

Taking Pictures

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DRAFT

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Open to a slow meandering pan montage of a set of still photographs of tourists taking pictures in front of tourist destinations around Austin: the UT Tower, the State Capitol, the Stevie Ray Vaughn Statue, etc. TITLES and Goofy, energetic, MUSIC play through the scene.

SCENE 1

EXT. DOWNTOWN AUSTIN, TX, IN FRONT OF STATE CAPITOL, - DAY

It is a beautiful spring afternoon. The park across the street from the State Capitol is green and lush. Sunshine streams through the tree branches. In the background, the Capitol dome shines proudly.

GEORGE and MARTHA HENDERSON—a 40-something couple dressed in shorts, T-shirts, and polar fleece vests--stand in the park looking at the Capitol.

George takes the camera from around his neck and looks around for a good place to set up his camera to take a picture of Martha and himself in front of the Capitol.

CHARLIE, a 30-something goateed white man, stands off to one end of the park. Charlie has a map spread open in front of him, but he is watching George and Martha. In addition to a backpack and sunglasses, Charlie wears standard issue fraternity boy clothes--white T-shirt, khaki shorts, cross-trainer shoes, curled brim baseball cap. George and Martha do not notice Charlie, but we do.

GEORGE

(Pointing at a low stone wall)

What do you think, honey? Would this make a good shot if I set up the camera here?

Martha looks at the bench and at George, rolling her eyes. Then she looks around for other possibilities.

MARTHA

It looks a little low, but I guess it would work. Why don't you just set it up on that park bench over there instead? Either way, let's just do it. Time's a-wasting. We've got an itinerary, remember? How are we going to make it over to the UT Tower if you don't hurry up? We have to get moving if we're going to see the bats at that bridge everyone talks about before dark.

As Martha finishes her sentence, George is already walking away, towards the bench.

Charlie is now in the background next to the bench, stealing glances at George and Martha from behind his open map.

GEORGE

(Shouting to Martha)

You stand there so I can line it up.

Martha rolls her eyes and puts her hands on her hips while George puts the camera on the bench and struggles to look through the camera's viewfinder at the same time that he tries to figure out the timer on the camera.

GEORGE

(pointing to Martha's left)

Martha? Can you put out your right hand—I mean your left—so I can make sure I will be in the picture?

Martha silently complies as George continues to struggle with the camera.

CHARLIE (O.S, to George)

Hey, dude, I couldn't help but notice that you're having a little trouble here.

George looks up from the camera and loses his balance. As he reaches for the camera, he knocks it to the ground.

GEORGE

(perturbed and embarrassed)

What?

CHARLIE

(pointing at the camera on the ground)

With the camera—trouble with the camera. I was over there and thought you could use some help taking the picture. You want me to take it from you?

GEORGE

(still perturbed and embarrassed)

I . . . Uh . . . guess so. (to Martha) Honey? This guy says he will take the picture for us.

MARTHA

Well give him the camera and get your butt over here.

George rolls his eyes as he gives Charlie the camera.

GEORGE

It's a point-and-shoot. Here's the button. Look through here.

CHARLIE

Got it.

George walks to where Martha is standing as Charlie lines up the shot. George and Martha paste on toothy grins and put their arms around each other.

CHARLIE

Yeah, that looks real nice. Wait. OK. Here we go. On the count of three, say "Hasta la vista, baby." OK? One..., Two..., Three...

GEORGE and MARTHA

(lamely--trying to smile, but a bit confused)
Hasta la vista, baby?

CHARLIE

Yep, hasta la vista, dudes. Later.

Charlie cackles as he takes off running like hell off screen, arms and legs flailing wildly. George and Martha are too dismayed to react. By the time they start to give chase, Charlie is already half way down the block.

The camera briefly watches Charlie recede before zooming in to a close up of a FLIER posted on a lamppost at the edge of the park.

