

25

by

Chris Van Strander

Chris Van Strander
(484) 995-0483
chrisvanstrander@gmail.com
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CARD: "3 YEARS AGO."

EXT. COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY - STREET/HOGAN HALL - DAY

CAMCORDER FOOTAGE: JOE (white, 22)'s POV as he pans a building. RECENT GRADUATES in caps and gowns trickle by.

With Joe as always is BOBBY (white, 22, investment banker/frat boy type), in cap and gown too. He's also sporting a BLUETOOTH earpiece--which he never removes.

JOE (O.C.)

Here she is: Hogan Hall. Our home all a' last year, us an' our crew.

Bobby turns the camera towards A PAIR OF CUTE COEDS going into Hogan Hall. Joe ZOOMS IN.

BOBBY

This's what I call a target-rich environment.

JOE (O.C.)

You live your life between your legs, Mav.

BOBBY

Goose, even you could get laid in a place like this.

The pair approach TAMSEN (white, 22, a debutante), also in cap in gown, holding her ACCESSORY DOG.

JOE (O.C.)

Here's Tamsen; her dad was our commencement speaker.

BOBBY

How'd y'all score that one?

TAMSEN

Oh ya know, promised a couple endowments.

Bobby turns the camera to the dog: it's licking its nuts.

BOBBY

Wish I could do that.

JOE (O.C.)

I'd pet him first, bro.

RACH (white, 22) ducks in, kisses the lens. She's a bit khaki and buttoned-up, but super cute. Cap and gown too.

Rach has muscular dystrophy; she uses FOREARM CRUTCHES, has been doing so most of her life. Her friends got used to it years ago.

JOE (O.C.)

Hey babe--show us your tassel!

RACH

(waves a colored cap tassel)
Magna cum laude--yeah yeah!

JOE (O.C.)

(shows camera his WRISTWATCH)
 And check out my awesome watch she gave me--engraved n' everything.

The pair approach TEDDY (African American, 22, obese), in cap and gown too, standing with his MOM, DAD (both 50s), and GRANDMA (80s). Teddy shades Grandma with an umbrella.

JOE (O.C.)

(to Teddy's family)
 'Scuse me--this guy bothering you?

TEDDY

(turns, smiles)
 Guys ever meet my mom, dad? Grandma?
 (to his family)
 This's Bobby and Joe.

JOE (O.C.)

Teddy, anything you wanna say?

TEDDY

Just thanks for the best four years; hope the next ones're gonna be just as great. Really gonna miss you guys--

BOBBY

Dude you're gonna see us all the time!
 You know we gon' keep this party rollin'.

SHEILA (white, 22, geek chic), cap and gown too, runs up.

SHEILA

Free at last, free at last, thank God Almighty, we are free at last!

Teddy's family exchange glances.

TEDDY

Uh, Sheil--have you met my family?

Sheila and Teddy's folks SAY AWKWARD HELLOS.

JOE (O.C.)
 Feelin' the talent up in here, Bobby?

BOBBY
 Totally. This's Sheila, our next
 big--what's it?

SHEILA
 I'm gonna be the postmodern novelist of
 our generation.

JOE (O.C.)
 Yeah, when we gonna see this book anyway?

SHEILA
 Halfway done!

TEDDY
 Joe get in, Mom wants a picture.

Joe hands the camcorder off to Teddy's dad.

JOE (O.C.)
 Thanks--yeah it's off.

It's not. Teddy's dad holds the camcorder at his side: we see the six friends hand Teddy's mom their cameras, then pose together... but only from their necks down.

JOE
 (his head cut off)
 Everybody say THANK GOD WE'RE OUTTA HERE!

INT. HOGAN HALL - JOE'S ROOM - NIGHT

The friends' graduation party. "Homies" by Insane Clown Posse blares. All six're dancing, everyone still in either their cap or gown. Joe's wearing a LAMPSHADE over his head--we still haven't seen his face.

