

# Being Charlie Kaufman

By Joe Gordon

## Scene 1

*Birds chirping. A man and a woman are sitting on a park bench. The man is MOKE GREENERBY, a well-dressed, bright-eyed and manic English gentleman in his 30s. The woman is SHEILA, a simple, soft-spoken American.*

MOKE: You know, they say that you can't force inspiration. They're wrong. If you don't look for inspiration, it won't look for you. That's why I started my inspiration regime. You know, that's when I started *doing* stuff. Varied stuff, particular stuff. Like smiling more. Fishing for inspiration. New things. New books. Touching everything. Wearing ladies' clothes and the like.

SHEILA: Excuse me, do I know you?

MOKE: No. *(beat)* Talking to strangers. That's on the regime. That's inspirational. I never used to do it. Hi. My name's Moke Greenerby.

SHEILA: Moke Greenerby? Sounds like a writer's name.

MOKE: *(little laugh)* Yeah. Funny you should say that. I'm going to kill Charlie Kaufman.

SHEILA: *(taking it as an obscure joke)* I see. Who's Charlie Kaufman?

MOKE: Just this writer. One of the best. Have you seen Being John Malkovich?

SHEILA: *(searching)* Being John Malkovich... No, I don't think so. That was the one with John Cusac and... no, it was a bit too crazy for me.

MOKE: Well he wrote that. And *Adaptation* – that's another one of his. That one's deliciously crazy – he wrote it with an imaginary twin brother called Donald! Donald was the first make-believe writer to be nominated for an Oscar! I mean how wacky is that?!

SHEILA: That's... wacky.

MOKE: How inspired! I think he must have found enough inspiration one day. God, he must've got inspiration overload. It's about experiencing everything, but in the right way. It's about tuning in, you know? Like getting a radio signal. You put out your antennae and you don't want to get *everything*, you want to tune into the right wavelength and get it crystal clear. You're looking for a new radio station.

SHEILA: *(beat)* Sorry, *what* are we talking about?

MOKE: Inspiration. It's about originality too. You want to tune into a wavelength that nobody's ever tuned into before. If you just get a nice signal, that's nice, but it's not new; you need it to be nice and new. That's what people care about.

SHEILA: So... is that what you do? Are you a-

MOKE: *(smug)* Writer, yeah. I used to write very different stuff before my inspiration regime. I wrote meticulously planned short stories for little children. They combined tales of farmyard animals with indecipherable romantic symbolism.

SHEILA: Oh?

MOKE: Yeah, mainly geese. For some reason nobody took me seriously. I was only ever appreciated by the under-nines.

SHEILA: *(encouragingly)* Well, they need books too.

MOKE: Possibly. *(sighs)* All I ever wanted was to write stuff that was printed in font-size fourteen or smaller.

SHEILA: *(confused)* Font-size 14?

MOKE: Yeah. Or smaller. You probably wouldn't understand.

SHEILA: No, I don't.

MOKE: *(pause)* That all changed when I found I had a gift.

SHEILA: Well that's great.

MOKE: Not quite. It was stolen property.

SHEILA: I don't get it.

MOKE: It's like I've been saying... sometimes you tune into somebody else's signal – their wavelength. I'll explain. *(beat)* Sorry, what's your name?

SHEILA: Sheila.

MOKE: Hi Sheila. (*shake hands*) Basically, I got obsessed with Charlie Kaufman. And I had a free week so I just read everything Kaufman's ever done. I submerged myself in Kaufman. I ate, slept and breathed Kaufman. I read all the screenplays, all the sitcoms, the interviews - everything. I wasn't just reading it for fun. I was reading *assiduously* - assiduously, which means persistently, with an unflinching attention, like working non-stop - and I was all-consumed. I glutted myself with Kaufman. I was in love.

SHEILA: Love?

MOKE: Love. In love with his *creations*. And by the end of the week I was so tired because I hadn't had much sleep and I was thinking like Kaufman. Charlie Kaufman's very self-referential, very personal, you know? And I was thinking like that. That was my new inspiration. Glut yourself on someone. That'll inspire.

SHEILA: I've never done that before. I read a lot of John Grisham but-

MOKE: That's different. (*SHEILA is taken aback*) Anyway, yeah, so I needed sleep and my eyeballs were burning. But the little Kaufmans in my head wouldn't go away, wouldn't stop sparking my imagination, you follow? So I frantically scribbled down all these ideas. And then out popped a film.

