

**THE ACTIVIST**

Original Short Screenplay  
by  
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and  
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INT. BEDROOM - MORNING

A ray of orange sun pierces through a small opening in the window shade. It shines over a white linen pillow and onto the naked body of Michael, a well groomed older man well into his 50's. His eyes open, looking at an alarm clock on the night stand.

6:59 AM

CLICK - 7:00 AM. The loud mechanical buzz of the alarm sounds Michael slaps the clock - Silence.

He takes a few shallow breathes as a look of subtle anxiety crosses his face. We gather from his demeanor, this is how he feels every morning.

He slowly rises sitting up on the side of the bed. Around him we see a spacious, modern bedroom. Next to Michael sleeps a woman - his wife somewhere in her forties.

He rubs the back of his neck looking more unsettled with each passing second.

Michaels voice narrates. His tone is haggard with defeat.

MICHAEL (V.O.)

I talk to you a broken man. For the past... God knows how many years, I've been waking up more unsure with this... My life... this house. A son I never see...

(aside)

Shit... Any good memories with that kid are few and far between these days. Hell I only talk with him maybe once a month I spoil the little shit.

Michael stands up, walking to the bathroom.

INT. HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Michael lightly knocks on door with a huge RADIOHEAD poster on it. A beat. Hearing no response, Michael gently opens the door.

INT. SON'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

A messy room, with scattered, isolate messes all around. A GUITAR HERO GUITAR is lying by itself on the carpeted floor.

A huge, plasma screen TV stands like the monolith from 2001 in a corner with tall stacks of DVDs--Pineapple Express and Knocked Up visible at the top.

On a huge bed, a bare arm hangs over the side of a bed sticking out through a mass of tumbled comforters.

MICHAEL  
(peering through door)  
Hey!...You don't work today?

A beat. Eventually, the hand at the end of the arm springs to life as it shapes a proud middle finger, issued especially for the voice at the door.

Michael shakes his head and closes the door.

INT. BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

Michael's bare feet cross the marble tiling as settles in front of a large toilet. He lifts the seat and begins to relieve himself.

MICHAEL (V.O.)  
About ten years ago or so, when our son went off to college. My wife Leanne had a healthy dose of depression. To offset this I went ahead and bought her a set of new tits... She wanted them for a while and overnight went from a B to a D. I'm not gonna' lie, it was nice - for a moment at least. Thinking back 30 years ago, I couldn't even imagine putting plastic bags in a woman's tits. It's kind of remarkable how common it is these days. Especially among her caddy little friends.  
(He clears his throat)  
One of whom I fucked about 3 years ago.

He finishes going to the bathroom, he shakes off the last few drops. He grabs a small slice of toilet paper and winces from a bad back as he bends over to wipe up the specs of urine that have landed on the rim of the toilet.

MICHAEL  
This was of course after a a dinner party, and a few bottles of wine and my wife had passed out.  
(MORE)

MICHAEL (cont'd)

Leaving me, like most every night,  
with no prospect of sex.. It was a  
little while after that the anxiety  
set in. This constant tug on my  
stomach. Now, that's all I wake up  
to in the morning. That sick  
feeling... I almost need the pain  
to remind me I wasn't always like  
this... Reminds me of what my life  
has become.

(whispering)

Fuck me...

CUT TO:

INT. BATHROOM - MINUTES LATER

Michael is wet under the shower. He turns it off, grabbing a towel to dry himself.

He opens a mirror cabinet strewn with toothbrushes, vitamins, pills, and a nose trimmer. He grabs a prescription bottle and swallows a capsule.

He bends down cupping water from the facet in his palm, drinking from his hand.

MICHAEL (V.O.)

When I was going to college I knew  
I wanted to practice law for a  
living. I've accomplished that much  
in my life.

Michael lathers his face with shaving cream. He takes the razor up to his neck

MICHAEL (V.O.)

But back then it was about justice,  
truth, and idealistic bullshit I  
guess. I don't know anymore. We  
used to call it the great mind  
fuck. When we saw something that  
wasn't what we thought it was. When  
something was wrong with this  
world, I wanted to fix it. The  
lawyer I am today... It's the  
biggest mind fuck of them all. The  
only measure of truth I have now is  
based on who pays me more to  
believe them.

He takes the razor and moves the blade across his neck as though pretending to cut his throat.

MICHAEL

Tsssss.

INT. BATHROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Michael rinses his freshly shaven face in the sink and lifts himself up. He study's his body long and hard in the mirror. A look of regret, anger, and fear.

His eyes grow intense.

MICHAEL (V.O.)

