

# The Remake

written by  
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## **The Remake**

### **Cast of Characters**

#### Leland

A Hollywood studio executive.

#### Martin

A screenwriter.

#### Holly

Beautiful Australian movie star.

#### Alexandra

Holly's significantly less glamorous girlfriend.

#### **PLACE**

Leland's corner office.

Scene 1

LELAND's beautiful and sleek office. HE is sitting behind his desk when MARTIN enters. MARTIN is about to speak, but LELAND interrupts.

LELAND

Martin, I'm not under the illusion that you think we're friends.

MARTIN

Leland, I'm--

LELAND

And I don't mean that in a bad way. We're business colleagues. That's fine. But I'm a colleague that wants what's best for you. You do well, I do well. Maybe that's not friendship, but at least it's good will.

MARTIN

I'm not sure what you're getting at.

LELAND

What I'm saying is that even though I'm not *technically* your friend, you should listen to my advice. Because it comes from a good place.

MARTIN

Okay.

LELAND

But maybe you didn't know that the day we met. So you didn't listen to me when I told you to *read your contract*.

MARTIN

I did.

LELAND

I even told you to go home and sleep on it. Some things can wait a night. We're making movies, we're not launching nuclear missiles here.

MARTIN

Leland, I did read it.

LELAND

Then let me repeat something you may have forgotten: Everything you write, it belongs to us.

MARTIN

I know that, Leland. Do you think I'm trying to break my contract?

LELAND

Well, since you're so good at listening, here's a piece of advice for you. When you write a script for someone else, don't have one of my assistants print it up for you!

(HE takes a script out of his desk and slams it on the desk. A pause.)

MARTIN

I can explain that.

LELAND

Sit down, Martin.

(MARTIN does.)

MARTIN

I can, I can one hundred percent explain.

LELAND

I'm pretty sure I just did.

MARTIN

It's not for anybody else. It's just for me.

LELAND

Per your contract, you're not even allowed to self-produce something, Martin.

MARTIN

I don't mean like that. I mean it's just for my collection.

LELAND

So you wrote it for nothing? You wrote it just so you could have it, not so you could do anything with it?

MARTIN

Yes.

LELAND

Startlingly, I don't believe you.

MARTIN

There are times when you get an itch to write something and you just have to write it. You understand?

LELAND

I do.

MARTIN

Okay. Well, this was one of those times.

LELAND

Fantastic, Martin. And guess what? It still belongs to us! I knew we weren't friends, but Jesus, I thought we at least got along.

MARTIN

I didn't show you the script because you're not gonna make it.

LELAND

Oh, do you make the decisions now on what gets made and what doesn't? Wow, that's gonna save us a lot of time, thanks.

MARTIN

I know the script and I know what the readers think and they're not gonna like it.

LELAND

The readers aren't gonna take a look at this one.

MARTIN

No?

LELAND

No, I am.

MARTIN

You're going to read it?

LELAND

I do know how to read.

MARTIN

I just didn't know that you really read a lot of scripts.

LELAND

Do you know who my father is, Martin?

MARTIN

No.

LELAND

Nobody does. And that means I didn't get my job because of who my family is and who they know. I got my job from being really, awfully, super-smart. So I'm going to read your script, and give you really, awfully, super-smart notes about it, and then we'll decide if we're going to make it or not.

MARTIN

Um ... okay.

LELAND

Plus, I'm reading it so, after we say no, I can recognize it a few years from now when you make a shitty indie film out of the script, and then inform those lawyers I was telling you about.

MARTIN

I wouldn't do that.

LELAND

Sure you wouldn't.

MARTIN

Leland, have I tried to break my contract before?

LELAND

Well, everybody's gotta start somewhere.

MARTIN

Leland, I do respect your opinions. I mean, when I've talked to you about scripts, about movies, you always came across to me as a genuinely knowledgeable person who has a true love for film. Not just the business of filmmaking, but the art of it too.

LELAND

Okay.

MARTIN

I'm saying, I'm not trying to screw you. I had an idea, an idea that I know you and everyone here would never go for, but it wouldn't leave me alone. Every time I'd try to write something else, I'd find myself making notes for this script. I'd get the names of characters wrong because I'd realize that I started writing this script in the middle of another one. I thought that the only responsible thing I could do would be to just write this script and get it out of my system so that I could go back to writing actual, makeable movies for you. I wanted a nice copy of it so I could put it on my bookshelf and remind myself I'm done with that project.

(Slight pause)

Does that make sense?

LELAND

It does. And now we have two nice copies.

(A pause. LELAND looks over the script's front.)

No title?

MARTIN

Haven't decided on one yet.

LELAND

Well, what's it about?

MARTIN

You're going to read it, right?

LELAND

You know, Martin, not telling me about this, even if you do nothing with it, could still be construed as a breach of contract. I think you should drop the attitude right about now.

MARTIN

(Slight pause, then)

It's about a businessman who dies.

LELAND

Okay. And?

MARTIN

He's led this really rich life and a reporter goes and interviews people he knew to discover the truth about him.

LELAND

What truth would that be?

MARTIN

He was a complicated guy and his life could be seen in a lot of different ways.

LELAND

Flashbacks so we see the businessman at different ages?

MARTIN

Yes.

LELAND

Married? Single? Gay?

MARTIN

Straight. Married a couple of times.

LELAND

Bad parents?

MARTIN

Given up to be raised by someone else. Rich, sort of because of it.

LELAND

Yeah, that sounds like a role no actor'd like to play.

MARTIN

It's a good part, I'll admit.

LELAND

Good? Go through most of his life, businessman famous enough to warrant an investigation of this life, married twice, given up by his parents ...

(HE is starting to realize something.)

What's the business?