CARD: "NOW."

EXT. LUDLOW STREET - NIGHT

A MUGGER (African American, 16) pokes his VICTIM with a GUN. The victim's back's to us--we never see his face.

VICTIM
 (his shirt)
 Careful! Ralph Lauren.

MUGGER
 iPhone, muthafucka!

Instead, the victim hands over his WATCH. We recognize it: Joe's graduation watch. The victim's Joe.

JOE
How 'bout we call it even?

MUGGER
(reads the engraving)
Who's Rach?

JOE
We, uh, dated a while, but now we're just friends.

MUGGER
iPhone, you hipster-ass trick.

JOE
Actually I'm a hedge fund--never mind.
(pulls out his IPHONE)
This's next generation. Not even out yet.

MUGGER
(COCKS gun)
Gimme that shit right now or I'm a' blow a hole in your goddamn skull.

Joe muses... puts the iPhone back in his pocket.

JOE
Go 'head.

CUT TO BLACK.

A SCREENSAVER: it's a death clock, complete with skull. "Your personal day of death is July 8, 2054. Seconds left to live: 1,489,371,118." It continues ticking down.

Next to this, OPENING CREDITS ROLL. Once they end, WE REVERSE to find ourselves in:

INT. SHEILA'S STUDIO - MORNING

A dark, messy hole. CLOCK RADIO: 6:33 AM.

Sheila, immobile on her futon, stares at the death clock taunting her over on her MACBOOK LAPTOP.

SHEILA
Aaaarrggghhh!!! Stop!

The death clock keeps ticking away.

SHEILA

What do you want on your tombstone? "She watched *Adult Swim*"?! Get up! Wriiiiite!!!

The radio now reads 11:47 AM. Sheila hasn't budged. She seems to be dialoguing with the death clock.

SHEILA

I know they're my best years, that's the point! What if I waste all this time and it never gets published?

(listens)

Okay but what if it's not well-reviewed?

(listens)

Well but what if no one buys it?

(listens)

But what if those numbers aren't big enough for Book Two? I'm too old to just make a solid debut! Alexander the Great was conquering Persia by my age! And let's not even talk music: Mozart! Usher! Usher's got six albums! What do I got?

(sneers)

Screw you. My voice, I just been... giving it time to grow!

(SOBBING)

Who am I? Shit, I never bought stamps!

Who am I?

(brightens)

Right! Pynchon didn't publish 'til 26!

(to herself)

Oh so I'm Pynchon now? Where's the book, Sheila?! Where's your agent, Sheila?!

Who's gonna publish you, Sheila?!

(horror)

I'll hafta move back! To Milwaukee!

INT. SHEILA'S STUDIO - A BIT LATER

Preserved above the chaos, a shrine: candles, a row of THOMAS PYNCHON NOVELS. Sheila sits before it, reading *Gravity's Rainbow* like a Bible.

EXT. STREET/YELLOW FEVER - A FEW MINUTES LATER

Sheila rides her BIKE down the street. Stops in front of Yellow Fever, a designer hat shop. Its LOGO's an "ironic" Chinaman caricature. Rach is out front scrubbing GRAFFITI off the sidewalk: the letters "EVL."

SHEILA

Hey sexy.

(re graffiti)

Wow. 's that that gang?

RACH

Guess. Stuck here 'til ten, musta did it after that. Hey, have you heard from Joe?

SHEILA

No, I keep texting.

RACH

Right? How's writing?

SHEILA

Awesome, just finished this huge revision! Didja show him your samples?

RACH

Sitting down later today!

SHEILA

Come on, lunch.

Rach checks her watch, indicates "one sec," ducks inside.

INT. YELLOW FEVER - DAY

Pimped-out lights, a skate ramp. The kinda shop a bunch of teenage boys would run... because they do: the hat designer ZANTO and his CREW.

