

The Report Committee for Zachary Julius Gonzalez-Landis
certifies that this is the approved version of the
following report:

**Losing CTRL: How I Learned to Stop
Worrying and Love the Process**

APPROVED BY

SUPERVISING COMMITTEE:

Supervisor: _____

Cindy McCreery

Beau Thorne

**Losing CTRL: How I Learned to Stop
Worrying and Love the Process**

by

Zachary Julius Gonzalez-Landis, B.A.

Report

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**Losing CTRL: How I Learned to Stop
Worrying and Love the Process**

by

Zachary Julius Gonzalez-Landis, MFA
The University of Texas at Austin, 2012

SUPERVISOR: Cindy McCreery

"Losing CTRL: How I Learned To Stop Worrying and Love the Process" examines the development of Zachary Julius Gonzalez-Landis' screenplay, *"CTRL*OBS*OLETE,"* and the personal and professional changes that resulted from his involvement in this project.

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CHAPTER 1: THE IDEA

The summer of 2011 sucked. Not just for me, but for almost anyone stuck in Austin during one of the worst droughts in Texas history. Temperatures exceeded 100 degrees as early as April, fires laid waste to nearby towns, lake levels plummeted, and air conditioners couldn't keep up with local demand. Even beer koozies lacked adequate motivation after a half hour in the sun.

To make matters worse, I lost my part time job at the end of May due to an administrative oversight, leaving me unemployed, on a tight budget until fall loans kicked in, and without a daily destination to keep me connected to the civilized world. My girlfriend and I lived on the east side without a car, so any trip downtown or to campus consisted of a sweaty waiting period for the bus, an experience we shared with ten or so bums that used the service as an escape from the heat. Despite my access to a tepid shower and a prepaid bus pass, I didn't feel so different from the homeless chatterboxes riding the wheels -- I was hot, I was bothered, and I was beyond broke.

The summer of 2011 sucked.

On one such weekday morning, as the starting gun of my CD alarm clock shattered any dreams of rain or reprieve, my

girlfriend let out a sigh and grumbled. "I don't want to go," she said, referencing the uninspired grind of university work in the summer. She had nothing to do all day but feign the act of being busy, often clinging to each click of the refresh button on her personal email account.

"You should send your clone," I said, drier than the pavement.

"Maybe I will," she said. And she laid there just long enough for me to wonder if I misinterpreted her sarcasm before peeling herself off the bottom sheet and stumbling to the bathroom.

I made coffee while she got ready, and as the speed of the percolation increased, so did the dusty, early morning gears of my brain. "What if I had a clone?" I remember thinking, "Would he make coffee instead of me? What would I do while he took care of all the adult responsibilities in my life? Where would I go?"

Of course, I didn't have a lot responsibilities at the time -- don't spend money, don't die of heatstroke -- but I had at least ten years of office memories to draw on, of working in arbitrary hierarchies, the nine-to-five drag, the exhaustion that follows hours of mindless paperwork. That endless routine spurs a kind of frustration and hopelessness almost everyone understands. Who wouldn't want to hand off their job to a clone, to free themselves from the burden of

40 hours of weekly slavery, to allow themselves to experience the world and not worry about paychecks and bills? On the flipside, what would the clone think? Would he be happy, resentful, depressed? Apathetic?

Thoughts and questions snowballed in the shower, where all my best thinking occurs; I knew that I stood on the cusp of a story and something about an office worker sending a clone to his job intrigued me. To figure out the premise, I decided to lug my rickety, swollen laptop to Rio Rita and break one of my own rules. This story would require at least two large iced teas.

Emphasis on "iced."

CHAPTER 2: FROM PREMISE TO STORY

I don't know if it was the incessant heat or all those hours spent sequestered at my desk and in coffee shop corners, but the premise that emerged took on a dark façade. I wanted to tell the story of a joyless, unfulfilled office accountant who sends a clone to work, enjoys the resulting freedom, but then, as his clone's awareness increases, they must fight each other for the right to live the life they both share. The clone would defeat its parent in a brief, bloody climax in the office and lead to a resolution that suggests all of industrialized society forces good people into subservient clones. That was my vision: dark, sardonic, and buried in a Vonnegut-like dystopia.

The premise consumed me and I pitched the rough logline to a friend. He liked the idea -- my decision to go dark intrigued him almost as much as the possibility of a decent entrant into the consistently disappointing canon of clone movies. Between the two of us, only Duncan Jones' *Moon* and the futuristic noir film *Blade Runner* fulfilled the premise of a world capable of creating exact human replicas. My friend's feedback led me to a realization I chose to ignore, that my excitement for the idea rested on its exotic nature. After all, I wrote comedies. My last feature centered on a drunk, wannabe astronaut's attempt to reach space on the

backing of an evil Russian billionaire. The opportunity to drill into a script that devolves into violence and psychological suspense rather than constantly searching for a joke per page scintillated my writing juices. As I will explain later, my choice to dismiss this -- and, it would appear, the audience for such a film -- cost me several months of frustration. At the time, however, the challenge of writing the angry, gritty version of *Office Space* captured my imagination. I gave myself a deadline for the outline and embarked on fleshing out the basics: world of the story, characters, and the division of the story into three acts.

Immediately, I honed in on the most difficult aspect of the premise -- how exactly does this accountant receive a clone? For me, the fix emerged when I chose *Big* as a model film and broke down its structure. Just like the kid in *Big*, my accountant could wish for a clone and, lo and behold, one could show up at his door the next day. Rather than use a psychic or boardwalk arcade game, I chose a quirkier route and dipped into my Art Institute of Chicago past -- why not wish on a magical painting? Then, in Act II, when he tries to reverse the phenomenon by returning to the museum, the painting's gone, now on loan somewhere far away and impossible to reach. It seemed perfect and I considered

adding it to a forthcoming how-to book called *Writing Is So Easy*.

The outline expanded on the premise and my protagonist flickered to life. Travis Birch exemplified the beaten down, working class everyman, unsure of how he ended up as a middle managing accountant in a faceless corporate environment. Although the name and inner-workings of the company would change a lot through various drafts, even in this first outline I described Travis' employer as a "designed obsolescence firm" specializing in the identification and implementation of graduated faults for otherwise sustainable products. I also created a mythology for the inciting incident when Travis wishes for a new life. While avoiding co-workers after some embarrassing antics, he finds himself staring into the eye of the *Cyclops*, a real painting at the Art Institute of Chicago that I endowed with a legend for fulfilling wishes. An exact clone named 22A arrives at his apartment the next day from a company called Working Bytes in California containing instructions on use and maintenance. Yet another important difference from subsequent drafts exists here -- from the onset, 22A recognizes that he's a clone and loves his role as a worker substitute. In fact, the two continue to live together throughout the story even as Travis spends his days dating a love interest (Dana) and learning how to be spontaneous.

To my surprise, the tonal shift from quirky comedy to dark comedy arrived late in Act II when 22A murders his creator from Working Bytes and travels back to Chicago intent on returning to work as Travis. Travis attempts to fight for his life, but fails as 22A slashes his throat with a thick stack of papers, burying evidence of the murder in a Dumpster outside. The switch now complete, no one notices the next day and the last scene depicts 22A smiling as his boss steps on his back to reach a cockroach on the wall.

Although imperfect, the story contained a beginning, middle, and end; I titled it *The Office Drone*. Themes of identity, class, and obsolescence hovered above the surface -- for the first time in my feature writing life, I managed to combine my disdain for capitalism with a tale centering on a character that attempts to live outside the system. Sure, Travis loses in the end, but that was the point in my opinion, the natural result within a world that values profits over quality of life. Dana, Travis' articulate girlfriend, represents the off-the-grid archetype for embracing life -- she quits jobs, protests, and follows her passions. Ultimately, this version of Travis remains misguided as he returns to work after receiving the long-awaited recognition he always desired. His death represented a failure of perspective, a muddled reaction to 22A's usurpation that questions whether Travis wanted his life

back or his job. For him, perhaps, they were one in the same. Regardless, I liked the ambiguity and believed the story tapped into an anger in contemporary society, the same kind of undercurrent that motivated that summer's Occupy Wall Street movement and served as the foundation for the Tea Party's rise to prominence.

Confident, I sent my outline draft to Kick in the Shorts (KITS), a weekly writers meeting intended to workshop short film ideas for production students, but welcomed all concepts. Truth be told, the regular attendees totaled no more than four on any given Thursday night at Spiderhouse, with me as the sole screenwriter representative. Either way, their notes supported my tone and direction, with much of the discussion focused on opportunities to expand character and clarify the rules of Working Bytes and 22A. *Frankenstein* entered the conversation along with *The Metamorphosis* -- the group found the strangeness of the idea appealing.

After one last pass, I settled on a new title, *Control Obsolete*, and felt satisfied and ready to start the semester ahead of the game with a completed outline.

I was in for a rude awakening.

CHAPTER 3: UNCONTROLLED OBSOLESCENCE

When the class discussed my outline in early September, I noticed a certain uneasiness in how they approached the workshop. A handful of colleagues recognized my intentions and reacted to the story much like *KITS*, but the majority remained stuck on two valid points: why would a comedy writer want to write a dark story and who's the audience for such a film? The class split into two uneven camps, divided by their interest (or disinterest) in the political themes of the outline. At best, they determined the story showed science fiction promise and required more character development, and at worst it distanced itself from all my strengths and read as a preachy story devoid of any entertainment value.

