

SHELBURNE FALLS

a screwball black comedy

Written by

Christopher Zatta

Screenplay For A Short Film

FADE IN:

1 **INT. STARK ROOM - DAY**

1

An upside down SILVER SKULL fills the frame. We SLOWLY rotate COUNTERCLOCKWISE, turning the skull rightside up, DRIFTING BACK almost imperceptibly, REVEALING the skull is actually a RING, and the ring is on the PINKY FINGER of a man's HAND, and the hand is laying motionless on a TABLE TOP.

A different set of hands ENTER FRAME, belonging to a MYSTERY MAN, clad in LATEX SURGICAL GLOVES and clutching a pair of heavy-duty stainless steel MEDICAL SHEARS.

The shears slide around the pinky finger, just above the skull ring, SQUEEZING TIGHT, straining with effort to cut the finger... to no avail -- *cutting fingers is tough.*

The Mystery Man takes a break, flexing his own fingers. He tries again, placing the shears back around the pinky.

CAMERA DRIFTS OFF NOW, across the table top, SETTLING ON a MANILA ENVELOPE as --

CRUNCH! WE HEAR the shears slice through flesh and bone.

TIGHT ON THE ENVELOPE, the address label reads: "To Sheriff Cameron Moore".

CRUNCH. CRUNCH. CRUNCH. CRUNCH -- four more fingers severed.

The Mystery Man quickly drops the BLOODY FINGERS in the manilla envelope and stuffs in a folded up PIECE OF PAPER before we --

SMASH TO:

2 **EXT. MAIN STREET - POST OFFICE - DAY**

2

Our Mystery Man approaches a USPS MAILBOX. He's cloaked in a COAT and HAT, back turned to us, never offering a good look at his identity.

ANGLE ON the mailbox. The slat opens and the MANILLA PACKAGE slides inside.

SMASH TO:

3 **EXT. SHELburnE FALLS - VARIOUS - DAY**

3

A SIGN READS: "You Are Now In Shelburne Falls".

(CONTINUED)

3 CONTINUED:

3

ESTABLISHING: A SERIES OF SHOTS of this small town and its various TOWNSFOLK -- a quirky and secluded hamlet, tucked in the foothills of a MOUNTAIN RANGE where the norm... well, the norm isn't always so normal.

CUT TO:

4 **EXT. MAIN STREET - NORTH END - DAY**

4

A BANNER hangs ACROSS AN INTERSECTION, reading: "Sheriff's Election Today."

And walking briskly right below that banner is --

SHERIFF CAMERON MOORE, late-thirties, Average Joe looks, sporting a SHERIFF'S BADGE and carrying an empty CASSEROLE DISH. Cameron is a little slow on the uptake, but he's warm and neighborly, and boy does he love everything about this town and the people in it.

He continues his brisk walk along MAIN STREET, taking note of ANOTHER BANNER hanging outside a STOREFRONT.

ANGLE ON the banner, reading: "Sheriff Cameron Moore vs Guy Fosse", as WE PUSH IN on the name GUY FOSSE...

CUT TO:

5 **EXT. MAIN STREET - TOWN CENTER - DAY**

5

GUY FOSSE, late-twenties, Hollywood looks, smug and arrogant, yet somehow also charming and appealing. He stands on a sidewalk with two GUNS holstered to his belt, Old West-style.

Guy shakes hands with a CLUSTER OF TOWNSFOLK who are entering a STOREFRONT, where a SIGN reads: "Vote Here".

MAPLE, twenties, Guy's loyal and adoring girlfriend, a knockout with a fashion sense to flaunt it, hands out "ELECT GUY FOSSE" BUTTONS to all PASSERS-BY.

MAPLE

(to each Passer-By)

Vote Guy... Vote Guy... Vote Guy...

ANGLE ON Sheriff Cameron, arriving across the street. He watches Guy, discouraged by the man's show of bravado.