The crew--scruffy JUNIOR (Latino, 16); gangsta BUCK (African American, 17); and lil' SCRAPPY (white, 14)--chill amongst rows of urban HATS. Rach stands tensely among them, watching as across the store:

ZANTO (Asian American, 15), dressed Harajuku, does an on-camera interview with JELLYBEAN (white, 12), an all-American gal in low-rise jeans and a "Tease" belly shirt.

SUZIE WONG (Asian American, 18), Zanto's model, stands next to him, posing like a China doll in one of his hats.

JELLYBEAN

(to camera)

'Sup y'all? Jellybean here for *Tween TV*, the first cell phone show just for kids! I'm in New York's famous East Greenwich Village, kickin' it with--well, if you seen Ali Lohan, Lil' Wayne, or any a' your other fav celebs rockin' a hat, you seen his designs! Zanto! 'Sup?

ZANTO

'Sup.

JELLYBEAN

What's it like to be the biggest guy on Earth in hats?

ZANTO

Shoot, I just drops the dopest lids I can, know what I'm sayin'?

JELLYBEAN

Tell us 'bout your brand.

ZANTO

's called Yellow Fever. An' we all about empowerin' Asian Americans, positivity, know what I'm sayin'?

JELLYBEAN

What's your message for teens?

ZANTO

Work hard, you'll achieve every one-a yo' dreams. Lookit me: just turned 15, an' I already made all my dreams come true!

CREW

Word! Fo' real! True dat!

Rach rolls her eyes.

JELLYBEAN

Thanks, Zanto!

They break. Rach grabs a BOX--her samples--and moves to approach Zanto, but his crew surround him. She dials her CELL. Across the shop, Junior's CELL RINGS; he grabs it.

JUNIOR

Who dis?

RACH

Just Rach. Can I take lunch quick?

JUNIOR

Hol' up--he needs somethin'.

RACH

Sure, where's the card?

JUNIOR

Lost it, use yours.

RACH

But my APR's 23%!

JUNIOR

Hurry too--dem niggas comin' from Macy's.

RACH

Say, what's his afternoon? Think I could block in a little time maybe?, show him some samples? Even if he could just gimme some advice, which buyers I might try approaching. Prob'ly didn't even realize, but my internship's gonna be over--

Rach looks over: no one's listening.

TIGHT ON RACH'S FACE

RACH

Do you have any...
(SIGHS, shakes head)
Tentacle rape?

INT. HENTAI SHOP - DAY

The pervy WAPANESE CLERK (20s) pushes a STACK OF DVDs towards Rach. She picks one up by its corner.

RACH

Chick-Squid Gangbang. Volume Ten.

WAPANESE CLERK

Stacked young schoolgirl meet horny mollusk, horny mollusk shoot her with cum 'til her head explode. Anything else?
(leers at her crutches)
Specialty video?

RACH

Just a brown paper bag.

Rach hands over her CREDIT CARD. A TV on the counter's playing a MANGA CARTOON: a girl with freakishly huge breasts being tortured. Rach glares at the clerk.

RACH

Your mom must be so proud.

Rach's cell RINGS; she grabs it.

RACH

Hey Teddy, couldja call me back?

TEDDY (O.S.)

Sorry, just needed a friendly voice. I'm--

RACH
 (to clerk)
 Will this appear discreetly? The bill
 goes to my parents.

Clerk DISSOLVES INTO CREEPY LAUGHTER.

TEDDY'S FACE: on his phone, listening to the CACKLING.

INT. CALL CENTER - THAT MOMENT

Rows of headset-wearing OPERATORS in cubicles. Teddy
 slumps in one. PHOTO on his desk: him and his parents. He
 hangs up, dials another number.

JOE (V.O.)
 This's Joe's iPhone. Hit it.
 (BEEP)

TEDDY
 Hey Joe, me again. Sorry to keep calling
 but, haven't heard from you in a while,
 just makin' sure everything's okay. 'Kay
 buddy, see you tonight I hope.