Bruised but undeterred, I spent the next week reworking the outline and breaking down the script from *American Psycho*, determined to capture the right tone and prove my story's worth. I layered in another untapped element mentioned from the *KITS* meeting, adding a theatrical production of *The Metamorphosis* into the Act II break and peppering a cockroach motif through the story, my attempt at yet another nod to obsolescence and the ugliness of capitalism. I thought this strengthened the script and

helped to create expectations for the kind of audience I envisioned.

I was wrong.

My continued focus on the themes of the story undercut the story itself; no one cared about the characters, let alone the protagonist. It was never super funny, or super violent, thus appeared unsure of itself. Rather than defy genre, it lacked commitment. I felt lost, frustrated -- should I write for me, or for an audience? The existential dilemma from the story leaped from the page to its author, and with the first script submission due in two weeks, I lacked adequate time to discover the perfect fix for a story no one wanted to read. I reached out to Cindy, my professor. I needed a new direction, something I could believe in.

After months of seeing *Control Obsolete* as a dark tale about an unfulfilled accountant and his clone, Cindy suggested mining the story for fun, locating possibilities that could open it up and breathe life into its skeleton. She helped me investigate the various parts of my story, not just thinking about the principal characters, but also settings. Eclipse Enterprises, the designed obsolescence firm Travis worked at, seemed like a missed opportunity and we teased out several ideas in her office that afternoon, with one in particular capturing my interest -- what if everyone at Eclipse Enterprises used clones? I adjusted it

slightly -- what if only the *executives* used clones? Of course, they use clones to let go of their responsibilities and live the easy, worry-free millionaire lifestyle. Suddenly, I saw the primary conflict in a new way. No longer a heady battle between two versions of the same guy, the script now presented a secondary antagonist in the form of Travis' employer. I could see discoveries, surprises, fun and games. In short, now I had a feature. This change also supported my interest in juxtaposing the haves and the have nots, pitting the one-percent (the executives) against a representative from the 99 percent (Travis) after he discovers being an executive with a clone has its serious drawbacks.

The following week I turned in a revised outline through the midpoint, a complete retelling of the story with new minor characters, rehashed old ones, and a fresh logline that emphasized the executives. Gone was the wish fulfillment, the Working Bytes thread, and 22A's self-awareness (he was now referred to as Clone Travis or CT). Dana changed from a political journalist to a hardass bartender and roller derby girl, Travis became more of a pessimist and less of a depressive, and the tone now reflected a quirky, sci-fi comedy. During this redevelopment process, I landed on one of the only scenes I kept through each version of the script, placed here as the midpoint --

the moment when Travis spots Clone Travis making-out with Dana on the Kiss Cam during a Chicago Bulls game. For whatever reason, no matter how many times I changed different aspects of the story, the prospect of Travis seeing his clone with his ex-girlfriend on a big screen felt like the right choice. Anyway, the latest outline necessitated yet another new title: *Executive Privilege*.

CHAPTER 4: ROUGH TRANSITION

But for some reason, I couldn't write the beginning. In a foreshadow of a technique to come later, I wanted to write the Act I break, to reveal Travis with Bill Whitehurst, president of Eclipse Enterprises, as they toured the lavish executive level of the company. Instead, my first submission took another detour and I discarded my outline entirely, groping through ten pages of scenes involving Travis as the heir to his father's watch shop, choices I made simply to have something to offer during the workshop. However, without an outline as a guide, no one in class was prepared to read what amounted to a free writing sample and, as such, my colleagues reacted with frustration, compounding my own instability with all these last moment changes. I felt like I let my readers down, both disrespected their time and disappointed their expectations. Maybe that's dramatic, maybe it's accurate. Either way, I shuffled back to my desk in the kind of despair usually reserved for Act II.

Again faced with first pages that I couldn't eke out, I turned to my girlfriend for advice.

"Make your clone do it," she said.

"Maybe I will," I said.

"But if he's not around, just write the scenes that you can write, and give the class that."

She was right; it was all I could do. So I honed in on the Act I break, the moment where Travis ascends the many floors of Eclipse Enterprises to the very top, meets Whitehurst who immediately hands him a drink --

The pages rolled out fast and easy as I imagined what billionaires would do if left unaccountable from all of society, including the very people they employed. This was exactly what Cindy mentioned before, having fun with the premise and exploring the world of the story. I knew the pages were overwritten, with too much space devoted to one scene, but I learned in that writing session (and would learn many times over during the next year) the value of the process. My ability to write the script hinged on that one scene and I needed to see where it would go in order to continue building the rest of the story. Visualizing in my head did not equal visualizing on the page, and that's the precise definition of a first draft -- the initial act of discovering the story.

For my purposes at the time, this foray into Act II without writing Act I secured a voice for Whitehurst, a tongue-in-cheek tone emerged, and the script found sure footing. That allowed me to go backwards and write Act I, where I managed to repurpose about half of the material from my earlier false start. Now I could really focus on the

challenges of cause and effect, character motivations, and, of course, finding memorable comedic moments.

In other words, I was finally writing a draft.

CHAPTER 5: THE FIRST (AND A HALF) DRAFT

When I stepped back from the first draft in early December, I knew I wasn't close to accomplishing the original story I set out to write. Several surprises occurred along the way, however, most due to the fact I never finished a full outline and, in turn, only reached what I considered the Act II break in script form. All those false starts in September forced me to write blind past the midpoint, resulting in a variety of unintended (but sometimes entertaining) story beats. The clarity of the first half of the script paled in comparison to the second half, and yet, I couldn't help but think that the story didn't really start until the midpoint anyway, when Travis sees Clone Travis.

Regardless, I spent a few days after the semester ended sifting through the script, trying to figure out how to streamline the story. By the Act II break where I stopped writing proper pages, the world of Eclipse Enterprises more than doubled -- not only did every executive have a clone, but every floor of the company represented another attempt at developing the "right" clone. Travis opens stairwell doors to discover different versions of himself, ranging from a lumbering cowboy to a nerd with full braces. Furthermore, the script suggests that this entire operation

started with Original Whitehurst, a character the audience meets late in Act II when Whitehurst sneaks into the basement for an update with his older, more human in appearance, parent. This follows Whitehurst's evil turn -- a clear bring back to the dark origins of *Control Obsolete* -- when he demands that Frank Carlton kill himself or risk the elimination of his family. If I divided my script into eight sections, reels five and six seem almost exclusive in their devotion to Whitehurst, Original Whitehurst, and the executive plight. Whether or not that storyline and exposition exists in the correct location remains secondary to the chief question on any audience member's mind: why the hell was Whitehurst involved in the creation of clones?

Even if that tidbit escapes thought, almost none of the events that occur past the midpoint contribute to the central story between Travis and Clone Travis. They meet, they switch places, but really, most of the story happens to Travis rather than Travis engineering the momentum of the script. Moreover, Dana disappears in favor of screen time with Travis' "home model" Claire, whose depth of character increases with her reaction to her self-awareness as a clone. Again, all interesting turns, yet each one appears to occur on the periphery of the central story. My simple tale about an unfulfilled accountant seemed awfully far away.

Stacks of workshop notes in tow, I challenged myself to a revision before the end of December, intending to use a solid draft of *Executive Privilege* to submit to the Nicholl Fellowship. At the top of my list of fixes sat Whitehurst's motivation and I returned to the Act I inciting incident to investigate a better entry point. In the first draft, Whitehurst offers Travis an executive position under the pretenses that he deserved the promotion, while the audience understands, in a vague way, that Whitehurst recognizes Travis is close to discovering the excesses of the executive lifestyle buried in a travel account. If Whitehurst was to play a major part in the story and drive the action toward the end, he required clearer reasoning and stakes that supported his goal. As luck would have it, during one of my last classes as a teaching assistant that fall, I screened the first act of *Zoolander*, one of my favorite comedies. That film begins not with the titular character, but instead with Mugatu, the antagonist, in a prologue that spouts two minutes of silly (albeit necessary) exposition. However, it was how that scene ends that caught my attention -- the villains need a patsy in order to finalize their plan of world fashion domination and want Mugatu to find the right idiot for the job. The very next scene reveals Zoolander in his clueless element, a clear answer to the previous scene's

question. So, why not make Travis a patsy? If it worked for Ben Stiller, it could work for Travis Birch.

I wrote up a prologue that takes place during a late night, hush-hush meeting between the three top Eclipse Enterprises executives and invented a secret, impending SEC investigation into their firm. Whitehurst suggests they transfer blame to a fall guy and, just like in *Zoolander*, I cut from their uncertain faces to Travis in all his misery, waking up on a deflated air mattress.

This structural move not only helped lend Whitehurst some much-needed credibility and instilled a nice ticking clock for the SEC, but also allowed more room for fun. By nailing a chunk of exposition in the first few pages, I bought time for more creative introductory scenes to the firm, character moments between Travis and his best friend/co-worker Jimmy, and set-up an inevitable Act II lowest point when the SEC arrests Travis while Whitehurst and his cronies disappear scot-free. Or would it be Clone Travis left with all the company's criminal responsibilities? I wouldn't get a chance to make that decision because...

My house was robbed before I could finish the new draft. In a sick twist of fate, my winter revision only mustered new scenes through page 45, where I had moved the previous midpoint moment between Travis and Clone Travis at

the Bulls game. I never submitted to the Nicholl, never wrote to the new midpoint (where I intended Travis and Clone Travis to switch lives), and I never again played *Madden 2007*.

