

# FROM THE SOURCE

Written by

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First Draft

Special Thanks to:

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FADE IN:

MONTAGE - SEB'S DEMO REEL

ORCHESTRAL MUSIC plays along with the video:

- A MAN (50s) standing on the street while cars pass in front of him at double speed.
- A WOMAN (30s) reading a book in the subway.
- A CHILD covering his eyes and counting with his fingers.
- A WOMAN (20s) blowing birthday candles.
- A fire.
- Two KIDS (teens) giggling, about to kiss.
- A MAN (40s), tearing, pointing and loading a gun.

MAN  
(filtered)  
I'm sorry.

A NOTIFICATION pauses the video.

ON SEB'S MONITOR:  
MESSAGES

Laura (now): Liar! you're still homeeeeeee

ZOOM OUT:

INT. SEB'S STUDIO APARTMENT - WORKING AREA - DAY

SEB (21), a scraggly man with dishevelled hair, is sitting on a swivel chair looking at a monitor. His eyes widen.

SEB  
Fuck.

MUSIC CUE: "Broken Boy" by Cage The Elephant.

Behind the monitor, a corkboard with a single post-it note that reads: "TO DO: [ ] DEMO REEL [ ] EDIT FALL VID [ ] VIDEASSAY SUNSET BLV [ ] SEP TUITION".

On the desk, an *Aglaonema Wishes* plant and a notebook that has been through a lot; its cover reads: "SEB RICHFORD". Lying next to it, his phone. On the other side, a closed laptop is feeding the monitor through an HDMI cable.

Seb stands up and YANKS the HDMI cable, pushing the swivel chair. A damaged backpack leaning against the base of the chair HITS the floor.

Seb takes the backpack and puts his notebook and laptop inside. He slings it over one shoulder. He takes his phone from the desk and calls Isaac, tucking it between his free shoulder and ear.

He heads to the entrance.

INT. SEB'S STUDIO APARTMENT - KITCHEN AREA/ENTRANCE -  
CONTINUOUS

Seb picks up his shoes lying on the floor. He begins to put on his shoes awkwardly while swaying.

SEB  
Morning, Isaac. Can you tell Mr.  
Marlowe that--  
(beat)  
Don't you feel like a dog with  
Laura's tracking app?

Seb PULLS the lock chain, opens and exits through the door. In front of his apartment, the elevator door sits with an "Out of service" badge.

SLAM and the sound of the door being LOCKED from outside.

SEB (O.S.) (CONT'D)  
Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

INT. SEB'S BUILDING - FIRE EXIT - DAY

Seb erratically descends through the fire-escape stairs for four floors. It looks like he's spiraling downwards.

EXT. SEB'S BUILDING/ISAAC'S CAR - DAY

Seb quickly descends the fire escape and opens the building door.

ISAAC (24) is behind the wheel of his car, waiting for Seb in front of the building.

ISAAC  
Hurry up! This detour's gonna cost  
me my attendance grade!

Seb gets into the passenger seat and fastens his seatbelt while Isaac starts the engine. He drives off.

INT. UNIVERSITY - LECTURE HALL - DAY

40 STUDENTS are scattered across the seats in the room. On the floor, the head of faculty, MR. MARLOWE (50s), holding a sheet, is taking attendance. Besides him, the Instructors, MS. CHÁVEZ (40s), MR. ROLLAND (60s), MS. HURD (40s) and MS. ALEXANDER (30).

MR. MARLOWE  
... Pardo?

PARDO  
(raising his hand)  
Here.

MR. MARLOWE  
Peterson?

PETERSON (O.S.)  
Here.

MR. MARLOWE  
Richford?

The door BURSTS OPEN. Seb and Isaac enter the room. The door closes behind them.

END MUSIC CUE.

SEB  
(catching his breath)  
Here.

MR. MARLOWE  
Almost on time, Mr. Richford.  
Surprising if you ask me.

Seb rolls his eyes. Isaac and he go up the aisle looking for seats in the last row, next to LAURA (22).

Isaac and Seb walk in front of people, forcing them to scoop up their belongings.

|                             |              |
|-----------------------------|--------------|
| MR. MARLOWE (O.S.) (CONT'D) | ISAAC        |
| Shaw?                       | (whispering) |
|                             | Hi, sorry.   |

|             |              |
|-------------|--------------|
| SHAW (O.S.) | SEB          |
| Here.       | (whispering) |
|             | Thank you    |

MR. MARLOWE (O.S.)  
Schmidt?  
(beat)  
Scott?

ISAAC  
(whispering)  
Mind if I?..

SCOTT  
Here.

Isaac and Seb sit beside Laura.

MR. MARLOWE (O.S.)  
Sutton?

Laura raises her hand.

LAURA  
(to Mr. Marlowe)  
Present.  
(to Seb and Isaac)  
Took you long enough.

MR. MARLOWE  
Taylor? Close call.

ISAAC  
Here.

MR. MARLOWE  
All right... Orson Welles  
once said, "Don't give them  
what you think they want"...

LAURA  
(to Seb)  
What's the excuse today?

Seb takes his phone and earphones out of his pocket while  
Mrs. Chávez gives a MUFFLED speech.

SEB  
Remember what I was working on over  
the summer?

Seb turns to Isaac and Laura, giving each of them an earbud.  
They put them on. He connects them to his phone and plays the  
demo reel.

MR. MARLOWE  
... Mr. Richford, could you please?

SEB  
Yeah. Yes, sorry.

Seb sits back in his chair and stares straight ahead while  
his friends watch his work.

INT. UNIVERSITY - HALLWAY - DAY

Students are exiting the lecture hall; Seb, Isaac and Laura behind them, walking side by side.

ISAAC

I don't remember the shot of the fire looking like that...

SEB

'Cuz it didn't. I had to reshoot some of it.

ISAAC

It looks more polished. Goes well with the score.

SEB

Thank--

LAURA

What are you trying to say?

SEB (CONT'D)

What do you mean? It's a showcase.

LAURA

What's the greater story?

SEB

I... ummm.

Laura passes Seb and turns to him. The three stop walking.

LAURA

Okay, I'll raise you an easier one: Where's the ending?

EXT. UNIVERSITY - GARDEN - DAY

Seb lies on a picnic blanket before the late-summer green grass. Isaac is sitting next to him, and Laura is standing in front of him.

SEB

Again, what's wrong with the funeral? the face of that kid... It's heartbreaking. It's inspiring.

Laura eclipses the sun.

LAURA

It doesn't fit...

ISAAC

I think it does. It's the ending of a short, hence, the ending of his demo reel.

Seb raises and sits. He points at Isaac.

SEB

See? He gets it.

LAURA

The problem is that *it* feels like an ending... you just said:

(imitating Seb)

"There! That's all I can do".

Seb stands up and faces Laura. He just stares at her. In awe; defiant. A phone ALARM goes off.

Laura takes her phone from her pocket and dismisses the alarm.

LAURA (CONT'D)

Okay, boys. Time to go to class.

INT. UNIVERSITY - DOCUMENTARY CLASSROOM - DAY

Isaac, Laura, and Seb enter a room with the lights off. 10 students are sitting in desk armchairs talking among each other. Suspended at the back, a projector turned on, illuminating a screen placed on the whiteboard.

They take seats in the middle of the classroom.

The title of the presentation projected reads "INTRODUCTION TO DOCUMENTARY FILM-MAKING by Graham Marlowe, PhD."

SEB

Oh, give me a break.

From the door, Mr. Marlowe enters with a steaming cup of coffee. He sits behind a desk and places his cup on it. He is facing the students. On his desk is a desktop computer.

MR. MARLOWE

Good morning. I know that many of you were expecting Mrs. Chávez to teach this class, but she is now working on a project, and we have decided that I will take over the subject.

(MORE)

MR. MARLOWE (CONT'D)

I already know all of you, so we can skip the introduction and attendance check. There's a lot to do this semester.

Students take their computers and notebooks out. Mr. Marlowe takes an electronic pointer and stands up. He clicks to go to the next slide: "ASSIGNMENTS".

MR. MARLOWE (CONT'D)

This semester, you will only have one assignment, and I will grade your process, research, and final product.

Laura is frantically taking notes on her computer. Isaac is scribbling, and Seb is making bullet points.

MR. MARLOWE (CONT'D)

So, there is...

(mumbling and pointing)

four, eight, twelve--

(back to the students)

thirteen of you. Get into pairs and be aware that you'll be working with each other for the entire semester, no exceptions.

The students start murmuring and changing seats around Isaac, Laura and Seb. The three get into planning.

ISAAC

I think we could ask him.

LAURA

It's not like a single person can produce anything by themselves.

SEB

Mr Marlowe, since we are an odd number. We're thinking of working as a group... of three.

Mr. Marlowe gets closer to Seb's seat.

MR. MARLOWE

I'm afraid not, Mr. Richford. Your friends can work together, and you can work alone.

The rest of the students have rearranged and are now quiet.

MR. MARLOWE (CONT'D)

Admittedly, you are more than capable of doing the work on your own. And you'll appreciate that no one will have to depend on your sense of time or lack thereof-- very well. Without further ado.

Seb rolls his eyes as Mr. Marlowe turns to the screen and clicks for the next slides: "SHORT-FORM DOCUMENTARY". Isaac and Laura exchange worried looks.

MR. MARLOWE (CONT'D)

The project, as if it weren't obvious: a short-form documentary. Free topic-- with substance. Maximum runtime of fifteen minutes. No reenactments or stylized footage. Only direct observation. Very important: All subjects must sign releases, and they must be screened in class.

(beat)

Any questions?

INT. SEB'S STUDIO APARTMENT - KITCHEN AREA - NIGHT

A KETTLE goes off. The only thing illuminating is the extractor's light. Seb takes it from the stove and pours the hot water into his cup with instant coffee. He turns off the stove.

He takes the cup and walks to his working area.

INT. SEB'S STUDIO APARTMENT - WORKING AREA - CONTINUOUS

Seb sits down and puts the cup on his desktop. He takes a pair of headphones lying on the keyboard and puts them on. The screen is too bright; it illuminates his tired face.

He has a video editing software program open. He is working on a vertical promotional video. He types: "FALL COLLECTION". Seb selects the font and tests some of them with the motion graphics. MUFFLED MUSIC can be heard every time he plays the video.

He pastes a video of falling dried leaves and removes its background.

KA-CHING.

ON SEB'S COMPUTER:

YOUVID

New paid comment @HandScootJenny \$100 : Are you actively looking for a job?... (more)

Seb's eyes widen. He CLICKS on the notification.

SEB

What the...

It triggers the web browser and opens to a video on Seb's YouVid channel titled: "Why Stories Outlive Their Creators".

In the video, Seb is standing in front of his desk, speaking directly to the camera.

SEB (VIDEO) (CONT'D)

(filtered)

Why do some films, books, and myths  
keep growing, even when their  
creators are forgotten?...

Seb lowers the volume on the viewer until it's muted.

He scrolls to the comment section. There are a couple of comments from @FadeInLaura and @ISeeIsaac hyping the video.

The whole comment reads: @HandScootJenny "Are you actively looking for a job? We have an opportunity for someone with your eye for detail. If you're interested, reply and we'll be in touch."

SEB (CONT'D)

(sotto voce)

Definitely not a scam.

Seb hovers over the comment for a couple of seconds.

He CLICKS on Reply and starts typing: Is this a scam.

He deletes it and gives it another try: How much \$.

SEB (CONT'D)

(nonchalantly)

Fuck it.

Seb backspaces until the comment is gone and types a single dot. He posts the comment.

He looks at the screen, waiting for something to happen.

Nothing...

Seb goes back to the video editing software.

He adds a new text box: "FIND IT IN YOUR NEAREST STORE".

His phone VIBRATES on the table.

SEB (CONT'D)

No way.

Seb takes the phone and turns to his face. He reads the screen.

ON SEB'S PHONE:

Incoming Call

No Called ID

SEB (CONT'D)

No fucking way.

He answers the call.

SEB (CONT'D)

Hello?

DISTORTED VOICE (V.O.)

(filtered)

Mr. Richford. That was a quick response. I went through your work and watched your videos. You have great attention to detail.

SEB

(laughing)

Very funny. Who is this?

DISTORTED VOICE (V.O.)

(filtered)

Let's call it... an opportunity. I think you're talented. Overlooked, maybe.

SEB

And you got my number from..?

DISTORTED VOICE (V.O.)

(filtered)

It's everywhere, Sebastian. You've been asking the world to notice you, and someone did.

SEB

Oh, ummm, I... I'll cut to the chase: What is this about?

DISTORTED VOICE (V.O.)  
(filtered)  
This is a job. A professional  
opportunity. Eight hundred grand.  
Cash.

SEB  
What's the catch?

DISTORTED VOICE (V.O.)  
(filtered)  
You'll have to fully commit to  
it... Tomorrow, you'll have an  
interview.

SEB  
Wha--when?

The LINE GOES DEAD. Seb is flabbergasted. He runs his hands through his face.

Back in his job, he saves the project and closes the window, revealing the YouVid page again. Both the comment and his reply have disappeared.

Seb disconnects the HDMI from his monitor and flips open his laptop. He opens a video call app. The cursor hovers over a group chat labelled: "The Musketeers." Seb CLIKS.

A DIALING TONE. Then, the screen populates with two boxes: one with Laura in her dorm room having dinner, and the other with the letters IT.

LAURA  
(filtered)  
Hello?

The second box now has Isaac sprawled out on his bed with a headset on, holding a console controller. He's playing video games.

ISAAC  
(filtered)  
Look behind--shit!

Isaac takes his headset off.

SEB  
Guys. Hey. I have something wild to  
tell you.

INT. SEB'S STUDIO APARTMENT - KITCHEN AREA - MOMENTS LATER

Seb is cooking ramen noodles and chicken. His laptop is closer to the stove than it should be. On his computer screen, there are boxes containing Laura and Isaac.

Laura is now doing her skincare routine in her bathroom, and Isaac is sitting in front of a desk.

LAURA  
(filtered)  
And what did you say?

SEB  
Before I could even ask for details, the call was disconnected, and the account was deleted.

ISAAC  
(filtered)  
Sketchy much.

Seb takes his phone from his pocket and shows his friends his Bank App. He has \$130 in savings.

SEB  
The thing is, I still got the money from the comment.

On his Bank App, Seb moves \$100 from his savings to "U-Fund."

LAURA  
(filtered)  
Okay, some lunatic paid \$100 to play a cruel joke on you.

ISAAC  
(filtered)  
Or... here me out: Seb was scouted by a super-private company to work on a big-budget film--

Seb puts his phone away and continues cooking. He stirs the noodles and sauce with the spatula and flips the pieces of chicken.

LAURA  
(filtered)  
By bribing him for the amount of a low-budget production... yeah, something doesn't add up.

ISAAC  
(filtered)  
Can we be delusional for a second?

LAURA  
(filtered) No  
SEB  
Okay

ISAAC  
(filtered)  
Go and find your most expensive  
suit--

SEB  
I've only got one suit.

ISAAC  
(filtered)  
And use it tomorrow, so that you'll  
be ready for the mystery interview.

LAURA  
(filtered)  
He'll look pathetic-- no offense.

SEB  
None taken-- I'll look pathetic.

ISAAC  
Worst-case scenario: yes. You'll  
feel humiliated for a couple of  
hours, and that'll be it.

SEB  
On the other hand..?

ISAAC  
(filtered)  
Best-case scenario. You got an  
almost million-dollar job!

LAURA  
Tha-- that's it?

Smoke is coming out of one of Seb's pans. He has burnt the  
chicken. SMOKE ALARM is on.

SEB  
Shit. Fuck.

Seb turns off the stove and takes the pan to the sink.

LAURA  
(filtered)  
IT'S A SIGN... WEAR THE SUIT  
TOMORROW. BYE. LOVE YOU.

Laura hangs up.

Seb opens the tap and the pan HISSES violently. Steam bursts upward, clouding the tiny kitchen.

ISAAC  
(filtered)  
MY CONDOLENCES TO THE CHEF.

Isaac hangs up.

Seb lets the water run and grabs a kitchen towel to fan the smoke alarm with frantic swipes.

EXT. UNIVERSITY - ENTRANCE - DAY

A pair of loafers and dress pants step off a bus. Seb, carrying his backpack, stands still deciding whether to go in or go home and change his suit and tie. His face reveals he didn't sleep much last night.

Too late. The bus has closed its doors and is going away.

A deep breath and steps forward.

INT. UNIVERSITY - PRINTING ROOM - DAY

Seb taps his Uni-ID card on a reader on top of an all-in-one printer. He then presses OK to release the queue. The printer starts to WORK loudly.

Laura is standing next to the tray, which she peeks curiously at. She notices a sheet of paper with colors slowly emerging from it.

LAURA  
So you are seriously *serious* about  
this.

SEB  
I spent the night designing my  
résumé.

A sheet made its way out to the tray. Another one is coming shortly.

LAURA  
Colors and all?

SEB  
They said I possess good attention  
to detail.

A second sheet is out, but the printer hasn't stopped.

LAURA  
A-ha. But three?

SEB  
Just in case...

Seb swiftly snatches the sheets from the tray. He puts them inside his backpack.

INT. UNIVERSITY - DOCUMENTARY CLASSROOM - DAY

The room is dimly lit with the beam of a projector showing a presentation on the collapsible screen. From his backpack, Seb takes out his laptop.

MR. MARLOWE  
There are no set rules,

Seb places his laptop on the armchair. In front of him, Mr. Marlowe is teaching a class on The Ethics of Documentary Filmmaking. To his side, Isaac and Laura are taking notes.

