

Almost Famous Scene for Discussion – Scene 1
35.16- 37-40

BEN FONG-TORRES: William Miller?

WILLIAM: This is he.

BEN: Crazy. William, this is Ben Fong-Torres. I'm the music editor at Rolling Stone Magazine. We've got a copy of your stories from the San Diego Door. This is the same William Miller?

William instantly, nervously alters his voice to sound older.

WILLIAM: Yes it is.

BEN: *(Reading some of William's writing...)* Voice of God, howling dogs, the spirit of rock And roll... this is good solid stuff, man. You should be writing for us. Any ideas?

WILLIAM: How about Stillwater?

BEN: Crazy. *(Thinking about the article.)* Stillwater. Hard-working band makes good. New album... their third... Startin' to do something. Crazy. Let's do three-thousand words. You'll join the band the road. We'll set up billing -- don't let the band pay for anything.

WILLIAM: *(acting casual)* Sounds good.

BEN: We can only pay -- lemme see, three-thousand words -- seven hundred dollars.

William's eyes widen, and he's so shocked he can't respond.

BEN: Alright, a grand. What's your background, William? You a journalism major?

WILLIAM: Yes.

BEN: What college –

Cut to the kitchen in William's home.

ELAINE: Honey, I need you to do that thing that fixes the garbage disposal --

She hangs up. Cut to William's room: he is paralyzed by shock.

BEN: Well, I know how my lady gets when I don't snap to it – Crazy.

DAVID FELTON (SMOKING GUY): Crazy.

BEN: Crazy!

DAVID FELTON: Crazy.



Cut to Lester Bangs' home.

LESTER BANGS: Beware... beware of Rolling Stone Magazine. They will change your story, they'll re-write it and turn it into swill. Beware!!

WILLIAM: But besides that, what would be wrong with it?

LESTER BANGS: *(Laughs.)* You have starry eyes, my friend... Look. Do the story. Who cares, it'll be good for you. But remember this --

William listens intently, and makes notes.

LESTER BANGS: —don't do it to make friends with people who are trying to use you to further the big business desire to glorify worthless rock stars like Stillwater. And don't let those swill merchants re-write you.

WILLIAM: *(still copying)* ... swill merchants...

LESTER BANGS: Now, what are you listening to?

WILLIAM: Stillwater.

LESTER BANGS: Stillwater!? *(hangs up abruptly)* The kid's doing drugs.

What do the underlined words mean?

Why does Ben offer William more money for the article?

Who does Ben think Elaine is?

What is Lester so worried about?

Is Stillwater a famous band? Does Lester like them?

What kind of a friend is Lester?

Scene 2 for Discussion

50.19- 53.51

RUSSELL: Alright. Fire away. I'm ready.

William plugs in his microphone.

WILLIAM: Do you have to be depressed to write a sad song? Do you have to be in love to write a love song? Is a song better if it really happened to you? Like, "Love Thing"... where did you write that? Who is it about?

RUSSELL: (*Surprised.*) When did you get so professional?

DICK: (*announcing:*) Gentlemen. Your first t-shirts have arrived.

There is an immediate buzz in the room, as Dick yanks open the box filled with new white t-shirts. He untangles the first fresh shirt, and displays it proudly. A silent beat as all examine it - their first t-shirt. Everyone seems disappointed or shocked.



DICK: It's the record company's mistake. And they *will* pay! T-shirts gone, band happy. Alright?

(Dick puts the shirt back in the box.)

RUSSELL: Can we just skip the vibe and go straight to us laughing about this?

JEFF: (*bitterly*) Yeah. Okay.

RUSSELL: Because I can see by your face – you want to get into this -

JEFF: How can you tell? I'm just one of the out-of-focus guys.

RUSSELL: Here. Take it. Let's look at it, alright? See, you LOVE this shirt - it lets you say everything you want to say.

JEFF: Well, it speaks pretty loudly to me.

RUSSELL: It's... a *t-shirt*. (*To other bandmember.*) Do you give a shit about a t-shirt?

BANDMEMBER: I'm just hungry, man. Let's go out and get some barbecue or something.

JEFF: I'm always gonna tell you the truth. From the very beginning -- we said -- I'm the front man and you're the guitarist with mystique. That's the dynamic we agreed on -- Page, Plant... Mick, Keith. But somehow it's all turning around. We have got to control what's happening. There's a responsibility here -

RUSSELL: Excuse me, but didn't we all get into this to *avoid* responsibility?

JEFF: I can't say anymore with a writer here.

RUSSELL: Oh, no no no no no! You can trust him, say what you want. He won't write it.

JEFF: Look, I work as hard or harder than anybody on that stage. You know what I do – I connect. I get people off! I look for the guy who isn't getting off, and I *make* him get off. (*To William:*) Actually, *that* you can print. (*Then to Russell:*) And yet, why do I always end up feeling like I'm a joke to you? Look, you want to pretend this isn't going to be a very big band. Well it is. You call yourself a leader of this band, but your direction allowed the t-shirt, when you allowed Dick to manage us, 'cause he's your friend... don't you see? The t-shirt is everything.

