

THE "DIRECTOR'S" OUTLINE.

Again, the premise is this: A middle-aged surfer gives up his straight life to search for an old friend and ex-partner in crime from their younger days, who is missing in Central America.

That's the premise. Since there is no movie in my book, since I *reinvented* the story for the screen, I changed the main character's name from my own (Allan) to Alex. (I did this for the sake of... veracity.) The friend Alex is in search of is Chris (nicknamed Captain Zero).

We pick up the outline as Alex leaves on his journey south. My comments, which upset everyone, are in **bold**.

CUT TO:

Alex drives out of town. His VOICE OVER; "I was not prepared for the loneliness, and sense of failure of leaving. I've broken so many promises I'd made to visit friends and ones dear to me. How do you say good-bye when in your heart you believe the parting is final?"

What's the point of this voice over? Voice over is intrusive if there's no good reason for it and I see no reason for it here. Alex's loneliness should be a subtext vibe that is done visually, not sledgehammered with voice over. If there is to be a v.o. here, it should be (at least in subtext) about Chris: *Chris is what is on Alex's mind, not the other people in his life.*

The problem of rambling off subject is endemic to this outline, as we'll see.

CUT TO:

NEXT MORNING.

Alex is back on the road now entering Baja. Towards evening he pulls into his first Baja encampment. Campfires lined like little suns with planetoidal figures surrounding them. Alex's VOICE OVER: he talks about arriving at a place that is neither here nor there, east or west, north or south.

More voice over that I see no point to. Show, don't tell. And aside from the fact that the above v.o. book quote is wildly inaccurate, what is so out of whack about the place that such hyperbole is warranted? And if it is that weird, what are we saving for later, when, presumably (at the end of the road where Chris is), things are *really* fucked up? We are blowing our out-of-whack wad right up front, leaving nothing to escalate to. Also, there is a big difference between internal prose in a book and the way people actually speak. When spoken as actual dialog (or v.o.), this (inaccurate) line from the book is overblown and pretentious.

He's met someone here. They talk. This conversation allows us to find out what Alex is doing here.

Okay. I'll ask again (Note: I deleted where I asked the first time):
 What is Alex doing here? Not only *what* but *why*. (Although we don't
 necessary impart the *why* here to the audience, we as storytellers sure
 as hell better know the answer. Otherwise, there is no way to write the
 scene, since we don't know what Alex is really thinking, deep down. In
 a good story the protagonist may not know what he is thinking deep
 down, but the writer better know.)

We also find out information from this person about the general
 lifestyle of Baja; the dangers, who the people are down there, what not
 to do, what to look out for etc.

I presume (the director) means that the guy does all this in dialog.
 This stuff should be imparted without expository dialog - through
 events, letting the audience *figure out for themselves* that it's
 dangerous down there. Besides, heroes are not told this sort of stuff.
 They already know. Especially Alex, who has been through more shit than
 this guy ever dreamt of. A scene like this makes Alex look like a
 tourist.

This may or may not be the place to insert the guys telling Alex; "the
 only people who come down here are the wanted and the unwanted."

No, this is not the right place for that line. Another example of
 shooting our wad early, leaving little chance for escalation in the
 third act. But anyway, to fixate on a line of dialog like this one is
 reflective of the overall problem with this outline. An outline of this
 length should concentrate on what *happens*, not little snippets of
 dialog. Here, pretty much nothing actually happens.

Alex is told how futile his search is? It's clear by everyone's
 reactions that searching for someone down here is not only futile but
 dangerous because most people come here so as not to be found. He's
 told to be careful whom he approaches.

Why is it futile? As I say in the book, the world of the traveling
 surfer is a small one. And it's not necessarily dangerous, nor do most
 people come to Baja so as not to be found. We're like a couple hours
 south of San Diego. Still again, this sort of thing makes sense at the
 end of the road at the bottom of Central America, where Chris is, not
 here. This stuff is hyperbole and not true. (Real Baja travelers will
 be tossing stuff at the screen.) Plus, again, we have our guy being
told stuff while he sits there like a tourist.

CUT TO:

Alex drives into a Mexican fishing village. He does more in depth
 Searching for Chris. Shows his picture. Alex is warned of danger to
 the south - three surfers were killed recently, he's told that his life
 may not be held in high esteem - don't travel alone.

Again: Show don't tell. And still again, our guy sits there and is told
 stuff. Not only told stuff, but told stuff we just heard in previous
 scenes, i.e., that's it's dangerous down there.

