

KALEIDOSCOPE

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FADE IN:

INT. OWEN'S ROOM - EVENING

OWEN (age: 12) pulls out a kaleidoscope from under his bed. It is half-constructed. He works on placing the stars on the viewing frame. He finishes. He peers into the hole and rotates. He has a big grin on his face.

INT. CLASSROOM - DAY

Owen (age: 16) is with his teacher MR. LUCK and classmates. Owen is in high school.

MR. LUCK

Congratulations on finishing your final projects. I was impressed with all of the creative programming projects everyone was able to complete. I do want to point out one project though. Everyone gave the maximum points to this person's project. I was incredibly impressed with Owen's project, the submarine search using trigonometry. You utilized and implemented coding syntax algorithms that went beyond what our class covered. It was very entertaining. Everyone give Owen a round of applause.

Everyone claps.

MR. LUCK (CONT'D)

Owen will solve world peace one day, everyone watch out.

Everyone laughs.

OWEN

Someday.

MR. LUCK
What's your plan?

OWEN
Stories, like the one I just told,
I guess. Perhaps I'll throw some
decision tree making in there in
case things get a little hectic.

EXT. DRIVING RANGE - DAY

Owen (age: 28) and BEN hit golf balls at a driving range.
Owen smacks one with his driver.

OWEN
Bam, this new driver is really kick-
ass.

BEN
Told ya.

OWEN
How's work?

Owen slams another ball.

BEN
Oh. Same old. Thinking about
traveling.

OWEN
You want to quit?

BEN
More of a hiatus. Do some soul-
searching, ya know?

OWEN
Yeah. Figured you would.

BEN

I'm thinking of some far away place, somewhere so different from here, but also at my roots. I want to rediscover who I am.

OWEN

I guess you've never really known that, being an orphan and all. I really take that shit for granted.

BEN

It's cool. I would too. It's just that... I want a life with direction. When I set sail, I want to know I'm embarking on a journey that will end in discovering a new world. I don't want to get lost at sea, metaphorically speaking.

Ben smacks a ball with his driver.

OWEN

I'm at a fork in the road too. Life just seems to mean how many people remember what you've done and who you impact.

Owen smacks a ball.

BEN

You should travel dude. It will give you some new perspectives. I'm serious about taking major time off to see the world.

OWEN

Yeah. For sure.

BEN

I thought you were really into your science position.

OWEN
I am. I like it a lot. It is
fulfilling.

BEN
Cool. I think you're doing good
work.

Ben launches another ball.

OWEN
Thanks.

Owen slams another ball.

OWEN
I feel like there could be
something more though.

BEN
What do you mean?

OWEN
Like, creating a different world.
Having a vision. And seeing that
vision come to reality.

BEN
Sounds like you want to do films.
People can get really immersed in
films.

OWEN
Yeah. I'll have to think about it.

Owen slams another ball.

BEN
I once saw a film that changed my
reality.

OWEN
Really?

BEN

Yeah. It gave me insight into who I wanted to become. I want people to be happy. I want them to laugh at life. Like scoff, to show that they won't be held down.

Owen laughs.

OWEN

You mean, like be an ass?

BEN

No. Like having swagger.

OWEN

That's hard man.

BEN

That's why it's worth doing.
Everyone has it. Just got to find the right doors to open.

Ben slams a ball.

EXT. PARK - MORNING

Owen is out on an icy morning in New York. He is alone on a trip and wanders around central park. He notices many people, all who seem to be having a great holiday. It is almost Christmas and the cheer is in the air. He notices a couple of GIRLS standing around. They are cute, cheerful, and welcoming. He catches a glance at them. They make brief eye contact. Owen stands around taking pictures of the ice rink, then the trees with snow glistening on the branches, and then the bright stars on the decorated trees. He sighs. He walks over to the girls.

OWEN

Fancy a picture of us?

GIRLS

We just met. We don't know you.

OWEN

I'll autograph it. It will be worth a lot. This is the day that will go down in your lives when you got a free ticket to my show.

GIRLS

What show?

OWEN

Well, it's not quite there yet. I mean, it's like not real or anything yet. It's still in my head. But it will be real very soon. Just you wait and see.

GIRLS

Okay whatever. Just get in the picture.

Owen smiles with the girls.

OWEN

Spicy!

They take a picture.

OWEN (CONT'D)

So like, you want to know what my show is about?

GIRLS

Sure.

OWEN

Think of the shyest motherfucking kid you've ever seen. So reserved that he is crippled socially because of this hyperactive thing in his head called the amygdala. It just shuts him off whenever he wants to say something. But get this. He goes out into the world and pushes himself to the brink. He talks to people. He talks to people that are really real.

(MORE)

OWEN (CONT'D)

They say, hey man you've got something. Something special. He wonders what it is. He asks them. They say, you got to figure it out yourself kid. They all say the same shit. He can't figure it out. Until one day he talks to a couple of strangers, and then he realizes it.

GIRLS

What is it?

OWEN

Swans.

GIRLS

Uh, what?

OWEN

Yup. Swans. I'll see you all at my show. Look out for it. My name is Owen.

GIRLS

What is your show going to be called?

Owen walks away.

OWEN

Well, I told you. You have to listen carefully.

GIRLS

Swans?

OWEN

I told you to listen carefully.
"Reflections."

INT. MOVIE FESTIVAL THEATER - DAY

Owen is at an indie movie festival. He is volunteering as a concierge, directing people to different theaters and answering questions.

CUT TO:

Owen sits in on the premier of "Harbor Of." A scene from the movie shows the main protagonist ANNIE gathering sea shells and listening to their messages along the beach front. She grabs one.

ANNIE
Butcher him, he's not the one.

She grabs another.

ANNIE (CONT'D)
Talent is where the eyes meet
another's eyes. Show them your
talent.

She listens to another.

ANNIE (CONT'D)
Cradle and nurture your future
child. He will pass on the legacy.

She grabs her head as if she has a headache, but she cannot stop listening to the messages. She grabs another.

ANNIE (CONT'D)
TERRENCE has something he's not
telling you. Ask him about
Lorraine.

She picks up another one.

ANNIE (CONT'D)
There is fortune ahead, but only
through darkness.

Annie grabs her head and screams. She looks as if she is losing her mind.

ANNIE (CONT'D)
Where is it coming from? Where!?

She grabs at the sand. She is addicted to the sea shells along the beach front, but they torment her.

CUT TO:

Annie finds herself awake wide-eyed and drenched. She is in the psyche ward of a hospital. She walks around and people are muttering to themselves in the corners of the corridors.

STRANGER

I saw him. I saw him. I saw him.

The person then makes a sawing motion. Annie shudders and walks down the ward. Another person walks past her.

ANOTHER STRANGER

I need a punching bag or someone's gonna get hurt!

She looks away. Annie then stops. She hears something.

A WHISPER (IN ANNIE'S HEAD)

Terrence has something he's not telling you.

She has a sudden realization that this is now her reality and not a bad dream. She cowers into a corner and sobs.

FADE TO:

Annie leaves the ward with her significant other. Terrence looks concerned as Annie walks toward him. As they walk together to the parking lot, Annie asks Terrence a question.

ANNIE

Hey, is there something you're not telling me?

TERRENCE

No. Why do you ask?

ANNIE

Oh, well... it's nothing.

TERRENCE
Is it the voices?

ANNIE
Yes. It's hard for me to figure out
who to trust.

TERRENCE
You have to trust yourself. Don't
listen to anyone or those voices.
Figure out your own true voice.

ANNIE
I know.

TERRENCE
No one can do this for you. This is
your fight. I will always be here
for you.

Terrence kisses Annie on the head. Annie puts her arm around
Terrence.

ANNIE
Thanks hun.

CUT TO:

Credits roll. People exit the theater. Owen holds the door
open as people exit and thanks the audience members as they
leave. He catches the main actor Annie walking towards the
exit. They make eye contact. Owen interjects.

OWEN
Hey you look exactly like the main
character, are you Annie?

SAM
Yes, my name is SAM in real life
though.

