SEIZE THE INITIATIVE!

10-minute short / proof-of-concept

Written by

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EXT. SALT LAKE CITY DRIVEWAY - DAY [ALT 4]

Open on what looks like a title card ("Clean The Darn Air"); character and camera movements soon reveal that it's a close-up of a sandwich board ("Utah Voters: Sign Here to Clean The Darn Air"). SAUL (mid-20s) picks up 3 boards with pens and stickers, puts them in his backpack, and carries it all to his bike; he's talking on an earbud with KATHERINE (30+).

KATHERINE (O.S.)
Jamie just bailed--

SAUL
Try try again...

KATHERINE (O.S.)
--so you're solo at the Red Butte concert.

SAUL
Another hot date with my sandwich board.
(smirking slyly)
Maybe I can recruit more "female volunteers".

KATHERINE (O.S.)
("shake my head")
You and your "technique". Love 'em and leave 'em... leave 'em with a signature packet and a bunch of stickers.

SAUL
(response #1: jokey)
I'm just putting the action into climate action.

KATHERINE (O.S.)
[GRUMBLE]

SAUL
(response #2: defensive)
It's not my fault if they fit better with the campaign than with me.

KATHERINE (O.S.)
Uh-huh, sure.

SAUL
(response #3: the kicker)
Their children will thank me.

KATHERINE (O.S.)
Yeah, but they won't be having those children with *you*.

SAUL
(impatient)
You want more volunteers, or not?

KATHERINE (O.S.)
Yeah, I do. If we don't triple our pace, you'll see why people call me the Oracle of Doom.

SAUL
OK bye.
(hangs up phone)
"Oracle of Doom".

Maybe: Saul wraps a bungee cable around the sign, but can't quite figure out how to clip it to his bike. As he tries to hook it to the frame, it slips out of his hand and flings back around.

Then he tries to roll the sandwich board up as a poster to clip it to a rear cargo tray, but just as he slyly smirks in self-satisfaction, the roll comes undone. Frustrated, Saul throws the bungee cable at his garage door.

Until the Red Butte dialogue begins, we hear part of "Wawa Hoagies" (Aaron Out, 2017), an upbeat, goofy rap song: "[0:25] I'm eatin' Wawa hoagies / I'm eatin' Wawa hoagies / I need a Wawa hoagie / Should I get turkey, roast beef, or baloney / [0:38] I need a Wawa hoagie / We need a Wawa hoagie / We eatin' Wawa hoagies / Waiting in the line with like 9 of my homies / [0:50] 4am, drunk, there's a Wawa up the street / Tryna figure out what kinda hoagie I'm a eat / Should I get the chicken strips with the side of mac and cheese / Should I get the mashed potatoes, boy I need that iced tea. [1:02]"

EXT. 800 S NEAR 1300 E, SLC - DAY

Saul bikes past a 7-11 full of Slurpee-drinkers. He's wearing a backpack and is awkwardly carrying three sandwich boards.

EXT. E KENSINGTON AVE. NEAR 1300 E, SLC - DAY

He pedals or pushes his bike up a steep hill. A rider on an e-bike zooms past, pedaling effortlessly.

SAUL
Cheater.

EXT. UNIVERSITY OF UTAH - RED BUTTE CANYON ROAD - DAY

Sweating in the heat, Saul slowly bikes uphill, past a “Red Butte Concert General Parking” sign.

EXT. OUTSIDE RED BUTTE GARDEN AMPHITHEATER - MID AFTERNOON

The sun beats down on a line of people waiting for the gates to open for this outdoor concert venue with amazing views. It’s *hot*, but the people in line are making the best of it: umbrellas, camping chairs, coolers, food and drink, cards.

Saul arrives, locking his bike and backpack to a parking lot sign pole. A steady stream of people walk by to join the line, which is long and wide.

EXT. OUTSIDE RED BUTTE GARDEN AMPHITHEATRE - LATE AFTERNOON

Saul, with a sandwich board and three packets, is gathering signatures 20 feet from the end of the fast-growing line.

LANCE (60s) passes by Saul to take a spot in line. Carrying a camping chair and a cooler, he’s wearing a Seattle t-shirt, a wedding ring, and distinctive beat-up sneakers.

GRACE (early/mid-20s, carrying a tote bag with a red-white-and-blue blanket in it) takes a spot in line next to Lance. Her phone dings; she studies it, then shakes her head.

Lance sets up his chair and sinks into it, opens his cooler, and gets out a take-out bag of from Yanni’s Greek Express food and a can of Inevitable Amber Ale (a local Utah beer).

NIKKI (mid/late-20s) searches for and finds Grace, gives her a big hug, and elaborately hands over three tickets. Grace, still holding her phone, puts the tickets in her back pocket.

NIKKI
Hey you! Happy birthday!

