

RECENTLY RECEASED

Written by

Brent Larson

INT. STUDIO - DAY

A zombie sits on a chair in a dark, typical studio background. 30-ish, was good looking at one time. Clothes surprisingly stylish and immaculate. But still a zombie. This is JORDAN.

He stares directly at the camera, slack-jawed. No movement. Vaguely hostile expression we all associate with zombies. Then TERRY (25) crosses in front of him. No reaction.

FRANK (O.S.)
Okay, let's back off a stop.

The camera pulls back, blurs, refocuses.

FRANK (O.S.) (CONT'D)
We're getting some bounce off his forehead.

Terry, a Production Assistant, steps into frame and starts applying makeup to Jordan's forehead. Still no reaction.

Frank mutters something to the camera operator. Then...

FRANK (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Okay, let's get him miked.

Terry walks back in, puts a lavalier mic on his collar. Slime drips off Jordan's face and onto the collar in a huge blotch.

TERRY
Oh, crap.

FRANK (O.S.)
Can, uh...

Terry adjusts the collar to hide the spot. STILL NO REACTION.

FRANK (O.S.) (CONT'D)
That's fine. Step out Terry...
(she does)
Okay, we got sound?

The POP of the mic being turned on. And then HEAVY BREATHING, and a low MOAN.

FRANK (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Jordan?... Jordan?... Hey, Jordan!

Jordan jumps. The hostility disappears. He widens his eyes like he was dozing. Now he looks practically friendly.

JORDAN
Sorry. What? Are we ready?

FRANK (O.S.)
Yeah, just hold off moaning into
the microphone for a minute...

JORDAN
What? No. I wasn't moaning. I dozed
off. I was snoring.

FRANK (O.S.)
I know what snoring sounds like.

JORDAN
I... was snoring!!

He now looks peeved and wags a finger, flinging SLIME at the
lens. Freeze on his face. A peeved zombie.

CUT TO BLACK

TITLE CARD: "RECENTLY RECEASED- THE JORDAN LUTZ STORY"

TITLE CARD: "A FRANK EDELSTEIN FILM"

CUT TO BLACK

TITLE CARD: "BEFORE..."

MEMORIAL PACKAGE -- MONTAGE

Overlay with Joe Cocker's "With a Little Help From My
Friends"... or something equally cheesy...

YOUNG JORDAN (5), smiling and happy, opens presents on
Christmas morning. His parents, BARRY (30) and ELAINE (30),
sit around him. Barry is more aware of the camera.

FRANK (O.S.)
Jordan Allan Lutz. Orlando native
from birth, active youngster...

--STILL PHOTOS of Young Jordan in a baseball uniform, at the
pool, gown and mortarboard, talking in front of a group, all
with cheesy big grin.

FRANK (V.O.)
... famous face around central
Florida...

--VIDEO of TV spot, with young Jordan with Barry (30), in cowboy clothes, on a car dealership lot, with cheesy grins.

BARRY

So, come on down to Lutz Subaru.

YOUNG JORDAN

We wanna seeya in a Subabu!

--STILL PHOTOS of Jordan growing up, in sports uniforms, debating with fellow students, giving a speech in gown and mortarboard. Or with his arm slung around the necks of friends. The friends aren't as excited as he is.

FRANK (O.S.)

... and all around happy kid.
Always moving, never stopping,
looking for the next big thing...

--STILL PHOTOS of Jordan hugging his mom in front of a SIGN--
"UNIVERSITY OF MID-FLORIDA." Him in a dorm room. In a frat house. Always with a huge grin.

FRANK (O.S.) (CONT'D)

...but it wasn't until college
where Jordan discovered his true
calling in life.

--TALKING HEAD of PROFESSOR Hackney (50), with TITLE: "PROF. ALFRED HACKNEY, UMP DEAN OF COLLEGE OF BUSINESS."

PROFESSOR

I have never had as gifted a
student as Jordan in the art of
marketing.

--TALKING HEAD of BOB Ledelheimer (28), with TITLE: "COLLEGE FRIEND, PHI BETA PHI BROTHER, AND FUTURE COLLEAGUE"

BOB

There's times we'd be in our
marketing classes and we'd be,
like, "Dude, I got nothin!" And
we'd all look at Jordan. Jordan?

PROFESSOR

I remember Jordan was part of a
group presenting a marketing
proposal for a final grade. I
thought it was brilliant. I found
out later, Jordan made major
changes at the last minute. I can
safely say, some of those people
graduated because of him.

