

Sound of a keyboard clacking.

SUPER (to the rhythm of the keyboard): FADE IN.

INT. RTA OFFICES - NIGHT

It's a nice place. Hip. Modern. A roomy, open-space floor plan, unburdened by office walls or cubicles.

Large, wooden communal tables with now empty chairs and turned-off Mac computers dominate the scenery.

The entire floor is lined by glass walls, and the magnificent view of the city's skyline makes it evident that the offices are in a high floor of some building.

At the center of the offices A CONFERENCE ROOM WITH GLASS PANELS filled with doodles and phrases, all drawn with some type of erasable marker.

Past the conference room the entrance to the agency is visible. The RTA nameplate in black and just below it the phrase: *Don't generate advertising ideas. Generate ideas worth advertising.*

Everything is dark in this creative hub. The only light is coming from a hanging-down light bulb below which CARL is sitting.

Mid-forties, with an unkept beard and slightly overweight, CARL is hunched over and furiously typing on his computer at his section of the communal table.

The glare from the computer highlights his small specks of gray hair and the bags under his eyes. The sound of the keyboard reverberates through the desolated office.

Next to his computer an assorted array of paraphernalia: A 2002 Cannes Lion, a film clapboard paperweight, a plaque commemorating his 15 years at RTA, an oversized tennis ball and a silver flask.

On the chair next to Carl are a pair of white Converse sneakers and a blue, button down shirt.

Close-up on his computer, where he's working on a Google doc document. We briefly see "Headlines" and "Clean Slate". "Round 33" is the title of the document.

Extreme close-up on his fingers typing.

INT. RTA OFFICES - FLASHBACK - DAY

Extreme close-up on his fingers typing, but the light around them suggests daylight.

PAUL

Ready?

PAUL, fat, blonde and middle-aged is standing next to Carl holding several black foam boards.

CARL

Let's do it.

INT. RTA CONFERENCE ROOM - FLASHBACK - CONTINUOUS

A slightly thinner Carl is leading a presentation along with Paul. Next to them they have design layouts mounted on foam boards as well as a large TV monitor.

The layouts are displaying some rebranding designs for Dust-Off.

The conference table is full. Seen from Paul and Carl's perspective, on the left side are seated people with sneakers and jeans and on the right all suits, led by a woman in her late fifties, with a bad tan and dyed blonde hair.

She looks like Estelle, Joey's manager from *Friends*.

On the back of the conference room, younger people from the agency are standing up, wanting to hear the pitch.

Carl and Paul, visibly excited, have just turned their attention to the TV.

Carl faces the suits. But as he begins to speak he addresses a young agency guy standing at the back of the room.

CARL

Eric. Do you know Dust-Off?

ERIC

(shyly)

Yeah.

CARL

Would you be able to describe to me what Dust-Off does?

ERIC

Yeah.

CARL

Are you the proud owner of a Dust-Off?

Eric simply shakes his head.

CARL (CONT'D)

You see, ladies and gentlemen, Eric here has exemplified our main conundrum. What we have here is an established, household product, with superior brand recognition, but low purchases. How do we fix this?

Dramatic pause.

Well, like fashion, where very old trends have the ability to become new again, we need to take this product and insert it into the present social context. Fashion, however, has the advantage of celebrity endorsements and glossy magazine spreads. So, short of handing Justin Bieber a can of Dust-Off, we need to tackle this a whole different way. Step one was redesigning the can, which Paul here has showed you. Make this something college kids will like to have next to their Macs. Something Eric would buy.

The agency side of the conference room laughs.

Step two, make it viral. Just like the ice bucket challenge from a couple of years ago, we need to leverage social media and make Dust-Off something more than just a cleaning brand. So, without further ado, let us present a short teaser of what we're envisioning for the brand.

Carl turns on the TV.

PAUL

Can someone get the lights?

The lights dim. Showtime.

The TV monitor shows the Dust-Off logo front and center, with "Blown Away" right underneath it. Both logo and text fade to give way to a young guy working on his computer in a library setting.

Suddenly, from the top-left corner of the frame, the trademark red straw from Dust-Off appears. It blows a strong puff of air into the guy's ear, scaring the shit out of him.

A teenage girl is reading a book in the park, her back against a tree. She looks so peaceful. The straw looms again from the corner of the screen. Puff of air. Loss of peace. Fade to black.

The agency people are laughing. The suits, not so much.