CHAPTER 6: THE REAL REVISION

Before moving to Los Angeles in June of 2012, I reread my two unfinished drafts of *Executive Privilege* and met with my thesis committee. We discussed a lot of different angles, possibilities, and interpretations -- what if the whole story centered on Clone Travis? -- but one comment that both professors noted shocked me.

Travis was not an empathetic character.

Somehow, in all my various outlines and drafts, had I ignored the most important aspect of any story, the protagonist? Without a likeable or cinematic central character, audiences (myself included) will shrug off any movie, no matter the level of conceptual brilliance, incredible dialogue, or striking visuals. And my professors were right, too -- I revisited both Act I's and found Travis indistinct, a passionless bore that ends up with a world of wealth and freedom by near coincidence. Between *Control Obsolete* and *Executive Privilege*, I thought I had developed a character who exemplified a lack of fulfillment, and instead created an unfulfilling character. Clearly, that required my immediate and focused attention.

As did another overlooked aspect of the script -- the love triangle between Dana, Travis, and Clone Travis. In both drafts, the strange goings-on at Eclipse Enterprises

detracted from the potential fun and drama of their relationship. Dana existed more as a tool than a character, and, as noted before, her counterpart Claire emerges as more interesting and deep despite her one-track mind.

These two comments spoke to the very foundation of the script and spurred me to erase my whiteboard, set aside all my outlines, and close my moleskin. I realized that I'd made the same mistake for a second time, that I'd left the audience on the sidelines. The best films revolve around relationships, personalities, and choices; my film revolved around a concept. Travis, Clone Travis, and Dana belonged on the poster, in the forefront, with Eclipse Enterprises behind them.

It sounds trite, but when I arrived in Los Angeles, my life changed. I now lived out of a suitcase and slept on a friend's futon, Skyping with my girlfriend once a week and interning in Beverly Hills. A year of distance from the initial script idea combined with a literal distance from the comforts of home placed me in an odd scenario for the revision. In many ways, I felt like Travis Birch, stuck in someone else's life, on some kind of borrowed time. But was I the executive, or the loner? The answer didn't really matter; I felt like both. And either way, I had never

experienced this kind of connection with my protagonist before, during any iteration of the script.

When I sat down to work on the revision for the first time, I laid down a few ground rules for myself. Number one I learned from *Executive Privilege*: write the scenes you want to write, as the moment strikes you. It's okay to write out of sequence and, in fact, it helps direct where the story will go. Two: write fast. I wanted to finish the draft in record time because I knew that would be the only way I would reach the ending. I also knew from attempts that my tendency to overthink often clouds what exists on the page. Next: only go backwards for clarification, not for editing. I can make edits all day, but every single one can be saved for when I finish the draft. And finally: no outlining before writing, only outline while writing. At this point, I knew the story, I knew the barebones and just needed to trust myself.

Ground rules intact, I embarked on the heavy lifting. Travis needed an overhaul, a voice and an underdog status to urge the audience to root for his success. I secretly chose an actor to play him with a distinct presence and enjoyable cadence. After some thought, I decided that Travis' character flaw wasn't misery in his life, but rather pessimism. In short, this script would detail the extraordinary way in which Travis learns to adjust his

attitude. With that in mind, I went about activating him in the first thirty pages. This decision coincided with minimizing the role of both Whitehurst and Eclipse Enterprises -- I could always add them back in a subsequent draft. This draft, however, I wanted to focus on relationships and, as my protagonist, Travis would need to drive every scene. I reworked his background and status. Rather than a disgruntled accountant, I made him a disgruntled scientist stuck designing great products to fail in laboratory no one visits or recognizes. His unused skills lead to his first triumph of the script, when he builds a machine to create his clone. To strengthen the moment when Travis sees Clone Travis with Dana, I changed the Travis/Dana dynamic from unrequited love to a stale, long-term relationship. This better juxtaposed his situation and suggested Clone Travis truly did "fix" his life by winning Dana back.

I also clarified Travis' goal -- another disconnect evident in the old draft -- by opening the film with a dream and showing his failed attempt to impress Whitehurst and his cohorts at a courtesy interview for an executive position. Travis now appeared belittled and discarded as opposed to self-loathing and bitter.

In preparation for the inevitable confrontation between Travis and Clone Travis, I read P.K. Dick's *Do Androids*

Dream of Electric Sheep? and noted the high level of care and humanity he endowed both the androids and their human counterparts. I realized Clone Travis represented another missed opportunity, that if Clone Travis did win Dana back, his love for her would compete with Travis' desire -- Travis would need to force him into switching lives.

But the biggest change, and my primary goal, was to inject the story with heart. And how I did that -- or if I did that -- is hard to describe. I wanted Travis to earn the right to win Dana back and for the audience to believe in his worthiness, his readiness, and his honesty. I'm proud of the resulting climax in a way that trumps any moment that precedes it, if only because I know it's the foundation of the next draft. And because I wrote it out of sequence as the second scene of my revision.

CHAPTER 7: LAST REMARKS

Somehow a dark story about a clone who refuses to give up his life to the accountant who wished for him evolved into a romantic comedy where a disgruntled scientist learns to love himself from a clone he created. Although I know this draft maintains a handful of unresolved issues and no doubt requires another solid sweep, I am happy with the journey and learned a tremendous amount in the process. My mistakes, missteps, trials, and errors all played a part in the culmination of *CTRL*OBS*OLETE*, the latest and most accurate title for draft.

And to think just a year ago I was sweating my ass off in Austin, Texas and now I'm lounging outside on an LA porch.

Summer 2012 definitely does not suck.

APPENDIX A: OUTLINE DRAFT (THE OFFICE DRONE)

ELEVATOR PITCH

Big meets Office Space. Only dark.

LOGLINE

Office yes-man Travis Birch sends a specialized clone to do his boring corporate job. But when the clone climbs the ranks, Travis must risk his newfound freedom in order to keep his secret and his job.

WORLD OF THE STORY / THEME

In the 21st century, we still “make a living” at various jobs, but most of us don’t physically make anything, let alone provide a tangible service for the community. We’re associates, administrators, managers, supervisors, directors, coordinators; seniors, juniors, specialists, with numbers attached for good measure. Our titles are more often connected to pay rate than responsibilities. And somehow we spend 70% of our week (and maybe our lives) wearing our work ID.

What have we become? Is this the American Dream we all envision? How do we reconcile the duality of our identities? Who are we outside our jobs?

CHARACTERS

TRAVIS BIRCH (30s)

A lifer, resigned to his position and his employer. Not only could he do his job in his sleep, he does -- it infiltrates his dreams, his nightmares. The only thing that ever changes is the fiscal year. Right out of college he shuffled his way up the corporate ladder one menial title promotion at a time, but none longer than his current role as Associate Statistical Specialist - Department of Accounting, a position married to Excel spreadsheets and the kind of predictive reasoning no one respects or understands. He's wallpaper and feels like it; he owns the worthlessness. Hates his job, but shrugs off the resignation -- it's too late to choose a new career, a new life.

"22A," TRAVIS BIRCH CLONE (ageless!)

Uploaded with Travis's work knowledge, work history, and an ability to learn and improvise within the work arena. 22A

is wired for success; emotions do not factor in to his on-the-job decisions. He is an expression of Travis's work potential and his mission is not just to be a yes-man, but a "yes-and" man.

DANA LIVINGSTON (30s)

Always followed her passions, which have led to different careers as a journalist, drive-through coffee owner, and office temp. Never made much money, never cared. Well-traveled, articulate, politically active. She knows her rights, knows herself, and not afraid of calling bullshit. She also loves to have fun -- drinks, drugs, sex. She's drunk with passion, not power. She has a colorful tattoo sleeve that includes the iconic fist from the Weather Underground.

JAMES QUINOA (30s)

Travis' best workplace friend. He's the happy-go-lucky version that turns lemons into lemon drops: shortstop on the office softball team, birthday committee chairman, Friday happy hour mainstay, dates the hot new blood as a rite of passage, etc. He's not an ass, though -- comes by

it honestly, with a sense of realism. Mantra: jobs are stupid, so we do them and then we go get drunk.

MEREDITH CHAMBERS (40s)

The head of Eclipse Enterprises and Travis's boss. Obsessed with money and the bottom line. Two-faced (bitch to staff, kitten to clients), loves her power. Finds efficiency and devotion to work sexy as hell. If she killed anyone, she'd manage to get away with it and not feel guilty.

ECLIPSE ENTERPRISES

Tag: "Eclipse your potential." They help clients redesign/re-envision products to more effectively plan obsolescence.

ACT I

TRAVIS BIRCH slogs through another morning at Eclipse Enterprises, half-heartedly preparing for the weekly staff meeting and his accounts progress report. His friend and officemate JAMES QUINOVA swings by the cube -- wearing yesterday's clothes. Things got wild at the bar last night after the softball game and he "hit for the cycle" with the new social media rep and her roommate. James mistakes

Travis' disgust for disbelief and shows off two sets of distinct bite marks on his torso to prove his conquest.

"See? Roommate had braces."

Inside the boardroom, the meeting gets stalled by a large bug on the wall. MEREDITH CHAMBERS, the boss, can't reach it, but insists she must be the one to kill it. She instructs Travis to lay on all fours, she'll stand on him and swat the bug. He does, unable to overcome his subservience. She chooses his report as the bug-killing weapon, digs her heels into his back and jumps repeatedly, puncturing Travis' skin. He cries, bleeds, and the room laughs. Except Meredith -- she starts calmly describing the weather forecast in Chicago...

CUT TO: The morning radio alarm continues the weather and Travis wakes up, face drenched in sweat. Another goddamn work nightmare.