Gidget (O.S.)

Big day, today.

(CONTINUED)

5 CONTINUED:

5

Cameron turns to see his MOTHER APPROACHING -- GIDGET, sixties and peppy, she brims with a parent's love and wants nothing more than for her son to be the happy local Sheriff.

Cameron hands Gidget the casserole dish and kisses her cheek.

CAMERON

Let's not get our hopes up, Mom.

GIDGET

(bolstering)

Oh, hush. Remember how happy you were when everyone first voted you Sheriff?

Cameron

Sure I do, but...

(gestures to Guy,
conceding)

This guy, Guy, is better than me. Everyone's voting for him.

GIDGET

Nonsense. You ask people, dollars to donuts, they like you more.

(adding, convinced)

You'll see.

Cameron smiles, appreciating her support.

OLD MAN (O.S.)

It's gonna be a battle. No doubt. Two men enter, one leaves, that sorta thing.

TWO TOWNSFOLK step outside yet ANOTHER STOREFRONT, HANGING UP yet ANOTHER BANNER in support of Guy.

Old man (O.S.) (CONT'D)

Cameron is class A. One hundred percent. But Guy, well, Guy really feels like he wants it... and he's got all those guns.

Cameron and Gidget look back across the street at Guy.

CAMERON AND GIDGET'S POV: Guy pulls a gun from his holster, UNLOADS the clip, aims at Cameron, cocks the hammer with a grin, and pulls the trigger so it goes CLICK.

Cameron jumps, startled; but then, actually kinda impressed --

CAMERON

He really does have a lot of guns.

(CONTINUED)

5 CONTINUED:

5

OLD MAN (O.S.)
 So in a way, instead of a battle, you
 could say it's more kind of a storm,
 washing Cameron away, leaving the town
 with the one man standing...

6 **EXT. MAIN STREET - SOUTH END - OLD FOLKS HOME - DAY**

6

Our ruminating OLD MAN, ninety-years-young, sits with HALEY
 NEWMAN, eighteen-years-old, wide-eyed eager reporter for the
 local newspaper.

OLD MAN
 (in jest)
 But watch out, I got sass in me still.
 Maybe I'll be the one left standing.

Haley laughs and writes feverishly in her NOTE PAD.

WE WIDEN to REVEAL the Old Man sits in a WHEELCHAIR. And
 ADJACENT TO HIM, rolling her eyes at his bad joke, is --

MAYOR BOBBI, fifties, sitting alone at a TABLE outside a DINER.
 Unfulfilled by her Mayoral role, Bobbi is a strong advocate of
 having a long breakfast and getting to work late.

Haley turns to Mayor Bobbi, enthusiastic, note pad in hand.

HALEY
 Hey, I'm writing an article on the
 election. Got a comment?

MAYOR BOBBI
 (frowns, shaking her head)
 Nuh uh. I'm not into local politics.

HALEY)
 (disheartened)
 But you're the Mayor.

Mayor Bobbi offers a "whacha gonna do" shrug, just as a DINER
 WAITRESS slides a PLATE OF FRENCH TOAST on her table and we --

CUT TO:

7 **EXT. MAIN STREET - POST OFFICE - DAY**

7

The METALLIC BACK PANEL to the mailbox OPENS. Crouching behind
 it is MAIL MAN SAM, thirties, an avid whistler and chipper as
 the day is long. He scoops the mail into a BIN.

(CONTINUED)

7 CONTINUED:

7

ANGLE ON the MAIL BIN, the MANILLA PACKAGE lays on top. It's DAMP now -- the blood from the fingers inside leaking through.

CUT TO:

8 EXT. MAIN STREET - POLICE STATION - DAY

8

Mail Man Sam waltzes leisurely up to the police station with his mail bin.

ANGLE ON the bin again, the manilla package on top, now taking on a significant DEEP RED SOGGY COLOR.