There are ten other students, and Seb's suit stands out from the summer outfits worn by the rest of his classmates.

MR. MARLOWE (CONT'D)  
However, these steps will benefit  
your end products. Firstly,  
understand that truth must come  
before ego,

Seb takes his earphones from his pocket, plugs them into his laptop, and places one earbud in his ear. He opens the video editing software and clicks on the Demo Reel file. Isaac is peeking.

ISAAC  
Not done yet?

SEB  
For me, it was.

ISAAC  
Hmm, I see she got into your head.

Seb rolls his eyes. They both know it's true.

MR. MARLOWE

Truth doesn't mean facts. Those are cheap, they're everywhere.

Isaac returns to note-taking, and Seb inserts a new clip, placing it at the end of the timeline.

MR. MARLOWE (CONT'D)

Truth refers to the WHY.

-- A MAN (40's) sitting, watching the sunrise on a BEACH; distraught, crying, anxious yet relieved.

MR. MARLOWE (V.O.)

A filmmaker can manipulate with a cut, with a score, even with silence.

-- A large WAVE comes ashore, and as it retreats, it sweeps the man away, leaving nothing on the beach.

MR. MARLOWE (V.O.)

But every choice you make either serves the subject... or serves yourself.

MURMURS ripple through the class. Seb types distractedly over a black screen: "Material directed and edited by Sebastian Richford."

MR. MARLOWE

Sit down with your partner to discuss and research whose truth you would like to explore.

Seb raises his head as his classmates rearrange and drift away from him.

MR. MARLOWE (CONT'D)

And, Mr. Richford, I'll do you a favour by asking you to work, as paying attention seems such a difficult task right now.

A ripple of stifled laughter. Laura throws Seb a sympathetic glance; Isaac smirks, trying to lighten the sting.

SEB

(defensive)

I am paying attention. Just... multitasking.

MR. MARLOWE

Then multitask your way into the assignment.

The class goes quiet. Seb freezes, cheeks hot. Mr. Marlowe turns around.

SEB (PRELAP)

He doesn't even hide it!

INT. UNIVERSITY - MIXED BATHROOM - DAY

Seb and Isaac are sitting on the sink. Both are facing the only closed stall. Laura is behind it.

Their backpacks and a tennis bag with rackets are on the floor.

LAURA (O.C)

He doesn't hate you. He's just hard on you.

SEB

I'm not a kid. I don't need his *tough love*.

ISAAC

To be fair, you were kind of a nag back in 101.

SEB

But that was three years ago.

LAURA (O.C.)

Point stands...

Laura comes out of the stall wearing her tennis uniform and her backpack on her back. She starts to tie her hair back in a ponytail.

LAURA (CONT'D)

You've always been a little stubborn. Maybe that's what he sees in you.

ISAAC

If he really hated you, he wouldn't even bother. He'd just let you fail in peace.

Laura goes to the sink and fixes her hair, looking at the mirror.

LAURA

You are gonna be some freshmen's cautionary tale. That's for sure.

(mocking Isaac)

Ready, love?

Isaac stands up and picks up his bags.

ISAAC

Oh, it's on.

Isaac and Laura make their way to the door. Seb stands up too.

SEB

Love?

LAURA

Tennis for zero. Which is exactly what Isaac's gonna score today.

ISAAC

Any news about the interview?

Seb shakes his head.

ISAAC (CONT'D)

Well, we can meet later if you're still around.

Laura nods.

SEB

Yep.

Laura and Isaac leave the bathroom.

INT. UNIVERSITY - LIBRARY - DAY

The afternoon sun beats down on the large library with glass walls.

Seb sits in a study area cubicle, fully immersed in work. With earphones on, loosening his tie and eyes locked on his laptop, he jots down bullet notes in his notebook. His phone is facing downwards so that he doesn't get distracted.

Seb has two tabs open on his computer that divide the screen in half. The first is an article on "The Greatest Documentaries of All Time," and the other is a YouVid video loading dialogue box; the upload of "Sebastian Richford | Demo Reel" is at 30%; the remaining processing time is about 20 minutes.

Half a mile from the library, Seb can see minute dots moving in orange gravel.

EXT. UNIVERSITY - TENNIS COURT - DAY

Laura hammers a serve across the net. Isaac scrambles, nearly misses, and lunges at the last second, sending the ball wide. He GROANS.

LAURA  
Thirty-love!

ISAAC  
Tell me again why I agreed to this?

LAURA  
Because you keep insisting you're athletic, and I needed a partner.

ISAAC  
Now I get why Jim bailed on you.

Laura gives him a playful, threatening look. He SIGHS and goes to the starting position again.

INT. UNIVERSITY - LIBRARY - DAY

Seb highlights a line: "Truth." Under it, a list of possible topics for his documentary: "-Sex workers -Musician/band -Me? -high-performance athlete -Bus driver"

He jots it in his notebook, underlining it twice.

The upload bar moves faster now, it ticks to 71% and the remaining processing time is about 5 minutes.

Around him, people start leaving.

Seb takes his phone and the screen turns on. No new notifications.

He SIGHS and opens the Messages App. Seb texts "The Musketeers" group chat: "Still no news. I'm gonna head home."

Seb locks his phone and starts packing his stuff.

EXT. UNIVERSITY - CAMPUS - AFTERNOON

Seb is walking away from the library. He is listening to music and feeling equal parts disappointed and incredulous. He takes off his tie and unbuttons his neck.

From afar, two people JOG towards him. As they get closer, it's evident that it is Laura and Isaac.

Laura steps in front of Seb. He stops and takes an earbud off. Isaac is beside him.

SEB  
I'm not gonna even ask.

LAURA  
Tracker app.

SEB  
I imagine... world's probably  
laughing at me right now.

They walk forward together.

ISAAC  
World's not watching. Don't lose  
heart.

LAURA  
Isaac lost three sets, and he's  
doing just fine, see?

Isaac nods.

SEB  
(sarcastic)  
Yeah, yeah. Thanks for the pep  
talk, team.

They keep walking together until they reach a fork in the path.

LAURA  
Alright, dorm's this way. I'll see  
you guys tomorrow.

ISAAC  
And my chariot awaits in lot four.  
Try not to miss me too much.

Laura rolls her eyes and heads off. Isaac veers the other way with a lazy wave.

Seb slows, watching them go. Then he pulls his earbuds back in and keeps walking alone, straight down the middle path.

EXT. BUS STOP - NIGHT

Seb trudges along the sidewalk, earbuds in, holding his tie. The campus lights glow behind him as he approaches a dimly lit and lonely bus stop. A single flickering streetlamp buzzes overhead.

He sits on the bench and drops his backpack at his feet. Pulls out his phone. No notifications. No calls. The battery is low.

Across the street, a armored SUV idles with its headlights off. Seb doesn't notice.

The digital bus schedule scrolls: NEXT BUS - 3 MINUTES.

Seb leans forward, elbows on his knees, scrolling aimlessly through his social feed.

The car door SLAMS. Two hooded men in black clothes, RAY (40s) and KEITH (40s), approach fast.

A black hood is put on Seb's head. His wrist gets clamped as he tries to get up.

SEB  
(struggling)  
Hey! No, no, no. Let me--

The sound of a GUN COCKING freezes Seb.

RAY (O.S.)  
Shut up and walk.

Shaking, Seb starts to walk as he is dragged towards a car. From inside the hood, the lights start to dim.

The flickering streetlamp BUZZES as the bus finally gets to the station. Its doors HISS open. The bus waits. Then DRIVES off, empty.

INT. CAR - NIGHT

Seb sits beside Keith. His head is hooded, wrists bound, and his backpack on his lap. He is breathing heavily, trying to keep it together.

Ray is driving. The engine HUMS and the tires DRONE over asphalt. He is going fast.

SEB  
(muffled)  
Please. Where are you taking me?  
(MORE)

SEB (CONT'D)

(beat)

Whatever it is, I'm not your guy.

The car SWERVES sharply. Seb jerks forward, and the seatbelt cuts off his breath.

KEITH

(stressed)

We're almost there.

(beat)

You haven't done anything. There.

Shush.

Seb eases his body a little. Behind the hood, he is now mostly confused.

EXT. COUNTRYSIDE ROAD - NIGHT

The SUV drives through an unpaved road. It's a little bumpy; no street lights and a dense forest on both sides. Searchlights illuminate the path.

EXT./INT. CAR/FIONN'S MANSION - GATES - NIGHT

As the car approaches, an iron gate suddenly reflects the headlights' beam. The headlights dim, and the vehicle comes to a halt.

Ray lowers his window, and a security guard, JOE (50s), approaches the vehicle. He stands on the driver's side and takes a peek at the backseat.

JOE

(mocking)

I didn't know it was a job for two.

RAY

I didn't know you wanted your teeth removed.

Joe SCOFFS.

JOE

Come in. You're already late.

Joe walks away from the car, and the gate swings wide open.

The car drives inside, revealing a three-storey mansion built to impress. The driveway has a massive roundabout. In the center stands a three-tiered fountain adorned with carved stallions.

## EXT. FIONN'S MANSION - ENTRANCE - NIGHT

The car comes to a full stop in front of a set of steps. Ray gets out of the car and SLAMS the driver's door shut. Keith also gets out from the back.

KEITH

Get down, kid.

Slowly, Seb gets out of the car, holding onto the door and the seat. When he is standing on the cobblestone, Ray and Keith each take one of his arms.

The three of them walk around the back of the car and stand in front of the stairs; Keith and Ray are upright. Seb, not so much.

From the doorway, a pair of oxfords approaches the last step with a confident and imposing STRIDE. Then they stop.

Ray removes Seb's hood, and he freezes when he looks up.

Seb sees a man in front of him, dressed in a suit, similar to his own, except that this one looks tailor-made. His hair is neatly combed and a little gray. Seb knows who he is.

Standing is FIONN "CANDY" JOHNSTON (42), a very charming and very infamous drug lord.

FIONN

Welcome. Come in.

Fionn's voice is both soothing and terrifying. Seb cannot bring himself to take a step, so Keith and Ray push him forward. They go up the stairs steadily and follow Fionn inside.

## INT. FIONN'S MANSION - 1ST FLOOR HALLWAY - NIGHT

Seb walks ahead of Ray and Keith, who pose as his bodyguards-- Fionn in front of them. Seb stares at every painting and picture in the hallway.

FIONN

I apologize if you felt threatened by my men. It's just protocol... I hope the road wasn't too rough.

Fionn stops at a large wooden door. He opens it and motions for Seb to enter. Ray and Keith remain standing behind it.

FIONN (CONT'D)  
Sebastian, if you don't mind, could  
you please join me in my office for  
a private conversation?

The two men in suits enter. Seb turns to the bodyguards, his  
expression filled with fear. Keith closes the door.

INT. FIONN'S MANSION - OFFICE - NIGHT

The studio looks sober and well-maintained. The wood finishes  
contrast nicely with the large garden seen through the window  
at the back of the room.

With an extensive collection of literature on the walls and a  
record player in the background, Seb wonders how many weapons  
might be hidden away.

On the back wall hangs a large painting of Fionn with his  
wife and two children. Beneath it sits a sizable oak desk  
accompanied by two chairs facing one another.

FIONN  
Please, take a seat.

Fionn takes a seat and motions for Seb to do the same. On the  
desk lies a box of Cuban cigars-- Fionn takes one of them. He  
shows Seb the box.

FIONN (CONT'D)  
Do you smoke?

SEB  
(shaking his head)  
No.

FIONN  
Good. It's a horrible vice.

Seb nods as Fionn lights the cigar.

SEB  
(timidly)  
I'm sorry... what am I doing here?

FIONN  
Sebastian Richford. Twenty-one  
years old. Film student at UCom.  
Average grades but above-average  
work.  
(starts smoking)  
You're here because I've seen your  
essays and video-- movies.

SEB  
(quietly)  
Shorts.

Fionn starts smoking.

FIONN  
Shorts, right.

Seb nods again, politely smiling.

FIONN (CONT'D)  
Do you know who I am?

SEB  
You-- you're Candy Johnston.

FIONN  
Ridiculous. Don't you think? The  
use of euphemisms, I mean-- Don't  
call me that. Only strangers do.

Seb turns pale.

SEB  
(concerned)  
Are we not... strangers?

FIONN  
Sebastian, I make it my business to  
know the people I welcome into my  
home. I expect you to make it your  
business... to know me.

Seb is not following.

FIONN (CONT'D)  
The thing is, I want to create a  
film. About me, my life, my work,  
my family... And I want you to make  
it.

SEB  
I don't think I'm the right person  
for this job.

FIONN  
And why is that?

Seb won't tell he's panicking; instead, he fibs.

SEB

Well... Fionn? You'd want someone professional who has the necessary credentials and skills to do you justice.

FIONN

I know those people. All of them ruined by the industry-- Hollywood. But you're not ruined yet.

(smiles)

You have something. Not many people see it, but I did--

SEB

It's flattering. It really is, but I--

Fionn leans back, unbothered, and taps ash from his cigar.

FIONN

I think you're not getting it, kid. I'm not asking whether you want to do it or not.

Seb hesitates, caught between fear and curiosity.

FIONN (CONT'D)

I'm telling you we're set on eight hundred grand.

Seb is now frightened.

SEB

I-- I can't. I don't have the experience or equipment; I have school, a job, and I'm sure one of my classmates would--

FIONN

You want options?... Fine, I'll give you options: You can either shake my hand and I'll pay your tuition for this semester right now, or you can walk out and forever wish you hadn't.

Seb, trembling, extends his hand. Fionn shakes it, smiling. Deal's closed.

INT. SEB'S STUDIO APARTMENT - KITCHEN AREA/ENTRANCE - NIGHT

Seb, hyperventilating, enters his home and closes the door behind him with his back to it. He LOCKS the door.

SEB

(sotto voce)

Fuck, fuck, fuck fuck, fuck...

Seb glares in every direction; he's paranoid. Finally, he fixes his gaze ahead.

Through the window, on the street opposite, Ray and Keith are standing, leaning their backs against the car.

Seb runs to--

INT. SEB'S STUDIO APARTMENT - LIVING AREA - CONTINUOUS

-- close the blinds and turn off the lights.

Seb grabs his phone charger from the desk and hurries over to the bed. He plugs the charger into his phone and the wall socket beside the bed, then waits for his phone to turn on.

The display is on, and he goes to the Messages App. He texts "The Musketeers".

ON SCREEN:

Need to talk be4 class. URGENT!!!

SENT. He then switches to a web browser and searches "Fionn Johnston." Seb taps on the NEWS tab. The results: a display of censored images and articles alluding to drug trafficking and domestic terrorism; Fionn's face all over them.

He opens one of them and lies in bed.

Seb opens another article,

A third one,

One after another for the whole night until he falls asleep.

INT. SEB'S STUDIO APARTMENT - LIVING AREA - DUSK

The sun is coming up, and Seb's ALARM goes off. He jumps up and opens the blinds. The car and the men are gone.

INT. SEB'S STUDIO APARTMENT - BATHROOM - DAY

Seb is taking a SHOWER, letting the water fall on his face.

His phone lies on the sink. A CHIME.

ON SCREEN:

Laura (now): See u at the cafe

Isaac (now): Be there at 8

INT. UNIVERSITY - CAFÉ - DAY

The space has a modern industrial style, but the presence of plants softens the look and prevents it from feeling too cold or uninviting-- peak millennial-core.

On top of a table, three steaming mugs. Isaac, Laura, and Seb sit facing one another. Seb looks restless, pulling at the sleeve of his hoodie.

ISAAC

I thought he was hiding somewhere in Italy.

Laura is looking at something on her phone.

LAURA

No... he is banned from entering the European Union.

ISAAC

Anyway. His head is pretty expensive right now. Why would he be here?

Seb buries his face in his hands. He GROANS.

LAURA

It can't be just for you.

ISAAC

On the brighter side, you got two for one. I'm sure Mr. Marlowe will be... *moved*.

Isaac couldn't find a better word to finish the sentence.

SEB

No. If I get caught working for him-- that's aiding and abetting, and I'll go to prison.

ISAAC

You're being coerced. Go to the police.

Laura can't believe Isaac just said the most obvious thing.

SEB

No. He expects me to do that... His bodyguards were standing watch outside my building last night. They might even be watching us right now.

Seb looks over his shoulder toward the store window.

ISAAC

So, should we pretend this never happened?

Seb goes back to the conversation.

LAURA

No. Seb will shoot the documentary, filming b-roll as evidence-- 'behind the scenes' footage. That way, if anything happens, Seb won't be the scapegoat. He's the whistleblower.

ISAAC

Like a dead man's switch?

Laura nods.

Seb was exaggerating, but,

PULL OUT:

EXT. UNIVERSITY - CAMPUS/CAFÉ - DAY

Quarter of a mile away from the café, behind a parking lot, the figures of Keith and Ray can be seen observing the musketeers as they finish their drinks and exit the establishment.

LAURA (O.S.)

Yes, but for it to work, Seb, you've got to keep it under wraps. No telling anyone. No posting about it. Nothing. Quiet. Understand?

INT. UNIVERSITY - MIXING CLASSROOM - DAY

A sleek, dimly lit room shaped like a miniature movie theater. Tiered rows of desks face a towering screen at the front. Along the walls, thick acoustic panels.

At the center sits a mixing console the size of a dinner table, its surface contains faders, glowing meters, and LED readouts. Twin monitors flank it, scrolling with waveforms and timecodes.

