

The first few
scenes from

FREEPORT

written by

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A globetrotting tale of
adventure and intrigue, or;
how I work through my emotions
in this capitalist hellscape.

Elegant chatter. Elegant accents. British accents, mostly, if we're being honest.

INT. DINING ROOM - NIGHT

An exquisite penthouse. Old money, modern art. A new skyline in every window.

A dozen socialites and well-to-dos work their way through a feast, strategically seated around an antique dining table. The combined net worth of this room could rival small countries.

A wine glass chimes, twice, three times. The chatter lulls.

GAUNT SOCIALITE

Everyone, everyone, just
a moment.

"Gaunt socialite" isn't going to work. That describes all of them. We'll call him GRANT.

GRANT

Now, I think we all know why Mary
invited us here tonight...

The guests laugh. On Grant's left, MARY (fifties, pale, greying) gives a faux-sheepish smile.

GRANT

...but all the same, let's give
her a hand. For putting together
this little soirée.

There's light applause, and Mary gives a tiny mock-bow. Behind her, a PAINTING hangs on the room's feature wall. It's covered in a black velvet sheet.

GRANT

Is there anything you'd like to
say before we...?

BOW-TIED SOCIALITE

Speech!

SCOTCH SOCIALITE

Don't you dare.

There's another round of laughter.

MARY

No speech?

TROPHY SOCIALITE

Show us the painting!

Mary grins, standing up.

MARY
 Alright! Alright! You're as
 impatient as I am.

She grips the velvet sheet.

MARY
 Any guesses?

There's a sudden charge in the air. A hushed beat.

MARY (CONT'D)
 No? Well then, ladies and
 gentlemen, I give you...

And she pulls the sheet from the painting.

It's PRICELESS. Something your high school art teacher would
 have killed to get his hands on. Something that never should
 have seen the outside of a museum.

TROPHY SOCIALITE
 Oh, Mary. Van Gogh?

There's scattered applause, and a half beat. Was that an
 impressed "Oh, Mary"? Or--

WINE DRUNK SOCIALITE
 It's loooovely, Mary. We have one
 of his too, y'know!

SCOTCH SOCIALITE
 (semi-hushed)
 So does Grant's doorman.

GRANT
 Well, we had to give him *some*
 sort of Christmas bonus.

The guests titter, and start chatting amongst themselves. We
 might hear snippets--

BOW-TIED SOCIALITE
 Doesn't she already have a
 Van Gogh?

TROPHY SOCIALITE
 Sunflowers? How much do you think
 it cost her?

GRANT
 Did you hear about Alvin's
 wedding this Sunday? Total mix-
 up, but...

Mary just watches. Her face is frozen, almost unreadable.
 There's something in her eyes, though. The fury builds, and
 builds, and builds, and--

The sound of applause fades in.

SPEAKER (PRE-LAP)

And so we turn to Timaeus and Critias - and maybe Hermocrates, too, though it's a little hard to be sure about that one.

INT. CONFERENCE HALL - NIGHT

It's a small crowd, but the room's even smaller. Scholars and academics watch as an old man paces the stage, speaking with militant self-assurance.

SPEAKER (CONT'D)

In these texts, the city is described as an island "greater in extent than Libya and Asia"--

RILEY sits in the wings, stage left. He's dressed to the nines, maybe eight and a half. Late twenties. Round glasses, clean cut, sapling thin.

SPEAKER (O.S.) (CONT'D)

--though of course Plato was referring to what we now know as North Africa and Turkey--

Through the skylight, a man watches the evening unfold. This is FINN. Dark clothes and a neck pillow.

He runs his finger down tonight's itinerary. The word "Atlantis". Right above the word "Riley". Is that this?

SPEAKER (O.S.) (CONT'D)

But again, the way that Plato described Atlantis, it wasn't a city at all--

Shit. That is this. He starts moving.

EXT. BACK ALLEY - CONTINUOUS

Finn slides down the drainpipe, landing shakily on a dumpster. He sheds his jacket, revealing something almost respectable underneath.

