

THE PENNSYLVANIA STATE UNIVERSITY  
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DIVISION OF HUMANITIES, ARTS, AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

AVERAGE JOE

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## **ABSTRACT**

My creative thesis is a feature-length dark comedy screenplay. It follows the story of a college student and aspiring YouTube poet who believes that “true art is only born through pain” sets about methodically destroying his life in an effort to create true art after realizing that his life has been essentially painless. This screenplay explores societal definitions and perceptions of success and greatness while also exploring the technical usage of various storytelling devices and concepts such as point of view, flashback, and the unreliable narrator.

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## INTRODUCTION

Over the past year and a half, I have been writing a feature-length screenplay as a research-based creative Schreyer Honors Thesis. When I was accepted into the Schreyer Honors College, I'd had one idea for my thesis that involved an examination and critique of greatness through the stories of four characters from different walks of life. However, after a discussion with my thesis supervisor, Dr. Feinstein, I realized that those characters' walks were far too different from my own for me to write about without an exorbitant amount of research. So, for my first screenplay, I decided to focus my writing on issues and themes that I am personally familiar with: college and social media.

Much like my original thesis idea, this screenplay, entitled *Average Joe*, focuses on the definitions and perceptions of success, greatness, and fame. As a writer and filmmaker, I've become fascinated with what I call the "anxiety of the mundane"—in other words, the anxiety that comes to many college students who wonder whether they'll be the person to "follow their dreams" and do something "great" or whether they'll end up giving up on their passions and being "just like everyone else." I put these phrases in quotes because they are buzz-words and phrases that I've heard my entire life. Condensed into one sentence, this anxiety produces the idea that, "we must follow our dreams because if we don't, we are merely another name on the list of failures who chose comfort over passion." Media today impresses the artistically-minded individual with the idea that artists are supposed to be "special"--revolutionaries who change both the world and perceptions of it. Through the advent of the internet and social networking sites, fame or affirmation or "specialness" is more attainable to the everyday consumer than ever which increases the pressure to be famous, especially among the young demographic that social media targets.

In this screenplay, I satirize the modern notion that claims "everyone is special" while making "special" a synonym for "famous" or "talented." I also satirize the addictive power of fame once it's been attained. The screenplay follows the story of a young male college student who is struggling and failing to

come to grips with the realization that he isn't a talented poet in a world that insists everyone is "special." He is desperate for affirmation of his work and will do almost anything to attain it. He believes that true art is only born through pain, but, after being told that he must write what he knows, he realizes that his life has been relatively painless. He then systematically destroys his life in various ways and documents that destruction on YouTube. He gains some level of fame with this method, eventually being asked to participate in a documentary about YouTubers, but when that fame is threatened, he again resorts to extreme measures to keep it.

In the process of writing the screenplay, I conducted extensive research into both the technical aspects of writing a screenplay as well as the creative aspects of the story such as the minutiae of the plot and characters I had created. Because of the visual nature of film, writing a screenplay requires a nuanced understanding of storytelling different from that required for writing in strictly text-based media like novels or short stories. In order to create a screenplay, a screenwriter must know the implications of camera angles and shot transitions in telling a visual story. A screenwriter must also be able to create visual clues to indicate what a character is thinking and feeling. I conducted research into aspects of the lives of the characters I created. For instance, I examined topics ranging from YouTube and social media trends to the workings of a small documentary film set to the legal and criminal repercussions of selling exotic pets without a license in Pennsylvania.

## Average Joe

Begin FlashForward:

INT. DOCUMENTARY - DAY

DOCUMENTARY POV.

DANIEL CROWLEY (a.k.a UNCANNY DANNY), a gaming YouTuber appears in front of a white background.

UNCANNY DANNY  
Why do I love YouTube?

One of UNCANNY DANNY's videos appears. He is sitting in a sound-proofed studio with expensive headphones on in a gaming chair.

UNCANNY DANNY  
Hey guys! The name's Uncanny  
Danny, and I hope you have your  
adult diapers on because today,  
we're gonna be playing Five Nights  
at Freddies!

ISABELLA COSTELLO, a beauty and fashion YouTuber, appears in front of a white background.

ISABELLA  
Why do I love YouTube?

One of Isabella's videos appears. She is in a house decorated in spotless white, faded pink, and rose gold.

ISABELLA  
Hello BFFs! Bella here! And  
welcome back to Beauty, Fashion,  
Forever! Today we're gonna be  
comparing these three charcoal  
beauty masks!

She tries to hold up three examples and almost drops one. She giggles as she tries to hold onto it.

BRANDON SYKES, a travel/lifestyle vlogger, appears in front of a white background.

BRANDON  
 Why do I love YouTube?

One of Brandon's videos appears. A beautiful panorama of Havasu Falls in Arizona appears with the title Havasu Falls: Cliff Diving written in the sky. Brandon is standing on a ledge next to the falls.

BRANDON  
 Hello everyone! Welcome to the vlog!

He leaps off of the ledge and into the water below.

JOSEPH BERTRAM, a YouTube poet/vlogger, appears in front of a white background.

JOE  
 I'm supposed to love YouTube? No no, I'm in love with art itself.

DIRECTOR (V.O.)  
 Cut!

CUT TO BLACK.

Title screen "Average Joe" appears.

INT. DOCUMENTARY SET - DAY

Documentary crew bustles around preparing for a shoot. Uncanny Danny, Isabella, and Brandon sit together chatting in chairs behind the film crew. Another young woman, HANNAH, Joe's girlfriend/manager, stands off to the side on her phone talking vehemently with the person on the other end of the line. The DIRECTOR begins to walk over to his place behind a monitor to watch the shot, but Brandon waves him down on the way.

BRANDON  
 Hey man, I just really want to thank you for bringing me onto this project. It's been great so far.

Isabella and Danny both nod and ad lib agreement.



DIRECTOR

No need to thank me. I wish all my talent was as easy to work with as you.

The director goes to his spot behind the monitor. Joe sits in front of the cameras. The director calls to the cast and crew.

DIRECTOR

Quiet on set! We rolling?

INTERVIEWER runs up to director.

INTERVIEWER

Excuse me. Can I--can I talk to you after the shoot today?

DIRECTOR

Uhh, I'm pretty busy--

INTERVIEWER

Please? I'm just worried. This guy just--

DIRECTOR

I know--I know he's been a problem. I'll talk to him.

Interviewer nods and takes her place on-set across from JOSEPH BERTRAM (JOE). Joe is on his phone doing a live-stream. He is soaking wet, his clothes are tattered, his pinky finger is bandaged, and he is barefoot.

DIRECTOR

(to all)

We ready? Sound?

Hannah notices that the crew is about to begin rolling, and quickly speaks into her phone as the rest of the crew answers the director.

HANNAH

Hey, can you hold? They're about to start rolling.

Hannah darts up behind the director to view Joe's interview. The director looks at her as she hovers next to him until she gets the hint and takes a few steps back to where the other YouTubers are sitting.

HANNAH

Sorry.

SOUND GUY

Sound speed.

DIRECTOR

Cameras?

DP

Speed.

SECONDARY CAMERA

Speed.

A grip darts out in front of the cameras holding a clapperboard.

GRIP

Marker!

The grip darts back behind the cameras.

DIRECTOR

And action!

Joe is finishing his livestream as the crew readies the shot. A few livestream messages appear on his screen: "Show us the set!" "Stick to the regular videos. Live-streaming isn't your thing."

JOE

-- director's cracking the whip. I swear they time things to cut my streams short. Must be jealousy. Anyway, I'll be back tomorrow with another video, and remember that true art is lived not made.

DIRECTOR

Mr. Bertram, we're rolling--  
Please!

Joe puts his phone away and lights a joint and takes a deep drag.

DIRECTOR

Mr. Bertram--we are shooting!

Joe glares at the director and tosses the joint on the ground grinding it into ash with his shoe.

JOE

Fire away.

DIRECTOR

Remember to answer the question using the words of the question. If the interviewer asks you how the weather is--

JOE

I say "the weather is nice."

(To the director then  
turning to the  
interviewer)

Can we move it along? I need to get back to ruining my life.

INTERVIEWER

Uhh. Yes. What made you decide you wanted to become a YouTube poet?

JOE

I didn't become a YouTube poet, I became a poet.

INTERVIEWER

So then, why did you become a poet?

JOE

Why does anyone?

INTERVIEWER

Well--why don't you give us your answer--

JOE

It was a rhetorical question. Umm...high school was where it started really.

BEGIN FLASHBACK:

INT. JOE'S HIGH SCHOOL/ENGLISH CLASS - DAY

Joe sits in the third row of his high school English class. Class is winding down, and Joe's teacher, MISS SIMMONS is writing the homework for that day on the whiteboard.

MISS SIMMONS

Alright everyone, I expect your poems to be turned in by class time on Friday so you can all be ready for the student council's poetry slam. Remember, it starts at 6:00pm in the auditorium.

The class buzzer sounds and the students begin packing up their stuff.

MISS SIMMONS

And I want you all to invite at least one person not from this school!

The students all head towards the door, but Joe stops to tie his shoe and put in earbuds, leaving him alone with Miss Simmons.

MISS SIMMONS

Who are you inviting, Joe?

He pulls one earbud out.

JOE

Huh?

MISS SIMMONS

I just asked who you're inviting to the slam?

JOE

Probably my dad.

He puts his earbud back in.

MISS SIMMONS

Not your mom?

He pulls his earbud back out.

JOE

Nah, she's shooting an evening wedding that night.

MISS SIMMONS

Oh.

(pausing and smiling  
before snapping back to  
reality)

Well, I'm really looking forward to seeing my star poet's work.

JOE

Thanks.

Joe smiles a little, puts his earbud back in, and walks out of the room. She smiles, and turns back to the whiteboard to erase her writing.

INT. JOE'S HIGH SCHOOL/AUDITORIUM - NIGHT

Joe sits in the backstage of his high school auditorium. He is in the second seat up to recite his poem. Miss Simmons pops in to the backstage area.

MISS SIMMONS

Break a leg out there tonight guys!

Her eyes rove the room till they land on Joe. She gives him a wink, a smile, and a subtle thumbs up.

STUDENTS

(variants of)

Thanks, Miss Simmons.

ANNOUNCER (V.O.)

Please welcome, Felicia Adams!

MISS SIMMONS

Oop! I've gotta go get my seat!

She waves at the students and rushes out. Joe looks up as the girl next to him goes through the stage curtain and out onto the stage. He looks at his phone and swipes through his poem before getting up to peer out at the audience from behind the curtain. He scans the crowd, his face showing the nerves he's feeling. Finally, he finds his dad in the audience. There is a seat on Dad's left side, occupied only

by his jacket, and he's looking off to his right speaking to someone. Joe looks confused and peers just a little further around the curtain to see Miss Simmons standing at the end of his dad's row. He can't make out what they are talking about, but after a moment, Miss Simmons motions toward the empty seat, and Joe's dad nods, pulls his jacket off the seat to his left, and stands. Miss Simmons begins crawling over the other people in the row to reach the empty seat. Miss Simmons smiles sweetly at Joe's dad when she reaches the seat and they both sit down. Joe shrugs and pulls his phone from his pocket, looking over his poem. (Though Joe witnesses the interactions between Miss Simmons and his dad, he is too wrapped up in his poem and his nerves to think about it.) Felicia Adams' poem ends and the audience begins to snap. Joe looks out from behind the curtain again and sees his Dad begin clapping, but his teacher taps his Dad's shoulder and shows him to snap instead.

ANNOUNCER (V.O.)

Great job Felicia! That was very moving. And now for our next poet, Joseph Bertram!

The announcer's voice startles Joe, but he quickly gathers himself, straightens his clothes, puts his phone in his pocket and walks confidently out onto the stage.

JOE

Good evening. The poem that I'm going to be reciting tonight is one that I wrote for my mom's dad, my grandfather who died last month.

There is an audible "aww" from the audience. Joe attempts to lighten the mood, chuckling.

JOE

No, don't worry, he had Alzheimer's all my life so it wasn't really--

Various audience members look at each other uncomfortably, and a few of them make cringing sounds. As he notices the audience's discomfort, he speaks more and more quietly.

JOE

All that--sad--for--me...

He pauses and clears his throat as the audience stares back at him in complete silence. Desperate for a familiar and sympathetic face, he locks his eyes on his dad and Miss Simmons. Miss Simmons gives him two thumbs up and mouths an exaggerated "You've got this." Joe pulls himself up straighter and begins his poem.

JOE

This is for you, grandpa.  
 The sky was grey on the day that  
 we lost you.  
 Clouds so thick, not even the sun  
 could shine through.  
 The rain fell in sheets  
 Through the air dank and cold.  
 We lost you too soon  
 Even though you were old.  
 We'll miss your smile,  
 Your kindness,  
 Your laugh.

Joe glimpses Miss Simmons reaching over and putting her hand on Joe's dad's knee. She whispers something to him. Joe's dad smiles uncomfortably and crosses his legs away from her.

JOE

We'll miss your love  
 Which none could match by half.  
 You always said to chase our  
 dreams.  
 Whatever the cost.  
 You remind us of this daily  
 Your legacy will never be lost.

Miss Simmons is leaning towards Joe's dad and Joe's dad leans away from her in his chair.

JOE

Although you're gone  
 We still hold you close  
 Close to our hearts  
 With your memory tied round our  
 necks.  
 We will miss you grandpa  
 As long as the sun rises in the  
 east.  
 We will miss you grandpa

As long as we can say rest in  
peace.

Tentative snapping starts, but Joe's teacher begins  
clapping.

MISS SIMMONS

Woo!

She catches herself and puts her hand over her mouth,  
giggling and turning to Joe's dad. He smiles uncomfortably  
and focuses hard on snapping. Joe smiles, bows and walks  
offstage.

INT. JOE'S HIGH SCHOOL/HALLWAY - NIGHT

Joe walks up to his dad and his teacher after the slam. His  
teacher is laughing and chatting at his dad, as his dad  
attempts to remain polite. Miss Simmons notices Joe  
approaching and turns to him.

MISS SIMMONS

Oh my goodness! You were so  
wonderful!  
(Turning to Joe's dad)  
Wasn't he so wonderful?

DAD

Y-yes.

Joe's dad focuses all of his attention on Joe and  
emphasizes the word "mom".

DAD

I know your mom would've loved to  
be here too. She loves that poem.

JOE

Thanks guys.

MISS SIMMONS

I was just telling your dad here  
what a joy it's been to have you  
in my class--star poet!

JOE

Thanks Miss Simmons. Poetry really  
means a lot to me.



MISS SIMMONS

Aww.

She puts her hand on Joe's dad's shoulder.

DAD

Well, I really must be going! Nice talking to you Miss Simmons! See you at home, Joe?

JOE

Yeah, Dad.

Joe's dad hurries out of the school. Miss Simmons watches him go and looks back at Joe.

MISS SIMMONS

Don't mind him. Parents can be weird about their children going into artistic professions. But, just like you said in your poem, if you want something--you've just gotta go for it--whatever it takes.

JOE

Are we still talking about like-- with poetry or--

MISS SIMMONS

Anything Joe--

JOE

Ok.

MISS SIMMONS

Good. Never forget that.

Miss Simmons hugs him and whisks off to another part of the school, and Joe watches her, mystified. He unlocks his phone and takes another look at his poem. He looks up and back in the direction that Miss Simmons had gone, determined.

END FLASHBACK:

INT. DOCUMENTARY SET - DAY

Joe's inaugural YouTube video plays.

JOE

Hello audience! My name is Joseph Bertram, but you can call me Joe. Now, you probably wanna know more about me because--this is my first YouTube video! I am a poet. And I am dedicating this channel to sharing my poetry with you. And uh--I really hope you enjoy it!

Hannah smiles proudly at Joe, but a voice on the other end of her phone interrupts her.

HANNAH

What? Yes, I'm still here! They're still filming just--

Isabella and Danny exchange glances, and Brandon puts his finger to his lips to shush her, pointing to the director who, again, is glaring at her.

HANNAH

(loudly whispering)

Hang on a second.

Joe and the interviewer sit together on the set.

INTERVIEWER

So, you've told us why you got into poetry, but why did you decide to bring it to YouTube?

JOE

YouTube's just so accessible. Anyone can post on YouTube. But, I did it specifically because I love poetry and I wanted--still want--other people to love my poetry.

INTERVIEWER

And did they?

JOE

Did they what?

INTERVIEWER

Did they love your poetry?

POV switch from documentary set to the documentary itself.

JOE

No. No, they did not love my  
poetry from the start.

BEGIN FLASHBACK:

EXT. JOE'S CHILDHOOD HOUSE/SCRUFFY'S GRAVE SITE - DAY

In SLOW MOTION, DAD carries a small cardboard box, as MOM and YOUNG JOE, age 8, trails behind him. Young Joe is clearly crying; wiping tears from his eyes and snot from his nose. They all approach a hole dug at the edge of their back yard, and Dad places the box inside the hole. Young Joe pulls free from his mother's hand and runs to the hole, kneeling on the ground and snatching the lid from the box. A lifeless Cairn Terrier with the name SCRUFFY emblazoned on the collar lays inside. Young Joe sobs into the box and reaches his hand in to pet the dog before his mom pulls him back and his dad replaces the lid to the box. Dirt covers the box and a stone with Scruffy's picture and paw-print on it engraved with the words "Scruffy, Beloved Family Pet" is placed as a marker on the grave.

JOE V.O.

Beloved and family--Two words  
engraved on the granite stone that  
marks Scruffy's grave.

