

STRIKE A MATCH

Written by

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OVER BLACK

ROY (V.O.)  
Since my time in prison, I've given  
this lecture two hundred and fifty  
eight times to over six thousand  
"animal activists."

INT. AUDITORIUM - NIGHT

ROY CORDELLO, a passionate twenty-something with the charisma  
of a cult leader, confronts an audience hidden in darkness.

ROY  
They talk a smooth game about  
compassion. They say "oh, animal  
experimentation is so sad." No shit  
it's sad. Since when did feeling  
sad make the world a better place?  
Since when did it make you a better  
person?

EXT. CHIRO CORP - NIGHT

Ten feet of chain link fence topped by razor-sharp concertina  
wire surrounds the otherwise bland corporate building.

ROY (V.O.)  
Animals don't care how you feel  
about them, so "feeling sad" isn't  
enough. "Talking" isn't enough.

A BOLT CUTTER reaches out and snips a link.

INT. AUDITORIUM - NIGHT

Roy paces the stage, facing his listeners.

ROY  
That is why the Animal Liberation  
Brigade exists.

EXT. CHIRO CORP - NIGHT

LIBERATOR 1, covered by black clothes and ski mask, snips  
another link. He whispers into a headset.

LIBERATOR 2, similarly dressed, crawls through the slit in  
the fence. Liberator 1 pushes a bulky backpack after him.

ROY (V.O.)

Make no mistake, negotiating with animal abusers is futile as long as they can profit off poisoning, mutilating, and killing innocents.

Liberator 2 swings the backpack over his shoulder and sprints towards the dimly lit entrance of Chiro Corp.

ROY (V.O.)

That is why we must drive a stake through the economic heart of those who exploit animals.

Liberator 2 unzips the backpack and pulls out a KITCHEN TIMER wired to a football-sized PIPE BOMB.

ROY (V.O.)

How do you join the ALB? Plan and act. There is no sign-up sheet, no hot-line. Just action. Your action.

Liberator 2 sets the bomb down and winds back the kitchen timer. A match glued to the timer's ticking hand raises, pushing one bare wire towards a second.

INT. AUDITORIUM - NIGHT

Roy's sermon reaches its climax.

ROY

Over fifteen years and dozens of arsons, no human has been injured or killed by the ALB. But make no mistake, we are a new breed of activism. We are not terrorists.

EXT. CHIRO CORP - NIGHT

The bare wires are millimeters apart.

ROY (V.O.)

We are counter-terrorists.

The wires touch.

BOOM.

INT. AUDITORIUM - NIGHT

The audience gets to their feet, applauding wildly.

The lights go up to reveal a room full of COLLEGE FRESHMEN.

INT. LABORATORY - ANIMAL HOLDING - DAY

Metal cages line the walls, each with a Beagle barking for attention, crouching warily, or running wildly in circles.

ASSISTANT 1, an irritable twenty-something with a disposable mask, gloves, and lab coat, throws open a cage door. The Beagle inside backs against the cage wall, whimpering.

ASSISTANT 1  
Come on, you little bastard.

Assistant 1 grabs the Beagle by the scruff of the neck. He swings the dog out of the cage and wraps his other arm under the dog's abdomen.

INT. LABORATORY - OFFICE - DAY

DR. BRIAN ANDREWS, a broad-shouldered forty-something, crouches in front of his desk obsessing over eight pages of "Observation Forms" strewn along the floor.

Dr. Andrews inhales sharply and snatches a page off the ground. He re-reads, growls, and storms towards the door.

INT. LABORATORY - SAMPLING ROOM - DAY

Assistant 1 enters with three Beagles on a wheeled SLING, a hammock with holes for the dog's feet to stick out.

CAMILLE GRAAF, a gorgeous twenty-something with librarian glasses and a lab coat hiding her athletic body, fills out an Ob Form.

ASSISTANT 1  
I call Bleeder. Who wants to be  
Holder?

Camille shrugs indifferently.

ASSISTANT 2 (O.S.)  
I'll hold.

ASSISTANT 2, a short, pimply female twenty-something, gently lifts BEAGLE 1 out of the sling. Subconjunctival hemorrhages of the eyes leave pools of blood around the dog's iris. Scabs on his nose.

Camille points to the scabs.

CAMILLE  
That's the third time I've seen  
nose scabs. Should I "ob" it?

ASSISTANT 1  
Nah, no need to write anything  
down. Wouldn't be relevant.

CAMILLE  
I'd need it for a vet request.

Assistant 1 grabs an empty syringe.