SPEAKER (O.S.) (CONT'D)

--but an *empire*, stretching deep into the Mediterranean. Which raises some immediate questions...

A security guard pushes through the fire door, fishing a lighter from his pocket. Finn flashes him a grin and grabs the door before it closes, slipping inside.

INT. CONFERENCE HALL - CONTINUOUS

Riley thumbs through his palm cards like a flipbook. He peels one off, and stares at it, steeling himself. Breathe in. Breathe out. His leg won't stop jiggling.

VOICE

Hey. S'this seat taken?

Riley looks up.

RILEY

Uh, I think it's...

A man stands in front of him. About his age, maybe a little older. Slim frame, well built, good posture. Solid boots. He might even be handsome in the right light.

FINN

Finn. Finn Patel. Real nice to meet you.

His voice is half class and all charm. He pulls the chair around to face Riley, and collapses into it. Riley shakes his outstretched hand, a little unsure.

FINN

I'm real glad I caught you. I guess you leave your phone off?

RILEY

Sure, I-- Sorry, are you-- are you speaking tonight?

FINN

Me? Oh, God, no, could never get a handle on public speaking. Or language, really. Linguistics?

RILEY

Linguistics.

Finn points a lone finger gun at Riley in affirmation.

FINN

Linguistics. You worked with Anton, didn't you?

RILEY

I'm sorry?

FINN

Anton. Lawrence. Linguist extraordinaire. You interviewed him a good few years back for some student paper.

RILEY

Oh. Oh. Sure, I studied under him in college. He was working on a text at the time, called... shit, it was Hebrew, I think, which I've never been great at--

FINN

I can't say I'm familiar. Did he ever talk about his work?

RILEY

With me? I mean, more than most, I guess? But that's not saying much. I'm sure you know how he--

There's a ripple of laughter from the audience, and Finn glances out to the speaker on stage.

FINN

You're on after him?

Riley nods, still unsure what to make of this.

FINN

Yeah. I'm told he had irons in a lot of pies. And I'm told that he was private. Reclusive. Did you know yours was the only interview he gave?

A beat.

FINN

It was in a student newspaper?

RILEY

Right. Right. I, uh, heard he'd passed, a couple of--

FINN

Two months ago. No next of kin.

Riley pauses. What's going on here?

RILEY

I'm sorry to hear that. He was good at what he did.

FINN

So you are familiar with his work, then?

RILEY

I-- well, yeah? Bits and pieces. Nothing by heart, but... history, linguistics, there's something of a crossover there.

FINN

Sure. Well, sure. History-ish, though, right? I've read your work. It's not just history, it's language and-- and myths, in-- you know, in a narrative sense.

A beat.

RILEY

Mister Patel, I'm sorry, but is there something you want from me? I'm not sure if-- well, this isn't exactly the best time for--

Ah. Riley pauses again. It's clicked.

RILEY

Look. I studied under him. But Anton and I haven't spoken in quite some time. Hadn't. If you're looking for someone who's studied his work, there's an entire audience out there who--

FINN

But how many interviewed him? How many worked with him personally?

RILEY

Well...

FINN

Yeah. So we're here. For you.

There it is. This is a job interview.

RILEY

You're--

Finn's phone buzzes. It's an old, chunky thing, with room for phone charms. He flips it open, and skims the text.

FINN

Shit. Okay. Walk and talk.

EXT. BACK ALLEY - CONTINUOUS

Finn bursts back through the fire door, Riley on his heels.

RILEY

Hang on, Finn, I'm meant to be on stage in like--

FINN

So! The trip. We're flying out, a week from now. The whole gang--

RILEY
I have a *speech*.

FINN
--sans translator. Nine or ten of us, privately funded. You ever done something like that?

RILEY
(he absolutely has not)
Where are you headed?

FINN
Hah, that's, uh...
(he waves his hands)
You understand. But we do need a translator.