The flier has a police sketch of a man who looks like the UnaBomber-- with a beard, sunglasses, and a hooded sweatshirt. Above the sketch, block letters read: "TOURISTS BEWARE. THE SNAPSHOT BANDIT FREQUENTS THIS SITE. DO NOT LET THIS MAN USE YOUR CAMERA TO TAKE YOUR PICTURE. HE WILL STEAL YOUR CAMERA." Below the sketch the flier describes the suspect: "Caucasian or Hispanic Male, 25-39, 140-200 pounds, 5'6" to 6'5" tall." Under this, in block letters: "REPORT ANY AND ALL SUSPICIOUS ACTIVITY TO THE POLICE IMMEDIATELY. \$1,000 REWARD FOR INFORMATION LEADING TO HIS CAPTURE, ARREST, AND INDICTMENT."

DISSOLVE TO:

SCENE 2

INT. DRUG STORE PHOTO DEVELOPING DESK - LATER THAT DAY

A 30-something CLERK hands Charlie a new batch of photographs. Charlie is wearing the same clothes but is now clean shaven.

CLERK

Hot off the presses. There's some interesting pictures in there. You want to look at them here with me?

CHARLIE
(puzzled)

Um . . . no.

CLERK

You sure seem to be in here a lot. You a professional photographer or a professional tourist?

CHARLIE
(grinning)

No. Well, Yes. I guess you could just say that I take a lot of pictures.

CLERK

Yeah, me too. Hey, seeing the kinds of pictures you take, I think you'll appreciate this. You want to see something?

The Clerk motions for Charlie to come around the side of the counter. Charlie hesitates at first, but can't fight his curiosity. The Clerk opens a drawer and shows Charlie some pictures. We do not see what they are.

CHARLIE
(grinning)

You are sick, dude.

DISSOLVE TO:

SCENE 3/3a/3b

INT. CHARLIE'S APARTMENT - NIGHT / EXT, PARK - NEWS INTERVIEW / INT. NEWSROOM

Charlie sits at a desk under a spot lamp, wearing latex gloves. His fake goatee, sunglasses, and hat are on the desk in front of him next to George and Martha's camera. Light from a TV in the opposite corner flashes throughout the scene. The sound is audible, but not comprehensible.

Charlie opens a batch of newly developed photographs and sorts through them, occasionally laughing and holding them up to the light for a better view. They are various tourist photographs that George and Martha took around Austin.

When he is finished sorting the pictures into two piles, Charlie pulls off his gloves, grabs one pile, gets up, and walks off camera. Charlie then turns on the overhead light, revealing a collection of cameras on bookshelves next to the door and a large bulletin board with many 4x6 photographs tacked up with push pins. The light also reveals SAM, Charlie's roommate, who sits on the couch in front of the TV in a stupor, mindlessly eating a bowl of cereal.

Charlie methodically pulls down some pictures from the board to make room for his new trophies and adds the new George and Martha pictures to the board. He pauses for a second on the picture he took of George and Martha in front of the Capitol, chuckles, and gives the picture a prominent place on the board.

As he admires his work, we hear a TV anchor clearly for the first time:

TV ANCHOR (O.S.)

And now, with tonight's Eyewitness News You Can Use News, let's go LIVE to CoCo Nelson at the Capitol, where she has an update on a story you saw first on Eyewitness News. CoCo?

SAM

(with a mouth full of cereal)
 Charlie? You're going to want to see this. They're playing your song.

Charlie turns to face the TV and sits on the couch next to Sam.

COCO (on TV)

Thanks, Jim. Well, the Snapshot Bandit--the photographer thief who has been terrorizing Austin tourists and eluding police for months--has struck again. Police say that the Bandit stole the camera of George and Martha Henderson of Waxahachie this afternoon after appearing to help the couple take a picture of them in front of the Capitol (turning and pointing). Earlier today, I spoke with the couple, who say that the Bandit took more than their camera: he took the couple's precious memories of their vacation.

GEORGE (on TV)

It makes me mad is what it does. I just can't believe someone could do something like this. What is the world coming to when you can't even trust tourists?

COCO (on TV)

And you, ma'am? How does this make you feel?

