

2016 Movie Draft

by Tenessa Gemelke, Joe Mulder, & Mike Wagner

We're back, baby!

Yes, it's the (very belated) return of the PoopReading.com Movie Draft. The Oscars may have been months ago, you may have forgotten who won, who was nominated, and who these people even were, but we did this so by God I'm going to publish it.

This year we welcome super-special guest participants Betsy Rosenblatt and Holly Moyer, both of whom are amazingly intelligent and clever women who are way above this sort of nonsense but agreed to participate anyway. They are joined by PoopReading.com vets Mike Wagner, Tenessa Gemelke, and myself.

So, how does it work? As we do every year, we took a fantasy football approach to the Oscars by drafting the 20 nominated actors via email, selecting some sort of made-up title, and then coming up with the best movie we could. This year's nominated actors were:

Christian Bale
Cate Blanchett
Bryan Cranston
Matt Damon
Leonardo DiCaprio
Michael Fassbender
Tom Hardy
Brie Larson
Jennifer Lawrence
Jennifer Jason Leigh
Rooney Mara
Rachel McAdams
Charlotte Rampling
Eddie Redmayne
Saoirse Ronan
Mark Ruffalo
Mark Rylance
Sylvester Stallone
Alicia Vikander
Kate Winslet

And we always have a different source for our movie titles. One year it was fake movies mentioned on "Seinfeld" episodes. One year it was English translations of Best Foreign Film Oscar nominees from the '50s and '60s. This year, we're using some of the less salacious-sounding titles from the credits of legendary adult film actress Nina Hartley. Because why not? Our twenty titles were:

As the Spirit Moves You
Bad Penny
Conflict
Diamond In the Rough
Dirty Little Secrets

Dreamwalk
Full Moon Bay
Hard Times
Hothouse Rose
Hungry
The Legend of King Karl
The Life of the Party
The New Barbarians
Nooner
Plaything
Riding Lessons
Spoiled
Twice In a Lifetime
White Rabbit
Wide Open Spaces

The email draft order was determined by random draw, and the proceedings went a little something like this:

BETSY: Hi, Mike and Tenessa! And Joe and Holly!

Iâ€™ve never done this before, so I've been putting a lot of pressure on myself over this first pick. On one hand, this is an embarrassment of riches. On the other, I go now, and then I get NOTHING for 9 rounds. If I'm not careful, I'll get a movie full of generic, albeit talented, blonde 20-something women. Thereâ€™s so much strategy to it! I started trying to reverse-engineer from titles, and realized that that was a good way to drive myself mad with possibilities. And anyway, having oneâ€™s options open is one of the great joys in life if you, like me, are a âœ• (Perceiving) on the Meyers-Briggs scale.

Yeah, Iâ€™m talking about Meyers-Briggs in the first round of the Oscar Draft. Wanna make something of it?

So Iâ€™m doing what any sane âœ• would do, and picking **Bryan Cranston**. The man can do anything. He can do wacky. He can do dark and edgy. He can do heartfelt drama. He can do history. The man was on *One Life to Live* in 1985, for goodness sake. My options remain open.
BOOM. MIC DROPPED.

JOE: I'm not saying that's the greatest debut email in Oscar Draft history... but that's the greatest debut email in Oscar Draft history.

TENESSA: Betsy! Holly! It's a pleasure to meet you. I look forward to destroying you with my superior imaginary filmmaking skills.

I'm excited about the draft quickly devolving into a Myers-Briggs discussion. How has this never happened before? Probably because this scene has historically been an introvert sausagefest. As a proud ENFP and vagina-ed American, I couldn't be happier about this turn of events.

So, in celebration, I give you my obvious first pick: **Jennifer**

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Lawrence. The internet says she is an ENFJ, but I figure that's close enough. Also? JENNIFER FUCKING LAWRENCE. I already win.

To save the rest of you the trouble, I went ahead and did the laziest possible search for all of the personality types. I know this will be an invaluable resource as the draft proceeds. You are welcome.