OWEN

Oh. Well, Sam, that was a brilliant movie. You must have wrote it too.

SAM

Yes I did.

OWEN

Very well done. A true indie.

SAM

I take that as a compliment.

OWEN

It is. You know I am going to write a film as well. It's about life as a patient too. Gotta promote the wave of change into the film industry.

SAM

Oh you have experience? You don't look the part.

OWEN

That was uncalled for. Yes I do in fact. I'm here trying to hustle to be honest. I'm looking for more ways to immerse myself into the industry.

SAM

Haha well good luck with that. It's a long road junior.

OWEN

Look, I may not have much experience, but this guy's got a lot of potential. You'll see me soon in the limelight.

SAM

No kidding.

OWEN
Look miss, don't discount this guy.
All I'm saying.

Owen looks at Sam who makes eye contact. Owen goes in for the kiss.

SAM
Okay. I see where you're coming
from.

OWEN
Good. Now give me your number and
I'll show you what I mean.

SAM
I think you already did.

Sam puts her number into Owen's phone.

SAM (CONT'D)
See ya later... what was your name
again?

OWEN
The name's Owen.

SAM
Okay Owen, see you dude.

Sam walks off.

EXT. WILDERNESS - NIGHT

Owen is outside at night with Sam. They gaze up at the stars.
The night is cool and brisk. He pulls out a telescope.

OWEN
For the things the eyes cannot see,
but they are there.

SAM

Stop with your nonsense Owen. Just give me the damn telescope. I want to see the big dipper.

Owen adjusts the eye piece.

OWEN

Hold on, I'm altering the appropriate distance...

Sam grabs the telescope.

SAM

There. It works. See? I can see clearly.

OWEN

Why'd you do that. I was almost ready.

SAM

I want to see what I want to see.

OWEN

Well, then. I think we have the wrong tool.

Owen whips out his kaleidoscope.

SAM

What is that?

OWEN

This here is something special. Something I was given and something I created. It's a kaleidoscope.

SAM

Oh. I know what that is. That stuff is for kids.

OWEN

No it isn't. The stars out there.
Those are based on reality.
Something tangible. But they will
die someday. It will take a while,
but it will happen.

SAM

Yes I know that.

OWEN

This kaleidoscope is a bit
different. You don't know what's in
there. At least not yet. There's
some mystery in it. A different
reality. One that you haven't ever
seen.

SAM

What did you put in there? A
nightmare?

OWEN

No Sam. A dream. Take a look.

SAM

Okay this better not be some voodoo
weird stuff.

Sam takes the kaleidoscope and looks into it. At first she
sees shiny stars, small and scattered in the darkness. And as
she rotates the kaleidoscope, she finds a large star, much
larger than the rest. She looks deep into the star and finds
the same pattern of stars that she saw while rotating the
kaleidoscope.

SAM (CONT'D)

How'd you put all the other stars
in there?

OWEN

It's a reflection you see.
Everything that you've touched will
eventually be a part of you.

(MORE)

OWEN (CONT'D)

What you give back in this life are
the things that you've touched.

SAM

So, this kaleidoscope is a
metaphor?

OWEN

Yes. A metaphor for life.

EXT. OUTSIDE BEN'S APARTMENT - DAY

Owen (age: 31) knocks on Ben's door. No one answers. Owen
peers into the window.

OWEN

Yo, Ben! It's Owen.

No one answers. Owen picks up his phone and gives Ben a call.

BEN

Hey man what's up?

OWEN

You've disappeared again. Been
trying to reach you. Where are you?

BEN

I'm in Sydney.

OWEN

What? When did this happen.

BEN

I flew out last week.

OWEN

You're always traveling man. Hardly
see you anymore.

BEN
Yeah. I'm finding my roots.

OWEN
You okay?

BEN
Yeah. Don't worry about me man. I
know how to take care of myself.
You should worry about your movie.

OWEN
I'm coming to see you. Too many
people have left my life. Need
someone who I can talk to.

BEN
Yeah man. Whatever you need. I'm
here.

OWEN
Cool. I'll fly out next week. See
you soon.

EXT. OUTSIDE BEN'S APARTMENT IN SYDNEY - DAY

Owen rings the apartment bell that Ben is staying at in
Sydney.

OWEN
Hey man, it's Owen.

BEN
Oh, hey dude, I'm coming down.

Owen waits, checks his phone. Ben opens the gate and comes
outside.

OWEN
Hey man it's been a while!

BEN

Yeah man. Wow I can't believe it's already been 2 years.

OWEN

You've got the traveling bug. Following your instagram. You weren't lying when you said you'd be traveling a lot.

BEN

Correction, wandering.

OWEN

Oh, you still searching for that deep dark secret to life?

BEN

Haha yep. I think Sydney has the answer, I can smell it. Speaking of which, let's go to this awesome ice cream place. They've got this ridiculous fig, honey, and pistachio ice cream. You've got to try it.

CUT TO:

Both Ben and Owen are holding ice cream cones.

BEN (CONT'D)

What did I tell you?

OWEN

Yeah. This is the stuff.

BEN

So, I've been on hiatus for a while. I've been doing a lot of thinking. And naturally, with lots of thinking comes writing. I've been trying to work out a tale of the lost traveler who finds his way. But the ending needs some work.

OWEN

How about he ends in creating a new life for people who were destined to never have one?

BEN

That's so romantic Owen.

OWEN

Well, you ever going to come back?

BEN

I don't know. I love traveling, but also I do miss my friends and family. I've got to figure out this tenuous situation I am in.

OWEN

How about you start something that is important to you? You gave me this same advice 2 years ago. Take your own advice.

BEN

Well, I don't want to sound pretentious but I have started something. It's just... where I want to be. I am not there yet.

OWEN

Just make it up.

BEN

Hm. I think if I could pull just one person out of a pit of despair, I would be happy. Stories have to have a happy ending. Otherwise, where is the inspiration?

OWEN

Say you found it. Whatever you're looking for.

Ben takes a bite out of his cone.

OWEN (CONT'D)

Leave a lasting impression. You have to show them the way you see the world. Give them something to strive for. Gotta show them the new horizons. Then they'll make the journey.

BEN

Hm. Yep. You got a point brother. I'll show them.

Ben takes a bite.

INT. JOINT IMPROV THEATER - EVENING

Owen goes onto stage. Owen is nervous as he steps into the light.

OWEN

Welcome, everyone! Tonight is our team's show, we're the Living in the Primordial Soup! We're looking for a suggestion tonight to start off our improv show, of anything in this cosmos!

AUDIENCE

Crucible, Jackson 5, taxation
without representation, blue pill,
Marcus Aurelius!

OWEN

I heard blue pill!

Owen walks to the back line. DINA and RALPH come to the front of the stage.

DINA

Time to go.

RALPH

What do you mean? It's only half
past 8.

DINA
Take my hand.

Ralph reaches out to Dina's hand. Dina puts something in Ralph's hand.

RALPH
What's this?

DINA
It's a note. Read it.

RALPH
To whom it may concern: your fate
lies in between two worlds. What
does that mean?

DINA
Well, what do you think?

RALPH
It's kind of vague. I don't usually
get notes that provide very
foreboding messages.

DINA
We all get messages like this at
some point in our lives. The
important thing is, do we heed
their meaning?

RALPH
I want to believe that something
like this is real. But I'm not sure
a message like this could change my
life forever.

DINA
It may not. What do you choose to
believe?

RALPH

Well, the fact of the matter is that I do come from two different worlds. I know this to be true, it resonates with me. I am both an artist and a healer.

Ralph looks at the paper once more and fiddles with it in his hands.

RALPH (CONT'D)

I knew this for some time actually, I just needed the push. I was living in a daydream.

Dina picks out another paper and gives it to Ralph.

DINA

Look at this one.

RALPH

Don't float. It's up to you.

DINA

I wrote these for you, because I love you.

RALPH

I love you and I know now what I have to do.

DINA

How will you do it?

RALPH

Making something of two worlds is difficult. I will take my time.

DINA

No. The time is now. You have to create something that is of both worlds. This will heal people.