RUSSELL: Is it my turn now? Because I think we should, for once, say what we really mean.

JEFF: Oh, this is the part where you quit -

RUSSELL: (*stiffening*) Right. I'm so predictable.

JEFF: Deal with it! And let me just say what nobody else wants to say to you -

RUSSELL: What?

JEFF: Your looks have become a problem.

DICK: Alright, okay, enough, now. Break it up! Everyone out of the room for five minutes!

RUSSELL: Hey! Yeah, William. Sorry. Come on, man, come on, come on, come on, let's go find something *real*.

What do the underlined words mean?

Who are Page and Plant, and Mick and Keith?

Why does Jeff think that the T-shirt is so important?

What's the difference between how Jeff thinks of being in a band, and how Russell thinks of it?

What do you think Russell is looking for when he says he wants something *real*?

Scene 3 for Discussion

1:19:30 - 1:22:58



PENNY: You think you can fool me. I read you. I know what you're thinking.

WILLIAM: What's that?

PENNY: You're worried about me and Russell.

WILLIAM: Yeah. I gotta work on that.

PENNY: You're so sweet. God – if there was more of you in him...

WILLIAM: Don't tell me this stuff. I want to like him.

PENNY: (*concerned*) Did you miss your test or something?

WILLIAM: You have *no* idea.

PENNY: I know I'm not on the plane, and I'm not going on some other band's bus. I mean, I could go with the Sabbath road crew, but that would be pathetic. The girls are all going with Humble Pie. If you could find out from Russell --

WILLIAM: (*quietly*) Penny—

PENNY: (*decides suddenly:*) Forget it. I'm flying to New York myself. I have a bunch of partial tickets. I know his ex-wife, current-girlfriend-thing's going to be there -

WILLIAM: –I'm not sure that's a good idea.

PENNY: What? What are you saying? What do you know? Did Russell say something?

WILLIAM: No... no. I don't know anything.

PENNY: I know he wants me there.

WILLIAM: (*suddenly angry*) Wake up! Don't go to New York!

PENNY: Why are you yelling at me?

WILLIAM: I thought we were going to Morocco! There is no Morocco. There's never been a Morocco. There's not even a Penny Lane. I don't even know your *real* name.

PENNY: If I ever met a man in the *real* world, who looked at me the way you just looked at me...

WILLIAM: When and where does the real world occur? I am really... confused here. All these rules and all these sayings... and nicknames...

PENNY: You know -- you're too sweet for rock and roll.

WILLIAM: Sweet? Where do you get off... where do you get "sweet?" I'm dark and mysterious and pissed-off and I could be very dangerous to all of you... I'm not sweet, and you should know that about me! I am The Enemy.

PENNY: Look. You should be happy for me. You don't know what he says to me in private. Maybe it is love. As much as it can be with someone who --

WILLIAM: (*blurts*) —who sold you to Humble Pie for fifty bucks and a case of beer? I was there! I was *there*.

He is instantly sorry. She tries to keep her composure.

WILLIAM: I'm... I'm sorry.

PENNY: What *kind* of beer?

What do the underlined words/phrases mean?

What does William mean when he says, "There is no Morocco!"

Is there more than one reason William is angry at Penny?

Why does Penny ask, "What kind of beer?"

What do you think Penny will do?

Scene 4 for discussion.

1:43:00



LESTER BANGS: Aw, man. You made friends with them! See, friendship is the booze they feed you. They want you to get drunk on feeling like you belong.

WILLIAM: (*ruefully*) Well, it was fun.

LESTER BANGS: Because they make you feel cool. And hey—I *met* you. You are not "cool."

WILLIAM: I know. Even when I thought I was, I knew I wasn't.



LESTER BANGS: That's because we are *uncool!* And while women will always be a problem for guys like us,

most of the great art in the world is about that very problem. Good-looking people, they've got no spine! Their art never lasts! They get the girls, but we're smarter.

WILLIAM: Yeah, I can really see that now.

LESTER BANGS: That's what great art is about: guilt and longing and love disguised as sex, and sex disguised as love... and let's face it, you got a big head start.

WILLIAM: I'm glad you were home.

LESTER BANGS: I'm always home! I'm uncool!

WILLIAM: Me too!

LESTER BANGS: (*leveling*) You're doing great. The only true currency in this bankrupt world is what we share with someone else when we're uncool. My advice... I know you think those guys are your friends. If you want to be a true friend to them... be honest and unmerciful.

What do the underlined words mean?

Did Anita's promise come true? Did William finally become cool?

Why does Lester call friendship a kind of booze?

When Lester calls the world "bankrupt", what does he mean?

Do you agree that all great art is about what Lester says it is about?

What do you think William will write in his article?