Also has the shark conversation at this point with the Mexicans who

Refuse to speak the word Shark. Guy in the conversation has one arm.

What does this have to do with anything? It does not advance the story, nor does it start up or pay off a subplot. Again Alex sits there and listens to someone else: and still again, the exposition is about how dangerous it is (sharks in the water).

CUT TO:

Alex watches a Bull Fight in Mazatlan. He makes a phone call.

Alex makes a phone call. Okay. Who does he call and why? If we keep a secret who he's calling - just show him making a call but nothing more - why are we doing that? (It's a device known as False Mystery, which is bad storytelling.) If he's calling Diana (or is it Denise? Are there two women here?) why not let the audience in on it? In which case, what is the drift of the conversation? If he's inviting her down, why? He's just left her. What has changed since he left that would cause him to suddenly want her down there? I'll answer that myself: Nothing has changed. Alex, our main guy, is merely vacillating. If he misses her so much after, what, a week on the road, why didn't he take her to begin with? In my draft you'll notice that each time he calls Diana/Denise it's after a story turn that causes him to have something to say to her.

CUT TO:

Puerto Vallarta. Diana arrives. Romance, food, wine and upscale accommodations. A break from the search and from the hard life of Baja.

What search and what hard life of Baja? If you look at what has actually happened up until now, you come up empty. Alex has asked a couple people if they've seen Chris, they said no, and that was that. I don't know what page we're on here but there should have been some revelations, some story turns, by now. Hard life of Baja? Nothing "hard" has happened. It's been all talking heads so far and mostly about stuff that is unrelated to our story spine, i.e., talk about how it's dangerous down there, what it's like to go surfing at a new break, etc.

This scene shows how torn Alex is. He's potentially giving up a terrific woman, worthy of his love, and he's struggling with it.

Since we know zero, zilch, nada about Diana (Denise, whomever) - we just caught a glimpse of her as Alex leaves - how about if we reveal here who she is and what her relationship to the story is? But I'll tell you what: This stuff better intersect with the Alex/Chris dynamic in some significant way. Otherwise the audience might forget that Chris is more than some guy Alex used to know. I'm not kidding.

Diana wants to discuss Christopher, wants to know why Alex is searching, why is Christopher important to Alex, does he think he'll find him. Maybe he's dead? Why did Chris disappear and bail out on you in searching for him? **(This sentence is incomprehensible.)** What will you do when and if you find him? This is all a way to continue revealing bits of info about Christopher and Alex's journey and relationship.

A bunch of great questions. But instead of asking them, how about providing some answers in this outline, since these questions are the crux of the movie.

Is (the director)'s attitude "We'll figure all this stuff out later"?

If so, that's like if he's outlining a murder mystery and says, "I don't know who gets murdered or by whom or why, but let's write it first and figure those details out later." This is not hyperbole. It's exactly like that.

But back to this scene: It's obvious that (the director) intends to continue with his shoot-the-book-as-written version. Meaning that Denise/Diana has never met Chris, as was the case in real life and in the book. Which will guarantee that nothing of any consequence happens in this scene. Which will continue the trend of no story elements connecting with any other story elements. (Make no mistake about it: had I written this book as fiction -- which is what this movie should be -- I would have had Alex/Diana/Chris have a major history together.)

There could be a number of scenes here; romance in the hotel, dinners, beach walks, town strolls.

Sure there could be a number of scenes here, but what happens? Hey, maybe we could shoot a Club Med commercial while we're at it.

Alex finally picks up some pertinent information about Chris; someone has recently seen Christopher's camper truck further south. This person tells Alex he saw the truck at a surf break.

This is a major clue - for the first time Alex has an idea that Chris may be alive.

I didn't know Alex thought Chris was dead. Why wasn't this vital assumption mentioned before?

CUT TO:

Back on the road. All is fine now until Alex and Diana enter Bandito Alley. This is visually scary due to the desolation and apocalyptic nature - we see burned out cars and other skeletons of bad luck. It's eerily empty.

As mentioned, we blew our it's-weird-and-dangerous-vibe wad up in Baja.

Suddenly Alex sees a truck approaching fast from the rear-view mirror. It begins to over take his truck. This is just what everyone warned him about. Diana starts to freak. The truck gets closer and closer until it forces Alex to pull over. It's looking bad. Alex pulls over, reaches for his weapon prepares to fight when he suddenly sighs. It's a military convoy and they just want is to check to make sure everything is okay. They check on him then depart and Alex follows behind them for the remainder of Bandito Alley.