SHEILA: A film?

MOKE: A screenplay. But there were no geese involved. It was *Adaptation*.

SHEILA: (*Unsure*) Cool.

MOKE: That's where you're meant to go "*woo*".

SHEILA: ... woo?

MOKE: Exactly. As I said before, it's Kaufman's film! It came out the next week! I couldn't believe it. I wrote *Adaptation*!

SHEILA: I thought you said this Charlie Kaufman guy wrote it?

MOKE: Well, he did *too*. We both did. (*Pause*) The script was font size eleven. *Eleven*. And I was writing it. I'd unknowingly perfectly

replicated it one week before I saw the film. So I might as well have *been* Charlie Kaufman.

SHEILA: But you weren't. You aren't.

MOKE: *(pause, dismissing SHEILA's comment)* So I had to test myself to make sure I could repeat this. I was duplicating Kaufman; it was the wackiest thing ever. But could I keep doing it?

SHEILA: *(not convinced)* Uh-huh?

MOKE: Then I wrote *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind* as a test. Do you know that film? You like it? *(SHEILA shakes head)* It was his next film. I didn't know the title – I came up with it. I tuned in! I came up with it all!

SHEILA: How does that work? How can you both come up with exactly the same thing? Surely that's impossible.

MOKE: It's perfectly possible, although scarcely probable. I don't know, I guess I just got behind his eyes, right into his mind!

SHEILA: Charlie Kaufman?

MOKE: Yes, Charles. *(pause)* You look at the same picture from a different angle, you see a different picture. But some people see the same picture. You look at the world from a different angle... *some* people see the same world. It's like fate's being naughty a boy, handing out the same present to two people. Fate can be mad like that.

SHEILA: A-huh... well I know what you mean about fate – I work at this flower shop and... *(realising MOKE looks hurt to be stopped mid-flow)*. So you wrote *Eternal Sunsh-*

MOKE: *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind!* Word for word. Where Kaufman thought he was adding something special, I thought the same thing. It was the same script. I couldn't write it faster than him though. *(excited)* He always gets there *first!*

SHEILA: Well, he was Charlie Kaufman first, surely.

MOKE: Technically. So I thought, what do I do now? What do I-

SHEILA: Because gee it's a useless talent!

MOKE: *(pause)* Yeah, I can see why you think that. All I really was was a terribly inefficient photocopier. That was my life. And I used to tell myself to write my own ruddy scripts, but I couldn't. Moke Greenerby tuned into Kaufman. Kaufman had tuned into Moke Greenerby. So I thought, what do I do now? That's why I'm going to kill Charlie Kaufman. It is the only sensible option.

SHEILA: *(alarmed)* You mean you weren't joking? You're joking.

MOKE: No.

SHEILA: But you don't even know him.

MOKE: In a sense I know him better than anybody else in the world. But no, I don't "*know*" him. I wouldn't need to.

SHEILA: Can't you just... explain everything to him? Like you did to me, just slower? You can't just kill someone. Above all you can't kill... what's his name?

MOKE: Charlie Kaufman.

SHEILA: Yeah, a writer like Charlie Kaufman. I'm sure you don't mean it.

MOKE: What?

SHEILA: That you're going to kill Charlie Kaufman. *(nervous laugh)* No?

MOKE: I'll give him a chance.

SHEILA: To do what?

MOKE: To be not killed. *(gets up)* Whatever happens, it'll be very Moke Greenerby-meets-Charlie Kaufman *(laughs)*. Ya' know? *(walking off)* Nice meeting you Sheila, you were an inspiration.

SHEILA: *(distressed)* Nice meeting you too, Moke. I suppose. Don't do anything stupid. Seriously, don't-

MOKE: We'll see. *(wistfully)* Font-size eleven...

## Scene 2

*CHARLIE KAUFMAN is lying on a sofa, underneath a blanket, reading his own script and laughingly admiringly. Excited by his own work, he tries to resist masturbating under the covers but ultimately*

*fails. The door bell rings. He checks his watch – he’s not expecting anybody. He gets up and opens the door.*

MOKE: *(offstage)* Charlie Kaufman?

KAUFMAN: Yeah.

MOKE: Have you got five minutes?

KAUFMAN: For what? Are you trying to sell me a kitchen... or Jesus, or something?

MOKE: Moke Greenerby.