FIFTEEN CLASSMATES sit scattered across the theatre; Isaac, Laura and Seb next to each other. At the front, Ms. Alexander is teaching the class, looking at one of the monitors.

MS. ALEXANDER

Let's watch the following scene together and discuss which elements the editor decided should be heard.

A RINGTONE.

Seb takes his phone from his pocket. He is embarrassed as Ms. Alexander turns to face her students.

ON SEB'S PHONE:

Incoming Call  
No Called ID

MS. ALEXANDER (CONT'D)

Whoever owns that phone, say, has decided that what's happening in their life should be heard.

He ignores the call and silences his phone. Ms. Alexander looks at him.

MS. ALEXANDER (CONT'D)

Isn't that right, Sebastian?

SEB

Won't happen again.

Mr. Alexander smiles and turns to face the monitor again.

She clicks play.

INT. UNIVERSITY - HALLWAY - DAY

Seb is standing in a hallway's dead end. He's talking on his phone, half whispering, half screaming; fully frustrated.

SEB  
I have class. That's out of  
question.

KEITH (V.O.)  
(filtered)  
So, tonight.

STEPS are heard. Someone is approaching.

SEB  
I got to work.

KEITH (V.O.)  
(filtered)  
Quit.

SEB  
I can't. I'd have to send a two-  
weeks--

KEITH (V.O.)  
(filtered)  
It's not a question. And, kid,  
beware what you tell your fiends.

Seb wants to answer, but the call is disconnected.

SEB  
(into the phone's speaker)  
FUCK!!

INT. CAR - NIGHT

Seb is in the backseat of the SUV, looking at his phone,  
impassive. He is writing an email.

He's not interested in seeing the road or knowing where he  
is. He just doesn't want to be there.

Behind the steering wheel is Keith, who checks the rearview  
mirror.

KEITH  
Don't do anything stupid.

Seb meets Keith's gaze.

SEB  
(bothered)  
I'm just quitting my job.

KEITH

A word of advice, kid. Lose the attitude before it gets you in trouble.

Seb smiles, annoyed.

Keith turns his gaze back to the road. As his right hand steadies the wheel, the light catches a scar on his skin; a crude brand seared into the flesh: FJ. Burned in, like cattle.

EXT. COUNTRYSIDE ROAD - NIGHT

From high above, the car, looking miniature, follows the road through the dense forest.

At times it disappears beneath the canopy, only to reemerge as the road bends and curves.

EXT. FIONN'S MANSION - NIGHT

The car rolls to a stop at the main gates. A guard checks, then waves it through.

The vehicle keeps moving, but the view drifts upward and away, gliding across the driveway until the mansion dominates the frame.

INT. FIONN'S MANSION - DINING ROOM - NIGHT

A MAID drops a plate in front of Seb. It's sous vide pork chops and a side of mashed potatoes.

She walks away.

For a mansion, the dining room is modest and contemporary. Six light blue velvet chairs contrast with the dark wood of an oval table.

On the table, a centrepiece is a replica of a sailboat in light wood, with the FJ insignia.

And above it, a chandelier with gold finishes.

Fionn and Seb sit along the sides of the dining table, not at opposite ends; both are drinking Pinot Grigio. Behind Fionn, a huge painting of his wife, kid and him.

Fionn gestures for Seb to start eating.

FIONN

Go ahead.

SEB

I'll wait--

Fionn shows Seb his palm and shakes his head. Seb stops talking.

FIONN

I already ate.

Keith is standing in a corner of the room. Fionn turns to him.

FIONN (CONT'D)

You may leave.

He exits and closes the door behind him.

Seb starts eating quietly, focusing on his plate.

Fionn is attentive. Seb senses and looks at him.

SEB

I... I'm sorry-- thanks for dinner.

FIONN

Don't bother... How's school going?

SEB

I think you already know how it's going...

FIONN

In your own words, I mean.

SEB

Uneventful, I guess. You know how the first few weeks of the semester are.

FIONN

I don't know, actually. How's college?

This arouses Seb's curiosity.

SEB

Very much like high school, but all of a sudden, classes are interesting. What did you do after high school?

FIONN

I had to work. My father couldn't,  
and my mother didn't earn enough...

SEB

Where are they now?

FIONN

Keeping your parents company, I'm  
afraid.

Seb returns to reality. He's full all of a sudden.

Seb places the cutlery on the saucer, indicating that he has  
finished eating.

He then takes a large sip of wine.

Seb wipes the corner of his mouth with a cloth napkin.

FIONN (CONT'D)

Should we take this conversation on  
camera?

Seb is caught off guard. He wanted to delay the raising of  
that question as long as he could.

INT. FIONN'S MANSION - OFFICE - NIGHT

The space is illuminated using a lighting kit, consisting of  
a neutral key light aimed at the desk chair and a warm  
backlight placed at a diagonal angle for added depth.

Fionn is looking downwards while Seb clips a Lav mic inside  
his shirt. Seb is looking away.

Seb steps aside and nods for Fionn to button up his shirt.

MOMENTS LATER

Fionn is sitting upright in his desk chair, shirt fixed and  
hair well-groomed.

SEB (O.C.)

Have you always worked in..?

Fionn nods. He knows what Seb is meaning to ask.

In front of him and behind a camera held on a tripod, Seb,  
wearing a headset, hides his gaze.

FIONN

I began at the very bottom:  
smuggling across the country.  
Knowing I could get caught at any  
moment, I started stealing cars on  
the highways and negotiated  
commissions from my boss to make it  
worth my while. It was undoubtedly  
risky, but I needed the money.

SEB

Did *they* ever ask where your money  
came from?

FIONN

They did. Everyone does, at first.  
Then they realize some answers  
aren't worth the price.

SEB

Have you ever wanted to walk out of  
this *world*?

FIONN

Even if I wanted to, I couldn't do  
it. The only way to keep all of  
this is by staying in the game.

SEB

May I ask? Why are you doing this  
then?

Fionn thinks about how to start unfolding that question.

FIONN

It's a shameful occupation at  
first... but then, one day, the  
world gives you a name, everyone  
knows you, but forgets who you are.

(beat)

I want you to tell them who I am.

Something sparks in Seb.

INT. SEB'S STUDIO APARTMENT - KITCHEN AREA/ENTRANCE - DAWN

The door is open, and Seb goes in. His backpack hangs from a  
thread over his shoulder.

INT. SEB'S STUDIO APARTMENT - LIVING AREA - CONTINUOUS

The sun is coming up, so Seb goes to his window.

In the curb, Keith is behind the wheel. He waves at Seb goodbye. Keith drives away, and Seb closes the blinds.

Seb lies down on the bed.

INT. SEB'S STUDIO APARTMENT - LIVING AREA - DAY

Seb is still asleep in the clothes he wore the night before.

The midday sun filters through his window, illuminating his face. It bothers Seb, but not enough to wake him up.

KNOCKS on the door.

Seb wakes up suddenly and goes to--

INT. SEB'S STUDIO APARTMENT - KITCHEN AREA/ENTRANCE -  
CONTINUOUS

-- the door. Seb looks through the peephole and sees a MAIL PERSON in the hallway holding a cardboard box.

Seb waits for them to leave the package on the floor.

They do and walk away.

Seb PULLS the lock chain. Then, OPENS the door.

He takes the package and CLOSES the door.

INT. SEB'S STUDIO APARTMENT - KITCHEN AREA - MOMENTS LATER

Seb is in a video call with Isaac, who is at university. Seb's phone is standing upright on the counter, facing the package and Seb, who is holding a pair of scissors.

SEB

What do you think are the chances  
of this being a horse head?

ISAAC

(filtered)

What are the chances of you coming  
to Marlowe's class?

SEB

(squinting)

I'll live.

Seb STABS the cardboard box and RIPS the adhesive tape.

Quickly, he opens the box; a letter sits on top of a big black velvet bag.

Seb takes the letter out and shows it to Isaac.

ISAAC  
(filtered)  
Yo, what does it say?

SEB  
"Tell them who you are."

On the screen, Laura pounces on Isaac.

LAURA  
(filtered)  
What did I miss?

Seb puts the letter aside, then takes the black velvet bag.

He unfastens it and takes out a high-end leather backpack wrapped in plastic.

ISAAC  
(filtered)  
I'm starting to think a drug-lord  
is in love with our friend.

SEB  
That's not all.

From the velvet bag, Seb fishes out the box of a compact digital camera. He shows it to his friends.

With the scissors, Seb carefully cuts the pieces of tape that hold the camera's box.

LAURA  
(filtered)  
Oh, he's love-bombing you.

Cautiously, Seb starts to unpack the camera.

SEB  
(dumbfounded)  
I'll call you guys later.

ISAAC  
(filtered)  
I'll take notes for--

Seb reaches for his phone and hangs up.

INT. SEB'S STUDIO APARTMENT - WORKING AREA - DAY

The camera sits on Seb's desk. Immaculate.

Seb crouches over it, connecting cables, slipping in the memory card, testing buttons.

INT. UNIVERSITY - DOCUMENTARY CLASSROOM - DAY

Mr. Marlowe is standing beside the collapsible screen. He is presenting a class on "HOW TO CONDUCT AN INTERVIEW."

Isaac, Laura and the other classmates are sitting in pairs.

MR. MARLOWE

... Essential for the development  
of a documentary.

(beat)

Not everyone will need it for their  
final product; nonetheless, it is a  
very helpful resource.

(beat)

Do any of you know if Mr. Richford  
is coming?

ISAAC

He's sick.

MR. MARLOWE

Thank you, Isaac, but I'll believe  
that when I see a doctor's note.  
Very well.

INT. SEB'S STUDIO APARTMENT - WORKING AREA - DAY

Seb adjusts the tripod, sets the camera facing him. The apartment looks messy: peeling paint, the cluttered desk and unwashed dishes.

Seb sits and presses "record". The red light blinks, and he takes a deep breath.

INT. UNIVERSITY - DOCUMENTARY CLASSROOM - DAY

Mr. Marlowe paces slowly in front of the screen, hands behind his back.

MR. MARLOWE

An interview is not an  
interrogation.

(MORE)

MR. MARLOWE (CONT'D)

It's the art of guiding someone to  
reveal who they are.

He points to the slide projected on the screen: "INTERVIEWING  
TIPS."

INTERCUT - WORKING AREA / DOCUMENTARY CLASSROOM - DAY/NIGHT

Day turns into night as Seb records his videos. Each time he  
talks, he wears different clothes.

SEB

Welcome back. I'm Seb Richford, and  
I talk about movies. I know it's  
been a long since my last video,  
but, I'm back with quality-- brand  
new equipment and--

MR. MARLOWE

Don't ask 'Yes or No' questions.  
Always drive toward a conversation.  
Do not be afraid to stray, for that  
is where crevices-- and great  
stories commonly lie.

SEB

... Seb Richford and I used to edit  
videos for a department store.  
Here's my advice;

MR. MARLOWE

Respect earns trust. Always be  
professional and polite. Remember  
that you're not there to prove a  
point; you're there to discover  
one.

Seb's last clip is seen through a computer screen; it's being  
edited. There are SOUND EFFECTS implemented and pop-up text.

SEB

... and I'm revisiting classics.  
Today's film is Sunset Boulevard,  
(filtered)  
and, spoilers, I could make a  
better movie...  
(back to normal)  
This is how!

MR. MARLOWE

Most importantly: Listen... to  
their needs, questions and the  
environment and don't stop filming.

INT. FIONN'S MANSION - PATIO - DAY

Fionn is sitting on a stylish outdoor wicker chair; behind him, the early afternoon sun glimmers on the pool. The SPRINKLERS are going off behind it on the green grass, and Seb takes shelter under a large parasol with his camera and lights ready. He's got a director's chair.

SEB

How did the paradigm shift when  
"White" Mendez died?

Fionn CHUCKLES. *"Paradigm"? "Died"?*

FIONN

When Peter was killed by the  
Italians-- the Barone brothers, a  
mob war began. It was not a violent  
war, comparatively speaking;  
racketeering heads began to fall.  
Whisperers brought down entire  
empires. They had pawns doing the  
nastiest of work.

SEB

Whisperers?

FIONN

Blue collar snitches... And with  
the last shred of dignity left to  
the "great ones," they murdered  
most of their pawns.

SEB

Weren't you still a... pawn?

FIONN

But I wasn't a snitch. I knew where  
my loyalty lay. When the Whispering  
War ended, we loyalists were  
promoted.

Seb's phone BUZZES. He takes it from his pocket.

ON SEB'S PHONE:

MESSAGES

Laura (now): Seb. Class?

Seb locks his phone and nonchalantly tucks it in his pocket.

SEB (PRELAP)

What do you do when you're not...  
working?

INT. FIONN'S MANSION - FOYER - DAY

Fionn is now sitting in a towering double-height foyer. Two grand staircases curve upward in perfect symmetry, meeting at a balcony lined with gilded railings. Behind him, a large window.

In front is Seb, equipped and filming.

FIONN

I umm... I cook with my wife, watch cartoons with Sawyer-- he loves the one with the bananas; I find it silly.

SEB

Would you like to include them in this?

Seb's phone BUZZES. He doesn't even bother.

FIONN

I don't know yet...

SEB (PRELAP)

How did you meet her?

INT. FIONN'S MANSION - CHIMNEY ROOM - DAY

The blinds are drawn, and the fireplace is lit; it seems like nighttime.

Fionn is sitting in a chair before it. Lighting kit and camera in position.

FIONN

Irene and I met in Guatemala. I was closing a deal in a bar... She was dancing. I was staring.

SEB

How long did you stay in Guatemala?

FIONN

Two weeks-- until the police started looking for me.

(laughing)

I'm sorry, this is absurd... Can we film somewhere else?

Seb's finger is about to stop recording.

SEB

We can go back to the patio... or your office if that's what you want. I just think--

FIONN

No. Let's not film in the house altogether. It's getting boring--stale.

SEB

Okay. What do you have in mind?

Fionn grins.

EXT. UNIVERSITY - GARDEN - DAY

Isaac and Laura are sitting side by side, their backs resting against a tree, while Seb lies in front of them with his head propped on his palm, elbow on the ground. He rests his other hand on his new backpack.

They are enjoying an impromptu picnic on a blanket, with vacuum-packed cheese, cold cuts, and fresh fruit.

SEB

So, we're going to visit his town this weekend.

ISAAC

The one he's from or the one he founded?

SEB

Hope Valley.

LAURA

I'm sure you'll be okay... they praise him over there. You, on the other hand, need to be more cautious; at this rate, you're going to run out of absences.

SEB

I don't think so. I've been away for like, what? A week?

ISAAC

And a half. And she's got a point. We only had lectures last week.

SEB  
I'm sure I'll catch up. Fill me in  
with Sound Design...

LAURA  
(baffled)  
Didn't you read my message?

SEB  
Which one?

LAURA  
The one about the test.

SEB  
Nope. When is it?

LAURA  
In fifteen minutes.

SEB  
You're kidding.  
(to Isaac)  
She's kidding... right?

Isaac grimaces.

INT. UNIVERSITY - MIXING ROOM - DAY

A split-screen displays a movie clip alongside a live  
equalizer projection. The sound is immersive.

Ms. Alexander is in front of it, looking at her students, who  
are focused on a sheet of paper, filling out a questionnaire  
on technical aspects.

All students are writing something, while Seb's sheet is  
almost blank.

MS. ALEXANDER  
Five minutes left.

Seb looks at her, dismayed.

MOMENTS LATER

Students are leaving their seats and walking down the tiered  
rows of desks. They all make a quick stop to hand Ms.  
Alexander their sheets before leaving the classroom.

Seb is the last one. He waits for the classroom to be empty.

He makes his way down and puts his sheet on Ms. Alexander's desk. He keeps walking.

MS. ALEXANDER (CONT'D)

Sebastian, I've been wanting to reach out to you, but you haven't replied to my e-mails.

Seb turns back.

SEB

I'm sorry, I'm having trouble with the school email.

MS. ALEXANDER

Is everything alright?

(beat)

I've spoken with other instructors, and it seems you haven't attended any Production Design classes or the Law Seminar-- We're concerned about you.

SEB

I... I'm busy working. Bills got higher over the summer.

MS. ALEXANDER

Sorry if this is too intrusive, but have you thought about applying for a government subsidy?

SEB

I have my parents' pension, but it barely covers the rent. And lately, work has been... unpredictable.

MS. ALEXANDER

I understand. But you can't keep trading sleep and grades for survival, Seb. It catches up to you.

(beat)

If you need it; withdrawing from some classes is always an option.

SEB

I don't want to fall behind...

MS. ALEXANDER

Okay... You can retake the exam next week. No penalties. But I need to see you showing up again, in class, in the labs, everywhere.

Seb nods, ashamed.

EXT. UNIVERSITY - CAMPUS - DAY

MUSIC CUE: "Purple Sun" by Cannons

Seb walks with his backpack, earphones in, and his head bowed. On the floor, a few autumn leaves begin falling.

He traverses across campus until he leaves the small crowds behind. Past the library,

Tennis court,

Café,

And the garden.

Turning on a corner, Seb comes across the armored SUV.

He goes inside the passenger seat.

INT. CAR - DAY

Keith is at the wheel, driving, while Seb sits alongside him, visibly annoyed as he gazes out at the road. His backpack lies on the floor, nestled against his legs.

The music is heard through Seb's earphones; aside from that, the ride is pretty quiet.

Keith gives glances at the kid.

KEITH

What's with the face?