MARTIN

What?

LELAND

You said he was a businessman. What kind of business was he in?

MARTIN

Oh. Um, publishing.

LELAND

Just publishing?

MARTIN

Politics too, for a time. The arts as well.

LELAND

Are you fucking with me?

MARTIN

I told you you wouldn't like it.

LELAND

Martin.

MARTIN

What?

LELAND

Is he called Charles in this one too?

MARTIN

Leland, look.

LELAND

Or did you change it for this?

MARTIN

Leland, I--



LELAND  
You wrote a remake of, "Citizen Kane?!?"  
(Silence)  
Martin, tell me I'm wrong.

MARTIN  
The idea wouldn't leave me alone.

LELAND  
It's not your idea!

MARTIN  
I was watching it one night and all of a sudden I figured out  
a way to do a remake of it. How to update it and change  
things but still tell a really good story.

LELAND  
It's "Citizen Kane."

MARTIN  
I know.

LELAND  
It's "Citizen Kane," you fucking idiot. You would've been  
better off doing a remake of "The Godfather." What is going  
on in your head?

MARTIN  
I ... come on.

LELAND  
What could you possibly have to say?

MARTIN  
It's not the worst idea in the world.

LELAND  
It's close.

MARTIN  
This studio does remakes all the time.

LELAND  
Yeah, but not like this.

MARTIN  
And people do remakes of good movies too. Movies that don't  
need to be remade.

LELAND  
But not like this!

MARTIN

It's a known commodity, it'll bring people in who want to see if it succeeds and who want to see if it fails.

LELAND

*If it fails?* If? This is beyond "Bad News Bears" remake bad. This is even beyond shot-for-shot remake of "Psycho" bad.

MARTIN

It's not a terrible script, Leland.

LELAND

I know. It was written by Orson Welles and that other guy.

MARTIN

Herman Mankiewicz. And I'm talking about my script.

LELAND

It's *my* script now. I get to go home and read it and you get to become a cautionary tale.

MARTIN

It's not a ... God, why am I even defending this? See, that's why I wanted to just put it on my shelf and never speak of it again.

LELAND

Oh, I believe you now. But that doesn't mean I'm not going to read it.

(HE checks his watch.)

I have a meeting, but you're coming back tomorrow.

MARTIN

I am?

LELAND

Oh, yes. Same time tomorrow. I'm going to go home and read this and laugh myself to sleep and then tomorrow you and I will talk about the projects you *should* be working on. This little dalliance right here, you know what it got you? A much shorter leash. So we will talk and I will make sure you are doing all you can to create movies we can actually make and not just laugh at at the Christmas party, okay?

MARTIN

Fine.

(Lights down on them.)

Scene 2

Leland's office, the next day.  
MARTIN is there, drinking a glass of water, waiting. After a few seconds of this, HE tries to read something on Leland's desk. LELAND enters, walking quickly. HE goes to his desk, takes his chair out, pauses, and then puts his chair back in. HE rubs his face with his hands. Inhales and then gives a long exhale.

LELAND

Where do I begin?

MARTIN

You read the script.

LELAND

I said I was gonna read the script, right? So, yes, I read the script. I read it last night.

MARTIN

Did you think--

LELAND

Last night I read it twice.

MARTIN

Why'd you read it twice?

LELAND

I read it three times. Twice last night and once more today. I barely got a wink of sleep because it was all I could think about.

MARTIN

Anger keeps you awake? Do you ever sleep?

(LELAND shakes his head and pulls out his chair. HE sits down and stares at MARTIN for an uncomfortably long time.)

MARTIN (CONT'D)

What, Leland?

LELAND

You know how much money I make, right?

MARTIN

Not the exact number.

LELAND

But ballpark. You know about how much I'm worth.

MARTIN

I know it's a lot.

LELAND

So if I were to say, break your nose, you'd try to sue me, because you'd know there's money to be gotten.

MARTIN

Of course.

LELAND

So that's out. Can't break your nose. But I really wanna fuckin' hit you, Martin. I want to put you in as much pain as I am in right now.

MARTIN

Just because of my script?

LELAND

Are you the asshole who keyed my car last week?

MARTIN

No.

LELAND

Then yes, just because of your script.

MARTIN

Look, I understand that you hate it because of what I did, but as a script, as its own thing divorced from any past ... whatever, I mean ... it wasn't bad, right?

LELAND

It was the best script you've ever written.

MARTIN

(A slight pause)

Wait, you're serious?

LELAND

Yes, Martin. Not only was it the best script you've ever written, it is the best script I've ever read. And I have read a lot of really fuckin' good scripts. But your stupid,

LELAND (CONT'D)

get-this-off-my-mind bullshit nonsense was better than all of them put together. I read it twice because when I finished it the first time, I wanted to read it all over again. And when I dragged my ass out of bed after three hours of sleep, it took all my willpower to take a shower and eat breakfast before I read it one more time.

MARTIN  
(Quietly)

Wow.

LELAND  
Yes. So you can see why I'm so upset.

MARTIN  
Not really, no.

LELAND  
It's a terrible idea.

MARTIN  
But it's a great script. Your words not mine.

LELAND  
And now I have to figure out a good reason not to make it.  
(LELAND's phone buzzes. HE answers it.)  
Yes? Well, I think it would probably be a good idea to show them in, then.  
(HE hangs up the phone.)  
Holly's here.

MARTIN  
Holly?

LELAND  
Holly Sloane. You know her?

MARTIN  
Not personally, but--

LELAND  
Well, I do. You win a couple of Oscars with somebody, you become close.

(HOLLY enters with ALEXANDRA, her partner. HOLLY is Australian; ALEXANDRA is American.)

HOLLY  
(Indicating Martin)  
Is this him?