



criminal) and Carol has little patience for his colorful nature. She is annoyed at the effect Joel has on Dan, and is probably worried that her son Michael will idealize him as well.

Joel is already very protective of his baby brother Dan. It wouldn't take much to layer in an arc where at the beginning of the movie, Joel is all-too-aware that he is a "bad influence" on Dan and is not considered a full-fledged member of the family. Joel is willing to accept any crumb that he gets from Dan. This changes over the course of the movie when Joel's experience ends up saving Dan at the bank, and pays off when he makes the ultimate sacrifice for Dan, dying to save Dan, and finally redeeming himself.

Could Joel and Dan have different fathers, and therefore different last names? Maybe Joel's dad was a ne'er-do-well who abandoned Joel and his mom, who later married Dan's dad, who raised Joel. This could play into the family myth of Joel being a bad seed of sorts and Dan being the "good" brother.

Tracking Joel's character: A quick breakdown of Joel's character shows the inconsistency in his character as currently written. Suggestions for changes are included:

Pg. 12: Joel seems to be a regular at the guys' poker game. He is kind of a scold in this scene – he is critical of the black-hat trick, he tells the other guys that Dan is counting cards. Carol invites him to dinner and seems to want to see more of him. When Omar gets the bad news phone call, Joel is kind of a jerk, sarcastically saying "Congratulations."

*Instead of having Joel seem like a poker regular and a family member in good standing, why not play the opposite. Joel is not normally welcomed in Carol's house because of his checkered past. Carol could be unpleasantly surprised to see him. Perhaps Dan explains that Joel is "the fourth man" because one of the regular players is sick and Dan invited Joel to fill in. Joel later becomes "the fourth man" in the robbery. Maybe instead of Suzie coming out to the garage, Michael does and is thrilled to see cool Uncle Joel, much to Carol's dismay.*

Pg. 28: In the middle of the Preparation and Pitch montage, there is a scene of Joel, at his house, seeming to react negatively to Dan's idea of a robbery.

*This feels out of place and out of sequence time-wise, and should be cut – Dan approaching Joel to ask for his help is a big moment and should be a scene of its own.*

Pg. 29–32: Dan arriving at Joel's house intercut with the end of the Preparation and Pitch montage is a good way to transition back to the important scene between Dan and Joel.

*Maybe Dan's showing up at Joel's house is a good opportunity for an emotional moment between brothers. Joel could be excited that Dan is visiting him (doesn't happen often, if ever) and hopeful this means a change in their dynamic, and then he is let down when he realizes why Dan is really there.*

Pg. 32: In this scene, Joel hits Dan and tells him he is a fool for a) jeopardizing his life/marriage and b) thinking he could rob a bank and c) thinking he won't be changed by

doing it. Joel again scolds Dan for wanting to steal the American dream. Joel tells Dan he won't participate and effectively aborts the mission. Joel seems very resolute in keeping Dan out of trouble.

Pg. 35: Joel calls Dan and reverses his stance, saying he is in.

*Why? In the previous scene, Joel has successfully aborted the mission. This change of heart comes out of nowhere and flies in the face of Joel's protective relationship to Dan. Joel needs a better motivation for making this change.*

*One solution might be that during the preparation montage Dan, who was initially planning to do the robbery with just Omar and Gordon, realizes he needs a "fourth man." When Joel turns him down, Dan might say he will find someone else. Joel knows Dan is moving forward no matter what, and knows Dan is in way over his head, so in order to protect Dan, he needs to join the team.*

Pg. 38: Joel is the gun expert, but Dan has done the research and wants revolvers because they won't leave casings.

*It might be nice to give Joel more of a role in this scene. Dan may have the plan, but Joel has the experience. It would be nice to see him contribute something vital, that maybe Dan minimizes or even dismisses.*

Pg. 39-40: Joel tells Dan he still is working in sales and in fact his business is good. Dan doesn't understand why Joel is doing the robbery then. Dan says he wouldn't have done the robbery if Joel had said no.

*This probably will fly by unnoticed, but again, it highlights that Joel could have stopped the robbery but didn't. Here he has yet another chance to stop it, but he doesn't.*

Joel reminds Dan that he has a criminal record, a long-ago bar fight, after which Dan's father kicked Joel out. Joel's criminal record breaks Dan's "rules" that because they have no records they won't be caught.

*This information adds to the confusion about who Joel is. His only crime, although serious and lends credence to the upcoming violence at the bank, was 20 years ago. What has he been doing since? Is he or isn't he a criminal? Why does he have so many guns – untraceable guns, if he isn't a criminal? Also, why does Dan keep breaking his own rules?*

Joel also tells Dan that after the robbery, their relationship is over.

*Up until this point, Joel's motivation seems to be all about Dan. Why is he agreeing to the robbery if a) he doesn't need the money and b) it not only won't help his relationship with Dan, it will end it?*

Pg. 45: Joel loads real bullets into his gun.

Pg. 46-49: The robbery. Joel acts like a seasoned pro – he is in charge, dangerous. He is brutally violent with the woman. He shoots Larry who is firing blanks at Dan in the face.