Seb doesn't hear him.

KEITH (CONT'D)

Kid.

Keith slams on the BRAKES, and Seb takes off one earbud as he turns to the driver.

KEITH (CONT'D)

I asked, "What's with the long face"?

Keith steps on the gas again.

SEB  
(puzzled)  
Just a bad day.

END MUSIC CUE as Seb pauses the song on his phone. Keith sympathizes.

KEITH  
Is someone causing you trouble?

SEB  
Not in particular...

KEITH  
Need to grab anything from your house?

SEB  
No. I've got it all.

EXT. FIONN'S MANSION - HELIPAD - DAY

The mansion can be seen in the distance, more than two blocks away and covered mostly by a grove of trees. Access to the helipad is divided by a path and a separate driveway.

The car stops 20 feet away from a helicopter.

Seb gets out of the car with his backpack slung over one shoulder. He is uncomfortable.

In front of the aircraft, Fionn and his pilot, RUPERT (late 40s), in uniform, are talking unintelligibly. Seb approaches them.

FIONN  
(signaling to Seb)  
Sebastian, this is Rupert. Former Navy pilot, actual magician-- He helps my problems disappear.

Seb nods awkwardly and shakes Rupert's hand.

FIONN (CONT'D)  
What's with the face?  
(joking)  
Oh, I get it. You were expecting the jet-- No, it's in the jet wash.

INT./EXT. HELICOPTER - DUSK

Rupert sits in the pilot's seat, headset on, as the deafening noise from the PROPELLERS fills the cabin. Through the windows, a stunning sunset paints the mountains outside.

Fionn is sitting across from Seb, who is shooting b-roll.

SEB

Don't talk-- or talk if you feel like it-- act naturally. The point is, it doesn't matter.

FIONN

Yeah. Don't get nervous. I got it.  
(beat)  
Do you fly often?

SEB

Not really... this is my third time ever.

FIONN

I have to fly constantly now-- make myself appear and disappear as quickly as possible... Irene doesn't like the rush much.

SEB

Where are we flying over right now?

Fionn stretches toward the window to get a better view.

FIONN

I believe this is Tomah.

SEB

May I ask... why does Hope exist?

EXT. HOPE VALLEY - FOREST CLEARING - NIGHT

The helicopter lands in a surprising, well-lit, rough gravel pad in the middle of a forest.

SEB (O.C.)

... Yeah, so I'll go down first for the shot.

The propellers slow down, and the door opens.

FIONN (O.C.)

Sure.

Seb steps down, carrying his backpack and the camera.

Once on the floor, he starts recording.

SEB

You can come down now. Remember not  
to look directly at the camera.

Fionn emerges from the helicopter.

FIONN

This is Hope. Back in the day, it  
was a settlement of no more than  
200 people...

INT. HOPE VALLEY - COUNTRYSIDE ROAD - CAR - NIGHT

A townsman, FRANK (50s), drives a modest pickup truck. The road is bumpy, but he is used to it. They are driving through the outskirts of a small town.

In the passenger seat is Fionn, who is holding onto the grab handle, and in the back seat is Seb, filming the two men and the road lit up by the headlights.

FIONN (V.O.)

Though the townspeople were barely  
surviving, they welcomed us  
whenever we needed to hide. In  
return, we provided them  
protection.

INT./EXT. HOPE VALLEY - CAR - NIGHT

The pickup truck rumbles slowly through a well-kept town, headlights gliding over freshly painted storefronts and clean sidewalks.

Windows are down in the backseat. Seb is filming the drive.

At the town square, a bronze statue of Fionn rises under the lamplight.

FRANK

(pointing at the window)

That was a gift for the town's 10th  
anniversary.

Seb is weirdly in awe.

FIONN

It's embarrassing how kind they are around here.

Frank drives a few blocks more.

As the car passes, a few people still out on the sidewalks turn to look, older people mostly, some tipping their hats, others lifting a hand in a casual wave. The way one might greet a hometown hero.

FRANK

Fionn gave wages and materials to build the whole place... Some even went to the big city to work for him-- How's Keith?

FIONN

He's behaving well, mostly babysitting Sebastian. Isn't that right?

SEB

Yeah. He is nice. Are you related?

FRANK

I'm the oldest.

INT. FRANK'S HOUSE - GUEST ROOM - NIGHT

Seb is sitting on an iron bed with his headphones on. His laptop rests on his lap. The unpainted wooden walls and the light from the bedside table warm up the atmosphere.

The screen plays a video of Fionn eating in a diner.

FIONN (VIDEO)

(filtered)

I legally founded the village and equipped it with the means to be self-reliant, so it no longer had to rely on the authorities that once previously neglected it.

EXT. HOPE VALLEY - HILL - DAY

Atop a hill overlooking Hope Valley, Seb is filming Fionn while Frank holds a boom mic.

SEB

A little higher, please.

Seb is looking at the frame through the camera. Fionn is in the middle of the picture, with the town at his feet. The boom is still lurking a little.

Frank raises the mic a little higher, and it gets out of the shot.

SEB (CONT'D)

Perfect. Thanks, Frank.

Seb presses "record" and points at Fionn with his hand.

SEB (CONT'D)

What was happening here twenty years ago?

FIONN

Hope became part of our trade routes after the war. We used to go down the hill to hide from the military.

EXT. HOPE VALLEY - NORTHERN OUTSKIRTS - DAY

Seb is taping a woman, ROSE (60s), on the last block of the town. On the wall behind her, a mural that reads "Welcome to Hope. Population 1725."

Frank is still holding the boom mic. Next to him is Fionn.

ROSE

They would come down this street and ask us to pretend to be their mothers.

(giggling)

Part of me loves them like my own children.

Fionn smiles and puts his hand on his chest.

SEB

What did they offer in return?

INT. HOPE VALLEY - DINER - DAY

A server, LOUISE (50s), in uniform and with a notepad in hand, talks behind the bar.

Fionn is looking at her behind the camera, drinking a strawberry milkshake. Frank, next to him, holds the boom.

LOUISE

Their money was useless in here. We  
needed medicine and food for our  
kids, and surely they delivered.

Fionn toasts with his glass of milkshake.

INT. HOPE VALLEY - SCHOOL - DAY

Fionn is walking down the hallway, with Seb walking backwards  
in front of him, filming the exchange.

Behind Seb, Frank leads the way.

FIONN

... We had to rebuild the school.  
The one before was... precarious.

From a classroom, children are MURMURING.

SEB

I thought it would be empty today.

FRANK

There's an art course on Saturdays.

FIONN

Oh, that's magnificent!

Fionn approaches the classroom door.

SEB

Shouldn't we ask first?

Fionn OPENS the door.

INT. HOPE VALLEY - SCHOOL - CLASSROOM - DAY

A group of 20 CHILDREN SCREAM, rushing to the door to hug  
Fionn.

CHILDREN

Candy!

Seb can't believe it.

Sitting behind a canvas and easel is MS. MOORE (30s).

Fionn extends his arm while being held hostage in place by  
the children.

FIONN  
Sebastian, this is Ms. Moore.

One of the kids reaches for Fionn's right-side pocket.

FIONN (CONT'D) MS. MOORE  
(whispering) Pleasure.  
Oh, let's not touch there.

FIONN (CONT'D)  
MS. MOORE, kids, this is Sebastian,  
and he's making a movie about me.

The children shift and now EMBRACE Seb with their love,  
causing him to tumble and FALL.

Fionn grins and presses down something inside his pocket.

EXT. HOPE VALLEY - SOUTHERN OUTSKIRTS - DAY

Seb, Fionn and Frank are far on the other side of town. Seb,  
wearing a cap, films Fionn's back as Main Street turns green  
and buildings become Karl Foerster.

FIONN  
Upon entering the meadows, we were  
instructed to scatter and follow  
our own path... I'd come back, stay  
longer in hopes of someone renting  
me their vehicle.

Wind is coming from the east, evenly, combing the grass to  
the left.

The grass HITS the boom mic. Seb gestures to Frank.

SEB  
Lower the mic for this one. Thanks.  
(to Fionn)  
Do you bring your family here?

They keep walking through the blowing grass.

FIONN  
In the off-season. Sawyer likes to  
get dirty and play in the barns...  
He once tried to teach chickens how  
to fly. And dyed--

On the camera, the sound level meters blush.

SEB  
Fionn, just so you know, I'll halt  
filming.

Seb lowers the camera; the gang stops walking, and Fionn  
turns to them.

FIONN  
I know Sawyer would like you...  
What are you doing tomorrow?

Seb thinks for a moment. He'll be honest.

Fionn stares behind Seb, at Frank,

SEB  
I have to attend a web seminar,  
At the town,

SEB (CONT'D)  
And finish editing a couple of  
videos.

At the meadows,

SEB (CONT'D)  
However, I'll be free after five.

At the dancing grass,

SEB (CONT'D)  
So, make sure the equipment's going  
to be charged by then.

At a patch on the left,

SEB (CONT'D)  
And... I...

To the motionless bunch of Blackhawks...

SEB (CONT'D)  
Umm... Fionn?

Fionn's gaze comes back again to Seb's face. His smile  
widens.

FIONN  
Listen carefully: I want you both  
to smile and laugh. Frank, tilt  
Sebastian's cap.

Seb is puzzled. Frank and he start LAUGHING.

From behind, Frank knocks Seb's cap.

Seb bends down to pick it up. Frank reaches for the soil, too.

Fionn takes an object out of his pocket. Seb doesn't want to see it.

Seb squats down and presses his head with his knees and hands.

BOOM.

Fionn steps away from the peephole. The grass remains motionless.

In the distance, the sound of GUNFIRE.

Frank takes a two-way radio from his back pocket.

FRANK

(into the radio)

Heads! Heads! Candy at green. Blast east. I repeat. Candy at green. Blast east. Out.

Fionn FIRES again.

KID (V.O)

(over the radio)

Roger that.

Another shot is FIRED. A bullet CUTS through Fionn's arm.

Blood drips onto the backs of Seb's hands.

Fionn grins his teeth and takes the gun with both hands. Determined, he gives it another chance. BOOM.

The Blackhawk now dances evenly.

The sound of the bullet being ejected from the cylinder deafens Seb. He opens his arms.

SOUND CUE: "Meditations V" by Sufjan Stevens.

Fionn drops the weapon into Seb's hands to cover the wound.

Frank, forcefully, takes Seb by his armpit.

FRANK

We've got to go, kid.

FIONN

Tell Rupert to meet us at the  
Helipad.

FRANK

(into the radio)  
Heads! Candy is red. I repeat.  
Candy is read... Hawk, wait in  
position. Heading to aid. Out.

KID (V.O.)

(over the radio)  
Roger that.

The three of them make a run for their way back.

INT. HOPE VALLEY - HOSPITAL - DAY

In a house turned into a hospital, with high-quality  
finishes, there is a short row of stretchers and a humming  
refrigerator.

A pale Seb is stealthily looking at Fionn, who is sitting in  
one of the stretchers with his shirt off, revealing numerous  
scars and burn wounds.

The gun is visible in Seb's pants pocket.

Ms. Moore is cleaning the latest one on his arm with povidone-  
iodine. Fionn GRUNTS in pain.

MS. MOORE

You really want me to believe it's  
your first time?

Fionn drops the act as MS. MOORE begins stitching.

FIONN

Well, it amused you before.

MS. MOORE

Is the kid alright?

FIONN

It'll pass. He's just dazed.

Ms. Moore's stitch is precise and quick. She's used to this  
kind of job.

MS. MOORE

(to Seb)  
You're alright.  
(MORE)

MS. MOORE (CONT'D)  
Not many can stomach that kind of  
thing their first time.

Frank comes in through the door.

FRANK  
Is the kid filming?

Seb shakes his head.

FRANK (CONT'D)  
The body was identified.

FIONN  
That was remarkably fast.

FRANK  
Yes... Well, it was good old  
Richard Greene... He was demented,  
wandering through the meadows.

Ms. Moore cuts the seam and hands Fionn his shirt. He is  
unbothered. She keeps her cool.

FIONN  
That's a shame.  
(to MS. MOORE)  
Give my condolences to your uncle,  
would you?

Ms. Moore nods. Fionn puts his shirt on.

FIONN (CONT'D)  
I'll send a check tomorrow morning.  
(beat)  
Shall we go?

END MUSIC CUE.

EXT. HOPE VILLAGE - FOREST CLEARING - DUSK

The helicopter is right how it was left the day before.  
Rupert starts the aircraft, and the movement of the  
propellers begins to become deafening.

Fionn shakes Frank's hand. Sebastian is behind them.

FIONN  
Thank you for having us, Frank.

FRANK  
Pleasure. Tell Keith to come visit.

Fionn nods and turns to the aircraft.

FRANK (CONT'D)

(to Seb)

My momma thinks these could be of use... for the movie.

Frank gives Seb a box. He opens it nervously.

Inside it, rolls of photographic film.

FRANK (CONT'D)

(discreetly)

My advice? Do the job. He's got a good heart, just don't try to understand him.

INT. ISAAC'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Isaac and Laura are sitting next to each other on the sofa, both of them looking at their computers, working on the same slideshow. On the huge TV past the coffee table, a film is playing.

ISAAC

... Sometimes I think we're all just training to be underpaid freelancers with opinions.

LAURA

What do you mean?

ISAAC

No one's going to watch this.

LAURA

You say that now, but you'd die if you weren't making something.

(beat)

Seb has his YouVid channel, and I don't see him complaining about his lack of views.

ISAAC

What do you mean "lack of views"?

Laura looks at Isaac, puzzled. He pairs his computer screen to the TV and shows her Seb's YouVid channel. A thumbnail labelled "NEW" and titled: "Let's talk movies... again" shows a counter with one hundred thousand views.

ISAAC (CONT'D)

He posted this earlier today, but hasn't replied to any of my messages yet. Have you tracked him?

LAURA

He came back from Hope last night... Why do you think he is ignoring us?

INT. UNIVERSITY - DOCUMENTARY CLASSROOM - DAY

Mr. Marlowe stands at the board, the screen blank for once. As the students settle in their seats, he catches sight of a sleep-deprived Seb entering from the corner of his eye.

MR. MARLOWE

Finally back, Mr. Richford. Got a doctor's note?

SEB

Huh?

MR. MARLOWE

Just as I thought.

(to Isaac)

Isaac, due to dishonesty, I will deduct five points from you and your partner on the next assignment.

Sitting beside each other, Isaac and Laura are perplexed. Seb sits next to Isaac.

ISAAC

I told him you were sick.

After the students have settled into their seats, Mr. Marlowe begins his class.

MR. MARLOWE

Well... who's going first?

MAUREEN (20s) raises her hand. She is sitting beside JOHN (20s).

MR. MARLOWE (CONT'D)

Maureen and John... Did you prepare a presentation?

Maureen and John stand up and go to the desktop computer to set their slides.

MAUREEN

Yes.

SEB

(whispering to Isaac)  
Presentation?

ISAAC

(whispering)  
It's optional.

SEB

Remind me again; today is..?

ISAAC

Pitch.

SEB

Got it.

On the screen, a presentation titled: "Days of a Woman: Lawyer, Mother, Foreigner (Documentary by Maureen & John)". Seb reads it, puzzled.

MAUREEN

... We're planning on filming one minute of footage a day for a month.

JOHN

Our truth-holder: a very strong and resilient woman who immigrated with her kids all the way from the Congo...

The presenters' voices MUFFLE as Seb's expression changes from deadpan to one of confusion.

MOMENTS LATER

The class CLAPS and another pair, NIKKI (30s) and GRACE (20s), stand up.

Their presentation reads: "Beach Characters (Documentary by Nikki and Grace)"

NIKKI

... Experimental, self-referential sociological observation of *who* happens on a beach in a single day.

SEB

(whispering to Isaac)  
Like National Geographic?

MOMENTS LATER

Seb doesn't realize that Mr. Marlowe is looking at him. Seb's confusion turns into annoyance as he CLAPS slowly in comparison to his classmates.

MR. MARLOWE  
Malcolm and Adam.

MALCOLM (20s) and ADAM go to the front.

MALCOLM  
Hi, everyone. Adam and I would like  
you to close your eyes.

All students close their eyes. Seb doesn't

SEB  
(sotto voce)  
Oh, they ain't got a presenta--

MR. MARLOWE  
RICHFORD.

Seb SIGHS and closes his eyes.

ADAM  
James is a blind kid...

MALCOLM  
But we're going to see his story.

Seb mouths "fuck me."

MOMENTS LATER

In front of their classmates, Laura and Isaac are presenting:  
"High on UCOM: The use of drugs on campus by Laura Sutton &  
Isaac Taylor."

LAURA  
... We know you've tried them.

ISAAC  
We know who you've bought it from.

LAURA  
We know you're--

LAURA/ISAAC  
High on UCOM.

Mouths drop. Everyone is either impressed or shocked.

Seb is tired. He CLAPS, automatically and unenthusiastically.

Laura and Isaac go back to their seats.

MR. MARLOWE

Lastly, Mr. Richford... I'm sure  
you think best is for last, please  
enlighten us.

Seb stands up as Mr. Marlowe makes room for him in the  
middle.

MR. MARLOWE (CONT'D)

Presentation?

SEB

Negative.

MR. MARLOWE

Okay. Floor is yours.

Seb freezes. He doesn't have anything prepared.

MR. MARLOWE (CONT'D)

Mr. Richford. What's your  
documentary about?

SEB

The documentary... It... It's about  
someone I met, who I believe has  
led a rather interesting life.