Young Joe kneels at the grave, head down.

JOE V.O.

Beloved and family--Two words too  
weak to describe an animal so wise  
and brave.

INT. JOE'S CHILDHOOD HOUSE/JOE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Joe sits in the dark, aside from the mood lighting he's created, reciting his poem. His writing desk is behind him. A quote from R.M. Drake "Art is pain, and pain is the art in which we find ourselves," is in a frame in the background on the desk.

JOE

Beloved and family--two words too  
sweet to grasp what you meant to  
me.

Joe's camera records Joe reciting his poem. Two small LED  
lights and a camera are set up around him.

JOE V.O.

Beloved and family--Still two  
words too perfect for you sweet  
pup--You were beloved family.

Joe hits stop on his camera. He ejects the camera's SD  
card, inserts it into his laptop, and edits the video. He  
gives SCRUFFY, his beloved family pet who is very much  
alive, a pat on the head and continues to edit.

JOE

Heyo, Scruffy. How's it going,  
buddy?

The video plays in the background as he edits.

JOE (V.O.)

I hope you all enjoyed the video  
for today. This week's poem is the  
first in a series that I am going  
to be submitting to be reviewed  
for publication when I start  
college next week. Gonna be  
talking to my advisor about  
possible places to send them,  
so...Wish me luck!

Joe pulls YouTube up on his laptop and checks his  
subscriber count. It's 64.

JOE

One more than yesterday.

He clicks upload on YouTube and other social media  
platforms and spins back around towards his camera.

CUT TO:

INT. COLLEGE BUILDING/PROFESSOR'S OFFICE - DAY

Joe sits in a chair across the desk from his PROFESSOR. She squints down through her glasses at the laptop she has set up in front of her. She scrolls through a document full of his poetry.

PROFESSOR

Print these up next time. My eyes do better with hard copies.

She continues to scroll and adjust her glasses. She looks up at him quizzically before looking back down at his work. She sits in silence for a few moments before speaking. She takes off her glasses when she does.

PROFESSOR

So, I'm going to just start by asking you...what do you think?

JOE

Um--What do I think? I mean--I loved writing them--I've been doing poetry since high school. Actually, my English teacher junior year of high school really-

The professor puts her glasses back on and looks back down at the poems.

PROFESSOR

Well, high school is very different than college.

JOE

I know that, I just--

PROFESSOR

(dismissively)

Doesn't matter--why did you want to come talk to me?

JOE

Well, you're my advisor, so I was hoping you'd have some suggestions on places I could get these published.

She scrolls on the document again.

PROFESSOR

Ok--well then--why are you hoping to be published?

JOE

I mean--why does anyone want to be published?

The professor raises her eyebrows at him.

JOE

I just wanna get my name out as a poet.

PROFESSOR

Hmm. At this stage, I'm probably not the person you want to talk to. There's some great publications on learning about poetry that I could refer you to-- we also teach a poetry course here.

JOE

No, but I know HOW to write poetry! I want to publish THESE!

Professor sighs. She scrolls on the document again and slides her laptop around so that he can see the screen. It's the poem Joe wrote about the "death" of his dog.

PROFESSOR

This one about your dog. Why did you write it?

JOE

Wh--why did I write it? I mean, I uh--I wrote it because--

PROFESSOR

Ok, that sort of answers my question.

She looks back down at his poem, puts her glasses back on and scans the screen, moving her cursor over the document. Joe shifts uncomfortably in his chair. She reaches a point in the poem where she stops and taps her fingernail on the screen. She highlights the sixth line of the poem.

PROFESSOR

Like this--"Two words too sweet to grasp what you meant to me." What did your dog mean to you?

JOE

Huh?

PROFESSOR

The line--

JOE

Yeah, uh--what about it?

PROFESSOR

What did the dog mean to you?

JOE

I didn't really think about--

PROFESSOR

You want your readers to feel something, right?

JOE

Of course!

PROFESSOR

Then you need to tell us WHAT your dog meant to you not THAT your dog meant to you!

JOE

I mean--it was just a phrase!  
Y'know, "what you meant to me"?  
Just a saying.

PROFESSOR

Has a pet of yours ever died?  
Someone you love?

JOE

--No--but I didn't think--

PROFESSOR

Break up with a significant other?  
Friends move away?

JOE

I moved after middle school, but I wasn't that close with my--

PROFESSOR

Wanted something really badly and not been able to get it? Lost something valuable?

JOE

Not that I can--

PROFESSOR

Well then, is loss really what you want to be writing about?

JOE

What do you mean? I-I feel these-- I believe in--

PROFESSOR

How can you believe in something you don't know a thing about?

JOE

I thought that writing was about creativity.

PROFESSOR

But you can't create something from nothing! How is your reader supposed to feel the emotion in your poems if you've never even felt those feelings?

She leans back in her chair and again removes her glasses.

JOE

So, you're saying they're not good enough to publish?

They stare at each other in silence for a few moments.

PROFESSOR

You're free to send them to publications. I have a list, but--

Professor shakes her head and looks back down at Joe's poetry. He stares at her in silence for a few moments before leaving her office. He rushes out into the hallway.



JOE (V.O.)  
Going into college was--uh--tough.

END FLASHBACK:

INT. DOCUMENTARY SET - DAY

The director waves his hand in the air.

DIRECTOR  
Cut! That's a good take. Good spot  
to break for lunch! Take thirty  
everyone.

The crew shuts down their equipment and disperses to the refreshment tables. Joe remains seated in his chair on set, and Hannah rushes over to him, phone still in hand.

HANNAH  
Hey babe, I just wanted to let you  
know that I have the newspaper  
from back home on the phone. I'm  
making sure they get the story of  
you and the documentary straight.

JOE  
Thank you.

HANNAH  
What would you do without me?

She motions to the refreshment table.

HANNAH  
You want anything?

JOE  
No, I've got a new poem in the  
works.

Hannah nods, but she is already starting to walk away. She brings the phone back up to her ear.

HANNAH  
Hello? Are you still there?

She walks over to the refreshment table. She grabs a plate and quickly fills it with food. She reaches for a cup to

grab a drink. She struggles to pour her drink while holding her phone and her plate of food. She cradles her phone between her shoulder and her ear. Brandon notices and rushes over to help her.

BRANDON

Hey, let me get that for you!

He puts his own plate and cup down and takes Hannah's plate, allowing her two free hands to pour the drink. Brandon waits for her to finish pouring her drink and hands the plate back. Hannah mouths thanks to him.

BRANDON

Don't sweat it, man! Anytime!

He picks his own plate and cup back up and turns around to head back to his chair. Brandon notices that Joe is sitting by himself and walks over to him.

BRANDON

Hey, man. There's food over there.

JOE

I saw it.

BRANDON

Not hungry?

JOE

I'm starving.

BRANDON

Ok. You do you, man.

(pauses)

Hey, I was listening to your story a bit. It's cool you didn't give up.

JOE

Is it? Is it cool to be told you're awful at what you love to do?

BRANDON

Well, naw man. But it's cool not to give up.

JOE

I suppose you're right.

BRANDON

Alright well, cool. Good talk.

JOE

I had a few people who had my back.

BRANDON

Oh, you're--you're still going--  
ok.

JOE

Not nearly as many as I do now. I have more support than I know what to do with now. Y'know, subscribers and fans.

(continue ad lib about  
the amount of people he  
has supporting him)

BRANDON

Uh huh.

The interviewer meanders back over to the set with her sandwich, and suddenly realizes that Joe is talking about important information for the documentary. Mouth full, she rushes back over to where the director is sitting, looking over the shooting schedule. She taps the director's shoulder, desperately trying to gulp down the bite of her sandwich. The director looks up at her and over at Joe where the interviewer is pointing.

DIRECTOR

Aw, shit. He's going--Randy! He's going with or without us!

The crew stands and rushes back to their positions. The director hurries over to a monitor, turns it on, and throws on headphones; the DP and second cameraman head to their cameras and rush to turn them on; second cameraman struggles to lick Cheeto dust off his fingers; the grip grabs the clapperboard and runs in front of the cameras. Hannah, still on the phone, notices the rush of the crew back to set.

HANNAH

Shit--Hey, this just isn't working right now, can I call you back?  
Yeah, but PLEASE do not publish

until we finish this interview?  
Yeah? Ok, thank you--so much!

Hannah rushes back to the set behind the rest of the crew. The director makes eye contact with both cameramen and motions for them to start their cameras. The grip silently shuts the clapper for the board and tiptoes out of the way of the cameras.

JOE

But uh, obviously that professor  
didn't have my back--

Brandon looks around uncomfortably, looking for rescue from the conversation with Joe. The interviewer slips up beside him and motions for him to leave. She replaces him, and sits down in her chair. Joe doesn't notice.

JOE

--but Hannah and--and my parents  
too. Few Facebook friends. They  
had my back in the beginning. The  
whole ivory tower thing just  
wasn't my scene.

INTERVIEWER

(clearly still trying to  
pull herself together)  
You uh--you--mentioned someone  
named Hannah? Who is she?

From the area with the other YouTubers, Hannah clears her throat loudly and points to herself.

The director sighs, looks at the secondary cameraman and points at Hannah. The secondary cameraman reluctantly pans over to her, and she gives a quick wave and nods at the camera. The secondary cameraman pans back around to his former position.

JOE

Yeah, that's Hannah. She's my  
girlfriend.

BEGIN FLASHBACK:

INT. JOE'S COLLEGE - DAY

Joe's professor's nameplate is on the wall. Joe walks through the hallway of his old college from her office and arrives in the lobby. He looks all around him. Joe sits by himself at a table. He looks over and sees his younger self rushing out of the hallway from the professor's office. Hannah appears opposite him at the table. Other students mill about.

JOE (V.O.)

We started going out in high school, senior year, but we went to the same college. She went for advertising and marketing. Has her own freelance business. She's really good at what she does.

INT. COLLEGE BUILDING - DAY

Older Joe vanishes and HANNAH, Joe's girlfriend, rises to meet him. They walk as they talk.

HANNAH

Hey babe, how'd it g--whoa--are you ok?

JOE

She told me not to publish them.

HANNAH

She what?

JOE

She told me not to publish them!

HANNAH

Wh-why?

JOE

You think I know!?

HANNAH

Well, what did she say?

JOE

I just told you!

HANNAH

Oh c'mon, you know what I mean!

They stop just inside the entrance to the building.

JOE

Look, I showed her my poems, and she told me not to publish them. Said I'd never felt loss...like she can tell me what I've felt!

HANNAH

Well...have you?

JOE

Fantastic! You too?!

HANNAH

I mean--

JOE

I wouldn't have written them if I didn't feel them!

HANNAH

No but--

JOE

Of course I felt them!

HANNAH

I know. I was just trying to help you think.

JOE

Well, contrary to what some people seem to think, I CAN actually think on my own!

HANNAH

Hey, I know!

She stops walking for a moment, grabbing his arm to stop him as well.

HANNAH

Babe, I love how you think. You know that.

Joe stares at her in silence.

HANNAH

But if she doesn't think you should publish them--maybe you should think about what she said and--I dunno--figure out if there's anything she has a point about?

JOE

Fine.

Hannah puts her arms around his neck, and Joe reluctantly links his arms around her waist.

HANNAH

And if not, then--just ignore her because you're smarter than her anyway.

Joe cracks a slight smile and shakes his head.

JOE

Ok.

Hannah puckers, and reluctantly, Joe leans down to kiss her. Hannah takes her arms from his neck.

HANNAH

Good. I've gotta go to my marketing class. But, I believe in you. You're gonna do amazing things, Joseph Bertram.

JOE

--Thanks babe.

She reaches out and squeezes his hand.

HANNAH

Love you.

JOE

Love you too.

She begins to walk away but turns back to him.

HANNAH

See you tomorrow?

JOE  
Of course.

She leaves, and he exits the building.

EXT. COLLEGE PARKING LOT - DAY

Joe walks to his car. It is raining. He reaches his car and begins searching in his backpack for his keys. He does not find them and begins frantically looking through the windows of his car. He spots them on the passenger seat and bangs his fists and head on the car in frustration. He pulls out his phone.

DAD (V.O.)  
Hello?

JOE  
Hey Dad.

DAD (V.O.)  
Hey Joe. What's up?

JOE  
Locked my keys in the car.

DAD (V.O.)  
Need the spare?

JOE  
Yeah. Can you--?

DAD (V.O.)  
I'm on my way!

PROFESSOR (V.O.)  
Have you ever wanted something  
really badly and not been able to  
get it?

Joe stands completely immobile with his phone to his ear.

DAD  
Joe? You good?

Joe shakes his head and clears his throat.

JOE  
Yeah, sorry. Thanks dad. Seeya.



Joe hangs up the phone and begins to walk back towards the college building. The rain pelts him and the wind is blowing at his back. A car alarm goes off behind him and he turns around to see what's going on. The wind and rain blow in his face, and through the mist, he imagines a funeral scene occurring across from the parking lot. He imagines his young self again, standing at the grave. Again he is holding his mother's hand, but this time his father is in the coffin. The lid of the coffin closes over his father and the coffin is lowered into the grave. The somber congregation watches as Young Joe reaches toward his father and his mother hugs him to her. His breath catches, and he whips out his phone to draft a new poem based on his vision. The rain continues to pour down, soaking him as he types and causing him to perpetually need to wipe off his phone screen in order to type. He writes "Rain--falling from the sky just as the tears from my eyes--As the congregation hems me in--A barricade of black--Shrouded in veils and nylon umbrellas--My father lies there--Motionless in the wooden box they lower into the ground--An open wound in the earth at my feet--My mother holds me back--Lest the salt in my tears cause the earth more pain."

JOE

(Ad lib increasing  
frustration as he types)  
Shit. Come on. Of all the--

Joe's dad pulls up in his car as Joe types, startling Joe.

DAD

Joe! What the heck are you doing?

JOE

Dad!?

DAD

(mimicking Joe)  
Joe!? You ok?

JOE

Oh! Yeah. It's nothing. Keys?

DAD

Here you go! You sure you're  
alright?

Joe's dad tosses the keys to him, and he catches them.

JOE

Yeah, I'm fine just...writing down  
an idea for a new poem before I  
forget it.

DAD

Ah. Writing. Gotcha. See you at  
home?

JOE

Yeah. Seeya.

Joe's dad drives away, and Joe jogs back to his car,  
unlocks it, and hops inside. He looks out to where he saw  
the vision of the funeral. There is nothing, but he looks  
down at his phone and reads over his work, smiling.

JOE

Yeah. This is something. Write  
what you know, my ass.

He turns on his car and drives away.

EXT. JOE'S CHILDHOOD HOUSE - DAY

Joe gets out of his car leaving a puddle in the driver's  
seat.

EXT./INT. JOE'S CHILDHOOD HOUSE/KITCHEN - DAY

Joe walks up to his house, his shoes squishing and  
waterlogged, and goes inside to the kitchen. His parents  
are both there. His mom is wearing reading glasses and  
standing over a laptop on the kitchen table. She has a  
camera sitting next to her. His dad is nearby in the living  
room watching a football game. They both hear his squishy  
footsteps coming and are staring at him when he enters. His  
mom's eyebrows are raised, and she stifles a laugh.

MOM

My goodness!

She rushes to the first floor bathroom and flings open the  
door.

JOE

What?

His mom pulls a towel out of the closet and rushes over to him.

MOM

What happened to you?

She hands him the towel, still trying to remain straight-faced, and Joe looks down at himself and his soaking clothes.

JOE

Oh, sorry.

He begins to dry off and struggles to pull off his dripping shoes. His mom hovers nearby.

JOE

It was kind of a rough day.

MOM

Are you ok? Do you want tea?

JOE

Nah, I'm ok.

MOM

Just put the shoes at the top of the stairs. I'll throw them in the dryer.

He does. She returns to her computer.

MOM

So, what happened?

JOE

Long story, really.

MOM

Do you want to talk about it?

JOE

You're working, I don't--

MOM

I could use a break from these photos anyway--my clients' baby is--not making my job easy.

She smiles and sits down in a chair at the table and motions for Joe to sit down as well. He does.

JOE

Well, the short version is...remember how I told you I was gonna try to get my poems published? I was gonna go talk to my professor about it today?

His Dad pipes up from the living room.

DAD

What? Your professor say they stink?

MOM

Howard!

DAD

He knows I'm kidding!

MOM

If you want to be part of this conversation, you can come over here.

DAD

Oh, come on Janine!

MOM

No, you come on!

DAD

But the game's going on over here!

MOM

Then just enjoy your game!

DAD

Now just--!

JOE

GUYS!

Joe stands. Both his parents refocus on him.

JOE

(frustrated)

Yes, she said they stink, she said they shouldn't be published, so thanks Dad, for that. I'm gonna go up to my room.

Dad sits in silence, apology on his face. Mom shakes her head.

MOM

Oh honey. I'm sorry.

JOE

It's fine. I'm fine.

MOM

I love your poetry. Don't let some professor stop you from writing. Remember what grandpa would say--

She touches the necklace she is wearing around her neck. The necklace has her father's picture in it and houses a small amount of her father's ashes.

JOE

Yeah, mom.

Joe turns to walk away.

MOM

What would grandpa say?

He turns back towards her.

MOM

Remember the poem you wrote for the funeral?

JOE

(he sighs)

Chase your dreams, whatever the cost.

His mom smiles at him, and he reluctantly smiles back.

JOE

Thanks Mom. I'm gonna go try to write now.

MOM

Good. But--wait, you still didn't say why you came in soaked?