I've heard true wisdom is understanding that the older you get the less you actually know. I think I've just forgotton how to care.

TITLE APPEARS NEXT TO THE REFLECTION OF MICHAEL IN THE MIRROR: **Michael Summers, Today.**

The sound of a crowd CHEARING grows louder and louder.

CUT TO:

INT. WAREHOUSE - DAY

A young man in a tweed sports coat, thin tie, shoulder length hair, and khaki pants leans against a pillar.

TITLE APPEARS NEXT TO HIM: **Michael Summers, 1970.**

Cigarette and pot smoke swirls around the cement room. A large crowd of twenty and thirty something's are piled in. Some paint posters inciting the slogans of protest on the floor, others listening intently to the speaker standing at the front of the room.

AMY (20), speaks into a microphone projecting over a small PA system. She has the command and vigor of an entire army.

AMY

Last week in Kent State, the deplorable acts that killed four of our brothers and sisters fighting this insane war has done only one thing... It has galvanized us.

Cheers from the crowd. On the opposite side of the room sits a weathered man with a short beard and long hair wearing Army Fatigues. He has one leg and rests back in a wheel chair. A Vietnam veteran who's eyes reveal the pain of a man who has seen things no one ever should.

He listens to Amy with indifference before looking over to Michael.

AMY

Their death is the fuel to our fire to fight back against the oppression of our government and the destruction of our democracy!

More cheers. The Veteran taps a woman next to him motioning for a pen as he grabs a small piece of paper. She digs in her purse and pulls out a pen. He hands it to him and he writes on the note.

AMY

In a few moments, we march across the school grounds into the streets to show our resistance to end this war and to the deplorable acts. We show patriotism is not saught through a shower of napalm on innocent villages, but by bringing the war mongers to justice and demand an end to this war!

Everyone breaks into loud applause.

The veteran folds the note, whispering in the ear of the woman next to him. She nods and takes the note, walking it to Michael.

AMY

Now I want to hand the mic over to the man you've all been waiting to hear. The man who fought for our free speech against the administration when they told us no to our demonstrations. He took them on - and won,

More cheers.

AMY

But!... but he was quick to remind  
us... We still had a war to stop.  
Hey Mike, come on up.

The crowd cheers louder than we've heard before, howling his name. Michael is just about to approach the front as the woman hands him the note.

Michael gives the note a quick glance, then - a double take. The contents of the note strike a deep chord.

He looks back to the veteran who is already looking starring at him.

AMY

Michael, please come up and give us  
a few words.

Michael takes the note and tucks it in the inside pocket of his suit coat. He gives the soldier another look as he walks to the front of the room. People settle as the applause fades. Michael looks to them long and hard.

His command is evident.

MICHAEL

I talk to you today an angry man.  
The irony is that I wasn't always  
this way. My hope... yeah, my hope,  
is that some day soon I don't have  
to be as cynical and as angry as I  
am now.

*CUT BETWEEN MICHAEL FROM 1970 AND MICHAEL TODAY.*

INT. BEDROOM - MORNING / MODERN DAY

Michael squeezes a striped neck tie firmly around his collar. He is all business in a formal shirt and tie as he combs back a sheen of silver hair.

INT. WAREHOUSE - DAY / 1970

Michael continues his speech as images of the war and movements he speaks on can be seen.

MICHAEL

Vietnam, East Timor, Kent State.  
 War surrounds us... From lands  
 we've never seen to our own  
 backyard! Man, the worlds on fire  
 and today we fight back! Today, we  
 march and scream to our supposed  
 masters, our kings, our tyrants,  
 our President--We scream, 'LET OUR  
 PEOPLE GO!'...Rameses heard it in  
 Thebes, Ceasar heard it on the  
 Palatine, Louis heard it at  
 Versailles, Stuart heard it at  
 Whitehall, the white Czar heard it  
 in the Kremlin,--'Let Our People  
 Go!'--This, the great cry of the  
 centuries...We unite today to  
 scream this, so our media, our  
 parents, our jobs, our lives, can  
 be forever cemented in the pursuit  
 of what is right, and we will yell,  
 we will shout, and we will make  
 sure the people of our school, our  
 state, our country and the world  
 will listen-to-us, and know what we  
 stand for! To put an end to a  
 pointless misguided war, to racial  
 inequality, to the injustice of our  
 own government on foreign  
 lands...Let out people go!

The Crowd grows to a fervent cheer.

INT. CLOSET - MORNING / MODERN DAY

Digging around his closet he looks for a jacket to wear. With a hint of retrospection in his eyes, he pushes the coats and clothes on the rack to reveal tucked deep in the back rack, a few vintage pieces of clothing.