CARL

As you can see, we believe there's
room not to take ourselves too
seriousl--

The woman, Mrs. Dust-Off, cuts him off with a wave of her hand and delivers the verdict.

MRS. DUST-OFF

I don't like it. I think it's too
risk--

END FLASHBACK

INT. RTA OFFICES - NIGHT

Carl stops typing and stretches in his chair. He takes a sip from his flask and spills a little on his white undershirt, adding a new stain to the collection.

He grabs the oversized tennis ball from his desk and starts throwing it up in the air above him. After a bad throw, he almost falls off his chair trying to catch the ball.

After a few throws he returns to his computer, fired by a new idea.

INT. RTA CONFERENCE ROOM - FLASHBACK - DAY

Same client, different pitch. A lot less people.

The design layouts are also different. This time they look more like print ads rather than rebranding designs.

Carl and Paul lead the presentation again, this time with a PowerPoint. The slide has only one sentence: *Dust-Off. A can of nothing.*

Carl changes the slide. A Looney Tunes "that's all folks" image appears.

Mrs. Dust-Off isn't happy. She shakes her head and:

MRS. DUST-OFF
I guess I'll know it when I see i--

CUT TO:

INT. RTA HALLWAY - FLASHBACK - CONTINUOUS

A door with the label "*fail often*". Carl opens it and we see it's a sort of storage/disposal room. He's carrying all the foam board design layouts from the presentation and he puts them next to a BIG pile of other foam boards, all with the Dust-Off brand somewhere in them.

Among the pile, the foam boards from the first flashback are recognizable.

END FLASHBACK.

INT. RTA OFFICES - NIGHT

Carl rubs his eyes. The clock on his computer screen reads 2:32 AM. He grabs his flask again, tilts his head back and shakes the flask on top his tongue trying to squeeze some last drops. The thing's empty.

He gets up from his chair and walks through the hallway to a nearby door. From the way he walks it's clear that he's drunk.

INT. RTA OFFICES - BREAK ROOM - NIGHT

The door opens and Carl walks in. It's a spacious room, with plastic sheets covering most of the furniture and some of the floor.

He heads to a cabinet, grabs a cup and pours himself some leftover coffee from a pot.

Cup of coffee in hand, he turns and heads to the glass wall at the far end of the room, dodging some construction material lying around on the floor.

He drinks from his cup and looks down at the cars driving around the city. Then, as his eyesight rises, his expression suddenly changes.

Carl looks directly at a skyscraper a couple of blocks away from the RTA offices. He scowls and turns to leave.

After a few steps, he stops, and after a brief moment of he turns again and throws his coffee cup at the glass wall.

As the cup shatters in mid-air, the frame freezes.

SUPER (Big, bold letters filling the screen): *"THE FIRST ACT IS OF TREMENDOUS IMPORTANCE. IF YOU DON'T GRAB YOUR AUDIENCE BY THE FIRST ACT, THEY WON'T BOTHER WITH THE REST OF YOUR STORY."*

INT. CARL'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - MORNING

Carl, wearing the same rugged jeans and stained white undershirt from last night, is profoundly asleep. Some drool dripping from the side of his mouth.

A top-down view of his bed shows empty cans of beers and bottles of liquor by the side of the bed where Carl is sleeping.

The other side of the bed is made and immaculate.

A ringtone sound gets progressively louder.

DAN

DAD!

Dan, a skinny eight year-old boy holding a backpack stands by the side of the bed nudging Carl.

Carl grunts.

DAN (CONT'D)

Dad, c'mon! I have a final!

With a monumental effort, Carl gets up and sits on the bed. His phone stops ringing.

CARL

(groggy)

Hmm. What time is it?

DAN

It's nine dad, let's go!

CARL
Its nine?! Shi-- darn. All right,
let me change and I'll drive you.

Phone starts ringing again. Carl picks it up and sees its Paul calling him.

DAN
Okay hurry.

Carl dismisses him with a wave of his hand. Dan leaves the room.

CARL
Hey, I know, I'm lat--

PAUL (V.O.)
What the hell man, why'd you quit?

CARL
I-- what?

PAUL (V.O.)
Why'd you quit and didn't even give
me a heads up?

CARL
(massaging his forehead)
Look. Paul. I didn't--

Lightning fast image of Carl at his computer the night before.

CARL (CONT'D)
I-I...

Another rapid-fire image, this time Carl's POV as he writes on his computer. It's an e-mail. A LONG one. Focus on the phrase *I hereby resign*.