JOE

It's nothing, I was just writing in the rain. Wanted to get my thoughts down before I forgot. I'm gonna head up to my room.

MOM

Now, just hang on. I'll make you tea.

She gets up from the table and readies a cup of tea. Joe watches her intently, his face indicating that he's bothered by the fact that she's making his life so easy. Joe's mom brings the tea over to him.

MOM

Here.

Joe shakes his head to clear away his irritation. He reaches to take it slowly.

JOE

(brusquely)

Thanks Mom.

He takes the mug and turns to walk up the stairs. His mom returns to her computer. As he reaches the foot of the stairs, Scruffy trots over to him, and Joe stoops to pet him, but stops short, staring at his clearly alive pet. He pulls his hand back from the dog abruptly and runs up the stairs. The dog darts up the stairs after him. He turns a corner and opens the door to his room, the last door on the left side of the hall, and Scruffy darts in ahead of him.

INT. JOE'S CHILDHOOD HOUSE/JOE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Joe sits down at his computer, clicks into YouTube, and checks his subscriber count. It's still 64. He quickly opens a Notes window over his subscriber count. He pulls out his phone, and quickly transcribes the pieces of the

poem that he'd typed in the parking lot onto his computer. He stops abruptly and stares blankly at the blinking text cursor on his screen. He looks back at his phone and stares at the text cursor there. He closes his eyes.

ZOOM IN:

EXT. COLLEGE PARKING LOT/FAKE GRAVESITE - DAY

The imagined events at the gravesite play through in FAST-MOTION.

JOE V.O.

(also fast-motion)

Rain--falling from the sky just as  
the tears from my eyes--As the  
congregation hems me in--A  
barricade of black--Shrouded in  
veils and nylon umbrellas--My  
father lies there--Motionless in  
the wooden box they lower into the  
ground--An open wound in the earth  
at my feet--

In REGULAR TIME, Young Joe reaches toward his father, but his mother hugs him to her.

JOE V.O.

(regular speed)

My mother holds me back--Lest the  
salt in my tears cause the earth  
more pain.

His mother's face shows no emotion.

JOE V.O.

But the only pain is mine--

The open grave becomes a canyon at Young Joe's feet. He wrenches himself from his mother's grasp and flings himself into the canyon.

JOE V.O.

And I fling myself headlong into  
the chasm before me. No--that's  
not it.

The events of the past few lines rewind. His mother's face shows no emotion.

JOE V.O.

But the only pain is mine--

The congregation begins to close in around Young Joe. He pulls free from his mother and shoves his way through the ring of funeral attendees standing around the grave. He runs out on his own, away from the burial site.

JOE V.O.

And the barricade is closing in around me-- I must break free.  
Eh...first line's gotta change.

Again the previous lines rewind. Mom and Young Joe cry in each other's arms.

JOE V.O.

Uhhh wait: There's enough pain between us--Yeah, that's it:

A man with shovel heaves dirt into the grave. Dirt smatters the lid of the coffin.

JOE V.O.

the grave digger seals the wound,  
one clod at a time--The earth is healed--

Cut to a few years later, Young Joe stands alone at his father's grave. Cut to several years after that, Joe stands in the same place, and lifts a gun to his head, and a gunshot sounds.

JOE V.O.

But I'm still broken--And I stay broken until I...break...myself?  
Gahh!

CUT TO:

INT. JOE'S CHILDHOOD HOUSE/JOE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Joe sits with his head in his hands.

JOE

Why...? I can't. I can't. Why can't I--?



He shakes his head and he grabs his phone from his desk. He reopens YouTube and sees another YouTube poet in his "Recommended" feed. He clicks on the video. He listens to the painful story about childhood trauma depicted in the poem ("Traps" by John Mark Green).

POET 1

I am forever stained with the ink  
of your dark soul. The words your  
tongue wrote on me, though now  
faded with the years are still  
indelible and deadly, living  
somewhere beneath my skin. What is  
inscribed on a young heart endures  
in secret, like a sorcerer's  
spellbook hidden in a musty,  
timeless tomb...If there was any  
justice in the universe, you'd  
have been sentenced long ago. But  
you are untouched by any  
consequence. Instead, you forge  
ahead in life, a cold  
conscienceless machine, trailing  
destruction in your wake. And I am  
bound to you by blood, memories of  
your misdeeds lingering in the  
haunted forest of my body, like  
traps waiting to spring.

Joe looks out his window down to the swing set in his back yard that remained from his childhood days, and envisions a scene out in the yard.

BEGIN FLASHBACK:

EXT. JOE'S CHILDHOOD HOUSE - DAY

Young Joe, aged 6, runs around in the yard laughing, playing hide and seek with his dad. His mom comes out of the house with her camera around her neck. She snaps pictures of their revelry. Young Joe runs to her and drags her into their game. They all play together before Joe's dad scoops him up and swings him around before catching him up in his arms and drawing his wife into a group hug. They all laugh, as the sun shines through a dreamlike filter above them.

END FLASHBACK.

INT. JOE'S CHILDHOOD HOUSE/JOE'S BEDROOM

Joe clicks on another video and listens to a poem about violent physical bullying ("Sticks and Stones" by Jon Jorgenson).

POET 2

When I was in 4th grade, Becky  
O'Neill called me stupid because I  
wrote my J's backwards. I told her  
"J's a hard letter. You don't know  
whether to hook left or hook  
right." A right hook from Ashton  
Bellmen in Jr. High was meant to  
swell me up and make my tiny nose  
normal sized, at least that's what  
he told me, and in high school,  
Ryan Mundy called me things I dare  
not repeat but still replay in my  
head from time to time all because  
I did theater instead of playing  
football. Sticks and stones,  
right?

He stands and walks over to his bookshelf, pulling out his middle school yearbook and flipping to his photo. He imagines another scenario. His photo in the yearbook fades to the scenario from his childhood that he's imagining.

BEGIN FLASHBACK:

EXT. STREET IN JOE'S NEIGHBORHOOD - DAY

Middle school age Joe is walking down the sidewalk alone with ear buds in. From behind him, two other, slightly older and bigger kids yell his name. He ignores them and keeps his head down. They run up on either side of him, and one of them pulls the ear bud out of Joe's ear. The other kid slings his arm around Joe's shoulders.

KID 1

Hey man! Didn't you hear us?

JOE

No.

KID 2

Just wanted to invite you to my birthday party Saturday! My mom talked to your mom, but she said I should ask you!

JOE

I can't.

KID 1

Aw, too bad, man.

KID 2

Lemme know if you change your mind!

KID 2 reaches up and grabs the brim of Joe's hat, pulls it off Joe's head and replaces it backwards. KID 1 gives Joe a hearty pat on the back, causing Joe to stagger slightly.

KID 2

Seeya!

KID 1

Later!

The two kids jog ahead together, bantering. Joe stops and puts his earbud in. He pulls his hat off and defiantly replaces it front-ways on his head.

JOE

Bullies.

END FLASHBACK.

INT. JOE'S CHILDHOOD HOUSE/JOE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Joe listens to a poem about a broken heart ("I Will Not Miss You by Kenneth Kataiwa).

POET 3

Leave, I won't feel sad. You're taking my heart with you. No teardrop will leave my eye. But inside I'll still cry. Go where you are not going--I know your

heart is staying. Please sweep your footprints outside. I'll remember your beautiful feet. Is it really over? Finally, my heart gets to break. Take your roses in the vase, I'll be the only thing withering. Don't close the door, the future is unwritten--we can change it now. I will not have to miss you if you decide to stay. (As you want to; as I want you to.)

He looks at the photo of him and Hannah at their senior prom. Again, he imagines a scenario within the photo.

BEGIN FLASHBACK:

EXT. HANNAH'S HOUSE - DAY

Joe puts a corsage around Hannah's wrist, fumbling with the flowers. She reaches to help him and touches his hand in the process. She takes the opportunity to take his hand in hers. They smile at each other and begin posing for prom photos.

END FLASHBACK.

INT. JOE'S CHILDHOOD HOUSE/JOE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

JOE continues to stare at the photo as his Professor's voice reverberates in his mind.

PROFESSOR (V.O.)

Why did you write this? Has a pet of yours ever died? Someone you love? Anything? You've never had to consider that? I can't tell by what you've written here. Write what you know! You don't know what you're talking about.

As Joe hears her voice in his mind, he looks up and over at the R.M. Drake quote on his desk.

INT./EXT. JOE'S CHILDHOOD HOUSE/BACKYARD - NIGHT

Joe prints a slew of his old poems, stuffs them under his shirt, grabs his camera and tripod, and rushes downstairs. He also grabs a lighter from his kitchen drawer and rushes towards the back door. His parents are in the living room watching TV, and as Joe rushes by, his parents notice.

MOM

Joe, what're you--?

Joe rushes out without response. His parents look at each other. Outside, Joe sets up the camera on the tripod so that he'll be facing into the wind and presses record. He squints as the rain pelts his face.

JOE

Hello, my LOYAL audience. I'm standing out here in a rainstorm because--because I don't even know why I'm out here! I-I've tried and I've tried--

He whips the hard copies of his poems out from under his shirt and shakes them in front of the camera.

JOE

I've even printed out your precious hard copies--yeah, that's for you prof! But--but you don't want to hear me! You proved that! 64 measly subscribers--I've poured out my heart, and--fake! You tell me I'm fake! Write what you know, my ass! Well fine--you think I'm fake? You want me to suffer for my craft? I'll fucking suffer. And you'll suffer with me. That's why I'm making this video! I'm announcing a new series. From here on, I will show you the pain that goes into every poem, in as much detail as possible. And, as a symbol of my--dedication--to this new series, I am going to begin by burning all my old poems!

Joe pulls a lighter out of his pocket. He flicks at the lighter a few times, but each time the rain puts it out. The rain splatters on the poems. He finally gets the lighter to light but the papers are too wet to ignite. He burns his hand with the lighter and drops it on the ground. He stoops to pick up the lighter and drops the poems on the ground in the mud. He picks up the soaked papers and waves them in front of the camera. Joe's mom opens the back door and peeks her head out.

MOM

Honey, are you ok?

Joe's face contorts and he buries his face in his hands. He screams in frustration, falling to his knees and tossing the papers again, without looking back at her. She rushes out onto the porch.

MOM

Joe?! What's the matter?

JOE

I AM RECORDING MOM! GO BACK  
INSIDE!

MOM

But--

JOE

Just go Mom! I don't want your  
help!

A hurt expression appears on her face, and she steps back inside.

JOE

Ugh, what was--

He picks up all of his papers. They are dripping and falling apart in his hands. He again waves them at the camera. Several pieces melt to the ground.

JOE

Signing off internet! Be careful  
what you wish for!

He stands and trudges over to his camera, turns it off, takes it off the tripod, and picks up the tripod. He sighs.

He stalks back into the house and up the stairs to his room. He ejects the SD card from his camera and inserts it into the computer. He immediately uploads it to YouTube and other platforms without editing it. The upload bar extends to 100%.

END FLASHBACK:

INT. DOCUMENTARY SET - DAY

JOE

That was the--uh--the rebirth of my channel. Of my entire life really.

INTERVIEWER

Can you explain that a bit?

JOE

Can I explain that...? I don't think it requires much explaining. I'd destroyed all of my old work--beyond that moment, any piece of art that I created was born from my experience. Not from some...half-baked fantasy. I was new.

INT. JOE'S CHILDHOOD HOUSE/JOE'S BEDROOM - DAY

Joe's alarm goes off at 8:00am, and Joe's hand smacks the alarm off. He sits up and rubs his eyes. His camera sits on his desk, a few drops of water from the night before remain on the desk. He attempts to turn the camera on and receives an error message on the screen.

JOE

Aw, shit! No no no! You've got to be kidding me.

He jostles his computer mouse, and the screen flashes on. His video from the following night appears on the screen, and he quickly scrubs through it. He checks his analytics. His subscriber count is down to 62. He frantically deletes the video from every platform he posted it on. He grabs his laptop and types up a new script. He looks at his broken camera, grabs it, and tosses it roughly on his bed. He

pulls out his phone and stacks a few books on his bedside table, propping his phone up on it and pressing record.

JOE

Hello audience, and welcome to my rebranded channel: "Finding Poetry". I--I had a bit of an epiphany that some of you may've seen in my video last night--which I have since taken down. In the spirit of fresh starts, I-uh-want to apologize to those of you who saw it. My advisor--the professor that I told you about. The one I was going to talk to about publishing my poems? Yeah, she uh--she ripped me a new one, and it was really painful for me. I was very upset about it. Please don't unsub. I promise you don't want to miss the new content I'm coming out with.

He tries to muster a catch in his throat. As he continues to speak, he clears his throat and blinks repeatedly, attempting to cry.

JOE

I've been writing poetry since high school, and I started this channel as another creative outlet for myself. But, yesterday, I was faced with the realization that--that my imagination, my--aw shit. C'mon man.

He jumps up and hits stop on his phone. He stands in his room looking around.

JOE

Onion.

He runs down the stairs to the kitchen.

INT. JOE'S CHILDHOOD HOUSE/KITCHEN - DAY

He rushes to the refrigerator, pulls open the vegetable drawer, rifles through it, and grabs an onion. He snatches



a knife from the utensil drawer and slices the onion open. He waits for a moment. He makes another slice in the onion. He brings the onion up under his nose and takes a long sniff. He slices the onion a few more times. He waves it under his eyes, and still nothing.

JOE  
You're kidding.

He chucks the half-onion that he cut up in the trash, and wraps the other half in saran wrap. He puts the half-onion back in the refrigerator. He spots a bunch of jalapeño peppers.

JOE  
Bingo.

He snatches up the jalapeño and runs back up to his room.

INT. JOE'S CHILDHOOD HOUSE/JOE'S BEDROOM - DAY

Joe hits the record button on his phone and grabs his laptop again to look at his script. He mutters a few lines of it to himself before picking up the jalapeño. He takes a deep breath and brings the pepper up to his eye. He squeezes the pepper and a droplet of juice lands in his eye. He blinks and begins to tear up. He clears his throat.

JOE  
Um, I've been writing poetry since high school--ahem--and I uh--started--hoo--I started this channel as another creative outlet for myself--sniff--but uh--wow ok-

His eyes continue to grow redder, and his tears come faster. He grips the bottom of his chair.

JOE  
But, ummmm--yesterday, I was--faced with--the realization that--that my--ffffff ok--my imagination and my, my--I'm sorry I didn't think it would be this difficult--my creativity--would not be enough for you. So, I am starting a new series where--ohhho ho ho--I--am going--to experience-

-gaaahhhh--every poem I write--and  
I am going to--ddddocument it here  
online for you to see.

Hannah enters the house.

HANNAH

Babe? Hello?

She looks around the bottom floor of his house. Joe, not hearing Hannah, continues with his video. He puts his face extremely close to the phone camera.

JOE

See. I'm crying. MMMMM-hmmm-hmmm.  
You can--see the actual--tears--  
running down--my face, right? Hoo  
hoo.

He pulls back from the phone camera.

JOE

Y'know what's--really--actually  
really--aha--great is that--ummmm--  
-I'm actually getting a lot of--  
ummm--inspiration right now. And  
uh, haaaaa--I know--this poem's  
gonna be great. I can--I can feel  
it. Ha--no pun intttteended. Now--  
-if you'll--if you'll excuse me--  
I'm gonna go wash out my eyes.

He screams in pain.

INT. JOE'S CHILDHOOD HOUSE/JOE'S BATHROOM - DAY

Hannah hears his cries from the kitchen and runs up the stairs to him.

HANNAH

Joe!? Are you ok?!

She finds him in the bathroom holding his eyelids open with his fingers and attempting to get both of his eyes under the stream of water coming from the sink faucet. He looks up at her and yanks his head back to greet her, hitting his head on the faucet as he does so.

JOE

Ow! Gah! Hey Hannah! What's-uh-  
what's up?

He holds the side of his head.

HANNAH

I kinda feel like I should be  
asking you that.

JOE

Huh? What do you mean?

As she talks, he inches over to the sink again, turns it on  
and begins to rinse his eyes out.

HANNAH

Ummm...the red eyes, the scream...  
the trying to rinse your eyes off  
in the bathroom!

JOE

Oh! That! Well, I just uh, I was  
recording a video and uh--hoo,  
that feels better.

HANNAH

And?!

He grabs a towel to dab off his face, garbling his words.

JOE

I was recording a video and I uh--  
sprayed myself in the eye with a  
uh--jalapeño pepper.

HANNAH

Excuse me?

JOE

I was recording a video and  
sprayed myself in the eye with a  
jalapeño pepper.

HANNAH

A--jalapeño pepper?

JOE

Yeah, jalapeño pepper, that's what  
I said.

Hannah stares back at him.

HANNAH  
May I ask why?

JOE  
Well--It'll just be easier to show  
you.

HANNAH  
Show me what?

JOE  
Come on.

INT. JOE'S CHILDHOOD HOUSE/JOE'S BEDROOM - DAY

He leads her back to his room and grabs his laptop. They sit together on the bed. He sees the jalapeño that he'd dropped on his floor and picks it up.

JOE  
Hoo, there it is. Can you put this  
on the--

He hands the pepper to Hannah; she looks at it incredulously and puts it on his nightstand.

JOE  
Ok, so. You know my poetry, and  
how I was feeling yesterday.

HANNAH  
Yeeeeaaaahhhh--your professor told  
you off.

JOE  
And you know my YouTube channel.

Hannah nods.

JOE  
Well, I--just watch this.

Joe flips open his laptop and shows her the footage of his video from the night before.