He pulls out one in particular. The same tweed coat from 1970.

INT. WAREHOUSE - DAY / 1970

MICHAEL (CONT'D)

Too often, we think of Liberty in  
 the form of the statues we raise to  
 it-- as a beautiful woman-- a  
 goddess...

(MORE)



MICHAEL (CONT'D)

crowned, triumphant in white robes,  
her lighted hand lifted to the sky--  
serene, calm... conquering...  
Bullshit!... Liberty is NOT a  
crowned goddess, in spotless  
robes... Liberty is the guy on the  
streets! Liberty is a vicious  
figure, running through gunsmoke,  
reeking of the rotten stench of the  
gutter, bloody, brutal, relentless--  
with a torch in one hand... and, if  
necessary, a gun in the other...  
Freedom is not free. Freedom is not  
a gift handed to us from the gods,  
but rather, it is a CHILD of the  
people, born from death, and  
stained with blood... And freedom  
one day grows-- not to become a  
goddess. No, no. It grows loud, and  
it grows mighty and it EXPLODES  
into FUCKING FURY!

Thunder of applause. In a word, the crowd is bonkers. Michael  
waits for the fervor to settle a bit.

MICHAEL

Most of us grew up thinking that  
our country only involved itself in  
the affairs of others with great  
restraint and only the greatest of  
intentions in mind, and above all,  
as a last resort, but now the war  
in Vietnam has brought to light how  
terribly naive we are.

A long pause - the people are gripped waiting for his next  
words.

MICHAEL

To see us, our country, lost in the  
absolution of moral integrity by  
the leaders WE put into office  
taking us blindly into the hearts  
of countries. Spending billions of  
our money. Destroying their land,  
their people, and the foundations  
of what our country stands for, and  
today - that is why - we march!

Loud cheers.

INT. HALLWAY / HOME OFFICE - MORNING / MODERN DAY

Michael wears the tweed jacket. It's a snug fit some thirty years later, but it works with his more modern attire giving him a scholarly look.

He walks down the hallway and into his home office. He takes a pile of papers off the desk and puts them in a thick black briefcase.

Sitting next to a computer are a pair of reading glasses. He folds them, storing them in his inside coat pocket.

EXT. MICHAEL'S HOUSE - MORNING / MODERN DAY

A garage door opens as Michael gets into a newer Mercedes-Benz.

INT. WAREHOUSE - DAY / 1970

Michael continues with his speech.

MICHAEL

Thank you... But now... Now people we have to start asking... What next? What will happen next? Today we prepare, we march, and then what? It is clear that the people of our country do not want this war. But is that it? Even if the war ended tomorrow, will it be the grand utopia we've envisioned? Peace, love, and happiness, man? Let's just put down our guns and fuck forever, man? NO!

EXT. BUSY GAS STATION - MORNING / MODERN DAY

Michael drives his Mercedes up to a filling station.

INT. BUSY GAS STATION - MORNING - MOMENTS LATER

A large Mexican woman sits behind the counter as Michael pays for his coffee and gas.

MICHAEL

Fifty dollars on pump three.

Michael hands the woman \$55 dollars.

MEXICAN WOMAN  
(broken english)  
You need a receipt?

Michael nods - no - he walks out of the station. The automatic doors open as he walks into the bright morning sun.

INT. WAREHOUSE - DAY / 1970

The people listen intently as he continues.

MICHAEL  
My hometown shines the bright sign  
of the same fast food restaurant  
across the promenade here. Turning  
out processed shit filling our  
pours. Filling our minds.

INT. MERCEDEZ - MORNING / MODERN DAY

Michael drives along. He stares forward sipping a coffee from the gas station. Through the windows we see, the fuzzy view of strip malls and fast food restaurants.

EXT. HIGHWAY - LATER

Michael's Mercedes cruises over a large overpass overlooking an endless sea of cars. In the distance is a far away downtown skyline, just barely noticeable through a brown smoggy haze.

INT. WAREHOUSE - DAY / 1970

Michael continues as images of the Mai Lai massacre splash across the screen. We see images of industry, degradation, pollution, and consumerism - including Vietnamese sweatshops.

MICHAEL  
We rape and pillage the people of  
Mai Lai, and that's only a small  
reflection to show we treat our  
earth. As we buy more clothes, more  
refrigerators, more color TV's.  
Bigger homes, bigger cars. Just  
more and more shit, as though  
that's the only thing left for us  
to do to fill our hollow void...  
(MORE)

MICHAEL (cont'd)

What is this war and the raping of our land for? Interests? What the fuck is that? Modern convenience? Gas Clothes? Are these conveniences making us happy? Can we relish in the technologies from modern war with the understanding that we are better then we once were? Are we happier?

