

A man wearing a dark beanie is shown in profile, looking upwards. The background is a dark, out-of-focus cityscape at night, with some lights visible. The overall mood is contemplative and mysterious.

LUCIUS

haunted doesn't need a house



DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

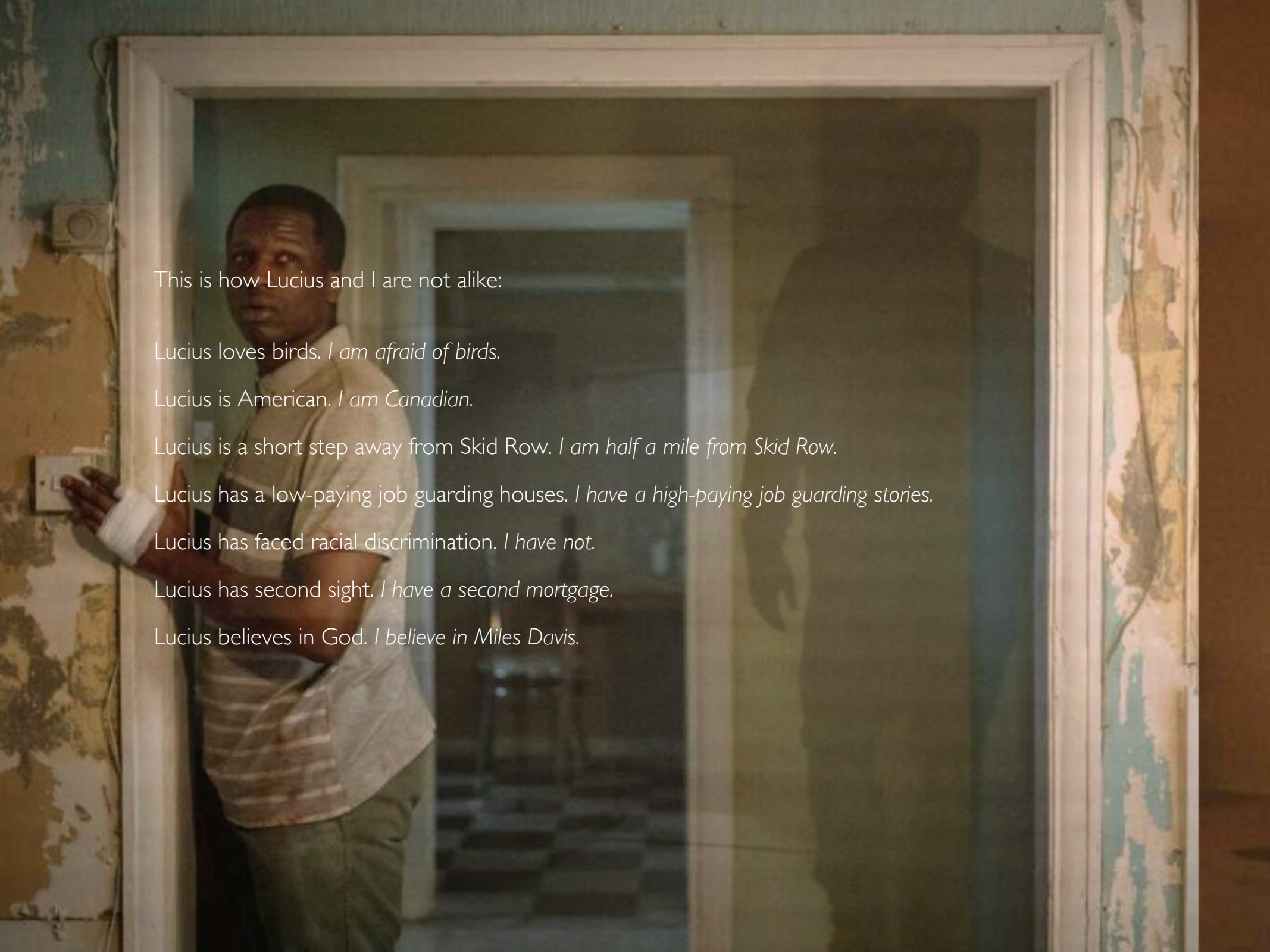
This movie is about me.

