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SCRIPT SAMPLE

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COCKROACH NATION
By Matt Pelfrey

CHARACTERS

HANK - A Man in his mid to late forties.

MIRIAM - Hank's wife.

DEAN - Hank's step-son.

BOONE - An urban survivalist.

COCKROACH BOY - Late teens, early twenties.

SICK FUCK FRANK - 'Nuff said.

BETTY - A twisted old hag.

WOMAN - A homeless woman.

CRUTCHES - A homeless man.

BLACK DUDE - A member of the working poor.

TRASH KING - An ancient homeless man

TRASH QUEEN - Literally made of trash.

SETTING - The dead-end of two impossibly long alleys in downtown Los Angeles. A huge dumpster, heaps of refuse, trash and boxes. Drenched in graffiti.

ACT ONE

Scene One

PIN LIGHT RISES on a throne of trash. On it sits the KING OF TRASH - a man so covered in filth and grime, we can't make out his race or his features.

Another PIN LIGHT RISES on a large garbage bag. It starts to move. Something is inside.

KING OF TRASH: When does the awareness hit? When does the time come when you realize everything you've been led to believe as valuable and necessary is really trash?

(Beat)

I remember the day when I knew I couldn't run anymore...

(Beat)

When the landfill in my mind refused to bury any more of the garbage from my life.

A HAND tears out from the garbage bag.

KING OF TRASH: If there is one truth I know, it's this...

ANOTHER HAND rips out.

KING OF TRASH: The wrapper outlasts the burger...

A HEAD emerges through the torn plastic.

KING OF TRASH: The bottle outlasts the wine...

HANK, dressed in a sharp business suit, pulls himself from the trash bag, like some new life-form emerging from a very strange womb.

KING OF TRASH: ...the can outlasts the coke...

Hank is now out of the bag, stands upright on shaking legs.

KING OF TRASH: The bones outlast the skin!!!

LIGHTS FADE on the King of Trash.

LIGHTS RISE on the dead end of an incredibly long alley. Garbage cans, trash bags, mounds of cardboard boxes, heaps and heaps of trash and a dumpster frothing with garbage dominate the area. Steam whispers up from a manhole. Pipes jetting out of the walls drip strange liquids. It is a moist, dangerous environment.

A stage left and stage right alley feed into the dead end. It is night.

Hank goes to one of the cans, lifts it up, dumps the trash out, throws the can aside. He descends on the spilt garbage, sifts through it with his hands. He finds a can. He looks around, warily, then smashes it and puts it in his pocket. Keeps sifting, finds some more stuff, puts it in another pocket.

Finished with that, he scans the alley, sees a garbage bag that interests him, goes to it, rips it open. He hungrily digs through the contents, stops when he finds something. We can't see

exactly what it is, but he smells it, tastes it, then takes a bite and starts to chew.

He closes his eyes, relishing the taste, savoring it, then...

Suddenly, as if gaining his senses again, he YELLS, spits out whatever he was eating and staggers back, shocked at what he's done, falls to his knees and retches, dry heaving and holding his stomach.

HANK: ...uh...god...wha...what is this...? Uhg...no, no, no...

(He takes in the alley)

What the...?

(As if suddenly waking up)

...oh shit...

(Harsher, to himself)

Control, control, control...It's okay...

(Gets a hold of himself)

Miriam!

(He pats his jacket, feels for something)

Oh god, thank you!

(Pulls cellular phone from jacket)

Please...please be home...be home...Miriam? Shit! Goddamn machine!

(He gathers himself, steadies his voice)

Miriam...I...I don't know exactly where I am...I...I had another spell...I'm out here...well, I'm not sure where I am, but, I'll call once I get to a street...or someplace I recognize...I'm so sorry...there's something wrong... whatever you want me to do, whoever you think I should see... I'll do it.

(Clicks the phone off)

Shit.

Hank starts to move towards the stage right alley. As he does, something rises up from the trash. It's a boy, in his teens, dirt covered. He wears shorts that are just as filthy as his skin. In fact, you can't tell them apart. His arms and legs are bare. He has two mismatched tennis shoes and a pair of goggles over his eyes. When he talks it comes out as a strange "ticking" sound. This is COCKROACH BOY.

HANK: YAAAHHOLYSHIT!!!!

COCKROACH BOY: Ticktickticktickkkkkk!!!

HANK: Stay away!!

Cockroach Boy crawls towards Hank.

HANK: Don't come any closer!!

Hank looks around for a weapon. Picks up a metal pipe from the trash, holds it ready.

HANK: I'll hit you! Stay away!!

Hank backs up against the dumpster.

HANK: I mean it! Stop! Right there! YAH! GET!

BOONE RISES UP from the dumpster behind Hank, brings a cord around his neck, pulls it tight.

HANK: AAAAGGGGKKKK!

Hank clutches at the cord, drops the pipe. Boone chokes Hank until he's gasping and then lets go.

Hank tumbles forward.