If the secret-phone-call was False Mystery, this one is False Suspense. This is a movie, folks. You gonna pull this, there better be a reason, especially after the INTERMINABLE warnings about how dangerous it is.

What does (the director)'s scene really say, about the dangers of Bandido Alley? This: Hey, the army is there to protect you! Just follow them! In my scripted scene, the reversal of expectation is that army becomes the source of danger, on top of the bandits. "It's lawless down here and what law there is, is your enemy too." This is what my scene says. Which is better?

CUT TO:

NEW ENCAMPMENT.

Alex finds the surf break where the truck is supposed to be. Meets More people. Asks about Christopher, shows the picture. Someone has some info. Tells Alex where he can find the truck. Alex searches and finds it but discovers it's now owned by someone else.

How do we (the audience) know it's Chris's truck? There have been no scenes in which we could possibly have seen it. Does Alex say, "It's a blue truck?" Then we see a blue truck? (Nah, doesn't work.) Have we seen a photo of it? (Ugh, a terrible device.) This is supposed to be a dramatic moment, but how do we pull it off visually?

But never mind that, because: We've strayed so far and for so long from the subject of Chris that I doubt that the audience is going to care if it's Chris's truck or not. Again, I'm not kidding.

This "someone else" bought it from Christopher and has info about Christopher; how he was selling off all his possessions and on his way to finding and securing his own piece of paradise. This person gives Alex his next clue where he may find Christopher. This is a key moment as it gives Alex the information that Christopher is alive and living "the dream."

How is this put? Directly? Looks like it. "Chris is living the dream."

How about this for an idea:

Alex meets a guy who describes an ultimate surf break in the wilds at the end of the road, then, when Alex - almost as an afterthought because he has other things on his mind - asks the name of the break, the guy says, "Zeros."

Chris has an ultimate surf break named after him. What stronger way of saying he's living "the dream" (a surfer's dream)? Plus, it lets the audience make the cognitive leap to the idea that Chris has found his paradise. By some guy saying, literally, "Chris is living he dream," the writing is on-the-nose, leaves no work for the audience. Plus, having heard that Chris has an ultimate surf break named after him - when we get there and find he doesn't surf anymore, it really says just how far he's fallen.

This is the way I have it in the draft everyone has presumably read.

Take a look at the scene in my draft. Is it better? And if it is better, why didn't (the director) use the idea (or any of my others) in this outline? Just asking.

CUT TO:
MORE TRAVELING. SCENIC SHOTS.

CUT TO:
BORDER BETWEEN COUNTRIES
It's midnight. Alex and Diana. Alex is arguing with the drunk border supervisor who refuses to let Alex through. Alex finally bribes him. The supervisor tells Alex he has to take a different road past the border. He points towards it. Alex and Diana now driving in a pitch-black night, over what sounds like a very rickety road. Alex stops the car, opens the door and realizes they are driving over a railroad trestle without any side fencing. One false turn and they are 100 feet below. He tries to keep this from Diana who's growing more and more suspicious. She finds out and starts to freak. Next day he is seeing her off at a one lane Mexican airport. She's had enough.

So she bolts because it's dangerous down there? What a lightweight Diana/Denise turned out to be! (You can take the girl out of the Club Med, but... etc.)

And what an uninteresting reason for the breakup of these two people we should presumably care about (since suddenly the movie has been about ABOUT THEM).

How about they break up because of something that has to do with a *personal* conflict between them. And how about if that personal conflict has something to do with Chris (remember him?), not driving on railroad bridges? (I've already seen this scene, by the way, *exactly* it, in *A River Runs Through It*.)

This outlined scene is still another anecdotal one having nothing to do with the story we are presumably telling: the story of Alex and Chris. We should be continuing the backstory tale... while escalating the conflict between Chris and Alex; the reason for the breakup (between the two old friends) and the issue(s), the betrayal(s), that has driven Alex to give up his straight life and follow in Chris's wake south. Again, the root issues of this story that are not even hinted at in this outline.

And last but not least: **STILL AGAIN** Alex is passive, let's other people make the decisions.