Teddy hangs up, checks his CLOCK: 12:59 PM. Puts away his
 CALL LIST--stops--pulls it back out. Dials one last
 POTENTIAL DONOR.

TEDDY
 Hi, could I speak with Mr. Silva?

POTENTIAL DONOR (O.S.)
 What for.

TEDDY
 Well, I'm Teddy Patterson with The
 Survivors' Coalition. We're a group of
 family members who've lost loved ones to
 violence. We're dedicated to reducing
 gang-related crime in our local commun--

POTENTIAL DONOR (O.S.)
 Why you people still call me?

TEDDY
 Well, you contributed three dollars last
 year. We wanted to thank you... and see
 if you'd be interested in becoming one of
 our regular partners?

POTENTIAL DONOR (O.S.)
 PUT ME ON YOUR DON'T CALL LIST! *CAPICHE?!*
 (hangs up)

TEDDY'S FACE: drained from the abuse.

Teddy pulls off his TIE, rolls it up, sticks it in his back pocket. Pops IPOD BUDS into his ears and splits.

INT. BUDDHIST SHRINE - A BIT LATER

Teddy bows in prayer before a large Buddha.

INT. SUSHI RESTAURANT - A BIT LATER

Teddy approaches the kimono-clad HOSTESS (Latino, 20s).

HOSTESS

(deadpan)

Konnichiwa.

TEDDY

Hey Blanca--oh hey, how's your uncle?

HOSTESS

Better, thanks.

TEDDY

(consulting a LIST)

Great. Everyone's real hungry--gonna need a salad and water for me, then they want four California rolls and four--

TEDDY AND HOSTESS

Red Bulls.

TEDDY

Oh and a quart of green tea ice cream.

(hostess writes)

Quart. You wrote pint.

Teddy waits at the bar, watching his VIDEO IPOD. An ABUSIVE FATHER (white, 30s)--large, drunk--sits nearby with his DAUGHTER (6), who's CRYING UNCONTROLLABLY.

ABUSIVE FATHER

This's your fault! You cryin' when I get back, I'm a' beat your ass!

He staggers off. Teddy watches the daughter struggle to stop her tears. Then slides over, hands her the iPod and one of his earbuds. She instantly quiets.

ON THE IPOD SCREEN: a crudely-produced, painfully earnest video blog--Teddy's. To EASTERN FLUTE MUSIC, Japanese characters fade in, followed by a title: *Daily Bushido.*

TEDDY

You know about knights?

The daughter nods.

TEDDY

Well they had this thing called chivalry. Samurai had bushido. You try to be a good person? Polite, honest?

The daughter nods.

TEDDY

Well those're some of its tenets. I talk about how we can still kinda use 'em, you know? Help make a difference in our neighborhood.

ONSCREEN: Teddy in a KENDO GI, before a homemade BACKDROP with the Japanese characters for "bushido."

TEDDY (ONSCREEN)

Konnichiwa; welcome to Daily Bushido.
Today I wanna talk about *rei*--respect.

ONSCREEN: The Japanese character "rei" appears.

TEDDY (ONSCREEN)

This week, even once a day, let's make an extra gesture of respect: to our family, guy at our deli maybe. Give a morning or a couple bucks to a group whose mission you respect. And certainly, if you see someone being disrespected, help stop it!

ABUSIVE FATHER (O.C.)

What the hell?!

The abusive father wrenches his daughter's arm.

ABUSIVE FATHER

(to the daughter)

You makin' trouble?!

TEDDY

E-e-excuse me. Should you... talk to her like that?

The abusive father melts: he hugs his daughter to him.

ABUSIVE FATHER

Sorry, baby.

CUT TO:

The abusive father wrenches his daughter's arm. Teddy's just been fantasizing.

ABUSIVE FATHER
You makin' trouble?!

