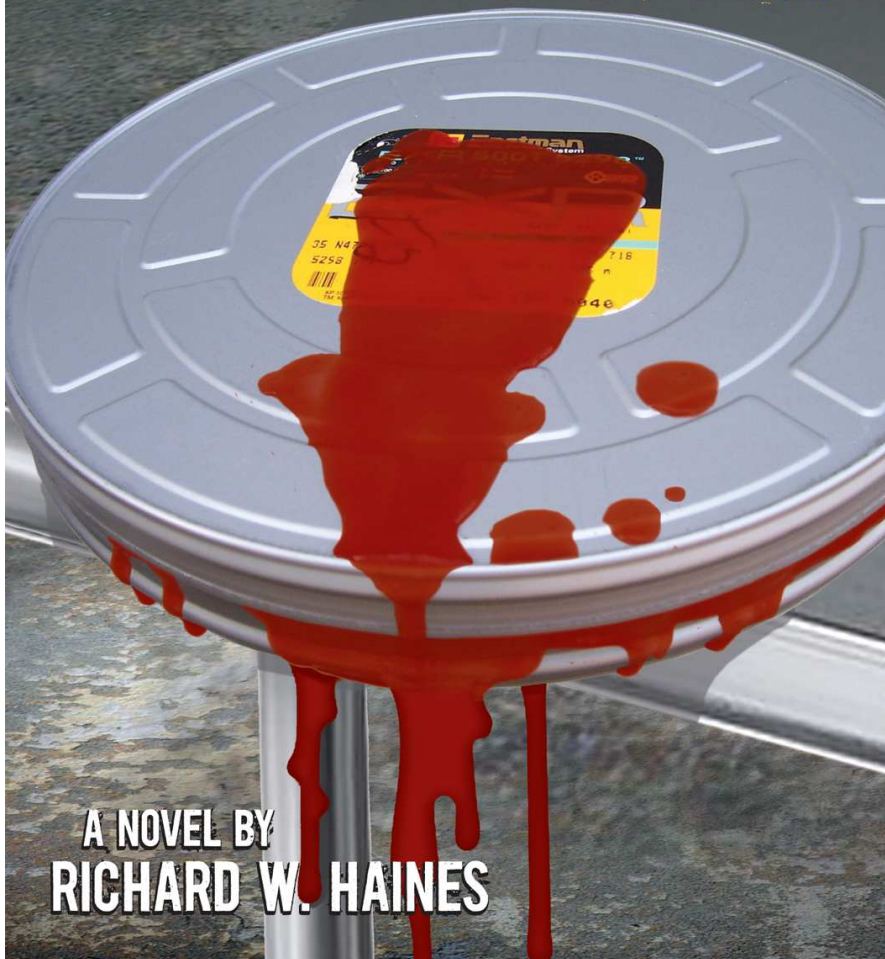


A 24-FRAMES-PER SECOND THRILLER

REEL DANGER

SCREEN FOR YOUR LIFE...



A NOVEL BY
RICHARD W. HAINES

REEL DANGER

REEL DANGER

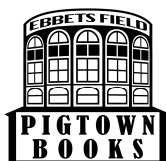
Screen for Your Life...

by Richard W. Haines

A 24 Frames-per-Second Thriller

Published by

PIGTOWN BOOKS



for

NEW WAVE FILM DISTRIBUTION, INC.

Reel Danger: Screen for Your Life...
Copyright © 2013 by Richard W. Haines

Cover design and logo by Richard Amari

Reel Danger was originally published as a trade paperback
by Pigtown Books for
New Wave Film Distribution, Inc.

ISBN: 978-0-9848810-4-8

Library of Congress
Catalogue-in-Publication Data

Reel Danger: Screen for Your Life / Richard W. Haines

1. Fiction - Crime 2. Fiction - Mystery 3. Fiction - Hard-
boiled

First Edition / First Issue

For further information, please contact:
info@pigtownbooks.com

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1-A

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced or utilized in any form or by any means, mechanical or electronic, including manual re-input, photocopying, scanning, optical character recognition, recording or by any information storage and retrieval system without permission in writing from the copyright holder.

This novel is a work of fiction. All characters and events described herein are fictitious and wholly the product of the author's imagination. Any resemblance to events or actual persons, living or dead, is unintentional and coincidental.

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

Books

(as **Writer**)

Production Value:

It will cost you your life...

(A 24 Frames-per-Second Mystery)

Technicolor Movies

The Moviegoing Experience, 1968-2001

Illustrator

Animal Kingdumb

Feature Films

(as **Producer, Writer and Director**)

Splatter University

Space Avenger

(Printed in 3-strip Technicolor,
co-written with Lynwood Sawyer)

Head Games

Run for Cover

(Photographed in StereoVision 3-D)

Unsavory Characters

Soft Money

What Really Frightens You

To Mary

PART I:

JOHNNY BOY

OCTOBER 1978

“**H**AVE I got a deal for you, Johnny Boy!” shouted Jim Forbin as he burst into his dorm room on East 10th Street.