He trudges through the morning routine: shower, shave, bus, train, elevator, coffee, cubical.

He prints off a report for the morning meeting. James swings by -- "Guess what happened last night?" Travis guesses he slept with the new social media rep. James looks at him crazy. "What? No. I hit for the cycle! Can you believe that? It was awesome. But she is kinda cute, huh?"

Minutes before the meeting, Travis notices the report he printed is from 2009, not 2011. He pulls up the old file and the current file side by side, is about to print the right one, then stops. Changes the dates on the old file and prints it.

Inside the boardroom, Meredith announces a temporary freeze on bonuses and a downsized annual company party. Instead of box seats and open bar at a home Bulls game, it's two drink tickets at the Art Institute's Modern Wing. She calls on Travis to top off her coffee and begin the first report of the departmental round robin.

He passes around the falsified report and, just as Meredith receives her copy, Travis caves and says he noticed an error and must reprint the document. He re-gathers the old reports and hustles out of the room. Once gone, Meredith

says they'll continue anyway, implying his reports are pointless.

Moments later, Travis returns with the new reports just as the meeting adjourns. His coworkers file out of the room, each declining their copy of his report. James moves to take one, but Travis gives him a "don't patronize me" look.

Some kind of short scene at home where Travis mopes and eats delivery, but also reveals a repressed/ignored passion (suggestions?? There's a placeholder in Act II...).

At the holiday party, Travis strolls in, the first to arrive, even though he's "on time." He reaches the bar just as a group of coworkers, obviously involved in a pre-party, raucously enter the Modern Wing. He lays down a ticket and asks the bartender for the strongest drink possible. The bartender pours him a half glass of wine. Travis produces a ten; bartender pours whiskey into a small shot glass. Travis drinks it, then stares back at the bartender, who acquiesces and pours another shot.

Later: Meredith makes a toast, interrupted by a very tipsy Travis accidentally setting off an alarm, trying to apologize, but instead tripping into a sculpture and setting off another alarm. The coworkers react like in the dream -- they laugh and point. Travis learns he has an office nickname: ASS (the acronym from his title).

Distraught, Travis tells James he should quit. "Then quit, man," James responds. "There are other jobs." After a moment, Travis sighs. "I can't quit. I don't know how to do anything else." James pats him on the back, then sets his sights on the social media hottie.

Later: Travis stands alone, drunk and sad, in front of an equally sad and depressing modern depiction, Alex Katz's Vincent and Tony, two teens staring off into a troubling distance the viewer does not see. A portly museum guard chats him up, then asks if Travis wants to see his favorite artwork in the Modern Wing.

Before the guard gets to his favorite piece, Travis spots a strange, childlike painting with an unrecognizable -- though central -- figure. "That's Cyclops," explains the guard as Travis shuffles forward, nose inches from the

canvas. "There's an old museum legend that says if you stare into the eye and make a wish, it'll come true." Travis focuses on the eye, intrigued. The guard shrugs. "Personally, that one kinda creeps me out."

The guard strolls away with Travis still fixated on the painting. He takes a deep breath and whispers, "I wish I could send a robot to work for me."

Travis almost sleeps in the cab ride home. It rains...

Inciting Incident

Next morning he wakes up, hung over, to his door buzzer. UPS has a package for him to sign -- a massive, human-sized box. He opens it: a replica of Travis, in work clothes, stands before him. Around the replica's neck is a letter.

Dear Mr. Birch:

Per your request, meet worker substitute model 22A, TRAVIS BIRCH (clone), fully programmed to operate in total capacity the tasks and activities inherent to ASSOCIATE STATISTICAL SPECIALIST - ACCOUNTING

DEPARTMENT, ECLIPSE ENTERPRISES. 22A contains only relevant memory data in connection to ASSOCIATE STATISTICAL SPECIALIST - ACCOUNTING DEPARTMENT, ECLIPSE ENTERPRISES, exhibits no emotion other than contentment, and does not require supervision. If work-related questions arise to which loaded memory or common problem-solving skills do not suffice, 22A will communicate the issue to you and resolve it in accordance to your wishes.

Otherwise, please remember to charge 22A once every 48 hours, using the plug extender at his right heel. If you have any questions relating to use or malfunction, contact our headquarters.

Enjoy your worker substitute!

Sincere regards,

Dr. Dale Princeton
Founder and CEO
Working Bytes, Inc.

When Travis looks up from the letter, 22A's eyes are open and the clone smiles kindly. Travis screams and trips to the floor. 22A helps him to his feet and reiterates the situation. "Travis Birch, you do not need to worry. I'm fully charged and ready to work. In fact," he checks his wrist watch, "it appears my delivery was late. I must hurry to catch the bus."

Travis -- wearing only boxers and slippers -- follows 22A outside the apartment and to the bus stop, asking rapid-fire questions ("What about lunch? Do you know how the coffee machine works? Do you know how to book meeting rooms? There's a 2:30 with Chris -- "). But the clone calmly answers each one. He knows where he's going, understands all of Travis's work-related responsibilities, and even has a transit pass.

The bus arrives and Travis panics. "No! I don't think this is a good idea!" 22A cocks his head to the side. "You want to go to work today?" Travis pauses. "Well, no. But -- "

22A smiles, says he'll be home at 6:07 p.m., and steps on the bus. Travis watches it pull away, then finally realizes he's freezing.

ACT II

Travis returns to the Art Institute, rushes into the Modern Wing and -- the Cyclops painting is gone. He finds an employee who explains that the painting is now on loan with the Tate Modern in London, part of a six-month long exhibition.

Wearing dark sunglasses, Travis stands in a downtown courtyard, outside his office building. He calls 22A at his desk, pretends to be a client. 22A recognizes him immediately, and again asks him not to worry.

In the department store directly across from his office, Travis spies on 22A through a window while pretending to shop in the women's clothing section. He briefly gets distracted by an argument between a store supervisor and DANA LIVINGSTON, an attractive and strong-willed part-timer. Dana quits on the spot, sees Travis watching her and, before exiting, tells him to fuck off too. Back at the window, Travis sees Meredith stop at 22A's desk, talk for a second, then turn toward Travis who immediately buries

himself in a rack of dresses to hide. When he emerges, shoppers stare...and Meredith is no longer with 22A.

That evening, 22A comes home slightly late, 6:16 -- the bus was late. Travis says it's a little creepy to talk to himself like this, so he hands 22A Groucho Marx glasses to wear whenever they're together. Then Travis asks questions about the day, but 22A cuts him off, hands him a document. "After every work day, I produce a status report for your review. You may request copies of any completed task."

While 22A charges, Travis reviews the document. He's impressed. "Wow, that's exactly what I would've done." He looks over at the clone. Maybe he's not so bad after all...

(this might actually be the real Act I break)

Next day, Travis waves goodbye to 22A. Showers, but decides not to shave, touching his one-day stubble. Goes to the fridge, reaches for orange juice, then pushes it aside for a beer. It's 9:30 -- but who cares? He spends the day lounging in un-ironed clothes, drinking, and not thinking about work.

Until his phone rings in the afternoon. Travis wakes up on the couch, an open pizza box next to him. It's 22A on the line -- there's an after work happy hour for a departing temp, what should he do? Travis says he hates going to those; they're lame and awkward. 22A says, "Well you don't have to. I can." Travis, euphoric, smiles.

MONTAGE of Travis spending his time leisurely (movies, beers, cafes, Internet poker, masturbating, park strolls, day Cubs and Sox games, strumming old guitar, day trips, etc.), and slowly weaning off the nightly reports from 22A. INTERCUT with 22A happily typing emails, printing, attending/conducting meetings, drinks at happy hour, softball, topping off Meredith's coffee. End montage.

Meredith, in her office, looks over a document, asks her secretary to call in Travis. 22A comes in. She applauds his work over the last month. She knows its short notice, but wants him to accompany her to a conference in Los Angeles this weekend, he would be a huge help in illustrating the cost effective nature of their business to potential clients. 22A says he is honored, but needs to think about it.

At a café, Travis -- now sporting a modest beard -- reads a stack of newspapers (or off an iPad?), drinks coffee. A woman on the phone sits down near him, he overhears her say "Fuck off" and end the call -- it's Dana. He strikes up a conversation, says he recognizes her from the department store and her little tirade. She's laughs, says that was a part-time gig, a desperate move now that unemployment insurance ran out. Year ago lost her business, a coffee shop in the Ukranian Village. Rent, Starbucks, and yupsters led to demise. Bankrupt, no job, but she refuses to be treated like shit. That's her rule. Travis lies, says he was laid off. He invites her on a walk through the Lincoln Park Zoo. She agrees.

While strolling, they bitch about former bosses. Dana laughs at Travis' description, he says it feels good to finally get that off his chest. Dana says she always wanted to be a journalist, Howard Zinn was a hero; she got distracted by great coffee and a boyfriend with a killer weed connection. Dana says Americans are overworked, don't get enough vacation, etc. We don't learn about ourselves if we're always serving someone else's desires. If France gets 6 weeks of mandatory vacation, why not us? Why are we so

different? She writes about that stuff on her blog:
allworkandnopay.net.

They come to the sun bears during feeding, just gnawing at every meaty inch. Travis says he never knew what he wanted -- always been jealous of people that figured it out. She doesn't believe it -- what did he used to love, as a kid? It comes out: cartooning. He used to draw Far Side-like, single-panel cartoons in the school newspaper. They were dumb, but fun. Dana invites him to a free concert in Millennium Park. She'll bring the blanket if he brings the wine.

