

LOOKING FOR OSCAR BENTLEY

by

Dustin Chandler

dl\_chandler94@yahoo.com  
(828) 446-8164

INT. THOMPSON HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAY (1973)

The STATIC of a tube television fills across the room as a pair of small child's hands bend and twist the bunny ear antennas.

These hands belong to RANDY THOMPSON (7), lanky and thin, with a rather sizable head that eclipses the rest of his body.

He continues to stir with the antennas. A slight adjustment allows the fuzzy TV reception to turn visible, revealing indeterminable portions of The Brady Bunch.

Randy sits himself down a few inches from the TV screen as his enjoyment seeps in.

As the show progresses, the loud, muffled SOUNDS of screaming and discussion bleed through the background. Randy turns his head for a second, then turns back to the TV screen.

The sounds start to get louder, yet Randy, growing slightly more anxious, keeps his full attention on the screen.

A door opens from the back of the room as two silhouettes - one male and the other female - quickly emerge.

The male silhouette, suitcase in hand, briskly walks to the front door. He slams it shut.

The female silhouette pauses, then walks to the middle of the room. She steps out of the darkness to reveal SUSAN THOMPSON (31), a slender motherly type with watery, weatherworn eyes.

She stands next to Randy, sniffing and wiping away at her eyes and increasingly red nose.

He looks up at her, as she builds herself back together.

SUSAN  
Let's go to a movie.

EXT. BAUREGARD MOVIE THEATRE - DAY

Susan, with a purse over her shoulder, stands in a sizable line of customers with Randy, holding him by the hand.

RANDY  
Shouldn't we wait up on Dad?

Susan doesn't address Randy, staring straight ahead at the line.

INT. BAUREGARD MOVIE THEATRE - DAY

Somewhat dark, yet lit enough for customers to walk around and pick out seats, most of which are already occupied.

Randy and Susan find two seats near the center of the theatre and sit down. She digs in her purse and discretely pulls out two candy bars, handing him one.

SUSAN

If you see anyone walking down the aisle, hide that - you understand?

Randy nods, as he tears open the corner and takes a bite.

The lights dim down as a whirring projector above their heads illuminates the theatre in a white, hazy glow.

The Universal Studios globe logo fills the theatre screen, followed by the familiar sight of Mel's Drive-In accompanied by the neon light title card reading "AMERICAN GRAFFITI".

Randy continues to watch the screen, taking bites out of his candy bar.

LATER,

Randy's enthusiasm has peaked, as he leans forward in his seat with an empty candy wrapper. The voices of Harrison Ford and Ron Howard converse back and forth in the theatre.

Randy listens with overwhelmed ecstasy.

EXT. BAUREGARD MOVIE THEATRE - NIGHT

Randy, animated and full of livelihood, walks out of the theatre building next to Susan.

RANDY

That was just - wow! I mean, the cars and that guy with the cowboy hat. It was cool!

Susan nods and gives Randy a smile.

They finally make it to Susan's car, as Randy opens his door.

RANDY (CONT'D)

We need to take Dad to this. He has to see it.

Susan's smile fades as she walks to the other side of the car.

SUSAN

We have to talk about that, Randy.

Randy watches her walk around, not quite sure what to make of her comment, but otherwise gets in the car. He closes the door.

EXT. THOMPSON HOUSE - NIGHT

Susan's car pulls up to the front of the house as the head lights shut off, masking the car in darkness.

INSIDE THE CAR,

Randy's face is flooded with tears. Susan's return to their watery state, but are more self contained. She continuously wipes at her eyes and nose.

Randy turns to Susan.

RANDY

Did I do something wrong?

SUSAN

No, no, no. It wasn't you, me -  
it's not even your dad. It's  
just...you did nothing wrong, okay?

Randy nods, albeit doubtfully.

SUSAN (CONT'D)

Everything's gonna be okay. I  
promise.

She leans in and gives him a kiss on the top of the head. She opens her door, as does he.

INT. THOMPSON HOUSE - BEDROOM - NIGHT

The walls are blank and empty. No vibrance, no personality.

Sprawled out in bedsheets, Randy, dressed in flannel pajamas, stares up at the ceiling. CRICKET CHIRPS from outside detract from the silence.

He finally kicks out of the sheets and stands out of bed, tiptoeing to the bedroom door.

INT. THOMPSON HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Randy creeps in closer to the living room, making his way to the tube TV. He occasionally looks over his shoulder as he tiptoes closer and closer.

He twists a knob on the TV as fuzzy static fills the screen. The loud sound of the static catches him off guard, as he twists another knob to lower the volume.

He grabs the bunny ear antennas and starts to twist and bend them until the static disappears.