The abusive father catches Teddy's eye, glares. But Teddy says nothing. The hostess returns with a big BAG--Teddy's food. He hands her money, grabs back his iPod, ducks out.

INT. 191ST STREET TUNNEL - A BIT LATER

A long, creepy subway pedestrian tunnel.

Teddy walks down--clearly not his favorite place to be. Some thuggish TEENS ON BIKES come barreling straight for him. Right as they reach him, they halt.

TEEN #1
You're the *Daily Bushido* guy!

Teddy smiles bashfully.

TEEN #2
Yo your channel is hot, son! We favorite all your videos! *Konnichiwa!*

TEDDY
Well--*konnichiwa* right back atcha!

CUT TO:

The teens're still barreling at Teddy--he's just been daydreaming again. He snaps out of it, cringes as the teens fly past on either side, SCREAMING.

INT. TEDDY'S APARTMENT - A FEW MINUTES LATER

Teddy tiptoes into his living room. Grandma's asleep in front of an abdominal exercise belt infomercial on TV. He turns it off; she wakes. He helps her into their kitchen.

A routine: Teddy pours the water in a glass, salad in a bowl, sets them before her. She eats. He starts laying out her infinite daily dose of MEDS--pill after pill.

GRANDMA
Where's Karen?

INT. TEDDY'S BEDROOM - A FEW MINUTES LATER

Tiny; martial arts POSTERS. A PHOTO: Teddy and his five friends on graduation day. His graduation TASSEL's draped over the picture, obscuring Joe's face.

He chugs a Red Bull, changes into his gi, preps to shoot his vlog. Unrolls his backdrop; tugs a corner, leveling it. The entire thing falls. This happens every time.

Teddy finally sits before his CAMERA, hits Record.

TEDDY

Konnichiwa; welcome to *Daily Bushido*. Now I know we're all about keeping it humble here, but... be nice to hear from y'all. Question, response video, story 'bout how you're using bushido in your life--just an email even: "Hey Teddy, 'preciate what you're doing, keep it up!" I know I've got some viewers, and I know they're not all me!

(holds for audience laughter)

So come on: hit subscribe, let's spread the word! Wouldn't it be cool if we hit a hundred views? A thousand? I could be the new Lonelygirl! Just playin'.

(pauses, exhausted)

Okay. Today let's talk about... courage.

Teddy trails off--he has nothing to say about courage. Crawls into bed, opens his ice cream. Halfway through a bite, he dozes off. Ice cream pools.

Across the room, on Teddy's huge (circa 1996) clunker of a COMPUTER, an INSTANT MESSAGE pops up: "HELP."

MATCH CUT TO:

Same IM on a BLACKBERRY SCREEN: "HELP."

EXT. CENTRAL PARK BOWLING LAWN - THAT MOMENT

A manicured pitch. SOCIETY FOLK young and old mill about, every one wearing the exact same tennis whites.

Tamsen has sent the IM. She's hosting a charity event with MAGS (African American, 25). They flank a BOWL opposite a row of PHOTOGRAPHERS. An ANCIENT SOCIETY DAME drops a check in, poses. PHOTOS.

MAGS

Thanks for your generosity, Lady Astor!

Tamsen smiles a plastered-on grin. Mags fixes her makeup.

MAGS

(to the photographers)

These'll run tomorrow?

(to Tamsen, sotto)

Tams I swear to frickin' god, every one a' these better get published. Six benefits last month? Not one snappy-snap.

MAGS (cont'd)
 How we supposed to move up if our faces
 aren't out there? Oh frick me--Paige.

Debutantes PAIGE (25) and KIPPY (20) approach.

PAIGE AND MAGS
 Hiii!

PAIGE
 Tams, Mags--Kippy. Her dad runs
 Citigroup.

TAMSEN, MAGS, AND KIPPY
 Nice to meet you!

KIPPY
 Donations?

Tamsen indicates; Kippy and Paige stick checks in.