There's a silence. Riley looks like he's about to throw up. But he hasn't stopped walking, either. After a moment--

RILEY
You're after something Anton studied. Something he never published.

Finn considers this, then nods shortly.

FINN
Yeah. We got our hands on one of his old journals, and-- well, I can read some of it myself, but they aren't exactly-- he had a rather cryptic way of writing.

RILEY
Sure.

They round the corner, making their way onto a semi-bustling sidewalk. Cars swerve and honk and establish their dominance.

FINN
So we're hoping you might be able to, y'know... crack it.

An expectant beat.

RILEY
Where are we going, Finn?

FINN
Few blocks north of here. I'm late, actually, so can we hustle? What do you need to know?

RILEY
No, I-- Fuck, fine, okay, uh... this work of his. What language is it written in?

Finn smiles, dodging a lamp post.

FINN
You want the whole list?

RILEY
Yes. Absolutely.

FINN
Oh.

Silence.

RILEY
Mister Patel--

FINN
Finn.

RILEY
Listen. I can translate. I'm good
on the Romantic side of things--

Finn raises an eyebrow, entertained. Riley stops walking abruptly.

RILEY
--French, Spanish, Portuguese,
Finn - but I need fair notice on
anything else. Soon. Now.

A long beat. He knows he's pushing it, but...

FINN
It might be dangerous, bud. Will
be, with our track record.

RILEY
What?

FINN
I was told I had to mention that.
But we know what we're doing.

Riley stares, unfocused. Finn checks his watch. After a second's thought, he throws out an arm, as if to hail a cab.

RILEY
What would *I* be doing?

FINN
We need translations on site.

RILEY
That's all you're going to tell
me, though? That, and that it's
dangerous?

FINN

Yeah. In their minds, you're the only one for the job. The only one who knew him. And you--

A cab pulls up, almost clearing the curb. Finn leans down to talk to the driver.

FINN

Few blocks north, pal. Gimme one minute, I'll be right with you.

He straightens up again, and turns to Riley.

FINN

What was his speech on? What's he talking about?

RILEY

What?

FINN

Back there. On stage. What was his speech on?

RILEY

He's, uh... Atlantis. Explaining Atlantis. Not just why it didn't exist, but why it couldn't have existed. Dissecting the legend. With bullet points.

A short beat.

FINN

Do you think it was real?

RILEY

I... don't think it should matter. It's about the impact that it left behind, not whether or not it ever...

He trails off. There's a long, drawn out silence.

Finn watches him, never blinking.

FINN

We leave next week. It's going to get cold, so pack a sweater. And bring your books. All of them.

RILEY

I...

FINN

You only get one chance like this, bud. Are you in?

Fuck.

RILEY
Yeah. I'm in.
(then)
I'm in. Assuming?

Finn opens the cab's door, sliding in.

FINN
We're headed north. To Canada.

Riley grins nervously.

RILEY
Canada? I can work with Canada.

He shakes Finn's outstretched hand through the cab window. The audience applauds. The speaker shuffles off the far side of the stage.

RILEY
Okay. Okay. I guess that's--

But the cab's already pulling out into the street.

FINN
(calling out)
Keep your phone on!

Riley watches him go.

RILEY
Okay. Cool.
(then)
Fuck.

He breaks into a run.

INT. RILEY'S APARTMENT - DAY

Quick cuts--

Riley drums a number into his phone.

We see Riley's apartment. Wilted plants, piles of paper, and a popcorn ceiling.

Riley throws a suitcase to the floor and starts tossing clothes into it, moving drawer by drawer.

RILEY
Shit. Okay, well-- did anyone you
know ever work with Anton?

Riley talks into his phone, carefully pinched between his shoulder and ear.

The walls are covered in books, and Riley sweeps an entire shelf into his suitcase. Now it won't close. Shit.

RILEY

Shit.

Phone balanced in one hand, Riley dials a new number. He weighs two coats, finally settling on the one that won't let him freeze to death.

