



# 14 STOUT MEN

A SCREENPLAY BY EFTHIMIS FILIPPOU  
TRANSLATED FROM GREEK BY KYRIACOS KARSERAS

PHOTOGRAPHY BY YORGOS LANTHIMOS



apartamento - Athens

**INT. SITTING ROOM — MORNING**

EFTHIMIS is lying on the sofa. He gets up and lights a candle, even though it's morning, and there's plenty of light in the room. Facing him are THIRTEEN STOUT MEN, all around 68 years old, all wearing white cotton tees and dark-blue shorts. They are all barefoot. Some of them are standing, others are sat on chairs, still others are lying on the floor. Some of them have combed their hair, others have not. One of them gets up off an armchair and fixes his hair with his hands before pulling a piece of paper out from the pocket of his shorts and reading from it.

STOUT MAN TWO

Efthimis, good evening. What is your first core memory of film, and when did you realise you wanted to pursue this line of work?

EFTHIMIS

Good evening. The Frontistirio Drakou — an after-school tuition centre teaching English — had a marking system with five grades: Excellent, Very Good, Good, Bad, Very Bad. Whenever I got an Excellent for my homework, which rarely happened, my mum would reward me with some fun afternoon outing and a vanilla sponge cake dusted with icing sugar. My first Excellent got me taken to a theatre show — for children, I guess — that I don't really remember. My second, however, earned me a matinée screening of *A View to a Kill* at the Cinema Oscar, followed by a meal at a pizza place with the French name Cheval. I think the sight of Grace Jones scaling the Eiffel Tower, that song by Duran Duran, and the pizza got all strangely fused inside me and shaped my understanding of the phrase: 'Now *this* is a good time'. I was eight years old. I should note here that the rarity of those Excellents back then explains why this text has been translated by Kyriacos, as this conversation we're having is in Greek. Anyway, two years later, we got a video cassette player at home because that was the thing back then — VHS players were the new refrigerators. We got a Panasonic, and it was beautiful, bigger almost than the TV itself. The first two films I rented from the video store — after some Excellent or other, I imagine — were a lousy Greek comedy and *Stand by Me*: kids smoking cigarettes, plucking leeches off their penises, and eating cherry-flavour PEZ while searching for a dead body. Grace Jones and Simon Le Bon went crashing into the leeches and PEZ, and that's when it became clear to me: movies really *can* mess with your head. But the possibility of working in the industry never crossed my mind. Nor did I ever feel the need to do it. I still don't. It just panned out that way because I happened to meet Yorgos Lanthimos. It always feels strange when I have to say his name in full: first name, last name. He's the one that suggested we write a screenplay together, the script for *Dogtooth*. I never would have done it otherwise. And then we kept

(MORE)





apartamento - Efthimis Filippou

## EFTHIMIS (CONT'D)

on writing and then we became friends and then writings and PEZ, missing corpses and Final Draft, James Bond and Athens got all tangled up. Even today when I write, I don't do it driven by some need. I do it because I don't know what else I might do. I have a terrible time of it, the writing process. That's why I turn to other forms of writing from time to time. Lyrics, plays, ads, interviews, short stories, and so on.

## STOUT MAN ELEVEN

Are there moments when you think that's not really true? That actually, you don't have such a terrible time of it when you write?

## EFTHIMIS

There are, of course, moments when I think that's not really true because, if I really was having such a terrible time of it, I'd stop writing. And then I think I might just be whining because that's another way to make people feel sorry for me. But anyway, the point is, I never would have gotten into film if it wasn't for Yorgos.

A 14th stout man (also around 68 years old) who was having a lie down in the bedroom comes running into the sitting room. From this point on, we'll be calling this man STOUT MAN ONE.

## STOUT MAN ONE

But there's another Yorgos too.

## EFTHIMIS

Yes. And then there's this other Yorgos, we share this apartment - we live together. And if it wasn't for this second Yorgos, I never would have gotten into love. So there's always been some Yorgos or other popping up in my life, getting me into things I'd never imagined.

