

# **Substance of Fire: A Screenplay**

Jon Robin Baitz



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Many of the greatest American plays of the 20th century have examined dysfunctional families under pressure. Add the American obsession with business and you have the preoccupation of **The Substance of Fire**, an award-winning 1990 off-Broadway drama. In Jon Robin Baitz's screenplay, the conflict between a father and his three grown children for control of the family publishing business has only grown sharper. The patriarch, Isaac, a Jewish survivor of the Holocaust, would rather see the company founder while publishing worthy books, than to prosper publishing slick junk. His three grown children, on whom he has lavished, Lear-like, enough stock to control his little kingdom, want the company to become a thriving concern, and feel Dad's standards are absurdly rigid. The question is not so much who will win control of the company, but on what terms and whether any such battle ever truly has an emotional victory.



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