At home, 22A asks him about the L.A. conference. Travis, shocked, can't believe it. 22A explains that since December, Travis' productivity level has improved by 38% -- has he not been reading the daily status reports? Travis skirts the question, asks about charging. 22A has a back up supply. He'll be fine for a weekend. Travis says okay.

On the plane, 22A works on a company laptop between Meredith and James. She's wowed by his work ethic, but suggests he enjoy a cocktail. 22A responds, "I receive more

joy from doing my job than any drink could possibly provide." He continues working. Meredith finds this attractive.

Back in Chicago, Travis winds his way through the packed Millennium Park, where mostly young people lounge on the grounds drinking and eating. He finds Dana. He guessed on wine -- she thinks he went a little pricey. Either way, he forgot cups, they'll have to swig from the bottle. Travis confesses he's never gone to one of the free concerts, always got out too late and it seemed like a hassle. What kind of music does he like? He lists off harmless '90s bands. She laughs. "Welcome to the 21st century." Some kind of dancey/rocky/electronica plays. Loud.

On a cruise type situation off the coast of Los Angeles, 22A and Meredith chat up a potential client. The client's phone slips out of her hand -- 22A dives into the ocean to retrieve it. He's under water for a LONG time. Long enough to be funny, not funny, and then funny again. He pops up with the phone. The client, of course, can't wait to sign up. Meredith's smitten.

Millennium Park: Travis and Dana dance, laugh, fairly drunk. He has no idea what he's doing. They people watch, pinpoint the different types. He asks what she's doing tomorrow. "Why?" He suggests a cab back to her place. "I'm not that kind of girl." He backtracks; she cuts him off. "Let's take the subway."

Meredith and 22A drink at the hotel bar. She hits on him, lays it on thick; he's clueless. She wants to know more about "the real Travis" -- 22A starts telling her about Travis, talking in the third person. She finds this hilarious/charming and kisses him. They go back to her room.

Midpoint: At Travis' apartment, he hands Dana an old scrapbook of his college cartoons. They laugh about them; his style is childish, but she says there's an audience for that. "Yeah, right -- like who?" She smiles and says, "Like me." They have sexy time. It's been awhile for Travis, he's nervous. Dana says it's okay; she'll guide him through it.

22A and Meredith have wild sex. It's the absolute best she's ever experienced. He's "like a machine!"

Next morning. Travis wakes up; Dana's gone...oh wait! She's in the kitchen. She says he has awful taste in coffee -- who uses pre-ground shit anymore? It's due time he experience a real cup of coffee, she'll get some and be right back. And oh yeah, his cell rang like four times since she's been out.

Dana leaves for coffee, Travis checks his phone, eight new messages. All from 22A. He calls 22A who answers from inside Meredith's hotel room (she snores). 22A explains his back up power supply will run out in six hours, he's expended too much energy. Unless Travis gets to LA fast, 22A will shut down. Travis presses him, what happened? Is that snoring? Energy...too...low. The call ends.

He scrambles, finds the original letter from Working Bytes, calls. Number doesn't work -- he looks at the return address. It's located in LA.

Moments later, Dana comes back in with the coffee, Travis nearly runs her over as he leaves. She notices his bag -- wtf? He tells the truth, he lies, it's hard for him to tell. She's appalled, pissed -- "this was your plan all

along, wasn't it?" He pleads, but doesn't have time. She throws the coffee at him as he gets in a cab to the airport.

Meredith sleeps in; 22A exits without waking her. James, down the hall, grabs the newspaper outside his door, sees 22A -- "Hey, you're going to the breakfast buffet -- " then notices where he came from. "Wait, are you doing the walk of shame?" 22A says he's just tired from all the sex with Meredith. He goes into his room, leaves James in the hallway to contemplate.

Travis jumps in another cab outside LAX.

Housekeeping approaches 22A's room, enters -- finds 22A laying on the bathroom floor naked, shower on. Housekeeper screams.

Travis makes it to the hotel, tries to get 22A's room number. No dice. Then -- desk person receives a call, there's an emergency in 520, a guest has died. Travis sprints to the elevator.

In 22A's room, Travis pushes through the housekeepers, tells them not to worry, convinces them everything is okay. He's Travis' brother and also a doctor, there's definitely a heartbeat, just let me take care of it. They leave. He plugs 22A, gets him barely awake. "Must...present..." Tells Travis there's a huge presentation in an hour -- he's the key speaker. Travis is shocked, what?! What else does he need to know?

THEN -- knocks on the door. It's Meredith, she whispers seductively, "There's time for a quickie, Travey!" 22A reiterates his desire to present then shuts down again. Travis tries to revive him; Meredith knocks again. Travis cracks the door open, conceals his beard. He explains he still needs to shower. She says they can do both. He needs to focus on the presentation, he has a routine. She's okay with that. Barely. She exits, he puts a Do Not Disturb sign up.

Travis finds a crappy razor and a pair of scissors (how?? Or do we not care?), cuts down his beard and shaves, cuts himself in a couple spots.

At the presentation, he finds James, Meredith, others. She demands he sit next to her, then reveals she's not wearing panties. Travis sweats. The client 22A saved the day before approaches him, shakes his hand, and tells him thank you. "I still don't know how you did it." Travis responds, "Neither do I."

The organizer announces they're starting with Eclipse Enterprises. Travis bullshits his way through a series of slides in my personal homage to Clean Slate (SUGGESTIONS FOR A GOOD/RELEVANT TOPIC?). He gets discouraged and skips to the end, puts the presentation in layman's terms, concise and clear. The audience loves it. Meredith beams.

In the lobby, Travis is mobbed by potential clients on his way to the elevator, each one with great products that need to be less great in order to maximize profit. They want help, they want the best. They want Travis. Meredith intercepts, says they can all schedule appointments. After all, the Vice President of Eclipse Enterprises is a busy man. Travis can't believe it.

Back at the hotel room, 22A's conscious, but not able to move. Travis explains what happened, shocked and elated. 22A expresses a hint of sadness -- he worked very hard on the presentation, and now Travis has a new job? Travis always wanted this opportunity, now he can show what he's really worth. "You want to work?" asks 22A. Travis does. He'll need to return 22A now.

Hijinks involving Travis smuggling 22A past Meredith, James, and other people from the conference.

He finds the nondescript, unlabeled address for Working Bytes. Meanders down a hall, stairs to a dark basement. Another hall. Finally, a door with the office name on it. All the while, 22A quizzes Travis on his new position and about what will happen to his old position. "I can still work for you, Travis. I can be the vice president." Travis buzzes the door and meets DR. DALE PRINCETON (60s), a mole-ish scientist. The room is a wash in bizarre prototypes (skin, hair, legs, etc.) and electronic, science-y stuff.

Dr. Princeton's never dealt with a return, was there a malfunction? No, although 22A did sleep with his boss. 22A

explains: "Travis' relevant memory data included sexual fantasies about Meredith." Dr. Princeton suggests 22A may actually need repair -- clones are not permitted to act on dreams. Travis thanks him and leaves.

Outside the hotel, Travis calls Dana, gets voicemail. He doesn't leave a message. Meredith and James meet him -- time to hit LAX.

Back at Working Bytes, Dr. Princeton examines the still-slack 22A, who stares past him. They discuss Travis' future -- will he find fulfillment in the new job? Who's to say? 22A thinks not. Travis is not diligent enough for VP position. Meredith will not like Travis. Princeton sighs, he needs to shut him down, rebuild a certain part. 22A regains slight movement in an arm, silently moves his hand toward an errant screwdriver. "I promise not to act on dreams." The doctor understands, "It wasn't your fault, 22A. You just need an update to correct a flaw." He shuts him down. Walks over to a counter and makes notes. In view of 22A, right behind where Princeton stood, is a framed print of Cyclops. THEN --

22A's eyes open. He grips the screwdriver. FADE OUT...

ACT III

Months have passed in Chicago. Travis sits in his own window office, ends a call and makes notes. He looks exhausted, overwhelmed. James, on his way out, asks if he's going to softball. No can do, too much work. Staying late. James nods, exits. Travis looks out the window -- it's fall, breezy. He can see downtown, the Art Institute, Millennium Park.

Walking from the bus, Travis takes a detour and walks past the café from before, sees Dana typing on a laptop inside. He passes the window and stops. Doesn't go in.

He watches TV and drinks at his apartment. Something reminds him of their zoo date. He gets inspired, draws.

Another day, late afternoon. Outside his office looks cold (bare trees, etc.). Travis signs off on some paperwork. He notices the main office cubicle area go dark; it's late again. From a drawer, he pulls out a near-finished cartoon involving him as a sun bear apologizing to Dana. It's

creative and charming. Meredith calls -- could he make her some coffee? She's dying. Travis agrees, puts away the drawing.

Travis walks past empty cubicles to the kitchen, brews some coffee (cheap, pre-grounded shit). Meredith enters, surprises him with a reach-around. Says everyone's gone, it's been awhile. She starts kissing him, oblivious to his lack of reciprocal affection. He says he's tired. She says she can give him a little vacation and eases down to his waist. While she undoes his pants and begins fellatio, he says, "You know, in France, they get six weeks of mandatory vacation every year." She doesn't respond. He closes his eyes. Somewhere, a phone rings. Again. Meredith stops -- "Travis, I think that's your phone. You should find out who it is." She stands. "I'll be in my office."

He rushes into his office, grabs the phone, and -- dial tone. Suddenly, his door shuts. Travis turns around. 22A stands by the door, in the same suit as Travis. He puts a cellphone in his pocket, says he's here to relieve Travis.