(MORE)

DINA (CONT'D)

Like a maverick this will crash down and storm the land washing away all the rubble and carcasses that have died waiting for a miracle to happen.

RALPH

Miracles don't happen.

DINA

They don't. You have to face the storm. You have to rise. You have to be willing to do whatever it takes to see it through to the bitter end.

RALPH

I... I think this will crush me.

DINA

It won't be easy. Figure it out.

RALPH

My story for mankind.

DINA

What is it that you hope to solve?

RALPH

People that wait their whole lives, for them to charge into their destinies.

DINA

Will you light the way?

RALPH

I will ignite the embers, but they must choose to keep adding fuel.

DINA

People may stop. You may open one eye. You may startle them.

RALPH
To keep going though, that's where
the real hero shines.

DINA
I think there's a hero in all of
us.

RALPH
There is.

Ralph grabs a book and hands it to Dina.

RALPH (CONT'D)
You see this. I wrote this.

DINA
The solo symphony.

RALPH
I think the answer comes from
bringing forth your own art. But to
do that, you have to do it yourself
and it has to create meaning for
everyone.

Dina reads the inside of the cover.

DINA
Your tale is to warn people of the
darkness?

RALPH
Yes.

Owen swipes the scene. Owen lies on a hammock on a beach on
an island.

OWEN
Ah, sunshine, zero clouds, and a
pina colada.

Owen sips his pina colada.

RUBY
I like it here. It's very nice.
Nothing, not even a wind or tide.

Harriet comes in as side support as a bird.

HARRIET
Caw caw... wait, not here!

She flies back out.

OWEN
It's nice to not have any worries.
No problems. No resistance. No
dreams.

RUBY
Just a nice little place to drift.

Ruby sips her pina colada.

OWEN
There's nothing here! Just us, the
people who don't want a taste of
reality.

Jim comes in as a turtle.

JIM
Tooortoise. Oop, nevermind not this
place again.

Jim shuffles back into the ocean.

RUBY
How did we end up here in the first
place?

OWEN
I think we just arrived here after
years of putting things off for
later.

RUBY

Oh yeah I remember now, I just was content and let things be the way they were without ever taking the hard road.

OWEN

So relaxing! Ahh... I like it. I don't love it but I like it.

RUBY

I'm getting kind of bored.

OWEN

Nah... just relax. I'm going to stay here forever.

Ruby looks shaken and gets up. She looks around and seems to notice something for the first time.

RUBY

Oh my god, Owen. There are skeletons littered all over the floor and on the trees! The trees are hollow and dead! What is this place?

Charlie worms his way around the skeletons.

CHARLIE

We are dream-eaters. Where people come to let their dreams be eaten! We provide 24/7 hospitality with no extra charge and no black out dates.

OWEN

Siphon out my brains! I like it. It feels so... serene and peaceful.

RUBY

Owen! Wake up!

Ruby slaps Owen.

OWEN

Sooooo content. Time for a nap.

RUBY

Shit! There's no place like being a rockstar." (pinch) "There's no place like being a rockstar." (pinch) "There's no place like being a rockstar..." (pinch) "Wake up Ruby, wake up!"

OWEN

What are you doing Ruby? Sit down and relax! These people or creatures or whatever are being so courteous and warm to us. We need to return the favor.

RUBY

Did you hear what they called themselves? Dream-eaters! Doesn't that sound like a red flag to you?

CHARLIE

Suck suck suck. Mmmmm brains.

OWEN

I feel so consistent. Things never change here. I like no change.

CHARLIE

Just lie down on the hammock and we'll take care of the rest for you. At the cost of your brains, we give you a nice life. We have a 100% guarantee of life contentedness. We don't give spectacular lives, but plain and normal.

RUBY

Screw that. I'm going to light this entire island on fire! Come at me mediocrity!

INT. OWEN'S APARTMENT - EVENING

Sam and Owen chat by the fireplace.

OWEN

You know, science has its merits.

SAM

You could be a great scientist if you wanted to Owen.

OWEN

Yes, but do I want to? Or rather, is there something bigger in store for me?

SAM

Every person can stumble upon something new and different. I think that's where you're at right now.

OWEN

I see. I guess what it is that I want exactly is hard to grasp.

SAM

Owen stop thinking so much and just do what your heart tells you.

OWEN

I've been a scientist my whole life. I think I found a great thing in science to improve motivation. But upon stumbling, I think I've found something. Something more raw and pure.

SAM

What do you mean?

OWEN

I think what I've been searching for in science...

(MORE)

OWEN (CONT'D)

I've been looking at the wrong spot because of the nature of the field. I think studying motivation, you cannot actually endow people with motivation. You have to do it differently.

SAM

Like self-improvement?

OWEN

No. Not exactly. I think there is a step before a person wants to actually change. There is something that will steer you to a positive outcome and it has to be meaningful to you.

SAM

Oh.

OWEN

Like a fire. It has to ignite. I think that spark is, well, the most pure form of emotion, love.

Sam looks into Owen's eyes. Owen and Sam then kiss.

SAM

Like that?

OWEN

Something of that nature. To truly love, well, it's hard. You can't let anything stand in your way. Especially not yourself.

SAM

I've known you for some time and you're not one to let that kind of thing get in the way.

OWEN

Yes. But it was not always like that. Can you believe I felt like a shadow?

SAM

Yes.

OWEN

Well, I'm done with that. I think there's something else I need to do to bring mental illness into the light. Away from the hospitals and clinics. Away from the nature of disease. Away from reliance on others. I know that there is something human in all of us, no matter the diagnosis. An immense propensity to attract others to us.

SAM

Attraction. Like a magnet?

OWEN

Yeah. Inside, we all have this charismatic, confident, superhero inside of us. When we are able to unlock it from its cage, it basically propels us into success forever. I want to figure this out. And I think it will take more than science or any field to do so.

SAM

Hold me.

Sam and Owen cuddle.

OWEN

It's a lofty goal. People will need to learn to trust themselves and the process. They will have to become fighters.

SAM

I am a fighter. I am a love
soldier.

OWEN

Yeah Sam. Whatever. Look, people
will stop thinking so much and
start doing. I want people to show
up.

SAM

Look, babe, not everyone will rise
up to the challenge. It's just the
way life is, like a normal
distribution.

OWEN

Everyone wants to be the best at
what they do. It's true. Don't get
me wrong, people will fail. But the
nature of it is to never give up.
And to do that, you have to find a
reason. And the reason is, simply
love.

Fire crackles.

FADE OUT.

INT. AFTERHOURS BREW HOUSE - EVENING

BEN

I'm curious to see what kind of
medium you're going to use to
convey your story.

OWEN

Originally I was thinking a book,
but I want bigger impact. I'm
feeling a movie would be the right
thing.

BEN

Oh snap. That's like not only does it have to be good, but you have to win the lottery as well. You sure you're up for this kind of slog? It's going to be really gruesome and you're going to be in for a lot of pain. People are going to reject your work, say it ain't good, and shove shit in your face.

OWEN

Yeah, I knew that already. But for what it's worth, the bigger the stakes, the bigger the haul. This just feels right.

BEN

Why do you care so much about getting your message out?

OWEN

I think it's too important to not be heard. It's like one of those things, your message, maybe the greatest message you'll ever give to the world. That's how this feels.

BEN

You've got me quivering with excitement, and envy you know? I'm really rooting for you man. You've got my number. You know where I live. Anything, I'm here for you dude.

Ben pats Owen on the shoulder.

OWEN

If that's the case, I wouldn't mind a beer.

BEN

You got it soldier.

INT. OWEN'S APARTMENT - EVENING

OWEN

I gotta give em the ol' one-two.

SAM

What are you talking about?

OWEN

A script that packs a punch.

SAM

I thought you were going to be talking about mental illness.

OWEN

I am. You're implying that mental illness isn't interesting.

SAM

I am not.

OWEN

Look, mental illness can't be about advocates and little inspirational quotes. We need a story of someone with mental illness who gets the hot girl, who surpasses his peers, and obtains his wild ambitions. Then, mental illness will get the respect it so deserves.