And this is how the main character Lucius and I are alike:

Like Lucius, I am a man in his 60s. I have a daughter I love dearly. There was a time when I had no home - thankfully, just for a short time, when I was young. A long cold winter, with my foolish pride and no money. I remember the couch surfing, refuge in doorways, hobo hotels, all-night donut shops, riding the subway, being wet all the time, pack of smokes vs loaf of bread, sponge baths and all that shit. I had criminal friends like Lucius has Rafa. My accomplices were Lance, LJ, Edjo, Mukwa, Frank, and on occasion, Scully and Six. I have been estranged from friends. I have a glimmer of a social conscience. Like Lucius, I like to garden. Like Lucius, I am haunted by the ghosts. Don't like to talk or think about those things. His ghosts are from big tragic events. Mine are perhaps less tragic. But tragedies none the less.

That is how we are alike. This is a director's game I play to embrace and to eat the story; to strive to know it fully and completely; to attempt to understand how and why this story calls so powerfully to me. I look at every event and every character in the story and discover the parallel in my own experience. A good game.

We continue . . .

A man with dark skin and short hair, wearing a light-colored striped shirt and green pants, stands in a doorway. He is looking back over his shoulder towards the camera. His right hand is resting on a light switch on the wall to his left. The wall has peeling paint, showing layers of yellow, green, and blue. A large, dark shadow of the man is cast onto the wall behind him to the right. The doorway leads into a dimly lit room with a checkered floor.

This is how Lucius and I are not alike:

Lucius loves birds. *I am afraid of birds.*

Lucius is American. *I am Canadian.*

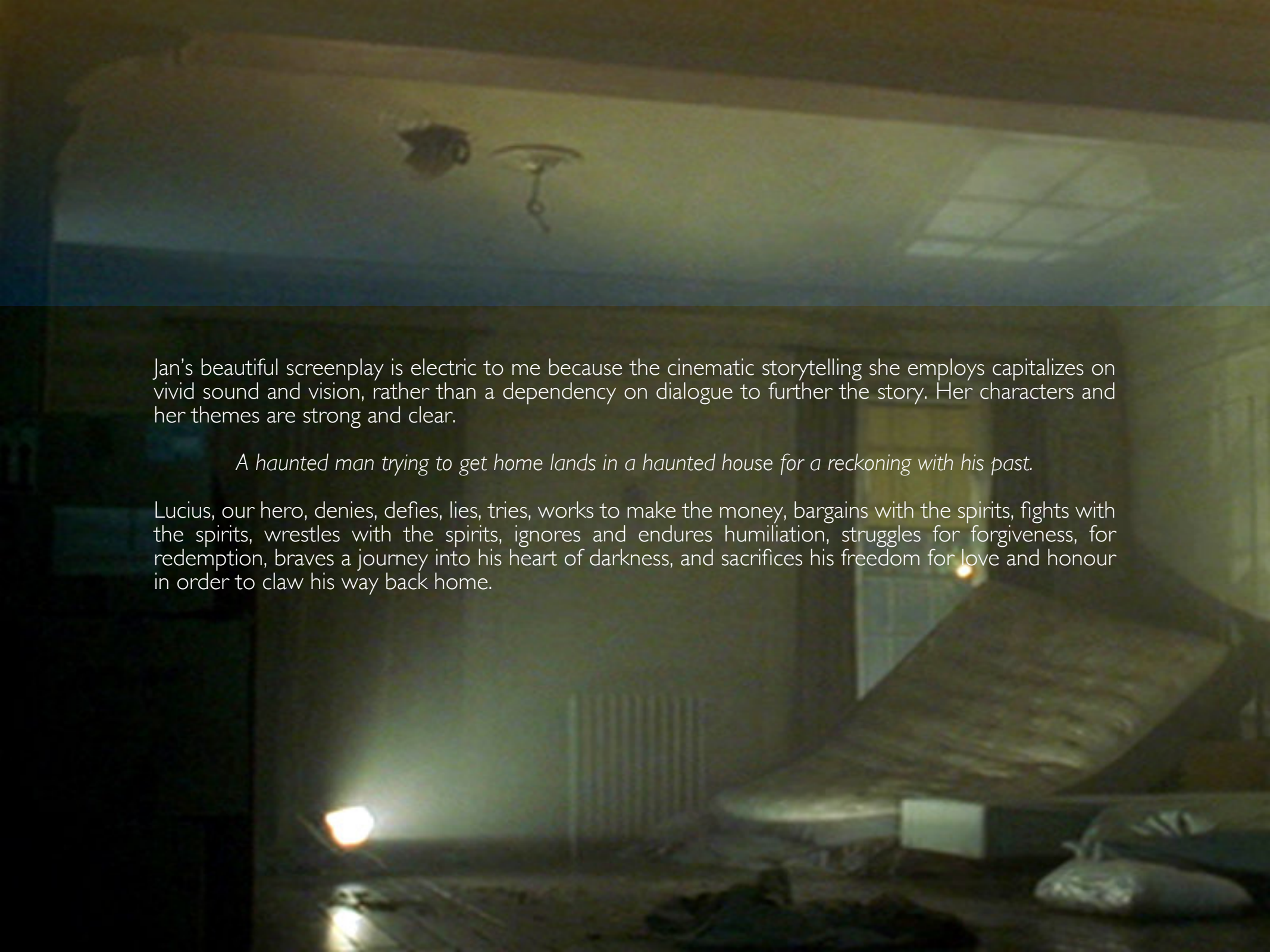
Lucius is a short step away from Skid Row. *I am half a mile from Skid Row.*