"What are you talking about?"

"Travis. Stop lying to yourself. You can walk out of this office and never come back. I don't even need you to charge me anymore. Both our wishes came true."

Travis trembles. "I don't understand. I left you with Dr. Princeton -- "

22A loses his kind smile and, after a riveting piece of dialogue, Travis eventually leaves, partially in fear, partially on his own volition.

He tracks down Dana at that same cafe (who at first doesn't recognize him sans beard), gives her the drawing, apologizes profusely, and asks if she wants to go somewhere, on a trip, a vacation, anywhere. He has money -- what does she think? She takes a pause, hands back the cartoon. "I don't work this way, Travis. I didn't think about you too much. Sorry."

Outside it rains, Travis tosses the cartoon in the street, walks to his apartment, pulls out his keys, and -- his work ID falls out. He stares at it.

Later: Travis emerges from the subway, treks through the rain to his office. Up the elevator to his floor.

He quietly maneuvers through the dark room, around the cubicles, listening to the distant CLACKS of typing from his old office. He stops at a desk and grabs a sharp letter opener. Makes his way toward the office door, when the typing stops. Travis hides. The color printer next to him receives data and starts printing. He edges into a corner, not totally obscured. 22A appears, gathers the paper, studies them a moment, then walks back. Travis stands, follows, grips the letter opener, WHEN --

22A spins around, grabs Travis' wrist with the letter opener and shoves him against the wall. They exchange brief unpleasantries and 22A slices Travis' throat with the stack of papers. 22A walks away as Travis slides to a seat, bleeds out. Travis notices the papers strewn on the ground -- slides for a new presentation about looking inward at Eclipse Enterprises ("If we give our clients the best ideas the first time, what's our insurance that they'll return? We need to practice what we preach."). Travis dies. 22A, hands gloved, lifts his body.

The next day, it's morning meeting time. 22A preps a projector, James hits on the social media hottie. Meredith walks in, sits, then notices a beetle on the wall. She goes to swat it with a folder, but it moves up, to the far corner, somewhere she can't reach. Before she can react with words, 22A says, "Here, let me help." He's on all-fours. Meredith pauses, then steps up. Her heels dig into his skin. She swats at the bug, jumps. 22A neither winces nor grimaces. He just smiles. Content.

THE END

APPENDIX B: TREATMENT (CONTROL OBSOLETE)

A servant to his boss and a slave to his job, TRAVIS BIRCH (30s) slogs through his 4,000th day at the planned obsolescence firm Eclipse Enterprises. It's his worst one yet: the company's in financial distress and they're laying-off the rest of his department. Travis will take over their jobs while Eclipse waits out the hiring freeze. MEREDITH CHAMBERS (40s), the CEO, thanks him for his patience. "When we've got money for raises, Travis, you'll be in the top twenty I consider."

At home, exhausted after hours of overtime, Travis watches muted baseball; he can hear the Wrigley Field cheers. A cockroach crawls across the room. He stares at it, emotionless.

Later that week, it's the downsized staff appreciation party, relocated to the Art Institute of Chicago. Travis gets drunk, embarrasses himself, and discovers his co-workers think he's pathetic. He agrees. Sad and depressed, he stands in front of the abstract painting Cyclops and

wishes for a new life, for respect, for a little goddamn power for once.

The next morning, a delivery interrupts his hangover -- a human-sized package. Inside is worker substitute model 22A, an exact clone of Travis already dressed for work. Travis learns 22A is uploaded with all relevant work-related memories and skills. 22A requires no supervision, other than a once-a-week recharge. As the clone heads for the bus, Travis panics, but 22A, casual and confident, hops aboard and starts his commute.

Still shocked and unsure, Travis spies on 22A from a building next door, prank calls him. 22A assures him everything is fine, no need to worry. Travis returns to the museum -- the painting's gone, left the country on loan.

When 22A comes home, he provides Travis with a status report. After careful review of every line, Travis relaxes: 22A thinks just like him. Maybe this is a dream come true.

Over the next few weeks, Travis experiences freedom: he stops shaving, goes to movies, day drinks, naps, etc. He

also returns to an old passion -- training cockroaches to perform -- and meets the freelancing graphic designer DANA (30s) at a Cubs game. Meanwhile, 22A works day and night, happy and content. Travis weans off the status reports, now oblivious to all office happenings.

At Eclipse, Meredith calls 22A for an impromptu meeting. She expresses her amazement at his efficiency and asks if he would present at an LA conference this weekend. He agrees and tells Travis that night. Travis is surprised -- he's not jealous at all and wishes 22A luck in LA.

Dana helps Travis design the cockroach stage (a motel) and he asks her to accompany him to a performance in the subway. She does; it's a mild success, until police shut it down (no permit). However, a theater director invites them to perform at a fundraiser in two months. But could he create a new stage? Their inaugural play is an adaptation of The Metamorphosis: perfect fit, right?

At the LA conference, 22A saves a potential client's phone -- they sign immediately, wowed by his quick thinking. Meredith takes notice. His company loyalty is damn sexy.

Dana and Travis celebrate their first official gig invitation. They talk about dreams, careers, so-called adulthood. There's no vacation time in freelancing, no money in roach wrangling. Dana says they'll both need proper jobs one day. Unless they move to France, where they get six weeks mandatory vacation every year. Travis agrees, but keeps his secret. They sleep together.

Back at the conference hotel bar, a drunk Meredith hits on 22A, then invites him to her room. They have wild sex -- the best she's ever experienced. He's "like a machine!"

Early next morning, Travis sees eight missed calls from 22A. Hiding from Dana, he calls back -- 22A's reserve energy levels are dangerously low, he can't make it to the conference today. Travis has to come to LA now. With the time difference, he's got seven hours before they'll wonder where Travis is. Travis thinks he hears snoring; 22A hangs up. What the hell's going on?

Travis scrambles, finds the original letter from 22A's box, calls. Number doesn't work -- he looks at the return

address. It's located in LA. He writes a quick note to Dana and bolts out the door, rushes to catch the next flight.

With Meredith passed out, 22A manages to shuffle back to his room. Drops to the floor, energy depleted. Hours later, housekeeping finds 22A and thinks he's dead. Supervisors get involved just as Travis arrives and pretends he's 22A's brother and doctor. He revives 22A long enough to learn he must present to the conference in 30 minutes and, oh yeah, he and Meredith fucked like crazy. Travis shaves his beard and rushes to the ballroom.

He bullshits through the presentation, unsure of what slide will come next. But the audience LOVES it and potential clients mob him afterwards. Meredith steps in -- please, refer to Travis as the Vice President.

Back in his room, Travis relays the happenings to 22A, who questions Travis: "You want to work again?" Travis thinks he should, this is a huge opportunity. This is his dream come true. It's time to take 22A back to Working Bytes.

Travis locates the address -- a creepy, mysterious lab in a basement. He meets DR. DALE PRINCETON (60s), a mole-ish scientist. The room is a wash in bizarre clone prototypes (skin, hair, legs, etc.). Travis asks how many clones are out there. Princeton doesn't know, but he's certainly never dealt with a return, was there a malfunction? No, although 22A did sleep with his boss. 22A responds: "Travis' relevant memory data included sexual fantasies about Meredith." Dr. Princeton suggests 22A may actually need repair -- clones are not permitted to act on dreams. 22A begs Travis to reconsider. Travis apologizes and thanks him.

Outside the hotel, Travis calls Dana, gets voicemail. He doesn't leave a message and leaves for LAX with Meredith.

Back at Working Bytes, Dr. Princeton examines 22A, who stares past him. Princeton sighs, he needs to shut him down, rebuild a certain part. 22A silently moves his hand toward an errant screwdriver. "I promise not to act on dreams." The doctor understands, "It wasn't your fault, 22A. You just need an update to correct a flaw." He shuts him down. Walks over to a counter and makes notes. In view

of 22A, right behind where Princeton stood, is a framed print of the Cyclops. THEN --

22A's eyes open. He grips the screwdriver. FADE OUT...

Months have passed in Chicago. Travis sits in his office, exhausted and overworked. He looks out the window -- it's fall, breezy. He can see downtown, the Art Institute, Millennium Park.

At home, alone, he watches a Cubs game on a beautiful new HD TV. He turns up the volume when cheers echo from outside.

Another day. He notices the main office cubicle area go dark; it's late again. He walks past empty cubicles to the kitchen -- Meredith intercepts him there, she kisses him. He says he's tired. She says she can give him a little vacation and eases down to his waist. While she undoes his pants, he says, "You know, in France, they get six weeks of mandatory vacation every year." She doesn't respond. He closes his eyes. A phone rings. Again. Meredith stops --

"Travis, I think that's your phone. You should find out who it is." She stands. "I'll be in my office."

He rushes into his office, grabs the phone, and -- dial tone. Suddenly, his door shuts. Travis turns around. 22A stands by the door, in the same suit as Travis. He puts a cellphone in his pocket, says he's here to relieve Travis, by any means. Scared, Travis acquiesces.

On his way to the subway, Travis spots Dana entering a black-box theatre where Metamorphosis plays. He buys a ticket, watches the show, tracks her down in the lobby. She's shocked, he looks so different. He apologizes profusely about the past, and asks if she wants to go somewhere, on a trip, a vacation, anywhere. He has money -- what does she think? She takes a pause.

And rejects him.

Outside it rains, Travis walks to his apartment, pulls out his keys, and -- his work ID falls out. He stares at it.