MR. MARLOWE

Well, who are they?

Seb knows he's got to be careful with his words.

SEB

I can't disclose right now, Mr.  
Marlowe, but I can assure you he is  
a notable-- intriguing person.

MR. MARLOWE

Oh, I see... Is he the reason  
you've been missing classes?

SEB

(sotto voce)

Yes.

MR. MARLOWE

And the reason you didn't hand in  
the investigation.

Seb nods, avoiding eye contact.

MR. MARLOWE (CONT'D)

You and I know where this is going... and I don't mean you to fail, so I'll make you a proposal, if your classmates agree to, of course.

(beat)

Submit your documentary by the established deadline-- without making any prior submissions and skipping the creation process-- as you are currently doing, and I'll grade you solely on your final product, meaning, it'll be your total grade in this class.

Seb and his classmates are equally dumbfounded.

MR. MARLOWE (CONT'D)

Mr. Richford, if you agree to these terms, say yes.

SEB

Yes.

MR. MARLOWE

Folks, those in favour, raise your hands.

All students, except Adam and Malcolm, raise their hands. Mr. Marlowe counts and nods.

They lower their hands.

MR. MARLOWE (CONT'D)

Against, raise your hands.

Adam and Malcolm raise their hands. Seb grimaces at them.

MR. MARLOWE (CONT'D)

Well, as per democracy, best of luck with your project, Mr. Richford.

EXT. UNIVERSITY - CAMPUS - DAY

Seb walks quickly away from the building, followed by Laura and Isaac. He is pissed. Earphones on. Nothing is playing.

ISAAC

Hey, Seb.

LAURA  
Seb, are you okay?

Seb stops and turns to her.

LAURA (CONT'D)  
Can we talk?

SEB  
Could you both please stop? I have  
to go home and study.

LAURA  
Did anything happen in Hope?

SEB  
No. I was just busy. That's all...  
I'm tired and my ride's here. Talk  
to you guys tomorrow.

The SUV parks in front of them, Seb puts his earphones back on and goes to the passenger seat.

Laura and Isaac freeze.

INT. SEB'S STUDIO APARTMENT - NIGHT

Seb enters through the door. In the distance, through the window, the SUV pulls away as Seb turns the lights on.

INT. SEB'S STUDIO APARTMENT - WORKING AREA - CONTINUOUS

Seb goes to the working area and puts his backpack on the floor, next to the box of films.

He opens it and SIGHS as he sees the gun inside, too. Carefully, avoiding its touch, Seb takes out one of the rolls.

He lays it open on his desk. While deciphering what they could be, it is evident that all of the pictures are similar.

Seb takes his phone from his pocket and takes a picture of one of the images. Then, he opens a photo editing app and taps on the "Auto Develop" icon.

A loading screen.

Then, "Filters applied".

Finally, the picture of a young Fionn beside a Christmas tree with Keith and Frank posing with rifles.

## MONTAGE - SEB'S WEEK

MUSIC CUE: "So Cold" by Balu Brigada.

-- INT. MIXING CLASSROOM - DAY -- Seb is retaking the exam with a pair of headphones on, while his classmates work on their laptops. Ms. Alexander peeks at Seb's exam sheet, worried.

-- INT. LAWS CLASSROOM - DAY -- Mr. Rolland is teaching a follow-up class on Copyright laws. Students raise their hands and participate. A point system on the board with everyone's names and a score. As the class progresses, the scores increase, except for Seb's, whose score remains 1.

-- INT. SEB'S STUDIO APARTMENT - KITCHEN AREA - NIGHT -- Seb cooks instant ramen noodles.

-- INT. SEB'S STUDIO APARTMENT - WORKING AREA - NIGHT -- Seb stares at his monitor and edits the documentary for hours as if he were hypnotized.

-- INT. PRODUCTION CLASSROOM - DAY -- Seb, with dark circles under his eyes, tries to pay attention to Ms. Hurd's class.

-- INT. MIXING CLASSROOM - DAY -- Ms. Alexander hands everyone their exam results. Isaac gets a B+. Laura has an A+ and Seb, an F.

-- INT. SEB'S STUDIO APARTMENT - LIVING AREA - NIGHT -- Seb dives headfirst onto the bed.

-- INT. DOCUMENTARY CLASSROOM - DAY -- Mr. Marlowe is teaching a class on something-- Seb isn't paying attention. He has his headphones on, editing a video for his YouVid channel. Laura and Isaac are playfully flirting while doing their homework.

-- INT. SEB'S STUDIO APARTMENT - LIVING AREA - NIGHT -- Seb is asleep, and a NOTIFICATION reaches his phone. It reads "Vacation weekend. Safe location. Hot weather."

END MUSIC CUE.

## EXT. UNIVERSITY - GARDEN - DAY

Seb lies on the picnic blanket while Isaac and Laura sit behind him, leaning against both the tree and each other, their pinkies subtly linked.

SEB

... Cuz have you seen my numbers? I think I'll be able to start monetizing in a month or two.

Isaac and Laura look at each other.

LAURA

That's... good

ISAAC

Great, even.

SEB

Instagram's also getting traction... I'll start posting B-roll.

LAURA

But... school, Seb.

SEB

You know it's not going... great. I should focus on where my future is.

LAURA

Yes, you should.

Seb turns to them, and they release each other's hands.

SEB

I'm going on a trip.

ISAAC

Where?

SEB

I don't know... warm weather.

LAURA

In the fall.

ISAAC

So, not in this country.

SEB

(smiling)

I think not...

Laura places her hand on Seb's shoulder.

LAURA

Word of wisdom, Seb: Midterms.

SEB  
Words of reply, Laura:  
(over-enunciating)  
Weekend getaway.

EXT. PRIVATE AIRPORT - CAR - DAY

Keith is behind the wheel, and Seb is in the passenger seat, both stepping down.

Near the car, a private plane stands with its stairs lowered.

Seb comes down with his backpack, impressed; Keith goes to the trunk, which opens automatically.

Keith takes a suitcase and extends the handles. Keith gets real with Seb.

KEITH  
My brother told me what happened  
back home... You'll be okay. Have  
fun, kid.

Seb replies to him with a sincere nod.

Keith and Seb walk toward the plane. Fionn emerges from it.

FIONN  
(to Seb)  
Told you it was in the washer!  
Haha.

Seb smiles. He is astonished.

FIONN (CONT'D)  
C'mon in! Sawyer and Irene are  
waiting for you.

Seb gives Keith a friendly fist bump, then watches as Keith walks back to the car. Seb turns to Fionn.

Seb takes his phone and starts recording the plane. Fionn rejoices as he goes in.

INT. PRIVATE PLANE - DAY

Seb is taking out his recording gear from a duffel bag.

IRENE (28) is sitting beside SAWYER (8), Fionn in front of them, drinking a glass of whiskey.

FIONN

Not yet, Sebastian. Get to know them first. He's a little shy.

Fionn pours Seb a glass of whiskey and invites him to sit next to him.

Seb takes it and, toast and smiles at Irene.

SEB

Sorry. Pleasure.

Irene smiles at him and gestures at Sawyer.

Sawyer toasts with Seb with his glass of water.

EXT. SUMMER VILLA - ENTRANCE - NIGHT

Seb steps out of a car while checking his phone. The driveway is flanked by palm trees and snake plants.

On the screen, he is rewatching and skipping through his own Instagram stories, which feature shots of the landscape from the plane and glimpses of the town.

He receives a NOTIFICATION: "+100 new followers and 20 new likes."

FIONN

C'mon, Sebastian.

Seb smiles as he steps forward toward the sand-colored summer house.

The backs of Irene, Sawyer and Fionn are in front of him.

Seb takes a photo of the front of the house. He posts it as a story.

INT. ISAAC'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Isaac is sitting on his bed wearing his headset, playing video games. Next to him, Laura is lying down, looking at her phone.

LAURA

It's unbelievable.

ISAAC

What is?

Isaac pauses the game and turns to her.

Laura shows him her phone. On screen, Seb's face hovers over a map of the east coast of Mexico.

ISAAC (CONT'D)

What can we do, Lala? He is technically working and actually threatened.

LAURA

You're right... I'm not his mother.

Isaac starts reaching for Laura.

ISAAC

(flirty)

I tell you what, you stop looking at your phone, I stop playing video games, and we can do anything else.

Laura locks her phone and places it on the nightstand. Isaac places his hands on the bed, one on each side of Laura. She smirks.

They kiss.

EXT. SUMMER VILLA - POOL - DAY

Seb, wearing swimming trunks, floats on his back with his eyes closed, letting the water move him. The sound of birds, the trees, and the breeze brings him peace.

SPLASH. Sawyer, cannonballing into the pool, cuts Seb's peace as water gets all over his body. Might as well stand on the pool and shield his face with his hand.

SEB

Oh, hi, kiddo.

Irene, wearing a bathrobe and with a book in hand, walks toward the pool.

IRENE

(to Sawyer)

Sawyer. Careful!

(to Seb)

Sorry, Sebastian. We thought you were with Fionn.

Seb walks toward her and rests his elbows and forearms on the edge.

SEB  
No worries. Please, ma'am, call me  
"Seb."

IRENE  
If you stop calling me "Ma'am."

Irene extends her hand.

SEB  
Yes, ma'--

Seb does too, she grimaces, and they shake hands.

IRENE  
Do you know where *he* is?

SEB  
I assume we aren't shooting today,  
so...

IRENE  
Do you mind if we join? You may  
interview me later if you wish.

SEB  
Not at all.

Irene walks toward a deck chair.

Seb turns to Sawyer, who's playing with a beach ball. He  
signals to the kid, and Sawyer throws him the ball.

SEB (CONT'D)  
Can I ask you something?

Irene lies on the deck chair reading a book.

Sawyer throws the ball back at him.

SAWYER  
Yes.

They start throwing the ball back and forth every time they  
talk.

SEB  
Do you like swimming much?

SAWYER  
Yes. I love swimming.

SEB

I'm not that good of a swimmer...  
What else do you like doing?

SAWYER

I like watching cartoons with Dad,  
and Mom takes me to the movies all  
the time.

SEB

I love movies... Do you go out with  
your Dad often?

SAWYER

He's always working.

SEB

What does he do?

SAWYER

He's the boss and everyone's his  
friend.

SEB

Do you have friends?

Sawyer throws him the ball back, but doesn't reply.

Seb sympathizes.

SEB (PRELAP) (CONT'D)

What's a misconception people often  
have about your husband?

INT. SUMMER VILLA - INNER COURTYARD - DAY

Sheltered by four walls that connect to the entire house, in  
Spanish colonial style, a natural garden divides the ceiling,  
letting in natural light during the golden hour.

Irene is sitting in a chair, wearing a dress that resembles  
Bougainvillea. In front of her is Seb with all his filming  
equipment.

IRENE

I know he comes across as a very  
intimidating person. I get it, he  
has to be tough, but he's a great  
father. He has never hit Sawyer or  
raised his voice in front of him.

(beat)

(MORE)

IRENE (CONT'D)

I know his job is unconventional,  
but I'm glad it helped build the  
life I now live.

SEB

Do you recall how you two met?

Irene takes a deep breath.

IRENE

Fionn was meeting my boss in Spain.

Seb breaks into a cold sweat.

IRENE (CONT'D)

He introduced a bunch of us, but he  
liked me the most.

(beat; tenderly)

I had no other choice but to  
reciprocate... I'm glad I did.

SEB

What were you doing in Spain?

IRENE

Internship. Business.

SEB

Does Fionn keep *his* outside?

IRENE

Oh, totally. That's our rule.

SEB

How do the in-laws feel about him?

IRENE

Oh, they don't know him yet-- it's  
risky...

SEB

What about Sawyer? It seems like he  
might be feeling a bit lonely.

Irene shakes her head.

IRENE

That's unfortunately the price we  
have to pay. He doesn't need to  
know it all, just yet. It comforts  
me to think that you don't miss  
what you don't know.

SEB  
Don't you miss them?

Irene looks straight into the camera. Uneasy.

FIONN (O.C.)  
Good afternoon!

Fionn's voice echoes on the walls. He is joyful. Seb and Irene look to the hallway, waiting for him to reach them.

FIONN (CONT'D)  
I see you started without me.

Fionn arrives and hugs Irene, giving her a quick kiss.

SEB  
Sorry-- My bad. We were--

FIONN  
Ah, Reen, you look *hermosa*!

IRENE  
He's learning Spanish, though he only knows words to compliment me.

Seb smirks as he reframes the shot to include Fionn in the center next to Irene.

SEB  
(pointing at the camera)  
Fionn, is there any reason you're particularly thrilled today?

FIONN  
I just closed a deal, and my new associate invited us to a *fiesta blanca*.

IRENE  
What about Sawyer?

SEB  
I can--

FIONN  
No, María will take care of him. Sebastian, you're coming with us.

SEB  
(dismissive)  
Oh no, I'm good. I don't even have white clothes.

FIONN  
(laughing)  
I anticipated you might say that,  
so I already took care of it.

INT. NIGHTCLUB - NIGHT

Irene linked arm in arm with Fionn, and Seb beside them, get into a luxurious disco with colonial finishes.

Seb tries to take in the atmosphere while identifying everything he sees: A long bar on the left with at least five bartenders,

behind them a shelf with an almost endless supply of alcohol;

at least one security guard dressed entirely in black on each corner;

a sea of elegant people dressed in summery white,

and a second-floor balcony where VIP guests have their seats. All men look menacing.

One of them, RICARDO CHAVEZ (56), stands up and waves his hand at them.

Seb turns to Fionn, and he is waving back. A SECURITY GUARD (40s), with an in-ear, approaches them and points to the right toward a staircase

SECURITY GUARD  
Follow me this way, please. Mr.  
Chavez was expecting you.

Irene, Fionn and Seb go upstairs. Seb reaches for his phone in his pocket.

INT. NIGHTCLUB - VIP BALCONY - CONTINUOUS

Seb is in awe as they reach the end of the staircase. Looking at every guest and table, he knows the bottles, clothes and jewels are the single most expensive things he has seen in his life.

Seb takes his phone out and starts recording.

Ricardo stands up to greet his new associate and his guests.

He shakes Fionn's hand.

RICARDO  
Glad you made it, Johnston.

FIONN  
(gesturing to Irene)  
Ricardo, this is my wife, Irene.

Irene extends her hand.

IRENE  
Mucho gusto. Gracias por la  
invitación. Está impresionante.  
[Pleasure. Thanks for having us.  
The place looks awesome.]

Ricardo takes it and kisses it.

RICARDO  
El gusto es mío. ¿Chiapaneca?  
[Pleasure's all mine. Are you from  
Chiapas?]

IRENE  
(laughing)  
Casi... Guatemalteca.  
[Close... I'm Guatemalan.]

Fionn takes Seb by the shoulder, unbeknownst to what he's doing.

FIONN  
And this is my godson, Sebastian--

SECURITY GUARD  
(intimidating)  
No filming on this floor.

Seb rapidly stops recording and deletes the video.

SEB  
Sorry.

Seb puts his phone in his pocket and dries his recently  
sweaty palm.

FIONN  
Forgive him, he's studying film and  
likes recording everything he sees--  
however, he won't do so here.

Seb nods and shakes Ricardo's hand.

RICARDO

I get it. You have passion. I respect that.

(beat)

Go downstairs and have fun,  
*Sebastián*. Order whatever you want,  
on me.

Ricardo squeezes Seb's shoulders tightly.

INT. LAURA'S DORM ROOM - NIGHT

With her roommate away, Laura and Isaac are snuggled in a twin-size bed. They are watching a movie on a laptop balanced on Laura's legs as she dozes off.

Isaac is scrolling on his phone and stops to stare at Seb's unbelievable like count on his last post: A stylish photo of the pool with the Summer Villa behind him; Mexico as the pinned location. The caption reads "Effort is rewarded."

Isaac is intrigued. The frame in Seb's profile picture indicates that Isaac has not yet seen his stories.

He looks at Laura. She is asleep.

Isaac silences his phone and clicks on the picture, revealing:

-- PICTURE of the inner courtyard. Text reads: paz.

Isaac starts skipping through the stories.

-- Soothing VIDEO of the pool and the majestic landscape

-- PICTURE of a plate of chilaquiles divorciados.

-- Close-up PICTURE of Seb's arm and a glimpse at his white shirt.

Isaac stares at the last picture:

-- Blurry PICTURE of the nightclub.

MATCH CUT TO:

INT. NIGHTCLUB

Seb is in the middle of the dance floor, drinking a margarita as he awkwardly stares at the crowd dancing and grinding in ways he has not seen before, listening to deafening music he doesn't understand.

He tries to imitate some of the moves.

INT. NIGHTCLUB - VIP BALCONY

Fionn, leaning on the handrail, looks for Seb.

Ricardo, with a YOUNG WOMAN (20s) beside him, is sitting across from Irene.

RICARDO  
(to Fionn)  
How's the godson doing?

FIONN  
I think he needs help.

Ricardo raises his hand and snaps his fingers. A security guard approaches him, and Ricardo whispers something in his ear.

The security guard steps back and picks up the microphone connected to his in-ear. He says something unintelligible.

Fionn turns to his wife and takes a seat next to her.

INT. NIGHTCLUB

A slightly more uninhibited Seb, without a glass in his hand, is approached by TWO GIRLS (20s) on either side.

The girls introduce themselves, and when Seb extends his hand, they greet him with a kiss on the cheek. He is stunned.

Both girls take him by each hand, closer to a group of partygoers.