MARTHA (on TV)

Violated. I feel so violated. You want to be able to trust people and then something like this happens. (Pleading directly into CAMERA) Whoever you are, you, you . . .sicko, you can keep the camera, but please give us back our pictures! You can't possibly have any use for them and they mean so much to us!

Charlie and Sam laugh O.S.

CUT TO:

SCENE 4

INT. GEORGE AND MARTHA'S MOTEL ROOM - SAME

George and Martha are propped up in bed. The TV, which is on in the foreground, flashes light on them. Martha is on the phone.

MARTHA

(to the phone)

Hey, Sally, it's Martha--we're down in Austin for the weekend. It's a long story, but I wish you could see this. Me and George are on TV!

CUT TO:

SCENE 5/5a/5b

INT. CHARLIE'S APARTMENT / EXT. PARK — INTERVIEW / INT. NEWSROOM —
SAME

COCO (on TV)

Meanwhile, Jim, police have issued an alert to tourists to heed the fliers like this one (waving one of the fliers) that police posted at popular tourist sites around the city last month.

DETECTIVE RIOS (on TV)

We got a good description of the crime from the Hendersons that fits what we know so far, so we're pretty confident that we can catch this guy before we start to see tourists taking Austin off their itineraries, but we're hoping even more witnesses will come forward with information.

COCO (on TV)

There you have it. Back to you, Jim.

JIM

(V.O. while a video version of the flier
is displayed on TV screen)

Thanks, CoCo. Don't let what happened to the Hendersons happen to you or someone you know. You can protect your families from this bizarre criminal if you are on the lookout for the Bandit. Police describe him as a Caucasian or Hispanic Male, 25-39, 140-200 pounds, 5 foot 6 to 6 foot 5 tall. He is considered armed and dangerous, so do not approach him. And now, Dirk Peterson will tell us whether you should bring your umbrella to work tomorrow. . .

DISSOLVE TO:

SCENE 6

EXT. "GREETINGS FROM AUSTIN" MURAL, S. 1ST STREET, AUSTIN — DAY

JAN and DEAN stand in front of the Austin post card mural on South First, facing away from the mural. The giant fiberglass genie on the roof of the building rises above them. They are clumsily trying to take their own picture in front of the mural by each holding one side of the camera at arm's length.

CHARLIE (O.S.)

Hey, guys, looks like you could use some help with your camera. . .

DISSOLVE TO:

SCENE 7/7a/7b

INT. CHARLIE'S APARTMENT — NIGHT / EXT. RE-ENACTMENT — DAY / INT.
NEWSROOM

The overhead light is on. A new camera and disguise are on the desk next to a pile of pictures and a single picture off to the side. Light from a TV in the opposite corner flashes throughout the scene. The sound is on, but again barely audible. Sam is again on the couch staring into the TV, mindlessly surfing through the channels while eating cereal out of the box.

Charlie chuckles as he puts the new picture he took of Jan and Dean in front of the Austin mural right next to the picture of George and Martha in front of the Capitol.

Charlie sits back down at the desk, puts on his latex gloves, and grabs the picture sitting by itself. It is the skewed picture that Jan and Dean took of themselves in front of the "Greetings From Austin" mural just as Charlie appeared on the scene.

Turning the picture over, he reveals what he had written on the back of the picture. It is set up like a post card. The right side is addressed to Detective Rios, c/o the Austin Police. The left side reads: "Dear Detective Rios--Having a Wonderful time in Austin. Taking some great Pictures. Wish You Were Here.--the 'Snapshot Bandit'" Charlie places a post card stamp in the corner, lays the card on the desk, giggles, removes his gloves, and joins Sam on the couch.

JIM (on TV)

...and after the incident today in South Austin, police have increased the reward to \$1500 for the Snapshot Bandit, who is the subject of tonight's Crime Focus feature on Eyewitness News You Can Use News.

CHARLIE

Bonus. Keep it here.