KAUFMAN: *(pause)* What’s that?

*A gun appears, aimed at KAUFMAN. MOKE speaks calmly, even nervously.*

MOKE: I’m just this chap from England. I’m a writer. Like you. And I want to kill you because... can I explain? Can we have a cup of tea and a chocolate hob-nob or something?

KAUFMAN: *(terrified, walking backwards, letting MOKE enter)* Jesus. I’m – I’m just a writer, man.

MOKE: I know. I’m a bit of a fan. Adaptation’s my favourite because it’s just so *real*. I nearly wept.

KAUFMAN: Thanks... Look, take anything. Take it and leave, please. Jesus. Is this a prank?

MOKE: *(slamming door)* No. I take tea with no milk, four sugars.

KAUFMAN: That’s how I take it. You’ll kill yourself. *(pause)* I’ll make the teas. I can sort this out. Jesus. I can sort this out. *(KAUFMAN busies himself at his sink)*

MOKE: You know, you’re even more neurotic in person.

KAUFMAN: *(turning around)* I’m not at my best.

MOKE: I think you’ll like my tale. It’s quirky.

KAUFMAN: OK, but can you just point the gun away from me? I can’t control my fingers. I can’t pour the tea.

MOKE: I'm afraid not. It'll be fine. I don't mind if you spill a bit. There'll probably be a bit of a mess anyway. Later.

KAUFMAN: (*whimpers*) Shit. What's your story? Maybe it'll distract me, I don't, er, I don't know.

MOKE: I'll keep it short; it's a simple premise. I read all of your back catalogue and I saw all your films, over and over again. Assiduously.

KAUFMAN: Assiduously? Are you sure that's the right word? I'm sorry. Go on.

MOKE: It'll do. Anyway, I got obsessed. I read and read and read. Then I wrote and wrote and wrote. And I wrote just like you. I tuned into Charlie Kaufman.

KAUFMAN: You tuned in? You mean you copied me?

MOKE: No, not at all. We wrote simultaneously. I wrote the Adaptation script and the Eternal Sunshine script at the same time and speed as you. We were both being equally original on our two very different planes of existence.

KAUFMAN: I get it. That's... cool. It's a neat idea, I like it. Apart from the phrasing – I mean, *planes of existence?* – and the...killing... bit. Why do... why?

MOKE: Well at first I thought I was just a hapless doppelganger. I could *create* but it was just advanced plagiarism, really. I could only *recreate*. I need to create. I need to be the *progenitor*. (*insane*) I was afraid I would just lose it – my mind, I mean – lose my mind. That wasn't what was happening though. I'm perfectly sane.

KAUFMAN: I think... I think that if you're going to murder me, I don't know, you might not come across as fully, 100%, down-the-line sane. You know, I haven't *done* anything!

MOKE: That's it though.

*KAUFMAN turns around and puts two cups of tea on the table.*

*MOKE picks one up.*

KAUFMAN: What?

MOKE: *(gun in one hand, tea in the other)* You've *done* it. You've succeeded. You torment yourself with insecurities, but you've been recognised. You get credit. You're a *creator*. And I'm nothing.

KAUFMAN: Sure. Er, that sucks but... *(switching)* I'm sorry, I still can't believe you, you know. That you wrote *Adaptation*. It was about me and-

MOKE: Flowers! Yeah. I did it, trust me, Charles. Otherwise, I'd just be your run-of-the-mill madman and I wouldn't be so thrilled to be here! I'll prove it! You're working on a new film that you just thought up about two weeks ago, yes? Your favourite line in it is: "Your damn feelings of silent superiority. You could say it all - *(KAUFMAN joins in with finishing it)* everything they all say. But you don't."

KAUFMAN: I don't know where to fit it in!

*KAUFMAN excitedly slams down his tea and picks up the script.*

MOKE: Nor do I.

KAUFMAN: Jesus. *(flicking wildly through script)* I didn't even write that down.

MOKE: *(slamming down tea)* I did. I beat you! See, I don't do everything exactly the same as you. I don't live a replica life. I just create the same. It's the start... the homogenisation of Kaufman!

KAUFMAN: God, imagine that, everybody writing like me.

*KAUFMAN puts the script down.*

MOKE: And me.

KAUFMAN: I guess.

*MOKE picks up the script, flicks through it, licking his lips and getting very excited. His hands wander down his legs but he restrains himself.*

MOKE: You wrote the song!