Christian Bale ISTP
Cate Blanchett INFJ
Bryan Cranston INTJ
Matt Damon ENTJ
Leonardo DiCaprio INTP
Michael Fassbender ESTP
Tom Hardy ISTJ
Brie Larson ISFP
Jennifer Lawrence ENFJ
Jennifer Jason Leigh INFP
Rooney Mara INFJ
Rachel McAdams INFJ
Charlotte Rampling INTJ
Eddie Redmayne INFP
Saoirse Ronan ENTP
Mark Ruffalo INFP
Mark Rylance INTJ
Sylvester Stallone ISTP
Alicia Vikander ISFP
Kate Winslet ENFJ

I guess my point here is that I will rise to any occasion, even if that occasion is some sort of inexplicable Myers-Briggs pissing contest.

JOE: I'm so glad we're doing this. This has already exceeded my astronomically high expectations.

Btw according to my online research, I'm a DILF.

BETSY: Agreed. "Some sort of inexplicable Myers-Briggs pissing contest" is now my favorite phrase ever.

MIKE: Betsy! Holly! Welcome to the draft. I look forward to my real drafting and pretend filmmaking crushing your spirits and forcing you both to take some long, hard looks in the mirror – asking the tough questions about whether you really have what it takes to be a pretend filmmaker. This shit is real. Youâ€™ve got to want it. You have to be willing to plan a high-octane rescue adventure starring Mickey Rourke and be willing to pivot on a dime to a hard-scrabble story of a bad father seeking to make good because heâ€™s dying of cancer all because effing Mulder picked Meryl Streep, leaving you with Anne Hathaway, who, while being delightful and unfairly maligned, is no Meryl Streep.

Lupe (Tenessa), you were dead to me, having taken my top choice. But, your hard work on the Myers-Briggs categorizations have me flowing strong, with the wind, in

this yearâ€™s Oscar draft/pissing contest. I think Iâ€™m an INFJ (D-WI) and it is not at all surprising that a gaggle of intelligent, super-talented hotties see the world the way I do. Fellow INFJer **Rachel Goddamn McAdams** is off the board.

Joe, it is your turn, but go ahead and mail the trophy to the Badger State.

JOE: Is there anything better than this? I'd compare the thrill and wonder of making your first Oscar Draft pick of the year to the thrill and wonder of tearing into that first gift on Christmas morning... but only if such a comparison weren't woefully inadequate to describe the Oscar Draft.

Some years I have a plan. I have a certain title or kind of movie in mind, and a certain type of cast, and I draft in service of that. This year I have nothing in mind. I'll be perusing the list of available talent with fresh eyes each time my spot comes up, and I'll pick the best of whoever's left.

And what do my fresh eyes find waiting for me at pick number four? Only the **BIGGEST MOVIE STAR IN THE WORLD**. I will happily and enthusiastically take **Leonardo DiCaprio**. Maybe I'll put him in a Netflix reboot of *Growing Pains*, just to punish you guys for not picking him sooner. You don't know.

[Actually, you probably know. I'm not doing that.]

MIKE: So I guess Joe doesn't want his lead actor to win an Oscar.

[Editor's note: this email draft was conducted before the Oscar ceremony. The sting of Mike's then-accurate burn has dulled considerably in the intervening months.]

JOE: I don't do fake Oscar Drafts for the awards. I do them for the sake of fake creating fake great art.

TENESSA: See, every year I excitedly tell people, "It's time for the Poop Reading Oscar Draft!"

And they say, "Poop Reading Oscar Draft? What's that?"

And then I TRY to explain what is so great about all of this, but I can't find words that capture the experience. It's like trying to explain to somebody why a Coen brothers movie is awesome.

HOLLY: Oh hello everyone. Tenessa, I believe we met once at a fun dinner in LA (?) when you were here for the Simpsons table read (??) –is that possible? *[Editor's note: it was possible. Somebody is friends with somebody's dad; it's one of those things.]* Mike, if we've met, I'm sure it was also lovely, but I forgot. Greetings to both of you!

First, some Myers-Briggs comments. Tenessa, your typing of

our candidates is excellent. For myself, unlike Mike who "thinks" he is an INFJ, I am DEFINITELY an INFJ. The internet has a lot of important scientific commentary about INFJs, and most relevant here is the fact that

WE ARE THE PSYCHIC ONES.