It was part of the New York University student housing system, a five-minute walk from Washington Square Park, Jim’s primary source of scoring pot. Dealers sold it to students in the open without getting busted. At any given time, at least three of them were exclaiming to anyone passing by, “Loose joints! Loose joints!”

A few hippies were still hanging out around the area, but their numbers had been dwindling since the end of the Vietnam War. It wasn’t wise getting downwind of them on that breezy October day in 1978, unless a person didn’t object to the aroma of body odor combined with marijuana. Even the post-hippie chicks smelled awful, no matter how attractive they were physically. Jim wasn’t partial to hairy armpits and legs on a woman, so he avoided them.

With unruly hair that grew down to his shoulders and sideburns that touched the outer edges of his mouth, Jim looked bohemian. He also had a scrap of hair under his lower lip, making him resemble a cross between a fifties beatnik and a sixties yippie.

He was a twenty-year old junior, as was his roommate, Jonathan Prescott, Jr., the son of a powerful Republican Senator. John was the polar opposite of Jim, with well groomed hair and a permanent wave that curled over his forehead.

Their room was a cluttered mess, with books and reports strewn across the floor, along with dirty clothes and empty boxes of Screaming Yellow Zonkers snacks. Movie posters of *El Topo* and *The Rocky Horror Picture Show* were taped to the wall. Jim had a stereo system, which he would turn up to full blast when he doing his homework. John had a small portable black-and-white television with an antenna. Every week night before going to sleep, they watched *Mary Hartman, Mary Hartman* on it. Both had chipped in for a red lava lamp, which they kept on while they studied.

While Prescott Jr. appeared to be a clean cut yuppie, he was known as “Johnny Boy” at their weekend pot parties. Political science majors tended to be timid when it came to smoking weed with friends, but John was an exception. He was rebelling against his strict upbringing, and now outside of his parents’ influence, he was having a wild time at college.

There were no such reservations for film students. Like most cinema studies majors, Jim loved to smoke pot in the dorm and at the movies.

Both roommates had covertly toked up at The Rivoli during the hallucinogenic climax of the 70mm re-issue of *2001: A Space Odyssey*. They sat three rows away from the gigantic curved screen and laughed uproariously at the weird visuals, annoying the other patrons who took the movie seriously. It was the best head film they’d ever seen, although they didn’t understand the plot in the slightest.

When the last image of the fetus staring at the earth appeared, John shouted, “Hey, baby! You’re outta this world!”

Which had gotten resounding boos from the movie buffs in the audience.

“What did you score this time, Jimbo?”

John typed the last sentence of his term paper, an essay comparing economic growth in the United States and Soviet Union. Since the Russians lied about everything, it was difficult to evaluate how their system fared on a global basis. His first draft made the case that centralized power without checks

and balances resulted in tyranny, even though his professors thought otherwise. John argued that if communism worked so well, why were so many people trying to escape the Eastern Bloc and immigrate to America?

He realized that if he wanted to pass the course, he'd have to advocate central planning as a template for economic activity. He knew his father, GOP Senator John Prescott, Sr., would disapprove, but he didn't want another confrontation with a professor.

When he joked that Karl Marx wasn't as funny as Groucho, his teacher threatened to fail him unless he took Marxism seriously.

John tore up the essay and rolled another sheet of paper into his typewriter. He typed a few words.

Jim sat down on his own bed. "Stop typing and listen."

He unrolled a movie poster and displayed to his roommate.

"What the hell is that?"

"A poster for *Horny Teacher's Pets*," Jim exclaimed enthusiastically.

The one-sheet depicted a dorm room similar to theirs. A major porn star, Lilly Lustoff, wearing nothing but a graduation cap, was straddling a college student with a dopey grin on his face.

"Never saw that one," replied John. "Didn't know you were into collecting X-rated movie posters."

"You never saw the film because it hasn't been made yet."

"Then how'd you end up with a poster?"

"Saw a posting for production assistants for this company on the Film Department bulletin board."

"Which company?"

"S.O. Productions," Jim replied. "Some guy named Larry Hoffman. I thought I might get a jump on the other students by working on a feature before graduation."

CHAPTER 1

Earlier that morning, Jim had threaded his way through the crunch of needles and squeak of condoms, past junkies nodding off in doorways, to the Manhattan district known as Hell's Kitchen.

He reached Hoffman's building, in a run-down tenement at 47th Street and Ninth Avenue.

When he rang the intercom buzzer, a woman's voice, heavy with a Bronx accent, blasted from the tiny speaker. "If you don't get lost, I'll call the police!"

Jim pressed the intercom again. "I'm not a bum. I'm Jim Forbin, and I have a meeting with Mr. Hoffman."

He was buzzed in and entered the building. Paint was chipping from the walls, half the overhead lights weren't working and the hallway smelled as if it hadn't been mopped in years. There was no business directory and no elevator, so Jim hoofed it up one flight and knocked on the first door he saw.

Someone opened it, and Jim entered a large room filled with battered desks. Young men wearing T-shirts bustled about, booking the company's product line. Stacks of film reels and carrying cases littered the floor. In one corner were rusty cans (which Jim noticed were 16mm rather than 35mm). The cans were labeled OCN (an abbreviation for "Original Camera Negative") along with the titles of the movies inside.