END FLASHBACK:

INT. DOCUMENTARY SET - DAY

POV switch to playing the end of that video within the documentary. POV switch to the documentary set. There is a monitor set up near Joe and the interviewer. The ending frames of Joe's angry video are fading away. The members of the film crew, as well as the other YouTubers, look uncomfortably at each other. Hannah looks at Joe and gives him an encouraging smile.

UNCANNY DANNY  
(whispered)  
Yikes!

The interviewer sits wide-eyed, mouth open. She catches herself and clears her throat.

INTERVIEWER  
Umm--so--so, that was the video  
you showed Hannah, correct?

JOE  
Yeah.

INTERVIEWER  
How did she respond to the video  
when you showed it to her?

BEGIN FLASHBACK  
SMASH CUT TO:

INT. JOE'S CHILDHOOD HOUSE/JOE'S BEDROOM - DAY

HANNAH  
That's--amazing!

Hannah and Joe are still sitting on his bed. Hannah has Joe's laptop in her lap.

JOE  
You think so?

HANNAH  
Of course! Prove them wrong! Then  
they can't have any question of  
whether or not you know what  
you're talking about! Plus, I  
think it's a super unique idea--

JOE

(relaxing)

That's what I thought! I did another, less--angry version this morning, but I wanted to show you where all this came from.

She smiles and strokes his face with her hand.

HANNAH

Thank you, honey. So, how can I help? And uh, how does the jalapeño play into this?

JOE

I mean. You want to help?

HANNAH

Of course I do! I want to be a part of things with you!

JOE

But babe, I--this is poetry. It's kind of a personal thing.

HANNAH

But like, the YouTube side of it. You need someone to film you, right? Like, if you're going to be going out and showing people that you're enduring pain for your art--especially since your camera's broken? And mine's not?

She smiles playfully at him.

JOE

Well, yeah, I guess--

HANNAH

And you still haven't explained the jalapeño.

JOE

No, I--I just wanted my audience to see me cry in a video. Show them that I'm not afraid to deal with pain for the sake of my poetry right off the bat.

HANNAH

Ok--so--don't you need to write a poem about it then?

JOE

Yeah.

She looks at him, smiling, and raises her eyebrows as if to say, "Then you should probably get to it."

JOE

Ok--Ok yeah.

He takes his computer from her, and begins to type. A silent writing montage begins. He types. She points at the screen to make a suggestion. Cross fade to show time passage. Joe is hunched over his laptop, and Hannah is laying down on the bed reading. He puts his head in his hands, trying to think; he asks Hannah to hand him the jalapeño again. She does, and he sniffs it. His face crinkles up in disgust, and he immediately gets back to writing. He taps Hannah's leg, and she sits up to look at his work. They read the poem together, and when they're done, Hannah nods in approval and kisses him on the cheek. They set up to film him reciting his poem. She leaves the room. He pulls his chair out from his desk. There is another crossfade to show time passage. Joe sets up his lights, and Hannah reappears in the room carrying her camera and tripod. She sets up the camera and tripod and motions for him to sit down in his chair. She adjusts the camera and flips the LCD screen around to face him. He motions for her to tilt the camera slightly and then nods. She presses record, gives him a nod, and the montage ends. He begins to recite the poem.

JOE

This new poem is called "Cry"--  
which--you have all now seen me  
do.

He clears his throat. POV switch to the video itself. As Joe recites the poem the time of day switches from day to night.

JOE

I've always wondered why my eyes  
burn when I cry.  
Are the tears coming to douse the  
burning fire

Or is the fire drying the tears  
 Or are they both at war  
 Fire and water trying to outdo the  
 other  
 One thing I've never wondered  
 though  
 Is why I cry at all.  
 It was a skinned knee on the  
 asphalt driveway.  
 It was my first heartbreak.  
 It was the professor that told me  
 that  
 I am nothing  
 When all I wanted to do was write.  
 In all those moments that fire  
 came.  
 The water came then too.  
 Both vying against each other  
 Vying for the position of primary  
 crying side effect.  
 But what if in their war against  
 the other  
 They put each other out  
 And leave me with less pain than I  
 had before.  
 For their war has strengthened my  
 defense.

INT. JOE'S CHILDHOOD HOUSE/JOE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Joe is now sitting alone in his room watching his video  
 again at his computer. A notification appears on his  
 screen, and he clicks on it. Someone has left a comment on  
 his video. "That was hysterical! 'Never mind eating a hot  
 pepper, I'm gonna spray it in my eyes!' This dude's nuts!"  
 Joe responds to the comment "Stay tuned! It's only getting  
 crazier from here on out!" He clicks into his subscriber  
 analytics and watches the number switch from 62 to 63. Joe  
 smiles.

INT. JOE'S CHILDHOOD HOUSE/LIVING ROOM - DAY

Joe shuffles down the stairs fully dressed for the day but  
 still bleary-eyed. His parents are sitting together in the  
 living room talking. His mom is holding her laptop, and his  
 dad is holding a mug of coffee. His mom immediately stops



speaking when Joe enters the room, and waves her hand at her husband to silence him.

MOM  
Good morning Joe.

JOE  
Morning.

MOM  
You're dressed early for a Saturday.

JOE  
Hannah's gonna be picking me up to go film in a bit.

DAD  
(to Mom)  
What were you saying he did with the jalapeño?

Joe freezes.

MOM  
Joe?

Joe ignores her and tentatively walks to the coffee pot on the stove.

JOE  
Any coffee left?

He lifts the lid on the coffee pot and peers inside. He shuffles over to the cupboard to grab a mug. He takes the mug, returns to the stove, and pours his coffee. His mom stands up and goes to meet him in the kitchen.

MOM  
I--uh--I saw your video.

He chokes mid-sip of coffee.

JOE  
Oh yeah? I--uh--I didn't know you watched my videos.

DAD  
(from the couch)  
What did you do with the jalapeño?

Joe remains silent and takes a long sip of his coffee, trying to remain casual.

MOM

Honey--I don't--why did you spray yourself in the eye with a jalapeño pepper?

Joe's dad turns the volume on the TV way down. He stands to go talk to Joe and his wife in the kitchen.

DAD

He what?!

Joe takes a short sip of coffee.

JOE

Guys, calm down, it's just for a video.

MOM

Well, THAT I could tell. But--

DAD

If you're gonna be spraying yourself in the eye with peppers, maybe the videos should stop!

JOE

Oh come on?!

MOM

I agree, Joe--

JOE

(turning to address his mom)

No you don't--what did grandpa always say?

He sips his coffee for emphasis.

MOM

What does--?

JOE

(sarcastically)

You have his ashes tied around your neck and you don't remember?

Again, he sips the coffee dramatically, this time, making noise as he sips.

MOM

Of course I remember, but--

JOE

Chase your dreams, WHATEVER the cost. This--these videos are my cost.

He takes a long gulp of his coffee. His mom returns to the conversation in a restrained tone.

MOM

Joe, I've just been really worried about you lately--

JOE

Why?!

Both of his parents look at him, startled.

JOE

Why are you worried about me?  
There is NOTHING to worry about!  
My life has been damn near perfect!

A car horn honks outside his house, he takes his last gulp of coffee and he puts his empty coffee mug down on the table.

JOE

I've gotta go. I've got another video to shoot.

He rushes out the door and slams it behind him.

INT. HANNAH'S CAR - DAY

Hannah and Joe are driving in silence. Hannah periodically looks over at Joe as he stares solemnly out the window.

HANNAH

So--are you--you good?

He does not respond. Hannah continues to attempt conversation.

HANNAH

So uh--You sure you wanna do a tattoo for your second video? It's kind of a leap.

Joe looks over at her.

JOE

I promised my new subscribers crazy. What, are you bailing on me?

HANNAH

No, of course not. Just checking.  
(smiling)  
I'm excited.

He gives a faint smile.

JOE

Me too. So uh, where'd you find this guy?

HANNAH

You remember Griffin from high school?

JOE

Yeah, wasn't he the guy with the face tattoo? Got it right before graduation.

HANNAH

He's the one. Well, I'm kinda friends with his girlfriend's sister, so I asked her to ask Griffin about guys who do cheap tattoos and voila!

JOE

Well, look at you with your criminal connections.

She smiles coyly.

HANNAH

I know, right!? Ooo alright. Here we are.

EXT./INT. MALL PARKING LOT/VAN - DAY

Joe and Hannah pull into a mall parking lot and park.

JOE

Can you text them and ask exactly  
where they are?

HANNAH

Yeah, sure.

Hannah pulls out her phone and sends a text that says "Here. Where r u?" She receives "Come around to the J.C. Penney lot. Gray van." in return.

HANNAH

J.C. Penney lot. Gray van.

Joe nods, and Hannah drives around to the J.C. Penney lot. They park close to the store, get out of Hannah's car, and walk to the gray van parked at the edge of the lot. They reach the van, and Hannah looks around, while Joe knocks on the back door of the van. The door opens and a cloud of smoke wafts out. Joe and Hannah cough, and the TATTOO ARTIST pokes his head out of the van. The Tattoo Artist is covered in ink, not tattoos but ink. A few of the inked drawings on his skin are smudged. He has no piercings, but he has one earring clipped onto his ear and one clipped to his nose. He also has long, greasy hair tied back in a matted ponytail.

TATTOO ARTIST

C'mon man, get in, get in, get in!

He reaches out and grabs Joe's shoulder, pulling him into the van. Hannah slips in close behind.

JOE

Yikes! You got a skunk in here?

TATTOO ARTIST

Yeah, how'd you know? I thought  
you were here for a tattoo?

The tattoo artist looks back at his girlfriend who is barely visible in the dark recesses of the van holding and lovingly caressing a young skunk. She is very thin, her hair is unstyled, and she is wearing several dreamcatchers around her neck.

## GIRLFRIEND

I named him Harvey. Say hello,  
Harvey!

## JOE

H-Hi Harvey.

Hannah, in the process of tweaking her camera's settings, waves at Harvey. Joe and Hannah look around the van. Scattered about, there are various glass or wire enclosures housing various types of wildlife: hedgehogs, a fox, a few squirrels, two possums, a muskrat, and a timber rattlesnake. There is a small kiddie pool filled with water and Eastern Painted turtles. There is a rat enclosure that houses a few rats, but two or three rats scurry about the place freely. The tattoo artist looks frantically around and, spotting a cigarette sitting on top of a cage near him, he grabs it and takes a deep drag. The tattoo artist's hands shake and he exhales slowly with his eyes closed, accidentally blowing the smoke directly at Hannah. Hannah stifles a cough.

## TATTOO ARTIST

Sorry, it's for the anxiety. If I  
don't, my hands shake like crazy.

Joe looks over at Hannah, horrified. She shrugs and gives him a less than encouraging smile. After a few moments, the tattoo artist opens his eyes again and notices Hannah for the first time.

## TATTOO ARTIST

Whoa whoa whoa. Who is she? Y-you  
didn't tell me you were bringing a  
plus-one.

## JOE

Oh sorry, she's actually the one  
who set up the appointment--this  
is my girlfriend, Hannah.

## TATTOO ARTIST

Ah, you brought your girl. That's  
good. I've got my girl here too.  
(motioning between Hannah  
and his girlfriend)  
You two can talk.

Hannah smiles uncomfortably at the girlfriend in the back of the van. The girlfriend is now holding a rat perched on one of her hands. She has her mouth open, and the rat is picking at her teeth. The girlfriend smiles, with the rat still "cleaning" her teeth. The tattoo artist takes another drag from the cigarette, his hands still shaking. Joe looks at the tattoo artist apprehensively.

JOE

You--you doing ok?

TATTOO ARTIST

Yeaaahh--it's just--

The girlfriend slips up beside the tattoo artist and places her hand on his back.

GIRLFRIEND

Poor baby, he's afraid of needles.  
It's ok honey, breathe deep,  
remember what Dr. Kim said.

JOE

Ah, ok--wait, what? How does he--  
??

GIRLFRIEND

My therapist told him to try  
things that scare him.

JOE

Ah--

Hannah and Joe look at each other, and Joe begins to turn back.

JOE

Well, on second thought, I uh--

Hannah lightly smacks his arm.

HANNAH

(whispered)

Hey, this is your second video.  
You can't give up now.

Joe nods. He closes his eyes and takes a deep breath. Hannah smiles at him.

HANNAH

You've got this.

Joe looks at his surroundings and takes another deep breath, again closing his eyes.

JOE

Alright. Let's do it.

Filled with renewed resolve, Joe rips open his button-down shirt and flops down on the tattoo chair, startling the tattoo artist and causing him to drop his cigarette into the turtle pool.

JOE

I'm ready when you are.

The tattoo artist leans down to pick up his cigarette with his thumb and forefinger. It drips a few times in his shaking hand. The tattoo artist's face contorts in fear.

JOE

What? What's wrong?  
(catching a glimpse of  
the dripping cigarette)  
Was that your last--??

The tattoo artist turns to him silently, nodding.

JOE

Great.

They all remain in silence for a few moments. Finally, Hannah speaks.

HANNAH

Um. We should probably get to  
filming. I don't want the camera  
to run out of battery or anything.

The grimace on tattoo artist's face remains frozen.

GIRLFRIEND

It's ok baby. Maybe this is what  
Dr. Kim was talking about.

The tattoo artist breathes deeply.



TATTOO ARTIST  
(voice quavering)  
You're right. Ok--

Hannah raises her camera and begins to film, and the tattoo artist begins preparing the tattoo equipment and ink. Camera POV switches between Hannah's camera and third person POV camera.

TATTOO ARTIST  
So, what're you looking for today?

JOE  
Well, uh, there's this poet--  
Instagram poet--R.M. Drake. I have  
one of his quotes on my desk, so I  
was thinking I could get that.

TATTOO ARTIST  
Ok. What's the uh--what's the  
quote?

JOE  
I'm thinking just the first part  
of it, so--"art is pain."

TATTOO ARTIST  
I thought--I didn't know you were  
a painter.

Joe and Hannah look at each other.

JOE  
A what?

TATTOO ARTIST  
No need to get testy about it,  
man. Hold on. I'll be ready in a  
second. Just black ink then?

JOE  
Yeah, just black.

The tattoo artist finishes assembling the equipment.

TATTOO ARTIST  
And where did you want it?

JOE

I was thinking right here. Right  
across my collarbone.

TATTOO ARTIST

Alright. You'll probably want to  
take your shirt off the whole way.  
Don't wanna get it all messy.

Joe takes his shirt completely off and the girlfriend  
rushes forward to take it. She places it on the rat  
enclosure, and the rat she'd been holding immediately  
crawls onto it and begins sniffing and nibbling it. Joe  
watches in dismay, but is startled back into focusing on  
the tattoo artist by a wet cloth brushing over his  
collarbone.

JOE

Hoo, man that's cold!

TATTOO ARTIST

Sorry, just want to get it a  
little cleaner here.

The tattoo artist drops the washcloth in the turtle pool  
and swishes it around in the slightly clouded water. He  
picks the washcloth up again and washes off Joe's chest.  
Joe watches.

JOE

Don't they usually use like--  
antiseptic wipes or something?

TATTOO ARTIST

Don't worry, the water's clean, I  
promise.

Hannah zooms in on the pool.

HANNAH

You sure? Aren't turtles kinda--

TATTOO ARTIST

Of course it's clean, I would NOT  
give my customers anything but the  
best.

GIRLFRIEND

Mmm--mhmm! That is so true!

The girlfriend applauds the tattoo artist.

TATTOO ARTIST

Thank you.

Joe mouths "I'm gonna die here" to Hannah.

HANNAH

Art is pain, babe, art is pain.

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. HANNAH'S CAR - DAY

Hannah is driving the car as Joe sits in the passenger seat with his shirt unbuttoned wincing in pain. His tattoo is covered over with a bandage.

JOE

I really didn't realize that a collarbone tattoo would hurt THAT bad.

Hannah smiles at him.

HANNAH

Do you feel a poem coming on?

JOE

Not yet, but when I do, I'll have plenty of material. I'll probably end up dying from that contaminated swamp water he uh-- sanitized--the tattoo with. But damn, that would make a good poem. Do I look pale to you?

He pulls down the car visor and looks at his face in the mirror.

HANNAH

No, not that I can tell.

JOE

I dunno, just ever since he started tattooing, I've been feeling, like, pain in my chest.

HANNAH

Babe, your chest was just stabbed with a bunch of needles, so I think that's probably it.

JOE

Yeah--probably.

He tries to relax in the seat and begins pressing his heart. At a sharp pain from the tattoo, he pulls his hand away, and he begins to imagine.

FADE TO:

INT. HOSPITAL - DAY

Joe is laying in a hospital bed, extremely pale and feeble-looking. Hannah and his parents sit around him. Hannah is crying and holding his hand, and his parents sit solemnly behind her, both holding back tears to the best of their ability.

HANNAH

How are you feeling? Are you--are you comfortable?

JOE

It's so--chills--I always have chills.

MOM

Would you like me to tell the nurse to get you a blanket?

JOE

No--no I'll be fine. I won't feel it for much longer.

HANNAH

No! No, don't say that! You're gonna be ok!

JOE

No, I won't, Hannah.

She breaks down and sobs on the side of his bed. He reaches down and lifts her chin with his hand.

JOE  
Hey--you'll be ok. I love you.

HANNAH  
But--I can't--

JOE  
Shh, I have to give you something.  
There's a--piece of paper on the  
bedside table.

Hannah looks over at the table and picks up the paper.

JOE  
That's my last poem. Hannah, I  
want you to make sure that people  
hear it. They're my last words.