SAM

So write about it.

OWEN

I am darling. I'm going to quiet all the naysayers and make all the haters dumbfounded.

INT. OWEN'S APARTMENT - EVENING

Owen starts crafting his story.

OWEN
Where do I begin?

Owen writes.

OWEN (CONT'D)
Once upon a time...

Owen pauses and looks deep in thought.

OWEN (CONT'D)
There was a patient, no, a person,
no, a dreamer.

Owen writes some more.

OWEN (CONT'D)
What he desired was for a better
world, where people did not fade
away or were not swallowed by the
evil that infiltrated both near and
far. What he desired was not just
peace, but humans that thrived.

Owen writes some more.

OWEN (CONT'D)
They say... well... you shouldn't
listen to what they say actually
and just listen... as best as you
can to the truth. There is a true
nature of things that leads us down
the path of most resistance and
least resistance. Search for it and
make it yours.

Scene cuts out to Owen writing.

OWEN (CONT'D)
When called upon, make the choice
truest to you. I cannot tell you
the choice, because it would ruin
you. Who do you want to be?

Owen writes more.

OWEN (CONT'D)
His name is Ryan and he is a
dreamer.

INT. APARTMENT - MORNING

Owen cold calls several agencies and management companies to try to get his screenplay into production. Owen prepares his first call. He is excited and nervous at the same time.

RECEPTIONIST
Hello, this is New Artist
productions, how may I help you?

OWEN
Hi, my name is Owen, I've just
written a screenplay. It has a lot
of potential. I'd like to speak...

Receptionist interrupts.

RECEPTIONIST
We don't accept unsolicited
scripts. This is a referral based
company only. Thank you bye.

OWEN
Wait, I'd like to talk to...

Receptionist hangs up. Owen looks frustrated and angry. He crosses the name off his list and moves down to the next number.

RECEPTIONIST
Hello, this is Flying Ark
productions, how may I help you?

OWEN

Hi, my name is Owen, I am seeking a manager to represent my work. I've just written an original motion picture screenplay. It's about a man with an illness whose desire is to heal the world. He discovers his true path to doing this which is through writing. I think this screenplay has a lot of potential and would be of great interest to your company.

RECEPTIONIST

Oh, that's great. However, you'll have to submit a query that gets filtered through our literary analysts first.

OWEN

Oh, okay. Is there anyone I can talk to about my project first?

RECEPTIONIST

No, unfortunately you have to submit a query.

OWEN

I think this is a really good fit for your company and my interests.

RECEPTIONIST

Sorry, submit a query to our email. It's on our website. Thank you.

Receptionist hangs up. Owen crosses the next name off the list.

INT. APARTMENT - NIGHT

Owen is in low spirits. He looks over the 100 companies that he has contacted and all have rejected his work. Frustrated he slams his fist onto the table. He gives Sam a call.

OWEN

God this is frustrating. Why will no one read my work?

SAM

It's a cut throat world out there. It isn't easy.

OWEN

It's like the world is plotting against me. This work will help millions if only I could get my message out there.

SAM

You can't quit. It's like what you said, you have to persevere. This is life's lesson.

OWEN

Yeah. It just... really sucks. I want the results now.

INT. PRODUCTION STUDIO - DAY

Owen drives down to Los Angeles and goes to a major studio company. He walks inside and notices SECURITY GUARDS. He tries to bypass them, but they walk up to him.

SECURITY GUARD

Excuse me sir, who are you here to see?

OWEN

Oh, I wanted to see a studio executive.

SECURITY GUARD

Do you have a name?

OWEN

No, but I have a great script. I'll let you be the judge.

SECURITY GUARD

I'm sorry sir but we don't allow anyone without an appointment with a direct contact into the building.

OWEN

It has a lot of potential, you see. It's about a male protagonist whose destiny is to raise humanity to new heights. He realizes that what really transforms people are stories that deeply resonate and connect with a person's psyche. He goes on to screenwriting and invents worlds that stretch possibility for humanity. It's really a great script. I think the production company would love it.

SECURITY GUARD

That sounds really great sir, but we only allow those with direct references in. I'm sorry.

Owen shakes his head and walks off.

EXT. CITY STREETS - DAY

Owen sits down. He lights a cigarette. His brow is furrowed and he has his head in his hand. He is outside his apartment on the steps and rain is pattering outside. Owen calls Sam.

OWEN

What does it take to get it made? I'm worn out. I think I've tried 100 different companies. No responses.

SAM

Give it some time and then follow up. I'm sure someone will see your vision.

OWEN

What good does a script do if it doesn't get told?

SAM
Keep your head up Owen.

OWEN
An artist is only as good as the
people who see his work.

SAM
Try another avenue. Take a lesson
from your work. Don't lose hope.

OWEN
Yeah I know.

Owen flicks the burnt cigarette to the ground.

INT. OWEN'S APARTMENT - MORNING

Owen revises his pitch.

OWEN
Okay, here goes.

Owen looks at the next name on the managers list. He dials
the number.

JIM
Hello?

OWEN
Hi, my name is Owen and I've
written an original motion picture
screenplay that I think will be of
great interest to your company. The
title of the screenplay is called
'Reflections' and it details the
heroic journey of a man with a
mental illness. His motto is
'showing up,' and this is his cure
for mental illness. It will leave
an impression on you whether you
suffer an illness or not, to always
push forward and face your demons.
(MORE)

OWEN (CONT'D)

I'm sure if you'd read this screenplay, you'd love it.

JIM

Oh great. We don't typically accept unsolicited content, but I'd be happy to take a look. Go ahead and send the script over.

Owen stunned.

OWEN

Great thanks! Where should I send the script?

JIM

Just email me at
Jim@turnofthecentury.com.

OWEN

Awesome, thank you!

JIM

Pleasure speaking with you Owen.

INT. DOCTOR'S OFFICE - DAY

Owen sees his doctor who is a mentor and friend.

DR. PATEL

Owen, it's great to see how well you are doing. I know it has been a bit rough recently with your medication changes. How are you feeling now?

OWEN

I'm doing much better. I did not realize how much a difference medications made. It is a cornerstone of my life.

DR. PATEL

You need to realize that your body has a biochemical imbalance that has triggered your mental illness. Some things are immutable.

OWEN

I don't like having to rely on things to survive. I feel... dependent. I hate that.

DR. PATEL

Some things can't be changed Owen. You'll have to accept this fact and then try to make the best of your life. Speaking of which, how is your script going?

OWEN

It has been up and down. I've got a script request which is a big milestone. I had to grind through about 100 different companies to get it, but I got it.

DR. PATEL

Congratulations, that is not very easy.

OWEN

Thanks, I'm going to keep persevering. This script means too much to me to let it go by the wayside.

DR. PATEL

Have you communicated to potential managers how much this script means to you?

OWEN

Yes. To me, it means more than success for myself. It means people understand my art and know that this is something that can truly create a different kind of world. It's transformative you see.

(MORE)

OWEN (CONT'D)

Everyone is capable of transforming. It comes down to, will you do it or not?

DR. PATEL

It will take something very powerful to do that Owen. People are content with where they are. They have learned to accept their realities. Most people do not want to put in the effort to change.

OWEN

That is why something like this is so important. If someone showed you what was possible, people could believe. I want to light their embers that have been dormant for so long.

DR. PATEL

Perhaps a film could do that.

OWEN

Yes. A different kind of story. A real tale of someone who really cares about others. So much that they are willing to do whatever it takes to get people to believe in themselves. Because that is something that can never be taken away from them. That is the key.

DR. PATEL

To get there will take a lot of work from those individuals.

OWEN

Yes, it will. But I know if I could get them to recognize it, there is real hope for real change. This is how people were meant to be. This is how our world was meant to be. Our future generations depend on reaching their own potential.

INT. THE ESTABLISHMENT GUN STORE - EVENING

Owen arrives at the gun store. He walks up to the counter.

OWEN
I'd like to purchase a gun.

STORE OWNER
Alright well you have to complete
this test and a few forms.