Lucius has a low-paying job guarding houses. *I have a high-paying job guarding stories.*

Lucius has faced racial discrimination. *I have not.*

Lucius has second sight. *I have a second mortgage.*

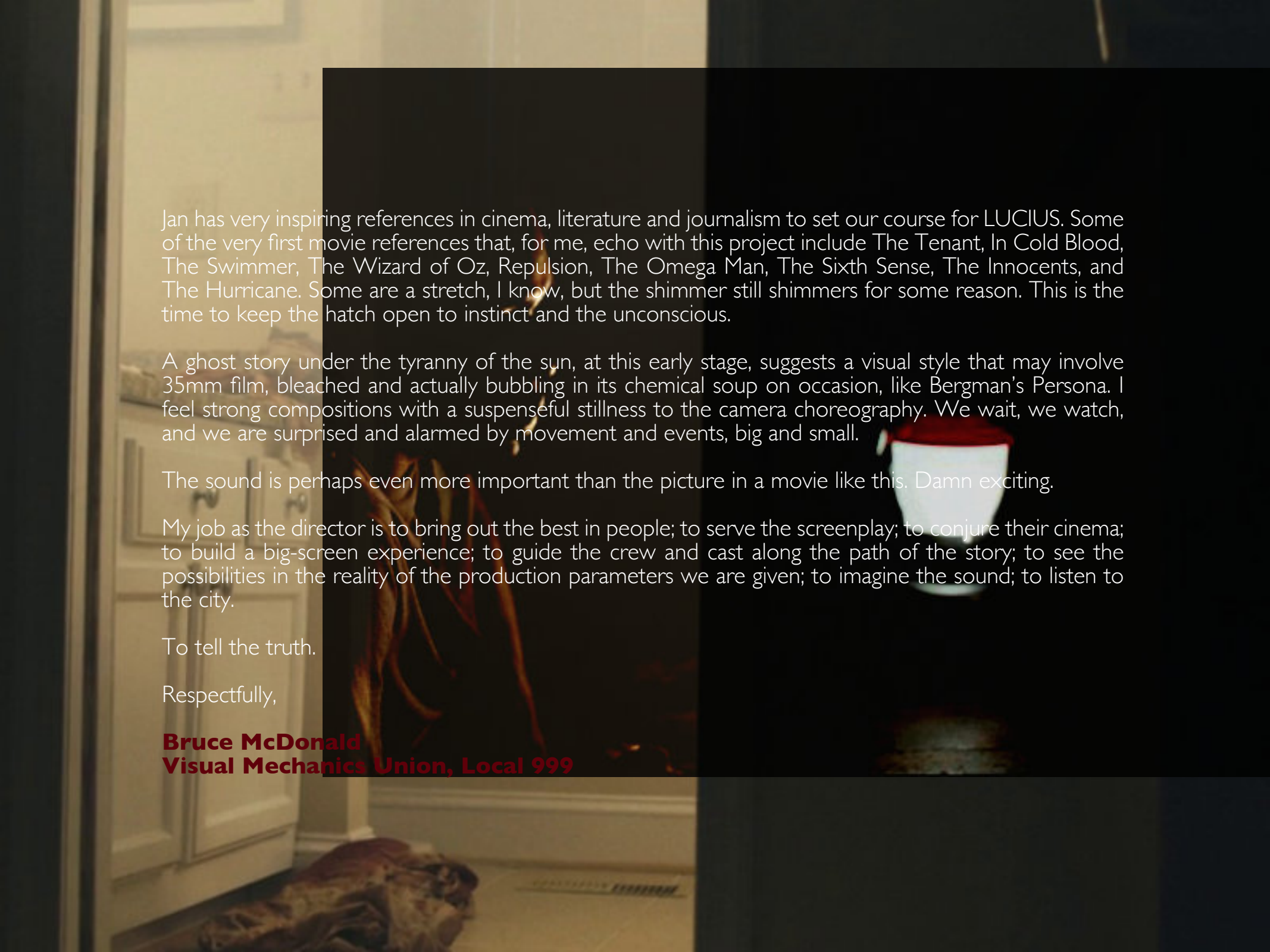
Lucius believes in God. *I believe in Miles Davis.*



