

INT. SAM'S OFFICE AT POCKET PUBLISHING --  
MORNING

SAM (late 30s) sits, reviewing Lord of  
Temptation by Francesca DuPar. He throws yet  
another page into the trash when his  
SECRETARY buzzes him on the intercom.

SECRETARY

Ms. DuPar is here to  
see you.

SAM

Send him in.

Michael storms in, ready to chew up the  
furniture.

MICHAEL

More rewrites? Why?  
You've never made me  
do this many before.

SAM

It's not believable,  
Mike.

MICHAEL

What's not believable?  
The plot? It's your  
standard romance novel  
plot.

Michael paces back and forth in front of  
framed, over-sized covers of his previous  
novels. All are written by Francesca DuPar.

MICHAEL

They meet, they fall  
in hate, outside  
conflict arises,  
forcing them to work  
together, they fall in  
love, something

happens to break them up, then they finally live happily ever after. What's wrong with the plot?

SAM

The plot's fine.

Michael stops pacing, shocked. The posters frame him in mute testimony to his brilliance.

MICHAEL

It's the hero, then? What's not believable about a gunslinging cowboy with a scar running across his cheek from a vicious battle during the Civil War, where he consequently acquired a noticeable limp?

SAM

Actually, this is your most believable hero to date. In fact,

Sam reaches into the trash can and pulls out the top page.

SAM

I really liked this scene where Alistair saves Melinda from her evil step-cousin.

MICHAEL

That one did just fly off my fingertips. But wait, so then it's Melinda who's lacking? No, the heroine needs to be both feisty and

yet vulnerable  
underneath.

Michael gestures to his framed proof.

MICHAEL

It's always worked  
before.

SAM

No, Melinda is  
fabulous.

MICHAEL

So, what else is  
there?

SAM

Sex, Mike. The sex  
scenes are boring.  
Complete yawners. In  
fact, I recommended  
them to Dawn last  
night when she  
complained of  
insomnia. Put her out  
like a light.

MICHAEL

What?

SAM

They're mechanical,  
biology-textbook  
bland. Where's the  
passion? Where's the  
spice? Where's the 'I  
can't wait to try that  
with my lover'  
creativity? What's  
happened to you, Mike?  
You used to enflame  
the world!

MICHAEL

I still enflame the  
world.

Sam pulls another page out of the trash and quotes

SAM

"Shocking the dinner guests, Melinda ran out of the dining room. Alistair quickly followed her."

INT. POST-CIVIL WAR RANCH HOUSE, DESERTED HALLWAY -- EVENING

MELINDA, a post-Civil War Barbarella, enters, breasts heaving almost out of her low-cut gown. ALISTAIR, a Fabio look-alike, stalks after her.

SAM

"He caught up with her in the dark, deserted hallway."

Alistair grabs her by the arm and forcefully turns her into his embrace.

Melinda gasps in expectant ecstasy.

SAM

"Knowing they could be discovered at any moment, he pulled her close..."

Alistair pulls her in, ready for an X-rated embrace.

SAM

"And kissed her hand."

Alistair and Melinda cast disbelieving looks at the camera before reluctantly doing as instructed.

INT. SAM'S OFFICE -- MORNING

Sam SNORES effusively.

MICHAEL

Ok, ok. So I've hit a  
dry spell.

SAM

This is not a dry  
spell, it's arid! It's  
desert dust in August.  
It's chaste, for God's  
sake! I could read  
this to my mother on  
her death-bed and not  
be embarrassed.

Sam crumples the page and throws it at him.

Michael ducks.

SAM

What's wrong?

Michael looks out the window, away from Sam.

Little Michael pops onscreen.

LITTLE MICHAEL

My love life is a  
mess. I don't know how  
to make a woman happy  
and I can't take it  
anymore. I'm sick of  
failing. But hey--at  
least my writing's  
successful. Ha, ha,  
ha!

MICHAEL

Nicole left me.

SAM

Oh, I'm sorry, man.

MICHAEL

She said she couldn't  
handle it anymore.

That she was tired of  
taking a backseat to  
my work.

(sotto  
voice)

'If it was another  
woman I'd at least  
have had a fighting  
chance.' Then she  
threw the keys at my  
head and stormed out.

Michael leans down to pick up the thrown  
page. A large white bandage covers part of  
his ear.

SAM

Well, that explains  
why the fight scenes  
between Alistair and  
Melinda are so  
realistic.

MICHAEL

Yeah.

SAM

Ironic that you'd just  
moved in together.

MICHAEL

Yeah. I've postponed  
the housewarming  
party.

SAM

Good idea. So, are you  
keeping busy?

MICHAEL

I find myself doing a  
lot of laundry.

SAM

Care to explain that?

MICHAEL

Nope.

Michael rises and walks to the door.

MICHAEL

But let's just say  
you'll have your  
rewrites by Friday.

He wiggles his eyebrows and exits, with a thoughtful smile  
on his face.