Store owner hands Owen a test and forms.

CUT TO:

Owen finishes his test and hands it to store owner. Store owner compares it with an answer key.

STORE OWNER (CONT'D)
Looks like you've passed. Let's
take a look at these forms.

Store owner pauses a few moments looking at the forms.

STORE OWNER (CONT'D)
Looks like you're not eligible to
own a firearm due to having a
mental illness.

OWEN
That's absurd. I've never committed
a crime or done anything to harm
myself or others.

STORE OWNER
Rules are rules.

OWEN
So I am being discriminated against
due to a condition I had in the
past that has no bearing on my
current mental state?

STORE OWNER
That's the way it is. I'm not
selling a gun to you.

OWEN
This is my fundamental right.

STORE OWNER
It's the law.

OWEN
It's a stupid law.

STORE OWNER
I didn't write the laws. This is how our state decided to reduce violent crimes. We abide by the law.

OWEN
It sounds like you're saying I'm a dangerous person. I'm only trying to protect myself and my loved ones.

STORE OWNER
I can't help you there.

OWEN
So you're saying I can't defend against crime if it ever comes to my doorstep?

STORE OWNER
Again, it's the law. That's how we view people like you.

OWEN
So I am less than human?

STORE OWNER
I'm not saying that. I'm just saying law is the law.

OWEN
It sounds to me like you're agreeing that people with mental illness are less than human.

STORE OWNER
No, I'm not. But your kind of people are dangerous.

OWEN
Excuse me?

STORE OWNER
School shootings happen because of people like you.

OWEN
People like me? People with mental illness are all the same in your eyes aren't they? We're all evil.

STORE OWNER

There's a reason to why we have these rules. It's to keep crazy people in check.

Owen laughs.

OWEN

You have a puny mind.

Owen leaves the store.

EXT. STREETS OF KRAKOW - DUSK

Owen walks into a crowded street on the cobblestones of Krakow. His breath is visible and heavy. People are hustling and bustling in both directions as he traverses through the city streets. There are people at food stands purchasing the street food Zapiekanka. The noise gets to Owen. He looks around. The camera shows Owen's vision begins to blur. People's voices begin to sharpen and become painful to listen. He continues his walk. From his point of view, he sees people who look at him and then look away. It starts to seem like people are watching him. He looks down. He starts to walk faster. He begins to hustle through the alleys. He makes it to his hostel. He opens the door and then closes it.

INT. DOCTOR'S OFFICE - DAY

DR. WEINSTEIN

Owen's too impaired, I don't think he can do it. He'll have to be under supervision for the rest of his life.

DR. PATEL

He's got a serious mental illness, yes. But have you seen what he's been able to do even under the duress of such an extreme case?

DR. WEINSTEIN

Yes, but understand that under such stress, he will implode. Only time will tell when he will have to return to the hospital.

(MORE)

DR. WEINSTEIN (CONT'D)
I don't believe in his ability.

DR. PATEL
How could you say such a thing? For one not to believe in his patient's abilities is akin to allowing a disease to go untreated.

DR. WEINSTEIN
It is not. From my experience, I have never seen a patient with this disease ever to overcome his or her obstacles. Never.

DR. PATEL
So, we coddle him forever as a patient? He will never gain a sense of his own ability.

DR. WEINSTEIN
Yes, and he will never collapse either. We are saving him from destruction.

DR. PATEL
This is the same as letting him destroy himself. I may not have as much experience, but I know when we are ruining a person's life.

DR. WEINSTEIN
Then what do you suggest we do?

DR. PATEL
We let him take a shot at life. He wants to travel, we allow him. He wants to risk it all by being a writer, we support him. We don't keep him here sheltering him his whole life. He has enough experience. Let him become who he was destined to become.

DR. WEINSTEIN
I stand by my decision, but he is your patient. Do what you will.
(MORE)

DR. WEINSTEIN (CONT'D)

Just understand that what science and real evidence-based outcomes show is that no one has ever done it. No one."

DR. PATEL

Well, maybe it is time that the world witnesses a person with this illness do it.

INT. LABORATORY - DAY

OWEN

What am I doing here?

Owen hashes out the details of his laboratory experiment.

RON

We're designing experiments man. This is the life of a scientist.

OWEN

Yeah, but I'm not sure that this is truly solving a problem. Actually, it's the problem I want to solve that I'm having trouble seeing a solution to. Where I am going with this experiment just doesn't fit within the confines of a laboratory.

RON

Why not?

OWEN

Well, lab environments for one are very regulated and do not represent "real world" scenarios. People come into the lab already prepared to be guided by the experimenters. You have to throw them a curveball and put them on their toes so that they treat this as something real.

RON

You want something real? Then why don't you do something in the real world? Like, ecological momentary assessment. You'd be able to capture data at real time points throughout the day on your phone.

OWEN

That's studying a particular phenomenon, and what I want to do is improve people's conditions based on their own choices.

RON

You want people to improve their conditions based on choice?

OWEN

I think people who are suffering and have a mental illness need to choose the higher path. They need to create their own reality.

RON

You should design an experiment that deals with choice. Study the intricacies that choice provides people.

OWEN

I have, but I think there's also a better way.

RON

How so?

OWEN

There has to be an impression made. Otherwise, people just float on with their circumstances. I think EMA will just provide an empty push. What people need is something internal to guide their decisions. They need something that resonates deeply with them.

RON
Man, go develop something that does
that then.

OWEN
I will.

RON
Do it! Revolutionize the field man.

OWEN
I'm on it.

INT. DR. PATEL'S SCIENCE LAB - DAY

COLLEAGUE THOMPSON places mental health flyers on the wall.

OWEN
We're doing the same thing that we
always do.

COLLEAGUE THOMPSON
Yes. Mental health awareness month.
Looks good doesn't it? Some people
looking happy on our posters.

OWEN
It lacks ambition.

COLLEAGUE MARIA
It does, doesn't it?

COLLEAGUE MADISON
What are you saying? That mental
health lacks aspiration?

OWEN
Mental health looks rather
impersonal and safe. The posters
look like people are just content.
Their smiles are fake. No one looks
up to and wants to be on a mental
health poster. There is no fire and
romance.

COLLEAGUE JAKE
All mental health posters do look
kind of the same, don't they?

OWEN

It's uninspiring. Look at the poster. Do we really know who this person is... and is this person going places?

Everyone looks at the poster.

COLLEAGUE RON

Well, we could use celebrities like Catherine Zeta Jones or Robin Williams.

OWEN

No. Still impersonal. We need something like a story of going from zero to hero. And use that as our mental health campaign. Not some person who got out of a hospital and is now living at his parents house doing something mediocre with his life and saying that he is happy. Truth is, most people with mental illness are doing that.

COLLEAGUE THOMPSON

So we burn these. And replace it with what?

OWEN

Something completely unbelievable.

COLLEAGUE MARIA

Like a revolution in mental health?

OWEN

Like people who defied all odds. People who did the impossible.

COLLEAGUE MADISON

You're shooting blanks here. Who has a mental illness and does those kinds of things? Very few.

OWEN

There are people out there who can.

COLLEAGUE RON

You think you could do it? We all know you have a mental illness Owen.

EVERYONE

Yup dude.

OWEN

Well if I do become that kind of person, then what would that make me?

Everyone looks at each other.

EVERYONE

A star.

INT. CLASSROOM - DAY

Owen presents his idea for his dissertation.

OWEN

Given that individuals with mental illness have deficits in motivation across the board, I want to create an experiment that targets improving motivation early on in the course of the illness so that greater gains can be made and trained in positive habits. I think we are left with one fundamental question: how do we get people to show up? People need to want to come in. They need to be working on something big, something that is meaningful to them. I propose that we get people to come in for a 1-year period where they dedicate each week to developing a personal project of significant importance not only to them, but also to communicate to the rest of the world. We will provide three avenues for this: a feature film, book, or company. In order to complete the project they will have to get the project produced, published, or kick-started for everyone to see. For additional incentives, we will provide awards and connections to top executives in the respective industries for the top projects.