KIPPY
 You guys' events are famous! So what, you
 co-chair?

TAMSEN
 Yeah--I think everything up, and she
 takes credit.

Obligatory LAUGHS.

PAIGE
 Kippy just bought. 1st and Bowery.

MAGS
 Omifrick I'm on Bleeker!

PAIGE
 You guys, 10002 is so the new 10021.
 (to Kippy)
 Tams just moved downtown too. The Dapper
 Building.

KIPPY
 Duh, of course! Your dad!

Tamsen and Mags stand centrally to address the crowd.

TAMSEN
 Hi. I'm Tamsen Dapper.

MAGS
 I'm Margaret Dresser.

TAMSEN

Welcome to this year's Dapper-Dresser
Charity Lawn Bowl.

Everyone APPLAUDS.

MAGS

We're here to have fun, but also raise
awareness about Angola, where there's all
this just terrible ethnic slaughter going
on.

TAMSEN

Let's welcome Armindo.

They bring up ARMINDO (20s), a handsome Angolan man.

MAGS

(sotto, to Tamsen)

Nice touch!

TAMSEN

A militia bombed Armindo's village. His
entire family, including his wife, burned
to death right in front of him.

PAIGE

(sotto, to Kippy)

Sin-gle!

Tamsen presents Armindo with the check bowl.

TAMSEN

Don't even think about thanking us. You
just take this, get back over there, and
start rebuilding--hear me?

Everyone APPLAUDS. Tamsen beams. Armindo looks confused.

CUT TO:

Everyone's bowling. Tamsen stands aloof, glowering.

KIPPY

I'd be honored to get on a committee with
you guys. What's Mary Higgins Clark on?

MAGS AND PAIGE

The Met.

KIPPY

Couldja get me on that? I wanna write
books, so--gotta get in with Mary Higgins
Clark!

PAIGE

We can't even get on the Met.

MAGS

Why you think I'm doin' frickin' Ebola?

PAIGE

Angola.

KIPPY

Is anyone here in publishing?

Tamsen starts to tear up--a common occurrence. She dials her BlackBerry, bolts into the trees.

INTERCUT

INT. BOBBY'S APARTMENT - THAT MOMENT

Bobby answers his Bluetooth. He looks ten years older. Fixes a BOILERMAKER: drops a whisky shot into a beer mug.

TAMSEN

(the dam bursts)

Fifty more years of this? I'll slit my wrists! This's why things never change! If they cared half as much about helping as they do about seeing their names bold? I know what you're gonna say: "Why do you care? You're the luckiest girl on earth! How many parents hand their kids a loft?" You think I don't feel just crippling shame about that? God, Bobby! Only way I can even live with all this is to use it to help end some of the injustices--

Bobby turns down his Bluetooth, guns the drink. Then eats an entire delivery of HOT WINGS. In silence.

INT. BOBBY'S APARTMENT - A BIT LATER

Bobby at his computer, playing ONLINE POKER. Wins \$5,000. Brings up his bank account: it jumps \$5G. His expression never changes. He may as well be slaving in a cubicle.

INT. BOBBY'S APARTMENT - A BIT LATER

Bobby stares at a closed DOOR. A POSTER on it: construction sign stick figures having sex. "No entry--work in progress." Feels a pang of pain in his stomach.

INT. PSYCHOLOGIST'S OFFICE - DAY

Bobby lying on a couch opposite his (male) PSYCHOLOGIST.

PSYCHOLOGIST

Any more thoughts about him being gone?

(no response from Bobby)

Betrayed? Lonely?

(no response)

You know Bobby, lotsa guys feel like "I should be able to handle this myself."

Didn't you express a need, when you came here, to confront things?

(SIGHS, checks watch)

Next week?

Bobby tosses down TWO HUNDRED BUCKS.

PSYCHOLOGIST

Remind your dad we're playing squash.

