

Fade Up by Stephen Keyworth

A production office. Film posters on the walls. MATT, a writer, pitching, to a pair of film execs, MORGAN and FREEMAN, sat behind a desk.

MATT                      Shall I start?

FREEMAN                 Absolutely.

MORGAN                 We won't interrupt unless we have to.

MATT                      Great. Okay. Here we go. Fade up -

FREEMAN leans forward.

FREEMAN                 Can I stop you?

MATT                      Sure.

FREEMAN                 Before we go too far. I want to say one thing.

MATT                      Okay.

FREEMAN                 Writers always say fade up. But we don't actually want to 'fade' up do we?

MATT                      Er...

FREEMAN                 Fading suggests slow. I think we want to get right in there. Bam! Into the action. We're in a zoo. Or whatever.

FREEMAN looks at MORGAN. MORGAN nods.

MATT                      It can be a fast fade.

FREEMAN                 I think no fade at all. Bam! We're in a zoo. Or whatever.

MATT                      Okay. Start again. Bam!

FREEMAN                 Don't say bam.

MATT                      Sorry. We're in a zoo.

FREEMAN                 Sorry - zoo was an example, you don't have to actually say zoo.

MATT                      But this film does start in a zoo.

FREEMAN                 You're kidding. What are the chances? Wow.

MATT                      Didn't you read the treatment?

FREEMAN I never read treatments.

A beat.

MATT Okay. So we're in a zoo.

FREEMAN Great minds think alike.

MATT Thank you. We're in a zoo.

FREEMAN I thought this was set in an underwater city.

MATT It's a zoo in an underwater city.

FREEMAN Is that sanitary?

MATT It's not ideal.

FREEMAN No, I should say not.

MATT But the planet is poisoned, most of the animals are dead. The last remaining humans, and the last animals are trapped -

FREEMAN (INTERUPTS) Er, that's sort of a downer. Everyone being dead?

MATT You wanted me to pitch you a film in an underwater city. This is what I came up with.

FREEMAN Yes, but I imagined a city you could visit, maybe at weekends, and then you go back to your real city on the mainland.

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MORGAN Just let him do the pitch.

MATT Thank you. We're in a zoo.

FREEMAN In an underwater city.

MATT It's a Noah's Ark type thing. But there's a leak -

FREEMAN Do they have penguins?

MATT What?

FREEMAN Penguins. In the zoo.

MATT I don't know. If you want.

FREEMAN I like penguins.

MATT waits to see if there's more to this. There isn't.