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PORTFOLIO

MA Writing for Script & Screen

Storytelling for Script & Screen WSS710

21/22 Part-Time Study Block S1

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Project: **Word Count**

Premise: 50

Treatment: 950

Writer's Statement: 500

Screenplay: 2500

Total **4,000**

Premise

When a conscientious ex-child soldier accepts the offer of a trial at Chelsea Football Club, he thinks that all of his dreams have come true. But when he finds himself imprisoned in a cruel, barbaric, underground penalty shoot-out contest, he must resort to the violence he hates, to stay alive.

Treatment

Machine gun fire wakes Isaac up. It takes his eyes a while to adjust to the dark. He stands, his body awkward. He's small for his 27 years. He's intrigued at the white football kit he's wearing, and at his new trainers. He stumbles around. Feeling his way around the four walls, he finds a steel door. He tries to open it but he can't. He bangs it. A motion-sensored light comes on, followed by footsteps getting closer.

A Guard unlocks the door and stands in the doorway, in military gear, pointing an Uzi at Isaac. Isaac falls to his knees, hands in prayer, and begs for water. When The Guard enters the cell, Isaac cowers to the ground. The Guard waves his Uzi and forces Isaac out of the cell. He marches him along a tunnel into an abandoned railway arch.

It's dark. Suddenly, three spotlights shine down on Isaac. Isaac squints in the glare and takes in his surroundings. It's a TV studio. Painted in white on the black floor are a penalty box, a six yard box, and a penalty spot. On the penalty spot, there's a football. Above the goal, a CCTV camera buzzes as it rotates and points down at Isaac.

In an office in Bahrain, Fifi Kumar, a super-hip 70 year old, swivels on a stool behind a state-of-the-art mixing desk, flicking switches. In front of her are twelve TV screens - dazzling technology. Centre screen, Isaac stares up at her on a giant curved plasma. Fifi flicks a switch. Bitcoin bets flash neon green. In her headphones, a football crowd cheers. Using her console, Fifi zooms in for a close up on Isaac.

Commentator sound effects play tinnily and excitedly through her headphones. Crypto currency bets flash and beep. Fifi clicks a switch to activate the projected remote controlled goalkeeper, which materializes in goal. Isaac stares in awe. Fifi watches Bitcoin bets flash and beep as Isaac places the ball on the penalty spot. Isaac rises to the occasion and scores his first penalty.

Back in his cell, Isaac is rewarded with chicken. He hears a thud, screams and machine gun fire. A light comes on, sending a glint under his door into his cell. Isaac looks at a photo of his wife and young daughter. Something is dragged past his cell. The light goes out. Isaac sits back and hides the photo under his pillow. Idly, he makes a stickman on the floor out of the leftover chicken bones.

The Guard forces Isaac back into the arena. Isaac places the ball, carefully, on the penalty spot. The remote-controlled goalkeeper appears. Fifi focuses on the incoming bets as Isaac starts his run, slowly, towards the ball. His pace quickens.

Fifi leans forward, her eyes fixed on the screen, hands on her control console. Isaac reaches the ball and swings his right leg back. Fifi sends the goalkeeper low to Isaac's left. Isaac scores! He celebrates with a crazy victory dance around The Guard. The Guard ushers Isaac out of the arena.

Back in his cell, Isaac places a chicken bone in the arms of the stickman, for a rifle, as something heavy is dragged past. He lies down to see if he can see under the door. A bloody, groaning, teenage boy locks eyes with Isaac. Isaac takes the stickman's chicken bone rifle and scratches it across his wrist, drawing blood.

Then, in his mind, he remembers his three year old daughter and stops self-harming. The Guard enters the cell and tries to take the photo. When Isaac refuses to hand it over, The Guard smashes him in the head with the butt of the gun, confiscates the photo, and orders Isaac out of the cell. Isaac struggles to his feet, enraged in his heart. On the floor of the empty cell, the stickman soldier has no rifle.