Google it. Yeah that's right.

Exactly how I will use this ability, I will keep to myself.

My picks are Idris Elba and Michael B. Jordan.

—oh wait, they weren't nominated. Right. Fine.

Cate Blanchett and **Tom Hardy**.

Be afraid.

JOE: I think you'd have ended up with Idris, because the chances of me letting a *Friday Night Lights* alum slip by are pretty slim.

Speaking of pretty slim – (that would have been an excellent segue into drafting Rooney Mara, but I'm not drafting Rooney Mara)

So who *am* I drafting? This is an interesting question. There are quite a few talented performers left, and I could shape a very interesting, nuanced story based on the skills of any of OH WHO ARE WE KIDDING OF COURSE I'M TAKING SYLVESTER STALLONE. I mean, Sylvester Stallone? In an Oscar Draft? This is quite literally a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity [for me, anyway – I was born a little less than a year after he was nominated the last time], and there's no way I'm missing out on it. It was all I could do to stop myself from picking him at Number Four. It would have been all I could do to stop myself from picking him at Number One, had I had the top pick.

And since *Rocky 7* was called *Creed*, *Rocky 8* could basically be called whatever the hell I want it to be called. I might just make Leo fight Sly in *Rocky 8*; you guys don't know.

[Once again, you probably know. That's not what I'm going to do. But I COULD, and you totally COULDN'T!]

MIKE: You left me **Mark Ruffalo**? Now I have Mr. crazy energy, hipster cred, deep pools of sad eyes paired with the mother of my secret family in Canada. Honestly, just call the rest of the draft off.

[*Almost a full day passes*]

TENESEA: OH SHIT

It's a good thing Holly followed me on Twitter today, because it caused me to think, "Gee, I wonder whose turn it

is in the Oscar draft?"

It's also a good thing Holly had dinner with me in LA that time, because my boobs looked GREAT that day.

So I'm clearly in a **Matt Damon** situation here. While I'm tempted to reunite Jennifer Lawrence with Christian Bale, I just don't want to fuck with their *American Hustle* legacy so soon.

Will they be working for minimum wage in a failing potato chip factory? Will they be hired guns, discreetly tracking down a kidnapper for a wealthy New England family? Will they be in the next Muppets movie?

Yeah, probably the Muppets one.

BETSY: Look, I respect all of you, and I can see all of your projects taking shape. Holly's edgy thriller. Mike's fluffy rom-com. Tenessa's heartwarming based-on-a-true story. Joe's ill-conceived Rocky sequel. But in crafting these, you have foolishly left me with **Rooney Mara** and **Charlotte Rampling**. Yup, I now have a cast I can do pretty much anything with, including the only brunette and the only woman over 50. Bwahahahaha.

I love it when a plan comes together. I can totally make a movie with just these three. Which is a good thing, since I won't know who my fourth is until they're the only one left. But just you wait and see, that's the glory of keeping one's options open: whoever it is will just slip right into my all-star offbeat cast, like a hand into a glove that is not the glove from OJ Simpson's 1995 trial because that glove is clearly an exception to the hands-slipping-right-into-gloves rule.

JOE: ...*Joe's ill-conceived Rocky sequel*

You spelled "fucking awesome" wrong.

TENESEA: Okay, I'm just going to tip my hand here and admit that in the last 12 months, I've seen *Hail, Caesar!* once and *The Force Awakens* twice. That's it. I sincerely don't know who the hell most of these people are.

What I do know is that **Saoirse Ronan** is fucking amazing so much so that she was almost my first pick. She can play sassy, forlorn, hilarious, or badass. She's still young enough to play a kid but old enough to play an adult. She can be adorable or terrifying with virtually any accent. And let's not forget that she's ENTP. Shit just got real.

I fly to Cancun tomorrow, so there's an excellent chance my last pick will be in a drunken stupor, with a lot of ranting about my mother. If we finish in time, I can write my entire synopsis on the beach using nothing but my phone and voice text. BEST OSCAR DRAFT EVER.

MIKE: (Ring, Ring!)