EXT. BALCONY - MORNING

Efthimis is out on the apartment's balcony, watering a small lemon tree. The second Yorgos is out at the office. The leather slippers Efthimis is wearing, so that his feet don't get wet, are one size larger than they should be. The marble floor tiles are wet and slippery. It's really quite dangerous. The weather is rather lovely. A stout man is leaning out over the balcony railing and laughing, which is really quite dangerous too. This man is Stout Man Seven.

## STOUT MAN SEVEN

Would you like to plant an orange tree someday?

## EFTHIMIS

Yes. Very much, yes.

## STOUT MAN SEVEN

How did you develop your writing style? I was wondering  
(MORE)

apartamento - Efthimis Filippou





apartamento - Efthimis Filippou



apartamento - Efthimis Filippou

## STOUT MAN SEVEN (CONT'D)

whether you feel at all tied to or defined by this rather particular style. Also, how does Athens influence your work, Efthimis?

## EFTHIMIS

I never developed a style. This was the style I knew – this was the style I could do, rather – and it's a sad thing to say because it would likely be more interesting if I *had* developed this style and turned it into something else. That would have been properly excellent, like an Excellent scribbled under my English exercises. And this inability of mine is something that's troubled me quite a lot, as I'd like to be able to write in various different ways at any given moment, but then I think there isn't time or the inclination or any hope for that to happen. It's like when a person has to walk some other way or dance some other way or talk some other way depending on the occasion, which sounds exhausting to me and quite futile. Now, is this something that weighs on me? It does weigh me down, yes. But it's not the worst thing that could happen to a person. I mean, feeling low because I write a certain way is ridiculous, it's next to nothing, it's silly really when you think there are people oppressed by the fact they can't fuck whoever they want, or talk whenever they want, or leave some place where they're unloved far behind. So I just zip it and write the way I can, even if it brings me down or is something...

(pause)

...let's just say something I don't find all that enjoyable. I should probably also note here that my main worry, over and above the style or tone I do or do not have, is convincing myself that what I do is a proper job. I grew up in a time and a country and a family where writing as an occupation was the privilege of the idle rich or the out-of-work poor. I don't recall your other question.

Stout Man Seven does not respond.

**INT. BEDROOM – MORNING**

A lighter lies on the bedside table. A pair of white socks lie tossed on the floor. The bed has been made but not all that well. Four men call out in unison from the kitchen.

## STOUT MEN FIVE, SIX, TEN, &amp; TWELVE (O.S.)

He remembered the question and thought: Yes, of course Athens has influenced my work. He then bent down and –

## EFTHIMIS

I remembered the question and yes, of course Athens has influenced my work. I've no idea how, but I know that it has. There's no point going into details or bringing

(MORE)





## EFTHIMIS (CONT'D)

up examples, but the particularities of the land where I live have made me think in a specific way. There are lots of people in Greece, for example, who can't wait for the start of summer each year. That might seem like some simple thing, but it's not – it shapes behaviour, shapes lives. They're disappointed if summer comes late. But also if it comes too soon. So, in that sense, yes, the land where I live affects me, but, at the same time, when I choose to talk about death or life or whatever lies between the two, I know I make my writing more generic, more easy in a way, more international, more comprehensible.

Stout Man Five is stood in the bedroom doorway, fixing his hair with his hands.

## EFTHIMIS (CONT'D)

While I'm writing, I might well be thinking of a village close by, but I never put that down, I never reveal that fact – at least, not deliberately – and so people living in villages further away think it's them I'm talking about. And those villagers far away know as well as I do what the truth is, but none of us care. Because the whole world is evenly sprinkled with idiots, with the kind-hearted and the egotistical and the polite, with necrophiliacs. And a scene might well be shot in New Orleans, even though I had the island of Crete in mind as I was writing it, but it's all the same. What interests me most is picking the words, not the locations. Blood is pretty much the same everywhere, the point is what words someone picks to describe its taste or its consistency or its colour. For me, that's what's important – the words someone picks, not just when they write but also when they speak. The aesthetic of these words, their weight, even their size is significant. It's like picking out a shirt or shoes or a dessert. People are judged for the loafers they wear or what flavour tart they prefer. Lemon is different from strawberry which is different from pineapple. That's what it's like with words too. What I strive for isn't writing about something but rather describing something. Something I've noticed on more than three occasions and suspect others have noticed too. There are words I would never ever use in these descriptions because I detest them. Because I don't like the way the letters sit combined or the way these words sound when spoken – ΥΔΡΑ is a nice word, for example, whereas ΣΠΕΤΣΕΣ is not. And that's a choice, one I'll be judged for alongside all the others I make – the desserts and my shirts and shoes.