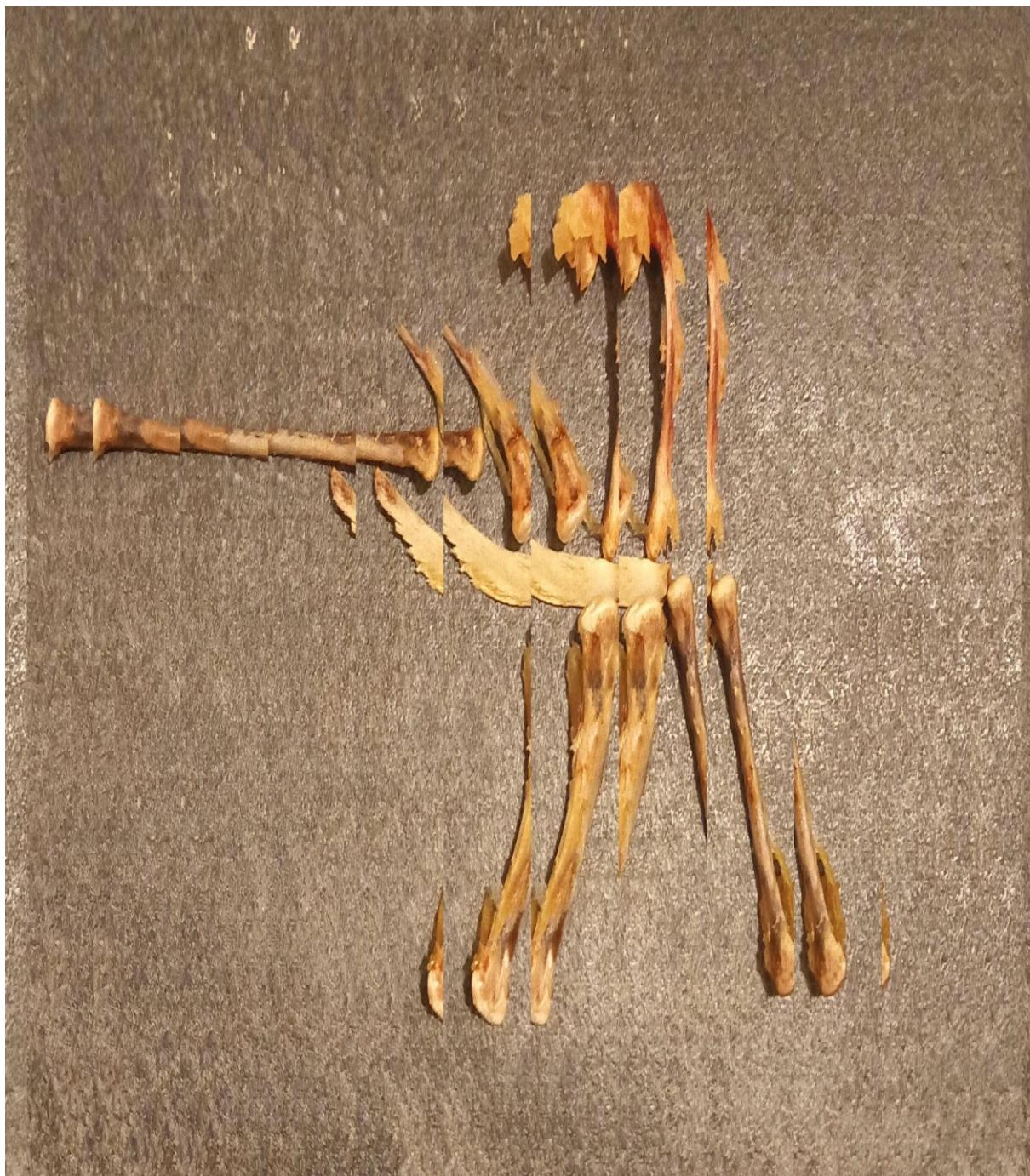
The Guard forces Isaac back into the arena. Fifi watches Isaac, holding the ball, as he looks up into the CCTV, straight at her. Fifi, eyes glued to the screen, hands on her console, takes control of the goalkeeper. Isaac picks up the ball. Fifi leans into the screen, watching intensely as Isaac walks slowly towards the penalty spot. Isaac places the ball, but *slips*. The ball rolls toward The Guard. The Guard shows off his football skills, flicking the ball up with his feet into his hands. He holds the ball out to Isaac.

