

**'First Person'**

**An extract from a comedy feature film by Nicholas Cohen**

## **OPENING CREDIT SEQUENCE**

INT. BROOKLYN CAFÉ. DAWN

Lean, intelligent, haggard DANIEL SHRIVER (32) sits at an empty table finishing his coffee. He stares at the empty seat opposite him where another cup of coffee and Danish sit completely untouched. DANIEL speaks quietly to the empty chair.

DANIEL

You know I could really do with one of your dumb jokes.

Burly, red-haired, pierced ROSIE (34) sweeps by and picks up DANIEL's empty cup. She stands by DANIEL and joins him in staring at the empty seat and untouched coffee.

ROSIE

He was always late. I remember that. Every time.

ROSIE claps DANIEL'S shoulder forcefully in solidarity. DANIEL makes to pay.

ROSIE

What is that? Is that real money in your hand? I must be dreaming.

ROSIE bats DANIEL'S hand away.

ROSIE

Pay me when you're rich and famous.

DANIEL

Don't hold your breath.

ROSIE

What am I - an idiot? Do I look like I'm holding my breath?

DANIEL stands. In a moment of private ritual he holds the table by the untouched coffee and shuts his eyes, remembering his dead brother. He opens his eyes and heads off.

ROSIE

Be good Daniel. And bring me back some native women. I'm sick of these New York bitches. (Spotting a skinny businesswoman) Why good morning ma'am. (Smiling flirtatiously) How are you today?

INT. NEW YORK CAB. DAWN

DANIEL sits quietly in the cab. He opens his bag and examines his new DSLR CAMERA. The CAB DRIVER chats away. DANIEL is not listening.

EXT. NEW YORK STREETS. DAWN

DANIEL records an answerphone greeting staring out. Even at dawn every kind of person is moving. COPS, COMMUTERS, the HOMELESS, STREET VENDORS. DANIEL'S voice is flat as though from a great distance.

DANIEL

Hey it's Daniel. I'm out of the city on a kinda.. job ..thing. You can Email me I guess...

INT. CAB. DAWN

DANIEL shoots the SUNRISE waking the city. He shoots STREET DANCERS. A STREET PREACHER declaiming, HASSIDS jostling past DELIVERY MEN.

An ELVIS LOOKALIKE (56) leads an outdoor AEROBIC ELVIS BOOT CAMP and has a group of ELDERLY FITNESS FANATICS shakin' all over.

A YOUNG BOY (5) munching a huge hotdog has a face smeared with mustard and goo. He grins at DANIEL and opens his mouth displaying uneaten sausage.

END CREDITS

INT. AIRPLANE. DAY

DANIEL is still filming as he sits by RON (50) a fastidious businessman who carefully lays out travel pillow, eyeshades and hand cream then turns and covers the lens.

RON

Hey! It is completely illegal to film in here!

DANIEL

Sorry. I forget.

RON regards disheveled DANIEL with alarm and disapproval.

DANIEL

It's not like I'm a terrorist. I may look like a terrorist but really I just need a shave.

RON is not so sure. He turns, hiding in a newspaper. DANIEL is embarrassed to spot a FAMILY in the aisle also watching him. He packs the camera and shuts his eyes.

INT. AIRPLANE. DAY

The plane hits tarmac. DANIEL jolts awake - dazzled by sharp Mediterranean sun. The journey has compounded his dishevelment – he looks really raggedy.

INT. ATHENS AIRPORT. DAY

DANIEL passes large totally clouded-up SMOKING ROOMS resembling steam baths. Amidst modern security and shops prowl ELDERLY LOTTERY TOUTS with TICKET BELTS slung over their shoulders like ammunition declaiming in musical voices.

INT. ATHENS AIRPORT LOBBY. DAY

DANIEL scans names on the WELCOME CARDS displayed in arrivals. None are him. He extracts his CELLPHONE.

As he dials he looks around. Fast asleep on a bench is a short and skinny pale man GEORGIOS (21) holding a card that reads “DANIEL SHREYEVERE.’ DANIEL approaches and gently nudges GEORGIOS.

GEORGIOS

Mm?

DANIEL

Me. I am Daniel.

GEORGIOS

Daniel Shreeveeree? You? Daniel Shreeveerreee?

DANIEL

Shriver. Daniel Shriver.

GEORGIOS

OK. Daniel Shreeveerree. Good news. Come please.

GEORGIOS leads DANIEL away.