## STOUT MAN FOUR (V.O.)

Is mainstream acceptance of your work something that interests you?





apartamento - Efthimis Filippou



apartamento - Efthimis Filippou



apartamento - Efthimis Filippou

## EFTHIMIS

When I write, I write with two or three of my nearest and dearest in mind. If they like what I give them to read, then I'm happy. This means the numbers I'm looking to hit are pretty low, which is a good thing because by the time I've reached a satisfied audience of four or more, I feel this thing I've done has already exceeded my expectations. And without wanting to sound petty or pitiful, this 'mainstream acceptance of my work' label leaves me feeling troubled and uncomfortable. It's not that I renounce commercial success like it's some mark of the devil. What I think I mean to say is that I find it normal and healthy for there to be people who can't stand me as a person or the sight of my face or the work I do.

## STOUT MAN THIRTEEN (V.O.)

What films or other works of art have influenced you?



## EFTHIMIS

The thing that's influenced me the least in my life is works of art. I think I've been more influenced by a cheese puff pie I ate as a boy beside the seaside, for example. Or by how a drunk man danced one night. Or by the way a woman snuck her husband a forkful of food in a taverna without the waiter seeing. I've been influenced by Greek laïkó ['popular' or 'folk'] music dating from 1950 through to 1980 and by the places where this music is played. I've been influenced by a gold-plated belt my mother wore to go out on special occasions, by my step-father's car, by my father's profession, by my grandfather's hands, by that Italian restaurant with the French name, by the loud laughter of that second Yorgos, by all my friends very very very much, by my belly that's bigger now, which means lots of my tops are too tight, and by the Cyclades that are just awful from  
(MORE)

apartamento - Efthimis Filippou



EFTHIMIS (CONT'D)

the 15th of July right through into early September. I do catch films, other works of art now too, and either I like them or I don't but that's about it. I might get jealous of something I like, or annoyed by something I don't, but this only lasts for a few days or even just hours. I'm not saying that's a good thing. I'd very much like to burst into tears at the opera or to feel my stomach tighten when stood before a sculpture or for some dance performance to change my life but, sadly, that's not how things go for me.

STOUT MAN ELEVEN

Are there times when you think none of that is true, and that there are, in fact, things that still move you?

EFTHIMIS

Yes, alright, those things I just said might not always hold true – there may in fact be things that still move me.

STOUT MAN SEVEN

How important is the idea for a screenplay?

EFTHIMIS

Ideas are overrated. The world is full of badly executed ideas. How an idea is realised and shaped, that's the real work. The hard work. And getting the right balance of seriousness is important too. To be serious but not too serious.

STOUT MAN TEN

When were you born?

EFTHIMIS

On the 18th of January 1977.

STOUT MAN TEN

Excellent.

#### **INT. KITCHEN – MORNING**

Stout Men Eight, Twelve, and Thirteen are stood around the sink. One of them has taken his top off because he was feeling hot. None of these three men ask any questions.

#### **INT. APARTMENT BUILDING ENTRANCE – MORNING**

The 14 men took the stairs down. When asked if they would mind having their photo taken, shortly before reaching the front door to the apartment building, they politely say they do mind but sing a song all together to make up for it. After that, they all leave. Everyone, that is, except for Stout Man Twelve, the one who'd felt hot and wasn't wearing his top. He leaves 30 seconds after the others.

**END**