A server arrives with a tray of Tequila shots.

They all take in.

INT. SUMMER VILLA - SEB'S ROOM - MORNING

Seb is lying down with his clothes half off, and the bed is messy.

The curtains of the window opposite the bed are fully open, and sunlight slowly makes its way over Seb's body until it reaches his face.

Annoyed, Seb begins to open his eyes and raises his hand to shield them from the light.

He feels dizzy and staggers when he tries to stand up.  
Seb takes a few steps forward before feeling the retch.  
He covers his mouth and turns to the bathroom.

INT. SUMMER VILLA - DINING AREA - DAY

An effervescent tablet BUBBLES inside a glass of water.  
Seb takes the glass and drinks from it.

MARÍA (50s), wearing a traditional embroidered apron, sets a plate of avocado toast and eggs, along with a side of fruit, in front of Seb.

MARÍA  
(broken English)  
No spicy, Mr. Sebastián.

SEB  
(bad accent)  
Gracias, María.

María leaves, and Seb takes his phone out. He has more than 30 notifications, but dismisses them.

Instead, he goes to the Messages App and opens Laura's chat. There's one unread voice note from that morning.

He plays it while eating.

LAURA (V.O.)  
(filtered)  
I thought that if I sent you a message, you wouldn't read it, so, Seb, please make an effort-- and don't tell Isaac about this.  
(beat)  
I know you're having a great time and going to these exotic places, but I think it's getting out of hand. I know you, and I sense that it's no longer just about the documentary...  
(beat)  
My point is, don't forget who you are and who he is and--

Seb pauses the voice note halfway through and deletes it. He is focusing on what's happening in front of him, through the glass sliding door leading to the yard.

EXT. SUMMER VILLA - YARD - DAY

On a green lawn, Fionn is playing soccer with Sawyer. From across the dining area, Seb gazes at them tenderly, his expression tinged with a hint of jealousy.

Fionn exaggerates his gestures when Sawyer scores a goal.

INT. SUMMER VILLA - DINING AREA - SAME TIME

Seb starts recording them through the window. He can see his yearning reflection.

He is so focused that he does not notice a figure approaching him.

Irene squeezes his shoulder. Seb rests his head on her hand.

INT. UNIVERSITY - DOCUMENTARY CLASSROOM - DAY

Seb sits near the back, headphones on, editing footage of himself for his YouVid channel. His fingers move automatically across the keyboard, lost in the familiar click of edits.

At the front of the room, Mr. Marlowe's voice is MUFFLED. The day's lecture projected behind him: "ETHICS BEHIND THE LENS."

Seb is hypnotized.

MR. MARLOWE

... Can someone tell Mr. Richford that today's class is a lecture, not a lab?--Malcolm.

Malcolm, who is sitting in front of Seb, turns to him and HITS his arm.

Seb looks up, startled, pulling off his headphones.

SEB

Sorry. I thought--

MR. MARLOWE

You thought incorrectly. Join us. Unless, of course, you've transcended the need for learning the line between exploring one's truth and exploiting it.

Seb turns red and shakes his head.

MR. MARLOWE (CONT'D)

As I was saying.

(beat)

Every documentary is a negotiation between what happened, what's shown, and here comes the great responsibility-- what you want the audience to believe.

Mr. Marlowe points to the next slide: an excerpt from "The Act of Killing" (2012, Dir. Joshua Oppenheimer).

MR. MARLOWE (CONT'D)

Chilling film and great art piece... Manipulative documentary.

(beat)

Remember what I told you about reenactments?... Who do you think is in control here?

Mr. Marlowe changes the slide; it reads: SUBJECT. FILMMAKER.

MR. MARLOWE (CONT'D)

Hands for 'the subject.'

Half of the class raise their hand, among them, Seb.

MR. MARLOWE (CONT'D)

'The filmmaker?'

Students lower their hands and the other half raise theirs, including Isaac and Laura.

Mr. Marlowe nods, and everyone but Laura lowers their hands. He turns to the screen to change the slide.

MR. MARLOWE (CONT'D)

Or the audience that gets to judge them equally?

(tuning to the class)

Yes, Laura?

LAURA

(lowers her hand)

I think it is more complex than that... The filmmaker has given an instruction-- it is his concept; however, the subject enjoys it, to some extent, it edifies him.

MR. MARLOWE

Good. Anyone disagree?

MAUREEN

I think the director's the one manipulating him. Ultimately, he has the final say in editing. The director makes it look like the guy's proud of something horrific.

Mr. Marlowe nods. Seb is actually paying attention.

MR. MARLOWE

Right. Both are true. That's the paradox.

(beat)

The director has already given him the stage. Truth becomes a collaboration between vanity and control.

(beat)

That's the thing; subjects are not collaborations. That's the danger with proximity.

Seb feels uneasy.

INT. UNIVERSITY - HALLWAY/MIXING CLASSROOM - DAY

In the distance down the hallway, students can be seen leaving Ms. Alexander's classroom, leaving a sheet of paper on her desk. She waves them goodbye while holding the door.

As the last students leave, a man in a suit approaches Ms. Alexander as she reenters the classroom.

INT. MIXING CLASSROOM - CONTINUOUS

The door begins to close as Ms. Alexander picks up the sheets of paper from her desk.

Keith's foot stops the door.

He goes into the room, letting the door close behind him.

MS. ALEXANDER

May I help you?

Ms. Alexander turns to him, stunned.

KEITH

Are you Ms. Alexander?

MS. ALEXANDER

Yes. And you are?

Keith LOCKS THE DOOR.

KEITH  
Sent by Fionn Johnston.

INT. UNIVERSITY - DOCUMENTARY CLASSROOM - DAY

The last few students pack up. The projector's turned off and its fan HUMS faintly.

MR. MARLOWE  
Well, see you folks next week.

Seb's classmates leave. He just closes his computer and buries his hands in his jacket pockets.

Laura and Isaac are heading out. She turns to Seb.

LAURA  
Seb, are you coming?

SEB  
Don't worry. I'll meet you at the library.

After leaving the classroom, Laura and Isaac discreetly hold hands. They think that Seb, still inside, doesn't see them; instead, confused, Seb looks at them with disdain as they disappear from his sight.

Mr. Marlowe blocks Seb's view. He stands in front of his desk, looking down at him.

MR. MARLOWE  
May I help you, Mr. Richford?

SEB  
Mr. Marlowe, I know what you think of me, and you know what I think of you, so I ask for your... forbearance.

MR. MARLOWE  
All right, I'm listening.

SEB  
Hypothetically speaking... could a subject use a filmmaker?

Mr. Marlowe tilts his head slightly. He's intrigued.

MR. MARLOWE  
Use, how?

SEB  
(carefully)  
Like... Can the subject actually  
control the story?..

The instructor takes a chair and sits. Seb and he are now  
looking each other in the eye.

MR. MARLOWE  
I guess there's always a chance.  
However, one should be aware of  
objective facts or... stop filming.

SEB  
(quietly)  
What if one can't?

Mr. Marlowe is honestly worried. Seb looks down.

MR. MARLOWE  
Sebastian, is it about your  
documentary?

SEB  
No. It's just... I think sometimes  
the story gets bigger than you, and  
you can't tell if you're  
documenting their truth or a well-  
fabricated lie.

MR. MARLOWE  
(folding his arms)  
Show me what you're working on.  
Let's see what kind of "truth"  
you're being dragged into.

SEB  
I can't.

MR. MARLOWE  
Can't or won't?

SEB  
I-- No. I can't explain it.

MR. MARLOWE  
(standing up)  
Then you must be very careful, Mr.  
Richford... Hope to see you next  
week.

INT. UNIVERSITY - MIXING CLASSROOM - DAY

Ms. Alexander tries to hold her temper. Her face flushes red, and she swallows hard.

Both standing, Keith is too close to her. His hand holds something inside his suit jacket. Ms. Alexander can feel it against her gut.

KEITH

I'm sure you'll give the committee  
a good word about the kid's  
performance.

Ms. Alexander nods shakily.

KEITH (CONT'D)

And even, I don't know... exempt  
him from his finals?

MS. ALEXANDER

(shaky and quietly)  
Yeah. Yes.

Keith walks away from Ms. Alexander and smiles at her.

KEITH

I'm glad I got to talk to you. I  
knew you would understand. Have a  
good afternoon.

He walks to the door.

INT. UNIVERSITY - LIBRARY - DUSK

Seb, Isaac, and Laura walk among the huge bookshelves.

ISAAC

What do you mean you talked to  
him?!

LAURA

I advised you not to disclose it to  
anyone. What if he--?

Seb grabs his friends by the sleeves and leads them to the back of the bookshelf row.

SEB

I know. I know. I know.  
(beat; hyperventilating)  
It's just that-- What he said put a  
lot into perspective.

They stop at a far corner. There's no one in sight.

LAURA

Oh, it did?! We've been telling you for the longest time! But you were too busy showing everyone about your bougie life and all-paid expenses trips.

SEB

I... I--

LAURA

Let's say that the film isn't it all; it's not the end... then what?

ISAAC

Jesus, Laura.

SEB

No, Isaac. She's right... Fionn's showed me too much-- I feel like I'm now part of his life, part of his payroll.

Seb runs his fingers through his hair, shaking.

ISAAC

Then stop filming. Tell him you already have all the material you need.

SEB

I watch him all the time, and I'm sure he does too. He'll know something's up.

Laura glances around as Seb collapses onto the floor.

LAURA

Okay. Then we'll use that. Seb, you keep filming and pretend nothing's going through your mind.

ISAAC

We?!

LAURA

Yes. B-roll won't suffice in court... Has he ever admitted to an unregistered crime?

SEB

Not that I'm aware.

LAURA

Okay. That's good. No coercion so far...

Isaac knows where this is going. He crouches down to talk to Seb.

ISAAC

While we were investigating for our documentary, we talked with the police or private investigators or the anti-drug squad. I don't know-- It was a hotline. The thing is, Laura and I are required to report the use or distribution of any non-decriminalized drugs or opioids.

LAURA

We'll wire you as you conduct the interview and make sure--

SEB

He confesses to a crime live.

ISAAC

Yes, a current, ongoing one.

LAURA

If we get the right device, something small, something you can hide in the mic rig, we'll have proof you're not doing this willingly.

INT. FIONN'S MANSION - KITCHEN - NIGHT

The SEARING sound of meat on a grill. A pair of tongs flipping a juicy piece of steak.

Seb is behind a large kitchen island filming. From inside his headphones, a second, unusual, white and slim cable emerges.

The light kit is set to illuminate Chef Johnston, who is wearing an apron.

Beside the grill, a stovetop with a simmering pot of tomato soup.

FIONN

Before we came back from the trip-- and you know this, Sebastian, my kid and I have become inseparable.

(MORE)

FIONN (CONT'D)

It reminded me of my favorite dish  
that my mother used to make for me  
when I was younger--  
(jokingly)  
Minus the steak, but still.

SEB

Going back to the trip...

INT. COUNTRYSIDE ROAD - ISAAC'S CAR - NIGHT

Isaac and Laura are sitting on the front of Isaac's car.

In front of them, on the dashboard, a laptop logged into a website that reads: bluehotline.gov. There, the conversation between Seb and Fionn transcribes live. In addition, there is a live chatbot compiling the information.

ON THE LAPTOP:

S.R. asks about a trip.

SEB (V.O.)

(filtered)

... we left a conversation  
unfinished. You told me about a  
deal.

BACK TO:

INT. FIONN'S MANSION - KITCHEN - SAME TIME

Fionn is stirring the tomato soup and adding spices. Seb looks attentively.

SEB

How's does that work?

FIONN

Ricardo and I met a few years ago  
because I know how to get around in  
Central America, if you catch my  
drift.

Seb nods, and Fionn takes a loaf of sourdough from the pantry.

FIONN (CONT'D)

For a long time, we talked about  
unifying some of our routes through  
his anchor cities and my access  
points.

Fionn opens the island cupboard and retrieves a wooden cutting board and a bread knife.

SEB  
(laughing)  
Now I get all the excitement.

Fionn starts slicing through the sourdough. He opens his mouth to resume.

INT. COUNTRYSIDE ROAD - ISAAC'S CAR - NIGHT

The sawing of Fionn's knife impairs his speech, and the couple exchanges worried looks.

ON THE LAPTOP:  
F.J. *Inaudible statement.*

LAURA  
Shit.

ISAAC  
(whispering to Seb)  
Tell him not to cut bread.

INT. FIONN'S MANSION - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Seb stands in front of the camera smiling, as if mocking Fionn.

SEB  
(laughing)  
Fionn, remember you're wearing the mic. If you cut the bread, the camera won't pick up the sound.

FIONN  
Right. Haha! I got caught up.  
(beat)  
While we're taking a break, Sebastian, could you please get the cheese from the fridge?

Seb nods and takes off his headphones, leaving the white bug exposed. He walks to the fridge.

EXT. FIONN'S MANSION - GATES - DAY

Joe, armed and accompanied by COSMO (3), the guard-dog, is patrolling the perimeter with the help of a long-range flashlight.

In the distance, the light reflects off something.

Joe begins to follow that blinding north.

INT. COUNTRYSIDE ROAD - ISAAC'S CAR - MOMENTS LATER

Isaac and Laura listen to the conversation in silence. Attentively looking at the screen.

FIONN (V.O.)  
(filtered)  
Where was I?

SEB (V.O.)  
(filtered)  
Trade routes.

INT. FIONN'S MANSION - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Fionn takes out the stakes and places them on the cutting board where the loaf of sourdough once sat.

FIONN  
Yes. Designs, in these businesses  
in particular, are executed  
expeditiously.

Fionn walks to the grill, where a plate with four uncooked cheese sandwiches rests beside it.

SEB  
What does that mean?

Fionn starts placing each sandwich on the grill.

FIONN  
That means our first joint shipment  
will arrive--

INT./EXT. COUNTRYSIDE ROAD - ISAAC'S CAR - NIGHT

Isaac and Laura's hearts are racing. Eyes wide open.

FIONN (V.O.)  
(filtered)  
-- in Fitchburg Friday night.

They made it. Isaac clenches his fists and swiftly brings his elbow up and down, mouthing 'Yes' repeatedly.

ON THE LAPTOP:  
F.J. expects shipment for the weekend.

OUTSIDE, NEAR THE VEHICLE

Joe is reaching Isaac's car.

BACK TO THE INTERIOR

Laura, blinded by the flashlight, swiftly jumps into the driver's seat, knocking down the laptop on the passenger seat.

LAURA  
(quickly)  
Kiss me.

Isaac tries to TALK over the intense make-out session while Laura undoes her blouse.

Joe TAPS on the driver's window using his flashlight.

Isaac tries to pull away, but Laura runs her fingers through her hair to hide his face.

ISAAC  
(panicking)  
Lala--

Laura mimics as if they were still kissing.

LAURA  
(whispering)  
I know. Don't worry.

Joe steps in front of the car and repeatedly switches the flashlight on and off to get their attention.

Laura turns to Joe; her lipstick is smudged. The flashlight illuminates his face as a spotlight would.

A GIGGLE escapes her lips, and Joe gets to the passenger seat.

Isaac lowers the passenger's window while Laura adjusts her clothes.

SEB (V.O.)  
(filtered)  
So, this is the deal you made with--

Cosmo starts BARKING, making Isaac's heart race.

Swiftly, Lara moves to the passenger side, CLOSING the computer as she sits.

Joe stares, enjoying himself. Laura meets his gaze in subtle disgust.

JOE  
Good evening, gentleman-- lady.  
Where are you headed?

ISAAC  
Oh-- we were just...

Laura jokingly PATS Isaac on the chest.

LAURA  
(playfully)  
He knows what we were doing, babe.  
(to Joe)  
Sorry, officer. Are we going to get  
fined?

JOE  
This is a private road, Ms.  
(to Isaac)  
Where are you headed?

ISAAC  
We were on the highway and I was  
looking for a private place to...  
well, you know.

JOE  
Is that so?..  
(beat)  
Turn off the engine.

Slowly, Isaac presses the engine button, turning the car off.  
The doors automatically UNLOCK.

MOMENTS LATER

Isaac and Laura sit still, acting cool, while Cosmo is  
SNIFFING the backseat.

Joe is inspecting the messy truck with his flashlight and a  
pair of gloves. He browses through the clothes, tennis gear  
and camping tools. Nothing suspicious.

From his pocket, Joe takes a tracking device and places it under the floor mat.

SLAM. He closes the trunk and moves to the front.

With a WHISTLE, Joe calls Cosmo, who gets out of the car with something hanging from his mouth.

Joe SHUTS the backseat door as Cosmo sits down on the ground.

Joe takes the plastic; it's a bag of weed. He waves it.

JOE (CONT'D)

Is this yours?

Isaac nods.

LAURA

Helps me with anxiety. It's top quality.

JOE

Is that so?

Joe inspects it and pockets the bag.

LAURA

(gesturing with her hands)  
Oh, of course! All yours.

ISAAC

(whispering)  
Lala, I paid big money for--

She HITS him playfully. Joe ignores it.

JOE

Now, I don't want to see you both around here again. Understood?

Isaac nods and TURNS ON the engine.

LAURA

(acting fool)  
Yes, officer.

INT. FIONN'S MANSION - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Fionn and Seb are eating at the counter while standing up. They are still recording. Seb's back in front of the camera for the first time.

FIONN

Oh yes. It has everything to do with Ricardo Chavez... in fact, I think he'll come to visit at the end of the month.