RILEY

But didn't you take his class?
You sat next to me! You must have
talked with him a few times, or--

Riley lies on his bed, over the covers, the poster child of panic.

Riley sits at his desk, a dozen browser tabs open on his computer. They're all on Canadian folklore, save for one search on "wolf attacks per capita".

RILEY

I know he was tenured there for a
few years, and-- no, I was so
sorry to hear about his passing,
but if you-- if anyone there had
worked with Professor Lawrence,
had any idea what he was--

INT. TAXI CAB - DAY

Finn snaps his phone shut.

FINN

Alright.
(to the driver)
We're getting out here, thanks.

He hands the driver a small fortune in bills, then slides towards Riley's side of the cab. Riley stares back at him.

EXT. MANHATTAN STREET - DAY - CONTINUOUS

Riley almost topples out of the cab, his suitcase in tow. Finn scoops him up, dragging him onto the sidewalk.

RILEY

What the hell are you doing?

FINN

Places to be. Places, places!

Every passerby is suited and bluetoothed and striding with purpose. Riley follows Finn at a scramble.

RILEY

Not the sort of thing we could
talk about in the A.C., huh?

FINN

Lots to catch you up on. Can't really do that where we might be, y'know...

RILEY

What, overheard?

Finn returns his smirk.

FINN

Sure. This isn't much better, but it's--

A WOMAN beelines toward them, chatting into her phone.

PASSING WOMAN

I know! She's so two-faced! And then *Michael* tells me...

Finn dodges out of her way, before returning to Riley's side.

FINN

"So then *Michael* told me," yeah, I know. But who's *Michael*? What did he tell her? It's...

(he waves his arms)

Snippets. Just snippets. Better that than let some cabbie hear the whole thing.

Riley nods stubbornly. It's not the worst point. Finn gestures, leading him down a side street.

FINN

So, you're about to meet my boss. Or, y'know, one of my bosses. The daughter of one of my bosses, really, but she has also hired me herself, so--

RILEY

Finn.

FINN

Right. Well, our *sponsor* for this expedition wants to check in on us. Make sure we're up to the task. But since time is money, and his daughter's in town...

RILEY

We're meeting her instead. Okay. What's her name? What do I need to know about her?

FINN

Madison. Mads, Madi, Mad. Never Madge.

RILEY
Never Madge. What else?

FINN
No idea, I've never met her. Tuck
your shirt in.

Riley wrestles his shirt into place, suddenly flustered.

RILEY
You've never met her?

FINN
Well, we've talked on the phone.
I don't always meet my employers.
Most of the time, they hire me,
they wire me, and I drop off
anything I found during billable
hours. She is feisty, though.
Whip smart. One of the good ones.
Top button.

Riley looks at him.

FINN
Your shirt. Your--

He rounds on Riley.

FINN
Look, they know me, okay? They've
worked with me. You're the
unknown quantity here. That's why
they're calling us in.

Finn buttons Riley's shirt, and straightens the collar.

FINN
So sharpen up. We've got an
heiress to impress.

INT. CORPORATE RECEPTION - DAY

Finn holds the door open for Riley. The lobby is marble and metal and glass. There's a tiny plant on the reception desk, and a tiny receptionist behind it.

FINN
Just act like you belong,
alright? Can you do that? Say
whatever you want, but don't rock
the boat. I'm throwing you in the
deep end a little here, I know,
but I'll do most of the--
(to the receptionist;
customer service voice)
Hi, we're here to see Madge?

INT. ELEVATOR - DAY

The elevator shoots up. It's carpeted. That might not scream upper class in a different city, but this one's meant to be New York.

FINN

--so I'll do most of the talking. You just keep quiet. Unless she asks you a question. Or unless I start floundering, I guess, but--

RILEY

Are you going to tell me why I'm coming on this trip?

FINN

No.

