

PHANTOM PAIN

DFM 205 Short Film Script

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EXT. PHILLIP'S HOME - AFTERNOON

INTRO MUSIC, akin to any popular sitcom, plays into the beginning of the scene.

A visual of, what appears to be, a pretty typical, suburban family home is shown as the music begins. The yard is tidy, and the sky is clear.

INT. PHILLIP'S ENTRYWAY & LIVING ROOM - AFTERNOON

The stereotypical SITCOM MUSIC continues to play, until...

The front door opens, and PHILLIP walks in. He's wearing business attire, with a coat over his arm and a briefcase in his other hand.

APPLAUSE from an IN-STUDIO AUDIENCE fills the air.

He waits for the applause to die down before saying his first line.

PHILLIP
(voice raised, pleasant)
I'm home!

A DISEMBODIED VOICE echoes out from another room.

DISEMBODIED VOICE
(voice raised, also pleasant)
Hi, honey! How was your day?

Phillip places his briefcase on the ground.

PHILLIP
(voice raised, still pleasant)
It was good.. I actually think the pitch went really well!

He reaches into the pockets of his dress pants and removes a set of keys and his wallet, placing them on a nearby entry table.

He stands up straight and looks out to where the disembodied voice seems to be coming from.

He fidgets with his tie, loosening it, seemingly waiting for another response to come. Instead, he's only met with SILENCE.

PHILLIP
(voice raised, stumbling over words)
Uh... where are you...? I want to tell you about it!

An uncomfortable beat.

Met with SILENCE once again, the expression on Phillip's face quickly becomes downturned. He appears relatively still in his stance, but his hands do not.

His hands twitch with discomfort, as he extends his fingers out and slowly scrunches them back in.

PHILLIP
(voice raised, concerned)
Hel-

The disembodied voice cuts him off.

DISEMBODIED VOICE
(voice raised, pleasant)
Oh! Sorry, honey... I'm just in the kitchen!

Phillip's trance-like concern is almost immediately knocked away by the familiar voice. His expression turns light and cheery once again.

He turns back to the coat rack behind him and places his suit jacket on one of its hooks.

PHILLIP
(under his breath, pleasant)
Classic...

Once the jacket reaches its hook, he makes his way toward the kitchen.

INT. PHILLIP'S "KITCHEN" - CONTINUOUS

Phillip walks through a hallway, disjointed from the room before. The layout doesn't make sense for how he entered.

PHILLIP
How was *your* day, dear-

His question is halted, as he turns the corner to find nobody there.

The room feels stale, and his words reverberate off the dilapidated nature of the environment.

This kitchen doesn't quite look right, compared to the house from before. It's drab and lifeless.

Still, Phillip remains unfazed by the jarring visual shift, and continues to call out to the disembodied voice from earlier.

PHILLIP

(cont'd)
Sarah?

SARAH is nowhere to be found.

He looks around, confused but still relatively unbothered.

He looks over to the corner of the dirty countertop, where a pristinely placed note is the only thing sitting amidst the dust. In bright red ink and cursive lettering, the name PHILLIP is inscribed.

He walks over and picks up the note, appearing hesitant but reading it anyway. The note reads...

SARAH (V.O.)

Off to the supermarket. I had to get a few more things before dinner!
Love, Sarah <3

Phillip stares aimlessly and emotionless at the letter.

A beat.

Suddenly, as if shaken again from a visible trance, Phillip chuckles to himself and sets the note back on the kitchen counter.

PHILLIP
(jokingly)
So elusive...

An AUDIENCE LAUGH TRACK plays, again.

He turns around and walks through the door, back into the room he came from.

INT. PHILLIP'S LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Phillip's expression is unaffected by the scene prior. He appears happy and unbothered, his stride confident once again.

He makes his way over to a set of stairs and calls out to his CHILDREN.

PHILLIP
(voice raised, pleasant)
Kids... I'm home!

Phillip pauses for a couple of seconds but receives no response.

He looks down to his watch, but its face is broken. Still, he carries on.

He looks up.

PHILLIP
 (sarcastic, to himself)
 Am I the only one who lives here?

The AUDIENCE LAUGH TRACK plays again, and Phillip appears to wait for its decline before making his next move.

He reaches into his other pocket and pulls out a phone. He taps the screen with his thumb, and its surface brightens.

The phone's display shows a text from someone named AMELIE.

Phillip's expression turns cold. There's sorrow in his eyes, as they slightly glisten from the phone's illuminance.

PHILLIP
 (choked up, under his breath)
 Amelie...