-Bale here.
-Mr. Bale? Yes, you asked for an update on the Oscar Draft?
-Andâ€??
-13th.
-(beat) I fell to 13?
-â€?
-13? Jesus, FUCK. I will make it my MISSION to make EVERY. LAST. PERSON. who skipped over me pay with the failure of their shit-stained FAKE. MOVIES.
-Yes, sir.
-Who am I starring with?
-Ruffalo and McAdams.
-Well, at least someone has their fucking head on straight.
-Yes, sir.
-Get me a goddamn drink and when you bring it, I better not see you looking for eye contact.
-Yes, sir.
-And tell Bradley Cooper I went 1st. (incomprehensible screaming)
(Click).

Christian Bale.

JOE: Alicia Vikander.

I'm as surprised as you are, quite frankly. I have never seen her in a movie, and I know next to nothing about her. I found out three minutes ago that she's a Swedish ballerina. Thanks, Internet!

But look – when you're putting together your fake movie, you've got to consider the public persona of your fake leading actors. The casting choices had better ring true for the fake audience, or the fake box office receipts could be fake meager indeed. And since I've got Leo, and I may well end up needing a love interest for Leo, I went ahead and picked somebody who looks quite a bit like the sort of gal Leo goes around town with. If it were up to me Brie Larson would be off the board right now, but unfortunately it's more or less up to Leo.

MIKE: Huh. I had just assumed that Alicia Vikander was a fake name.

JOE: This is showbiz; I believe it's one of the few that's not.

HOLLY: Hey guys, you all are pretty genius and I've been laughing out loud a lot, but one of the cat-related feeds I follow on Twitter just gave me the template for my teaser movie poster, so I guess I'm the real genius.

[SnapChat picture of Tom Hardy's face on a cat – dummied up to make it look like a hastily thrown together movie poster with all of Holly's chosen actors on it – that I will try to learn how to embed into this post, but if you're reading this then I got too lazy to do it]

That'd be **Michael Fassbender** and **Mark Rylance** for me,

thanks.

JOE: Wow. Every year we do this, I say I'm going to A) get Photoshop, B) learn Photoshop, and C) make posters for all of the fake movies our Oscar Draft produces, and Holly went out and actually did it. Expert work.

I will take **Eddie Redmayne** with such unbridled enthusiasm that it may in fact raise eyebrows. As I've said, he has long been Number One on my "if I had to be with a guy" list, and he's like Number Three on my overall list. Now they've got him playing a foxy lady, apparently. And all you bleeding-heart liberals laughed when the Christian right said that Hollywood tries to turn people gay...

Mike, Tenessa, Betsy – take it home! In that order. Brie Larson, Jennifer Jason Leigh and Kate Winslet are left. Not to editorialize, but the ass end of the Oscar Draft usually produces much, much slimmer pickings than this. You're welcome, I guess? Even though the idea is to take all the good people first? Not sure how this happened. Enjoy.

Spoiler alert: Eddie Redmayne is going to be Tango's son. Or Cash's son. Whichever one Kurt Russell was.

MIKE: Kate Winslet is good goddamn delightful and now she is in my pretend movie. Is she a haughty â€œcold moneyâ€• denizen who will be terrorized by Bale before being rescued by a wounded Ruffalo, recovering from the death of McAdams? Or, will she be a befuddled book editor managing three crazy authors with interconnected pasts? You donâ€™t know! Winslet out.

[Two days laterâ€?]

TENESSA: WAAASTIN AWAAAAY AGAIN IN MARGARITAVILL

Actually, my mom has been marching me around the tourist attractions nonstop. Doesn't she know there's a Poop Reading Oscar Draft afoot? (She does know. I told her. Then I tried to explain. She stared blankly.)

I don't know a lot about my movie, but I do know that I don't want Jennifer Jason Leigh giving Jennifer Lawrence the creeps and scaring her off the set. I'll take **Brie Larson**.

Again, sorry for being slow. Blame the Mayans for leaving their ruins behind.

BETSY: YOU ARE PLAYING RIGHT INTO MY HANDS

*[For those of you without scorecards, Betsy's last pick becomes, by default, **Jennifer Jason Leigh**. Then we pick titles...]*

HOLLY: Deceptively sleek, actually cutthroat, Wall Street

warriors vying for dominance?