Hannah nods. Her tears drip onto the page.

JOE  
Mom, Dad, please come closer.

They do.

JOE  
I want the three people I love  
most near me for--for--

Joe's heart monitor flatlines, and the flatline tone  
sounds.

HANNAH  
Joe? Joe?!

CUT TO:

INT. HANNAH'S CAR - DAY

Hannah is shaking Joe's shoulder and calling out to him.  
They are sitting in the driveway to Joe's house.

HANNAH  
Joe?! You there?

JOE  
Sorry babe, I was--

HANNAH

C'mon, let's go inside. I want you  
to see your tattoo.

Joe buttons his shirt, and he and Hannah get out of the car and walk up to the front door of the house. Joe motions to be quiet as they enter the house.

INT. JOE'S CHILDHOOD HOUSE/KITCHEN - DAY

They open the door quietly, stooped over, but they can just see Joe's mom sitting at the table past the corner of the entryway wall. Joe looks at Hannah and gives her a look as if to say "don't say a word about the tattoo." They straighten and stride boldly into the room.

JOE

Hey Mom, we're back.

HANNAH

Hi, Mrs. Bertram.

Joe's mom looks up; it's clear that she'd been crying, but she's been trying to pull herself together.

MOM

Oh, hello.

Joe and Hannah head for the stairs, but Joe's mom gets up and catches Joe's arm at the bottom of the stairs.

MOM

Joe, I'm not happy about how our  
conversation ended earlier.

JOE

Ok?

MOM

I'm not sure what happened, but--

She opens her arms to draw Joe into a hug. Joe and Hannah look at each other. He reluctantly hugs her, and she squeezes him tight, pressing firmly against the new tattoo. Joe winces in pain and tries to pull back, but she holds on. He continues to wince as she squeezes.

MOM

I love you, Joe.

JOE

Yeah, mom.

Finally, she lets go and smiles at him.

MOM

We'll talk later, but now--

She taps him on the chest with one finger, and again, he stifles a wince and steps back.

MOM

You go work on your videos, and--

Joe turns to walk away, and he and Hannah begin to ascend the stairs.

MOM

(Calling after them)

Just be safe.

INT. JOE'S CHILDHOOD HOUSE/BATHROOM - DAY

Joe and Hannah enter the bathroom, and, as soon as the door is closed, Joe mouths "Owwwww." Hannah chuckles quietly at him as she turns on the camera and quickly adjusts the settings. He begins to unbutton his shirt slowly.

HANNAH

(whispered)

Hurry up!

He finishes unbuttoning his shirt and takes a deep breath.

HANNAH

(whispered)

Come on! I want to see it!

JOE

(whispered)

Will you be patient?

He reaches up and pulls back the bandage. The tattoo, which reads "Art is Paint" is revealed. His face registers shock, and Hannah smiles as she films his reaction.

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. JOE'S CHILDHOOD HOUSE/JOE'S BEDROOM - DAY

Joe sits in front of his camera filming a new poem. The shots of Joe recording the poem are super-imposed over him uploading the video and checking his subscriber count. It has risen from 63 to 79.

JOE

This poem is entitled:  
 Misunderstood.  
 What happens to words once they're  
 said,  
 But before they reach someone's  
 ears?  
 What happens in the space between  
 speaking and hearing?  
 Where does my intellect morph into  
 stupidity  
 In the space between mouth and  
 eardrum?  
 Is it my mouth that has spoken  
 unclear the thoughts of my head?  
 Is it your ear that has scrambled  
 my words into drivel?

POV switch between filming the video and the video within the documentary.

INT. DOCUMENTARY SET - NIGHT

JOE

Or is it the air in between  
 A gust of wind here  
 A gentle breeze there  
 And the words I have spoken become  
 muddled and jumbled  
 Before stumbling ungracefully by  
 your eardrum  
 And leaving me confused and  
 befuddled and--  
 Misunderstood.

The rest of the YouTubers sit behind the camera watching Joe's poem on the monitor. A few of them as well as a few members of the crew chuckle. Hannah is standing back from the rest of the YouTubers, looking thoughtful. She mouths the last word of the poem along with the video.



INTERVIEWER

So, I understand that you still have the tattoo.

JOE

They do tend to be permanent, yes.

INTERVIEWER

Well yes, but I mean, you haven't gotten it covered up?

JOE

Of course I haven't gotten it covered up!

Joe unbuttons his shirt and displays his bare chest which still has the words "Art is Paint" emblazoned across it. Brandon laughs out loud, and Danny follows his lead.

JOE

I'd never cover this up.

DIRECTOR

Alright, cut! We're gonna break for the day!

(to the YouTubers)

Be back tomorrow at 7:00am. I want to get the interviews started early.

Brandon stands up, goes to Joe and points to his tattoo. Hannah joins them, draping her arm around Joe's shoulders.

BRANDON

Oh, man! That's even better in person! That's amazing!

JOE

It's a symbol of what I've gone through to get here.

Brandon smiles and goes back to his chair to get his jacket and leave the set.

BRANDON

You bet, man. You own that tattoo! Hey, I'll catch you tomorrow!

(to Hannah)

You too?

HANNAH

I'll be here!

Joe nods and Brandon leaves the set for the day. Joe turns to Hannah.

JOE

Are you heading back to the hotel?

HANNAH

Yeah.

JOE

I'll catch up with you there.

HANNAH

Ok babe. I came up with some possible next steps for this YouTube stuff. I wanna talk to you about them tonight, so try to finish up here soon, ok?

Joe nods and Hannah leaves the set. Joe stands and the director waves to get Joe's attention. Joe approaches the director, and the director puts his hand on Joe's shoulder. Joe's gaze shifts from the director's hand, then back to the director.

DIRECTOR

Mr. Bertram--Joe--do you mind if I call you Joe?

JOE

You can call me whatever you feel like calling me.

The director chuckles and smiles wryly.

DIRECTOR

(under his breath)  
Don't tempt me, kid.

Joe looks at the director, confused.

DIRECTOR

(catching himself)  
Joe, I've gotta talk to you about something.

JOE  
I assumed so--

DIRECTOR  
(becoming immediately  
frustrated)  
See that's what I--Joe, this sort  
of--contrarian attitude--you're  
making members of my crew very  
uncomfortable.

JOE  
Perhaps that's the point.

DIRECTOR  
Excuse me?

JOE  
If I'm making them uncomfortable,  
then I've touched a part of their  
souls that they're uncomfortable  
with. Uncomfortability is what  
grows us. How can that be a bad  
thing?

The director looks at Joe incredulously.

DIRECTOR  
Alright, y'know what, cut the  
shit. If you don't stop it with  
the cryptic comments, and the  
being late to call, and the toking  
up on set, and the--the live-  
streaming while we're rolling, and  
just the general weird shit you  
do, I'm gonna have to cut you from  
this documentary.

Joe looks at the director and draws back.

DIRECTOR  
Hey now, I'm not cutting you yet.  
Your story adds just the dash of  
screwball that we needed in this  
doc, but--I can't have my crew  
afraid of the talent.

Joe remains silent.

DIRECTOR

Do we understand one another?

JOE

Yes.

DIRECTOR

Good. I'm glad to hear that. Have  
a good evening, Joe.

Joe remains perfectly still. He is looking in towards the set. He imagines Brandon's interviews and interactions thus far in the documentary. The scenes Joe imagines become more and more exaggerated with each new scene. The present-day scene continues in slow-motion, super-imposed over the exaggerated flashbacks.

BEGIN FLASHBACK:

INT. DOCUMENTARY SET - DAY

Brandon is sitting on-set, and the interviewer is in her chair. The entire crew is present, and the cameras are rolling.

INTERVIEWER

So, what first made you decide to  
get into YouTube?

BRANDON

Well, y'know what, I've just  
always had a real passion for  
travel and adventure—man, I'll  
tell you what, I'm just so  
terrible at talking about myself.

INTERVIEWER

How do you mean?

BRANDON

I don't know, man, I'm just bad at  
it. Like, actually telling a  
story, I'll end up adding  
information from my birthday party  
ten years ago to talk about my  
trip to Iceland.

They laugh.

BRANDON

No, seriously, I'm so bad at telling about things that I'm doing. One Christmas, my mom gave me a camera and was just like, "Now you can show us what you're up to instead of trying to tell us a story."

They laugh again and continue laughing for just a bit too long.

QUICK PAN TO:

Hannah is struggling to pour her drink at the refreshment tables. Brandon rushes over.

BRANDON

Hey, let me get that for you.

He puts his own plate and cup down and takes Hannah's plate, allowing her two free hands to pour the drink. The rest of the crew has stopped to watch in awe at Brandon's act of kindness. Brandon waits for Hannah to finish pouring her drink and hands the plate back. Hannah locks eyes with Brandon and gazes at him wistfully.

HANNAH

Thank you, Brandon! Thank you so much! That was so kind of you!

BRANDON

Don't sweat it, man! Anytime!

He picks his own plate and cup back up and turns around to head back to his chair. The entire cast and crew continues to watch Brandon in complete awe and amazement.

QUICK PAN TO:

Brandon is in his chair behind the crew, talking to the director.

BRANDON

Hey man, I just really want to thank you for bringing me onto this project. It's been great so far.

DIRECTOR

No need to thank me. I should be  
thanking you! I wish all my talent  
was as easy to work with as you!

He claps Brandon on the back.

DIRECTOR

But damn, that Joe character!

BRANDON

Right!?

DIRECTOR

Glad I have you to remind me what  
REAL talent looks like.

QUICK PAN TO:

Brandon is talking to Hannah on set.

BRANDON

Will you be here tomorrow?

Hannah smiles.

HANNAH

Will YOU be here tomorrow is the  
real question.

BRANDON

Of course I will.

HANNAH

Then I will be too.

QUICK PAN TO:

The room begins to spin around Joe showing flashes of  
scenes portraying the adoration that Joe believes Brandon  
receives. Paparazzi bulbs flash around Brandon. Brandon is  
signing books at a table. The film crew stands in an aisle  
as Brandon runs down it, high-fiving everyone along the  
way. Brandon passionately kisses Hannah. Suddenly, all of  
the characters standing around Joe turn on him and begin  
mocking or laughing at him, calling him crazy and a  
screwball.

PAN AND PARALLAX ZOOM ON PRESENT-DAY JOE.

END FLASHBACK:

INT. DOCUMENTARY SET - NIGHT

The director goes and gets his jacket before realizing that Joe is still standing there.

DIRECTOR

Have a good evening, Joe.

Joe is startled out of his reverie.

JOE

Yes. Good evening.

Joe leaves the set. The director prepares to leave before a door to the left side of the studio door opens, and an editor named MARK sticks his head out of the room.

DIRECTOR

Oh hi, Mark, what's up? Need something?

MARK

Hey, uh, can you come in here a second?

DIRECTOR

Sure!

The director follows Mark into the editing room.

DIRECTOR

What's up?

Mark sits down at one of the editing computers and clicks through some of the videos. The director comes to Mark's side and stoops over the desk.

MARK

So uh, I was doing a little preliminary planning for post-production, and I was looking through some of the examples of the subjects' videos and uh--well, how many of Joe's videos have you seen?

DIRECTOR

I mean--he's made a lot of videos--  
I've seen the ones we've talked to  
him about so far, and the ones he  
sent us when we were looking for  
subjects.

MARK

I dunno. I'm just a little--I  
dunno. I know this guy provides  
extra interest to contrast with  
the more--conventional creators,  
but--I mean--

Mark clicks on an example of a video.

MARK

This guy filmed himself rubbing  
poison ivy leaves all over his  
body. And that's--kinda--

DIRECTOR

Tame for him?

MARK

Yeah. I dunno, maybe it's just the  
sheer quantity of crazy shit this  
guy's done, but--I mean--check  
some of these out.

Mark and the director click through a few of Joe's past  
videos. Each time they click on a new video, the video  
takes up more of the frame. They begin by watching the  
video in which Joe rubs poison ivy all over himself.

JOE

Alright. So we're gonna fast  
forward a bit till when this  
starts to take effect.

His video incorporates a transition where his camera pans  
left out of the shot then pans right into the shot he'd  
taken a day later. He is covered in swelling and blisters  
all over his arms and face.

JOE

Uhhhh--well--this is--  
(scratches his face)



Ah--ah--ah--this is awful. I've never--ever--had such intense--itching--

Mark switches to another video in which Joe tries smoking weed for the first time. His first drag is far too deep, and he begins immediately coughing and wheezing.

JOE

Oh man, I was not expecting that.

He looks at the joint and sniffs it, again, accidentally inhaling smoke and coughing again.

JOE

I wonder how long it takes for this stuff to enter your system.

The video cuts to Joe high.

JOE

Well yeah, because I was--

He trails off and stares intently at the back of his hand for awhile.

HANNAH

Babe? Because you were what?

JOE

I was--I was just gonna say--I don't think it's affecting me.

Mark switches to a different video in which Joe is out in the backyard of his house at his burn barrel. The barrel is full of shoes.

HANNAH

So, what are we doing in today's video?

JOE

Today, I am giving up shoes for good, and we're going to document the state of my feet over the next two weeks.

He takes a can of gasoline and pours part of it over his pile of shoes. He lights a match.

JOE  
Get ready for blisters!

He drops the match onto the shoes, and they immediately go up in flames. The video cuts to a shot of Joe's feet completely covered in blisters and sores.

HANNAH  
How're you doing there, babe?

JOE  
I-I was not ready for blisters like this.

Mark scrubs further in the video to a scene of Joe in a grocery store. An EMPLOYEE is angrily talking to him.

EMPLOYEE  
Sir, you can't be in here without shoes.

JOE  
Why not?

EMPLOYEE  
It's company policy.

JOE  
Oh yeah? Show me the policy!

EMPLOYEE  
Sir, if you won't put on shoes, I'm going to have to ask you to leave.

Mark switches to yet another video in which Joe is sitting outside in a snowstorm without anything but shorts on. Joe's words are slurred as he speaks because his lips are going numb.

JOE  
I'm--this is just so--why did I do this?

HANNAH  
You did it for the views!

She turns the camera around to film herself and still keep Joe in the background.

HANNAH

And for the art of course!

JOE

I haven't felt my toes in an hour.

Mark clicks on another video.

JOE

Today, we're going super literal,  
and actually making writing into a  
painful experience.

He picks up a hammer with his right hand and wiggles the fingers of his left hand in front of the camera. The video cuts to a shot of the empty room that Joe had just been in, and a loud thud, snap, and scream are heard in the background.

HANNAH

Oh my--are you--are you ready?

JOE

No no! Don't do another one! I  
can't!

HANNAH

You said you wanted to do all of  
them, though!

JOE

Oh no--one is enough--one is  
enough.

The video cuts again and Joe returns to the frame with tears running down his face. His left pinky finger is horribly bent.

JOE

Check it out. Time to get typing.

Joe sits down to his computer and begins to type, reading the words of his poem aloud as he does. Mark talks over the poem and prepares to click on another video.

JOE

Click--Another letter on the  
screen. Click--Now there's a word.

I'll try harder. Click click--too much effort for my bent and broken fingers. Back to one at a time. Click--Not even a letter. I've just added blank space. Click--ah, another letter. It should be relief. Click--Another letter that is certainly not relief. Click--

MARK

I mean--but I dunno--it's just that all of this is just for views and likes and--I dunno, I guess it worked for him--this sort of shit gave him almost 32,000 subs in a year but--

The director cuts him off and points to a different video than the one Mark was about to click on.

DIRECTOR

Hang on--what about that one?

Mark hovers his cursor over a video entitled "Destroying My Roots."

MARK

What? This one?

DIRECTOR

Yeah.

Mark clicks on the video. Joe is in his bathroom holding a cremation urn with the words "Chase your dreams, whatever the cost" engraved on it. The light from the video flashes in Mark's and the director's eyes. Mark grimaces.

MARK

How does he get away with shit like this?

DIRECTOR

Oh. Looks like I've got some new questions for our interview with Joe tomorrow.

CUT TO:

INT. HOTEL BAR - NIGHT

Joe is sitting at the hotel bar by himself, staring straight ahead. Hannah comes down the stairs and approaches him at the bar as the bartender sets a glass of whiskey down next to Joe. Joe pulls the drink over to him and does not look at Hannah as she addresses him.

HANNAH

Hey babe, I got your text. What're you doing down here? I thought you were gonna come up to the room.

Joe continues to stare straight ahead without answering her. He takes the glass of whiskey and raises it to his lips.

HANNAH

Well, like I said, I had some ideas for how to move forward with this YouTube stuff. So, I think the on-set live-streaming is really good! Give your subscribers a--

Joe chokes on the whiskey and coughs, making faces and trying to disguise his distaste for the drink. Hannah is startled out of talking and gives Joe a look of confusion before she continues.

HANNAH

A real world look at what you're doing. Second, I've been doing some checking into conventions--

The bartender approaches her to ask for her order, but she waves him away.

HANNAH

No thank you.

(to Joe)

So with this whole documentary thing, once it gets released, as long as you're still hyping it on your channel and Instagram and stuff, we should see your subscriber count really--

JOE

Why did you send in my stuff?

He takes another, very tentative sip of his whiskey, again trying to disguise his distaste.

HANNAH

What?

JOE

To the documentary people. Why did you send in my stuff?

HANNAH

I mean. I was looking for ways to help you get recognition outside of just YouTube. A documentary on YouTubers seemed like it would be a perfect fit. Your numbers have already--

He takes another sip of his whiskey.

JOE

It wasn't to make me look like a joke?