A poster on the wall caught Jim's attention. Lilly Lustoff, dressed as a Southern Belle, snuggled in the arms of a Confederate soldier. The film was titled *Cum with the Wind*.

Another poster displayed an attorney stripped down to his underwear, a sexy woman on her knees before him, and the title, *Quid Pro Blow*. The tag line read, "She summoned him in his legal briefs!"

Jim groaned when he realized that S.O.P. did not stand for "Standard Operating Procedure" but "Super Orgasmic Productions" and that Hoffman was a pornographer, not a mainstream indie producer. He was wondering whether he should leave immediately. He knew that the mafia was well entrenched in the adult film industry.

Before he could make a move, the woman who answered the intercom called to him. "Mr. Hoffman will see ya now!"

She motioned for him to enter the office next to her desk.

Jim glanced behind him at the exit door, then shrugged. He decided to give it a shot and see what happened.

When he entered Larry Hoffman's office, the producer was sitting with his feet up on his scratched, coffee-stained desk. He was smoking a cigar and talking on the phone. The room was a shambles. Piles of release forms. An overflowing garbage can. More posters on the wall in cracked glass frames. Bent out-of-shape Venetian blinds hung on the windows overlooking Ninth Avenue.

Hoffman resembled the cliché of how a pornographer was supposed to appear. He was in his mid-twenties, with curly black hair, a scraggly mustache and beard. His facial hair was poorly trimmed, making him look older than he really was. Hoffman's suit was wrinkled and didn't really fit him. His socks could be seen below his pants cuffs. He obviously wasn't comfortable in this outfit, and his tie (in a color that didn't match his jacket) was loose on his collar.

Hoffman pointed to a folding director's chair in front of the desk.

Jim plopped down and found himself looking up at the desktop. Hoffman ignored him as he continued his phone conversation.

“Come on, Paul!” Hoffman shouted. “I told you I’ll pay the lab bill as soon as I collect from The Selwyn. You know how slow those grindhouses pay... Well, what do you want me to do about it? If I make a stink, they won’t book my movies... Don’t forget. I’ll have the next one ready in a couple of months. It’s called *Horny Teacher’s Pets*... Another fifty-print run? Hell no. It’ll be a 35mm CRI blow-up, so you can high speed it at a one-light setting. We’re shooting it in 16mm, and Rob is doing the blowup... Okay, talk to you later. Keep the faith, baby. Bye.”

Hoffman hung up and pulled his feet off the desk. Jim stood up to shake his hand.

“Hello. Mr. Hoffman?”

“No, I’m Ingmar Bergman,” the producer joked. “Of course I’m Larry Hoffman. That’s the name on the door, right?”

Jim handed Hoffman his resume and sat back down in the director’s chair. It was very wobbly, and he was afraid it might collapse.

“So you’re a film student at NYU?” said Hoffman.

“That’s right,” Jim replied proudly.

“You study with Haig Manoogian?”

“You know who he is?”

“Scorsese’s mentor. And who are your other professors?”

Jim was surprised that Hoffman was familiar with his college department. He figured anyone making X-rated movies would hardly keep up with cinema studies.

“William K. Everson is my film history teacher.”

“He’s a great writer,” Hoffman smiled. “I have some of his books at home. Sounds like you’re in good hands. Anyway, what’s your long-term goal? You wanna be an auteur-director?”

“Actually, I’d prefer to get into commercials.”

Hoffman glanced over Jim’s resume.

“Smart move. There’s big bucks in TV spots. But first you gotta learn how to make a movie. You had any production experience outside of student films?”

Jim shook his head. “That’s why I called you.”

“I see. Well, working on a porn is just a little bit different than making a NYU short.”

“I figured.”

“So. How’s your dorm room?”

This question caught him by surprise. Why on earth would Hoffman be interested in his dorm room?

“It’s okay. I guess,” Jim answered suspiciously. “Why?”

Hoffman paused before he continued, “How would you like to get some real production experience? And make a thousand dollars cash to boot?”

Jim hesitated, not knowing what the producer was getting at. Hoffman stood up with a broad grin. He walked around the desk to hover above Jim.

“Here’s what I have in mind,” Hoffman said. “I’ll give you a grand if this weekend you let us shoot a scene for our new movie in your dorm room.”

“What? Which film?”

“*Horny Teacher’s Pets.*”

Jim smiled despite himself.

“We’re filming in 16mm,” Hoffman continued, “so it’ll look like one of your student productions. Not too much equipment. Just me, the cameraman, soundman, a Lowell kit and Lilly Lustoff.”

“Lilly Lustoff?” exclaimed Jim. “Holy shit! Who’s the male lead?”

“I was saving that for the biggest surprise for last. It’s a little incentive.”

“Who? Who?”

“You!”

“Me?”

“Lilly’s going to screw you and your roommate. That is, if he’s interested.”

Jim shook his head in disbelief, “You mean we get to sleep with the biggest porn star there is?”