ASSISTANT 1  
I said don't worry about it.  
(to Assistant 2)  
You gonna hold?

Assistant 2 places the dog on a metal cart and raises his  
head, exposing the neck.

ASSISTANT 2  
(to dog)  
Shh... it's okay, sweetie. It's  
okay.

The needle of the syringe grazes Beagle 1's jugular. Beagle 1  
whimpers. The two other dogs bark crazily.

Camille impassively watches. In the corner of her glasses,  
nearly invisible, is a PINHOLE CAMERA.

Assistant 1 draws his hand back, aims the needle and JABS.

INT. LABORATORY - HALLWAY - DAY

Dr. Andrews, fists clenched, reaches the entrance to the  
Sampling Room when he hears the tortured bark of a Beagle.

INT. LABORATORY - SAMPLING ROOM - DAY

Assistant 1 draws the syringe back again, growling at the  
struggling Beagle. He grabs it by the scruff and shakes.

ASSISTANT 1  
NO! SIT STILL AND STOP!

He repositions the syringe, draws his hand back, and--

ANDREWS (O.S.)  
(seething)  
What in the HELL are you doing?

Assistant 1 turns to face his employer.

ANDREWS (CONT'D)  
You're sampling like an abusive  
drunk and terrifying the other  
dogs.

Camille tries to hide a slight grin.

ANDREWS (CONT'D)  
You weren't hired to cause undue  
pain and stress. Do you know why?

ASSISTANT 1  
I... uh...

ANDREWS  
We're trying to diagnose a deadly  
virus using antigens in the immune  
system. Stress releases cortisol.  
cortisol lowers immune function.  
Lower immune function means less  
accurate tests.

Camille's grin disappears.

ANDREWS (CONT'D)  
And that wasn't even why I came in.  
(to Camille)  
You reported scabs on the noses of  
2054 and 2063. Jesus--

Andrews points at the scabs on Beagle 1's nose.

ANDREWS (CONT'D)  
--another one?

Andrews catches Assistant 2's glance towards Assistant 1.

ANDREWS (CONT'D)  
I guess this means an entirely new  
symptom. We'll have to restart the  
test and euthanize this batch--

ASSISTANT 2  
--it might not be from the virus.

Assistant 1 shoots a glare at her. Andrews smiles.

ANDREWS  
You're right, it might just be  
someone slamming cages shut and  
hitting dogs on the nose.

ASSISTANT 1

I... uh...

ANDREWS

If these symptoms appear again,  
I'll be sure to track down the  
proximate cause. Understood?

ASSISTANT 1

Yeah.

ANDREWS

Finish sampling the other two, then  
clean up for the weekend shift.

Andrews leaves. Assistant 1 approaches BEAGLE 2. He pauses.

ASSISTANT 1

(to Camille)

You bleed this time.

Camille stiffens.

ASSISTANT 1 (CONT'D)

Problem?

CAMILLE

Course not. Bring the little  
bastard here.

Assistant 2 hands Camille a syringe. Assistant 1 holds Beagle  
2's head up. Beagle 2 whimpers.

Camille positions the needle in front of the dog's jugular  
and--

INT. BATHROOM - DAY

--Camille VOMITS into the toilet, pointing her glasses'  
pinhole camera at the floor.

Panting, She lifts the glasses.

POV PINHOLE CAMERA

Camille, blank faced, stares into the pinhole.

CAMILLE

We're going to get these fuckers.

CUT TO BLACK

EXT. ELEMENTARY SCHOOL - DAY

Children run, scream, and tumble over each other on a grass-filled playground.

LYNN ANDREWS, a forty-something housewife dressed like a twenty-something partier, pulls up in a grocery-laden sedan.

She blissfully watches TODD ANDREWS, her energetic eight year old, scramble up a jungle gym, yelling to his friends.

GARY (O.S.)  
 (to Lynn)  
 HEY!

Lynn jumps in her seat. GARY YANOFSKI, a forty-something bureaucrat with a power trip, leans his freshly pressed suit against the car.

GARY (CONT'D)  
 Scare ya?

Lynn grins.

LYNN  
 Fancy seeing you here.

GARY  
 I know, I keep running into you.

LYNN  
 At this exact time and place.

GARY  
 Coincidence.

LYNN  
 Oh, I was worried you were a stalker.

GARY  
 Who said I wasn't?

They laugh.

LYNN  
 So how are things at the I.C.A...

GARY  
 I.A.C.U.C. Institute for Animal  
 Care and Use Committee.



LYNN

Right, Brian always called it "I-A-Cuc."

GARY

Mhmm. I'm supervising your husband's project, you know.