(MORE)

OWEN (CONT'D)

If successful, we will turn this fast track idea into an international incubator for developing talent in people with mental illness to broadly facilitate improvements in motivation.

INT. AUDITORIUM - DAY

Owen presents his first first-author paper.

OWEN (CONT'D)

From multiple measures, we found that across all measures there was a significant improvement in composite motivation for people engaging in the Original Newcomer for Excellence or ONE intervention over typical therapeutic treatment as usual.

Owen points to the first bar graph that shows higher motivation scores.

OWEN (CONT'D)

People also reported greater quality of life scores and had much more positive functional outcomes.

Owen points to the next two bar graphs that show higher scores.

OWEN (CONT'D)

People from the ONE intervention reported they would continue seeking out positive career goals similar to ones that were generated from the ONE intervention.

Owen indicates the percentage of people that chose certain positive goals.

OWEN (CONT'D)

Top participants went on to secure deals from producers, publishers, and angel investors. Our model of checking in with participants on a weekly basis with a mentor was highly regarded by the participants who enjoyed discussing their progress and receiving feedback from these mentors. As it stands, ONE has been shown to be a very successful idea to improve motivation and should be translated into real world application through becoming an established non-profit business for developing talent in people with mental illness. I'd like to thank the numerous people in the respective industries that made this possible, and funding from the National Institutes of Mental Health, One Mind, and the National Science Foundation to make this project a solution for motivation in mental illness.

EXT. SAN FRANCISCO - DAY

Ben and Owen are bike up a hill.

BEN

Been going through a rough patch with my girlfriend. Wants me to get a job but I still want to write.

Owen pedaling and breathing heavily.

OWEN

Did you show her your script?

BEN

Yeah. She likes it. But she still wants me to make money. Ever since I went traveling I've been just doing my own thing. Funemployed.

OWEN

So she wants you to make money and
do what you love. Seems like a
Catch 22.

BEN

It can be done. But 3 years being
unemployed with no positive income
doesn't rub well with the
girlfriend.

OWEN

You finish the ending?

BEN

Yeah. I decided to go with C'est La
Vie.

OWEN

That's depressing.

BEN

I never found what I was looking
for.

OWEN

Maybe it's because you're looking
at the wrong spots.

Both are pedaling hard.

BEN

Meh.

Ben and Owen reach the top.

OWEN

Phew. That was rough. C'est La Vie.

BEN

See?

Owen chuckles.

OWEN
I guess it works.

BEN
It always does. Now what about you?
How's your writing?

Ben takes a swig of water.

OWEN
Drama. Revelations. That kind of
thing.

BEN
Tell me more.

OWEN
A man who discovers what he truly
wants.

BEN
That's so lame.

OWEN
Shut up. It's good.

BEN
What is it that he wants?

OWEN
Himself.

BEN
No hiding. No running away. That
kind of thing?

OWEN
Yeah. He wants complete and utter
fearlessness.

Ben gazes out into the scenery.

BEN

You know, that kind of thing is very hard to find. Most people are not like that.

OWEN

It's hard because you can't give up on yourself. Most people do. Or at least create an illusion.

BEN

Add some humor into it. It sounds so... perfect.

OWEN

Yeah well humor can be an avoidance tactic. And you kind of have to be perfect to be that way. Perfect isn't a bad thing.

BEN

You think you're perfect?

OWEN

Yeah.

Ben throws water on Owen.

BEN

You're such a twat.

INT. OWEN'S APARTMENT - EVENING

Owen plays charades with Sam, Ben, and his improv friends. People are drinking beer and having a good time. It is Ben's turn. He picks up a piece of paper, looks at it a long time. He snaps his fingers.

BEN

Alright got this.

RUBY
Ready, set, go!

Ben mimics a traveler walking up a mountain. He seems lost, trying to find his way. People look on intently.

ERICA
Lewis and Clark!

JIM
Pioneer!

OWEN
Ben!

Ben shakes his head. Ben carves out a mask and puts it on his face. Then he puts an X on his chest.

JORDAN
Immigrant!

DINA
Exile!

BEN
Bam!

He points to Dina.

RALPH
Why was he walking up a mountain?

BEN
He needs to find a new place. So he travels across many mountains.

SAM
A mask?

BEN

Yes, so he conceals his identity.
His past hates him.

ERICA

Why would you wear a mask? Who
cares if people know who you are!

BEN

I was thinking Bourne Identity. If
he just wore a mask then no one
would know who he was!

JORDAN

That's lame dude.

BEN

Whatever.

Owen gets up and grabs a piece of paper. He looks at it then
glances at everyone. He looks back, then tosses the paper.

RUBY

Ready, set, go!

Owen makes a light signal with his hands. Then he draws a
large column and makes it land on the ground. People look
puzzled.

SAM

Aliens!

DINA

Saturday night lights!

JORDAN

It's Friday Dina.

Owen starts to act out monsters. Then he stands in the light
and points up to the sky.

JIM
Heaven and hell!

RALPH
I come in peace!

ERICA
Show stopper!

JORDAN
What the hell?

Owen draws a circle and then shows lights coming down around him and has his arms open embracing the light.

SAM
Kaleidoscope!

Owen shows other people running towards the light, while monsters are chasing them.

HARRIET
SOS!

BEN
Beacon!

OWEN
Yes!

PEOPLE
Oh, we get it. You're saving people.

DINA
No wonder there were monsters.

JORDAN
That was so damn complicated man.
Too much going on.

OWEN

That's the name of the game. The more difficulty, the more that's got to go into it.

RALPH

Guys what do exile and beacon have in common?

JORDAN

They're both far removed, like us!

ERICA

Yeah we're weirdos!

BEN

Nah, man. It's hope! Both exemplify some form of hope.

OWEN

Both set you on a path of revelation to do good in this world.

EVERYONE

Ohhhh.

Everyone looks at each other.

EVERYONE (CONT'D)

Okay.

INT. APARTMENT - DAY

Owen is with Sam in his apartment.

OWEN

I don't want to make the leap.

SAM

Why not? You told me you wanted to.

OWEN

It's really damn difficult. I'm so exhausted.

SAM

So you're going to quit? This is not like you Owen.

OWEN

Honestly Sam, I've given it everything that I've had. And then some. It's really killing me. I need to focus on my work.

SAM

Your work will be transformative when you make the leap.

OWEN

I'm fine with making incremental discoveries. My work is difficult and fulfilling.

SAM

But it isn't your tale.

OWEN

Yes it is.

SAM

Fine. Up to you. But I will say that anything you do in this life is a reflection of who you really are. What you're communicating to me is that you're done fighting.

OWEN

Sam you are so irritatingly stubborn.

SAM

Up to you.

OWEN

Ugh. I hate it when you're like this. Fine I'll keep at it.

SAM

Good. Your stories will heal and transgress people. You will open new doors where many had thought they were sealed shut forever.

OWEN

Only because I know why people watch movies. They're looking for a reason.

SAM

People are looking because Owen, life is what we make of it. And most are not happy with it. They are content, but they are not happy.

INT. PARTY VENUE IN SAN FRANCISCO - EVENING

Owen arrives at the indie festival afterparty. He walks into a room full of artists, producers, and agents. There is loud music playing in the background and the lights are dim. Owen scans the room and spots many people in groups around tables chatting. He spots one inviting group and walks towards them.

OWEN

Hello.

GROUP

Hey.

OWEN

You all look like filmmakers.

ANNA

Haha yes some of us are.

OWEN
Who's the boss?

ANNA
That would be me.

OWEN
Hm really? I guess you do look the part.

Anna laughs.

ANNA
Yes I do.

OWEN
You don't also happen to be a producer?

ANNA
Yes I am.

OWEN
Mind if I give my elevator pitch? I am a screenwriter.

ANNA
Sure.

OWEN
"Reflections" casts mental illness in a completely different light, one of power, ambition, and romance. We all know too well that mental illness has stigma, and no one likes to talk about it or even be associated with it. But when you hear this story, you will change."

ANNA
Wow. This has got my attention. Is this based on a true story?