Later: Travis emerges from the subway, treks through the rain to his office. Up the elevator to his floor.

He quietly maneuvers through the dark room, around the cubicles, listening to the distant CLACKS of typing from his old office. He stops at a desk and grabs a sharp letter opener. Makes his way toward the office door, when the typing stops. Travis hides. The color printer next to him receives data and prints. He edges into a corner. 22A appears, gathers the paper, studies them a moment, then walks back. Travis stands, follows, grips the letter opener, WHEN --

22A spins around, grabs Travis' wrist with the letter opener and shoves him against the wall. They struggle, then 22A slices Travis' throat with the stack of papers, several times. 22A walks away as Travis slides to a seat, bleeds out. He notices the papers strewn on the ground -- slides for a private presentation about phasing out entire departments at Eclipse Enterprises. 22A, hands gloved, lifts his body.

The next day, 22A finishes up a meeting and leaves for the day. He takes the train back to the apartment, heats up some leftovers. Sits on the couch, turns on the TV. And smiles. Content.

THEN, out of the corner of his eye, he sees a cockroach sprint into the bedroom. 22A follows him inside, watches him sneak underneath the closet door. 22A opens it: on the floor sits the finished, unused Metamorphosis diorama.

22A cocks his head to the side.

THE END

APPENDIX C: STEP OUTLINE (EXECUTIVE PRIVILEGE)

LOGLINE

After a new position vaults him into a secret society of clone-owning executives, an overworked accountant discovers a life of leisure -- until his clone steals his identity.

WORLD OF THE STORY

In America, there are two social classes: the one you and I exist in with packed grocery stores, weekend plumbing rates, and HMOs with ever-changing network providers (the Have-Nots), and another one where people are so wealthy money ceases to have value (the Haves).

The Haves in this story own worker substitutes (or clones) that do the Haves' work while the real Haves party, cavort, nap, vacation, get high, etc. These clones think they are the real human version and know nothing about the existence of their, shall we say, "parent."

At least, they're not supposed to.

CHARACTERS

TRAVIS BIRCH (late-30s)

Picture Ryan Gosling as the self-defeating, push-over careerist whose entire life revolves around his demanding job as Eclipse Enterprise's sole, underpaid accountant. Travis can't afford anything he really wants (sports tickets, new HD TV, smart phone, decent groceries, etc.), not that he has time to do anything fun anyway. He keeps losing out on higher-paying positions within the company. He looks for other jobs, wants to quit, but can't afford to (rent, bills, credit card debt). If only he made more money, had more time, bigger apartment, working heat...

He sweats a lot when he's nervous. Liberal user of profanity. Very sarcastic, deadpan. Definitely some suppressed rage in there.

Loves: Chicago dogs, actual dogs, football, huge Cars fan (the band, that is), Irish coffee (any time).

Flaw: sucker for money, compliments.

CLONE TRAVIS

Travis Birch's clone (aka, "worker substitute"). Uploaded with everything that defines Travis. They are exact clones, with one difference: Clone Travis does not know he's a clone. For all intents and purposes, he exists as Travis Birch pre-promotion.

BILL CHARLOTTE (50s)

The white-haired CEO of Eclipse Enterprises. Could've been the wealthy and charming politician, but went with the wealthier and charming businessman model instead. He's the very epitome of rich white guy. Scotch in one hand, mistress in the other. Hell, he doesn't even sleep with his wife anymore -- there's a clone for that.

DANA LIVINGSTON (30s)

Freelancing graphic designer struggling to stay afloat financially, compounded by a recent biking accident that put her arm in a makeshift sling (no insurance). To make ends meet, she bartends. Yet, she keeps her optimism; it's contagious. Her nerdism is not dormant -- she has a Dalek tattoo, subscribes to Make magazine, and loves fringe theater. One of those rare breeds attracted to how things

work, even if it means getting her hands dirty. She also loves to have fun -- drinks, drugs, sex. She's drunk with passion, not power.

JAMES QUINOA (30s)

Travis' best workplace friend. He's the happy-go-lucky version that turns lemons into lemon drops: shortstop on the office softball team, birthday committee chairman, Friday happy hour mainstay, dates the hot new blood as a rite of passage, etc. He's not an ass, though -- comes by it honestly, with a sense of realism. Mantra: jobs are stupid, so we do them and then we go get drunk.

GEOFF WILKES (60s)

The old guard of Eclipse Enterprises, the former CEO and current SFO. Tired in the face and losing steam in his old age. Otherwise well respected and admired. His eyes, though, betray him...

ECLIPSE ENTERPRISES

Tag: "Eclipse your potential." OR "Think small." They help clients redesign/re-envision products to more effectively plan obsolescence.

ACT I

1 INT. TRAVIS' APARTMENT - DAY

An ALARM goes off -- and won't stop, despite the hand that slaps it. TRAVIS BIRCH rolls out of bed, let's the alarm continue. Showers with shitty water pressure. He pounds against the wall to no avail.

His electric razor dies. Old standby's too dull. He almost tries with an actual knife.

Pours coffee into his thermos. Unbeknownst to him, it leaks.

2 INT. RED LINE - DAY

On the subway, Travis' iPod dies, then there's a delay due to a "medical emergency."

3 EXT. ECLIPSE ENTERPRISES - DAY

A light spray of water wets his hair, then a fierce wind whips it into disarray before he makes it inside his building...

4 INT. ECLIPSE ENTERPRISES / INTERVIEW ROOM - DAY

Travis, hell personified, sits across from a panel of old, white men, mid-interview. He sweats. One of the panelists - - BILL CHARLOTTE -- asks, "So, Travis. What would you say is your biggest flaw?" Travis chuckles, says drinking. "Not on the job, of course, but, you know outside..." Then, full of nerves, he lists off a litany of faults: takes on too much responsibility, never says no, never fights for himself, has a really noticeable fake laugh, etc. A pause deafens the room. He fake laughs. They thank him for his time.

5 INT. ECLIPSE ENTERPRISES / ELEVATOR - DAY

He rides down to the sixth floor. Looks like he might puke.

6 INT. ECLIPSE ENTERPRISES / MEN'S ROOM - DAY

Fresh Sharpie marks the inside of his stall: "You're full of shit." He flushes. The toilet backs up, spills out of the bowl.

7 INT. ECLIPSE ENTERPRISES / ACCOUNTING - DAY

Sits in his cubicle. Opens his email -- 92 unread messages. Most read "urgent." He takes out his coffee thermos. It's

empty. JAMES QUINOA swings by, asks about the interview. Travis deadpans a response. James says they should get drunk tonight. Travis says he's got too much to do.

8 INT. TRAVIS' APARTMENT - NIGHT

At home, Travis half-watches a Cubs game while working from his laptop, his couch covered in folders. He's confused by a set of mismatched account totals, one hard copy and one digital. On the TV, a player hits a homerun. He mutes it -- he hears the distant cheers of the Wrigley Field crowd. Then, he notices another sound from the apartment above him: SEX. After a long pause...

9 INT. MAP ROOM BAR - NIGHT

Blitzed, Travis rants about his job to James. "I just want to know what it's like on Floor 111." He's been turned down three times for other positions -- this is it. James asks how this position came available. Travis doesn't know, doesn't care. It's time to quit. Nine years of nothing but underpaid and overworked bullshit. Time to start a new life. Tomorrow.

He puts "You're All I've Got Tonight" by The Cars on the jukebox. He wants to hit on the gorgeous bartender, DANA LIVINGSTON. James eggs him on -- he talks about doing it every time they're here. Travis approaches, chats, but right at the point where he should ask her out...he orders another.

10 INT. ECLIPSE ENTERPRISES / BILL'S PRIVATE OFFICE - DAY
Hungover and trailed by a line of leaked coffee, he barges into Bill's office (Floor 110). But before he can get out his rant, Bill stops him. "I was just about to call you, Travis. We'd like to offer you the job."

Stunned, Travis stares.

Bill explains that this new position makes Travis an executive and that comes with certain privileges: access to the best products, a company card, private office, company condo, company transportation. And an exact clone that does your job. Travis fake laughs; Bill smiles. "I'm serious, Travis." He makes Travis a drink, they walk out onto his

11 WEATHER-CONTROLLED PORCH

He turns a monitor to Floor 6 while he explains the ins-and-outs, the rules. He produces a contract for Travis. "Catch is, you have to leave your old life behind. Your old friends, your old hangouts, weekend calls to mom, whatever. That's your clone's job now. That's Travis Birch's life. You sign here, you become Executive Travis Birch."

Travis watches the monitor. His coworkers yawn, type. James fills up at the water cooler. Travis asks Bill, "Why me?" Bill responds, "Look. You've been here nine years. Underpaid, overworked. So why'd you stay? Because you're loyal. And loyalty's the number one trait of a good executive."

He signs. Then -- on the monitor -- CLONE TRAVIS walks onscreen, gets water from the cooler, high fives James -- they celebrate. "Jesus. He looks just like me." Bill: "He is you. C'mon. Let's go up one floor."

ACT II

12 INT. ECLIPSE ENTERPRISES / PRIVATE ELEVATOR - DAY

Bill uses a special key to access Floor 111. The elevator opens to...

13 EXT. ECLIPSE ENTERPRISES / EXECUTIVE ROOFTOP PATIO - DAY

Huge. Fucking. Party. Green space, sun. Put-put golf. Pool. Live DJs kick jams, chefs cut fresh sushi. Executives dance, drink, laugh. Make-out with sexy models. Travis: "Are those women clones, too?" Bill: "They're called models, Travis. Of course they're clones."

