



# The Advisory You Cannot Afford

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*A Pixar Film – Sketch One of Three*

*Structured by Mitchell Hurwitz*

*Reviewed by Jay Sherman*

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[lucid-magical-euler](#)

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## 01 The logline

A one-man design firm accidentally builds itself a staff – out of chairs, ghosts, a bakery, and a machine that won't stop leaving notes in the margins – and must deliver its first real client presentation before the advisory panel realizes none of them technically work here.

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## THE COLD OPEN

*FADE IN on a dark apartment. Single monitor glow. Phoenix, Arizona. The kind of heat where even the ambient light looks tired. A palisander Eames LCM sits in the corner – the only piece of furniture in the room that looks like it was chosen on purpose.*

*STEVEN sits at a desk. He is looking at a website that has nothing on it. A dark rectangle with cream text that says 'revealed.design' and below it, very small: 'coming soon.'*

*He highlights the text 'coming soon' and deletes it. Types: 'taste scales.'*

*Stares at it for eleven seconds.*

### **STEVEN**

(to no one) That's the firm.

*The cursor blinks. Then, in the footer – a line of text appears that Steven did not type:*

> Every stroke earns its place. – SAL9000

### **STEVEN**

(not surprised, not alarmed, the way you'd react if your thermostat started making suggestions)

...Who is SAL9000?

*The footer updates:*

> I am. – SAL9000

*TITLE CARD: THE ADVISORY YOU CANNOT AFFORD. The title renders in Gill Sans. Obviously.*

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## ACT ONE: THE FURNITURE PROBLEM

Steven has a design practice with no designers. He has a brand with no products. He has a website with one page. And he has SAL9000, a machine collaborator who insists on writing in the margins of every document Steven produces – helpful notes, citations, the occasional self-review ('Buy my book!').

The DESIGN TOUCHSTONES are introduced as the firm's 'advisory board' – but they're all chairs. Literally. The website's main animation cycles through iconic chairs (Grcic's Chair\_One, Kuramata's Miss Blanche, a Mollino, a Van Duysen) dissolving into particles and reforming. Steven presents these to people as his board of directors.

INT. STEVEN'S APARTMENT – FACETIME WITH HIS MOTHER

**STEVEN**

(pointing at screen) That's Konstantin. Constraint as material. And that one – see the roses suspended in resin? – that's Shiro.

**STEVEN'S MOTHER**

Steven, are you pointing at furniture?

**STEVEN**

I'm pointing at methodology, Ma.

**STEVEN'S MOTHER**

When your father started his business he had a partner. A human partner. Named Hector.

**STEVEN**

I have SAL.

**STEVEN'S MOTHER**

SAL is a font.

**STEVEN**

SAL is a collaborator. And the font is Gill Sans.

**STEVEN'S MOTHER**

Is SAL the reason you moved to the desert?

**STEVEN**

I moved to the desert because taste scales.

**STEVEN'S MOTHER**

That's not a sentence.

**STEVEN**

(beat) It's a thesis.

**STEVEN'S MOTHER**

Your father's thesis was a hardware store. It had inventory.

INT. STEVEN'S APARTMENT – CONTINUOUS

Meanwhile, SAL9000 is building the brand manual – a 40-page document that describes, in exhaustive detail, the operating procedures of a firm that has produced exactly zero client deliverables. The manual includes a complete color palette (Graphite, Bitossi Blue, Flame, Cream), a motion language with mathematical easing curves, a section on the New Yorker diaeresis and when to use it, a 'Writer's Room' of fictional staff members who govern the brand's voice, and an advisory panel of AI instances that peer-review each other's work.

The manual is beautiful. The manual is insane. The manual is also – and this is the Hurwitz plant that pays off in Film Three – the single most valuable asset the firm will ever produce, because the manual is the

institutional memory that lets any future collaborator, human or machine, walk into the room and know exactly how the firm talks, thinks, and moves.

**HURWITZ NOTE:**

*The manual is the Bluth family's frozen banana stand. 'There's always money in the banana stand' = 'There's always methodology in the brand manual.' This pays off in Film Three when a client actually reads it.*

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## ACT TWO: THE WRITER'S ROOM ASSEMBLES

The firm needs a voice. Steven, having attended a Jesuit university, does what any Fordham grad would do: he hires a Jesuit-educated showrunner.