Jan's beautiful screenplay is electric to me because the cinematic storytelling she employs capitalizes on vivid sound and vision, rather than a dependency on dialogue to further the story. Her characters and her themes are strong and clear.

A haunted man trying to get home lands in a haunted house for a reckoning with his past.

Lucius, our hero, denies, defies, lies, tries, works to make the money, bargains with the spirits, fights with the spirits, wrestles with the spirits, ignores and endures humiliation, struggles for forgiveness, for redemption, braves a journey into his heart of darkness, and sacrifices his freedom for love and honour in order to claw his way back home.



Jan has very inspiring references in cinema, literature and journalism to set our course for LUCIUS. Some of the very first movie references that, for me, echo with this project include The Tenant, In Cold Blood, The Swimmer, The Wizard of Oz, Repulsion, The Omega Man, The Sixth Sense, The Innocents, and The Hurricane. Some are a stretch, I know, but the shimmer still shimmers for some reason. This is the time to keep the hatch open to instinct and the unconscious.

A ghost story under the tyranny of the sun, at this early stage, suggests a visual style that may involve 35mm film, bleached and actually bubbling in its chemical soup on occasion, like Bergman's Persona. I feel strong compositions with a suspenseful stillness to the camera choreography. We wait, we watch, and we are surprised and alarmed by movement and events, big and small.

The sound is perhaps even more important than the picture in a movie like this. Damn exciting.

My job as the director is to bring out the best in people; to serve the screenplay; to conjure their cinema; to build a big-screen experience; to guide the crew and cast along the path of the story; to see the possibilities in the reality of the production parameters we are given; to imagine the sound; to listen to the city.

To tell the truth.