GRACE
Thank you! Gotta enjoy the three best things about grad school...

GRACE/NIKKI
June, July, and August!

Grace indicates her phone.

GRACE
Did you see? Samantha bailed.

NIKKI
(sourly)
This is why it's not working out for us. What's her story this time?

GRACE
(reading from her phone)
"Too stressed out about the Presidential race."

NIKKI
In *July*?? Oh, Samantha. She takes poli sci way too seriously.

Nikki fixes a tag sticking out of Grace's clothes, then notices Saul, who is applying sunscreen from a small bottle. A blob of sunscreen stays visible on his nose.

NIKKI (CONT'D)
That guy's probably stressed out, too.

GRACE
No, he's *doing something*. He's *committed*.

NIKKI
(skeptical)
Not only *is* he committed, he *should be* committed.

Lance crumples his empty beer can and tosses it by his cooler. He can't help eavesdropping.

GRACE
Least he's wearing sunscreen.

NIKKI
With that sandwich board, it kinda looks like mayonnaise.

GRACE
(letting herself dream)
Maybe he's a *roast beef* sandwich...

NIKKI
Yeah, or a tuna melt.

Lance laughs into the lid of his cooler as he reaches for another beer. Grace and Nikki notice and it's a bit awkward.

LANCE
If it gets any hotter, we're all gonna melt.

EXT. OUTSIDE RED BUTTE GARDEN AMPHITHEATRE - LATER

There are two crumpled cans on the ground by Lance; he's on beer #3. He starts to open his Yanni's take-out bag when Saul interrupts, motioning at Lance's t-shirt.

SAUL
Long way from Seattle. Utah voter?

LANCE
Unfortunately.

Lance wipes the sweat from his brow, then rubs his nose as a hint to Saul, who rubs in his blob of sunscreen.

SAUL
(giving him a line)
If you think it's hot now, just wait a few decades. Have you signed yet?

Lance, resigned, reaches out and takes a packet.

LANCE
Dude, if you need a signature, I'll give you a signature.

SAUL
I also need your name, today's date, and a date of birth.

LANCE
Too much.

Lance tries to hand back the packet; Saul resists.

SAUL
It's only thirty seconds. Can you manage?

LANCE
Abso-freakin-lutely... if you fill it out for me.

This time Saul takes back the packet.

SAUL
As long as *you* sign it. Name?

LANCE
Lance Scott.

Saul talks to himself as he writes:

SAUL
“Scott” with two “t”s... Today is July 11...

LANCE
(suddenly animated)
Oh, crap! I missed my free Slurpee!

SAUL
I’m really sorry, sir. Maybe you can hit the Sev after the show.
(beat)
Date of birth?

LANCE
July 7, 1977.

SAUL
7-7-77??

LANCE
Some people get all the luck.
(beat)
How much you get paid for this?

SAUL
I’m a volunteer.

LANCE
Respect. Wanna beer?

Saul does, but only has one free hand, so he imitates Lance:

SAUL
Abso-freakin-lutely... if you open it for me.

Lance opens his cooler and gets out a beer.

SAUL (CONT’D)
Wanna sticker?

LANCE
(stone cold stare #1)
Dude, do I look like the kind of guy who wants a sticker?

Saul shrugs. Lance closes his cooler and opens Saul’s beer.

SAUL
Sign right here and you’re done.

They trade: a beer for a packet. Lance signs, then tries to hand back the packet...

...but Saul, draining the beer, holds up an index finger: “Wait”. Lance is annoyed, then amused, then impressed. Finally they trade back.

SAUL (CONT’D)
Double thanks.

LANCE
Double welcome.

Lance crumples Saul’s empty can, puts it by the other two, and gets a gyro sandwich from his take-out bag.

Meanwhile, Saul turns to Grace and Nikki.

SAUL
Thirty seconds for clean air?

GRACE
What’s it about?

SAUL
Cleaner air and cheaper food. We want to eliminate the state sales tax on grocery store food and replace it with a modest carbon tax on polluting fossil fuels.

Grace enthusiastically takes a packet. Nikki declines.

NIKKI
I’ll do a background check.

SAUL
(to Grace)
Print your name, very legibly please; then sign to the right... Today is July 11...

LANCE
(mostly to himself)
Don’t remind me.

SAUL
...put your date of birth below that and you’re done.

Saul offers Nikki a packet.

SAUL (CONT’D)
Miss? Peer pressure?

NIKKI
Give it up, it’s way too hot.

SAUL
Hey, that's my line!

NIKKI
Don't even try. You sound like my...
(turns away, muttering)
Too stressed out about the Presidential...

SAUL
(to Grace)
She always like that?

GRACE
Heartbroken.

SAUL
I'm sorry.

GRACE
Try, try again.

Saul gives a start. (That's his line!) Grace hands back her packet. Saul checks it, getting her name and date of birth.