9 INT. POLICE STATION - LOBBY - CONTINUOUS

9

Sam ENTERS, spotting the DEPUTY, sixties, on the job for forty years, never seen a crime but sure wishes he could.

The Deputy takes the mail bin and holds up the manilla package. It's now completely SOGGY, GOOPY and RED-STAINED.

DEPUTY

(grimaces, re: the
package)

Do I need to sign for this one?

CUT TO:

10 INT. POLICE STATION - SHERIFF'S OFFICE - DAY

10

Sheriff Cameron ENTERS his office. Young Reporter Haley is right on his tail, dogging him.

CAMERON

Haley, I don't want to do an interview
for an election I'm going to lose.

Haley

Maybe you won't lose.

CAMERON

(making a point)
Who did you vote for?

Haley averts her eyes and nods, point taken.

CAMERON (CONT'D)

(leans in, confessing)
And listen, off the record, I'm not sure
I even want to be Sheriff anymore.

(CONTINUED)

10 CONTINUED:

10

HALEY

Well, that's probably for the best,
considering.

CAMERON

I know, right? Something crazy would have
to happen for me to win.

The Deputy ENTERS with the DRIPPING saturated manilla package.

DEPUTY

(handing it over)

Package came for you, Cameron.

Haley and the Deputy gather close as Cameron grabs a LETTER
OPENER and quizzically slices the package open.

The bloody fingers FLOP OUT onto his desk.

CAMERON

Whoa, boy.

HALEY

Ugh!

DEPUTY

Wow... human fingers.

The BLOOD-STAINED folded piece of paper FLOPS OUT next.

CAMERON

(reading the note aloud)

Dear Sheriff Cameron. I left you the rest
at the park. Enjoy.

We PUSH IN TIGHT on the words "...the park. Enjoy." as we --

MATCH CUT TO:

11 **EXT. THE PARK - DAY**

11

TIGHT ON A SIGN that reads: "THE PARK. ENJOY!"

Sheriff Cameron quick-steps PASSED THE SIGN and through the
park, leading a GROWING SWARM of people, including:

Haley, the Deputy, Mail Man Sam, Gidget, Mayor Bobbi, and of
course the Old Man in his wheelchair.

OLD MAN

(to the Deputy)

What's Sheriff Cameron doing?

(CONTINUED)

11 CONTINUED:

11

DEPUTY
 (excited)
 Solving a crime!

Then -- EVERYONE STOPS across from a GIANT TREE, peering OFF CAMERA, aghast in horror.

REVERSE ANGLE TO REVEAL A CORPSE, male, forties. Its HAND missing all five digits, the SKULL RING prominently situated on the PINKY STUMP.

CAMERON
 (to the gathered
 Townsfolk, protective)
 Okay, everyone better, uh, step back.

As everyone steps back --

STANLEY MOORE, seventies, ignores Cameron's request and steps forward. Stanley is Cameron's dad, a spry little guy who is just tickled pink over the dead body.

STANLEY
 (to Cameron)
 This is great, huh? A murder case!

CAMERON
 (pulls Stanley aside,
 concerned)
 No, Dad, it isn't. I've never solved a murder before.

STANLEY
 So? Neither have a lot of people.

ANGLE ON THE FINGERLESS CORPSE, still on the ground. The Deputy leans over it, gazing with fascination.

Stanley (O.S.) (CONT'D)
 The killer sent fingers to you, right? He wants you to catch him. It's classic.

ANGLE BACK ON Cameron and Stanley.

CAMERON
 He wants to be caught? Geez, I hope so.

STANLEY
 And when you get 'em, I bet you'll win the election.

CAMERON
 (suddenly reticent)
 Oh... then maybe I shouldn't.

(CONTINUED)

11 CONTINUED:

11

ANGLE ON Guy, APPROACHING with Maple, fervently spouting out questions to no one in particular --

GUY

Why is this crime scene contaminated with civilians? Where is the M.E.? Has an autopsy even been scheduled?