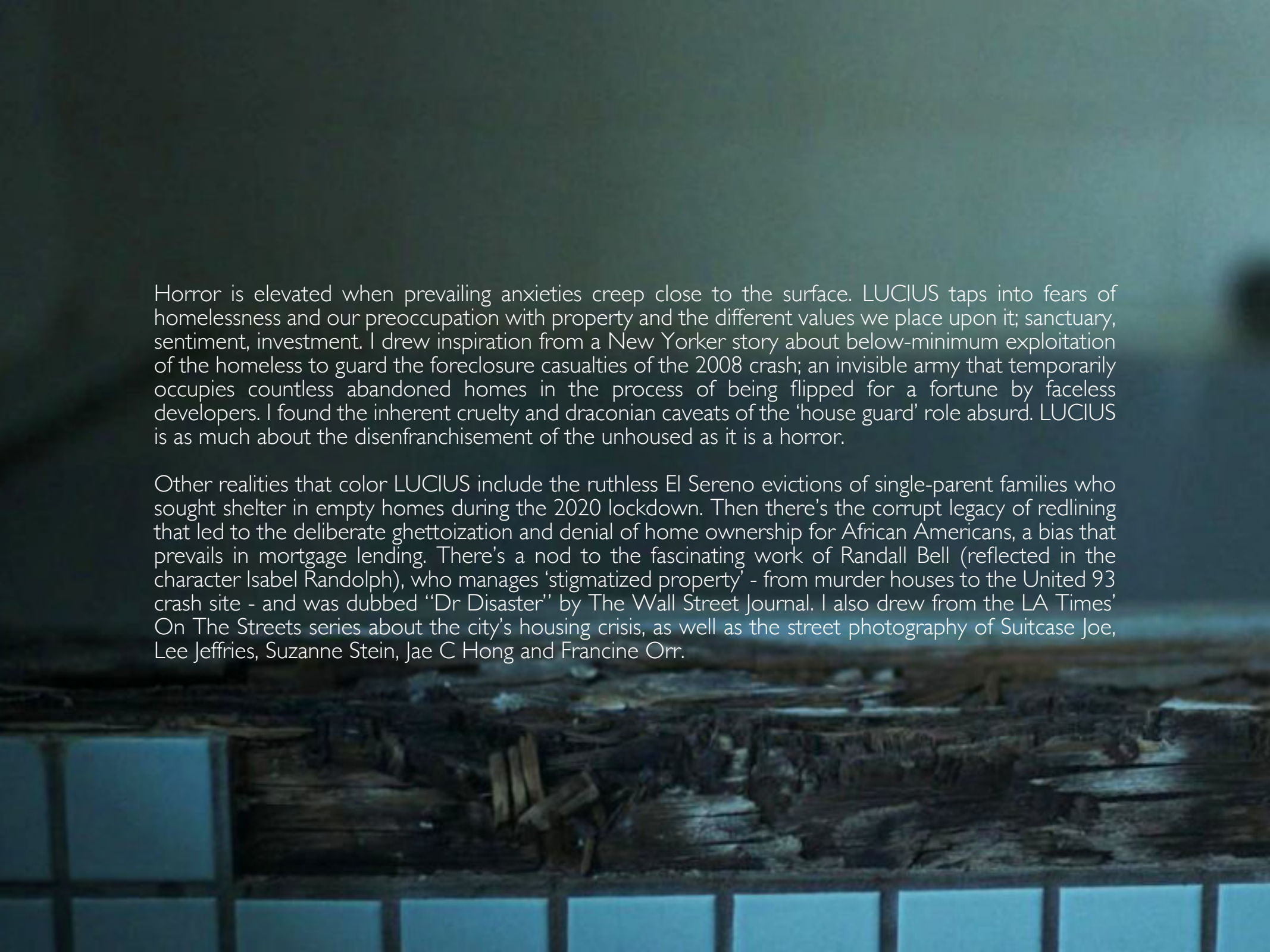
Respectfully,

Bruce McDonald
Visual Mechanics Union, Local 999

WRITER'S STATEMENT

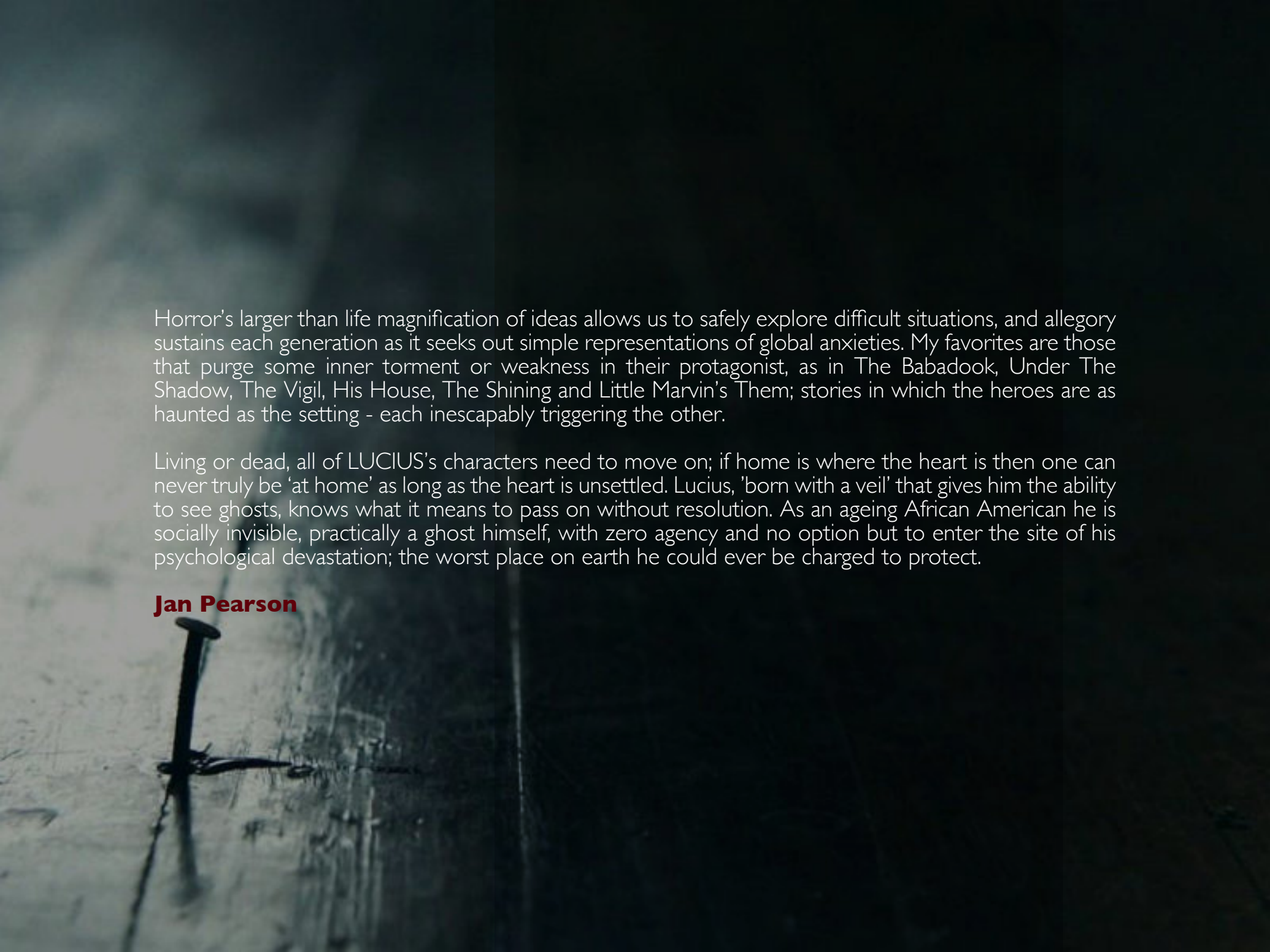
I've loved ghost stories for as long as I can remember. From Poe to Jacobs to the Jameses, a childhood fixation was amplified by British television's golden era of horror and supernatural tales. Ghosts are steeped in the gloomy fibre of Blighty with its violent history and gothic appetite.

Such tales seemed exclusively to haunt the rambling mansions and windswept moors of the landed gentry. Then a new wave of South East Asian films threw open the heavy drapes and shed light upon regular folk and the familiarity of modern apartments and tower blocks. This made the horror seem more pervasive and inescapable. With LUCIUS I wanted the horror to seep further into a city teeming with life, broiling in relentless heat; Los Angeles. Here, direct daylight exposes the harsh realities of a place where fear, isolation and danger are just a rent-check away.