INT. RESTAURANT - AFTERNOON

The place, which would normally sit about 50 people, is empty except for a table in the center.

On top of the fancy tablecloth rest several dishes of food, a bottle of white wine and two glasses.

Sitting across from each other in elegant attire, Isaac and Laura are eating a not-so-modest early dinner.

ISAAC

So... what do you think?

LAURA

Usually people book just one table, but, yeah, I'm impressed-- can't believe it's been a month already.

Isaac holds his glass mid-air.

ISAAC

Well, cheers to-- especially that.

Laura reciprocates, taking her glass to TOAST.

INT. COUNTRYSIDE ROAD - CAR - AFTERNOON

A visibly uncomfortable Seb is sitting in the backseat beside Sawyer, who's playing on a tablet.

The situation is both unusual and worrying.

SEB

Don't you get carsick, buddy?

Keith is behind the wheel. Driving and sometimes gazing over his *kids*.

SAWYER

(looking at the screen)  
Not really.

KEITH

I let him play sometimes when his parents aren't looking. It's our little secret.

SEB

Where's Irene?

KEITH

Mrs. Johnston is waiting at home; she had to run some errands--

SAWYER

She said it was an "emergency."

KEITH

Don't worry, kid. Everything's all right.

EXT. FIONN'S MANSION - GATES - AFTERNOON

As the SUV passes through the gate, the atmosphere becomes tense when half a dozen trucks parked on the premises come into view.

INT. FIONN'S MANSION - ENTRANCE - MOMENTS LATER

Ray opens the main door and stands still while Fionn walks out. Sawyer and Seb go up the stairs, both looking uneasy. Keith stays on the driveway, leaning against the car.

Upon reaching Fionn, Sawyer embraces his dad; he needs to feel protected. Seb tries not to look him in the eye.

Fionn crunches down and hugs his kid. He whispers in his ear.

FIONN

Mom is waiting for you in the theatre room. The Lion King is playing.

Sawyer pulls away to jump his way into the house; Ray walks down the stairs as he retrieves the tracking device from his pocket.

Fionn stands up, looking for Seb's gaze.

FIONN (CONT'D)

Sebastian, I know you wanted to shoot in the cellar, but the basement is being used right now.

(MORE)

FIONN (CONT'D)  
Should we head to the office  
instead?

Seb nods. On the background, Keith gives Ray the car keys and the latter hops on the driver seat.

INT. FIONN'S MANSION - OFFICE - DUSK

Fionn stands before the bookshelf.

Seb, behind the camera, tries not to peek out the window at the men who are repeatedly going in and out of the basement access.

SEB  
(pointing at the shelf)  
Which one's your favorite?

FIONN  
(nonchalant)  
All... none... any.

SEB  
You haven't read them.

FIONN  
They're an insured asset--  
exclusive titles, rare volumes,  
expensive editions that'll be worth  
more if they burn.

INT. RESTAURANT - ENTRANCE - SUV - NIGHT

Ray's left hand is behind the wheel of the infamous SUV; in his right, the tracking device SIGNALS.

Through the windshield, Laura and Isaac are seen receiving the car keys from the VALET (20s), who then opens the passenger door for Laura.

Isaac hands the valet some dollar bills and goes to the driver's seat.

Off they go, and behind them, Ray.

INT. FIONN'S MANSION - OFFICE - NIGHT

Seb is sitting.

SEB

When I say the word "home", where  
does your mind go?

His shaky leg is about to give him away.

Fionn, in front of him, is blinded by the particular array of  
lights now that he is standing before the window.

FIONN

The Midwest-- my parents' house in  
Potosi.

SEB

Have you been back since?

FIONN

No. It wouldn't be much of a  
welcome waiting there.

SEB

Are you still in contact with  
anyone from your childhood?

FIONN

What's with these questions? Are  
you in a hurry?

Seb LAUGHS nervously.

SEB

Sorry... I just thought you  
wouldn't have time for a lengthy  
interview because of the shipment  
and all that... Your men are  
already here and--

Fionn breaks in LAUGHTER.

FIONN

No, no. Don't worry. That was in  
the morning...

Seb stops filming and starts taking off the gear.

SEB

Then I must've misheard-- well,  
let's take a break then--

Seb reaches for the key-light to turn it off,

FIONN

You're not going anywhere.

but halfway, he freezes.

EXT. STORAGE COMPLEX - NIGHT

The solitude of the place seems almost harmless. A truck with a container attached sits parked all alone.

It is surrounded by a dozen warehouse doors, all completely closed.

Another truck, identical to the one already parked, is entering through the gate.

INT. STORAGE COMPLEX - TRUCK - NIGHT

BIANCA (40s), a tough-looking woman, is driving it.

She puts on a balaclava, and her hand reveals the FJ brand.

She parks parallel to the twin truck. A mobile radio lights green.

Bianca takes the hand mic.

BIANCA

No cattle and a single truck.  
Shutters down... all of them.

INT. STORAGE COMPLEX - TRUCK'S CARGO BOX - NIGHT

Half a dozen MEN are preparing their gear and hiding their arms inside their clothes, listening to the instructions through a speaker.

BIANCA (V.O.)

(filtered)  
--hide in warehouses six, eight and eleven.

BACK TO:

INT. STORAGE COMPLEX - TRUCK - NIGHT

Bianca is also preparing for the siege. Gun's ready.

She takes a deep breath and gets out.

EXT. STORAGE COMPLEX - CONTINUOUS

Bianca steps outside. Aims at the other truck,

At warehouses 1 through 6,

Behind her,

At warehouses 7 to 12.

To the roof. There's a--

The peephole HITS the ground.

Bianca CHOKES on a cry for help.

ON THE ROOF

A SNIPER (40s) lies on the ground. His fingers are still on the trigger. The back of his hand is marked.

His sight is on the half-a-dozen men stealthily getting out of the truck.

Six flashes from six rapid shots cause the six bodies to fall to the ground.

One of them crawls.

FLASH

INT. FIONN'S MANSION - OFFICE - NIGHT

A monitor displays the camera feed on the sniper's headset.

Fionn is sitting on the table beside it, pointing with a controller.

FIONN

I told you, we also improved our  
production equipment.

Seb is sitting in front. Face is red. Eyes are watering. He's paralyzed.

SEB

(trembling)

That's from this morning?

FIONN

(shaking his head)

Ten seconds delay; give or take.

(turns off the monitor)

(MORE)

FIONN (CONT'D)

Now, I'm going to ask again: do you know these people?

Seb shakes his head.

FIONN (CONT'D)

(hand behind his ear)

What's that?

SEB

No... Fionn. I don't.

FIONN

I genuinely thought we had formed a bond-- a partnership, Sebastian... I know you, and now you know me. Don't you think we're past lying?

Seb doesn't know what to say.

SEB

I swear I don't--

Fionn's anger builds, while Seb lowers his head in shame. Both wonder, "How could he be so gullible?"

FIONN

Do you really think the police were going to conduct such an amateur raid?

Fionn picks up the remote again.

FIONN (CONT'D)

I'm going to ask one last time. Do you know these people?

Seb's lips are ready to deny again, but when Fionn turns the TV back on, the feed is different.

A surveillance camera shows footage of two people, a man and a woman, their heads covered with hoods, and their bodies bound, inside a wine cellar.

FIONN (CONT'D)

No?

Seb's eyes lock onto the girl's dress. He has seen it before, yet he doesn't say a word.

FIONN (CONT'D)

This might help. Give me your phone.

Fionn stands up and extends his hand. Seb gives him his unlocked phone.

Fionn TAPS the screen several times, and from the TV, a RINGTONE is heard.

The girl tries to move herself and the chair closer to the guy, but to no avail. The guy tries shaking his leg. Both emit MUFFLED GROANS.

Ray comes into view to retrieve a phone from the reluctant guy's pocket, who attempts to make his words comprehensible.

Ray answers the phone.

FIONN (CONT'D)  
Ray, please take them off.

As Ray removes the hoods, faces are revealed, and Seb's gaze falters.

Isaac and Laura, with cloth gags and bruises, look helpless.

FIONN (CONT'D)  
Sebastian, you ratted me out to a WHISPERER! I'm not surprised, yet I'm deeply disappointed 'cuz you couldn't even do *that* right.

SEB  
No, no. You don't understand, Fionn. They have nothing to do with this. It was all me.

FIONN  
(patronizing)  
That's not true.  
(beat)  
Ray, show Sebastian what happens when you lie.

INT. FIONN'S MANSION - WINE CELLAR - NIGHT

The cold basement is filled with wooden racks and bottles.

In a corner, Ray adjusts something on a metal tray. FLAMES color his face with warmth.

BACK TO:

INT. FIONN'S MANSION - OFFICE - SAME TIME

Seb is getting desperate. Rage builds up and tears well up.

On the monitor, Ray is out of frame. Isaac and Laura can't help but try to look behind them when they hear the sound of metal.

SEB

(distressed)

Please, Fionn. I swear, I thought we were talking to the police. You don't have to do that.

FIONN

Oh, but I do.

Ray returns to the screen; Fionn focuses on him, excited.

FIONN (CONT'D)

Pick one of them.

Isaac and Laura shake their chairs, tears and red despair showing on their faces. With caution and away from his body, Ray carries the red-hot iron.

SEB

I can't. I won't.

Ray is playing Eeny Meeny Miny Moe with the iron in front of them.

SEB (CONT'D)

THEY HAVE NOTHING TO DO WITH THIS.

Fionn finally exhales, disappointed.

FIONN

It's both if you don't choose-- did you know they were on a date?

SEB

(voice cracks)

Don't do this. Please--

FIONN

WHICH ONE?

Seb opens his mouth.

INT. FIONN'S MANSION - WINE CELLAR - NIGHT

Ray stands still in front of both as Seb's answer ECHOES.

Ray wields the iron and brands the dorsal side of Isaac's left hand as the couple CRIES for help.

Between SCREAMS, Laura tries to move her chair closer to Ray.

Seb recoils, almost rising, but Fionn's hand lands heavy on his shoulder.

Fionn lowers and levels his head close to Seb's.

Fionn doesn't blink and, through the screen, he makes sure Seb doesn't either. Their reflections overlap with the terrifying image.

The HISSING sound fades as the orange glow dies.

INT. COUNTRYSIDE ROAD - SUV - NIGHT

Isaac and Laura sit together in the backseat, both wearing hoods. Laura gently cradles Isaac's blistered hand.

Ray drives them away.

RAY

Keep your mouths shut, and it'll be over. Tomorrow will be the same as yesterday because today never happened.

Laura tenderly squeezes his hand.

INT. SEB'S LOFT - LIVING AREA - DAY

Daylight filters through the closed blinds. The atmosphere is gloomy, and the space looks neglected. Trash accumulated over the weekend, and piles of paper cover every surface.

Seb sits on the floor with his earbuds on, obsessing over his own social media content and numbers.

He goes through half a dozen POSTS (videos) and lets them run for a couple of seconds to read their approval and reach statistics.

INT. STREET - CAR - DAY

Keith is driving, and Seb is hypnotized by his phone.

Keith reaches for something near the dashboard, catching Seb's eye as he notices the FJ brand.

On his phone, Seb goes to the Messages App and taps on "The Musketeers" group chat.

The last message was sent by Seb two days ago. It is an ignored and lengthy apology.

He brings himself to type: "I'm really sorry," then exits the chat, clearing all its content.

INT. FIONN'S MANSION - WINE CELLAR - DAY

Seb, behind the camera, knows he is being punished as he tries to zone out from whatever Fionn is saying.

The man is standing behind a bar in the middle of the cellar.

FIONN

... I think I could go into politics... I'm definitely better than many of our representatives when it comes to business matters. But that would be even more exposure-- Sebastian, am I boring you?

SEB

Nah. Not in the slightest-- ummm... I saw you have a record player in the office. What kind of music do you like to play?

FIONN

70s rock mostly, and country.

SEB

(stale)

What's your favorite band?

FIONN

Led Zeppelin.

SEB

What's your favorite song?

FIONN

More questions?

SEB

I'm just curious. I think music's a good way to get to know someone.

FIONN  
Bullshit. You're salty.  
(beat)  
Make something useful out of that  
resentment.

Seb doesn't buy it.

SEB  
So you can punish me afterwards?

FIONN  
Ask anything.

SEB  
How does it feel to kill someone?

Fionn smiles. There it is.

FIONN  
"Kill" is a simplistic word that  
doesn't account for the guts  
required to do it... Killing is  
only of use when there's no room  
for punishment or correction. Else  
is a waste of ammunition-- I have  
morals.

SEB  
(unamused)  
Wasn't the old man a waste? An  
accident?

Beat.

SEB (CONT'D)  
How many have you killed?

FIONN  
On accident? Three, but this  
conversation is going nowhere. Stop  
recording and take whichever bottle  
you like.

INT. FIONN'S MANSION - CHIMNEY ROOM - NIGHT

Fionn and Seb sit facing each other, with their sides turned  
toward the timid fireplace that barely illuminates them. In  
their hands, a glass of Merlot.

Seb stares blankly at the hypnotizing red liquid, but Fionn's  
gaze is fixed on him.

FIONN

Sebastian, aren't you curious as to why the police aren't after me anymore?

SEB

(shrugs; guessing)

An exceptionally generous bribe?

Fionn shakes his head.

FIONN

Have you ever seen my security force?

Seb shakes his head.

FIONN (CONT'D)

I told you that your job was to get to know me and show the world who I really am.

SEB

That's been done; it just needs editing.

FIONN

Not quite... It's no use if you film reluctantly-- Sebastian, THIS MATTERS TO ME.

The conversation is becoming heated, and the flames are growing more intense.

SEB

I *am* taking this seriously. I've been doing everything you asked-- hell, I'll even have to retake most of my courses because of this.

(beat)

So believe me when I say it matters to me too.

FIONN

You don't believe in it. I can see it every time you hit record-- you're afraid of me!

SEB

Oh, cuz you think any of *this* is the norm?!

A long, heavy silence. The fire SNAPS behind them.

Fionn stands up abruptly. His chair SCREECHES backwards.

Seb sits up, tense.

FIONN

Sebastian, why do you think I'm doing this?

SEB

Honestly?

(beat)

Because you're controlling and desperate.

Fionn, angry, THROWS his glass onto the fireplace, causing the flames to dim once more.

FIONN

If I were desperate, I would've hired someone less inclined to sweat through the interviews.

SEB

Then what do you want from me?

Seb stiffens. The room seems to shrink.

FIONN

In a month, give or take.

(beat)

After I die, Sawyer will only have the news, the headlines, and my crimes-- so the documentary--

SEB

It's for him.

INT. DRUG STORE - DAY

A news report is being played on the television behind the cash register. Seb's face and social media posts all over it.

Seb, dressed incognito, is cueing up with a manila envelope in his hand.

When he reaches the front, he avoids making eye contact with the CASHIER (40s). Seb swiftly places the envelope on the top of the counter.

The envelope has a made-up name and a disposable email address written on it.

CASHIER  
How many rolls?

SEB  
Five.

CASHIER  
All right. Please place your card  
here, and we will process a pre-  
approved payment of \$60.

Seb places a platinum credit card on the reader. A BEEP.  
Transaction approved.

SEB  
When will they be ready?

The machine starts PRINTING the receipt.

CASHIER  
In two weeks.

The cashier takes the receipt, and Seb takes out a \$50 bill  
and puts it on top of the envelope.

SEB  
I need them in one.

The cashier nods and slowly takes the bill.

INT. STREET - CAR - DAY

Seb sits in the passenger seat of the SUV, staring at his  
phone, which shows his YouVid channel analytics. The metrics  
have increased significantly overnight.

EXT. UNIVERSITY - ENTRANCE - DAY

The SUV parks near a busy sidewalk.

When Seb steps out of the vehicle, passersby freeze.

He closes the DOOR, and Keith drives off.

As Seb, with his earbud on, nervously moves forward, people  
make way for him as if he were the plague.

They MURMUR and point at him. Some even take pictures or turn  
the other way.

INT. UNIVERSITY - CAFÉ - DAY

Seb sits by himself, surrounded yet isolated by the unkind looks. He is eating a pastry and drinking coffee.

INT. UNIVERSITY - DOCUMENTARY CLASSROOM - DAY

Seb sits alone in the corner. The light emanating from the projector blurs his face.

MR. MARLOWE (O.S.)

... First of all, congratulations on your research. I am genuinely thrilled to watch your final projects.

His classmates, scattered throughout the front rows, sat in pairs, ignoring Seb's existence.

MR. MARLOWE (CONT'D)

Who would like to go first?

A pair raises their hands. One of them, covered in gauze and a bandaid, though a sweater sleeve tries to cover them.

It is Isaac and Laura. A ROUND OF APPLAUSE.

Seb sinks into his seat.

Mr. Marlowe grows worried, looking at Isaac and Laura's poorly concealed bruised and stitched faces.

INT. SEB'S STUDIO APARTMENT - KITCHEN AREA/ENTRANCE - DAY

Seb enters the door, hyperventilating.

He THROWS his backpack on the floor and desperately scrambles to the back of his apartment, KNOCKING everything over in his path.

INT. SEB'S STUDIO APARTMENT - LIVING AREA - CONTINUOUS

He closes the blinds in despair as he watches Keith drive away.

Seb is unaware when a black van parks in front.

INT. UNIVERSITY - MR. MARLOWE'S OFFICE - NIGHT

The imposing figure of Mr. Marlowe sits down at his desk. In front of him, Isaac and Laura sit like scolded children.