Guy sees the Deputy touching the wounds on the corpse's fingerless hand.

GUY (CONT'D)

(snaps his fingers at him)
Hey, sicko. Stop that.

Guy turns to the Townsfolk, commanding attention with hutzpah.

GUY (CONT'D)

This is what I'm talking about, people.
The current inefficient police force does not protect your town.

ANGLE ON Stanley watching Cameron, saddened to see his son shy away from Guy.

GUY (CONT'D)

The killer cut fingers off his victim,
wrote a note and put it all in the mail.
That kind of methodical approach is the
work of someone who will strike again.

Stanley nudges Cameron, whispering --

STANLEY

Don't let him take this from you, son.

CAMERON

(nods; then, weak-kneed)
Hey, Guy...?

GUY

(turns to Cameron, amused)
Yes, soon-to-be-former Sheriff Cameron?

CAMERON

This is my investigation.

Guy and Maple crack up laughing. Cameron winces, insulted.

GUY

Cam, you don't have what it takes.

CAMERON

I... sure I do.

(CONTINUED)

11 CONTINUED:

11

Guy
Yeah? In what way? Huh?

CAMERON
Well, uh, I --

Guy
What in the name of all that's sacred do
you bring to the table?

Cameron looks out at the gathered cluster of observing
Townsfolk. He considers his reply, then --

Cameron
People in this town like me. And I like
them.

GUY
(gets in Cameron's face,
insidious)
I could care less about what these people
like. All I care about is winning.

Those words land on Cameron, offending him, discrediting his
beloved town. He straightens his back.

CAMERON
When you win, Guy, my job is all yours.
But till then you have no authority here.
So, get the hell out of my way!

Guy steps back, surprised by Cameron's gumption.

GUY
Fine. Let's see you solve the case.

Guy DEPARTS, with Maple in tow.

Stanley, Gidget, Haley, the Deputy and EVERYONE ELSE break out
in CLAPS and HOOTS for Cameron. All impressed.

HALEY
Sheriff! How about that interview now?

Cameron blushes, enjoying the accolade with fearful skepticism.
The applause grows LOUDER, ECHOING as we --

CUT TO:

12 **EXT. MAIN STREET - TOWN CENTER - LATER THAT DAY** 12

"Elect Guy Fosse" BUTTONS fill the frame. We SLOWLY DRIFT BACK, REVEALING the buttons are inside a TRASH CAN, and the trash can is on the MAIN STREET SIDEWALK, and the sidewalk is littered with TORN DOWN and TORN UP Guy Fosse BANNERS.

Guy APPROACHES with Maple, genuinely dismayed by the show of newfound support for Sheriff Cameron.

GUY

Cameron hasn't even caught the killer yet and already everyone supports him? It doesn't make any sense.

He sees a NEW BANNER, reading: "Re-Elect Sheriff Cameron!"

GUY (CONT'D)

He did it without buttons. He did it without a campaign. He did it without attitude, bribes or a brain.

MAPLE

(beat, concerned)

Guy... you're starting to sound like the Grinch.

CUT TO:

13 **EXT. MAIN STREET - ADJACENT TO TOWN CENTER - CONTINUOUS** 13

Sheriff Cameron and Mayor Bobbi stand across the road, both shaking their heads at the campaign mess on Main Street.

CAMERON

(sighs)

I am woebegone, Mayor Bobbi. My heart is just not in being Sheriff anymore.

MAYOR BOBBI

I hear that. I don't want to be Mayor.

CAMERON

Really? I always thought being Mayor'd be fun.

MAYOR BOBBI

Nuh uh. You wind up knowing every dirty secret in town. Makes me want to leave.

CAMERON

(skeptically amused)

Dirty secrets? Here?

(CONTINUED)

13 CONTINUED:

13

MAYOR BOBBI

There's always grime beneath the shine,
Cameron. Always.