(beat)

You'll be fine, though. You'll--

INT. LUXURIOUS BOARDROOM - DAY

Finn and Riley sit at a sprawling conference room table. Across from them is MADI. Thirties. Dark, messy hair. Almost casual. Denim and leather and diamonds, all custom made.

The room is *dead fucking quiet*. All eyes are on Riley.

We hold for a beat, just to let the panic set in. Finn gestures furiously with his eyes. *Go on, say something.*

Riley turns to Madi.

RILEY

So I, uh... hear you've worked with Finn before.

She smiles generously. It's only a little fake.

MADI

A few times.

FINN

Half dozen.

RILEY

Why?

FINN

Riley--

RILEY

Hey, no, if we're gonna be dragged in here, if no one's going to even tell me what this is even about, I think I--

MADI

Finn, it's okay. Riley, is it?
Riley? I can catch you up.

Finn crosses his arms.

MADI

At the risk of sounding...
condescending, well... after a
certain *threshold* of net worth--

FINN

She's a collector.

Madi nods in concession.

MADI

Yeah, that's a good way of
putting it.

RILEY

A collector? Like an art
collector? But-- not art. Not
art, right?

MADI

Oh, I do that too. But once
you've run out of wall space, and
you have your hands on that
Picasso--

FINN

(under his breath)
Asshole.

MADI

Oh, he was an absolute fuck, but
that doesn't change the fact
that--

FINN

That your dinner guests don't
know that?

RILEY

Hey, hey, uh...

Madi and Finn both turn to Riley.

RILEY

Well, what do you collect?

FINN

Mmm. That "certain threshold" she
mentioned isn't just about
money--

MADI

Anything. Everything. The rarest of the rare. But specifically--

FINN

These friends of hers, these friends in high places, they've *all* got a Picasso. You spent a fortune on that painting, and now it's worthless, because your neighbor has one too.

Madi shoots him a look. Finn's smiling a little too hard.

MADI

I suppose it is about exclusivity. No one cares if you have a Van Gogh, but *Starry Night*...?

FINN

She doesn't, for the record.

MADI

We're working on it. But paintings aren't what they used to be. Like I said, once you own a Picasso, you start looking elsewhere. For a new source of exclusivity. Something like...

She notices Riley's hand. It's held up. An interjection.

RILEY

It would really, *really* mean a lot to me if someone could please just use the word "treasure".

There's a long beat. Madi looks to Finn. He's grinning.

FINN

I told you, he's a smart kid.

MADI

Well, treasure's a tricky word. Not quite right.

FINN

Artifacts?

MADI

That's not bad.

RILEY

Artifacts. Which is why you hire people like Finn? To track down these *artifacts*?

MADI

Yes.

RILEY

Not from museums or private collections, though.

FINN

Jesus, no, I'm not--
(beat)
Well...

MADI

You're not here for a heist.

RILEY

No, I'm not. You came to me, and I'm in languages and history. That means "archeology". Hollywood archeology. Globetrotting.

MADI

Globetrotting? Is that right?

RILEY

You want us to fly out to Africa, jump a few pits, run away from a boulder, and bring back whatever we find, right? All based on some historical texts?

MADI

Canada. The expedition is to Canada. And you're not "in languages", you just happen to speak a few. You're in history and mythology.

Riley pauses.

RILEY

That's... that's right, yeah.

FINN

That's how Anton's involved, see? He might have been a linguist, but in his spare time...

RILEY

He wrote on history. And mythology. Uh...

Riley swivels his chair to face Finn.

RILEY

(slightly hushed)
What the fuck is this, Finn?
(MORE)

RILEY (CONT'D)

Is this not some sort of... of
twisted, private treasure hunt?
Are you seriously telling me
that--

MADI

*"A twisted, private treasure
hunt."* Oh, I like that. I like
that a lot.

RILEY

But...

And then it sinks in. His look says it all.

RILEY

This isn't history, is it?

MADI

No. No, this is the other one.

There's long beat. Madi's grinning like a fox.

MADI

Maybe it's time I gave you
the tour.