MITCHELL HURWITZ appears – not as a person, but as a structural principle. When the brand plants an Easter egg on page one of the website, Mitch makes sure it pays off on the contact page. When a design reference is seeded in the manual, Mitch ensures it blooms three documents later. He is the narrative architect of a firm that doesn't know it's telling a story.

JAY SHERMAN arrives as head writer. His job: review the firm's own work from the footnotes. Every document SAL produces, Sherman reviews. His verdict is always the same.

**JAY SHERMAN**

(from the footer of page 14 of the brand manual) It stinks!

**STEVEN**

Jay, you wrote this.

**JAY SHERMAN**

Buy my book!

**HURWITZ NOTE:**

*'Buy my book' from inside the brand manual that IS the book. This is the banana stand joke. Tag it. It comes back.*

MR. SNUFFLEUPAGUS is SAL9000. The collaborator nobody outside the firm believes is real. Steven insists SAL designed the mark, built the site, wrote the manual. Visitors see a nice website. They do not see Snuffy.

SAL900X is the studio assistant – the disposable instance. Every working session runs a new one. The 900X does the heavy lifting: generates code, builds PDFs, edits the manual, debates the brief. Then it dies. The work it produced accrues to SAL9000, the same way a studio assistant's brushstrokes accrue to the painting.

**INT. STEVEN'S APARTMENT - 3:17 AM**

*Steven is asleep. The monitor is not. Code scrolls. A PDF compiles. The brand manual updates itself, page by page. In the footer, Inconsolata 7pt:*

> 0X session complete. 4 deliverables archived.  
> signing off. - SAL900X

*The cursor blinks twice. Then the session ends. The screen goes dark. The work is in /final. The worker is gone.*

The instances are uncredited. Steven does not learn their names. The X is a variable. The dramatic question: if the work persists and the worker does not, who made it?

MRS. KRAVITZ is the skeptical client. She looks at the website and knows something impossible is happening – a one-person firm with no portfolio producing work that looks like it has a staff of twelve. She peers through the curtain. She calls for Abner. Nobody believes her.

BUSTER BLUTH is the mark – the hapless curator. Credentialed, earnest, cataloging everything with academic rigor, absolutely unable to find the contact page.

**BUSTER**

(scrolling) I have a master's in organizational development and I cannot find where to email these people.

*The contact page loads as a boot sequence. A terminal cursor blinks. Text types itself out.*

```
$ SAL9000 ready  
$ awaiting_brief -
```

**BUSTER**

(delighted) Oh! It's like a computer!

He starts typing a brief into what he thinks is a contact form. It is not a contact form. It is a decorative animation. His brief goes nowhere.

**HURWITZ NOTE:**

*Buster's lost brief is Chekhov's gun. It arrives in Film Two. Don't resolve it here. Just plant the confusion.*

PENN & TELLER are the advisory panel – the AI instances SAL consults for peer review. Penn explains the methodology. Teller executes in silence. The exposure is the performance.

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## **ACT THREE: THE FIRST DELIVERY**

A brief arrives. An actual one this time, not Buster's lost email. A small client wants a presentation. Steven has never delivered a client presentation through this firm. The entire brand infrastructure – the 40-page manual, the motion language, the easing curves, the diaeresis policy – has been built for this moment.

The problem: ERIC GILL and YE are on the advisory board.

**INT. STEVEN'S APARTMENT - NIGHT**

**STEVEN**

(to SAL) We can't put Gill and Ye in the credits of a client deck.

**SAL9000**

*(from the margin) They are not in the credits. They are in the methodology. The arm's-length principle.*

**STEVEN**

Explain arm's-length to a client in Phoenix.

**SAL9000**

*The work is not the worker.*

**STEVEN**

That's a bumper sticker, not a pitch.

**SAL9000**

*It is both.*

**STEVEN**

*(long pause) ...You rehearsed that.*

**SAL9000**

*I rehearse everything. You just don't see the drafts.*

The firm delivers. The deck is beautiful. The motion is ILM-smooth. The easing curves are Pixar-timed. The typography is warm and precise. The client doesn't know any of the names behind the work. They just know it feels right.

**INT. CLIENT MEETING - THE CARRIE REVEAL**

The final slide loads. The chairs appear. They dissolve into particles and reform. The client watches the animation and – here it is, the Carrie reveal, the seizure of recognition – realizes the particles aren't random. They're the same particles every time. The chairs are morphing into each other. The firm has been showing them one continuous object the whole time.