OWEN

It is driven by part of my life but
retold through a different
perspective.

ANNA

Awesome, well you know we are
looking for screenwriters with
exceptional scripts to produce
their work.

OWEN

This is what you are looking for
then.

ANNA

Great. Let me give you my card.

Anna reaches into her purse and pulls out a card and hands it
to Owen.

OWEN

Awesome. It was great to meet you,
what was your name?

ANNA

It's Anna.

OWEN

Owen, pleasure to meet you.

They shake hands.

INT. OWEN'S APARTMENT - EVENING

Owen is at his apartment with Sam. They are eating dinner.
Owen receives a call from an unknown number.

OWEN

Hello?

Owen pauses for several moments, shocked.

OWEN (CONT'D)
Okay. Thank you so much.

Owen hangs up. Sam looks at Owen.

SAM
What?

OWEN
You won't believe it.

SAM
No way. Your script got optioned.

OWEN
Yup.

Sam runs to Owen and he picks her up and spin-hugs.

FADE TO:

"SCENES FROM THE MOVIE REFLECTIONS."

INT. RYAN'S PARENT'S HOUSE - DAY

RYAN (age: 10) at a young age sits at home writing a story.
He finishes the last page.

RYAN
Hey MOM look at the story I just wrote!

MOM
Ryan, why do you waste your time writing. You should be studying core math and sciences. You will be a doctor someday so act like one.

RYAN
But... the teacher said it was good. It almost won first place in our class!

MOM

Writing is a hobby and at most will only be that way. No one makes a living on writing. It is a fairy tale.

Ryan looks disheartened.

RYAN

Do you even want to know what it's about?

MOM

Okay tell me.

RYAN

It is about a person who always felt that something was off in their life. Ever since she was a kid, she didn't understand why people acted the way they did. It was as if she was living on autopilot, and her reality was a day dream. It wasn't until her adult years did she discover that she was actually ill. She never understood how to become an adult, because she never knew the basics of being a kid. Her whole world was turned upside down when she realized people had been communicating a certain way all their lives. She felt like a baby because everyone could speak this language, even little kids, that her whole life she had no idea of. She played catch up though. She threw herself into the most vigorous challenges and trained herself. While she was never able to be completely the best at this language, at least she learned how to be in reality and not a day dream anymore. She could now learn, build, and love like all humans did.

MOM

That's great Ryan. It's really a great story, but who will want to read it?

RYAN

I think people would like to hear it.

MOM

No it's a sad story. You should focus on positive skills that will help you for your career. Like math and biology. Why don't you go play the Logical Journey of Zoombinies or Magic School Bus?

Ryan shrugs.

RYAN

Okay.

INT. DOCTOR'S OFFICE - DAY

RYAN (AGE: 31) (CONT'D)

It happened some time ago.

NATALIE

What happened?

RYAN

What shattered me.

NATALIE

Oh. I'm sorry to hear that. That must have been a really difficult time.

RYAN

No. It was necessary. I was a mess back then. It gave me direction.

NATALIE

Perhaps you had it all along.

RYAN

No, I did not. Had it not happened,
I would not be the person I am
today.

NATALIE

What did you go through?

RYAN

An illness that has marked me.
Pain, torture, and loss. I almost
gave up. But I knew I had to keep
going or else I would fall back
into the pit of despair. Something
happened though. I changed. With
all the challenges I faced, I
became a new person. I made a leap
of faith and then saw the
brightness in this world. I saw
potential. It gave me a reason to
climb life's ladder. I wanted to
see people become something more.

Natalie contemplates this for a few moments.

NATALIE

Your illness, you've been battling
this for quite some time.

RYAN

Yes, I have. And I will forever.

INT. MENTAL HEALTH FACILITY - DAY

Ryan walks around the halls of a mental health facility. He
sees people walking around and pacing the halls. Some are
muttering profanities. Some are staring straight at the
walls.

Ryan whispers to himself.

RYAN

I don't belong here. This place
reeks of neglect.

He walks up to nurse on duty.

RYAN (CONT'D)

Ma'am is there anyway I can
expediate the process of leaving
this place?

(MORE)

RYAN (CONT'D)

I am very much in control of myself
and I am not a danger to others. I
am healthy and conscious enough to
function on my own.

NURSE

I am sorry you'll have to wait for
your meeting with the doctors and
case managers.

Ryan is in a meeting with his case manager and doctor.

RYAN

I am obviously ready to leave.

CASE MANAGER

We're keeping you here to make sure
you're ready when the time comes.
We have to argue with the court
because you are here on an
involuntary hold.

RYAN

I'd like to petition.

CASE MANAGER

It will take several days as we
have to write up a report and hear
your case at the superior court.

RYAN

This place reeks of foul poorly
trained staff and lacks any kind of
beneficial ways of recovering.

DOCTOR

I understand you do not enjoy it
here, but we have to keep you here
based on the court's orders. As an
involuntary hold, you must abide by
the rules until you are granted
leave.

RYAN

This is like a prison, you
understand that right?

CUT TO:

Ryan strolls around the halls. A nurse approaches him.

NURSE
Time for your meds.

RYAN
What is this?

NURSE
It's a medication that your doctor
prescribed for your illness. It
will make you feel better.

RYAN
Can you explain to me what it is
and what effects it will have?

NURSE
I cannot do that. You'd have to ask
the doctor but he is not around at
the moment.

RYAN
I would prefer to know what it is
that I am taking. Can I use a
computer to look up the medication?

NURSE
No, we do not have computers or any
electronic devices for your use
here. Just take it, we know what we
are doing. We are licensed clinical
staff.

RYAN
And if I don't?

NURSE
Then we will have to write you as
noncompliant.

INT. NATALIE'S OFFICE - DAY

Ryan speaks to Natalie.

RYAN
They talk down to you. You don't
feel human when you're there. There
is a lot of disrespect. A lot of
people don't want to be there.
Staff don't seem to like it there.
You can feel their contempt and
disregard for others. Patients
don't want to be there.

(MORE)

RYAN (CONT'D)

It's like a prison. It is very much a place where all your rights are taken away.

FLASHBACK.

NURSE ON DUTY

Line up, time for your classes. The more classes you attend the better chance you have of getting out of here. You have to show you are making progress.

BACK TO RYAN AND NATALIE.

RYAN

You can see for yourself that most of the activities are so mind-numbing and stupid. You feel like you're in kindergarten again.

FLASHBACK.

NURSE

Here are some pictures you can color. We have some colored pencils and crayons and markers. This will help keep you mindful and relaxed.

BACK TO RYAN AND NATALIE.

RYAN

Most of the people there either hate it or go there because they have no where else to go. Because of that you get people who are very bitter and full of hatred.

FLASHBACK.

PATIENT

(Mutters)

You ain't gonna do it because you're a pussy.

RYAN
Excuse me?

Patient grabs Ryan by the throat.

PATIENT
Motherfucker.

Ryan shoves the patient off him. Several social workers come in to stop the confrontation.

BACK TO RYAN AND NATALIE.

RYAN
You see how it is now?

They gaze at each other for a few moments. Ryan goes in for the kiss.

NATALIE
I do.

INT. CARL'S APARTMENT - DAY

RYAN
I can heal the world through writing.

CARL
Didn't you want to become a doctor?

RYAN
There are many other ways of healing people. I think now I've realized that I don't need to be a doctor to do that. I could be an actor, an artist, a writer.

CARL
So what, you're just going to quit science? You've been a part of science your whole life.

RYAN

I'm creating a link between science and films. I'm pioneering a new perspective, one of personal relevance and widespread impact. Who else is a consumer but also has the background of understanding most of the in's and out's of mental health? I can write about it and trust that my experience, and my voice will powerfully resonate with people. I'm really in my own element here.

CARL

You do realize how hard it is to make a dent in the movie industry though right?

RYAN

I'm trusting my gut here that I've got something different and I'm also trusting that I've got what it takes to take it straight to the top. It won't be easy and I know it's a long road. So yes, I do know it's hard... really hard.