Futuristic mercenaries setting their sights on the greatest prize of all—the Imperial Jovian flagship Roan Barbary?

Four neighbors facing the true brutality beneath the shiny veneer of suburban life?

The doomed and gritty Saxon heroes of the Battle of Maldon?

You don't know the details yet, but you know they're!

â€**THE NEW BARBARIANS.**

I can already see it engraved at Hollywood and Highland in that noble and venerated aisle of Best Picture titles right above the Forever 21.

JOE: I will take *The Legend of King Karl*, mostly because I still have absolutely no idea what I'm going to do yet, and that title leaves me wide open. King Karl can be anything or anyone, shoehorned into whatever idea I come up with eventually. Maybe I'll make "King Karl" be the name of a Charles Foster Kane-type character's sled, you guys don't know.

Mike, Tenessa, Betsy... let's put a bow on this bad boy! That is TOO a saying.

MIKE: My choices are gritty: *Hungry*, fluffy: *Twice in a Lifetime*, dark comedy: *Bad Penny*, and I have no idea: *Wide Open Spaces*.

So, I will go with *Plaything*. Think of it as *Julie & Julia* meets primate research.

TENESSA: The only thing I have known from minute one of this draft is the title of my movie: *Bad Penny*.

Now it's ON, bitches.

BETSY: Just under the wire, I hereby announce that the pretend-film masterpiece of 2016 will be named *White Rabbit*.

Which is clearly an Aryan-Supremacist version of either *Donnie Darko* or *Harvey*. Right?

AND NOW, THE MOVIES

White Rabbit, starring Bryan Cranston, Rooney Mara, Charlotte Rampling, and Jennifer Jason Leigh

By Betsy Rosenblatt

Svetogorsk, Soviet Union, 1987. A sliver of moonlight barely illuminates the back of a cargo truck. Inside, refugees huddle together. One, a middle-aged woman in wire-rimmed glasses, her features far more refined than her circumstances, rubs her arms for warmth. She wears only a thin cardigan: she has wrapped her fine wool coat around the shoulders of a younger woman who groans in pained discomfort. We see, in the dim light: the younger one is pregnant. The older one whispers (according to the subtitles), "not long until the border, Malinka. We must be quiet now. Not long." But being quiet is not an option. "It's happening." Malinka wails. The refugees make space, as well as they can, and spread the coat over the floor of the truck. There, among the rumbles of the road, her child is born. The older woman wraps the child in the wool coat and lays it on its mother's breast.

Moments later, the truck jerks to a stop at a checkpoint. A gray-haired Soviet guard with a scarred lip and a machine gun demands to see inside the truck. "It's only turnips," the driver says, "from the White Rabbit Farm. For the morning market." There is a noise from inside the truck. "Awfully loud turnips," replies the guard. He strides around to the back of the truck and tries the lock. It's locked, so he shoots at it with his machine gun. Bullets rip through the lock and the farm's name, hand-painted on the back of the truck: Ð`Ð`Ð`Ð`Ð`Ð`Ð` ÐšÐ ÐžÐ`Ð`Ðš, and a picture of a white rabbit. The door swings open, and the guard begins pulling people out and shooting them, one by one. A young man. An older man. Then Malinka, who thrusts her baby at the older woman before tumbling out of the truck and falling to the grizzled guard's shot. "What do we have?" a fresh-faced young guard hustles toward the truck from behind a stand of bushes, pulling up his pants, realizing with panic that his bathroom break came at exactly the wrong time. As he looks at the truck, his face registers: exactly the wrong time. "White rabbit," he says, under his breath. In one swift move, he raises his gun and shoots the older guard in the head. The young guard looks with dismay at his former comrade's fallen body. The three dead refugees. The wailing baby inside the truck, cradled in its wool coat as the older woman tries, unsuccessfully, to soothe it. "I suppose I am coming with you, now, White Rabbit." He latches the door, gets in the passenger side of the truck, and they speed across the border into Finland and the night.