SAUL
Grace Stevens, your handwriting is *beautiful*. And hey, tomorrow's your birthday! Here's a present.

STICKERS. Nikki scowls. Grace laughs and takes one.

GRACE
Thank you!

SAUL
Thank *you* for the signature... and for the lovely smile.

NIKKI
(appalled and dismissive)
Are you flirting with her?

SAUL
If I wasn't working, I'd probably ask for her number.

NIKKI
If you didn't look like a BLT, she'd probably give it to you.

Grace pulls a ticket out of her back pocket.

GRACE
Lemme do you one better: extra ticket to the show. Wanna come?

Nikki pulls Grace aside, in a direction that happens to be toward Lance and his gyro sandwich.

NIKKI
Wait, you're inviting *Jimmy John* to join us?

LANCE
(50% deep, 50% drunk)
He could be the "gyro" she's been waiting for.

NIKKI
(to Lance, but also Grace)
Or he could be a psycho...

LANCE
Nah.

NIKKI
...or a killer...

LANCE
Dude, you gotta chill.

NIKKI
...or a... *vegetarian*.

LANCE
You might be right about that one.

Grace defiantly offers Saul a ticket; he takes it.

SAUL
But... can we meet up when the gates open?
(to Nikki)
You can do your *background check*...

An eye-rolling sigh from Nikki.

SAUL (CONT'D)
...and *I* can finish these packets and put all this stuff away.

GRACE
(boldly flirting)
Sounds great. I *would* like to see what you look like <u>without</u> a sandwich board on.

SAUL
Don't take this the wrong way, but *I'd* like to see what *you* look like *with* a sandwich board on.
(beat)
Wanna help?

Saul gives his packets to Grace, but she hesitates.

GRACE
Don't wanna take your board from you...

SAUL
No problem!

Saul lifts up his sandwich board, revealing a second sandwich board underneath.

NIKKI
(in mock amazement)
A triple-decker club sandwich!

Saul flashes a third board underneath at Nikki.

SAUL
You want one, too?

NIKKI
I'm gluten-intolerant.

Nikki sighs again and gives Grace a good-luck hug.

NIKKI (CONT'D)
Come back when the gates open... and don't forget to pack some *condiments*!

Saul takes off a sandwich board and helps Grace into it.

SAUL
Just follow my lead. By the way, I'm Solomon; I go by Saul.

GRACE
I'm Grace... I go by Grace.

NIKKI
(to Lance)
I'm Nikki; I go throw up.

SAUL
(with an eyebrow to Nikki)
It's a pleasure to meet you, *Miss Stevens*. And... happy birthday!

As Saul and Grace head off, Lance gives Nikki a beer.

NIKKI
I wonder how many layers of those things he's got on?

LANCE
That dude? I think he's sandwich boards all the way down.

Nikki looks apprehensively after Saul and Grace.

We see views of the Salt Lake Valley and hear more of "Wawa Hoagies": "[1:02] Seen this bad chick, standin' up in the line / She was fine, so I hopped in and I creeped up from behind / Then I realized I was drunk and looked like an idiot / So to play it off, I grabbed some licorice [1:15]"

EXT. OUTSIDE RED BUTTE AMPHITHEATRE – LATE NIGHT [ALT 2]

Saul and Grace lay next to each other on their backs. It looks like they're in bed. The camera slowly pulls back.

GRACE
That was fabulous.

SAUL
You were amazing. Fearless. Your stamina was incredible.

GRACE
Didn't wanna stop.

SAUL
I can't believe that was your first time.

GRACE
My parents could've showed up! And my body... my body was covered in sweat.

SAUL
It was *hot*. You know, I could hear you. I loved every sound you made.

GRACE
Thought my *voice* was gonna give out!

SAUL
I thought my *back* was gonna give out!

They're on the grass, near Saul's bike and a scooter. During this next line, we see Saul, wide-eyed.

GRACE
And if you think *that* was great, wait 'til we do it in *Provo*... at the farmers market!

SAUL
(no longer thinking about signatures, he's in love)
Lemme make sure I've got your number. When can I see you again?

Grace is all business; she picks up her packet.

GRACE
Next time there's a concert.
(taps at her packet)
Seventy-five signatures.

We see title cards and hear more of "Wawa Hoagies": "[1:15] Shortie had a Shorti and a pack of Black and Milds / Cracked a smile, then she told me I was really actin' wild / I told her we should blaze up, she could get to know me / But first---hold up!---I'm waitin' on my hoagie / [1:29] (Chorus) We eatin' Wawa hoagies / We eatin' Wawa hoagies / We need a Wawa hoagie, should I get turkey, roast beef, or baloney / [1:41] We eatin' Wawa hoagies / We eatin' Wawa hoagies / I need a Wawa hoagie / Waiting in the line with like 9 of my homies [1:52]"