LYNN

I know.

Todd jumps into the car.

TODD

Hi, mommy. Hi, Uncle Gary.

GARY

Hey, kiddo. You been treating your momma good lately?

TODD

Yep.

LYNN

Say goodbye, Todd.

GARY

Goodbye Todd. See you later, Lynn.

EXT. STREET - DAY

Roy Cordello, eyes on the ground, shuffles down a busy commercial street.

A WHITE VAN tails Roy.

He glances up. Customers at a Fast Food joint eating burgers.

MEMORY FLASH

STOCK FOOTAGE -- A flailing cow hangs by one hoof from a metal chain. A Slaughterhouse worker THRUSTS A HUNTING KNIFE into its neck. Blood gushes--

BACK TO SCENE

Roy turns the other way. An elegant fifty-something passes wearing a fur coat.

MEMORY FLASH

STOCK FOOTAGE -- A Fur Farmer pulls the skin of a dead Mink over its head leaving only muscles on bones.

BACK TO SCENE

Roy stumbles against a lamppost, panting. He pulls out an ASTHMA INHALER and takes a hit.

KEVIN (O.S.)  
Remembering the good ol' days, huh?

KEVIN WEBB, a pale faced twenty-something with a crew cut and wire-frame glasses, plants himself beside Roy.

ROY  
You've seen what I've seen. How can you stand being here?

The white van drives closer.

KEVIN  
You just gotta turn part of yourself "off." The part of you that cares. Like when we went undercover at the slaughterhouse.

ROY  
You can't always do that. Can you?

Kevin shrugs.

KEVIN  
I don't see another choice.

The white van pulls up beside them. The door slides open to reveal Camille, hair down and glasses off.

CAMILLE  
You kids looking for some candy?

EXT. ANDREWS HOUSE - DAY

Lynn parks the sedan in the driveway of a small suburban home with a front porch and lawn.

Todd jumps out of the car with a grocery bag in either arm. Lynn follows him to the door.

LYNN  
Sure you can hold those?

TODD  
Yep.

INT. ANDREWS HOUSE - FRONT - DAY

The door opens, pushing aside mail stuffed through the slot. One MANILA ENVELOPE has a return address to "DARFUR, SUDAN."

Barking fills the house as DOGGY, the family Basset Hound, skids across the linoleum floor on his way to Todd.

TODD

Doggy!

Lynn bends over to catch Todd's grocery bags as he discards them. Doggy slides into his outstretched arms.

Lynn sets the bags down and turns back to the car. Todd pets Doggy as he looks around.

TODD (CONT'D)

Where's Daddy?

LYNN

He's not home yet.

TODD

Why does Daddy run to work?

LYNN

Because mommy needs the car to pick you up.

Todd considers this.

TODD

You should ask Santa for another one.

LYNN

I'll do that.

Todd turns his attention to the stack of mail.

LYNN (CONT'D)

Go ahead, just don't open Daddy's--

Todd rips open the nearest envelope and pulls out an electric bill as it were a present. He discards the letter without reading it and moves on to the next envelope.

Lynn smiles and heads into the kitchen. She doesn't notice Todd grab the Manila Envelope from Darfur.

EXT. ANDREWS HOUSE - DAY

Dr. Andrews jogs down the sidewalk with his briefcase strapped to his back by nylon cord. He stops at his driveway, huffing.

INT. ANDREWS HOUSE - FRONT - DAY

Todd rips the top off the manila envelope. He dumps out a stack of papers dotted by POLAROID PHOTOS.

The top photograph shows SHADI, a twenty-something one-handed African grinning and waving his stump at the camera.

Todd pushes pages aside to find the next photo.

EXT. ANDREWS HOUSE - DAY

Andrews heads for the front door as he unhooks the nylon.

INT. ANDREWS HOUSE - FRONT - DAY

A polaroid six month old child, eyes closed, covered head to foot with purple lesions and red rashes. He lies, motionless, on a metal tray covered with sheets.

Todd looks at the dead child, frowning. He tosses the photo away and lifts a page of writing to reveal--

EXT. ANDREWS HOUSE - DAY

Andrews' hand is on the door when he hears Todd SCREAMING.

INT. ANDREWS HOUSE - FRONT - DAY

Lynn runs in to find Todd bawling into his father's shoulder. Polaroids scattered across the room. Andrews looks up at his wife. They say nothing to each other.

CUT TO:

INT. ANDREWS HOUSE - KITCHEN/DINING ROOM - NIGHT

Lynn and Andrews sit across from each other, listening to their son talk between bites of pasta.