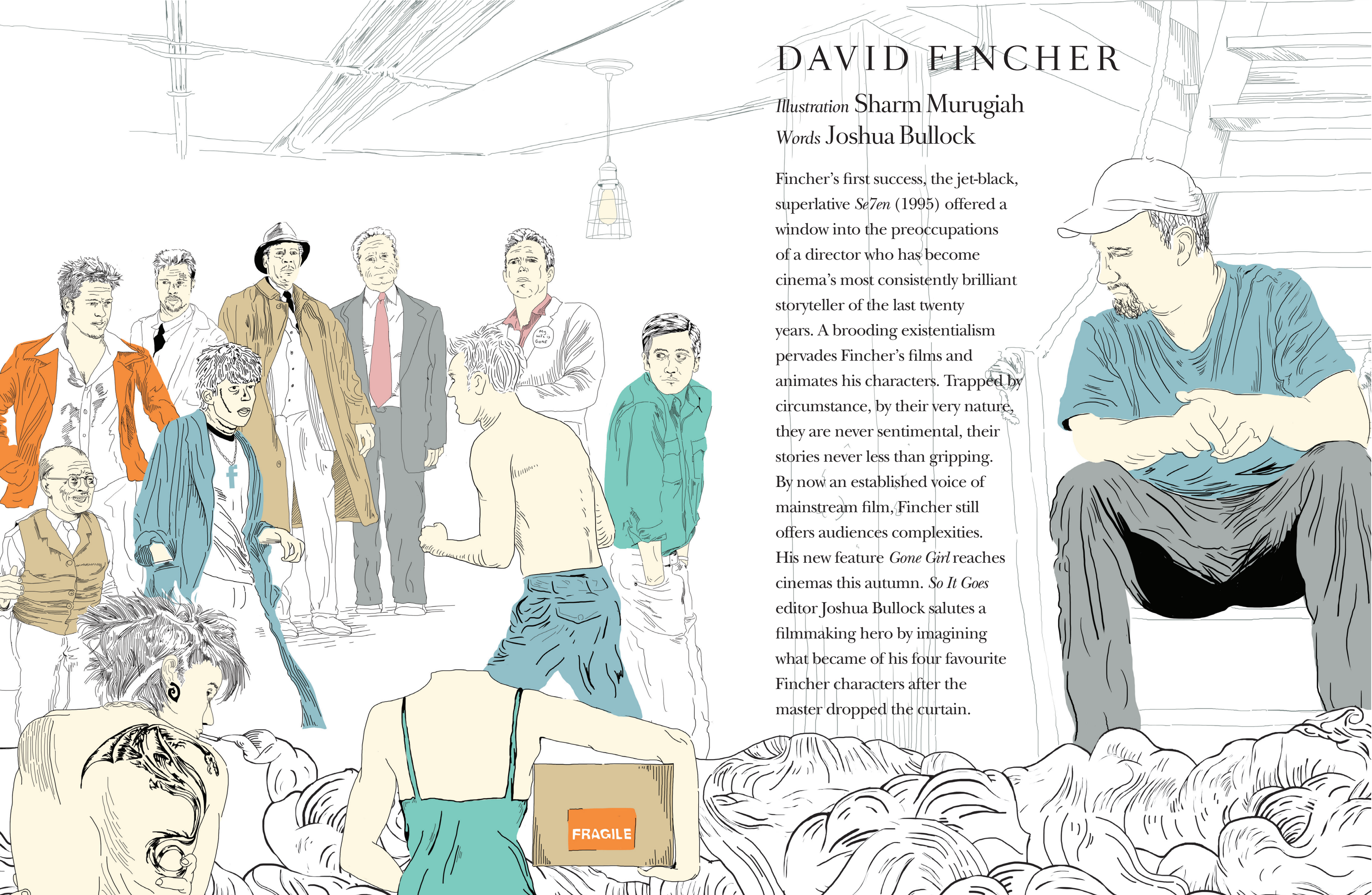


DAVID FINCHER

Illustration Sharm Murugiah

Words Joshua Bullock

Fincher's first success, the jet-black, superlative *Se7en* (1995) offered a window into the preoccupations of a director who has become cinema's most consistently brilliant storyteller of the last twenty years. A brooding existentialism pervades Fincher's films and animates his characters. Trapped by circumstance, by their very nature, they are never sentimental, their stories never less than gripping. By now an established voice of mainstream film, Fincher still offers audiences complexities. His new feature *Gone Girl* reaches cinemas this autumn. *So It Goes* editor Joshua Bullock salutes a filmmaking hero by imagining what became of his four favourite Fincher characters after the master dropped the curtain.