INT. MICHAEL'S HOUSE / CIRCA 1980'S

VHS footage shows Michael and his young child during a 7 year old birthday. He is unwrapping a gift. A Nintendo. Michael can be heard behind, holding the camera.

MICHAEL'S YOUNG SON

(demanding)

Is it a Nintendo Daddy?! I want a Nintendo!

MICHAEL

There you go...

As he unwraps the package, Michael's son becomes ecstatic revealing a Nintendo Video Game system.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)

... Anything for you little guy.

INT. WAREHOUSE - DAY / 1970

MICHAEL

No... We are not happy we never can be, as long as the one and only true religion of man is the worship of the bottom line. Money...  
Fucking money... Five years ago our black brothers won their freedom to win the right to vote. Not more than a few years later, when the man who championed that cause spoke out against a war that was fought for profit. He was killed! Fucking dead! Racism didn't kill him, the possibility that he may infringe on some white mans profits did! Money killed him.

Images of Martin Luther King splash the screen.

MICHAEL  
ONE PROBLEM MAY REPLACE ANOTHER BUT  
THE FUCKING RICH WILL ALWAYS GET  
FUCKING RICHER!

EXT. MERCEDEZ - LATE MORNING / MODERN DAY

Michael pulls his car into a large parking structure of a modern, very corporate looking office building.

INT. PARKING STRUCTURE - MOMENTS LATER

The Mercedes pulls into a designated parking spot.

INT. MERCEDEZ - CONTINUOUS

Michael sits with the same nervous expression as when he just awoke earlier in the morning.

INT. WAREHOUSE - DAY / 1970

As Michael continues, we see images of troops returning from Vietnam, Iraq, and the election of Barack Obama.

MICHAEL  
I beg of you, after today's march,  
when the dust settles from our  
shoes. When we put down our  
signs... When our troops come home  
from the far east and other far  
away lands. When the chains of  
racial segregation are broken and  
the power of true equality is in  
our grasp. I ask then, what will be  
our battle?

INT. OFFICE BUILDING - LATE MORNING / MODERN DAY

Michael exits an elevator and steps into a sea of cubicles. The office is buzzing around him. People push papers, talk on the phone, and go about their day as he walks across the office floor.

INT. WAREHOUSE - DAY / 1970

MICHAEL

I envision the victory of justice,  
peace, and equality to mask  
something deeper... It will mark  
only the beginning of the greater  
battles to come...Beyond any one  
government or system lies a far  
greater evil. Underneath I fear  
for each of you, and for myself,  
that we may find... Complacency.

INT. OFFICE BUILDING - LATE MORNING / MODERN DAY

There is little life in Michael's posture as we follow him  
into a corner office. The view out his window is impressive.

He takes a seat at his desk, taking out the same pile of  
papers that he had taken from home.

INT. WAREHOUSE - DAY / 1970

We will be blind to the allusion of  
our freedom without realizing that  
we have become slaves to far more  
dangerous institutions than any one  
war or exchange of ideas. And  
before we know it, we will be  
stuck, beyond ourselves... Lost,  
without hope. With the feeling that  
nothing - nothing can be done...

INT. MICHAEL'S CORNER OFFICE - LATE MORNING / MODERN DAY

We slowly push in to Michael sitting behind his desk. He  
talks on the phone as we see an assistant hand him a legal  
file.

Michael takes the papers and hangs up the phone. He opens the  
file, grabbing inside his coat pocket to pull out his reading  
glasses. He puts them on and looks at a page in the file.

Not more than a second passes that he stops. A curious  
expression washes over his face.

He feels over his coat pocket.

CUT BACK TO:

INT. WAREHOUSE - DAY / 1970

We flash back to moments before Michael takes the stage to deliver his speech.

He is holding the note from the Soldier in the wheel chair. The Soldier looks back at him. The room is cheering, waiting to hear Michael speak.

Michael takes the note and puts it into the breast pocket of his jacket.

CUT BACK TO:

INT. MICHAEL'S CORNER OFFICE - LATE MORNING / MODERN DAY

Michael pulls out an aged crusty piece of paper from his breast pocket. It is the same note.

He looks down and reads:

"This war that took my leg will be over someday. Then what?"

Michael looks into the camera at our audience - desperate.

INT. WAREHOUSE - DAY / 1970

Michael looks into the camera finishing his speech.

MICHAEL

The fight to end war is only a blip. The war within ourselves will have yet to be won. So after tomorrow, what will you be fighting for?

-END-