ANGLE ON Cameron, lighting up with an idea...

CAMERON

Hey, if you want to leave, I can run
against you in the next Mayor election.

MAYOR BOBBI

Fine be me. Then I can retire.

CAMERON

And Guy can be Sheriff. And everyone can
be happy. It's perfect!

MAYOR BOBBI

S'long as someone catches the killer too.

CAMERON

(oh... yeah)
I'm working on that.
(but still on cloud nine)
Mayor.

Cameron smiles to himself and WALKS OFF, leaving Bobbi to peer
across the street at the new banner, musing --

MAYOR BOBBI

(not noticing that Cameron
has exited)
S'funny though. That murder really helped
your odds at staying Sheriff. Almost as
if the killer was your biggest fan.

CUT TO:

14 INT. STANLEY & GIDGET'S HOME - KITCHEN - DAY

14

Gidget stands at the sink, barefoot, washing BLOOD off her
hands. Stanley sits in a chair, his hands covered in BLOOD too,
pulling off DIRT ENCRUSTED BOOTS.

15 INT. STANLEY & GIDGET'S HOME - LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

15

Cameron WALTZES IN, a grin glued to his face, calling out --

CAMERON

Mom! Dad! I've got an announcement!

Stanley and Gidget both ENTER, giddy to see Cameron.

(CONTINUED)

15 CONTINUED:

15

STANLEY

There he is!

ANGLE ON STANLEY'S HANDS, still covered in BLOOD -- but Cameron doesn't notice just yet.

GIDGET

Did you see everyone in town? They're all voting for you now.

CAMERON

Actually, that's why I'm here. I don't want to be Sheriff anymore.

STANLEY

(beat, shocked)

...what? But what do you want to be?

CAMERON

Mayor.

GIDGET

Mayor? Son, you're really throwing a monkey wrench at us.

CAMERON

(finally noticing Stanley's hands)

...is that blood?

CUT TO:

16 **EXT. MAIN STREET - TOWN CENTER - DAY**

16

Guy loads an AMMO CLIP into each of his handguns.

GUY

(to Maple)

I've been going about this all wrong. I do want these people to like me.

MAPLE

What are you going to do about it?

GUY

Make amends with Cameron and help him catch the killer. He needs me. The town needs me.

(then)

Now which way did he go?

CUT TO:

17 **INT. STANLEY & GIDGET'S HOME - LIVING ROOM - DAY**

17

Stanley and Gidget stand in front of Cameron. He's aghast as they try to explain themselves --

STANLEY

You see, son, we wanted to give you a crime to solve.

GIDGET

So you could be a shoe-in to win Sheriff.

STANLEY

Which obviously was working out great.

CAMERON

...what exactly are you talking about?

Stanley glances at Gidget. She nods to him approvingly.

STANLEY

(then, to Cameron)

We're the killers.

Cameron just stares, jaw open, gawking in disbelief.

GIDGET

We did it because we love you.

CUT TO:

18 **INT. STANLEY & GIDGET'S HOME - BACK SHED - DAY**

18

The SHED DOOR OPENS to reveal Cameron, Stanley and Gidget in the ENTRYWAY, peering inside where --

A MAN is sprawled across a bloody PLASTIC TARP on the floor.

CAMERON

(flabbergasted)

You guys actually murdered two people.

GIDGET

(correcting, re: the Man)

This one's not dead yet. He's unconscious.

STANLEY

All the blood's just from hitting him over the head with my hickory ball-peen hammer a couple times. Remember we both got one of those back in '96?

(CONTINUED)

18 CONTINUED:

18

GIDGET

(re: the sprawled, bloody
man)

See, he's our patsy. We figured we'd
leave him alive since it'd be best if you
killed him. Then you'd be the town hero.

Cameron approaches this PATSY, dumbstruck and horrified.

GIDGET (CONT'D)

So what do you think, Cameron?

STANLEY

You just have to plug the patsy with a
few bullets. No one will know.