Boone jumps out from the dumpster, grabs Hank and throws him into one of the trash heaps.

BOONE: You FBI, ain't ya? Checkin' in with headquarters, weren't ya?

Boone reaches into Hank's jacket, takes out the cellular phone, throws it against the wall.

BOONE: Wanna find out about Trash Day? After my notes on Koresh? Not a chance! I told you about Trash Day once and you all LAUGHED IN MY FACE!

Boone pulls out a gun.

BOONE: On your knees! PRONTO!

Hank doesn't move. Boone hauls Hank to his knees, backs away.

BOONE: Know how many FBI punks they've sent after me so far? Mucho! And I've smoked every one of 'em!

HANK: I'm not with the FBI!!

BOONE: Thought you'd say that—

HANK: IT'S TRUE!!

Boone jams the gun against Hank's forehead.

BOONE: Give J. Edgar Hoover a big tongue kiss when you see him in hell!

HANK: NO!!

Hank scrambles away, cringes, holds up a sack of garbage in a pathetic attempt to ward off the bullet.

Boone and Cockroach Boy share a look.

BOONE: Never seen a Bureau boy cower like that.

HANK: I'm not with the FBI, GODDAMNIT!!

Boone looks over at Cockroach Boy again. Cockroach Boy shrugs.

BOONE: Wallet.

HANK: Take whatever you want -- have it all!

BOONE: Wallet! Now!

Hank reaches into his back pocket. Boone takes aim on Hank.

BOONE: Careful...

Hank pulls out his wallet, throws it to him. Boone picks it up, searches it.

BOONE: Huh.

Boone throws the wallet back at Hank.

BOONE: Who the hell are ya then?

HANK: Hank. My name...is Hank...okay?

BOONE: What're you doin' back here?

HANK: Don't even know where I am.

BOONE: Buying any of this crap, Cockroach Boy?

COCKROACH BOY: Tickticktictictictickkkk!

HANK: It's the truth!

BOONE: This's the drain.

HANK: Doesn't help me much.

BOONE: It all ends up right here.

HANK: What does?

BOONE: *(Ignoring his question)* You trollin' for trim?

HANK: Trolling...? No, no...I don't—

BOONE: Want someone to get freaky? Huh? Somethin' nasty the little woman won't do?

HANK: I -- I was at work...work! Some meeting...for what?
(Can't remember)
For what? Something important...

BOONE: Don't give a shit. Either way —

HANK: *(Remembering)* The Mega-Bacon Deluxe.
(Off Boone's look.)
I was meeting with my team...developing the West Coast ad campaign for the new Mega-Bacon Deluxe... then...everything... just smeared...smeared together...

BOONE: Get your ass up.

HANK: Don't do anything...please I—

BOONE: See that alley? Go! Follow it to wherever the fuck you came from.

HANK: That'll take me back? To the street?

BOONE: I'm givin' you a chance here. Better take it.

Hank starts to move towards the stage right alley. Stops.

BOONE: Nah, don't stop! GET OUTTA HERE!

Boon chucks a hunk of trash at him. HANK EXITS.

BOONE: Poor bastard.

COCKROACH BOY: Tictictickticktickkk!

BOONE: Nothing we can do for 'im.

COCKROACH BOY: Tickkk! Tickk! Tickk!

BOONE: Hey, I ain't God, 'kay. I can't save everyone. Call it compassion fatigue if ya want.

Cockroach Boy stares hard at Boone.

BOONE: No, no, no! Don't give me that look! We're gettin' outta here. Time to sequester.

COCKROACH BOY: Tickkkkkk-tickkkk!

BOONE: Don't start...

COCKROACH BOY: Ttiticktick!

BOONE: Wrong! He's just like all the rest!

COCKROACH BOY: Tticktitick!

BOONE: You don't know that!

COCKROACH BOY: Tick, tittick!

BOONE: You're reachin', you're really reachin' now CB!

COCKROACH BOY: Tititkc!

BOONE: He's not! Squash that shit!

Boone reaches into the dumpster, pulls out a big, hiker-style back pack. It is full of stuff carefully tied-in and organized.

COCKROACH BOY: Tititckcktick?

BOONE: No time to get laid. Y'nabbed a piece last week.

Cockroach Boy grabs a bag of trash and dry humps it for a second, grinning enthusiastically, nodding to Boone.

BOONE: Damn, you're just full of opinions and demands tonight. What more you want from me? Huh?

COCKROACH BOY: Tickkk!

BOONE: It's gonna happen any day now! Let's hit the bunker and wait it out! We gotta stick to the plan!

Cockroach Boy shakes his head "no."

BOONE: You're bein' el stupido.

COCKROACH BOY: Tickk! Tickk!

Boone takes a deep breath. Cockroach Boy grabs his groin.

BOONE: She's not in love with you! She was a crack whore! She'd fuck a dead dog for a dollar fifty! Which is fifty cents less than I paid her to fuck you!

Cockroach Boy strokes the bag of trash tenderly.