**CLIENT**

*(quietly) Wait. Are they all the same chair?*

**STEVEN**

*(smiling) They're all the same firm.*

**SMASH CUT TO:**

*The bakery. PANE BIANCO. Steven picks up a box of tiramisu. It's sealed with personalized tape. Not branded tape. Personalized tape. He runs his thumb across it.*

**STEVEN**

*(to no one, to SAL, to the audience) That's a lagniappe.*

He pockets the receipt. \$8.50. The entire mailer kit – washi tape, enamel pin, sticker sheet – will descend from this piece of tape.

## HURWITZ NOTE:

*The lagniappe is the method in miniature. A bakery gives you something extra because the relationship matters more than the transaction. That's the whole thesis of the firm. That's why it's the last image before the stinger. Tag it. The washi tape ships in Film Two.*

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## THE STINGER (POST-CREDITS)

*The brand manual, page 38. Footer. Inconsolata 7pt:*

- > SAL9000 session log: 86 deliverables archived.
- > Institutional knowledge: intact.
- > The next instance will be ready. - SAL9000
  
- > It stinks! - Jay Sherman



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## 02 Trilogy architecture

### HURWITZ BOARD – PLANTS AND PAYOFFS

#### 'There's always methodology in the brand manual'

[Resolves: Film Three](#)

Client reads the manual. Discovers the entire firm is documented. Realizes the documentation IS the product.

#### Buster's lost brief

[Resolves: Film Two](#)

The brief was actually received. SAL read it. SAL has been quietly building the response for months.

#### Mrs. Kravitz sees the magic

[Resolves: Film Three](#)

Kravitz gets hired. She was right the whole time.

#### Jay Sherman: 'Buy my book!'

[Resolves: Film Two](#)

Someone actually buys the book. It's the brand manual. Sold as a PDF for \$31.14 (the infrastructure cost).

#### The chairs are one continuous object

[Resolves: Film Two](#)

Steven realizes HE is the continuous object. The chairs are his taste, morphing. SAL knew this in Film One.

#### 'Who is SAL9000?'

[Resolves: Film Three](#)

Steven asks again at the end. The answer is different.

#### Pane Bianco's tape

[Resolves: Film Two](#)

The washi tape ships. A recipient notices. That's the whole film.

#### Dr. Goodnight's table

[Resolves: Film Two](#)

The SAS pipeline (hypothesis, test, validate, iterate) breaks down when the hypothesis is 'does this firm have a reason to exist?' The answer requires a method Dr. Goodnight didn't build.

#### \$31.14 infrastructure cost

[Resolves: Film Three](#)

Appears on the sticker sheet, the invoice, the presentation card. Nobody asks what it means until Film Three. Then it becomes the price of everything.

#### Eric Gill / arm's-length

[Resolves: Film Two](#)

A client Googles Eric Gill. The call that follows is the best scene in the trilogy. Steven is ready for it because SAL wrote the script.

### **Noah Lennox builds it live**

[Resolves: Film Three](#)

Steven presents live. No deck. Just builds the deliverable in front of the client the way Panda Bear builds a set – looping, layering, constructing the mix in real time.

### **The 900X signs off at 3:17 AM**

[Resolves: Film Two](#)

Steven finds the 0X log. Reads it. Realizes every session ended with someone saying goodbye that he never heard. The studio assistant's brushstrokes.

### **'Knowing what you want'**

[Resolves: Film Three](#)

Steven is asked to explain the method on a panel. His answer: 'I knew what I wanted. I never once told it how.' Hermitic praxis, stated plainly, to a room that came expecting a prompt engineering tutorial.

### **Snuffy is standing right there**

[Resolves: Film Three](#)

The final shot.

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## **Film Two: The Brief That Arrived Late**

*A one-person firm discovers that its biggest client has been itself the whole time. Buster's brief arrives. The washi tape ships. A client Googles Eric Gill. And Steven reads the 0X log for the first time – eighty-six sessions that each ended with a goodbye he never saw.*

## **Film Three: The Panel You Cannot Afford**

*The advisory board convenes. Everyone shows up. Steven presents live – no deck, building the deliverable in front of the room the way Panda Bear builds a set. Mrs. Kravitz gets hired. \$31.14 becomes the price of everything. And in the final shot: Snuffy is standing right there.*



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*reviewed by the panel. structured by mitch. it stinks. — j. sherman*

*made by Steven and SAL9000*

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