--TALKING HEAD of BARRY and ELAINE Lutz, TITLE: "JORDAN'S PARENTS." Barry still in salesman mode. Elaine looks like she wants to say something, but can't get in.

BARRY

We are so proud of that kid. Chip
off the old block!

--STILL PHOTOS of Jordan in another gown, hugging mom and holding up a degree.

FRANK (O.S.)

After graduation, Jordan turned
down offers from all over the
country, instead signing on with an
Orlando-based boutique advertising
firm.

--STILL PHOTOS of Jordan shaking hands with MR. SWABBY (50) and EXECUTIVES in front of a SIGN-- "NARCOOSEE ASSOCIATES."

--STILL PHOTOS of Jordan working in different cubicles that get progressively bigger and more impressive.

FRANK (V.O.)

Within five years he was leading
marketing initiatives that went
national...

--COMMERCIAL of a guy at a kitchen table, taking a bite of spaghetti, next to a jar of MAMA'S SPAGHETTI SAUCE...

EATER

WHOOAAA, MAMA!!!

FRANK (O.S.)

... and was a finalist for the
Florida Marketing Association's
Outstanding Marketer Award twice,
before finally winning last year.

--STILL PHOTO of Jordan on stage, accepting a large plaque, surrounded by coworkers with varied expressions of jealousy.

--TALKING HEAD of Mr. Swabby (50), portly and dithering. With TITLE: "EUGENE SWABBY, MANAGER, NARCOOSEE ASSOCIATES."

SWABBY

Jordan was so gifted. He made us a
lot of money. AND... and he was a
beloved figure here.

--TALKING HEAD of Bob

BOB
 He loved biking, he loved
 restaurants, he loved musicals...
 it was weird.
 (laughs)

--STILL PHOTOS and VIDEO of Jordan on the streets of downtown Orlando, in a ritzy apartment, on a bike trail. Hosting a party with people who, again, aren't the warmest.

--TALKING HEAD of ANGELA (28). With TITLE: "ANGELA SPRINGER, CO-WORKER AND FRIEND." Slender, pretty in a girl-next-door kind of way. Grounded. Thoughtful. And sad.

ANGELA
 Jordan was very self-possessed, I think. He had hidden depths. I think.

--TALKING HEAD of SHENAIA. With TITLE: "SHENAIA KIBOSH, CO-WORKER, GIRLFRIEND." Bombshell blond. And scene-chewer.

SHENAIA
 He was truly something special.
 We... he, had such a future ahead
 of him...

Her last words echo in a slow fade to black.

FRANK (O.S.)
 And then, April 19, 2015, driving home from his girlfriend's house, Jordan came face-to-face with the cold, merciless visage... of fate.

--STILL PHOTOS of a retention pond at night and a car tail sticking out of it. Rescue vehicles surround it.

FADE TO BLACK.

--VIDEO clips of funeral. A couple dozen people, sad but not distraught. The memorial service. A large portrait of Jordan sits on an easel up front. Bright, cheery smile of course.

--TALKING HEADS.

BARRY
 (with Elaine; sad)
 I... yeah.
 (Elaine is dew-eyed)

BOB
 (choked up)
 I wasn't even in town that day.
 (MORE)

BOB (CONT'D)

I just keep thinking... dude, if I'd only been there. It's just so sad.

ANGELA

There's so many things I never got to say to him. That's... a lasting regret.

SHENAIA

(overly distraught)

I'll always wonder why... how could this happen? To someone who loved life that much?

--We move closer in on JORDAN'S PORTRAIT from the memorial.

FRANK (O.S.)

And we'll never know the answer. We just know... Jordan left a hole. And it's up to us to remember the hole, even cherish the hole.

--TITLE: "Jordan Allan Lutz--1984-2015."

FRANK (O.S.) (CONT'D)

But know that the hole will stay with us, a reminder of what's been lost, never to return.

--FADE TO BLACK, over an SWELLING ORCHESTRAL THEME

--TITLE: "A Frank Edelstein Film"

--TITLE: "Visit my website at FrankEdelsteinFilms.com!"

END MONTAGE

--TITLE: with a CLANG-- "12 WEEKS LATER"

INT. PERFORMANCE ART CENTER - NIGHT

Handheld CAMCORDER footage reveals a community theater-type stage. A low HUBBUB. The cameraman shoots from the second row. An onstage dry-erase board proclaims "Fiddler!"