ANOTHER ENCAMPMENT FURTHER ON DOWN THE ROAD

Alex pulls up alone. Begins asking the locals about Chris. They seem to know something but feign ignorance. They're indifferent to him. At night his car is vandalized as he's asleep. It turns out the locals think he's with the DEA and we should wonder this as well. Is he DEA? Is that why he's searching for Christopher.

In the book, some of the locals thought I was DEA. This is a whole lot different from *the audience* thinking this. If you're going to try to

pull off something like this, it better have been well set up in previous scenes, which of course it is not. But it has nothing to do with the Alex/Chris story, so what's the point? It would be much ado about nada.

Forget the Banditos (**I already have, since we haven't seen any**), his life is in jeopardy now as the surf locals don't want him around. Then Alex meets Bart. He finds out it was Bart who hired the surf-monkeys to rough him up. But then Bart sees Alex surf and realizes he cannot be DEA as he surfs too good. They begin conversing in the water.

If the scammer-locals thought Alex was DEA they would not harass him; as in the book, they would merely avoid him, or be very careful what they said to him. To assault him would just bring down more heat.

Alex is invited to dinner at Bart's home. They discuss the drug business and Alex's past with Christopher - some topics: that the 70s were for he and Christopher a return to the great age of piracy minus rape, pillaging and slaughter.

Still more talking heads. Don't we want to SHOW this stuff in backstory scenes? Of course we do.

Alex tells Bart that Christopher is the link, the one clear connection to so much he holds dear as well as so much he regrets.

What does he hold dear?! And regret as well?!

And anyway, to use this line as actual spoken dialog (rather than as internal prose, as in the book) does not work. People don't talk that way.

This lets us in on more clues to their relationship.

What is their relationship? Not even any clues in this outline.

It's here we find out how Alex and Christopher did their pot business, the fast lifestyle they lived, how they became successful and broke their covenant and how they eventually lost and parted ways resulting in Chris's disappearance.

SHOW it in backstory scenes!

And HOW did they break their covenant and part ways? We HAVE TO know this. In fact, these questions are at the root of the story and of why this shoot-the-book-as-written version will not work. If we do it as the book, meaning the two parted company with no major issues between them (going separate ways... so what?), then we have no story. When we get to Act 3 of this outline and find that there is no story here, this is at the heart of it.

We should also hear from Bart how so many people come down here like Christopher and so many disappear forever.

Still another in-dialog warning; and on-the-nose exposition. And again - as in the many other times we heard this sort of thing in dialog -- this would be better used at the end of the road.

The chances of Alex finding him are not good especially considering he hasn't heard from him in five years. But yet, somehow Bart has some info that leads Alex into going a bit further to Talamanca (the end of the road where I found my old friend in the book). That Christopher may be there. Perhaps Bart knows that he may be running an airstrip down there. **(In which case it would be easy to find him.)** Perhaps he did business with him over a year ago but hasn't heard anything since. **(That would then make it one year since Chris was heard from, not five.)** He might even suggest that Christopher was killed. **(Hey: Make up your mind! It's one thing to give choices in detail, another to list mutually exclusive scenarios!)**

Alex departs. Bart tells him that if is DEA then he's the best they've ever sent.

(The director) is again making the audience think that Alex is DEA (which he isn't). And then the subject is never brought up again. What's with that?

CUT TO:
TRAVEL SHOTS.

CUT TO:
Various crosses through various rundown pueblos. Various surf checks Along the way. He's alone and traveling south. He's happy to be passed Bandito Alley when a tree suddenly drops in the road. He's forced to stop as two bandits appear from the bush. One has a machete, the other a club. They don't look to be selling Mangos. Alex sizes up the situation to Shiner when he says, "okay, what now?" He then whips out his ATM-Credit Card and runs the ATM card-scheme from the book. **(Note: In the book - and what really happened, is that I told the two bandits that I was broke -- I only had a credit card, which I showed them.)** It's a dangerous scene that shows Alex is still just as cool under pressure as in the flashbacks **(the last one was a lifetime ago)** and always ready to confront danger with brain power. He outsmarts them and escapes.

After all the warnings about how vicious and merciless the Down South road bandits are, these two clowns fall for that? Noooooo. THIS IS A MOVIE! Not a nonfiction book! (Please picture how this scene would actually play, with Alex holding up a credit card and them saying, "Oh, okay then. We won't rob you." At the end of the book chapter I point out that it was possible these guys never intended to rob me at all. I had to do that, since they were such pussies. By the way, I already told (the director) this stuff. A couple of times.)

And still again, this scene has nothing whatever to do with our story.