Charlie and Sam watch as the TV news plays a documentary style re-enactment of Charlie's Capitol heist. The re-enactment is darkly lit, giving it a sinister feel. The actors playing George and Martha wear similar clothes but look completely different and play the scene in high camp style. Charlie is played by an actor wearing a fake beard, hooded sweatshirt, sunglasses, and blue jeans.

GEORGE 2 and MARTHA 2 are all smiles and cuteness, happily and lovingly going about their business while being stalked by CHARLIE 2, who is skulking behind the trees in the park. It should feel exaggerated, like Little Red Riding Hood gleefully skipping through the forest without a care in the world as the wolf, licking his chops, watches from behind a tree.

JIM (V.O. on TV)

We all know how disappointed we are when the pictures we take on vacation don't turn out, but picture this: On April 3, 2001, George and Martha Henderson were visiting the State Capitol, taking pictures of their romantic weekend in Austin, when . . .

CUT TO:

SCENE 8/8a

INT. GEORGE AND MARTHA'S MOTEL ROOM - SAME / EXT. RE-ENCATMENT

George and Martha are propped up in bed. The TV, which is on in the foreground, flashes light on them. Martha is reading a book while George watches TV.

GEORGE

Hey, Honey, Check it out: We're on TV again.

GEORGE 2 (O.S. on TV)

Sweetie, isn't this a lovely place?

MARTHA 2 (O.S. on TV)

Oh, yes, Pookie. It sure is. Wouldn't it be great to preserve a memory of the experience?

CUT TO:

SCENE 9/9a

INT. CHARLIE'S APARTMENT - SAME / EXT. RE-ENCATMENT

GEORGE 2 (on TV)

Splendid idea, Muffin. I'll just go over here to the bench and set up the camera so we can both be in the picture.

MARTHA 2 (on TV)

That would be grand. Then we'll always remember this wonderful moment and this wonderful place.

CHARLIE (O.S.)

(laughing)

Damn. Wish we were taping this!

On TV, George 2 competently sets up the camera on the bench.

GEORGE 2 (on TV)

Ready Muffin? Here goes the timer. Remember to smile.

On TV, Just as George 2 is about to push the button, Charlie 2 storms into the frame menacingly.

CHARLIE 2 (on TV)

Hey! Gimme that.

GEORGE 2 (on TV)

Please don't hurt me.

CHARLIE 2 (on TV)

I can help you. Why don't you go stand next to your old lady where you belong, dude. I'll take your picture for you.

GEORGE 2 (on TV)

Gee, you know, I actually could use some help--that way me and Pookie can both be in the picture, together...

Charlie and Sam burst out laughing O.S.

CHARLIE 2 (on TV)

Go stand next to Pookie, for crying out loud. I don't got all day.

On TV, George 2 is already walking towards Martha 2.

CHARLIE 2 (on TV)

Now, if you know what's good for you, you'll say "Hasta la vista, baby," like good boys and girls.

GEORGE and MARTHA 2 (on TV)
(smiling widely)

Hasta la vista, baby!

CHARLIE 2 (on TV)

So long, suckers...

Charlie and Sam just giggle.

CUT TO:

SCENE 10

INT. GEORGE AND MARTHA'S MOTEL ROOM - SAME

George and Martha are now both watching TV.

GEORGE

Boy, you gotta hand it to them at Eyewitness News. They sure tell it like it is.

MARTHA

Well, they got their facts straight, alright, but damned if I don't wish that you were as handsome as that man playing you on TV!

DISSOLVE TO:

SCENE 11

INT. DRUG STORE PHOTO DEVELOPING DESK - DAY

Clerk is looking at some pictures, giggling, and tossing them into the drawer he showed Charlie earlier. When he looks up, he sees Detective Rios standing over him watching what he's doing. Clerk instantly gets flustered and drops the pictures he was holding.

CLERK

Uh . . . Can I . . . uh . . . help you?

DETECTIVE RIOS

I'm beginning to think you can. We're trying to track down some stolen photographs.

CLERK

(sweating, shifty)

Stolen photographs?