--TITLE: "USED WITH PERMISSION"

The cameraman pans down to the DIRECTOR and JACK, an assistant, also in second row. The director waves him back to the stage.

JACK
 Okay, next up?
 (refers to sheet)
 Peggy.

PEGGY (20) walks onstage. She's dressed like a cocktail waitress. The camera zooms in tighter.

DIRECTOR
 Hello, Peggy. Thanks for coming out. Introduce yourself for the camera, please.

PEGGY
 Hi, I'm Peggy Welmer, I'm trying out for the part of Hodol. I'll be singing "Far from the Home I Love."

DIRECTOR
 Ok. Lorraine?

LORRAINE on a PIANO starts playing the song from "Fiddler on the Roof." Peggy sings, quite well.

PEGGY
 How can I hope to make you understand
 Why I do, what I do,
 Why I must travel to a distant land
 Far from the home I love?

 Once I was happily content to be
 As I was, where I was
 Close to the people who have chosen
 me
 Here in the home I love...

Camera shifts to the director and Jack. They shrug and nod.

PEGGY (CONT'D)
 Who could see that a man would come
 Who would change the shapes of my
 dreams?

Offstage is a CRASH. The camera wanders over, then back.

PEGGY (CONT'D)
 Helpless, now, I stand with him
 Watching older dreams grow dim.
 (MORE)

PEGGY (CONT'D)

Oh, what a maddeningly choice this
is,
Wanting home, wanting him,
Closing my heart to every hope but
his,
Leaving the home I love.

As Peggy sings the last four lines, a MOAN gets louder.

DIRECTOR

What is that? Jack, what is that?
Lorraine, hold up.

The piano stops. Peggy looks perturbed. The moaning is now more pronounced, and getting louder.

DIRECTOR (CONT'D)

Would somebody please figure...

Peggy takes a step back as Jordan lurches onstage. Zombie Jordan, covered in mud. Matted hair, skin the color of slate. He lurches towards Peggy.

DIRECTOR (CONT'D)

Uh... it's a zombie.
(a beat)
Right in the middle of my audition.
That's, that's just great.

JACK

Um... nobody get too close. Jerry,
call those guys. The zombie guys. I
don't know, look 'em up!

Everyone is remarkably unconcerned, except for Peggy, who inhales to scream... but...

PEGGY

(yells)
Can somebody get it off the stage?
These are my work clothes!

Jordan moans again, but it's different. It starts to start like gargling. THEN it sounds like he's clearing his throat.

JORDAN

Arrrrr, yrrrrr, yerrrr, YOU'RE
GETTING IT WRONG!

DIRECTOR

What?

JACK

Um, the zombie just spoke.

DIRECTOR
Um, sir? Can we... uh...

JORDAN
(rasping)
It's not, "Oh, what a maddeningly
choice this is." That's not even...
it's "Oh, what a melancholy choice
this is..."

PEGGY
No, no! It says right here...

She pulls a sheet out of her pocket.

JORDAN
And earlier... it's "Close to the
people who are close to me," not
"who've chosen me."

PEGGY
(to director)
Who're you going to listen to here,
me or...?

DIRECTOR
Okay, okay, thank you sir. Um, is
there someone you want us to call
for you?

Peggy sighs, frustrated, and pulls out a compact, starts
applying lipstick. Jordan lunges at her suddenly.

PEGGY
Eww! Excuse you!

Jordan grabs the compact. Stares at his face in the mirror.
Touches his face. Then starts SCREAMING. Long, drawn out.

DIRECTOR
Well, this is a fiasco.

JACK
Jenny? He's right.
(holds up a songbook)
About the lyrics.

DIRECTOR
Are you...?!
(to Peggy)
Nice work. Thanks for wasting all
our time.

PEGGY

Hey, I got these off the internet!
I printed these directly off...

DIRECTOR

Oh, yeah, it was on the internet,
therefore it must be correct...

PEGGY

Hey, you're the director...

Jordan continues screaming as he looks at himself.

INT. JORDAN'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAY

A better-grade camera, handheld, frames up a upper-middle class living room. Jordan sits on a couch with plastic under him. It rustles as he moves. He is still a slimy zombie, but is dressed to impress. And his posture and demeanor presents a guy confident and in control.