KAUFMAN: Of course I wrote the song, it's my song!

MOKE: *Our* song!

*MOKE breaks into song and KAUFMAN soon joins him. Neither of them can really sing but they follow the same tune. Towards the end they compete with each other.*

MOKE & KAUFMAN:

Reproducing's just necessity,  
Love-making's just an act,  
Just biological mundanity,  
Our bond means more than that.

*I wrote...*

'I love you' in 260 pages  
But one word spelt the end  
You spelt it with an N.  
I should have written 261

*MOKE launches into the next verse with "Our love, it whispers so sweetly-" but notices KAUFMAN stopping and abruptly stops too.*

KAUFMAN: *(pause)* Jesus, you're real. You don't need to kill me. We can...  
I don't know, collaborate?

MOKE: What's the point? We'd only end up with something either of us could  
create alone.

KAUFMAN: No, no, we'll bounce ideas off each other. Sure, we'd club  
together, you know? You'd get writing credits as well and-

MOKE: People would just think I was made up. One of your characters. Just another Donald Kaufman. Besides, at some point you'd probably inform the police that I made an attempt on your life.

KAUFMAN: I'll keep quiet. I'm a quiet guy. I'm meek, Moke.

MOKE: I mean I *am* copying you, in a way. But only as much as you copy yourself.

KAUFMAN: (*carefully*) Does that strictly make sense?

MOKE: Yes.

KAUFMAN: (*pause*) You don't even look like me.

MOKE: I would publish as Moke Greenerby.

KAUFMAN: I guess it's a writer's name.

MOKE: And I'm a real literary guy.

KAUFMAN: What does that mean?

MOKE: It means I like words. It means I say 'copulate' instead of 'fuck'. And I say 'gosh' instead of 'fuck'. And 'you rascal' instead of 'you fucker'.

KAUFMAN: That's not what being a writer's about.

MOKE: I know. We're on the same wavelength. (*pause*) Ah! Charlie Kaufman's pen! (*MOKE seizes a pen from the back of the sofa*)

KAUFMAN: It's just a lousy fountain pen.

MOKE: (*rising up from sofa, beholding the pen*) The *fountainous* cock of creation! (*sarcastic*) Just a pen! At least I have more respect for my extra little literary limb. (*MOKE brings his own pen from his pocket and holds them next to each other*) Moke Greenerby's pen! (*no response*) Do you want to hold it?

KAUFMAN: Thanks for the offer but no, not really, man.

MOKE: Hold it!

KAUFMAN: No!

MOKE: We could be ink brothers!

KAUFMAN: (*shouting*) I am not your brother!

*MOKE reasserts his dominance with the gun and pauses, gently handing KAUFMAN his pen. KAUFMAN humbly accepts it. He is unimpressed. A pause.*

MOKE: If for some reason I don't kill you, I thought you could do with some inspiration anyway. This is something different. It's inspiring, isn't it?

KAUFMAN: *(pause)* I guess, thanks. I mean I was OK before... actually... before you came here with your gun... and your pen.

MOKE: Everyone can do with a little more inspiration.

KAUFMAN: But maybe not a few more bullets... in their brains... or... where are they going? Don't tell me. Fuck. There must be some other way.

*A knock at the door.*

MOKE: *(hushed voice)* Are you expecting anybody?

KAUFMAN: No. I wish more people visited. But they don't. I do get more fan letters from obsessed 17-year old girls than I ever thought I'd get. But they never knock on my door, which figures.

MOKE: So it's most likely a nobody?

KAUFMAN: Yeah.

MOKE: Open the door. Be careful – there are all types of weirdoes out there. And if you say anything, I'll shoot you in the pancreas and live a successful life as the new incomparable scriptwriter...

KAUFMAN: *(with disdain)* Sure. *The pancreas.* *(opens the door)*

SHEILA: *(offstage)* Hi, are you Charlie Kaufman?

KAUFMAN: Yep.

SHEILA: I'm not a fan or anything, but today I met a guy who said he was going to kill you.

*MOKE pushes past KAUFMAN.*

MOKE: Sheila! Come on in!

KAUFMAN: Umm, yeah. So did I.

SHEILA: Moke Greenerby? *(enters)* Moke! Don't do it, I have an idea! Shit, I can't believe you were for real.

MOKE: Would you care for some tea, Sheila? Charlie, is the pot still hot?