DETECTIVE RIOS

I'm sure you've heard about the Snapshot Bandit, right? Well, we received a picture in the mail from him today, and we noticed that the back of the picture was stamped with your store's name and developer code. Do you mind if I have a look at what you've got in that drawer?

CLERK

(sweating, shifty)

Do I have a choice?

DETECTIVE RIOS

In the short term, yes. But we can do this the hard way or the easy way. Which is it?

DISSOLVE TO:

SCENE 12

INT. POLICE STATION LINE-UP ROOM - DAY

Six men of widely ranging ages, weights, heights, and ethnicities stand before a wall marked with height measurements. Each man has a goatee and is wearing jeans, a hooded sweat shirt, and sunglasses. One of the men, NUMBER 3, is the Clerk from the Drug store. Another man, NUMBER 4, looks almost exactly like Charlie 2 from the News re-enactment, but also identical to NUMBER 2. Behind the two way mirror, Detective Rios stands with George and Martha.

DETECTIVE RIOS

Are you sure?

GEORGE

I don't know, honey. Maybe we should have number 3 and 4 do it again?

Martha nods.

DETECTIVE RIOS (O.S., over loudspeaker)

OK, gentlemen. We need to hear number 3 and number 4 again. You know the drill. Number 3?

The Clerk steps forward, looking directly into the camera.

CLERK

Hasta la vista, baby.

DETECTIVE RIOS (O.S., over loudspeaker)
Number 4?

Number 4 steps forward, looking directly into the camera.

NUMBER 4
Hasta la vista, baby.

MARTHA
That's him! Number 4! This time I'm certain. He's the
one that created this mess. "Book'em Dan-o!"

DISSOLVE TO:

SCENE 13
INT. CHARLIE'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Charlie is at the desk sorting through pictures. Sam is on the couch watching TV and eating cereal.

SAM
Man, they'll catch up with you sometime.

CHARLIE
Not if I keep hitting people like George and Martha.

SAM
(with a mouthful of cereal)
Whatever, man. You just better not steal any more of my cereal again or I might just have to turn you in. The reality of the situation is that you are stealing people's cameras.

CHARLIE
Who gave you the keys to reality, dude? What I'm really doing is providing a service to these people. Take George and Martha. They wanted to take their pictures so they would have some evidence that they had been here, something to help them remember. I guarantee you that they're going to remember this trip even better now. They're probably hometown heroes in Waxahachie by now. Dude, they should thank me.

SAM
Whatever, man. Let's see what's on TV.

FADE OUT

Taking Pictures

Synopsis

Taking Pictures is a comedy about memory, media hype, mistaken identity, and Charlie the "Snapshot Bandit." Obsessed with other people's personal snapshot images, Charlie hangs out at tourist sites, offers to help tourists take their pictures at the sites, and then steals their cameras to get to their pictures. The film follows one particular theft involving George and Martha Henderson and the local media hysteria that ensues.

While George and Martha are angered and dismayed by the theft, they also enjoy getting to be on TV telling their story. Their story, however, is distorted because they were caught totally unawares by Charlie and did not notice what he looks like. From the police sketch and description circulating in town, which includes a wide range of descriptions of the Bandit, it is clear that Charlie's other victims have had a similar problem. The police are equally confused. Even when Charlie sends one of the tourist pictures he has stolen to the police to mock them, the police track down the clues, outsmart themselves, and apprehend the clerk who processes Charlie's film instead.

By the time that reporters at Eyewitness News You Can Use News do a Crime Stoppers re-enactment of the theft of George and Martha, the story has become a stereotypical crime news story and Charlie has become a dangerous thug who stalks his victims like a serial killer. Although its aim is to help solve the crime, the re-enactment only adds to the confusion, leaving George and Martha to pick the wrong man in the lineup and leaving Charlie still on the loose as the film ends.