*The level of Joel's violence seems to come out of nowhere. Is he out of control? Or is he in control and just doing what needs to be done? Maybe the brutality toward the woman would be more understandable if it were better motivated – say in her flailing she is about to pull off Gordon's mask.*

*Joel later explains why he killed Larry and the explanation works.*

Pg. 49-51: Joel keeps his head in the aftermath of the robbery. He realizes Gordon is out of it and follows him. Gordon is about to call the police to confess when Joel pushes him on the subway tracks.

*Again, this sequence works really well but reveals a level of ruthlessness in Joel that is shocking. He doesn't just grab Gordon's phone away – he murders him. Maybe Gordon starts crying and talking to people in the station – "I never meant for this to happen...He's dead....we shouldn't have done it...." He seems insane and desperate and people don't understand what he means but Joel does and knows Gordon is beyond reason at this point.*

Pg. 53: Joel looks at the contents of the bag and finds the uncut diamonds. He is afraid.

Pg. 55: Joel attaches motion sensors to his house.

Pg. 56: Joel watches the news report about Gordon's suicide. He loads his weapons.

Pg. 69: Joel calls a fence, Uncle Benny, to ask about the diamonds.

*Again, confusion. Is Joel a criminal or not. How does he know Uncle Benny? How does Uncle Benny know Joel? Also, is he trying to sell the diamonds? Behind Dan's back? It seems like he has a plan but it's not clear what it is. Is the audience supposed to think Joel actually might be double-crossing the others? That's good, but needs to be better developed.*

Pg. 77: Panicked, Uncle Benny calls Joel and tells him he knows who the diamonds belong to and he wants no part of them.

When Dan and Omar show up early, Joel pulls a gun on them, checks them for a wire. Joel explains why he had live ammo, and explains what would have happened if he didn't kill Larry. Joel expresses regret over the necessity of killing Gordon. Joel tells Dan and Omar he isn't giving them their cut because it is too dangerous. Omar gets angry, Joel hits Dan, Joel shoots Omar in the foot.

*A great and surprising scene that highlights the conflicts in Joel. He seems crazy and paranoid, perhaps with good reason. He seems to be protective of Dan (rational, sympathetic) yet shoots Omar in the foot (irrational, unsympathetic.) If his character tracks up until this*

*point, the audience will know what Joel is trying to do, while Dan and Omar will think Joel is just crazy (which seems to be Joel's intention.)*

Pg. 99: Joel sits alone in his house, playing with the safety on his gun. Waiting.

Pg. 100: Dan arrives at Joel's. Dan asks for the money. Joel says he gave Dan every chance to stop the robbery but Dan wouldn't. Dan the only way out for him is to find Joel dead with the money. Joel is shocked, hurt and disappointed. Dan reveals that his real plan is for both of them to live and for them to give the money back. Joel is relieved and agrees.

Before they can do anything, Viktor and his men arrive.

Joel and Dan finally have their moment as brothers – Dan chooses his brother over himself (reversing his previous decision to choose the robbery over his relationship with his brother.)

Pg. 104-108: Joel tricks Dan into leaving and takes on the Viktor's men by himself. He sacrifices himself to save Dan. Dan comes back at the last second to kill Viktor and Joel dies in Dan's arms.

*From the moment Viktor's men arrive, Joel's actions are clear. He is saving his brother and will take the rap for the robbery himself. He knows who he is and what he has to do. It's a very satisfying ending which ennobles Joel's character.*

## **DAN**

Dan is a great, well-drawn, compelling character – an Everyman trying to make ends meet in a world that doesn't reward hard work and honesty. His speech on pg. 33 about "The surest way to stay poor in this country is to stay honest," perfectly captures his plight and his desperation is a believable motivation for the robbery. His relationship with Carol is warm and rings true and he is a fun and attentive dad.

Dan's Plan: Dan comes up with a detailed plan for success, that has many "rules" most of which over the course of the script, are broken, with Dan's knowledge or by Dan himself. On pg. 39 Dan questions Joel about a call on his normal cell, but moments later brushes off the information that Gordon is breaking the rules by using his cell.

*What is this trying to say about Dan? Joel's line "You can convince yourself of anything. That's quite a gift Dan," addresses this contradiction, but I'm still not clear what it means. Is this a pattern with Dan? Has he done this sort of thing before? Is there some old family story that Dan believes but Joel knows the truth about that can be revealed later? This would be a nice button to the Dan/Joel arc.*

*Unless Dan's making rules only to break them pays off somehow, often times Dan's rules feel like a leftover device that cause more problems than they solve (Joel's inexplicable decision to join the plan even though he has the power to kill it.)*

Dan & Joel Dan is a big-picture guy who researches the robbery and comes up with a bullet-proof plan for success. As mentioned in the notes about Joel, it might be nice to further emphasize the differences between Dan and Joel – Dan is a thinker and a planner, but Joel has experience and knows not everything can be planned in advance.