© New Line Cinema

SE7EN

Detective Mills

The serial killer John Doe (Kevin Spacey) is driven into the desert outside the city by investigating homicide detectives Somerset (Morgan Freeman) and Mills (Brad Pitt). There, a delivery van meets them with a box. When Somerset opens it he finds Mills’ wife’s head inside. Mills kills John Doe, becoming ‘Wrath’ and completing the film’s cycle of seven deadly sins: gluttony, greed, sloth, wrath, pride, lust and envy.

Detective Mills took his revenge only moments after the news of the death of his wife and unborn child. Some would say after, though not to his face, that at least Mills had had the slim satisfaction of executing their killer himself. But that was the peculiar horror of John Doe, by killing him Mills had completed his sadistic conceit for him. Vengeance could never be his. John Doe was a killer with no real name, no past and no identity. He was gone as quickly as he had come and held no purchase for Mills’ hatred. In the years that followed, that hate turned steadily back in on Mills.

His old partner Somerset had been as broken by the experience as he. His old-timer wisdom had finally run dry, and both knew there was no consolation to be had. No hand on shoulder could even partially wipe away the horror of her head in a box. The two detectives drifted apart, as survivors of a tragedy do when every meeting becomes a

séance to a terrible moment relived. Somerset’s parting words to Mills were simple – if you kill yourself he wins again.

After a brief period of absence, Mills returned to the force, but off active duty. For several years, he lived in the bowels of the precinct’s records department, as far as from human beings as the interminable miles of boxed case files could stretch. Word had it that he could sometimes be consulted on homicide investigations. A mad monk stalking the catacombs.

One event he did surface for was Somerset’s funeral. Just five years retired, the policeman’s curse. It was a good turn out and Mills had kept to the back, dodging the handshakes from embarrassed colleagues. A few days later a package arrived for him. There was a note from Somerset’s sister saying her brother had wanted Mills to have something. Opening it, he found the old man’s metronome.



© 20th Century Fox

FIGHT CLUB

Unnamed narrator

The unnamed narrator (Edward Norton) has, with the help of his forceful friend Tyler Durden (Brad Pitt), escaped office bondage to lead an anti-material-ist rebellion called ‘Project Mayhem’ across the country. At its climax, the narrator has uncovered Durden’s plans to erase debt by destroying the buildings that contain all credit-card records. When he tries to stop Durden, it is revealed that Durden and the narrator are in fact two dissociated personalities in the same body. While the narrator has been asleep, Durden has been in control. The narrator shoots himself through the mouth and Durden appears dead with an exit wound out the back of his head. His woman Marla (Helena Bonham Carter) is brought in by minions who still consider the narrator to be Durden and therefore in charge. He and Marla watch from a window holding hands as the explosives detonate and the buildings collapse.

With my cheek flapping open like a storm door, Marla dragged me through the aftermath of a whole city in chaos. I felt I had woken up to a new dream started. The planned perfection of Project Mayhem had seemed achieved in a daze, which in essence it had. Now my mind was finally unfugged of Tyler’s powerful voice and his mantras: that nothing works, nothing changes by itself, nothing can stop you when you have accepted both those facts.

I stuffed wads of my shirt into the second hole in my mouth and realised I was free for my next enslavement. Only the sane can judge the depths of insanity. As soon as those buildings had fallen I realised I had been just that, insane, whatever the positives. I had to reject the extreme methods we had employed. But part of me could never totally disapprove of them, even after Tyler’s demise. From insomniac desk jockey, to guerrilla leader to...what now?

Surgery, recuperation and flight. For months and years after, the broadside struck for freedom was replayed and analysed. But debt could not be wiped out. The IOUs lived on like scattered droplets of mercury. The world was still an archipelago and our rebellion proved to be as American and provincial as John Wayne. The capitalist

dreadnought shuddered, listed to the waterline then righted itself.

Had it been just ten years later we would have all drowned clutching each other, into a new life. First, the American dollar foundered, then the euro. The financial system had not been globalised enough. Markets crashed until they were underwritten by the taxpayer. The government of the day almost shut down as fiscal conservatives tried to stop it administering the economy a vaccine of more debt.

But money is the dream and it is infinite. More televisions and couches needed to be built for citizens to imprison themselves. After I recovered, we got as far away as we could. And our passports still worked. The tap on the shoulder never came. Still hasn’t. Somewhere out there the brotherhood has remained true to its word. No one talks about Fight Club.

Once Marla and I had saved enough from working our jobs in our tropical near-paradise, we still needed a loan for our piece of it. We got it. We were part of the world; however much sand, palms and weed we tried to put between us and it. And the world forgives even if you don’t want it to. Marla took it all with a fierce practicality I loved her for. Tyler would not have.