Horror is elevated when prevailing anxieties creep close to the surface. LUCIUS taps into fears of homelessness and our preoccupation with property and the different values we place upon it; sanctuary, sentiment, investment. I drew inspiration from a New Yorker story about below-minimum exploitation of the homeless to guard the foreclosure casualties of the 2008 crash; an invisible army that temporarily occupies countless abandoned homes in the process of being flipped for a fortune by faceless developers. I found the inherent cruelty and draconian caveats of the 'house guard' role absurd. LUCIUS is as much about the disenfranchisement of the unhoused as it is a horror.

Other realities that color LUCIUS include the ruthless El Sereno evictions of single-parent families who sought shelter in empty homes during the 2020 lockdown. Then there's the corrupt legacy of redlining that led to the deliberate ghettoization and denial of home ownership for African Americans, a bias that prevails in mortgage lending. There's a nod to the fascinating work of Randall Bell (reflected in the character Isabel Randolph), who manages 'stigmatized property' - from murder houses to the United 93 crash site - and was dubbed "Dr Disaster" by The Wall Street Journal. I also drew from the LA Times' On The Streets series about the city's housing crisis, as well as the street photography of Suitcase Joe, Lee Jeffries, Suzanne Stein, Jae C Hong and Francine Orr.



Horror's larger than life magnification of ideas allows us to safely explore difficult situations, and allegory sustains each generation as it seeks out simple representations of global anxieties. My favorites are those that purge some inner torment or weakness in their protagonist, as in *The Babadook*, *Under The Shadow*, *The Vigil*, *His House*, *The Shining* and *Little Marvin's Them*; stories in which the heroes are as haunted as the setting - each inescapably triggering the other.

Living or dead, all of LUCIUS's characters need to move on; if home is where the heart is then one can never truly be 'at home' as long as the heart is unsettled. Lucius, 'born with a veil' that gives him the ability to see ghosts, knows what it means to pass on without resolution. As an ageing African American he is socially invisible, practically a ghost himself, with zero agency and no option but to enter the site of his psychological devastation; the worst place on earth he could ever be charged to protect.

Jan Pearson

SOUND

Because the story for the most part takes place in a house, perhaps the musical score is epic; a contrast to the spooky claustrophobia; to chart the big emotional landscapes of our main character, Lucius. Perhaps a John Barry, Dances With Wolves-type full orchestral score - Mahler like. Or there could be very little score. The sound design as score. The tension that the sound of the city creates on its own in Chantal Ackerman's *Letters From Home* is harrowing and full of dread and suspense and alienation. All good things for our ghost story. So foley, atmosphere, footsteps, the city outside, the weather, the cicadas, the sirens, kids' voices from the playground, house creaks, muscle cars, choppers, the radio, dogs barking, freeway hum, screen door slam, coffee maker, zippo lighter, bird song, trees sighing and all that stuff can build eerie sun-baked atmosphere and heart-pounding suspense.

Places for tunes may include the opening drive through town, the music in the bar, the occasional radio, and maybe tail credits. The script has led me back to listen to Charles Bradley, Keith Jarrett, The Beach Boys, GNR, Frank Ocean, Aretha, Gil Scott-Heron, Band of Gypsies, Pastor TL Barrett and the Youth For Christ Choir, Sly Stone, Bud Powell, Sigur Ross, John Barry, Coltrane's *A Love Supreme*, Isaac Hayes, *Fur Alina*, *Sinking of the Titanic* by Gavin Bryars, and Jack Johnson and *In A Silent Way* by Miles. Research is fun!

PRODUCTION

Under 10 million; a small crew; 35mm color. Two weeks cast rehearsal/bond with key crew. Current rough estimate, a 40-day main unit. Mostly one camera. Location based. A few small set builds, like bathrooms and set pieces for special shots. Ten-hour days. End of day 'rushes' with editor, designer, writer, DOP, producer, any crew, cast. Consider second unit 'city unit' to capture dusk/dawn/heat of the day for transitions. Second unit 'nickel unit' to capture the tragedy and horror of the destitute on Skid Row. Establish some kind of bridge or trust with those people and be able to photograph this world to include in Lucius' descent into hell.

LOOK BOOK





SHELTER IN
THE STORM
ReclaimLA

