Slowly but surely, the image of Groucho and Harpo Marx performing the famous mirror scene from "Duck Soup" appears on the screen.

Randy sits back, quizzical, yet intrigued. As the scene plays out, he gradually begins to laugh, starting as small chuckles before becoming massive belts.

A clock sitting on a nearby wall reads "11:42". A few hours later

THE CLOCK READS

"2:18".

Randy lays on his stomach, glaring at the TV screen with absolute attention.

The TV screen now depicts a battered and bloody Marlon Brando limping down the dock ramp in "On the Waterfront."

Another few hours go by and

THE CLOCK READS

"4:25".

Randy, still laying on his stomach, rests his head on the floor, asleep.

The TV screen plays SMPTE color bars and a monochrome beat that rings throughout the living room.

A nappy headed and half asleep Susan, dressed in her nightgown, walks into the living room.

She looks down to see Randy splayed on the floor. She sighs and twists a knob on the TV, shutting off the color bars.

INT. THOMPSON HOUSE - BEDROOM - LATER

Susan, carrying Randy on her shoulder, walks into the bedroom and gently lays him on the bed, tucking him under the covers.

She kisses him on the forehead and scruffs his hair before turning around and heading out of the room.

INT. THOMPSON HOUSE - BEDROOM - DAY (1983)

TITLE: TEN YEARS LATER

Several movie posters cover the once blank walls, varying from "The Wild Ones" and "On the Waterfront" to "Mary Poppins" and "Duck Soup".

Book shelves on the opposite side of the room display rows upon rows of Super 8mm films and books, thin to thick. Titles include "The Cinema of Alfred Hitchcock" and "The Great Movie Comedians".

Randy, (17), lankier and his head finally caught up to the rest of his body, lays asleep on the bed in his street clothes. A book rests on top of his chest.

A KNOCK on the door. A familiar voice calls out to him.

SUSAN (O.S.)

Randy?

No response, followed by a more aggressive knock.

SUSAN (O.S.) (CONT'D)

Randy?

Randy finally jolts up, knocking the book off his chest. He slowly brings himself up, trying to stay awake.

RANDY

Come in.

The door opens and Susan, (41), with visible tire yet expressive liveliness, comes in with a laundry basket under her arm.

SUSAN

Morning, Sleepy Head.

Randy nods, stretching and rubbing his eyes.

Susan walks around the room, picking up miscellaneous pieces of clothing.

SUSAN (CONT'D)  
Did you sleep well, honey.

RANDY  
A little. I was up 'till three  
reading this new book.

He looks around for the book, finally picking it up off the floor.

SUSAN  
I can see that.  
(tapping at his shoes)  
Shoes.

Randy kicks off his shoes as Susan picks them up and lays them next to the bed.

She takes the book off the bed and opens to the front page.

SUSAN (CONT'D)  
(reading)  
"Films in My Life by  
Fran...Frankois Truffat" - Truffat?

RANDY  
Truffaut.

SUSAN  
Oh, okay.  
(pronounces to herself)  
Truffaut. Truffaut.

She hands him the book.

RANDY  
It's pretty good so far. There's a  
great section on Chaplin and "The  
Great Dictator".

SUSAN  
I forget, Chaplin's the one with  
the little mustache, right?

Randy nods, dismissing her comment. He returns to the book.

SUSAN (CONT'D)  
Anyway, are you excited about  
school?

RANDY  
I guess.

A moment.

SUSAN

You promise you'll do better this year--

RANDY

I will.

SUSAN

You will?

RANDY

I will! I passed all my classes last year.

SUSAN

I'm not saying you didn't but just - I don't know - focus on your studies a bit more this year. That's all I'm saying. Just don't get too distracted.

RANDY

I won't. What's there to distract me?

He returns to his book. Susan attempts to say something, but can't muster up the words.

She picks up the last piece of clothing and, laundry basket in hand, walks out of the room.

INT. BEDFORD HIGH SCHOOL - CLASSROOM - DAY

Class is in session.

A lean, mustached man walks across the front of the classroom: MR. ANDREWS (41). The embodiment of no-nonsense.

Randy sits in his desk with a composition notebook in front of him, scratching away in his own world.

MR. ANDREWS

Welcome back to another year of education and enjoyment. I hope you're all glad to see me again.

VOICE (O.S.)

Bullshit!

MR. ANDREWS

Bobby! What did I say about profanity?



He shakes this off.

MR. ANDREWS (CONT'D)  
Anyway, I hope you all received my letter about our upcoming new program called the Senior Thesis. It will focus on a six month long community based project, shadowed by a mentor of your choice.

Randy continues to write away in his notebook. Mr. Andrews proceeds to walk down the classroom as he talks.