On an adjoining chair is FRANK (26). Dressed like he wants to be identified as an auteur guerilla filmmaker. They're both looking at the camera.

FRANK

Okay? Okay. So...

JORDAN

(taking charge)

So, yes, thanks for coming. Let's
do this officially. I'm Jordan
Lutz, and, of course, you're Frank
Edelstein.

He holds out his hand and they shake. Frank then subtly wipes his hand on his jeans. Jordan gestures to the camera...

JORDAN (CONT'D)

And this is?

FRANK

This is Tony. Forget him... it's
best if you pretend he's not there.

Elaine brings them a pitcher of water. DEXTER, a pug, jumps up on the couch and growls at them.

JORDAN

Mom, can you do something with
Dexter?

Elaine grabs the dog and carries him out without a word.

FRANK

Cute dog.

(Jordan rolls his eyes)

I don't think your mom likes me much.

JORDAN

Eh, don't worry about it. I don't think she liked how you did the memorial video. I did, though...

(indicates Frank)

... obviously. I really feel like you got to the core of me, man.

FRANK

Thanks.

JORDAN

Well, it moved me. And that's exactly why I asked you to come.

FRANK

Okay, before we go on, let me...

SMASH CUT TO:

LATER

Now, Jordan is lit as if he's in a studio. Frank is off-camera. Jordan continues to sound confident. Frank has the controlled, reasonable voice of an interviewer.

FRANK (O.S.)

Okay, so... this is exciting. You're the first talking zombie on record.

JORDAN

Okay, let me stop you right out the gate. Sorry!

(laughs)

I am NOT a zombie. I can see the confusion, what with what's going on in Miami. But I'm not one of them. Obviously. Can zombies have an intelligent conversation? Or dress themselves? Or... I don't know... enjoy tacos? Or movies? I can do all those. Because I'm not a zombie.

FRANK

What do you think you are, exactly?

JORDAN

One of a kind. Obviously. I've thought about it... I like "viable deceased." Or actually, "receased." But I'm as good as I was before. Maybe better? But not worse. In short, not a zombie.

FRANK

What's it been like, since your return?

JORDAN

Quite a shock, as you can imagine. It's disorienting, physically and mentally, to find out you've been declared legally dead and your stuff is...

--VIDEO of Jordan in his apartment, now empty but for a couple odds and ends. He looks around forlornly. In mirrors we see Frank and TONY (25) behind the camera. Jordan picks up a lone DVD on the floor. LIVE AND LET DIE. He grimaces.

--Back in the living room.

FRANK (O.S.)

And now you live in the garage.

JORDAN

Yeah. Back with the parents. A slight step down. But it'll do until I get back up to speed.

--VIDEO clips of Jordan in the garage as he narrates. There's an odd assortment of humidifiers, dehumidifiers. Piles of laundry the camera carefully notes-- gray, slimy streaks on bedsheets, clothes, etc.

A large TV sits on a pile of crates with a blanket over it. An old, battered sofa sits in front of it.

JORDAN (V.O.)

I keep telling my folks... kids move back home all the time these days. And I want to get back out *there* as soon as possible.

He types on a computer sitting in the corner. It has saran wrap on the keyboard.

He picks up a piece of paper. It stick to his hand. He pulls it off. It sticks to the other hand. He tries to fling slime off his hand. It lands on the wall in a stringy mess. He resorts to drying his hands with a handheld hair dryer.

He reads a book, turning the page with a pencil eraser.

--Back in the living room.

FRANK (O.S.)

Um... okay. Well... before we go on, I imagine the world would have a question for you.

JORDAN

(laughs)

I imagine they'd have several.

FRANK (O.S.)

And keep in mind, I'm not speaking for me, but for the world.

JORDAN

(leans forward)

Okay.

FRANK (O.S.)

Do you... um... want to... eat human flesh?

JORDAN

(a beat)

No! No, I don't want to eat human flesh. That's repulsive! God!

(Frank starts to speak)

No, you're right, I know. So, no.

--VIDEO clips of Jordan at home, at the dinner table with his folks. His mom ladles soup into a bowl. As she reaches down, Jordan grabs her arm and pretends to take a bite out of it, before looking at the camera with a huge grin.

JORDAN (V.O.)

I've been around people for, what, a couple weeks now? I haven't bitten anyone. I just don't want to. I steer away from carbs more than I used to, but...

--Back in the living room

JORDAN

(pats his midsection)

... you know.