HANNAH

A joke?! Why on earth would I want to make you look like a joke?

JOE

The director said I was.

HANNAH

Was what? A joke? Hey--

She leans toward him and puts her hand on his shoulder. He tenses up.

HANNAH

Hey, I want you to succeed as much as you do. I've been in this with you since the beginning.

JOE

Yeah, you were with me cause you saw a good deal.

HANNAH

Excuse me?

JOE

You saw a good deal and you took it. Like I said on set, you're good at what you do. All about what you can get out of an idea instead of the passion you bring to it.

HANNAH

But, I believe in you--and your poetry! I was just saying to Isabella on set about--

JOE

You only believe in what you can sell, and I dunno--kinda seems like you found someone better to believe in--

HANNAH

I can't imagine what you're talking about.

JOE

Oh right, like Brandon doesn't seem like a hotter property than me right now! In more ways than one.

HANNAH

You're kidding me. You think I'm after Brandon!? After what--I said two words to him on set? Joe, you and I have been dating since high school! You think I'd just toss you to the side for some random guy who happens to have a lot of subscribers who enjoy watching him jump off waterfalls?

JOE

You said it yourself--he has more subscribers than I do. Probably you too--

Hannah stares at him for a moment without speaking. Her eyes moisten, but she speaks again without any catches in her voice. She gets up from the barstool.

HANNAH

I'm going to go to bed. Please don't wake me when you come up. In fact, I'm sure there's space on the couch up there. You should probably use that.

Hannah walks away, and Joe stares intently ahead, refusing to look after her. He takes another sip from the whiskey and immediately coughs.

INT. DOCUMENTARY SET - DAY

Joe enters the documentary set looking exhausted and even more disheveled than normal. Members of the crew and other cast members stare at him uncomfortably as he walks into the room. Hannah is already there, and she refuses to look at him when he walks in. Brandon gets up and goes to Joe.

BRANDON

Hey man, you doing ok?

Joe keeps marching ahead without answering.

BRANDON

Joe, c'mon man, the director's pissed.

JOE

I bet he's not pissed with you.

BRANDON

--No--?

JOE

See?

Brandon watches Joe go in complete bewilderment. He shrugs and returns to his chair. Joe marches onto the set and plops down in the interview chair.

DIRECTOR

You're late to your call again, Mr. Bertram.



The director checks his watch.

DIRECTOR  
A full hour this time.

JOE  
Yeah.

There is complete silence.

JOE  
I'm here now. Let's get this show  
on the road.

DIRECTOR  
Alright. I'm going to be  
conducting your interview today.

JOE  
Where's uh--the regular--

DIRECTOR  
I told her to go home for the day  
once she'd interviewed everyone  
else.

JOE  
Ok.

DIRECTOR  
Since you were late, I took the  
liberty of showing the crew and  
the cast the videos I'm going to  
be talking to you about today.

JOE  
Oh yeah? What were they?

DIRECTOR  
Just hold on. You kept us waiting  
for an hour--you can wait.

The director takes his seat in the interviewer's chair.

DIRECTOR  
What does the phrase, "Chase your  
dreams, whatever the cost" mean to  
you?

JOE  
Why do you ask?

DIRECTOR  
Just answer the question.

JOE  
My grandfather. He used to say  
that all the time.

DIRECTOR  
Seems to me like you really took  
what he said to heart, didn't you?

JOE  
Hmm?

DIRECTOR  
The video you posted on November  
30th, 2019.

JOE  
I've posted a lot of videos. I  
can't remember--

DIRECTOR  
Can we bring the video up on the  
monitor, please?

The monitor screen on the set lights up with the image of  
one of Joe's YouTube videos. The title displayed on the  
monitor is "Destroying My Roots."

JOE  
Oh.

DIRECTOR  
You seem like you need a little  
reminder of what this video is  
about. Can we roll the video?

Joe stares straight ahead, never turning towards the  
monitor as the video begins to play.

DIRECTOR  
And after we watch this video, I'd  
like an explanation of why--

BEGIN FLASHBACK:

INT. JOE'S CHILDHOOD HOUSE/KITCHEN - DAY

Joe comes storming down the stairs, and his mom comes tearing after him. His dad slowly follows them both down the stairs. Scruffy, who is sleeping in the kitchen, is awakened by the noise. He gets up and runs into the living room to avoid being trampled.

MOM

Joe, do not walk away from me when I'm talking to you! This is important! Stop!

JOE

What, mom!? What do you want!

MOM

Joe, your dad and I are really worried about you.

Her eyes begin to well up with tears.

MOM

Joe, why are you hurting yourself for these videos?

JOE

Because I have to.

DAD

Now, what sort of ridiculous--?

JOE

You just think it's ridiculous because you've never had a creative thought in your life!

(he smirks)

Except maybe from Miss Simmons--I heard she was a pretty inspirational woman.

DAD

Now what is that supposed to mean?!

JOE

You know what I mean!

MOM

What DOES he mean, Howard?

Scruffy begins to bark and growl in the living room, jumping back and forth and looking intently at something behind the couch.

DAD

Now, come on, that's NOT what we're discussing.

MOM

Oh, so there is a THAT to discuss?

DAD

No! Of course not! I'm just saying that right now, we're talking about Joe!

Scruffy lets out one particularly shrill bark.

DAD

Shut up, Scruffy!

MOM

Stop trying to change the subject! We'll talk about Miss Simmons right now!

DAD

There is NOTHING to talk about!

MOM

Sure there isn't. I remember the way she used to look at you.

JOE

Me too. Did Dad ever tell you that he sat with her at my poetry slam in high school?

Scruffy lets out another particularly shrill bark.

MOM

Howard?

DAD

Scruffy!

Dad turns toward Scruffy and glimpses Hannah hiding behind the sofa, holding a camera and desperately trying to hush the dog.

DAD

Hannah?

MOM

Was that her name? Hannah Simmons?

DAD

What? No! Hannah, what are you doing here?

Hannah quickly lowers the camera she is holding and pops up from behind the couch. Scruffy marches over to sniff her pant legs and shoes.

HANNAH

Huh? Oh uh, hello Mr. Bertram.

MOM

Hannah, what are you doing here? Were you--were you filming this?

HANNAH

No! No, definitely not. Joe and I were gonna head out and shoot, and I was just uh--checking the battery.

MOM

Behind the couch?

Dad walks over to Hannah, and Scruffy trots away back to his nap.

DAD

Hannah, why is the little red light on the camera blinking?

HANNAH

It's the uh--

JOE

Turn off the camera.

MOM

Joe? Why? Were you--

He glares at his mom and storms out the front door of the house. Hannah smiles at both of Joe's parents.

HANNAH  
Um--I'm just gonna--

MOM  
Yeah, you'd better.

INT. JOE'S CAR - DAY

Joe is sitting in the driver's seat of his car in the driveway of his house, fuming. Hannah comes out of the house and joins him in the car. They sit in silence for a few moments.

HANNAH  
You wanna talk about it?

Joe glares at her without speaking. She waits a few moments and smiles.

HANNAH  
It would've been perfect.

JOE  
What?

HANNAH  
Oh, come on, can't you just see the title? All caps--I exposed my Dad's affair, awkward, with little double asterisks on both sides of the "awkward". And then for the thumbnail, we could've done your face all like--  
(making a shocked face)  
And then in the background, a stock photo of two people looking all guilty, covering themselves with sheets.

Joe cracks a faint smile.

HANNAH  
Yeah, that's what I was looking for.

She smiles and kisses him on the cheek.

JOE

He didn't really have an affair though.

HANNAH

I know, but reality doesn't stop anyone else from giving videos completely phony titles.

JOE

Maybe not, but it didn't work either. I just--I've begun to exhaust my options here. I have so many videos and poems and all, but I need new stuff--relational stuff.

HANNAH

I know.

JOE

I mean, think about it, what "real" poetry have you heard that was spurred on by standing out in the cold or getting jalapeño juice in your eye? No--it's the hard emotional stuff.

HANNAH

I know.

JOE

I just keep thinking about those poems that I listened to when I decided to revamp my channel. There was bullying and broken families. I still don't have a clue. Oh, and heartbreak.

Hannah remains silent and stares at him for a bit.

HANNAH

Are you--are you breaking up with me?

JOE

What!? No--no.  
(he chuckles)

Would make a fantastic poem  
though.

HANNAH

(she chuckles  
uncomfortably)

Yeah, probably would.

(she pauses)

But like, with this relational  
stuff, you're still looking at  
your family?

JOE

Yeah, I think so. Feels right.

HANNAH

So, this thing with filming a  
fight between your parents didn't  
work. What now?

He sighs and shakes his head, resting it on the steering  
wheel.

JOE

I don't know.

HANNAH

I mean--if you can't get them  
fighting with each other--why not  
them fighting with you? That  
almost happened today anyway.

Joe's head pops up off the steering wheel.

JOE

Follow your dreams, whatever the  
cost.

HANNAH

That's the spirit!

JOE

Oh, you have no idea.

HANNAH

Ok?



JOE

We're gonna go out for coffee  
quick--wait for my parents to  
leave.

Hannah buckles her seatbelt.

HANNAH

They're leaving on a Saturday?

JOE

Mom's got a shoot, and Dad's got a  
football game to watch with my  
uncle.

HANNAH

Then what?

Joe turns the key in the ignition.

JOE

Then we're gonna do a little  
chopping at the ol' family tree.

HANNAH

I'm sorry but--what?

JOE

I'll explain at the coffee shop.

He pushes his foot onto the gas pedal, and the car shoots  
out of the driveway and down the road.

INT. JOE'S CHILDHOOD HOUSE - DAY

Joe opens the door to his house, and he and Hannah slip  
inside.

JOE

Hello? Anyone here? Anyone decide  
to stay home and get in the way?  
Looks like we're good.

He rushes over to the fireplace mantelpiece in his living  
room, scanning its contents. He spots a medium-sized urn  
with a plaque on it that reads "Follow your dreams,  
whatever the cost." He reaches up and removes it from the  
mantelpiece.

HANNAH

Oh, no no, wait! Let me get this part. Put it back up!

JOE

Oh, yeah, good thought.

He places the urn back on the mantelpiece, and Hannah readies the camera. When she's ready, she points at him and mouths "go." POV switches between the video itself and third person camera. Again, he reaches up and takes the urn down from the mantelpiece. He begins to walk towards and then up the stairs to the upstairs bathroom.

JOE

Everyone, say hello to Grandpa Bertram. I wrote one of my very first poems about this guy, and uh, I actually presented that poem at a high school poetry slam. I wrote it for my mom, really. This was her dad, but I didn't know grandpa all that well.

He reaches up and makes a swirling motion next to his head with his finger and mouths "Alzheimers." He reaches the upstairs bathroom and places the urn gently on the sink near the toilet.

JOE

This episode is going to be a little bit tough. I've been really thinking and considering the next steps in my artistic journey, and--I've come to the conclusion that I have to, kind of, go big or go home. I've really come a long way with this whole experiment, but I've spent a lot of time dealing with physical pain and not nearly as much emotional pain. But, that's what poetry is, isn't it? It's the only way for a broken heart to sing. So, while I think I've really grown through the poison ivy and the botched tattoos, I think I have to take the next step. I've been really wanting to write a poem about

loss. The loss of people you love  
and care about, so, that poem  
begins here.

Joe takes the lid off of Grandpa Bertram's urn and raises  
the toilet seat. He picks up the urn with both hands.

JOE  
Goodbye Grandpa.

He pours the contents of the urn into the toilet. Ashes  
continue to spill and spill out of the urn: far more ashes  
than Joe expected. They continue to pour out.

HANNAH  
Um--Joe, maybe you should--

JOE  
No no, I'm sure it's almost done.

The ashes continue to spill.

HANNAH  
Babe, come on, that can't--

The spill stops.

JOE  
See? It's done. I told you it was  
done.

Hannah takes the camera over to the toilet and looks down  
in. The pile of ashes in the toilet has managed to breach  
the top of the water so that the very tip of the ash pile  
is dry.

HANNAH  
Joe, I really don't think you  
should try to--

The toilet flusher sounds. Hannah whips the camera back up  
to look at Joe.

JOE  
What? This was the plan!

HANNAH  
I know but--

The toilet begins to make a swirling sound that gets louder and louder. Hannah again pans the camera down to look at the toilet.

HANNAH  
Shit! Joe?

JOE  
What?

Joe finally looks down at the toilet and realizes that the water is rising, but the ashes are not going down.

JOE  
Aw shit, no no no!

HANNAH  
What do we do?

JOE  
I don't know--I dunno--I dunno!

The water continues to creep higher, and the first drops begin to trickle out over the edge of the toilet bowl. The sound of the front door opening comes from downstairs.

MOM  
Hello? Joe, are you here?

Joe looks at Hannah with panic in his eyes.

MOM  
I saw your car in the driveway.  
Are you upstairs?  
(to herself)  
Water's running anyway.

Mom's footsteps creak up the steps as the toilet continues to overflow, more water spilling out every second.

HANNAH  
(harsh whisper)  
Just--do something!

Joe hesitates for a second.

MOM  
Joe, we really need to talk.

Another of her footsteps creaks on the stairs. He begins desperately fishing his grandfather's ashes out of the toilet and dropping them in the bathtub. Hannah drops the camera to the floor and joins Joe. The sound of the camera thudding on the floor startles Joe's mom.

MOM

What was--? Are you ok?

She runs the rest of the way up the stairs and reaches for the bathroom doorknob. The door doesn't budge. Inside the bathroom Joe and Hannah continue to frantically fish ashes from the toilet. Joe's mom knocks on the door of the bathroom.

MOM

Joe? What's going on?

She places her ear up to the door and continues to knock. She hears strange splashing noises coming from behind the closed door.

MOM

Joe, I know you're in there.

She knocks again. Inside the bathroom, Hannah tosses Joe a plunger that was sitting beside the toilet, and Joe furiously plunges.

MOM

Open the door! If this is some sort of stupid stunt for a video, Joe, I swear--!

She hears a toilet flush and a shower curtain close from behind the door. The lock on the door clicks, and Joe's mom takes an unsure step back from the door. She steps up again and takes the doorknob in her hand. She turns it and the door swings open slowly. Joe is kneeling next to the toilet, with his arms in the bowl, and Hannah is propped up on the edge of the bathtub holding the camera. There is water all over the floor as well as residual grit from the ashes that were scooped out of the toilet but missed the bathtub.

JOE

Welcome back to Finding Poetry.  
Today, I decided to shake things

up a bit with the--Drinking Out of  
the Toilet Challenge!

MOM

Joe? What's going on here?

He whips his one arm out of the toilet to wave at his mom,  
flinging drips of toilet water everywhere.

JOE

Oh hi, Mom! I'm uh--just filming  
another video.

She picks up her foot which is now soaked in water.

MOM

I see--

She notices her father's urn on the sink.

MOM

Joe--I'm only going to ask you  
this once--what is your  
grandfather's urn doing up here.

Joe and Hannah look at each other, and Hannah continues to  
film the following events.

JOE

Uh, I uh, I dedicated this video  
to him, so it only seemed right.

MOM

You dedicated the toilet water  
drinking video to your  
grandfather?

JOE

Yes.

Joe's mom's gaze flicks between Joe and Hannah, but they  
remain silent. She begins to get emotional but pulls  
herself together.

MOM

Alright, you don't have to tell me  
what's really going on just--I'm  
taking my father back down to the  
mantle where he belongs.

She reaches for the urn, but Joe lurches to grab it first, accidentally knocking it off the sink. It shatters on the floor, revealing that it's empty. Joe's mom looks in horror at the fragments of the urn. She begins to lose her composure.

MOM

Joe--where is my father?

Joe involuntarily glances over at the bathtub. She marches over to the bathtub and reaches for the shower curtain. Joe stands between her and the curtain.

JOE

I mean, don't you still have some in your necklace thing?

Joe's mom stares him down, eyes locked with his.

MOM

Joe. Step aside.

Joe stares back at her for a few moments before stepping aside. Mom whips back the shower curtain to see the piles of wet ash lying in the bathtub. She drops to her knees at the edge of the bath. She's in complete shock.

MOM

No. Dad.

She reaches out and touches one of the piles of ashes. Joe and Hannah look at each other uncomfortably. Joe's mom speaks without looking up at them, her voice catching. She grasps the pendant of her necklace.

MOM

You tried to flush my father?

Joe opens his mouth, but no sound comes out for a moment.

JOE

Yeah. I-I was just trying to--

MOM

I want you both out of my house.

JOE

You what?

MOM

Please leave. We'll talk about  
this later, but right now, get  
out of my house.

She looks up at both of them as the POV switches to  
Hannah's camera.

MOM

And on your way out, do me a  
favor. Turn off the stupid camera.

CUT TO BLACK:

INT. DOCUMENTARY SET - DAY

Joe is still sitting in the interview chair staring  
straight ahead, looking dazed and almost defeated. The rest  
of the members of the crew are sitting in their chairs  
looking extremely uncomfortable. Hannah is sitting in her  
own chair looking down, trying to distract herself by  
checking out her nails. The director's eyes are locked on  
Joe. The final frames of Joe's video fade away from the  
monitor next to him.

DIRECTOR

So, you flushed your grandfather's  
ashes down the toilet.

Joe continues to stare straight ahead without answering.

DIRECTOR

Joe, did you know that flushing  
ashes of--anyone--is a felony?

Joe shifts his gaze to the director, and after another  
moment of silence, he speaks.

JOE

No.

DIRECTOR

It is. I did a little checking,  
and pulling a stunt like that can  
put you in jail for up to a year.