SHEILA: *(suddenly scared)* No-no, I don't want to stay. I just had an idea.

KAUFMAN: Shoot.

MOKE: Careful.

KAUFMAN: Shit.

SHEILA: It's just all you did was tune into Charlie Kaufman, right? You read his stuff, what was it, *(trying to find the word)* a...a

MOKE & KAUFMAN: Assiduously.

SHEILA: Right. But he's alive, so it's like you can't just be a copycat. Unless you kill him. *(MOKE takes this as a suggestion and happily aims at KAUFMAN)* Which would be terrible! *(MOKE calms down)* But maybe that's just your sort of talent? Like you can copy anyone. So why can't you copy someone else? Someone who's already *dead*? Then you'll be writing new stuff, right?

MOKE: I suppose... *(considering)*

KAUFMAN: You can be the new Charlie Dickens!

MOKE: *(announcing)* Being Charles Dickens. *(pause)* No, that wouldn't work. Who the copulate reads Charles Dickens? I prefer Kaufman.

SHEILA: *(rushing towards MOKE)* But it's a great idea! You'd be in font size eleven and –

*MOKE panics because SHEILA is so close, shooting her in the chest while he jumps back.*

*(dying)* I understood that. Font-size eleven. I got it. You didn't just want to talk to kids.

*SHEILA is still.*

MOKE: Why did you *do* that?

KAUFMAN: What do you mean? *I* didn't do anything!

MOKE: This is all your fault!

KAUFMAN: I'm-I'm-I'm-I'm just a writer!

*MOKE goes over to inspect SHEILA's body.*

MOKE: Sheila, I liked you! Are you OK? Can you hear me? I was... was going to use you as a character. I was going to immortalise you! Sheila! Wake up!

KAUFMAN: You *shot* her! You killed her!

*KAUFMAN steps up behind MOKE and puts his fountain pen to MOKE's neck. MOKE, sensing the danger, rises.*

MOKE: Gosh.

KAUFMAN: I'll do it! I'll do it!

MOKE: Don't! You'd be killing your ink brother! With his own pen! Remember the song, Charlie!

KAUFMAN: You've got to respect life over literature, you fucking nut!

MOKE: Just calm down and act rationally.

*KAUFMAN appears to calm down. MOKE stabs him in the knee with his own pen. They duel elaborately with their own fountain pens.*

KAUFMAN: Jesus Christ, I'm a writer, not a fighter!

MOKE: (*enjoying himself*) But this is fascinating! I wonder if we fight the same as well!

KAUFMAN: Yes, I wonder! I agree - this is, er, fascinating. We have to do scientific experiments - lengthy, meticulous experiments and-

MOKE: No, this is *it*!

*MOKE lunges at KAUFMAN but he dodges and manages to strike MOKE quite ineffectually.*

Naughty Kaufman!

*MOKE suddenly notices he still has a gun in his hand and points it at KAUFMAN. Now there's a very tense moment between KAUFMAN and MOKE.*

KAUFMAN: Oh shit... oh shit...

MOKE: Any last words?

*This moment is shattered when a mobile phone rings in the audience: the phone of ROSANNA, who has been in the audience throughout. There is an awkward pause as MOKE tries to talk to KAUFMAN but can't resist staring at the audience.*

Anything quirky prepared for your epitaph?.. Anything... scribbled... for-

*MOKE shouts towards the audience, fiercely angry.*

I hate it when people do that! I *hate* it when people do that! (*the phone stops ringing*) And you're all thinking, I wish someone on stage *did* something, because it is *so* rude! (*points gun at the audience*)

Who's the idiot who left his phone on?

ROSANNA: I-I just-

MOKE: Get up!

*ROSANNA gets up and looks around meekly.*

ROSANNA: I only, er - that was me.

MOKE: Come up here, now. Don't ponce about.

*ROSANNA tries to sit down again but MOKE insists.*

ROSANNA: Me? OK, but...

*ROSANNA makes her way to the stage, politely asking people to stand up so that she can get to the aisle. She jumps onto the stage and makes apologetic gestures.*

I'm sorry; I just forgot to turn it off.

KAUFMAN: *(perplexed)* Who's she??

MOKE: *(demanding)* What's your name?

ROSANNA: Er, me? My name's Rosanna. Can I turn it off cos they're going to ring-

MOKE: No! Don't touch it!

ROSANNA: *(pause)* You're, er, pointing the gun at *me*.