EXT. AIRPORT CARPARK BACKLOT. DAY

Leaning on a filthy FORD FIESTA – is LEFTERIS (56) A burly handsome-faced man whose belly is spilling out of his yellow T-shirt. LEFTERIS’ salt and pepper hair is tied back in a ponytail.

LEFTERIS

Daniel Shriver! Welcome to the Hellenic Republic of Greece.

DANIEL

Thanks.

LEFTERIS

I am Lefteris. This is my Athenian assistant Georgios.

DANIEL shakes hands with both men.

LEFTERIS

I am the manager of Yannis' resort. You will have a wonderful time filming I am sure. Now you should turn the camera on and film me.

DANIEL

Uh...Yannis told me just to film the resort and the island. It's a promo.

LEFTERIS

Yannis does not know about films. Turn the camera on and film me.

DANIEL

Why?

LEFTERIS

You will see. Follow me please.

EXT. ATHENS AIRPORT TERMINAL ENTRANCE. DAY

SECURITY GUARDS suspiciously eye LEFTERIS and DANIEL, now filming him.

LEFTERIS:

Better to be quick when you are shooting me here.

DANIEL

Why are we even doing this?

LEFTERIS

OK quick. (Grinning broadly at the camera) Welcome to Athens! Here we are at the international airport. Many people know about the troubles here in Greece. But also there are many myths. Look around do you see gangs of young people throwing bombs? Do you see police shooting in the streets? Turn the camera around. Have a look!

DANIEL pans his camera. It settles on a CONFUSED GERMAN FAMILY. LEFTERIS barks at GEORGIOS, grins at the GERMAN FAMILY and gives them a double thumbs-up. The GERMAN FAMILY hurry off, disturbed.

LEFTERIS

So peaceful.

An AIRPORT SECURITY GUARD lumbers over.

LEFTERIS

Camera off.

THE SECURITY GUARD fiercely questions LEFTERIS in Greek. LEFTERIS shrugs and pleads.

LEFTERIS, THE SECURITY GUARD and GEORGIOS all talk at once over each other.

A small crowd gathers – an ANCIENT LOTTERY TOUT approaches DANIEL and starts talking animatedly in Greek. DANIEL tries to ignore him.

THE GUARD demands to see the footage. He grabs the camera and reviews it. He smiles and shakes his head indicating that they are all crazy.

The crowd disperses. All except for the ANCIENT LOTTERY TOUT who continues talking to DANIEL in Greek. He shakes DANIEL’S hand warmly.

INT. ATHENIAN CAR. DAY

DANIEL snoozes as LEFTERIS drives through the FREEWAY.

LEFTERIS

DANIEL! Daniel! Turn the camera on!

DANIEL

Why?

LEFTERIS

Filming.

DANIEL

Filming what? The freeway? We have those in the United States.

LEFTERIS

Greek infrastructure. Point the camera at me.

DANIEL

Lefteris. This is ludicrous.

LEFTERIS

If you are too tired for your job, give me the camera. We stop and I film myself.

DANIEL

Keep your eyes on the road.

Reluctantly DANIEL switches the CAMERA on.

LEFTERIS

Kaleemera. Here you see the Greek infrastructure functioning just like Manhattan and Washington DC. Despite economic troubles we won't let the show come off the road. People say Romans built the first straight roads. What madness? Everything Roman was stolen from Greece. Same as today. Just ask Silvio Berlusconi.

DANIEL

OK that's it. Camera stays in the box now till we reach the island.

LEFTERIS

You say you are a filmmaker but you do not want to shoot film. Strange.

DANIEL

Yannis just wants images and voiceover. He doesn't want a presenter. I can't use anything with you talking to the camera.

LEFTERIS

Yannis doesn't know about these things. Is it not better to have a friendly face than just images? Someone to make you feel welcome? A host?

DANIEL

It's cheesy. It's like 1970s style.

LEFTERIS

1970s cheese? You are wrong Daniel. It is not 1970s cheese.

EXT. FERRY. DAY

Brilliant blue sky and sea heated by a blazing Mediterranean summer sun.

DANIEL watches the churning foam. He turns back to the busy port of Piraeus receding. He descends into the hold.

INT. FERRY. DAY

DANIEL looks around. FAMILIES with BABIES, GERMAN TOURISTS, GREEK SAILORS. OLD MEN drinking coffee. LEFTERIS enters, looking for him.

LEFTERIS

What are you doing down here?

DANIEL

(stern) The camera stays in the box.

LEFTERIS

But this is the journey! This is the voyage. One minute of shooting.

DANIEL

Look we can call Yannis when we get to the island. You'll see he was very clear and specific in his instructions.

LEFTERIS

One minute. Just one minute.