Joe again sits in silence.



DIRECTOR

So--we saw a little bit of how your mom responded to this whole thing. What about your dad? Have you talked to your family since?

JOE

Yeah, we talked. Kinda mutually decided that I should live--elsewhere. Haven't really had contact since then. My grandfather was--really important to my mom. And--my mom is really important to my dad.

DIRECTOR

What about you?

JOE

What?

DIRECTOR

I mean--aren't your parents important to you?

JOE

I--what do you--?

The director talks over Joe.

DIRECTOR

Or maybe the better question is, who IS important to you?

Joe sits in stunned silence for a few moments. He quickly glances over at Hannah and then down at his bare feet and yucky clothes.

JOE

I--I still don't see what these questions--

Again, the director talks over Joe.

DIRECTOR

Because from what I can see, you only really care about yourself and not at all how your actions might hurt someone else.

Joe gets visibly irritated.

JOE

No! I may've gotten too caught up in my poetry, but I acted on my own! They were MY actions to understand MY art! I was hurting ME!

DIRECTOR

(shrugging)

I rest my case.

The director looks back at his crew.

DIRECTOR

Hey, cut! I think we're due for a bit of a break.

JOE

What do you mean, you rest your case!?

The crew powers down their equipment, and a few of them go to the refreshment tables while others begin conversations amongst themselves. All of them glance at Joe with intense curiosity. Without looking at Joe, Hannah stands and walks out of the building. Joe notices her leaving and calls after her.

JOE

Hannah? Where are you--?

She doesn't turn back, so he stands and follows her, calling out again.

JOE

Hannah wait! I want to talk to you!

She makes it outside of the building before he catches up to her.

EXT. DOCUMENTARY SET - DAY

Joe reaches out and grabs her arm. She stops short but refuses to look at him.

JOE

Hey, I know you're mad at me. Can you--can you please look at me?

Hannah turns her head slightly.

JOE

Um, you--you are important to me. What the director said back there. I just wanted you to know that you're important to me. We left things on a--negative note last night, and I wanted to clear the air.

Joe turns to walk away as Hannah sighs and turns to face him fully.

HANNAH

Joe. You didn't act on your own. I was with you the entire time.

JOE

I guess the air isn't clear.

Joe turns back to her. Hannah shakes her head.

HANNAH

About what you said last night, I think you were kinda right. I think we both kind of used each other.

JOE

Oh really? You've gotta make me a villain in this too?

HANNAH

You tell me! I came up with most of the ideas for your videos!

JOE

I wrote all of that poetry myself!

HANNAH

Sure, but almost every damn thing you did to yourself to get the "experience" to write those poems? That was me! That was MY camera we

used because you broke yours! It was ME who helped you build a fan-base! I got you this job!

JOE

So it's all my fault now for taking advantage of you!?

HANNAH

No, not at all! In return for my trouble, I replaced my boyfriend with a project--I got a test of skill. To see if I could really market someone. And I did it. I have my answer.

JOE

So, what are you saying?

HANNAH

I'm saying we're business partners terminating a contract. And as a goodbye gift, you can finally write that heartbreak poem.

She reaches up and pats his shoulder before turning and walking to her car in the parking lot. Joe watches her walk away in stunned silence. Brandon pokes his head out of the doorway.

BRANDON

Hey man, uh, John said he wants to talk to you again.

JOE

Who the hell is John?

BRANDON

The--uh--the director.

Joe and Brandon stare at each other for a moment. Joe nods.

JOE

Of course--of course JOHN wanted to talk to me again--and of course he sent you--

Brandon nods towards Hannah's car driving away.

BRANDON

That your girl driving off?

JOE

As if you don't know.

Joe pushes his way past Brandon to the interior of the set.

INT. DOCUMENTARY SET - DAY

The director is talking with Mark, the editor, towards the back of the room. They are talking in hushed tones, but Mark is gesturing firmly.

MARK

I'm telling you, it's just sick!  
He shouldn't just be allowed to--

Mark glances back and notices Joe. He nods and points toward him, looking concerned. The Director turns to where Mark has pointed and sees Joe entering the building. He approaches him motioning for Mark to stay where he is. The entire crew is standing as far away from Joe and the director as possible, but all eyes are focused on the two.

DIRECTOR

Joe, I--uh--  
(glancing back towards  
Mark)  
I talked to the authorities in  
your home town. I would expect to  
hear from them in a few days. I  
think they'll have some questions  
for you.

JOE

You what? Why?

DIRECTOR

Look, I'll tolerate a lot of  
stuff, but true-crime is not my  
forte.

JOE

True-crime!? I flushed my  
grandfather down the toilet and  
then scooped him out again, this

wasn't exactly the crime of the century!

DIRECTOR

No, but as a director, I have a responsibility to my crew. Like I told you, some of them are-- frankly alarmed by your behavior.

JOE

Oh, so that's what it is. You just wanna get me off your set.

(raising his voice to address everyone in the room)

Who was it, huh? Who's so concerned about me?

Mark shrinks back into the crew, and the director stares at Joe, refusing to make an indication of who it was. Joe looks back to where Brandon stands. He doesn't speak, but he holds his gaze on Brandon for too long. Mark and the Director notice, and the director looks back at Mark who shrugs.

DIRECTOR

It uh--it wasn't Brandon who was concerned, I can tell you that much.

Joe glances back at the Director before storming off the set.

JOE

Yeah.

He leaves. As he approaches Brandon, Brandon addresses him.

BRANDON

Hey, I'm sorry man.

Joe brushes past Brandon, intentionally bumping his shoulder into him. The entire cast and crew watch Joe go.

FADE TO:

INT. HOTEL ROOM - DAY

Joe is sitting on the bed in the hotel room staring into space. The shades are drawn, and only the light on his side of the bed is on. After a few moments he begins looking around at the half-emptiness of the room. His stuff is strewn about on his bedside table. What would've been Hannah's table is immaculate. His meager wardrobe is hanging by itself in the closet, and his suitcase is the only one in the closet. He stands up and walks into the bathroom. Only his toothbrush and toothpaste are there. He looks at himself in the mirror for a moment before returning to the main part of the hotel room. He sits down again on the edge of the bed and turns off his light before flopping onto his back. He closes his eyes. He opens them again after a few seconds and scrabbles to grab his laptop from the bedside table. He opens it and the light from the screen shines on his face. He writes his heartbreak poem. Shots cut from Joe's eyes watching the screen to a line of text appearing on his screen to his fingers typing on the keyboard. After he finishes the poem, he gets up and looks over again at Hannah's bedside table. He fully registers that it's empty, and looks frantically around the room. Not seeing what he's looking for, he rushes to the closet and grabs his suitcase. He tosses the suitcase onto the bed and flings it open. He rustles around in the dirty clothes and other travel items in the suitcase, muttering and getting increasingly frustrated as he does.

JOE

Where's--? Did she--? It was definitely on her table last night. She would've given it-- right? No-- She took it. She took the camera! She took all the shit!

Not finding the camera, he shoves the suitcase aside and flops on the bed. After a few moments he turns on the lamps next to the bed and takes out his phone. He opens a live-streaming app, and props the phone up on the base of the lamp at the corner of the bedside table. The footage looks grainy. The shot is a low angle of his face. He's frustrated but starts recording anyway.

JOE

Hey, uh, welcome again to finding poetry. I--uh--I'm changing up the format a bit here--doing an actual poem on a livestream because my

uh--my camera went--missing.  
Unfortunately, sometimes things  
happen in life when the cameras  
aren't running and--uh--well--  
Hannah left me. We--uh--we'd been  
together for--

His phone slips from the base of the lamp, off the bedside table, and lands hard on its corner on the floor. Joe sighs, and slowly reaches to the floor to pick up the phone. The screen has several cracks going across it. He tries to hit the record button to stop streaming, but one of the cracks goes directly over the record button, and the phone won't register his touch. He tries to hit the button a few more times.

JOE

C'mon. Come on! You piece of shit!  
Just stop fucking recording! You  
fucking piece of shit!

He hurls the phone against the wall, shattering the screen completely. He flops down again on the bed and stares at the shattered phone. It is still recording. A message appears from a subscriber. "Um. What's going on with this stream? Just tuned in to a stream of f\*cks." He flops back on the bed. After staring at the ceiling for a few moments, he sits up and puts his head in his hands. He looks down at the smashed phone lying on the floor. He picks it up and watches the screen as the recording timestamp counts up. Another two messages from subscribers appear. "Weird stream, dude." "What's he doing?" He looks at the hotel phone and walks back to it. He props the cell phone up near the hotel phone. He presses a single button on the hotel phone to dial out of the hotel, and then, he dials a number.

CUT TO:

INT. HANNAH'S CAR - DAY

Hannah's phone rings from her purse in the passenger seat. She fumbles through the purse and finally pulls out her phone. She squints at the unfamiliar number on the phone and answers.



HANNAH  
Hello? Hannah Moore, Poesis  
Marketing, how may I--

JOE (V.O.)  
Where are you?

HANNAH  
Joe?

JOE (V.O.)  
You took the camera.

HANNAH  
Joe, why are you calling me? It's  
over. We're done.

JOE (V.O.)  
I've written one last poem.  
Please, just bring me the camera.

HANNAH (V.O.)  
It's MY camera, Joe--we talked  
about--!

JOE  
Just bring it, and I promise,  
you'll never have to hear from me  
again.

HANNAH  
Yeah right!

JOE  
Hannah, please, I really need to  
make this one count.

HANNAH  
Why? Joe, are you--are you ok? You  
sound--wait--what did you mean,  
one LAST poem?

She pulls up to a stoplight.

JOE  
Bring the camera to the roof of  
the hotel--

HANNAH  
Joe, c'mon, that's not funny.

JOE

They fired me from the set.

HANNAH

Oh I'm--sorry, Joe. That's tough,  
but, it's still my camera.

JOE

Just bring it to the roof of the  
hotel. I just want to make my last  
video.

The stoplight turns green and she sighs while making a  
right turn.

HANNAH

Joe, I-I don't like this "last"  
talk.

JOE

Then get over here!

HANNAH

I'm turning around, ok? Please  
just wait in the room, and we'll  
talk.

JOE (V.O.)

I don't want to talk, Hannah! I  
just want a fucking camera and a  
fucking tripod.

HANNAH

Whoa Joe, seriously, just calm  
down ok?

JOE

(shouting)

Just bring the fucking camera, ok!

Hannah stares out of her windshield in silence.

HANNAH

Ok ok. I'll bring my camera. I'll  
help you film your video. Just  
please don't--do anything, ok?  
Just wait in the room for me to  
get there?

JOE

Don't worry about me. You'll have one hell of a story to sell, babe. And I'm sure moving on won't be a problem for you.

His end of the line goes dead.

HANNAH

Oh, come on, you stop that Joe. Joe?

She tosses her phone back in her purse.

HANNAH

Shit!

CUT TO:

INT. HOTEL ROOM - DAY

Joe stands for a few seconds with his hand still on the hotel phone receiver. He walks over to his suitcase and searches it for a few seconds, pulling out a single sheet of paper labeled "Cast and Crew Contact Info." He brings the sheet of paper with him back over to the hotel phone and picks up the handset. Another two messages appear. "WTF this MF doing? I don't watch a stream for phone calls!" "HE SAID HE'S JUMPING OFF A ROOF!?!?"

INT./EXT. SWANKY RESTAURANT - DAY

The cast of the documentary as well as some members of the crew, including DP, Secondary Camera, Mark, and Interviewer, are sitting around a table in the middle of their meal laughing and chatting.

SECONDARY CAMERA

So Brandon, that video of you that we're showing at the beginning of the doc--the like--jumping off the waterfall and all that?

BRANDON

Yeah?

## SECONDARY CAMERA

How long did it take you to work up the balls to jump? Or are you just some sort of adrenaline junkie?

BRANDON

(laughing sheepishly)

Oh, yeah, well--there's actually a story--

The director's cell phone buzzes and rings, and he pulls it out of his pocket.

BRANDON

Heeeyyy, saved by the bell!

The group around the table chuckles as the director looks down at his phone. He shrugs and puts the phone back in his pocket.

DIRECTOR

Not so fast there, it was an unknown number. If it's someone who needs me, they'll leave a message. So, what's the story?

Brandon laughs off the question.

BRANDON

Let's just say there may have been some pee involved.

DANNY

Oh, come on, now you have to tell us!

BRANDON

Well, I--

The DP's cell phone rings and buzzes on the table, and he picks it up to look at the screen.

BRANDON

Saved again!

DP

Nah, nah, nah. It's weird, mine was an unknown number too. But please, go on.

BRANDON

Damn. Well, where was I?

Isabella, who is sitting next to Brandon and was just taking a sip of her Long Island iced tea, quickly swallows and speaks up.

ISABELLA

Something to do with pee!

BRANDON

(laughing)

Y'know what, that's the part of the story I try to forget! No, no, y'all will never let me live this down!

Brandon's cell phone rings. It also displays a number that he doesn't recognize.

BRANDON

Well would you look at that.  
Unknown number strikes again!

He stands and clicks the "pick up" button on his phone, and raising the phone to his ear, he covers its mouthpiece and speaks to the rest of the table.

BRANDON

But, I'm picking it up because I'm not telling this story!

The people around the table chuckle and resume hushed conversations among themselves as Brandon uncovers the mouthpiece.

JOE (V.O.)

(voice catching)

Brandon? Hey--is that you?

Brandon's smile immediately drops, and a few people at the table notice his change in expression. Soon, everyone is paying attention to Brandon's phone conversation.

BRANDON

Whoa yeah, this is Brandon--who--who's this?

JOE (V.O.)  
 Good--this is Joe--Bertram--from  
 the doc. Or I--I guess not from  
 the doc anymore.

Isabella nudges him.

ISABELLA  
 Who is it?

Brandon mouths "It's Joe." Brandon's statement elicits various responses from the table. Some murmur amongst themselves, Mark and Interviewer look at each other nervously, and Director massages his forehead.

BRANDON  
 Hey man! You don't sound too good-

The Director mouths "Speaker phone." and Brandon nods and puts the phone on speaker.

JOE (V.O.)  
 Hannah left me.

BRANDON  
 Yo, I'm sorry, man. Um, no offense  
 but, why are you calling me?

JOE (V.O.)  
 I'm calling anyone with a fucking  
 camera.

BRANDON  
 A camera? You have a camera--why-?

JOE (V.O.)  
 Bitch took it.

BRANDON  
 Whoa, hey no man, don't be--

JOE (V.O.)  
 Shut up! I've got nothing left. No  
 girl. No job. Nothing to lose.  
 Just get me some cameras.

BRANDON  
 Dude, I can't do that! I'm just  
 part of the cast!

JOE

Aren't you listening? I have NOTHING to lose! I could burn the doc set to the ground and not even bat an eye!

Brandon stands with his mouth open for a few seconds. The Interviewer gasps and swallows hard. The Director chimes in.

DIRECTOR

Alright, that's it. Joe, this is the director of the documentary. I don't ever want you to call anyone on my--

JOE (V.O.)

Ah, hello, Mr. Director, just the man I wanted to speak to. I have a shot for you--the perfect shot.

DIRECTOR

I've had quite my fill of shots from you Mr. Bertram.

JOE

But you still have my footage. You're not gonna get rid of it. You said yourself that I'm the screwball--the clickbait. I'm the ONLY member of your cast who's passionate enough about what I do to experience pain for it, and passion is what keeps people watching! And without your clickbait, what is your documentary? Just information.

DIRECTOR

You coming to a point with all this?

JOE

Just that I have the perfect shot for you to end my storyline and keep the passion in your little documentary. And if you don't--I guess I'm on speakerphone, so you already know what I'll do to your

documentary. I won't waste time on another threat.

BRANDON

Joe, hey, where are you man? You ok?

JOE (V.O.)

I've written one last poem.

Isabella looks at Danny and mouths "one last poem?"

BRANDON

That's cool man, but where are you?

JOE (V.O.)

I'll be on the roof of the hotel. Mr. Director, if you want it, I've got my final shot for you. Bring the cameras. Bring the whole crew. I'm at the Hilton closest to the set.

Joe's end of the line goes dead.

BRANDON

Joe? You there, man?

DIRECTOR

Dammit!

Brandon ends his call. The cast of the documentary sits in stunned silence, aside from Isabella who, though she looks concerned, takes a loud sip of her Long Island iced tea through her straw. DP and Secondary Camera look to the Director. Mark nervously bites his nails and the Interviewer has turned to frantically scrolling through social media, but she cannot focus on it. Suddenly, a waiter approaches the table and breaks the silence.

WAITER

Excuse me, have you thought at all about des--?

DIRECTOR

NO!

The waiter jumps and scurries away.



CUT TO:

INT. HOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

Joe looks down at the phone he's just hung up and glances over at his smashed cell phone still recording next to him. Three messages have appeared on the screen. "I used to like his old videos, but lately he's just toxic." "'No offense, but why are you calling me?' (with two laugh/cry emojis) Savage!" "Is this real?!"

INT. HANNAH'S CAR - NIGHT

Hannah is on the phone.

HANNAH

Hello? Um, Mr. and Mrs. Bertram?  
Yeah, it's Hannah. I-I'm sure you  
don't wanna hear from me, but you  
might want to come out here--to  
the hotel--just in case--

INT. HOTEL HALLWAY/ELEVATOR - NIGHT

Joe walks out of his hotel room and into the hallway. He's carrying his smashed phone along with him. The messages on the livestream are coming in with increasing speed. He presses the up elevator button. The doors open and he steps inside.