INT. DELI - A FEW MINUTES LATER

Bobby buys ANTACID and a BEER. Sits at a back table next to a pile of crates. Pours it, drops one of the tablets in--FIZZ! Drains it, turns his Bluetooth back up.

TAMSEN (O.S.)

...but what'm I supposed to do? Go to a shelter, start handing out hundreds? I'm not a communist...

Turns it down, looks over. Sheila's staring back at him.

EXT. STREET/ATM - A FEW MINUTES LATER

Sheila (on bike) and Bobby (walking) COUGH as they approach an ATM ENCLOSURE. An NYPD barricade blocks the way. Inside the ATM, a BOMB SQUAD DISPOSAL ROBOT examines a DEVICE: taped-together soda bottles.

A BEAT COP (50s) stands outside.

BEAT COP

Up to Second, kids, we got a live device!

SHEILA

EVL?

Cop displays an evidence-bagged FLYER. At the top: "EVL."

SHEILA

"Too long have we endured megaconglomerate chains taking over our 'hood. We, the East Village Liberation front, vow to destroy these invaders and regain our home. Check out our Web site."

Cop holds up another bag: a WRECKAGE of soda bottles.

SHEILA

Pepsi?

BEAT COP

Chlorine.

BOBBY

When's this gonna re-open? I'm not going--

The ATM bomb EXPLODES in a CLOUD OF CHLORINE. The robot panics. Sheila and Bobby jet. Cop grabs his WALKIE.

BEAT COP

Dispatch, Unit Three! Bot down!

INT. HOPES N' BEANS - A FEW MINUTES LATER

A chain coffehouse. Their SIGN: "Hopes n' Beans: fresh made, fair trade!" A cozy, velvet-chaired faux-bohemia.

Sheila and Bobby enter, wave to the bearded, dreadlocked barista STEPPENWOLF (white, 20s), move to a bank of chairs and couches. Teddy and Tamsen are already there.

TAMSEN

(still on her BlackBerry)
...And wouldja tell Joe to turn his chat on? I can't reach him all week! Bobby?

Tamsen looks up, sees Bobby, hangs up.

SHEILA

EVL just hit our bank.

TEDDY

Oh my god--this one here?

BOBBY

Yeah an' it better re-open soon. I am not going to Union Square every day.

TEDDY

Guys hear about Steppenwolf?

Rach arrives. Their circle still contains one empty SEAT.

RACH

Hey, can only stay a sec. He's showing his stupid precollection: every buyer in the industry's coming by.

BOBBY

He's hookin' you up too, right?

RACH

Yeah--Saks, Bloomies, everyone!

Steppenwolf brings over a teapot for Sheila and black coffee for Bobby. It's tough going: his hand's in a CAST.

SHEILA

Rain stick accident?

STEPPENWOLF

EVL, dude. Lockin' up, they come, start chuckin' bricks through our window. So I'm like "Dude! Not cool!" So they chuck 'em at me! Majorly harshed my mellow.

(beat)

What were we just talking about? Oh yeah-- Sheil, is that your grandpa or something?

Sheila's laptop's covered with a collage of stickers, etc, including the graduation day photo. The corner of a 50s-era MAN's PICTURE covers Joe's face.

SHEILA

That's Thomas Pynchon.

STEPPENWOLF

The writer? Couldn't get a newer picture?

SHEILA

Dude, he's a recluse. Hasn't been reliably photographed in over half a century. Supposedly? He lives somewhere on Riverside Drive in the Upper West Side, but only a handful of people know where. Think gettin' his photo's tough, try his autograph. Be like Jesus comin' back to sign your shirt.

STEPPENWOLF

Big fan, huh?

SHEILA

Of the greatest novelist of the 20th century? Yeah kinda. Mind you, this's a girl who was raised on the Brontes, so, first time I read him? I'm like what is this? Was just the strangest, most gorgeous, brilliant stuff I'd ever read. Every book: prose just got lush, plots more insane, themes huger. And every one was like he'd written it just for me.