MR. MARLOWE  
How did it happen?

ISAAC  
(acting oblivious)  
Happened what..?

MR. MARLOWE  
You injuries, folks.

LAURA  
We didn't mean to alarm you. Isaac and I were training for the tennis tournament. Things got intense and--

MR. MARLOWE  
(raising his hand)  
I'm aware that Mr. Richford is working for Candy Johnston.

LAURA  
We are as disturbed as you are, but this is not related.

Mr. Marlowe looks intently at his students' cool. He leans toward them and clasps his hands together.

Isaac flinches. Laura is unbothered.

MR. MARLOWE  
Ms. Alexander was threatened-- and, Isaac, what's that?

Mr. Marlowe pulls Isaac's cuff off.

ISAAC  
(quoting Monty Python & The Holy Grail)  
"Tis but a scratch."

Mr. Marlowe backs off and SIGHS. He doesn't buy it.

MR. MARLOWE  
The Dean and I spoke with the police. They are currently investigating Mr. Richford and have advised us not to engage with him for the time being. I encourage you to do the same.

Isaac and Laura look defeated.

INT. SEB'S STUDIO APARTMENT - WORKING AREA - NIGHT

Seb is locked in. It is 1:00 in the morning, and his impassive face gazes at the monitor.

FIONN (VIDEO)  
(filtered)  
How old are you now?  
(giggling)

The screen displays an editing suite with a complex timeline, featuring multiple frames of Fionn's face. The mouse hovers across the project, while the video player shows a scene of Fionn and Sawyer sitting together on a couch at home.

Sawyer raises eight fingers.

FIONN (VIDEO) (CONT'D)  
(filtered; laughing)  
That many?

Behind it, the corkboard has been transformed into a web of Post-it notes, each outlining the structure and storyline of the documentary. The effect is unsettling.

FIONN (VIDEO) (CONT'D)  
(filtered)  
He turns nine in January and--

Seb CLICKS pause. His eyes well up.

Fionn's face remains static on the screen, smiling.

MATCH CUT TO:

INT. FIONN'S MANSION - DINING ROOM - DAY

Fionn is eating a piece of steak.

Seb is in front of him, eating a salad bowl.

SEB  
I'm almost done with the first cut.

FIONN  
That's terrific news.

Seb acts like a child debriefing his day of school while poking peas. Partially afraid and in awe.

FIONN (CONT'D)

I'm planning to host a premier--  
"screening," as you'd call it.

SEB

I wish, but my butt hurt teacher  
has this rule that the documentary  
can only be played in class.

FIONN

I'm sure you'll work around that--  
my friends have been asking about  
you and the movie.

SEB

That's given, considering that  
cat's out of the bag and we're  
basically celebrities...

Fionn starts to LAUGH mockingly.

FIONN

(drinking)

Where did you get that idea?

SEB

The internet. I'm doing numbers on  
social media.

FIONN

(smirks)

I'm aware. The first hundred  
thousand were on me.

(beat)

But a screening... *that* would be  
real exposure.

Seb HUFFS, shaking his head. Fionn offers his hand.

PRELAP: The sound of a tennis ball HITTING a racket.

EXT. UNIVERSITY - TENNIS COURT - AFTERNOON

Laura and Isaac are standing on opposite sides of the net.  
Their bruises have faded.

A ball rockets toward Isaac.

It THWACKS against his racket. He lets out a GRUNT. Seb's  
"gift" is still wrapped in gauze, still hurting.

LAURA (O.S.)  
Use your other hand! God gave you  
two for a reason.

Isaac stoops, grabs the ball with his uninjured hand, and  
tosses it back.

ISAAC  
Yeah, well... our *friend* fried the  
good one.

Laura SIGHS and BOUNCES the ball a couple of times, then  
sends a hard SERVE flying.

LAURA  
Have you seen him?

The ball SKIDS. Isaac, using his non-dominant hand, barely  
returns it.

ISAAC  
Not this week, no.

THUD. It makes its way above the net and to Laura's.

LAURA  
I have a terrible fee--

Laura's response is weak, and the ball SKIMS the net.

ISAAC  
LET. He's not our responsibility.

Both walk toward the net.

They lock eyes, but Isaac gives up and crouches to pick the  
ball up.

LAURA  
He doesn't have anyone else!

ISAAC  
Lala, we got off the hook pretty  
damn "harmless."

He gives the ball to Laura. Truce. She takes it.

LAURA  
Have you even thought for a split  
second about all the things Seb has  
gone through?!

Isaac walks back. Laura grips the ball tightly.

ISAAC

Whatever it is, I'm sure the news will tell us all about it.

LAURA

Have you considered his life's at stake?!

ISAAC

(desperate)

Lala, if we get involved again, our bodies will be the headline.

INT. UNIVERSITY - MR. MARLOWE'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Mr. Marlowe is grading a stack of papers. The man is tired, but he's almost finished.

PING. The monitor turns on, displaying a notification. Mr. Marlowe puts his glasses on to read it better.

ON THE MONITOR:

(now) srichford@ucom.edu

Subject: Ticket to From The Source

MR. MARLOWE

What the...

He puts down his pen and papers and, with the mouse, clicks on the email notification.

A full-screen email tab opens. Mr. Marlowe scans through the lengthy message; it is a letter, accompanied by an invite.

He scrolls.

Two buttons sit at the bottom: RSVP FOR PREMIERE -- PRESS KIT. The pointer hovers over them.

INT. SEB'S STUDIO APARTMENT - NIGHT

WORKING AREA

Seb looks at his monitor. He's in his e-mail tab; a notification bubble reads: YOUR MESSAGE HAS BEEN SENT.

Behind it, the corkboard has become a mess. Aside from the Post-it notes, there are stills from the project, names, locations and dates. It resembles a crime investigation.

He SIGHS and rolls on his swivel chair to his bed.

## LIVING AREA

On his bed lay a brand new white suit, still covered in plastic, with a Post-it note attached: Sebastian.

Seb stands up and picks the suit from the hanger.

Delicately, he opens the plastic bag's ZIPPER.

DING. Seb turns to his workspace.

## WORKING AREA

On his monitor, a notification from his Messages APP.

Seb ROLLS back with the chair.

ON SEB'S MONITOR:

Your film is ready!

Download digital files via link + code.

Pickup in-store tomorrow after 9 AM.

Seb CLICKS on the link, and a loading screen appears.

Below the ring:

preparing 180 items

Then, one by one, the pictures start filling the screen.

Most of them don't include Fionn but rather cold, severed bodies and tags in different settings across Hope Village.

Seb opens the first picture: It's Richard Green's bloody and pale body lying on the meadow's soil.

Seb lets out a terrified and soft GASP. He closes the picture and scrolls through the rest.

A very bright picture catches his eye; he CLICKS it:

The metal surface reflects the overhead light. The morgue drawer is half-open, just enough for a pale hand to spill into the frame.

Seb zooms on the white tag dangling from the body's wrist, the name barely legible.

Seb's face forfeits its color. He's horrified.

PRELAP: MUFFLED CLAPS.

INT. UNIVERSITY - DOCUMENTARY CLASSROOM - DAY

Students are randomly dispersed throughout the room; they no longer sit in pairs, except for Isaac and Laura, whose faces have almost healed.

They CLAP and CHEER as Mr. Marlowe stands at the front.

He signals with his hands for them to contain the excitement.

MR. MARLOWE

Thank you, thank you, but it was  
all of you who put in the effort  
and hard work-- folks, you've truly  
earned these grades.

Laura and Isaac smile tenderly, proud, while behind them,  
Malcom shows Mr. Marlowe a snarky hand raise.

MALCOLM

Even Sebastian? We haven't seen his  
drug-trafficking ass or his shitty  
documentary.

Adam, sitting close to Malcolm, DABS him up.

MR. MARLOWE

(scratching his head)  
I'm aware, Malcolm-- I'm watching  
Mr. Richford's documentary shortly.  
Then, I'll--

Laura and Isaac are bewildered.

ADAM

(cupping hands around the  
mouth)  
FAIL HIM ALREADY.

MR. MARLOWE

Malcolm, Adam, that's enough. Class  
dismissed.

MOMENTS LATER

Laura and Isaac sit still while their classmates leave the  
room, and Mr. Marlowe picks up his briefcase from the desk.

ISAAC

Graham, what do you mean you're  
meeting with Seb?

He stops and SIGHS to CLOSE THE DOOR. Now, light seeps  
through the gap between the floor and the door.

LAURA

You told us the police said--

Mr. Marlowe turns to his students.

MR. MARLOWE

I know what I said, but Mr. Richford's mail was, you know... we made a deal, and I have to give his project the benefit of the doubt.

(beat)

And, as the police said, Laura, I encourage you folks not to be there on Friday.

Isaac nods, but Laura almost lets out a "where?"

INT. - SEB'S LOFT - DAY

Seb's home is now pristine: the kitchen is spotless, and the living area looks like it's straight out of a magazine.

For the first time in months, his desk is clear of notebooks and loose sheets, though the open box of *only* film rolls remains, sitting there eerily.

The corkboard's diagram is topped with some of the prints from the rolls. It sits still, waiting on someone else to find it.

Seb is getting ready, standing near the bed. He's adjusting his tie and glancing at the brand-new tux while wearing the old one.

A CHIME on his phone: "KEITH: Hurry."

Seb flicks his hands on his suit.

INT. ISAAC'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - DAY

Isaac sleeps, hugging Laura's body, who is already awake.

She is on her phone, looking at Seb's location on the Tracker App. His pin is still at home.

Then, the app refreshes, and Seb's pin starts moving through his neighborhood.

Laura sits up, provoking Isaac to wake up.

ISAAC  
(strained)  
Morning.

Laura hides her phone behind her pillow and locks eyes with him.

LAURA  
Hey, babe. Keep sleeping, and I'll  
wake you up for breakfast, okay?

ISAAC  
(sighs)  
Okay.

Laura swiftly takes her phone as she stands up, and Isaac snuggles onto the bed, taking her pillow.

INT. ISAAC'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Laura walks out of the bedroom all dressed. Stealthily, she closes the door.

From the couch, she takes the remote and turns the TV on.  
FULL VOLUME.

Laura tosses the remote back to the couch and takes one of Isaac's hoodies lying there.

She puts it on and makes her way to the entrance, pulling her hair into a messy bun. From its pocket, Laura takes out his car keys.

She takes her phone from her pants and taps "DRIVE" on Seb's location. "DESTINATION ETA: 32 min."

Off the door, she goes.

EXT. THEATRE - ENTRANCE - DAY

Mr. Marlowe, wearing a tux and a worried face, is walking from a corner, looking in every other direction.

He makes it to an old-fashioned movie theatre with a velvet and abandoned cue. Standing in front of it, dressed in all black, is Ray.

RAY  
Name?

Mr. Marlowe fixes his gaze on the closed box office and the substitute anti-gun sign.

MR. MARLOWE  
Marlowe-- Graham Marlowe.  
(beat)  
I'm Mr. Richford's professor.

RAY  
Sebastian?

Mr. Marlowe nods, and Ray turns his head to the intercom attached to his ear.

RAY (CONT'D)  
Tell the kid his teacher's here.  
(to Mr. Marlowe)  
Arms out for me, sir.

Mr. Marlowe raises his arms, startled. Ray steps in.

INT. THEATRE - FOYER - DAY

Seb emerges from the screen door and meets with Mr. Marlowe, who slowly enters from the street.

Seb extends his hand for his professor to shake it.

SEB  
Thank you for accepting my  
invitation.

He lowers it.

MR. MARLOWE  
Mr. Richford, you broke our  
agreement.

SEB  
The agreement didn't account for  
the magnitude of my project.

MR. MARLOWE  
I guess it didn't.  
(beat)  
Why am I here?

SEB  
Because I'm doing something great,  
something different... have you  
ever done that with your movies?

MR. MARLOWE  
Don't make me say what it really  
is.

SEB

Don't make me start late. I've  
saved you a seat next to mine.

INT. STREET - ISAAC'S CAR - DAY

Laura is driving recklessly, following her Maps App in Seb's  
direction. THE TONE is heard.

LAURA

C'mon, Seb. Pick up.

The TONE, again.

LAURA (CONT'D)

(sighs)

Fuuuuuck.

The TONE. Laura, mad, taps on the car radio screen to cancel  
the call. Then taps on the microphone icon.

LAURA (CONT'D)

Call 911.

INT. THEATRE - SCREEN - DAY

The auditorium is filled with menacing-looking people. In the  
very front row sit Sawyer, Irene, Fionn, Seb's spot, and Mr.  
Marlowe. Security guards stand in the corners. It's  
unsettling how they all CHEER for Seb, who's coming from  
behind the screen.

A camera sneakily stands between the screen and the audience,  
recording Seb's entrance. A spotlight follows.

SEB

(waving)

Hi, hello everyone.

(cheering fades)

Thank you for being here today.  
This means a lot more than you  
think!

(beat)

I've made stuff before-- small  
stuff, contained... stories, short  
films. But the story I walked into,  
the film you're about to see, is  
bigger than anything I'd ever  
worked on, bigger than anything  
than I've ever lived.

(beat)

(MORE)

SEB (CONT'D)

I saw the man the world thinks it  
already knows. He wanted me to  
show... not the myth, not the  
headlines, but the person  
underneath all of that.

(the lights fade)

This is Fionn Johnstone. From the  
Source.

APPLAUSE from everyone except Mr. Marlowe. Seb goes to his  
seat in the front row.

INT. SEB'S LOFT - DAY

\*A special forces unit enters the apartment, and an agent  
informs the police officers that they've just received a new  
report on Seb's and Fionn's whereabouts.

INT. THEATRE - SCREEN - DAY

The documentary is rolling. The audience is in awe. Both Seb  
and Fionn look pleased. Mr. Marlowe is sickened.

Sawyer pulls his mom's dress to get her attention.

SAWYER

(whispering)

Mommy, where's the bathroom.

IRENE

I'll go with you.

Irene takes Sawyer by the hand, and they go out of the room.

The film is still playing, but for a split second, some  
frames begin alternating with photos of the Hope Village  
morgue.

In the back, SOMEONE (40s) cocks a gun, then Ray, standing in  
the corner on the bottom, shoots him.

Thereupon, two dozen men stand from their seats with small-  
calibre firearms in hand. Half of them aim at Fionn, the  
other half at each other.

Mr. Marlowe is terrified.

MR. MARLOWE

(whispering)

Sebastian, I think we need to leave  
now.

Fionn stands up in front of everyone.

FIONN

No one is going anywhere.

More henchmen reveal themselves from the audience.

FIONN (CONT'D)

You, little brat, stay right there.

(pointing at the  
projectionist)

And you stop the film. Stop the  
fucking movie!

Fionn FIRES twice at the projectionist. The film freezes on one of the photos from the film roll.

Men who aim at Fionn get SHOT by the henchmen sitting near them.

Seb and Graham take cover on the floor.

EXT. THEATRE - ENTRANCE - DAY

\*Laura arrives and Keith calls her by name, telling her not to come in.

Gunshots are heard, and Keith goes in.

Laura calls 911 again and says there are gunshots.

INT. THEATRE - SCREEN - DAY

\*Keith makes it inside and shoots someone who is creeping behind Fionn.

\*Seb tells Keith to go get Sawyer and Irene, who are in the bathroom. He does so.

Someone shoots Ray, and Fionn shoots the audience member, as do Fionn's friends. A shootout begins.

Mr. Marlowe and Seb crawl away.

Then Mr. Marlowe stops moving and falls to the ground. A pool of blood.

Seb, motionless, watches out of the corner of his eye as Keith leads Sawyer and Irene to one of the emergency exits.

The woman and her son pass through the exit. With a jolt, Keith falls forward when a bullet enters his back.

\*Then Fionn goes mad, thinking that his family has been shot, he starts shooting indiscriminately.

EXT. THEATRE - ENTRANCE - DAY

\*Irene makes it out carrying Sawyer.

\*Laura asks Irene if Seb is still alive.

\*Irene nods and goes to the back to get the SUV.

INT. THEATRE - SCREEN - DAY

Seb, with his head in his hands, waits for the SHOOTING to end.

The bullets halt, and Seb lifts his gaze to the camera. It's still recording. It recorded everything.

Stealthily, he tries to crawl his way out, past Mr. Marlowe's body. A pair of feet approaches.

Fionn turns his demented stare at him. Seb stops moving.

Fionn cocks the handgun and points at Seb.

FIONN

Look at me!

Seb looks up, and Fionn gestures with the gun for him to stand up.

He slowly does.

As Fionn moves closer to him, his body gets tattooed by the light; a severed body all over the screen, his suit and hair; on his face, the tag hanging from the foot, reads: August T. Richford.

FIONN (CONT'D)

What the fuck is this, your  
"director's cut"?

SEB

(pointing at the screen)  
It's the truth. You did that!

FIONN

Yeah, and I created who you are  
today.

SEB

I don't care! It's over.

FIONN

You're not done. Give me the real one! The one with the proper FUCKING ending.

Laura slowly opens the auditorium door. Fionn turns around, aiming when he hears the CREAK.

Seb pulls the gun out of his suit.

He SHOOTS Fionn in the back.

The man HITS the ground.

Laura comes in and lets out a SOB. Seb, trembling, turns to meet her eyes. Laura freezes.

Seb, sweating cold, raises the gun with the muzzle toward his own chin. His hands are colored with Mr. Marlowe's blood.

He closes his eyes.

OVER BLACK

A CLICK.

No bullet.

**THE END**