fernando Valley? Rest full of honours and rollick around like Man o' War?

MACEDON

Never hearda ya.

The Sergeant approaches Macedon.

SERGEANT

Your friend's arranging bail?

Macedon ignores him and looks at the floor.

The Sergeant shrugs.

SERGEANT (CONT'D)

(to Hobby)

Need a drive home?

Hobby follows the Sergeant out the door.

He turns back to Macedon.

HOBBY
Nice talking over old times.

Macedon refuses to look at him.

MACEDON
Never hearda ya.

INT. CAR - DAY

The Sergeant starts the car.

They take off.

SERGEANT
Where you live?

HOBBY
I don't live anywhere tonight.
That's why I was driving around.
When a friend of mind wakes up I'll
touch him for a couple of bucks and
go to a hotel.

SERGEANT
Well now, I gotta coupla bucks that
ain't workin'.

Hobby gives him a long look.

Then turns to his window.

He watches the mansions of Beverly Hills slide by.

Hobby waves his hand at them in salute.

HOBBY
In the good old days I used to be
able to drop in to some of those
houses day or night. And Sunday
mornings --

SERGEANT
Is that all true what you said in
the station about how they put him
in the hole?

HOBBY
Sure, it is. The guy needn't have
been so upstage. He's just an old-
timer like me.

Hobby turns to the Sergeant, a warm smile on his face.

CUT TO BLACK:

THE END