Cameron crouches over the Patsy. Contemplating it, actually
considering his parents proposal; then, shaking his head --

CAMERON

Mom... Dad... this is twisted shit.

GIDGET

(gasps)

Cameron. Language.

ANGLE ON THE PATSY as he stirs awake. His eyes settle on Cameron
for a beat. Just for a beat. Then --

He JUMPS UP and CHARGES!

Cameron BOLTS out of the shed, frightened, with the Patsy right
on his tail!

CUT TO:

19 **EXT. STANLEY & GIDGET'S HOME - FRONT YARD - CONTINUOUS**

19

Guy stands in front of the house, peering INTO THE BACKYARD.

GUY'S POV: Cameron runs from the shed, fleeing the Patsy, while
Stanley and Gidget helplessly watch.

GUY

(to himself)

...the killer...? It's the killer!

(then, calling out)

Cameron!

Guy pulls both his handguns from their holsters and takes aim.

20 **EXT. STANLEY & GIDGET'S HOME - BACKYARD - CONTINUOUS** 20

ANGLE ON Cameron and the Patsy. The BULLETS FLY. Cameron DUCKS TO THE GROUND. Ten perfect shots HIT the Patsy. He DROPS DEAD, landing right on top of Cameron.

Stanley and Gidget rush to Cameron's side.

STANLEY

Son? Are you okay?

ANGLE ON Guy, heading into the backyard, calling out --

GUY

Is everyone safe? Did I get him?

ANGLE BACK ON Cameron, turning to Gidget and Stanley.

CAMERON

Mom, Dad, let's let Guy have this.

Gidget

You're sure?

CAMERON

Yes. I'm very sure. Being Mayor'll make me happy.

Gidget and Stanley exchange a look, a happy look, happy to know that Cameron will be happy.

CUT TO:

FLASH! A photo is taken.

ANGLE ON the PHOTO. It's of Cameron and Guy shaking hands.

WIDEN to reveal the photo is on the FRONT PAGE OF A NEWSPAPER, the HEADLINE reads: "DEAD KILLER! NEW SHERIFF! NEW MAYOR?"

21 **EXT. MAIN STREET - TOWN CENTER - DAY** 21

Reporter Haley Newman carries a stack of the NEWSPAPERS, gleefully handing out copies to every cheerful passer-by.

Haley APPROACHES Guy, while Maple pins a SHERIFF'S BADGE to his chest pocket.

HALEY

Newspaper, Sheriff Guy?

GUY

I'd be honored, Haley.

(CONTINUED)

21 CONTINUED:

21

He takes the paper, with appreciation and respect.

Mayor Bobbi then BREEZES BY. Haley holds a copy of the newspaper up, which Mayor Bobbi begrudgingly accepts.

WE STAY ON Mayor Bobbi, as she ROUNDS A CORNER to see --

Former Sheriff Cameron sitting on a BENCH, reading his own copy of the newspaper, his brow furrowed, still in deep consternation over all that's transpired.

MAYOR BOBBI

The town secrets are all yours, Cameron!

Cameron forces an uncomfortable laugh -- *she has no idea.*

ANGLE BACK ON GUY, as the Deputy RUNS UP to him in a panic.

DEPUTY

Sheriff Guy, there's another one!

ANGLE BACK ON CAMERON, watching Guy, the Deputy, and a GROWING SWARM of townsfolk RUSH OFF towards the park.

An OFFSCREEN WOMAN SCREAMS just as --

Gidget and Stanley ENTER THE FRAME, brimming with excitement as they take a seat on the bench beside Cameron. Their hands and clothes once more covered with blood.

Cameron turns to them, wary at the thought of what they've done.

STANLEY

Son, your mom and I had a little talk.

GIDGET

We came up with a great way to help your Mayor campaign.

Off Cameron, dread setting in -- *not again...*

CUT TO BLACK.

THE END