New York, 2016. Katie Krolik (Rooney Mara) bustles out of her New York apartment with her hands full. She is running late for her job as a radio producer for NPR. On her way out, she runs into Bryan Cranston, her building's handyman, wearing a pair of coveralls under a big, multi-colored open-front sweater. "A fine morning, Katichka, is it not?" "Hi Oskar!" She greets him. Although she's clearly in a hurry, he engages her in conversation and helps her balance her tote-bag-and-coffee bundle. He's quite a character, prone to heavily-accented tall tales about how things were in the Old Country. At work, in a production

meeting, her boss explains that they are doing a series of human-interest stories about the legacy of the Cold War, 30 years later. Katie pitches a story about the handyman, Oskar Byelo. "He moved into my building a month after I did, and I already feel like I know his life story. If even a quarter of his stories are true, he's either a war criminal or a hero," she explains.

Oskar's interview is so outlandish – he claims that in the 1980s he rose quickly through the Soviet apparatchik system and by the time he was in his late 20s he was already a high Kremlin official, in charge of assassinations and domestic spying, keeping secret records on high-ranking KGB agents – that it starts to look like the whole interview is unusable. But he also has some things to say about what it has been like to adjust to American life after what seemed like a lifetime of serving a totalitarian regime, and the fact-checkers are able to verify with the Russian embassy that someone with the name Oskar Byelo had, in fact, held some position in the Soviet government, so they use a little bit of his interview on the radio.

But Katie is intrigued. She starts trying to do deeper fact-checking herself. And as she digs, she begins to realize: *it's all true.*

We discover in a series of flashbacks that Oskar Byelo had gradually collected personally damning information about KGB officers and had used it as leverage to sneak political dissidents out of the Soviet Union. Using the code name "White Rabbit," he had snuck out many of the Soviet Union's top intellectuals, who had defected to the U.S. and Canada. Oskar Byelo was, indeed, both a villain and a hero. When he could no longer maintain his secret work, he escaped. Byelo had been the man behind the wheel that fateful night in 1987, carrying not only a truck full of scientists, professors, and poets, but also a parcel of papers containing personal secrets that could destroy the lives of those who now lead the Russian intelligence service, the FSB.

But Katie's handyman was not Oskar Byelo.

Katie manages to track down one of the people from that truck – we can tell from the wire-rimmed glasses that she is the one who had helped deliver the baby. She is Elena Kurskaya, played by Charlotte Rampling, now a retired professor of mathematics. Together, Katie and Elena figure out that the handyman calling himself Oskar Byelo was actually the fresh-faced young guard who had saved the truck. He had spent the last 30 years protecting Oskar Byelo's secrets by appropriating Byelo's identity, increasingly believing his own legend, and secretly watching over Katie – who had been that little baby in the back of the truck, the baby he couldn't forget, whose mother he couldn't save. And after 30 years apart, Elena reconnects with Katie, the baby she helped deliver.

But as Katie and Elena uncovered this information, so did the FSB. The moment that NPR fact-checkers contacted the Russian embassy, other wheels began turning. The FSB sent a special operative, Natalya Volk (played with slinky, badass menace by Jennifer Jason Leigh), to find Byelo and the lost files – and find him with severe prejudice. What she finds instead is a hapless and possibly delusional daydreamer of a handyman, a math professor, and a radio producer, none of whom know where Oskar Byelo is. The trio run for their lives.

What follows is a game of cat and mouse around New York, New England, and Canada, as Natalya and the trio each try to track down the real Oskar Byelo – one to warn him, the other to destroy him once and for all.

The Legend of King Karl, starring Leonardo DiCaprio, Sylvester Stallone, Alicia Vikander, and Eddie Redmayne

By Joe Mulder

Karl Palladino (Sylvester Stallone) was a successful professional wrestler in the 1970s and 1980s. Known as "King Karl," he built a large following but retired just before the wrestling boom of the early '80s. A legendary "heel" (bad guy), Karl would lock opponents in his "Kingdom Come" sleeper hold and finish them off. Many an announcer and opponent would decry the move as an illegal choke hold, but Karl – in character – always vociferously and arrogantly denied this, saying that "you peasants" simply couldn't appreciate his wrestling genius.