DANIEL  
(very stern) Absolutely not.

EXT. FERRY. DAY

LEFTERIS addresses the CAMERA held by a grudging DANIEL.

LEFTERIS  
So here we are crossing the Aegean sea. Like Odysseus who wandered for ten years on the waves. Island to island he had to find the way back to Ithaca because the Gods were angry with Odysseus. And all the men meanwhile were trying to get into the underwear of his wife Penelope.

DANIEL  
(sarcastic) OK. Beautiful. Let's cut it there.

LEFTERIS  
Historical background. Local colour. Do you not watch the travel channel?

LEFTERIS reaches across DANIEL and switches the CAMERA on again.

DANIEL  
Hey!

LEFTERIS  
The island was conquered by pirates, by the Turks by the Nazis. But through it all the Greeks remain stubborn as goats. Thanks be to God! Now the Germans and Angela Merkel try to conquer us again. Nothing doing Angela! Of course German people are very welcome.

DANIEL  
Good job. Outstanding.

LEFTERIS  
You think so?

DANIEL  
No, I do not think so. Jesus Christ.

EXT. SKYROS FERRY TERMINAL. DAY

The ferry docks. LEFTERIS and DANIEL gather belongings and get into LEFTERIS' CAR which chugs off. DANIEL stares out of the window.

EXT. SKYROS STREETS. DAY

The CAR halts in the narrow cobbled streets as PEOPLE block the way. LEFTERIS barks and remonstrates. DANIEL shifts impatiently.



LEFTERIS

Relax Daniel. Here on the island time slows down. Which is great opportunity for more shooting. Take out the camera.

DANIEL

No! You hear me? No more shooting.

DANIEL has had enough. He grabs his bags and jumps out.

LEFTERIS

Where are you going?

DANIEL

See you up there.

DANIEL trudges up the hill.

EXT. SKYROS RESORT TERRACE. DAY

The terrace looks out over the hill to the sparkling sea beyond. A spectacular and tranquil outlook. DANIEL drops his bags and is still as the calming view washes over him.

Vines grow overhead and grapes hang down, olive trees sway on the slope.

Excitedly DANIEL unpacks the CAMERA and begins filming. The only sounds are a soft breeze, distant dog barking and some wind chimes.

DANIEL turns hearing footsteps and finds himself filming Californian ANNA (32) the most beautiful girl he has ever seen – barefoot in shorts and a bright vest.

ANNA smiles at him. DANIEL is transfixed and continues shooting. He zooms in on her.

ANNA blows the camera a kiss and giggles.

DANIEL closes in. ANNA gets shy and turns away.

ANNA

(good humoured) Hey! Quit stalking me.

ANNA theatrically walks behind a bush. DANIEL turns off the camera.

DANIEL

Don't run away. I need you for scale.

ANNA

What?

DANIEL

I need you. As a foreground element to give human scale.

ANNA

That sounds sooo appealing. What do I get?

DANIEL

A lifetime supply of olive oil and ouzo. You know I can still see you.

ANNA

(laughing) Damn. You evil genius.

ANNA steps out from behind the bush. She smiles at DANIEL. They stand frozen - the electricity crackling between them. Finally ANNA moves along the terrace.

ANNA

OK then. Make it fast because right now I am in the zone.

DANIEL smiles and begins filming. He motions her to the edge of the terrace.

DANIEL

OK. Think serene. Think dawn of civilization. Greek men talking philosophy. Plato. Socrates. Aristotle Onassis.

ANNA

How's this?

ANNA raises her arms and balances on one leg.

DANIEL

Awesome.

ANNA

'It was here long ago that mankind first encountered the chinchilla.'

DANIEL

(lowering the camera) What even is a chincilla?

ANNA

A crepuscular rodent that lives in high altitude colonies.

DANIEL

What are you - a zoologist?

ANNA

I like exotic pets. Not really chinchillas. More like iguanas. What I really want is a komodo dragon but that's totally illegal.

DANIEL

What do you have?

ANNA

A cat.

DANIEL

Exotic?

ANNA

Her behavior is exotic. She's obsessed with my toes.  
Are we done?

DANIEL

Oh. Sorry.

DANIEL switches the CAMERA off. ANNA gently takes it from him.

## **BIOGRAPHY**

Nicholas is a dual national US/UK writer/director educated at Cambridge and trained at the BBC Drama Directors Academy. He has directed Channel Four documentaries, BBC continuing drama series and feature films including 'The Reeds' which After Dark/Lionsgate distributed theatrically in America. He hopes to shoot 'First Person' later this year.