The phone's display goes dark, leaving only the reflection of Phillip.

Suddenly, the sounds of RUNNING and CHILDREN'S LAUGHTER can be heard, coming from upstairs.

Phillip's sorrowful emotions fall away from his face, returning to a pleasant and cheery display.

PHILLIP
 (jokingly)
 Oh... I see how it is...

Phillip, with a child-like grin, moves forward onto the first step of the staircase.

As he begins his next sentence, he starts to unbutton his sleeves.

PHILLIP (cont'd.)
 (voice raised, jokingly)
 Y'all really wanna hide from your dear ole dad...? Right when he gets home from work?!

Phillip runs up the stairs.

INT. CONCRETE STAIRWELL - ???

After making his way up the first set of stairs, Phillip is not met with what would be expected.

He appears to be in a sort of winding staircase, like something you would find in an office building.

The distorted sounds of the SITCOM THEME consumes the noise, surrounding him and the viewers as it plays.

Phillip appears confused, as he turns the corner around the metal railing.

He looks up the stairs for a moment. But after a second, he winces in pain, stumbling as if he's suddenly become lightheaded.

He reaches up to his head, blinking fast and struggling to stay upright. His BREATHS are deep and uneven.

His eyes continue to wince, like he's staring directly into the sun.

The sound of CHILDREN'S LAUGHTER infiltrates the sitcom theme.

A bright flash of white light pervades the screen.

FADE TO: WHITE

A beat.

Finally, the laughter dies out, leaving only the piercing sound of the sharp INHALES and EXHALES released from Phillip's lungs.

CUT TO:

EXT. PHILLIP'S HOME - NIGHT

Once again, MUSIC, akin to any popular sitcom, plays into the beginning of the scene.

A visual of Phillip's home is shown as the music continues. This time, it's night, and only one window appears to have light behind it.

INT. PHILLIP'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

The SITCOM MUSIC dies down.

Phillip is lying on the couch. He has an ice bag positioned over his eyes, with only a hand towel to keep it from his skin.

APPLAUSE from an in-studio audience fills the air, but this time, it visibly disturbs Phillip from his peace.

He grabs the ice bag and towel in one fell swoop, slowly tossing them away from his face as he attempts to prop himself up.

He rubs his eyes with his free hand, as if he was awakened from a deep slumber.

He looks forward, almost directly into the camera, but the lights seem to be too bright for him to see. He squints through the visibly anxious state and quickly calls out.

PHILLIP
(confused, concerned)
Honey?

The disembodied voice of Sarah is back, once again.

SARAH
Yes?

Relief flushes over Phillip's face.

PHILLIP
Oh... thank god... What the hell was that noise?

A beat.

Phillip looks away from the lights and surveys the environment.

He raises his hand, again, to rub his temples.

PHILLIP (cont'd.)
(confused)
And how did I end up on this couch...?

The audience LAUGHS, startling Phillip again.

PHILLIP (cont'd.)
(freaked out, voice raised)
Honey!

Phillip swings his legs off the couch and sits on the edge of his seat.

SARAH
(laughing, playful)
What do you mean? I don't hear anything!

A beat.

Phillip looks down at his hands shaking.

SARAH (cont'd.)
And... I don't know... you just told me you were going to lay down. I figured you had a migraine or something, but... you seemed like you wanted to be left alone...

Phillip appears confused, looking up again to try and see behind the lights.

SARAH (cont'd.)
(emotionless)
So that's what I did.

Despite the emotional shift, he tries to shrug it off.

A beat.

PHILLIP
I'm sorry, baby... I don't even remember lying down.

Another beat.

This time, Sarah does not respond.

PHILLIP (cont'd.)
Uh... Did you at least get everything you needed from the supermarket?

SARAH
(confused but laughing)
Well... yes, honey. We just finished eating it all... like 5 minutes ago.

Phillip laughs and puts his face into his hands. He adjusts their position, dragging them through his hair as he responds.

PHILLIP
(jokingly)
See... now I know you're messing with me because I could never forget a meal.

The audience LAUGHS again. Phillip's eyes dart to the direction from which it comes, but quickly, he pulls his glance away.

His frame is tense and rigid, seemingly trying not to acknowledge the off-screen presence.

Regardless, Sarah does not respond.

He looks up, noticeably confused. He rubs his beard, before glancing around the room.

Sarah isn't there.

PHILLIP
Sarah...?

A beat.

PHILLIP (cont'd.)
Where are you?

Phillip continues looking around for her, visibly becoming more uncomfortable.