CUT TO:
TALAMANCA ARRIVAL. We know from a previous scene with Bart that Christopher could be found at this destination. And that if he is here, he has most likely found his piece of paradise.

How exactly do we have the information that Chris has most likely found his piece of paradise? Because he sold his truck? So far, that's the only evidence given: Someone says he sold his truck to finance his paradise. That's it. That's the logic. Sold his truck equals he's found his paradise.

I mention this hole in logic because the thought is that when Alex finds Chris to be a mess, this is supposed to be a major dramatic moment. For it to be that (at best I don't see it as that dramatic), we have to really believe he's found his paradise. So there must more evidence than "he sold his truck." (As a matter of fact, if someone told me that he sold his wheels to finance what amounts to a place to live, I'd assume things were going less than great. Wouldn't you? We may be in Central America but when you have to sell your car, something is up and it ain't "You must've found your Paradise.")

But okay. Let's patch this hole. If definite knowledge - more than "he sold his truck" -- is given that Chris has found his paradise, then the person imparting the info would know definitely where Chris is. Right? Right. All the above mystery about where he is and maybe he's dead and it being unlikely Alex can find him, etc would go out the window.

Alex, driving, approaches a group sitting in the shade of a large tree just outside of town, selling artistic trinkets.

After all the weird and dangerous and heart of darkness stuff from up in Baja - how it's where the Wanted and the Unwanted go and how people disappear there and how apocalyptic Bandido Alley was and on and on... after all that, Alex gets to the End of the Road, the End of the Line, the Bottom of It All and what does he find? Mellowed out hippies selling artistic trinkets. What's wrong with this picture?

He shows them Christopher's picture. They say yes, he lives here and point down the road. Alex drives. A few miles down he sees a black woman.

Who's the black woman, Colonel Kurtz's cleaning lady? Damn it: What's the vibe of the end of the Road? Should be *Heart of Darkness* like we all agreed, like is in my first draft (flaws and all). Sure ain't in this outline.

Asks the Whereabouts of Christopher. She tells him to look for the Hogfish ranch. "Hogfish ranch," he says to himself. **(The name must be important if he's repeating it.)** Obviously Chris found his place. **(Why? Because of the name?)** Alex proceeds. Alex approaches an intersection. Sees a figure. Looks like Chris but can't be. Looks again. It can't be. **(Why can't it be, since he's been directed to him?)** Alex gets out. Says hi. It is Chris. Chris sees Alex and says; "God sent you to me, everything's going to be okay now, just like the old times." Hogfish ranch. **(Third time we hear it in this little outline. Must be really important!)** Alex and Chris both enter. Alex is freaked by the place. "This is paradise?" **(Talk about on-the-nose dialog.)** "This is a jungle slum." **(Better say it in dialog just in case the audience hasn't noticed that the place is a mess?)** It's hot inside and Alex asks about a fan, Christopher says the electric company screwed him over. Chris then says as soon as he gets some money he's going to get some girls to straighten the place out. Alex asks him about surfing. Finds out

Christopher surfs little. This is a major blow to Alex - what went wrong? This isn't how it was supposed to be.

CUT TO:

Restaurant scene with Alex and Christopher that night. Further getting reacquainted though it's not easy. They've grown far apart and Chris is not living the paradisiacal life Alex had expected. Nothing is as he expected.

Isn't this all that's going to come of this? His old buddy is down and out. What new information do we get here?

CUT TO:

Hogfish ranch at 4am. Alex is sleeping in his camper in the driveway when he's awoken by the arrival of two women banging on Christopher's door. Then a rag-top car pulls up and out walks Christopher and some dude with one leg. Alex can see things are terrible.

We already know things are terrible! Problem is there is no place to go from there, because nothing whatsoever has been set up. Again: this Cliff's Notes version of my nonfiction book will not work.

They go in the house and do blow. *Chris does drugs but is not the crack addict he is in the book.

Now he doesn't even have a drug problem? I presume this is a solution to the problem I brought up at our first meeting and which - really - is the root cause of all the problems. No ending. Our protagonist goes through all this shit to find his friend sitting in the dirt smoking crack. Period. That's all that really happens in the book (the good stuff in the book is in my head). And that's all that happens here.

This is no solution at all, of course.

Bottom line: Whatever conflict between Alex and Chris we actually have left (all the conflicts I set up via the premises we all agreed on and that are in my draft are gone) are now softened to nothing. Now the two guys don't even have anything currently going on to argue about, let alone a vital backstory issue between them.