*It might be nice to somehow emphasize this difference – maybe during the poker game, Dan is trying to count cards and is losing while Joel is reading players and winning (instead of cheating.) More on how the poker game can be better utilized below.*

Dan & Omar: Dan seems to be the group leader but Omar is the one who leads the interview with Gary and is the one who arranges the next meeting that never happens. What are their roles? Should Dan be the one who arranges all the meetings? If it is Omar who is more of the public face of the company, this needs to be fleshed out a bit.

### **OMAR**

Omar seems slick and seems to be the spokesman for the team. Other than him talking on the phone with his mother, we don't know too much about him. On pg. 34 he says "Anyone can get guns." And on page 80 he repeats that he can get guns. And pg. 93 he has a gun. If it is so easy for him to get guns, why did they need Joel? (Answer – as suggested they needed a 4<sup>th</sup> man.)

### **GORDON**

Gordon really works as a young flabby porn and comic-addicted computer nerd.

### **CAROL**

Carol is great as a harried mom who with the best intentions sometimes misreads her husband's cues. The only hiccup with Carol is around her work attire. Pg. 1 describes her as wearing "a business outfit more suited for a younger woman and she knows it." Carol is in her 30's – what does this mean? The entire "having to dress sexy for the leering boss" feels a little dated.

### **ELLIS**

Ellis is a perfect mirror/foil for Dan. He is Dan a few years down the road – world-weary but wise. He articulates the theme of the movie several times: pg. 73 "People are always willing to destroy themselves as long as it's their idea." And on pg. 110. "... A reminder to never forget where that line is drawn and what you lose when you reach across it," which is continued on pg. 112, "...But when you do cross it, regardless of the reason, things are never the same. It doesn't wash off. Not ever. Take my word for it."

The only problem with Ellis comes with his final confrontation with Dan. With the "It must have been a helluva pitch, Dan. You blurred the line for them," it seems as though he is assuming Dan was the ringleader. Why Dan? Of the three dead men, Joel would seem to leap out as the obvious leader. He has a criminal past (albeit a small one as written), and has all the guns and money etc. at his house. Also, on pg. 71 Ellis identifies one of the robbers (Joel) as having formal training, something Dan clearly doesn't have.

Also, his line “To get three guys with barely a blemish between ‘em to cross the line like that. No connections, no prior history. Just a computer guy hiding in plain sight.” The line is great, but doesn’t make sense. They do have a prior history – Dan does have connections to all of them, especially his brother.

Also, the last moment is unclear. Ellis accepts Carol’s invitation for dinner. Are they going to be friends? Not sure if the feeling is supposed to be menacing or not.

## **SEQUENCES:**

### **THE POKER GAME**

As mentioned before, the poker game is a great opportunity for character development, and to establish ideas that are paid off later. It has already been suggested that Joel is not a regular guest and Carol is not happy to see him. Michael might interrupt the game instead of Suzie. Dan counts cards but loses anyway – this dovetails with idea that no matter how smart the plan, it can’t account for everything. Joel wins the game, not by cheating but by reading people – a trait he uses during the robbery. This could be taken even farther – maybe he cleans them out. Maybe Omar suspects Joel of cheating. Omar could reference this when he gets paranoid that Joel is trying to steal the money.

### **THE ROBBERY**

The robbery plays really well. What makes it fresh is Dan et al know the police are not on the way so they can take their time – something that Ellis picks up on when he views the tapes.

Why not take this conceit even further? They collect cell phones and cut the phone lines, but the second they step out the door, they know someone in the bank is going to run outside and call the police. Wouldn’t Dan be smart enough to think of something to delay this as long as possible? An example: could they do something like put a sign “Closed for Fumigation” on the front door and lock the front and putt everyone in the vault, or they could plastic handcuff people to each other so they can’t move? This might even make for a light moment when the customers/bank personnel are eventually discovered.

### **THE BLACK HAT**

A really picky note – on pg. 7 in the meeting with Gary, Gordon hands Dan a printout of the stolen email. Where did he get it? How did he print it? It might be a fun visual gag to see Gordon working away on the computer during the meeting, giggling at what he sees, then Dan takes out a wireless printer and prints the emails right there in the room.

## **MISCELLANEOUS:**

Pg. 1 – Dan and Carol are in there 30’s and Michael is 13. He seems to act younger – is his age correct?

Pg. 9 – Could Carol find some old mementos of Dan and Joel in her garage search?

Pg. 20 – We don't see Ellis from pg. 20 until pg. 43. Too long without him?

Pg. 46 – Does the bank have a security guard?

Pg. 49 – Where did Omar get the police radio? Does this need to be set up earlier? Should Dan have it?

Pg. 71 – Walter's last dialogue – uses "then" instead of "than."

Pg. 81 – Walter's last dialogue – uses "Whose" instead of "Who's"

Pg. 83 – When Dan says "...We shouldn't have done it. None of it." Could be an opportunity to say something like "Joel was right."

Pg. 88 – Is the time continuous? Dan and Carol are attending Gordon's funeral, seemingly the day after his identity is revealed on television. Or have several days passed?