BOONE: We all want love, kiddo. But that doesn't mean we all get love. Comprende?

Cockroach Boy SCREAMS, starts slamming the garbage bag onto the ground in a rage.

BOONE: No more tantrums! STOP THAT!

Cockroach Boy throws the bag of trash aside.

BOONE: I'll leave your ass here. Serious. Don't wanna. You're my best pal, like Robin and Tonto put in one feisty little package, but if push comes to shove, nobody shoves harder than me.

Cockroach Boy senses something, dives into a pile of trash, disappears.

Boone pulls his gun as Hank ENTERS.

BOONE: Told you to beat it.

HANK: Every step I took—

BOONE: Hey!

HANK: It felt wrong! I couldn't—

BOONE: Just go! Lucky I haven't capped your ass yet!

HANK: Like I was stepping into a lie...

BOONE: C'mon...

HANK: ...was feeling nauseous...

BOONE: It's the smell back here, now—

HANK: I threw up.

BOONE: You get a gold star—

HANK: When I did, swear to Christ, garbage came out.

BOONE: Don't wanna hear this...

HANK: Old coffee grounds!

BOONE: Shut up!

HANK: A McDonalds bag!

BOONE: Alright...!

HANK: Wadded up napkins!

BOONE: Enough!

HANK: A can of Bud Lite...

(Beat)

I don't even drink Bud Lite!

BOONE: Hey, see a doctor! Maybe it's some new kind of yuppie flu!

HANK: When you were ranting at me...waving that gun...you mentioned Trash Day.

Slight pause.

BOONE: So fuckin' what?

HANK: Every night this week, I've been sleep-walking...My wife finds me by the curb with our cans mumbling "Trash Day is coming. Trash Day is coming. It's time to take out the trash."

(Beat)

In my dreams -- I've seen cities built on continents of garbage! Endless landscapes of refuse and junk! I've been getting these... impulses...what the hell's happening to me?

BOONE: Hey, sorry, but—

HANK: I heard you. You said it...

BOONE: Don't matter what I said.

HANK: I'M LOSING MY FUCKING MIND!! Going crazy! You know! I can see it! IN YOUR EYES! You got to help me!

BOONE: I don't gotta do shit! This isn't Bullshit Incorporated! I don't work for you! Back here...this is my office. And you don't come into my office demanding shit!

HANK: Then shoot me! "Cap me!" Whatever. I don't care!

Hank reaches for Boone's gun.

BOONE: Hey!

Boone draws on Hank.

HANK: Yes. There you go...Do it! Put me down. I can't go on like this. I'm deteriorating...

BOONE: *(Lowers his gun)* You're too late.

HANK: For what?

BOONE: Everything.

Hank looks at Boone. Doesn't understand.

BOONE: Trash Day. It's imminent. Nothin' you can do.

HANK: Don't even know what this Trash Day's supposed to be.

BOONE: Wouldn't be here if you didn't. Just buried.

(Tapping his skull)

In here. Trust me.

HANK: Why can't you explain--?

BOONE: Do yourself a favor. Go back to the Great Lie. Pretend everything's fine. Watch your big screen, go to your little job, n'when Trash Day hits, pray you're killed instantly.

(To Cockroach Boy)

CB! Let's go!

Cockroach Boy sticks his head out from under the trash.

COCKROACH BOY: Tictictick!

BOONE: No.

COCKROACH BOY: Ticktickticktick!

BOONE: No fuckin' way.

COCKROACH BOY: TICKKTICKKKK!!

BOONE: Come out, right goddamn now. We're going! Fuckin' pronto!

COCKROACH BOY: *(Vehemently)* TITTITITITITTICICICTITTICKCCTITITCICCK!

HANK: What's he saying!!

COCKROACH BOY: Tittititckkkkk!

HANK: Tell me!

Boone glares at Cockroach Boy, takes a breath, looks over at Hank.

BOONE: Says you may be different than the rest.

HANK: The rest? What, there's others?

BOONE: Got a Priest once. A cop. This really annoying chiropractor.

HANK: Wait -- Can I talk to them?

Boone shakes his head.

HANK: Maybe they could tell me what—

BOONE: Ain't gonna tell you shit.

HANK: Why...not?

Boone doesn't speak. Just looks at Hank, searching for something in his face, eyes, being...

HANK: Where are they?

BOONE: Broken. Cracked. Twisted. Couldn't handle it. When they saw what was comin', they fell apart.

(To Cockroach Boy)

Just like he's gonna.

(To Hank)

Here's the bottom line: I think CB's ass-wrong about you...

COCKROACH BOY: Titictictick!!

BOONE : (*Ignoring CB*) You're just like the others. Another piece a' human garbage that got hosed off Melrose and ended up here.

COCKROACH BOY: Titctictick! Ticktu!

BOONE: You don't know! You're just guessing!

COCKROACH BOY: Tickticktitick!

BOONE: Bullshit, Roach! You said that about the last one!

END OF SAMPLE.