MOKE: *(still angry)* Would you like some tea?!

ROSANNA: *(unsure)* No...er, yes? Do you... want to... give me tea?

MOKE: *This is Charlie Kaufman! Shall I introduce you two??*

KAUFMAN: *(muttering)* You know, I didn't feel like bringing it up before, but it's *Koffman*.

MOKE: *(confident)* It's *Kaufman*. Rosanna, this is Charlie *Kaufman*.

ROSANNA: Umm... hi?

MOKE: *(pause, then slams hand against head)* How did this happen? What would Kaufman do... what would Kaufman do...

KAUFMAN: I *am Koffman!*

MOKE: Well, what would you do? *Kaufman?*

KAUFMAN: If you can replicate me, you can work it out. Then I'm the redundant one. Then I'm useless. *(walking slowly to the back of the*

*stage, putting his hand on a table)* I always knew I was useless. Not an original thought in my head.

MOKE: You're right. It's my turn.

KAUFMAN: (*grinning, transforming*) But it's not as simple as that. It's not your *turn*. That's where you're wrong. It's *my* turn.

*KAUFMAN quickly whips two guns from out of a kitchen draw and points them at MOKE and ROSANNA, his arms crossed.*

MOKE: Gosh.

KAUFMAN: All along, I didn't-

ROSANNA: (*trying to creep off stage*) Look, can I just let you... act?

KAUFMAN: Yes! An act! I'm an actor, an impostor! Jesus, you guys were going to find me out, but nobody can know!

MOKE: Know what?

KAUFMAN: That I am not Charlie Koffman! Five years ago I realised that I had an amazing gift. The only problem was... it was stolen property!

MOKE: What??

KAUFMAN: I could write! I could *write!* But he always got there *first!*

MOKE: Who?

KAUFMAN: Charlie Koffman! I killed Charlie Koffman. I'd tuned in. I was just like you, Moke Greenerby. Only, I was closer to Charlie. I didn't think it could happen again but...

MOKE: Then *who* are you? If you're not Charlie Kaufman...

KAUFMAN: (*relaxing*) We had the same experience, the same inspiration. But he got all the credit. Nobody even knew that I existed. So I killed him. I killed... my own twin brother.

MOKE: Twin brother? You're... *Donald* Kaufman?!

KAUFMAN: Yes, I killed Charlie! *I* am his evil twin brother; *I* am Donald Koffman!

ROSANNA: From Adaptation?? The film? What's going on?

MOKE: (*in realisation*) That bit never felt right... that was the hardest bit for me to write...

KAUFMAN: (*smug*) Adaptation. Maybe I shouldn't have gotten so cocky.

ROSANNA: But in that, don't you... and aren't you killed in a car crash?

KAUFMAN: (*patronisingly*) It's fiction, Rosanna! Catch up! Nobody else knows what happened in the swamp that night, nobody apart from me, Donald Koffman. And I fed him to the crocodiles. They chomped on his bones. And then *I* was Charlie Koffman.

MOKE: The homogenisation of Kaufman.

KAUFMAN: *Koffman*.

MOKE: *Kaufman*.

KAUFMAN: *Koffman!* Imagine that, everybody writing like me.

MOKE: Us.

KAUFMAN: (*raising guns*) There can be only one.

ROSANNA: (*cough*) Can I sit down now?

KAUFMAN: No! Do you know what this is, Rosanna? *This* is-

ROSANNA: A play?

KAUFMAN: (*surprised, even hurt*) What?

ROSANNA: This is just a play, right?

KAUFMAN: I know! Wait. (*pacing, still holding guns*) I'm confused. I thought I was real. (*pause*) Okay, Mrs. Reality, if this is a play then where's the "audience", where's the producer and the director!?!

ROSANNA: I don't know if they're-

KAUFMAN: Well, ask for them!

ROSANNA: They might be over *there* (*waving finger at audience*) somewhere.

KAUFMAN: Ask for the director!

ROSANNA: (*sighs, then faces audience*) Excuse me, is the director here? I'm sorry about this. If they are... could they please... come?

DIRECTOR: (*standing up*) I'm the director. This isn't how the play's meant to go.

KAUFMAN: (*pointing gun*) You're the director? Get your arse up here, Hitchcock.

DIRECTOR: (*goes up to stage and stands near KAUFMAN*) Hi.