MR. ANDREWS (CONT'D)  
You will report back to me every month with well organized notes and photographs on your project, and by the end, you will turn in a nine page paper that tells us why your project represents community. This will count for 30 percent of your grade. Keep that in mind, guys. It's sink or swim.

He makes it to Randy's desk. He stands over him as Randy continues to write.

Randy finally looks up at Mr. Andrews, who takes Randy's notebook off his desk.

MR. ANDREWS (CONT'D)  
(reading)  
"Interior, classroom, day. A lone figure sits in the back of the classroom and listens to the loud, laborious belting of a monotone man with a bushy John Holmes mustache."

He looks down at Randy.

MR. ANDREWS (CONT'D)  
Based on anyone?

RANDY  
You could say that.

A modest laugh from the rest of the classroom.

He motions two fingers between his eyes and Randy's, in an "I'm watching you" manner, and walks back to the front of the room.

INT. THOMPSON HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAY

The front door opens and Randy, backpack over his shoulder, enters the living room.

He swings his bag off his shoulder and twists a knob on the TV, before plopping down on a nearby seat. His attention rests on the TV screen.

Susan emerges from the nearby kitchen, a wire whisk and a bowl occupying her hands.

SUSAN

Hey, buddy. How was school?

RANDY

It was alright.

SUSAN

Good, good. Did you enjoy your teachers?

RANDY

Yeah. In fact, I think they're starting to like me.

Susan smiles as she exits once again, still whisking away in her bowl.

Various KITCHEN SOUNDS bleed into the conversation.

SUSAN (O.S.)

Do you have any plans this weekend?

RANDY

Not really, why?

SUSAN (O.S.)

Well, the Stephensons are having yard sale this Saturday--

RANDY

(half responding)

Uh huh.

SUSAN (O.S.)

And I figured maybe that would be something fun to do.

RANDY

Eh, I don't know. I mean - aren't they the ones with all those ceramic cats in their front lawn?

SUSAN (O.S.)  
I like those ceramic cats.

RANDY  
Yeah, but...I'm probably gonna pass  
on this. Maybe next time.

Susan reemerges, wiping her hands with a dish towel. She appears somewhat concerned.

SUSAN  
It'll be fun, I promise.  
(off Randy's shrug)  
Besides, they might have some old  
books or movies they don't want  
anymore.

RANDY  
I guess.

She walks over to Randy, towel still in hand, and gives him a peck on the forehead. He mildly resists, but nonetheless allows it.

SUSAN  
This'll be great. Y'know, get you  
out of the house a little bit.

Randy looks at Susan. He considers her words for a little bit, almost obligatory.

EXT. STEPHENSON HOUSE - DAY

A finely prepared, yet otherwise ornate household.

Three long wooden tables line up across the front lawn, each one occupied to the fullest with boxes, various knickknacks, and, yes, even ceramic cat figurines.

Susan, standing next to an obviously disinterested Randy, observes one of these cats.

SUSAN  
(to herself)  
'76 design. Not too shabby.  
(to Randy)  
What do you think - not too shabby?

RANDY  
(faintly)  
Yeah, looks real...yeah.

Susan continues to observe the items around her. Randy grows increasingly impatient, looking around the surrounding area. No escape.

RANDY (CONT'D)  
How long are they having this?

SUSAN  
'Till about three, I think.

Damn. This seeps in for Randy, as he looks at the line of ceramic cats that lay in front of him, almost mockingly.

RANDY  
I think I'm gonna roam around a  
little bit.

Susan continues to observe the ceramic cat, but otherwise acknowledges Randy.

SUSAN  
Okay, knock yourself out.

Randy walks away, practically in somewhat of a sense of relief.

He approaches another table and starts to peruse through the boxes.

Baseball caps. Stuffed animals. Barbie dolls. No luck.

He looks down at the ground and notices another box, folded up and sitting next to the table.

He kneels down and opens it up, revealing stacks upon stacks of disorganized Beta Max tapes, VHS tapes, books, and magazines.

A bit shoddy, but this still grabs his attention.

He flips through each object, with a mild interest with some, and an obvious "hell no" reaction with others.

He reaches his hand to the bottom and finally pulls something out: a VHS tape, decorated in overblown sci-fi illustration on the clamshell case. Men in space helmets reacting to the unknown, shadowy silhouettes, lasers.

A title on the front reads, in a slapped together font, "DIVINELY CONQUERED".

Randy looks at every detail of this tape with initial intrigue, from the illustrations to the crude title font.

A middle aged woman, MRS. STEPHENSON (53), walks up to Randy.

MRS. STEPHENSON  
Interested in buying something,  
sweety?