In Isaac's mind, The Guard metamorphoses into a Military Commander holding *not* a football, but an AK47. The Military Commander gives the AK47 to Isaac and orders him to shoot the goalkeeper - now a bound, gagged, pleading prisoner in an Ethiopian refugee camp.

Terrified, and just a boy, Isaac drops the rifle / ball. Snapping out of his hallucination, he retrieves the football and makes his way to the penalty spot.

On Fifi's screen, Bitcoin bets blink, beep and flash in neon green. Isaac places the ball slowly, carefully, on the penalty spot. He scores and does a crazed victory dance around The Guard. Then, quick as a flash, he stabs The Guard in the eye with the chicken bone. Fifi watches in shock as Isaac grabs the Uzi, riddles The Guard with bullets and shoots up the studio lights and CCTV, causing Fifi's screen to blackout.

Isaac weaves his way through underground railway tunnels, mowing down guards with his Uzi as he makes his escape. He slaughters two more guards at the entrance, before rising out of a derelict London underground station, then marches, like a warlord, down a traffic-less street. Armed with his Uzi, white England kit stained crimson, he passes a 'STOP' traffic sign, and disappears into the woods.



Writer's Statement

"I was playing football with friends when I was forcefully recruited by Tigrayan fighters..."
 one 17-year-old told us.

- BBC News.

Isn't the penalty shoot-out the most exciting part of every football match? Especially when it's sudden death. It's edge of your seat, nail biting, heart thumping drama. Since the penalty shoot-out is so dramatic, the question begs to be asked, why isn't there a drama about it? The words 'sudden death' are begging to be exploited in dramatic form. *Death Penalty* is crying out to be made. The only question is, why hasn't it been made already? And why now?

In Bahrain, a country built on slave labor and human trafficking, young African men are being lured from war torn African countries on the promise of a professional football contract, only to wind up working as cheap laborers on construction sites, their passports withheld until they can repay their debts to their traffickers - lost, lonely, broken hearted *and enslaved*.

Death Penalty rages against modern day slavery, it rages against racism, it rages against labor rights violations, it rages against child exploitation, it rages against the indifference of western news media who would rather report on Messi's transfer fee than the war in Tigray; would rather report on the latest signing by Chelsea than the catastrophic number of deaths of migrant workers on construction sites in Qatar; it rages against the traffickers who exploit the vulnerable. And it rages against the corporatisation of football - a tragic modern day symbol of globalized, economic inequality - the rich / poor divide.

Death Penalty threads the five c's together: capitalism, crime, corruption, the corporatization of football and children's rights violations and asks the question John Yorke asks in *Into the Woods - what if?*

What if football was so corrupt that talented young footballers from war torn countries were trafficked to England to play in a live streamed penalty shoot-out contest - where 'sudden death' really was sudden *death*?

Yet trafficking and exploitation of young men and boys for profit is not confined to the Middle East and Africa. BBC's Panorama reported recently that here in England crooked football "agents" traffick underage boys who show the potential to be highly paid soccer stars, between clubs, illegally, for profit. And then, when they're 18 and deemed 'not good enough', they're let go, promised the earth then dumped in the dirt.

This short film takes an ex-child soldier from an African war zone, and trafficks him to a derelict underground station in London to take part in a macabre penalty shoot-out, live-streamed on the dark web - an online gambling crypto currency goldmine, filling the

pockets of a transnational organized crime boss. In the feature film version English boys are expelled from the football academies and dumped, like lame race dogs to the slaughter, in the “death penalty” arena, and pitted against the African trafficking victims, fighting from the penalty spot for their lives.

With the racism row in British football, the diversity debate in British television, the Black Lives Matters movement, and with Qatar just around the corner, there has never been a more urgent time to tell this story.

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DEATH PENALTY



Where sudden death, means sudden death.