We see a close-up of Phillip sitting on the couch, when suddenly a figure passes behind him. We do not see their face.

MATCH CUT TO:

INT. ROWAN'S APARTMENT LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Phillip, disheveled, is sitting in the same position on the couch of a different home.

SARAH
(whispered, breathy)
I couldn't stay.

MATCH CUT TO:

INT. PHILLIP'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Phillip stands.

PHILLIP
(panicked)
W- What?

The sound of a car starting billows from the front of the house.

Phillip walks behind the couch, closer to the entryway. But he's stopped dead in his tracks.

From his position, a door to the garage is visibly wide open. There's no car, and Sarah is gone.

His BREATHING continues to become gradually more intense. His hands begin to fidget once again.

PHILLIP
What the fu-

DIRECTOR
Andddd... CUT!

Phillip turns quickly, as if discovering an intruder in his home. His expression not only appears startled, but the fear on his face holds sorrow as well.

His eyes, again, well-up and become glassy. His breathing becoming sharper and more panicked.

His frame is tense, and his position is locked in place.

CUT TO:

EXT. PHILLIP'S HOME - DAY

MUSIC, akin to any popular sitcom.

A visual of Phillip's home is shown as the music carries into the scene. It's day now.

INT. PHILLIP'S LIVING ROOM - DAY

Phillip's eyes are wide open.

APPLAUSE from an in-studio audience fills the air, once again.

We pull away to find Phillip still standing in the same position. He appears worn down, looking as if he's about to be sick.

PHILLIP
(desperate)
Please... help me.

The audience LAUGHS, and the laughter doesn't stop.

Phillip remains rigid in his stance, as if he's locked in place by invisible chains.

FADE TO BLACK

EXT. ROWAN'S APARTMENT - EVENING

MUSIC, akin to any popular sitcom, plays into the beginning of the scene. But this time the audio is warped.

A visual of an apartment complex is shown. It's not as pristine or picture-perfect as the home from before.

Then, a visual of an apartment door.

INT. ROWAN'S LIVING ROOM - EVENING

The warped SITCOM MUSIC continues to play.

The door opens, and Phillip walks in. He still appears disheveled and worn down, but now, he's wearing a hoodie and sweatpants.

He enters the room like nothing has changed, only this time, he doesn't announce himself.

Still, he has his briefcase in hand.

SARAH
(voice raised, pleasant)
Hi, honey! How was your day?

Phillip drops his suitcase in the middle of the entryway, looking physically exhausted. He doesn't respond.

A beat.

SARAH
(slightly muffled)
That's fantastic! I told you it would go well.

Phillip looks drained, emotionally and physically. His frame is droopy, and he has bags under his eyes. His stride drags throughout the living room, as if he's uncertain of where he's going.

PHILLIP
(sarcastic, drained)
I should've known... you're always right!

A muffled AUDIENCE LAUGH TRACK plays.

Phillip moves further into the apartment, lightly pausing before entering the bedroom.

INT. ROWAN'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Phillip staggers as he walks through the door.

PHILLIP
(defeated, emotionless)
I'm going to change real quick before dinner.

He lightly pushes the door behind him.

Phillip takes his keys and wallet out of his pocket and tosses it onto the bed.

As it flies through the air, a small folded note falls from the wallet onto the ground. It hits the carpets..

Phillip does not notice the note when it falls, and he continues his stride, into the bathroom.

A beat.

The distant sounds of the audience LAUGHING echoes from the living room, as if the scene is carrying on without him.

INT. ROWAN'S BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

Phillip approaches the mirror and stares aimlessly at his reflection.

He turns away, looking back into the bedroom as he leans against the bathroom counter.

Suddenly, his phone begins to buzz.

He reaches into his pocket to pull out the ringing phone. He answers.

PHILLIP
Hello?

JIMMY (V.O)
Hey Rowan, this is JIMMY...

Phillip seems shocked to hear that name... Rowan.

Upon hearing the name, he slowly slides down the bathroom cabinet.

JIMMY (V.O, cont'd.)
So... I talked with the showrunners at Breaking Heights... and they're... not interested, man. They're really wanting someone new, and to be frank, they only see Phillip Evans when they look at you... And that's good! I mean... you, obviously, left a positive impression with that role, but... at the end of the day, that's just... all you are to them. They just think this role would be such a 180 turn that you wouldn't really blend into the character... You know?

A beat.

ROWAN
I don't want to be Phillip...

Phillip's cadence changes with his response. This is Rowan speaking, now.

JIMMY (V.O)
... I know, buddy.