CUT TO:

Hogfish ranch. Next morning. Alex sits outside his camper drinking coffee when he meets little boy, Werner. Werner tells him that Christopher is his best friend. He also tells Alex about the "stone men" (crack heads) and advises Alex against parking his truck here. Says the stone men will steal from it.

Another talking head telling Alex stuff. And guess what? Still more "it's dangerous here" stuff. And it has no payoff, since Alex never gets ripped off by stone men. Matter of fact, he never even sees any stone men. Stone men are never again even mentioned.

In the book, this scene had a purpose: gave me an excuse to not camp in Chris's yard, which paid off at the dinner-epiphany at Monkey Point. Here it has no purpose.

CUT TO:

Alex finds a place to park his camper truck. Looks for the local surf spot, Salsa Brava, he's heard so much about.

Salsa Brava has not yet been mentioned.

Gets acquainted with the land, the town and people.

A suggestion: wouldn't it be so much richer and better and loaded with potential if the break were named after Chris (because he used to barrel ride it like a demon), and he no longer surfs it? As in my draft.

I can't help but ask again: If there are a bunch of ideas in my draft that are better than what we have here (even within the context of this outline), how come (the director) didn't use them? What was the point of all my work (and the studio's money)?

CUT TO:

Alex meets the local surfers. Is warned about the terrifying break.

Still more warnings! In the book I paddle out and find out for myself, with no warnings. Just go out and do it!

Gets the lowdown on Christopher from them.

What "lowdown"? There is no lowdown.

Finds out when Chris surfed last surfed

Why didn't he just ask Chris in one of the previous scenes?

and what he does now - there is much differing opinion about what Chris does to make a living.

Which is what? And why didn't he just ask Chris?

The locals test Alex to see if he's a loser/druggie like so many others down there.

Test him? How, since nothing happens here? The Talking Head Test?

CUT TO:

Alex phones Denise. Explains the situation with Christopher, that he's bad off and living a destitute life.

Since we already know this info from being repeated over and over and over since Alex arrives, what's the point of repeating it still again on the phone?

And: According to this outline, Denise doesn't know Chris, so why would she care what his situation is?

He tells her he loves but that she should move on as there is no future with him.

What has happened to make him say this? Wouldn't he have already told her this in the Club Med interlude up in Mexico? After all, in the

logic of this outline, Alex has just always been a ramblin' kind of surf guy.

CUT TO:

Dinner with Christopher and Werner in the camper. Alex introduces Werner to the music of Mozart. This gives Alex a chance to bond with Werner.

Why do we want Alex to bond with Werner? Why, this late in the story, are we introducing characters that have no effect whatsoever on the ending?

Werner leaves after dinner and Alex tries to help Christopher. Tells him he'll pay for his flight back to Montauk. Get him a summer job etc. Chris doesn't like what Alex is saying and bails. This scene doesn't end well. (I'm tempted to say "It sure doesn't.")

CUT TO:

Alex is sleeping. Christopher knocks, it's 3am, wakes him and asks for money. Says he's horny and he's got a girl. Alex reluctantly gives him a number of Colones.

Apparently here - as opposed to the book -- the money is not for crack, since drugs are not mentioned. (Chris doesn't really have a drug problem.) In which case, so what? He's borrowing a couple bucks from his old friend so he can go out on a date. What's wrong with that? In which case this scene has no purpose, none whatsoever.

CUT TO:

The waves come up and Alex surfs Salsa Brava for the first time. He Paddles out and notices the locals are wearing helmets. This is a different surf break altogether than we've previously seen. The locals watch him carefully to see if he can surf. Bad fall gets their attention. He can hold his own in the water impressively and they accept him, which opens up for friendship and information gathering.

Again: What information gathering? What information does he not already have? And still again: Even if there was new info to gather - which there absolutely isn't -- Alex gets it via *talking heads*.

And now Alex is going to make new friends? Who? Why? What's the payoff? We're almost at the end of the movie and he's making new friends?

In this outline - after the initial scene when Alex sees Chris's digs and finds out Chris is down and out - there is *not one scene* that has any real use. Not one. If anyone doubts this, please go back and look. All these scenes just repeat the same stuff over and over, or - even worse - they introduce new characters that have no payoff.

CUT TO:

Hogfish Ranch. Christopher is not at home. Alex walks in discovers Wanda and one legged man in bed in a drug coma.