(beat)

Could write the rest of my life, I'll never be as good as he was at my age

SHEILA (cont'd)
 already.
 (looks up; everyone's staring)

STEPPENWOLF
 Yeah, how is your book comin'?

SHEILA
 Week away!

WE FOCUS ON Rach and Bobby.

BOBBY
 Month? 'Bout 20 grand, if I multi-table.

RACH
 Don't scare you, risking that much money?

BOBBY
 Beats workin'.

RACH
 Hey, do you or Joe know anything 'bout
 some new secret club?

BOBBY
 Which?

RACH
 It doesn't have a name.

BOBBY
 Where?

RACH
 No, no address.

BOBBY
 Phone number?

RACH
 Yeah... but even Zanto can't get it. So
 couldja find out anything?

Teddy with his iPod; Tamsen scrolling her BlackBerry:

TEDDY
 Have you gotten to check it out? My vlog?

TAMSEN
 Been so busy--I'm gonna, though!

TEDDY
 Actually I got it right here if you--

TAMSEN

Nuts! I double-booked next Wednesday!
 NYU's got this new gallery? And the
 Testicular Cancer Ball.

TEDDY

What's at NYU?

TAMSEN

Bennett Newman. But I got Sting to sing
 at Testicular!

TEDDY

Well anyway, whenever you get a chance,
 I'd really appreciate a couple views. And
 if you could rate me?, five stars? Tryin'
 to get 'em to feature me. You get a lotta
 subscribers like that.

TAMSEN

(to the group)

Y'all got your invites? My housewarming?

Her friends GRUNT AGREEMENT.

TAMSEN

If you could RSVP ASAP? Bobby, tell Joe?

SHEILA

Yeah what's with him? I left 11 messages.

TEDDY

Me too--'s he sick?

Bobby just pulls out a portable VIDEO GAME, starts
 playing. MACHINE GUN SOUNDS pour out.

TAMSEN

Is Joe okay?

BOBBY

Don't know. Left.

Everyone looks at Rach.

RACH

Hey it's news to me too!

TAMSEN

Where'd he go?

Bobby doesn't reply.

SHEILA

Quit the shit. What happened?

BOBBY
I went to AC. Get back--

INT. BOBBY'S APARTMENT - DAY - FLASHBACK

Bobby barrels through his front door.

BOBBY
Shoulda been there, bro! Six lap dances,
lost ten thousand bucks--it was awesome!

Charges up to Joe's room--the closed door from earlier--
opens it. Stares, stunned.

INT. JOE'S ROOM - THAT MOMENT - FLASHBACK

Stripped empty, except for two OBJECTS on the floor.

Bobby picks one up: Joe's graduation watch. The time's
stopped. Picks up the other: their graduation day photo.
Joe's face has been scribbled out.

INT. HOPES N' BEANS - A MOMENT LATER

TEDDY
When was this?

BOBBY
Tenth.

RACH
And you didn't tell us?!

TEDDY
Did you call his folks?

BOBBY
Haven't heard from him either. For all
they know he's--.

The group sits, trying to absorb this. Steppenwolf
approaches, oblivious, grabs the empty chair.

STEPPENWOLF
Guys savin' this?

TEDDY
That's--Joe's.

BOBBY
Take it.

SHEILA
Bobby.

BOBBY

Take it!

Steppenwolf leaves without the chair.

Bobby's CELL RINGS. He ignores it. Rach looks, grabs it.

RACH

JOE!... Yeah it's me, are you okay?

Rach puts the cell on speaker, sets it on Joe's chair.

JOE (O.S.)

'm I on? Hello, friends.

SHEILA

How you know who's here?

JOE (O.S.)

It's Wednesday. Keeping our pack together, eh Bobby?

TEDDY

Joe where are you?

**To read the rest of this screenplay, please contact me
at: chrisvanstrander@gmail.com.**