ROWAN
Did you tell *them* that?

Jimmy hesitates, seemingly thinking carefully over his next words.

JIMMY (V.O.)

(solemnly)

I did everything I could to land you this role.

ROWAN

(frustrated)

Did you or did you not tell them that I don't want to be Phillip Evans anymore?

A silent and uncomfortable beat.

JIMMY (V.O.)

I mean... that's how everyone sees you, Rowan.

Rowan appears defeated and distant. His expression looks like he's zoning out of the conversation.

A beat.

JIMMY (V.O, cont'd.)

Look man. I can't change the fact that you spent almost half your life playing that role... and neither can you.

SILENCE... once again.

JIMMY (V.O, cont'd.)

(trying to reassure)

It's just who you are now.

A beat.

ROWAN

(defeated, choking up)

It feels like that's all I've ever been...

JIMMY (V.O.)

(slightly distracted)

And that's okay! But look, buddy... I'm going to keep an ear out for some more opportunities, and I'll let you know if anything comes up...

Rowan stares off into the void in front of him.

JIMMY (V.O., cont'd.)

(still distracted)

I've got a plane to catch, so I'm going to let you go... But text me if you need anything... anything at all.

ROWAN

(solemnly)
Thanks.

Jimmy hangs up.

Rowan sets his phone to the side, pressing his hands to his face. He sits there for a few seconds.

He lets out a broken sigh before picking up his phone and standing. As he stands, he looks forward into the bedroom.

He stands still for a moment before leaving.

INT. ROWAN'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Rowan walks into the bedroom, and the note quickly catches his attention.

He stands over it before kneeling down to grab the folded paper.

He picks up the note and unravels it. But the message is different from before. This one reads...

AMELIE

I could never be more proud of who you've become. I look forward to the day I get to share the screen with you again. My sweet, sweet Rowan. Be easy on yourself.
Love, Amelie <3

Rowan smiles down at the note. He holds a hand to his mouth.

He moves over to the bed and sits, still looking down at the note.

He takes his hand from his mouth and pulls his phone out again. He unlocks it, and types the name "Amelie" into his contacts.

Rowan's thumb hovers over the call button, but eventually, he clicks it.

As it rings, he sits down on the bed.

Amelie answers the phone.

AMELIE (V.O.)
Rowan!! How are you, angel?

ROWAN
(choked up)
I'm- I'm good... It's... so nice to hear your voice, Amelie...

AMELIE (V.O.)

Are you okay? It's... it's been a while since we last talked.

Rowan's face struggles with knowing what emotion is present. It holds both sorrow and glimmers of hope.

ROWAN

(struggling)

Um, yeah... I just... I guess I've just been in my own little world lately. But... I stumbled across the note you left me the night we wrapped filming, and... I thought I should call.

AMELIE (V.O.)

Aww Rowan... I've been missing you so bad lately. We need to get together for dinner soon! I'm coming into town on Thursday... if you're free sometime this weekend?

ROWAN

That would be really nice... Just... let me know, and I'll work around your plans.

AMELIE (V.O.)

Alright... it's a date.

ROWAN

(choked up again)

It's a date.

AMELIE (V.O.)

Well, I love you, Rowan! And I hope you're taking care of yourself.

Both Rowan and Amelie go silent for a few seconds.

AMELIE (V.O.)

I'm so glad you reached out... I really needed to hear your voice today.

ROWAN

I did too.

AMELIE (V.O.)

I'll see you this weekend?

ROWAN

I'm looking forward to it.

AMELIE (V.O.)

Bye, Rowan.

ROWAN

Bye.

Rowan hangs up the phone and lets it fall beside him.

He pulls his hands to his face, and he cries quietly to himself.

As he cries, the SITCOM MUSIC begins to play faintly in the distance.

Rowan looks through the door leading to the living room. The MUSIC begins to grow louder, but with the increase in volume, it sounds more and more distorted.

He lets out a deep sigh and stands, before walking over to his closet.

He throws together an outfit that looks a little too pristine, amid the current emotions. Dropping the baggy clothing, he's now back to the sharp business attire from before.

Once dressed, he moves over to the bedroom door and tries to shake away the discomfort and sorrow from his frame.

He's crying, yet still, he readjusts his outfit and forces a smile.

A beat.

Rowan reaches for the door handle and pulls it open. The white light fills the space around him.

He walks through the door, and the white light expands to consume the frame.

Faintly, his VOICE can be heard. But the cadence has changed.

PHILLIP
(voice raised, pleasant)
Honey... I'm home.

FADE TO BLACK