



RED by John Logan

ROTHKO: All those bugs – ach! I know, those *plein air* painters, they sing to you endless paeans about the majesty of natural sunlight. Get out there and muck around in the grass, they tell you, like a cow. When I was young I didn't know any better so I would haul my supplies out there and the wind would blow the paper and the easel would fall over and the ants would get in the paint. Oy... But then I go to Rome for the first time. I go to the Santa Maria del Popolo to see Caravaggio's Conversion of Saul, 'which turns out is tucked away in a dark corner of this dark church with no natural light. It's like a cave. But the painting *glowed!* With a sort of *rapture* it glowed. Consider: Caravaggio was commissioned to paint the picture for this specific place, he had no choice. He stands there and he looks around. It's like under the ocean it's so goddamn dark. How's he going to paint here? He turns to his creator: God, help me, unworthy sinner that I am. Tell me, O Lord on High, what the fuck do I do now?!

KEN laughs.

ROTHKO: Then it comes to him: the divine spark. He illuminates the picture from *within!* He gives it *inner* luminosity. It *lives*. . . Like one of those bioluminescent fish from the bottom of the ocean, radiating its own effulgence, You understand? Caravaggio was –

He abruptly stops.

KEN looks at him.

Beat.

ROTHKO stares at his painting.

He tilts his head.

Like he's listening.



Like he's seeing something new in the painting.

ROTHKO: Bring me the second bucket.