PAUL (V.O.)
Hey, listen, if you're still mad
about--

Carl starts to frantically search for his shoes.

CARL
Paul, I'm not--

PAUL (V.O.)
... that barbecue thing, I get it,
but I don't think it's fair that--

CARL
 P--Paul, listen. Shut up! Look.
 Just stall that old bitch and cover
 me with Connie. I'll be there in
 half an hour for the meeting.

Carl crawls under the bed to reach his right shoe.

PAUL (V.O.)
 But--

CARL
 Just do it!
 (he hits his head with the
 bed)
 Agh, shit.

PAUL (V.O.)
 You okay?

CARL
 No. Yes. Just stall them. I'm on my
 way.

He crawls back from under the bed with his shoe.

PAUL (V.O.)
 Okay, but hurry, they're here
 already.

Carl hangs up. He tries to put on his right shoe as he walks
 to the door of his bedroom. He falls.

CARL
 Shitshitshitshitshit. DAN WE
 NEED TO GO! NOW!

EXT. RTA PARKING LOT - DAY

A red truck screeches to a halt in an empty spot. Carl gets
 out.

CARL
 Wait here.

He closes the door and runs out of frame. We stay on the
 truck.

After a while, Carl returns, out of breath from all the
 running. He opens the door.

CARL (CONT'D)
Actually, this might take a while.
Come on, you'll wait inside.

INT. RTA OFFICES - DAY

The elevator doors open to reveal Carl and Dan. Carl looks like the personification of a bad hangover. Sweaty, with tussled, greasy hair and the same clothes as yesterday.

INT. RTA OFFICES - CONTINUOUS

Paul and CONNIE, a tall, authoritative blonde in her mid-fifties, are having a heated conversation. They spot Carl walking their way and Connie can't help but frown in disgust.

CONNIE
Carl, what are you doing, he's
supposed to be in school. Hi Dan.

DAN
Hi.

CONNIE
And you decided you didn't want to
work here anymore.

CARL
Connie listen--

Connie gets taken aback by Carl's breath.

CONNIE
Oh my God.

CARL
Connie listen, let me go in there
(points towards conference
room behind them) and
I'll explain everything
after the meeti--

CONNIE
No. Paul will handle this. You will
get Dan to school and get yourself
a shower. There's no way you're
going in there smelling like this.

PAUL
Oh. Here.

Paul grabs a pack of Mentos from his pocket and gives two to Carl, who eats them. Paul quickly unbuttons his shirt and also gives it to Carl.

Carl gives a what-you-gonna-do shrug to Connie and walks away towards the conference room.

INT. RTA CONFERENCE ROOM - CONTINUOUS

As Carl walks into the conference room, Mrs. Dust-Off and two other suits sit upright and look at him with thinly veiled indignation.

Carl stands at the front of the room, next to a TV set.

CARL

Gentlemen, *madame*, I apologize for the wait. But, I promise you it'll be worth it. I believe you're about to watch something very special.

Carl turns on the TV.

MRS. DUST-OFF

We'll see.

CARL

Well, you know what they say. 33rd time's a charm.

INT. RTA OFFICES - CONTINUOUS

Paul and Connie are still in front of the conference room talking. Dan is now sitting at Carl's desk close by, unwillingly listening in on their conversation.

CONNIE

Paul, you enable him too much.

PAUL

Connie, come on, give the guy a break. It's only been four months since--

Dan grimaces.

CONNIE

Oh enough with that already. I think I've given him plenty of rope and he's taken it upon himself to cut it short.

PAUL

That's not fair. Carl delivers.
He's your best CD.

Behind them, visible through the glass panels of the conference room, Carl is pointing fiercely at Mrs. ClearIt.

CONNIE

He is *not*. And these past two years
he hasn't won us a single pitch.
C'mon Paul you know this.

Unbeknownst to Connie and Paul, Carl is now heatedly throwing papers around and slamming the table. Dan is now aware of this and is looking alarmed.

PAUL

Connie... look, all I can say is
the guy's been going through a lot.
But his heart's in the right place.
He'll come around soon enough.
Trust me.

A random employee walks past Connie and Paul and notices what's going on inside the conference room.

EMPLOYEE

What the fuck!?

EXT. RTA PARKING LOT - CONTINUOUS

Elevator door opens to reveal Dan and Carl, who's carrying a box with his belongings.