Unlike a lot of his colleagues, Karl saved the money he made in the wrestling game and invested it wisely, turning it into a small fortune. This fact is not lost on Niles Chilton (Eddie Redmayne), an English wrestling fan and documentary filmmaker of modest-to-limited success, who has been shadowing Karl for a year or so, ostensibly to make a film about him. Karl has a lot of money, but the peripatetic wrestling life left him little time for friends or family. Wrestling also hastened the decline of his mental faculties, and that has begun to manifest itself in earnest. Irrascible and controlling, Niles has wormed his way into Karl's life. Forgetful and increasingly helpless, Karl has let him.

One day during an autograph signing Karl agrees to demonstrate his sleeper hold on an enthusiastic fan. Karl becomes agitated and confused, however, and nearly chokes the man into unconsciousness.

Months later, Karl has moved into an assisted living facility. Niles is constantly getting on the staff's nerves, particularly those of a nurse named Marta (Alicia Vikander), who is increasingly unsure that Niles's motives are pure.

One day, Luke (Leonardi DiCaprio) shows up and asks to

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talk to Karl. We find out along with Luke that he is Karl's son. It turns out a confused Karl called Luke's mom's phone number looking for her, but she passed away long ago without ever telling Luke who his real father was. Luke kept her number after she died.

Niles pretends to be welcoming, but is outraged. Karl has no will, and not being of sound mind, he can hardly make one now. Niles is incensed that this newly revealed son will get all of Karl's money, when Niles believes he "deserves" it.

Luke and Marta become close – I mean of course they do, just look at the two of them – and Niles becomes increasingly desperate and controlling of Karl.

Finally, with Karl having all but succumbed to total dementia, and with Marta and Luke on the verge of excising Niles from Karl's life, Niles tells Karl something: Niles is going to kill Luke. He villain-monologues to an out-of-it, uncomprehending Karl that he's not going to let all these years hanging around some washed-up wrestler go unrewarded.

"You won't miss him," Niles tells Karl. Karl can't really hear or understand him, can he? Karl's gone. "If you cared about him, you'd have gotten in touch with him back when it mattered."

Karl gets up out of bed. Hmm—he hasn't done that unassisted in some time. He leans a chair against the door handle, jamming the door. "What the fuck are you doing?," a stunned Niles asks him.

Luke and Marta show up outside Karl's door; they've decided to confront Niles.

Karl grabs Niles and the muscle memory takes over. He starts to choke him out.

Niles cries out. Luke and Marta pound on the door, but they can't open it. "Dad!," Luke shouts, as the life drains from Niles's face.

Karl tosses Niles's corpse to the floor and climbs back into bed. The chair gives way and Marta and Luke burst into Karl's room. We fade to black as Karl looks at them, now once again genuinely confused.

Nobody, Karl included, will know why he did it.

The New Barbarians, starring Cate Blanchett, Tom Hardy, Michael Fassbender and Mark Rylance

By Holly Moyer

The Prologue of The New Barbarians looks like the

prologues to Disney cartoons like Cinderella or Beauty and the Beast. There's a gorgeous illustrated book. There's a narrator (Morgan Freeman, ENFJ). Quick live-action images spring from the book as the story is briefly told—

They were kids, pulled from 1980s London into the magical world of Nurpia – a fantasy world threatened by evil, a world only they could save.

Gwennie became the sorceress, the high arts of magic at her fingertips.

Liam became the warrior, wielding Ferox, the greatest blade of the ancient Nurpian defenders.

And orphaned Ivo Brokenshire? He turned out to be the Chosen One.

Gwennie, Liam, and Ivo learned about teamwork and self-sacrifice and bravery. Ivo's friends helped him achieve his rightful throne, the barbarians were defeated, evil fell into sleep, and humans, fairies, and unicorns danced in happy celebration of the new peace. Then, not without a few tears, Gwennie and Liam bid farewell to young King Ivo and returned to London.

"And then they forgot about Nurpia and grew up," says Morgan Freeman bluntly, losing interest, and the book SLAMS SHUT.

We're in present-day London.