They drink, smoke cancer-free cigars. An executive pees off the side of the roof. Bill introduces Travis to various executives, including GEOFF WILKES, who appears skittish but congratulatory. A helicopter arrives -- "Ready to see your new condo?"

14 I/E. HELICOPTER - DAY

Executive parties seen on every skyscraper -- why doesn't anyone know about this? Bill explains: "We own the buildings, we get final approval over all images. It's best

if the general public doesn't know. They might get the wrong idea."

15 INT. TRAVIS' NEW CONDO - DAY

Spacious, filled with the best furniture, technology. Everything is automatic. Bill gives him the week's mandatory events -- golfing, Bulls game, cruise, etc. "Welcome to your new life." He leaves.

Travis, still dazed, walks around his new place. Hears a RUSTLE from the bedroom, investigates.

16 INT. TRAVIS' CONDO / BEDROOM - DAY

He opens the door to reveal a beautiful woman wrapped in nothing but a bed sheet. It's CLAIRE, his home model. He starts to ask questions -- she shushes him. "Before we talk, why don't we get acquainted?" Unwraps her sheet, pulls Travis close...

17 MONTAGE to (Preferably to The Cars' "Good Times Roll") Shocked sex with Claire. Awesome parties. Great water pressure. Banquets. High-stakes poker. VIP seats. Golf. Arm candy. Nose candy. Travis learns water polo. Speed boats.

Exclusive clubs. Guilt-free naps. No lines, no waiting. In-control sex with Claire.

Travis grows a fine beard.

18 INT. UNITED CENTER / COURTSIDE - NIGHT

Travis (in shades), Bill, MISTY (Bill's clone mistress), and other execs sit at a Chicago Bulls game. An awesome Bulls alley-oop sends the crowd into a frenzy and the opposing team calls time-out. Travis asks where Geoff is, he loves the Bulls. Bill says vacation. "He's on vacation from this, huh? Crazy."

On the Jumbo-Tron, it's Kiss Cam time -- the crowd laughs to see, up in the nose bleeds, Clone Travis and James on screen. Travis spits his drink out. Then Kiss Cam pans as Clone Travis (CT) turns to no-fucking-way-it's DANA and they make-out! Travis can't breathe. Bill tells him to stay calm. Travis needs another drink, gets up. Bill repeats: stay calm, sit down. Travis ignores him and jogs right into BENNY THE BULL, knocks his head off (children SCREAM). Jumbo-Tron picks it up, all eyes now on Benny and Travis.

Travis, aware that he could be recognized, makes the only choice available. He puts Benny's head on and sprints...

19 INT. UNITED CENTER / LOCKER ROOM ENTRANCE - NIGHT

Benny catches up, tackles Travis -- the giant head topples to the floor. They scuffle, security pulls them away right as Bill arrives. "He's with me."

Bill grabs Travis by the shoulders. "What the hell are you thinking?" No answer. "Do you know how close -- Look. There's a limo outside. Just go home. Now."

20 INT. TRAVIS' CONDO - NIGHT

Travis, an ice pack on his head, watches "worst of the night" low-lights from the game. Somehow, no camera caught a straight shot of his face. He sighs. Claire offers various sexual favors, he turns them down. Asks her if she likes her life. "Oh, I love it! During the day I think about having sex with you. Then you come home and we have sex. It's like total wish fulfillment!"

21 EXT. ECLIPSE ROOFTOP PATIO / JACUZZI - DAY

Travis lounges, despondent. Drinks a beer next to two other execs. He asks them how long they've been executives. They can't remember, and who cares anyway? This is the life, right? Travis isn't sure. The execs say that sounds a little like Geoff. By the way, where is he these days? Travis tells them he's on vacation -- they go silent. Travis inquires further; they insist it's nothing.

22 EXT. COUNTRY CLUB / CROQUET LAWN - DAY

Executives smoke, drink, play croquet. Travis finishes a round, checks his watch, says he has to leave for a film premiere. Bill watches him go.

23 EXT. ECLIPSE ENTERPRISES / COURTYARD - DAY

Late afternoon, workers file out. Disguised, Travis sits on a bench. THEN -- CT exits. Walks to the Brown Line. Travis follows.

24 I/E. BROWN LINE TRAIN - DAY

Travis watches his clone a few rows ahead of him.

25 EXT. BUCKTOWN / BUS STOP - DAY

They wait on opposite sides for the bus. It pulls up.

26 EXT. BUCKTOWN - DAY

Travis, at a safe distance, watches CT enter the Map Room. Moments later, he reemerges with Dana, hand in hand. Travis follows them to...

27 INT. LEMMINGS - NIGHT

Travis, mopey drunk, sits at the bar in the corner, watches the happy drunk table of CT, Dana, James, and James's girlfriend. CT walks to the jukebox, puts on "Best Friend's Girl" by The Cars. James stumbles to the bar, shoulder-to-shoulder with Travis. He orders a round of cheap whiskey and beckons his friends over. "To beer and whiskey! Great boobs. Ladies. And playing hooky tomorrow!" Clone Travis hoists his shot -- "To my first weekday brunch!" They laugh, drink.

28 INT. TRAVIS' CONDO / LUXURY BATHROOM - DAY

Travis shaves off his beard. Checks the time, 6:00 a.m.

29 EXT. DOWNTOWN CHICAGO - DAY

Travis trudges through commuters. He's in a suit.

30 INT. ECLIPSE ENTERPRISES - DAY

Gets off at Floor 6.

***Where the story goes from here...in super exciting
TREATMENT form!***

Travis poses as Clone Travis. He accidentally walks into the wrong office. Runs into James in the coffee room.

Meanwhile, Clone Travis wakes up with Dana. He realizes he left something (tickets?) at his office (or is a guilty conscience more apt?). He's gotta go grab 'em.

Travis checks out his office. Not bad. Looks over email, memos. This is gonna be easier than he expected. Except his secretary calls -- they moved a presentation to today. He's needed in the boardroom ASAP.

CT arrives at Eclipse, only to be intercepted by an executive. He mistakes CT for Travis and says he's late --

it's a big day today. He whisks him up to the 111th floor...

Travis sweats as the Clone Executives file in. He sees Clone Geoff and asks him how his vacation was -- the other executives look at Geoff and Travis as if to say, "What vacation?"

CT follows the executive to the rooftop patio. His jaw drops. Models hand him "his favorite" drink. A helicopter arrives -- it's the annual Polo Bowl-o day! Everyone climbs aboard. Models hand executives polo gear.

In front of the board of Clone Executives, a Powerpoint presentation starts up. Travis bullshits every slide. The board's suspicious. He sweats. Fake laughs. A lot.

Helicopters land on a secret sandbar off Lake Michigan. Polo's all set up -- it's Eclipse versus BBDO. CT et al wade into the water. Bill takes CT aside. He didn't think Travis was coming in today. That's not good. He reminds Travis about loyalty. Then tells him he knows what he's

been up to. And if he keep it up, Bill will have to send him on vacation. CT is confused. And scared.

Back in the presentation, the meeting ends on an awkward pause. All the clone executives leave, except Geoff, who goes up to Travis and whispers in his ear: "Meet me at Rossi's. Say you've got a lunch date."

CT sucks at polo, BBDO kicks their ass. Bill pulls CT from the game, pissed.

At Rossi's, a divey downtown bar, Geoff reveals he's (a) the real Geoff and not a clone (b) the company killed his clone thinking it was him (c) Bill secretly reviews board minutes and (d) Travis has no idea what he's doing and is in some serious danger. They talk about where the clone is now -- Geoff asks: "Are you sure?"

Travis goes to his old apartment -- finds an exhausted, beat-up, confused CT. The sight of Travis pushes him to tears -- what the FUCK is going on? They have the inevitable clone discussion.

Things that will happen but I don't know how yet. There's no order here, that's how confused I am.

1. Travis/CT will discover that Bill used the new job to distract Travis from a big issue Travis was about to find: that Eclipse runs on a deficit, has no real money.
2. The clones will team up to take down Eclipse.
3. Geoff, Travis' only inside guy, will disappear.
4. Dana will find out about Travis and CT. She'll freak out.
5. James will find out about Travis and CT. He'll think it's cool.
6. Claire will find out about Travis and CT. She'll think it's kinky.
7. Bill will find out about Travis and CT. He'll want to kill them both.

VITA

Zachary Julius Gonzalez-Landis was born in Louisville, Kentucky to Ronald Landis and Kathleen Gonzalez-Landis, however he grew up in Whitehall, Michigan, a tiny lakefront tourist town where he played basketball on chain-link nets and weathered long winters and tight braces. At the age of twelve, he moved with his family to the desert of Tucson, Arizona, where his obsession with basketball could continue year-around. But after failing to crack 6'0" in high school, Zach retired from sports and pursued the next best thing: fiction writing. He followed this passion to the University of Arizona where he graduated in 2003 with a Bachelor's of Liberal Arts and minors in Spanish and creative writing. His novelistic plans soon dissolved when he moved to Chicago with several friends and studied improv, performed sketch comedy, and transitioned into theater. Writing returned to his life in the form of ten-minute plays, collaborative scripts, and online shorts. In 2010, he enrolled in the Radio, Television, and Film Masters of Fine Arts Screenwriting program at the University of Texas at Austin. Today Zachary lives in Los Angeles, California with his girlfriend Adrienne and his indoor/outdoor basketball.

Email Address: zacharylandis@gmail.com

This report was typed by the author.