THE GAME

Nicholas Van Orton

On his forty-eighth birthday, wealthy banker and misanthrope Nicholas Van Orton (Michael Douglas) receives an unusual gift from his estranged younger brother Conrad (Sean Penn). Their father had jumped to his death on the day of his own forty-eighth birthday, watched by a young Nicholas. The gift is a voucher for a supposedly life-changing ‘game’ offered by a company called Consumer Recreation Services (CRS). Over the course of the following days, Van Orton’s life is turned upside down by seemingly real events including kidnap, gunfights and extortion. Pursued by CRS he eventually holds one of their agents Christine (Deborah Kara Unger), hostage with a gun on top of a building as armed troops try to break down the door. Terrified, she explains the game is a hoax, not a conspiracy and that his family and friends are waiting on the other side of the door. When the door swings open Nicholas fires and shoots his brother who stands holding champagne. In grief, Nicholas jumps off the roof and falls through a glass ceiling into a ballroom, landing on a giant inflatable air bag. In the ballroom waits a party for him, full of his friends, family and the cast of players who have tormented him up until this point. In tears, he rises to be joined by Conrad who is alive and well. Conrad explains he wanted Nicholas to embrace life and not end up like their father. When Nicholas sees Christine is leaving the party, he joins her as she travels in a cab to the airport for her next assignment.

In a cab with...Claire is what she called herself now. At the airport she checked into a flight for Australia. A walk-on part she said. So he joined her, desperate to see in from the outside.

During the long hours of flying, he buttoned back the many questions. Like how they would have responded had he acted differently to certain scenarios. Had he taken the left door instead of the right. Had he never picked up the gun. But he knew it would have been something like bad manners. Already he held some shape for the privilege. What joy he now felt, in spite of himself and in spite of the deception. He knew the power of wanting something badly for someone else. Not even knowing who that person might be.

The perceptive man that Nicholas was, he understood how it was the players’ very passion for converting the played that supported the illusion. They believed it and were proved right in the end. And what

would it be to keep the knowledge and joy of it to himself? Everything that had been wrong about his gilded, stultified life until now. Had Claire experienced the Game from his side? Was every actor a convert like him? He would ask in time.

A hostess passed him a drink from the trolley, and he remembered how the action had once been an indication of character. An efficient, graceful motion had meant no irritations; an action which Nicholas had granted a condescending respect. Now, his eyes found the person instead and considered what her story might be. No, not her story, just her – the legacy of the Game could not be a narrow belief in the theatricality of life. Life was not staged for his benefit. Life was the trivial passing of iced water and also the glorious wonder of an airplane travelling over clouds. It was unfathomable and unplannable. He wanted more of it.



© Paramount Pictures

ZODIAC

The Zodiac

During the late 1960s and early 1970s, a serial killer who called himself the Zodiac killed and injured several people in the San Francisco Bay Area. Cartoonist Robert Graysmith, then working at the local San Francisco Chronicle becomes obsessed with the killer who sent taunting letters to the newspaper. He begins to conduct his own research over many years when the killer is never brought to justice. Graysmith loses his job, his family leaves him and he receives anonymous calls in the night. He presses on. In December 1983, fourteen years after the first murder, Graysmith tracks his prime suspect, Arthur Leigh Allen, to a hardware store in the Bay Area where he is a clerk. Graysmith goes inside the store and approaches him. Allen asks if he can help. Graysmith says no, then the two stare at one another for a while before Graysmith leaves. In 1986 Graysmith publishes a book based on his theories. In 1991, victim Mike Mageau, who was shot but survived his encounter, identifies Allen as the Zodiac from a police mug shot. Leigh Allen dies in 1992 before he can be further questioned. A tissue sample taken at his autopsy does not match a partial DNA sample gathered from the postage stamp of one of the Zodiac letters.

Two men sit on a park bench. The Zodiac is in his fifties; a balding, powerfully built man in workman’s overalls. The other is a slim, handsome man in a Hawaiian shirt.

YOUNGER MAN – You got away with it.

ZODIAC – Away with what?

YOUNGER MAN – Don’t play coy. I’m the only one who knows who you really are and doesn’t care. You still fuck around with kids?

ZODIAC – No.

YOUNGER MAN – Still kill people?

ZODIAC – No.

YOUNGER MAN – Of course not, that would be stupid.

ZODIAC – You haven’t killed anyone. I can tell.

YOUNGER MAN – Not intentionally no. But who’s to say?

ZODIAC – They had me in a room. They had my name. They knew it was me. They had what you think you have. But only I knew. That’s the point. And it drove them wild: the journalist, the detectives, the author Graysmith. It peeled them from the inside out.

YOUNGER MAN – Would you do it again?

ZODIAC – I wouldn’t have lasted a week now with all the cameras and the forensics they have. I was troubled. I’m better now.

YOUNGER MAN – No you’re not. You’ve just learned how to suppress what made you unique. You wanted to be Mr Zodiac, you were for a time. Now you’re back to being what they want you to be – a good citizen. We’re the all-singing, all-dancing crap of the world. That’s the truth of it. Even monsters and heroes.