DR. GWENDOLYN PUCK (Cate Blanchett, INFJ) is a noted neurosurgeon, top of her game, except her life's falling apart. Her successful husband NORBERT (Adrian Lester, Myers-Briggs type unknown) is leaving her. Norbert thinks she's having an affair, but really Gwendolyn spends evenings getting drunk and then going to psychics, palm-readers, and tarot experts with the same shame a proper British lady would carry into a seedy strip club. She ends up drunkenly telling them off and staggering home. It's a bizarre compulsion. In public, she's still managing to hold everything together, but in private, she's in despair. Life used to have meaning. Where'd it go?

LIAM JONES (Tom Hardy, ISTJ) is an ex-con and car mechanic. A crappy car mechanic. Actually he mostly makes cars worse. He's more interested in getting in bloody pub fights on behalf of "the oppressed" which, on any given day, might be a pretty girl getting harassed, a scrawny guy who lost money on a bar bet, or, on one ill-fated occasion, a really well-known boxer who did not need his help. He's been in and out of prison and is barely scraping by with the help of his goofball American protag MARLON (Michael B. Jordan, Myers-Briggs type unknown but basketball Michael Jordan is ISTP) and badass con artist JULIE (Freema Agyamen, Myers-Briggs type unknown but [this website](#) uses a GIF of one of her characters to illustrate a point about INFJs).

Gwendolyn comes home to her huge, empty house one night

and opens the fridge looking for something to drink. Beyond it isâ€¦ not the fridge. She sees trees, hears birdsong. A horse neighs. "Oh, hell no," says Gwendolyn, and slams the fridge door. But the same vista greets her behind every door she opens. Finally, in a moment of madness, she steps throughâ€¦

...into NURPIA! It's still here! That daydream from her childhoodâ€¦ was real! This is incredible! A unicorn trots up!

The unicorn's horn has been bloodily chopped off. It looks like it's dying as it staggers out of sight.

"Something's gone wrong here, huh?" says Liam, strolling up.

Something has, indeed, gone very wrong in Nurpia, and its defenders have been summoned once again. What was once a cheap C.S. Lewis rip-off is now straight-up Game of Thrones (with less rape-iness; I'm a feminist, dammit). This is not a kid's world anymore. A terrible army is ravaging the land, plague is rampant, and there are whispers of evil magic at work.

After a series of sensible adult attempts to get the hell out of here, and some difficulties getting reacquainted, Gwendolyn and Liam face facts: they're back, and they have to solve this. Accepting this gives them a strange sense of liberation, even confidence, as they step back into their roles as sorceress and warrior, this time with grown-up knowledge and strength to back them up. Doesn't mean she exactly remembers how to cast spells – yet. Doesn't mean the blade Ferox isn't a rusty ruin. But they have each other. All they have to do is find Ivo – the Chosen One – and they'll have the gang back together. Teamwork, self-sacrifice, and bravery will save the day once again.

But KING IVO THE UNIVERSAL (Michael Fassbender, ESTP), under the influence of his mysterious advisor ESMOND ORD (Mark Rylance, INTJ) has betrayed his kingdom's trust. He remains dangerously childish, remembers nothing of our world, and believes only that his warrior hordes must purge his land of all impurity, a belief that has plunged his land into blood and chaos because he defines "impurity" as "basically anything."

Gwendolyn and Liam must raise an outlaw army to meet this scourge, even as Ord declares their paltry forces to be an invading barbarian horde – like the invaders who attacked years ago, and were slain by King Ivo – and throws the King's vast forces against them. A magical, medieval military campaign across the land follows, the bloodshed is terrible, and all that's before Ivo reveals that he has hostages. Norbert, Marlon, and Julie are within his impregnable citadel, guarded by Ord.

The climax arrives as Gwendolyn and Liam lay siege to Ivo's

citadel, just as Ivo himself leads his most elite troops in a trick maneuver to trap them against the walls from behind. Even if they save the hostages and survive this final, epic battle to see victory, Gwendolyn and Liam must face two terrible questions: first, can they kill their childhood friend Ivo, if it comes to that? And second, will they – and the people they care about – ever get home again?

Plaything and **Bad Penny** are pending at press time.