RANDY  
Um, sure. I guess this'll be it.

MRS. STEPHENSON  
Five dollars.

Randy pulls out a five dollar bill and hands it to her.

MRS. STEPHENSON (CONT'D)  
Would you like to see one of my  
cats--

RANDY  
No, no, I'm good. Thank you.

Randy walks away, still looking over the illustration.

INT. THOMPSON HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Randy opens the clamshell case and slides the VHS tape in the  
VCR deck.

He presses PLAY on a remote and sits on the couch.

On the TV screen, a simple title card appears, reading  
"PANTAMELLO PRODUCTIONS". It soon fades away into a LOUD  
lightning bolt sound and visual effect.

Randy jumps back, apparently caught off guard.

The lighting bolt transitions to a three piece orchestral  
beat playing adventurous, swashbuckling romp, followed by the  
familiar DIVINELY CONQUERED title card.

The title card fades to black, as the view tilts down to what  
appears to be a green painted Styrofoam ball on fishing wire.  
A subtitle reads "PLUMBUS: 250 LIGHTYEARS FROM EARTH".

Randy winces slightly at this.

A downtrodden, stern VOICE narrates over the footage.

VOICE (V.O.)  
We were at peace. We didn't even  
consider the possibility of  
enslavement. But it happened.

Randy perks up slightly.

VOICE (V.O.)  
The Enchons robbed us of our  
freedom and shipped us away from  
Plumbus, but not before destroying  
our planet.

The Styrofoam planet suddenly explodes in a small flame,  
leaving only the blackness of "space". Randy's eyes widen.

VOICE (V.O.)  
Now, all we have left is each  
other. For now.

The blackness fades to a empty, sandy area - obviously, the  
beach.

One by one, a group of chained men, wearing rags and tribal  
green paint on their faces, walk in a straight line.

They are led by a monstrous half human, half "lizard" BEAST,  
whip in hand.

BEAST  
March!

A crack of the whip.

BEAST (CONT'D)  
March!

Randy nods. He's drawn in.

LATER,

Randy continues to watch, sprawled out on the couch. At his  
most comfortable.

On the screen, two CHARACTERS, male and female and both in  
tribal green paint, silver jumpsuits and bloody scars, hold  
one another amid bodies among bodies in the sand.

FEMALE CHARACTER  
Don't go, please - I won't let you!

MALE CHARACTER  
It's too late for me.

FEMALE CHARACTER  
But, but--

MALE CHARACTER

Hey...

He puts a bloody finger to her lips, pausing her words.

MALE CHARACTER (CONT'D)

We did it.

The male character slumps, going limp and lifeless. The female character becomes hysterical, bursting into tears and tightly holding his body.

A generic "THE END" title card superimposes on the footage, as sweeping adventure music plays it out.

Credits begin to roll, starting with "WRITTEN AND DIRECTED BY OSCAR BENTLEY".

Susan, in flannel pajamas, walks in and looks at the screen.

SUSAN

(yawns)

Whatcha watchin', sport?

RANDY

I don't know, but whatever it was -  
wow.

Susan nods, rubbing her eyes.

SUSAN

Well, don't stay up too late. Go to  
bed soon, promise?

RANDY

Yeah, promise.

She starts to head off, before stopping to look back at the screen. A title card reads "FILMED IN NEW HAMPSHIRE".

SUSAN

Huh. That's pretty neat, isn't it?

Randy perks up a little.

RANDY

Yeah. Yeah, it is.

Susan walks off.

Randy looks over his shoulder as soon as Susan is out of site. He hits REWIND on the remote as the credits scroll backwards.

He finally hits pause as one title, flickering with static, catches his eye.

"WRITTEN AND DIRECTED BY OSCAR BENTLEY".

RANDY (CONT'D)  
(to himself)  
Oscar Bentley...

INT. THOMPSON HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

A thick phone book slams in the center of a kitchen table.

Randy flips it open, thumbing through page after page, finally landing at "Ben".

He lands his finger on the page and drags it down, name by name.

Bennett. Benjamin. Benson. Benton.

No Bentley. Damn.

INT. THOMPSON HOUSE - BEDROOM - DAY

Randy sits on the edge of his bed, with several of his books scattered next to him.

He flips through the pages of one book: "Cinema in the 70s".

His eyes scan every word. No luck.

Frustrated, he slams the book shut.

INT. LIBRARY - DAY

A few scattered BOOKWORMS here and there.

Randy sits at a table with a few books, with either "film" or "New Hampshire" in the title.

He lays down one book and picks up another. He opens to one page and quickly scans it, before thumbing through several more.

He drops the book down.

RANDY  
Dammit!