KAUFMAN: Did you direct this scene?

DIRECTOR: No.

KAUFMAN: *Did* you?

ROSANNA: Yeah, come on, did you?

DIRECTOR: (*drops head guiltily*) Yes.

KAUFMAN: Why?

DIRECTOR: Because it's wacky. We thought it was wacky.

MOKE: Did you ask Charlie Kaufman for permission?

DIRECTOR: No.

KAUFMAN: And I didn't give any permission!

DIRECTOR: You're not Charlie Kaufman.

KAUFMAN: I know I'm not Charlie Kaufman. I'm Donald Koffman!

DIRECTOR: You're not Donald Kaufman either. Your name's Alex.

KAUFMAN: Whatever, you fool! Over there (*pointing at MOKE*), that's-

DIRECTOR: Moke Greenerby.

KAUFMAN: Er, yes.

DIRECTOR: No. He's called Finnian. He's scared of flying. He wouldn't even make it to America.

KAUFMAN: Where's the writer?

DIRECTOR: Somewhere else, probably jerking off.

KAUFMAN: Hey, I write those scenes!

MOKE: Kaufman, you weren't the first guy to whack off and videotape it and make it arty-farty.

KAUFMAN: But... hasn't all this play-within-a-play self-referential, self-indulgent bullshit been done before?

DIRECTOR: It's *all* been done before! That's the *gimmick*! You're just a character in a story that was already written.

KAUFMAN: (*in admittance, hanging head*) I'm just a... a character? Jesus Christ, I'm just a character...

DIRECTOR: *(nods conspiratorially to MOKE, then both DIRECTOR and MOKE suddenly draw guns on KAUFMAN)* Ha! We didn't think it'd be that easy, to convince Charlie Kaufman himself-

MOKE: Donald Kaufman-

DIRECTOR: Whatever! We didn't think it'd be that easy to convince the great Kaufman that he's a fictional character! You're just in a story now.

KAUFMAN: But... I'm not real! I'm fictional! I'm acting! You just said!

DIRECTOR: We got you, Kaufman. Moke, it's all yours. Kaufman's fictional now, the real world is yours. Put your props down, Kaufman.

*KAUFMAN puts his guns down and stands, bemused and sad.*

*DIRECTOR gives MOKE his gun and parades the room, laughing.*

KAUFMAN: *(in dismay)* Jesus Christ... it's not about Charlie Koffman.

MOKE: It's *all* about Charlie Kaufman!

DIRECTOR: *(laugh proudly as he walks around KAUFMAN.)* Donald Kaufman... Charlie Koffman...

KAUFMAN: I've already put myself into a film.

DIRECTOR: I know. You made yourself into a character.

KAUFMAN: We're all characters. *(KAUFMAN and MOKE share a moment, staring into each other's eyes)* We're all just characters with our predefined traits... our social scripts... we don't really *make* anything... we've already been made.

MOKE: You're wrong.

KAUFMAN: Wait a minute, I *am* wrong.

MOKE: You're *not* just a character... *(touching Kaufman tenderly)* they're trying to turn you into a character, Charlie – or Donald - *(for the first time)* Koffman! And they're trying to turn *me* into a character as well!

*Surprising everyone, MOKE shoots DIRECTOR. Blood everywhere.*

*After a pause, ROSANNA tries to creep off the stage again but MOKE ushers her back on.*

DIRECTOR (*dying*): Why?

MOKE: Who wrote you?

DIRECTOR: (*gasping*) What?

MOKE: Come on! Who wrote you in, was it me or was it him? (*turning around dramatically*) Koffman! I saw that look in your eye! It was the look I *wrote* into your eye! The look that said, "I wrote this too, Moke Greenerby. I wrote this too!"

KAUFMAN: Yes! And you reciprocated! With that-

MOKE: Trembling half-wink! That knowing (*together with KAUFMAN*) trembling half-wink! (*alone*) We wrote the same play!

KAUFMAN: We wrote this play!

DIRECTOR: (*last words*) But... neither of you wrote me. I really did direct... this *thing*. (*dies*)

MOKE: (*sigh and pause*) Give me a programme! (*MOKE runs out into the audience and snatches the first programme he can find. He reads it in horror*). He was right. It was neither of us. Neither of us wrote this!

KAUFMAN: But maybe that guy with the programme's just an actor too!

MOKE: (*holding gun up to non-actor*) Are you an actor?