JOE

(under his breath)  
Up, up, up to the roof we go.

INT. SWANKY RESTAURANT - NIGHT

The film crew still awaits the director's decision.

BRANDON

Do you--do you think he's gonna do  
it?

CUT TO:

INT. HANNAH'S CAR - NIGHT

Hannah is at a stop light.

HANNAH  
Come on, come on, come on.

The light turns green.

CUT TO:

INT. HOTEL - NIGHT

The floor numbers count up, and Joe films them. The doors of the elevator open on floor thirty. Joe steps out of the elevator.

CUT TO:

INT. SWANKY RESTAURANT - NIGHT

The director slams his hands on the table and stands. He grabs his jacket and keys and rushes out the door. Other members of the cast and crew look at each other and grab their stuff to follow the director.

CUT TO:

INT. HOTEL HALLWAY - NIGHT

Joe finds a fire escape map and locates the exit onto the roof. He finds the door to the staircase up to the roof and tries the handle. It's locked.

JOE  
Dammit.  
(looking down at his  
phone, and shot switches  
to phone camera POV)  
Just--hold on a sec.

He sets his phone down on the other side of the hallway, turned to film the door to the roof. Switch back to third person camera POV. He looks down the hall and spots a fire extinguisher hanging on the wall. Switch back to phone camera POV. He disappears from the frame, returns with the fire extinguisher, and slams it down on the handle of the

door, breaking it. He puts the extinguisher on the floor and picks his phone up again. Switch back to third person camera POV. He opens the door to the roof, stepping out onto the stairs. He walks up the stairs and puts his hand on the door handle. A message appears on the stream that reads "OMG, he's actually going to the roof!!!"

CUT TO:

EXT./INT. HANNAH'S CAR/HOTEL - NIGHT

Hannah pulls into the hotel parking garage just a little too fast. She parks and jumps out of her car, grabbing the camera and tripod from the back seat. She walks briskly into the hotel. The FRONT DESK CLERK looks up at her.

FRONT DESK CLERK

Hello, how can I--?

HANNAH

Hi yeah, there's someone on your roof. He's threatening to jump-- you may want to get a hold of hotel security.

The front desk clerk nods and looks down to pick up the desk phone and dial. She looks back up.

FRONT DESK CLERK

Excuse me--

Hannah is already gone. The front desk clerk looks around and barely sees the elevator doors closing behind Hannah. Inside the elevator, Hannah slams the button for the top floor and rides up, impatiently tapping her foot. On floor thirty, the doors open again, and she follows in Joe's footsteps, finding the fire escape route, finding the broken roof door, and following the stairs up to the roof. She steps out onto the roof and looks around her, spotting Joe standing out on the very edge of the roof. She gasps and clasps her hand over her mouth to stop from yelling out to him. She composes herself before she speaks.

HANNAH

Hey.

Joe tentatively turns around to face her, holding out his hands and bending his knees slightly for balance, still holding his shattered phone.

JOE  
 (clearing his throat)  
 You bring the camera? And the tripod?

She swings the bags off her shoulder and holds it out towards him.

HANNAH  
 Yeah, I did.

She pulls the bags back towards herself.

HANNAH  
 But uh, you have to come and get them from me.

JOE  
 Oh, come on, Hannah. I'm your project remember?

HANNAH  
 (indignant)  
 Joe, that's not what I--

JOE  
 You stood by with a camera and watched me make my life a poetic hell from day one. You HELPED me make it that way! Don't act like you're suddenly worried about my health and safety now.

Hannah looks away from him. A commotion sounds on the ground below Joe, and he abruptly turns to look, wobbling a little as he does so. People below have noticed him standing on the roof, and a small crowd has begun to gather. Joe shoves his phone under his coat to keep it from picking up his conversation with Hannah.

JOE  
 Look, look, look! The crowd!  
 That'll be perfect for the shot!  
 If we do a high angle of me, and

then the people below me--you remember the opening shot of Brandon's video on the falls, right?

He looks at Hannah.

JOE

Well?! Set it up!

She unzips the tripod bag and pulls out the tripod. She extends the legs and plants them firmly on the ground. Joe pulls his phone back out. The messages on Joe's stream pour in, and he begins receiving subscription notifications.

CUT TO:

INT./EXT. HOTEL - NIGHT

The director of the documentary is driving with his DP and Secondary Camera.

SECONDARY CAMERA

So, what exactly is the plan for when we get there?

DIRECTOR

--I'm not sure--we're just gonna do whatever we can to--Oh no.

The director catches a glimpse of the crowd that's gathered in front of the hotel. The sound of sirens whir and red and blue lights flash behind the director's car, and the director pulls his car off to the side of the road. Two police cars followed by an ambulance speed by. While they are pulled over, the director looks up to the roof of the hotel and spots Joe on the edge with his back turned away from the crowd below him.

DIRECTOR

What the hell does he think he's doing!?

The director pulls back into the road and drives to the hotel parking garage. Other cars containing other members of the documentary cast and crew such as Brandon, Danny, and Isabella pull in next to them. They all pile out of their cars. Both the DP and Secondary Camera sling small camera bags over their shoulders. They rush out to where

the crowd has gathered in front of the building. Two police officers keep the crowd back from the entrance to the hotel. One officer ducks inside the building. The Director turns to the DP and Secondary Camera.

DIRECTOR

Dammit, there's no way they'll let us up. Can you zoom in and see if you can tell what's going on up there?

The documentary crew and cast step back from the rest of the crowd and huddle around the DP and Secondary Camera as they pull out their cameras, begin recording, and zoom in on Joe.

DP

Oh shit! There's someone--

SECONDARY CAMERA

That girl! His girl is up there with him!

CUT TO:

EXT. HOTEL ROOF - NIGHT

Hannah takes the lens cap off of the camera, and the POV switches from third-person POV to Hannah's camera's POV. She angles the camera on the tripod. The POV switches back to third-person POV. Hannah turns the camera LCD screen towards Joe who is crouched at the edge of the roof looking at his phone.

HANNAH

Is that what you want?

JOE

This is crazy!

HANNAH

Joe!

JOE

The comments just keep coming! And subs! I just got three--no four--five, in the last five minutes!

HANNAH

Hey! You want this shot or not?

Startled, his head jerks up from his phone, and he wobbles, grasping at the ground.

JOE

DON'T--Do that!

(he puts his hand over  
his heart)

Don't wanna go over the edge  
before we get the shot!

HANNAH

(pausing)

Is this the angle you wanted?

Joe squints at the LCD screen and the POV switches from third person back to the POV from Hannah's camera.

JOE

Get a bit more height on it. In  
Brandon's video it was almost  
right over his head. There! Ok,  
and make sure I'm in the left  
third.

Joe positions himself to make the shot an exact replica of Brandon's shot. Then, he turns back to face Hannah.

JOE

Ok, perfect, so I'll have the  
crowd in the background, I'll say  
the poem, and turn to where I was  
before, so it's framed exactly  
like--

Joe's eyes suddenly lock on someone behind the camera.

JOE

Hey! No! Stay back! Stay away from  
me!

POV switch to third person camera. Hannah turns to look over her shoulder to see the police officer and a hotel security guard standing in the doorway to the hotel roof.

CUT TO:

EXT. HOTEL - NIGHT

The DP is still trying to get a good angle of the happenings on the roof, and the Secondary Camera is interviewing the crowd with his camera. The director and the rest of the cast and crew are looking up at Joe and talking to each other. Occasionally the director will make suggestions to the DP and Secondary Camera on shots to get. A car screeches to a halt on the side of the street near the crowd, and Joe's parents leap out. They look up, and Joe's mom looks horrified as she sees her son on the edge of the roof. They run into the crowd and try to push their way through but are stopped by the police at the door of the hotel.

POLICE OFFICER 1

No one from outside is allowed in the hotel right now. Please step back!

MOM

That's our son up on the roof!  
Please!

POLICE OFFICER 1

I'm sorry ma'am, please step back.

DAD

Officer--

POLICE OFFICER 1

Sir, step back!

They turn away from the door and walk back out towards the street. Secondary Camera approaches them through the crowd.

SECONDARY CAMERA

Excuse me, sir, ma'am. Would you mind answering a few questions for the camera?

DAD

What? Yes, I'd mind!

SECONDARY CAMERA

What do you know about what's going on up on the roof?



MOM

What?

SECONDARY CAMERA

The man up on the roof--when did you notice that he was there?

MOM

I--I'm his mother!

SECONDARY CAMERA

Oh I'm--oh no.

MOM

Why are--why are you filming this? My SON is on the edge of a building and you're filming!?

SECONDARY CAMERA

I'm sorry ma'am--I really--!

MOM

Turn it off! Turn it off, and put it away!

The director notices Mom yelling at his Secondary Camera and walks over to see what's going on.

DIRECTOR

Ma'am, ma'am! What's going on here?

MOM

What's going on here!? This man is--

Joe's Mom whips around to face the director and suddenly recognizes him.

MOM

You--you're on his livestreams-- you're the director of that--that documentary--

DIRECTOR

Mr. and Mrs. Bertram?

DAD

Yes. Sir, can you please tell your crew to turn the cameras off?

DIRECTOR

We're just trying to assess what's going on.

MOM

You CUT him! You have no right to keep your cameras on him! Just leave him alone!

The director looks at the Secondary Camera and the DP and waves them away from the Bertrams. Both the Secondary Camera and the DP lower their cameras and inch away from Joe's parents before raising the cameras again.

DIRECTOR

The cameras are off Mrs. Bertram. Please calm down. I understand that what you're going through must be difficult.

MOM

(to Dad)

Those videos. What happened? Why is he--?

Suddenly, a commotion from the crowd draws their attention. Joe has disappeared from the roof.

CUT TO:

EXT. HOTEL ROOF - NIGHT

Hannah turns back to Joe after seeing the police behind them, relief written on her face.

HANNAH

Joe, please--?

JOE

Fuck no!  
(to the Police and Security Officers)  
Get back and close the door!

POLICE OFFICER

Sir, please just--

JOE

Get back! I WILL jump!

The police officer and security guard back up slowly until they're inside the stairwell and close the door to the roof.

JOE

Come on! Let's get this shot! We rolling?

Hannah presses record on the camera and nods to him, looking back at the doorway that the police officer and security guard just disappeared through.

JOE

Ok, Hello! This is going to be my final video--for those of you who caught the live stream, you know more about--

HANNAH

No.

Hannah reaches up and stops recording.

JOE

Hannah, what--?

HANNAH

(shakily)

No, Joe. I'm not doing this. I'm not just standing by with a camera anymore. There's police. I'm not going to jail for you. How did I even get myself into--? I-I don't want to be responsible for you anymore. You'll have to jump on your own. You're not getting any more help from me.

She begins to take the camera off of the tripod, but before she can pack it away, Joe lunges towards her, grabbing at the camera. They struggle, and Joe wrests it from her, shoving her backwards.

JOE

Fine! You go! But the camera stays with me!

He turns back to head to the edge of the roof again, examining buttons on the camera.

HANNAH

NO!

Before he reaches the edge, the tripod swings wildly behind him, landing squarely on the side of his head, and he collapses to the ground. The camera flies out of his hand and over the edge of the roof. Hannah stands above him, holding the tripod. The comments on his livestream continue to flood in.

FADE TO BLACK.

EXT. HOTEL ROOF - NIGHT

The following sequence is completely silent aside from voice over. Hannah drops the tripod and opens the door to the roof, motioning for the police officer and security guard to come out. They rush over to Joe and hoist his arms over their shoulders, pulling him back to the stairwell. At the stairwell, they lean him against the wall and cuff his wrists together.

JOE (V.O.)

Yeah so, that's what happened on the roof.

EXT. HOTEL - NIGHT

The police officers walk him out of the building in cuffs. Hannah follows in-step behind them with her head down, refusing to look at anyone. His parents clasp each other. The director and the rest of the cast and crew watch him go in silence, some watching in contempt, some shaking their heads, but the DP furtively raises his camera to get a shot of Joe leaving the building.

JOE (V.O.)

As to what happened later--I don't really remember much from that night, but I do know that I was charged with attempted suicide, trespassing, endangerment, and with abuse of a corpse and criminal mischief for the whole, grandpa in the toilet thing.

INT. COURTROOM - DAY

Joe is sitting in a courtroom as his lawyer is standing and talking. Joe's parents are seated in the background, and Hannah is in the witness stand. She stands and returns to her seat. The judge says a few words.

JOE (V.O.)

I didn't really want to plead insanity, but uh, since there was video evidence of what I'd done and what my lawyer called "a history of self-destructive behavior," he seemed to think that would be the best option.

The judge's gavel slams.

EXT./INT. MENTAL HOSPITAL - DAY

The audio for this scene returns. Joe is escorted through the front door of a mental hospital, through the hallways, and into a room with two beds on opposite sides of the room. Another PATIENT sits on the bed reading. Joe's escort leaves the room and closes the door behind him. Joe scans the room and goes to sit down on his own bed. He looks at the upper left hand corner of the room nearest the door. POV switch to the room security camera.

JOE

Hey, what's that?

PATIENT

Hmm?

Joe motions toward the camera with his head.

JOE

What's that?

PATIENT

Oh, that's the camera. I think all the rooms have one. It's for safety.

JOE

A camera?

Joe gets up to go look at the camera closer.

JOE

So, someone's watching us? Right now?

PATIENT

24/7.

JOE

Huh.

INT. MENTAL HOSPITAL VISITATION ROOM - DAY

Brandon is sitting across from Joe with a voice recorder in his hand.

JOE

So uh, why are you here? I heard the doc went under?

BRANDON

Yeah man, it did. Too much time lost after your footage didn't work out. Plus, like, a couple people in the crew quit because they were so freaked out by everything and John couldn't afford to replace 'em.

JOE

So, what's with the tape recorder, then?

BRANDON

Funny you should ask. Actually, I uh--I always wanted to try my shot at directing, and I've been doing pretty well for myself, so--I bought the footage. Finishing the doc on my own. Actually, it's a crazy thing. I remembered your girl, Hannah, did marketing stuff, so I called her. She agreed to market the doc for me when I'm done! Crazy how connections work, huh?

Brandon laughs, but Joe blinks, unimpressed. Brandon clears his throat.

BRANDON

So uh, how long are you gonna be  
in here, man?

JOE

As long as I choose. I finished my  
required time last week.

BRANDON

What do you mean? Dude, you mean  
you're staying here? Like  
voluntarily? Even when you don't  
have to?

JOE

(shrugging)

Camera's always running.

INT. MENTAL HOSPITAL ROOM - NIGHT

Security camera POV. Joe is sitting in his room at a small  
desk, writing. He turns to look at the security camera.

JOE

Welcome again to Finding Poetry.  
This poem came to me while I was  
sleeping, so I quick wrote it down  
before I forgot. It's called "The  
Cold Eye."

He begins reciting the poem.

FADE TO BLACK.

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## EDUCATION

### **B A IN PROFESSIONAL WRITING, SUMMA CUM LAUDE**

MAY 2020, THE PENNSYLVANIA STATE UNIVERSITY, UNIVERSITY PARK, PA

Graduated Summa Cum Laude

**Thesis Title:** "Average Joe"

**Thesis Supervisor:** Dr. Sandy Feinstein

#### **Academic Achievements and Awards:**

- Dean's List 2016-2020
- Professional Writing Achievement Award, 2020
- Candace Spigelman Professional Writing Award, 2020
- HASS Division Young Investigator Award, 2020
- Erickson Discovery Grant, 2019
- Evan Pugh Scholar Award, 2019
- Foreign Languages Award in French, 2019

#### **Academic Scholarships**

- Chancellor Scholarship, 2016-2020
- Boscov Honors Program, 2018-2020
- Hintz Jr. Scholarship Fund, 2019-2020
- Harold W & Jeane Perkins Scholarship, 2017-2019
- Presidential CES Scholarship, 2016-2017

## WORK EXPERIENCE

### **FEB 2020 – PRESENT**

#### **WRITER/VIDEO EDITOR, VA PRODUCTIONS**

- Collaborated with directors and producers to generate script ideas, wrote scripts, coordinated rewrites with clients, and edited video. Undertook each task meticulously yet efficiently to guarantee high-quality written and edited works as well as customer satisfaction.

### **JAN 2017 – PRESENT**

#### **FREELANCE FILMMAKER**

- Scripted, filmed, directed, and edited creative short films and promotional films in an efficient and detail-oriented manner to ensure high-quality and engaging videos.
- Corresponded with clients in order to ensure client satisfaction with promotional films.
- Assembled and organized talent for creative films.

## INTERNSHIPS

### **SEPT 2019 – DEC 2019**

#### **VA PRODUCTIONS**

- Edited video, participated in professional shoots as a grip and as a producer while learning the everyday operations of the film production company. Hired from intern position to part time writing and editing position.

**MAY 2019 – AUG 2019**  
**TAKE ONE PRODUCTIONS**

- Edited video, participated in multiple day shoots, and served as a grip while learning the everyday operations of the film production company. Undertook each task enthusiastically and efficiently in order to ensure positive crew collaboration and management satisfaction.

**LEADERSHIP**

**SEPT 2018 – MAY 2020**  
**HEAD TUTOR, PENN STATE BERKS WRITING CENTER**

- Assisted students with writing documents such as essays, lab reports, and short stories assigned for their classes.
- Provided guidance to students during any stage of the writing process: brainstorming, drafting, and editing.
- Served as the liaison between my fellow tutors and the Writing Center Director
- Took on various administrative tasks such as taking meeting notes