These are *still more* characters that have no payoff!

Alex finds Christopher's diary. Reads it and finds something revealing about HIMSELF.

What does he find out? Nothing has been set up that gives any possibilities whatsoever. How could you saddle a writer (me) with this?

CUT TO:

Denise, second phone call??? (May or may not be needed) Alex backtracks. Says he was wrong in previous call. She tells him she's found someone else.

Backtracks? Why? What has changed that would cause him to backtrack? Nothing, that's what. Our main guy cannot seem to come to any decisions about anything, then stick to them.

He's now void (I presume (the director) means "devoid") of all earthly connections aside from surfing.

Call me an insensitive brute (which has been done), but the many times women have dumped me, I never once felt devoid of all earthly connections. (The one time this did happen was in 1968 and a little purple pill was involved.)

By the way: how do you show this devoid-of-all-earthly-connections concept? How do you put it up on the screen - maybe the same way you do so with "The Red Sox haven't broken any hearts yet"?

He finds out Chris may be operating an illegal airstrip somewhere in the nearby jungle.

CUT TO:

Alex and Chris, at Chris' insistence, end up doing a long night of Cocaine together. But something good, if only temporarily happens, they end up becoming close "just like in the old days." Lots of laughing. This is the first time they bond like the old times in the flash backs.

What flashbacks? The last one was so long ago that I don't remember it.

They discuss the days past, trying to one up each other, big laughs and bigger stories.

Movie scenes are either Up moments or Down moments. From (the director)'s description, while these guys are smoking crack or snorting their brains out, the audience is supposed to be thinking, "Wow, isn't this great!"

Wait. I can't go on; I don't have the heart. (The director)'s outline ends with a drug deal gone sour that comes out of nowhere; no set up. It's so irrelevant that I'm not including it in this memo: you can't introduce the climax heavies in the third act, plus it's a cliché, plus it doesn't keep to the spirit of the book, plus there is no surfing involved.

What I've been doing here, picking apart each scene, is misleading. My quibbling over this stuff is sort of like that great moment in *Titanic* wherein the ship's architect adjusts a clock in the dining room as the

ship is going down. (That was a wonderful touch, wasn't it? Said so much about that guy. *Without a word spoken.*)¹

Okay. Let me just say it. This outline is of no use whatsoever to anyone writing this screenplay, since there is no story here. And the problem is not in the details, in the execution, it's in the premises, or, rather, the utter lack of them.

You may be wondering why you optioned this book, given that there appears to be no screen story in the book story.²

Click here to read my *Zero* screenplay, which the studio/producers have not showed to anyone else. See if you can figure out why, since as of the late summer of 2006, word is that the project is dead in the water, due to the other screenplay being unshootable. Why wouldn't they try to resurrect the project with my screenplay? What do they have to lose?

Right. They'd look... how?

Click here to return to the top of my (very, very etc) long Note on Veracity.

¹ I'll try to imagine how (the director) would have handled that scene: Leonardo and what's-her-name are running around on the sinking ship and they happen upon the ship's architect in the dining room, where the architect has tied a passenger to a chair so the fellow has to listen to him rather than try to get to a lifeboat. The architect is saying this: "See, in building this ship I put so much into perfection and attention to detail that right now as it's sinking it bugs me that the clock over there is five minutes fast." The passenger is still yearning to try to get to a lifeboat but is so moved he says, "Wow, you must really love this ship!" Leonardo looks into the camera and says, "Heavy, no?" 1a.

1a. No, this footnote wasn't in the original memo. I wish to hell it had been, though; I wish I'd thought of it back then. Another example of how writing about stuff makes you self-reflect, dig deeper. 1b.

1b. Do you even remember that moment in *Titanic* when the architect adjusted the clock? If not, it doesn't matter. It got to you and affected you anyway, that moment, trust me. Just so you know: All that crapola from the first part of this footnote, that ridiculous scene? The moment with the clock actually did say all that stuff. (Plus it reinforced the idea that time was running out.) Great moment. 1c.

1c. A not-so-great moment in the same movie was when ship is closing on the iceberg and the mate yells "Hard to starboard!" -- the helmsman acknowledges the command then spins the wheel to *port*. I mean with all the perfection and attention to detail James Cameron put into *Titanic*, what was *that* fuck up all about?

² Yes, this sentence is my catch 22, disguised as a rhetorical question.