NON-ACTOR: (*hopefully*) No.

MOKE: (*looking at programme, jumping back up to stage*) Who the hell is this guy anyway? Look. It's not even a writer's name.

KAUFMAN: He thinks he can put us into a play!

MOKE: What a rascal.

KAUFMAN: (*passionate*) But we did both write this! That trembling half-wink! And... and (*remembering*) I gave you a gun so that you could kill me. I wondered what it would be like, to be killed on stage.

MOKE: (*equally passionate*) Yes, I thought you would! I wrote that! It was wondrously wacky! But I wrote it!

KAUFMAN: But in the end I get scared. And I don't want you to kill me, Moke. So I-

*KAUFMAN picks up one of his guns and aims at MOKE, trembling with emotion. MOKE and KAUFMAN stare down the barrels of each other's guns, but tension is once again interrupted by ROSANNA's ringtone. ROSANNA answers cautiously.*

ROSANNA: I'm in an *umm*, thing, can I phone you back?

*MOKE is furiously, futilely trying to get ROSANNA to hurry up, terrified that KAUFMAN is about to kill him and unsure of where to point his own gun.*

OK. Yes. I've got to go. Meet you at 4.30 at The Assembly Rooms. Got it. (*MOKE is squealing with anxiety and ROSANNA shushes him authoritatively*) I'll pick up two diet cokes... chicken sandwich... sorry, *two* chicken sandwiches ... and a packet of bon-bons... bye. (*puts phone away*) OK, I'm finished here now, right, can I umm, sit down? I'm going to sit down.

MOKE: But he's going to *shoot* me! Koffman's going to kill me!

ROSANNA: (*walking away, not even turning around*) He isn't Kaufman. (*muttering*) You're so confusing.

*ROSANNA walks off stage calmly. KAUFMAN cocks his gun and ROSANNA begins to run, panicked. KAUFMAN shoots her down in the aisle (where she stumbles and falls, blood everywhere) and aims back at MOKE.*

KAUFMAN: Where were we?

MOKE: (*whipping off jacket, then recounting fast while they both pace*) Well we wrote an identical play and (*waving programme*) apparently some third party non-writer-name-guy did too. So we thought it'd be delightful if I came to kill you and-

KAUFMAN: Because I'm so wacky I thought it'd be an interesting experience,  
to be killed on stage.

MOKE: Then we had a brief interlude where we shot some people - mostly  
innocent, potentially fictional.

KAUFMAN: Some of who were trying to convince us we were characters!

MOKE: Characters! We're *writers!* And I still needed to *beat you to it*, so we  
wrote that I was going to shoot you, possibly in the pancreas!

KAUFMAN: But then I got scared-

MOKE: So we wrote a gun for you. We wrote that you whip your gun back up  
and (*KAUFMAN whips his gun back up*)... and then...

KAUFMAN: (*as MOKE says "you fire"*) I fire. (*KAUFMAN fires at MOKE  
but MOKE is unfazed*)

MOKE: Yeah so you take a shot-

KAUFMAN: But nothing happens-

MOKE: Because you load a blank

KAUFMAN: Because we thought it'd be even crazier if we tracked down-

MOKE: - this *third* writer guy and (*together*) killed him -

KAUFMAN: - and then worked as a (*together*) team.

*There's a long pause as they eye each other up and take their guns to  
their sides.*

MOKE: Because of course... (*turning to the audience and raising gun*) we're  
not in the programme as writers. There's another Moke Greenerby out  
there. Somebody else tuned in. So now we've got to kill them too.

KAUFMAN: (*raising gun and aiming at audience too*) Yes. Which one looks  
like the writer?

MOKE: (*pause*) We could be called... Donald Greenerby.

KAUFMAN: We'll work on that.

MOKE: Moke Kaufman. Mookie Kaufgreenerby!

KAUFMAN: Look...

*KAUFMAN's arm is swinging back robotically, out of his control, to point at MOKE, whose arm reciprocates. They try to resist, pushing back with their free hands, but they fail and are left pointing guns at each other.*

This'll never work out.

MOKE: *(in horror)* This other guy... he finishes this play first... he gets to the ending.

KAUFMAN: Beats us to it. I never wanted the spotlight.

MOKE: And so we kill each other and die, as mere characters, but... together.

KAUFMAN: Together.

*They both shoot, blood spurting everywhere, and fall to a heap.  
Curtains.*