Taking Pictures**Character Sketches****CHARLIE (white male, 25-35)**

Charlie is the "Snapshot Bandit"--a trickster figure who steals tourists' cameras after he offers to help them take pictures of themselves in front of popular tourist sites around Austin. Chameleon-like, Charlie picks his disguises to blend in with his surroundings so that his victims will not be able to describe him after he gets away. Despite police and news media theories to the contrary, Charlie is a relatively benign criminal. He is not interested in stealing cameras to pawn them for cash. Instead, he steals the cameras to get to the pictures, which have great fetish value for him because he is fascinated by the way other people use snapshots to represent their experience. And while he certainly enjoys his work, he also thinks of himself as a "gentleman bandit" providing a public service to his victims by making their vacations even more memorable than they imagined possible.

GEORGE (white male, 35-45) and MARTHA (white female, 35-45)

George and Martha Henderson, a 40-something tourist couple from Waxahachie, Texas, are on a romantic weekend vacation in Austin when they have their camera stolen by the "Snapshot Bandit," which sets off the events of the film. George means well but is generally incompetent and Martha means well but is generally impatient with George's incompetence, so their interactions are characterized by biting but good-natured bickering. George and Martha are embarrassed and angry that they have been duped by the Snapshot Bandit, but they love the fact that the ultimate outcome of the crime for them is that they get to be on TV. George and Martha are always seen together.

GEORGE 2 (white male, 35-45) and MARTHA 2 (white female, 35-45)

George 2 and Martha 2 are the two main characters in the news re-enactment of the Snapshot Bandit's crime depicted in the first scene of the movie. Unlike George and Martha, who bicker with each other and fumble their way through their encounter with the tourist site, George 2 and Martha 2 drip with sweetness and innocence as they are attacked by Charlie 2, a stereotypically menacing criminal. Their sweetness should be played as over-the-top camp.

CHARLIE 2 (white or Latino male, 25-35)

Charlie 2 is the Snapshot Bandit in the news re-enactment version. Unlike Charlie, who is a subtle trickster figure without a clear and predictable motive for his crimes, Charlie 2 is menacing and obvious--a bully and a thug, with a chip on his shoulder and an empty pocket to fill with money earned from pawning stolen cameras. Like Charlie, though, Charlie 2 enjoys his work.

NEWS ANCHOR/JIM (male or female, 35-45) and NEWS REPORTER/HORATIO/CoCo (male or female, 25-35)

The Eyewitness News anchor and reporter are earnest to a fault, which means that they take the Snapshot Bandit crime more seriously than we think they should. Their reporting hypes the crimes, treating them the same way they would a serial killer or rapist on the loose creating mass hysteria in the community. They do not see any irony in their role in this. They read their lines in the characteristically over-the-top cadence of the local 10 o'clock news.

DETECTIVE RIOS (Latino male, 35-45)

Detective Rios is a suspicious but good-natured police detective who takes his job seriously but also has a sadistic sense of humor--especially when it comes to interrogating suspects.

CLERK (white male, 25-35)

The Clerk works behind the counter at a drug store, processing photos. Like Charlie, he has a fetish for other people's pictures: he collects copies of his favorite photographs brought in by customers to be developed. We never see which kind of photographs he is particularly interested in, but his actions and interactions should indicate that his fetish for other people's photographs is creepier than Charlie's.

SAM (white male, 25-35)

Sam is Charlie's slacker roommate. He never seems to leave his perch on the couch in front of the TV. He thinks Charlie's habits are amusing, and gets vicarious pleasure watching Charlie get away with it, but he wonders whether it is the right thing to do.

TOURISTS BEWARE

THE "SNAPSHOT BANDIT" FREQUENTS THIS SITE



THE SNAPSHOT BANDIT

CAUCASIAN OR
HISPANIC MALE

AGE: 25 - 39

WEIGHT: 140 - 200
POUNDS

HEIGHT: 5'6" TO
6'5"

DO NOT LET THIS MAN
USE YOUR CAMERA TO
TAKE YOUR PICTURE

HE WILL STEAL YOUR
CAMERA

REPORT ANY AND ALL SUSPICIOUS ACTIVITY
TO THE POLICE IMMEDIATELY

\$1,000 REWARD FOR INFORMATION LEADING TO
HIS CAPTURE, ARREST, AND INDICTMENT