CARL

Put it together I'd like to hear about it.

RYAN

Sure thing brother.

INT. NATALIE'S OFFICE - DAY

Natalie writes her notes for her patient, Ryan.

NATALIE

Ryan is a performer. He has performed in several shows at various local theaters. While he is a talented artist, he is an even greater writer. He writes about his inner turmoil.

(MORE)

NATALIE (CONT'D)

He has conflict with having an illness while trying to make it in the creative arts industry. He once believed that his illness prevented him from being creative. However, he has sold many books. He has performed and sold out shows. He has written movies.

CUT TO:

INT. SHOWTIME IMPROV THEATER - EVENING

RYAN (ON STAGE)

There was a time when I hesitated. In everything that I did, I hesitated. In my work, in my relationships, in myself. I doubted everything. The nature of things was unknown to me. Because of this, I barely moved. I was static. I did not change.

Morgan and Gary come into the light.

MORGAN

Yup, Gary, this is it. This is the one.

GARY

The one who broke the shackles?

MORGAN

No. We caught that guy and brought him back. This is the other guy.

GARY

Oh, Ryan.

MORGAN

Yes, Ryan, the guy who led the revolution.

GARY

That guy was strange. How did he end up doing it anyway again?

MORGAN

Well he was a part of this place for a very long time. Unchanging. Or so we thought.

GARY

Everyone here never changed until he came.

MORGAN

Yes. He befriended the very best. He made allies... under our noses.

GARY

He was so cunning. He looked harmless but in reality he had plans. Plans to turn dumps into danger.

MORGAN

What a man! His timing was impeccable. See here, he vanished. But he's not gone, his spirit lives in all of the prisoners here.

GARY

God Morgan, I'm so impressed. This is Catacombs level 10. No one does this to us.

MORGAN

I'm not just impressed, but ecstatic! To do what he did is like... curing the incurable.

CUT TO:

Ryan tempers his steel sword over a pot of molten metal.

RYAN

This day marks day 364 that I have kept to myself in these mediocre town halls, living a mediocre life, making mediocre wages, and having mediocre accomplishments.

KEN

So, what are you going to do about it?

Ryan tempers the sword by using a hammer on an anvil to hammer the molten steel.

RYAN

What am I going to do about it you say?

Ryan clangs down again on the steel.

RYAN (CONT'D)

Do you know anything about the code of the warrior?

KEN

Yes I do. Never turn your back on those who seek redemption. Always and forever ignite your steel so that it may taste battle at all times.

RYAN

Well I'm igniting my steel ain't I?

KEN

Yes... what are you getting at?

RYAN

This steel here has been ignited thousands of times. But it never has seen the likes of battle. It has yet to taste the villainous foe.

Ryan picks up his sword and spins it and then rests it back on the anvil.

KEN

I see you're ready and you've sharpened your steel quite rigorously to the point of actual obsession.

RYAN

I've been preparing my whole life, but... I've never shown up.

Ryan clangs the hammer on his sword.

RYAN (CONT'D)

Since receiving this sword, the one my father passed down to me, his son, I've only seen its potential but never realized it. 364 days and counting. Could become 3640 days or even 36400 days. You missed the last part of the code.

KEN

Showing up.

CUT TO:

Ryan is heavy lifting boulders onto a flat plain to construct a temple. As he pushes he lets out heavy sighs to indicate the difficulty of moving the boulders into place.

RYAN

These here rocks are not meant to be moved. It threatens the natural order of things.

Gus throws a boulder down.

GUS

Then why are they round? Seems to me like they'd be square if they wanted to sit where they was.

Ryan throws down a boulder.

RYAN

Good point. Gus, you've got a good head on your shoulders. Keeping me sane doing this boulderin' work.

GUS

Nah, just gotta keep face forward and moving these boulders to create the foundation of our ultimate goal.

RYAN

The temple.

GUS

Yup. Who knew that these fancy temples needed so much heavy lifting.

RYAN

It's reminding me of building an Ark. But we house spirits here, lay people to rest.

GUS

I ain't lettin' no animals shit on this house. This is a place for educatin' and puttin' together some fine people so they'd be able to do the things that good people ought to be doing.

RYAN

Like writing.

GUS

Yeah, like writing.

RYAN

Storytelling can be so freeing, but people just don't understand the amount of headwork and well, heavy lifting that goes with it. You think it's just about a good tale and it will be heard. Nope. You gotta put together something so damn great from a place that people have heard of, like this temple, to have recognition that it is legitimate. And then there are people who doubt your work and throw it away like it's some piece of crap. All this foundation work of constructing a temple for your art... leaves me, well, kind of forlorn.

GUS

Ryan, we is good people. Good things happen to good people. Come to think of it, I think we's the only people doing it starting from ground zero.

RYAN

No. We aren't the only one's Gus. Maybe in this region, but there's a whole world out there dying to tell their tales. Sad thing is, most of the world will never hear them. Cuz the nobles, the one's who look at the art... if it doesn't vibe, they throw it away.

GUS

Looks to me like we got a shot though no? People see we came from a good place and put in our dues.

RYAN

It'll take more Gus. I'm afraid our story won't be heard.

Gus rolls a big boulder and grunts.

GUS

Well if I was you I'd start moving more rocks cuz no rocks means no foundations. And no foundations means no temple. And no temple, well that's just a sad tale that happens only between us.

INT. RYAN'S APARTMENT - DAY

Ryan pulls out his laptop and places it at his desk. He pulls up a chair and sits down. He begins typing out his screenplay. On the title page he writes: "The Revolution." Days go by as he writes (time lapse).

RYAN (NARRATION)

Established norms need to be reconstructed. The status quo leaves much to be desired. There needs to be change... momentous change such that we no longer view mental illness as a weakness or a defect of human character. But to do this requires incredible strength from those with these challenges. These individuals need to revolutionize the perception of mental illness that has been woven into the very fabric of society for centuries. There needs to be more than a few exceptional individuals to do this. There needs to be a movement of people to rise up. If you are stuck at home reading this, with a bleak future, ask yourself why that is. Is it really because you cannot do something more with your life, or is it because you chose to be unintimidating?

End of REFLECTIONS.

INT. FILM FESTIVAL THEATER - EVENING

At a film festival, Owen sits among the audience. The ANNOUNCER comes on stage.

ANNOUNCER

Allow me to introduce the finalists for our screenplay competition. "Catcher" by SALLY THOMPSON, "Quest for ignorance" by EDWARD REEVES, "Time in a bottle" by HARRISON THATCHER, "Villager" by MARY CHU, and finally "Reflections" by Owen Lee.

Everyone applauds.

ANNOUNCER (CONT'D)

I'd like to invite all the finalists on stage and have them give a brief synopsis of their screenplays.

All the finalists walk onto stage.

SALLY

Hi, my name is Sally and my screenplay is titled, "Catcher." "Catcher" is about a lost soul who catches dreams as his occupation. He stumbles upon one particular dream that is familiar to himself, but he questions why it is. After seeing the dreams of this one particular individual, he realizes it is himself in the past and his purpose is to warn his past about the way he dies. To see if he succeeds in altering his future, you'll have to read this thrilling screenplay.

Sally passes on the microphone to Mary.

MARY

Hi my name is Mary Chu, and my screenplay is called "Villager." In "Villager," a woman is born in a remote village that has little access to the outside world. She finds her way into the bustling city environment and develops a profound love for comedy. She returns to her village to connect them to the rest of the world through her own hilarious lens of comedic talent.

Mary passes the microphone to Owen.

OWEN

Hi everyone, my name is Owen Lee, and my screenplay is titled, "Reflections." Despite having a serious mental illness a man uses his strength to find romance, ambition, and respect. "Reflections" paints the broken system of mental health but also how individuals with mental illness have the innate ability to drive a new system that will change the landscape of mental health for future generations.

INT. AUDITORIUM - EVENING

Owen walks on stage in front of an audience of 500. The lights shine brightly on center stage. He gives his TED talk.

RYAN

Character. How do we forge strong character within ourselves. Are people born with character already ingrained? Maybe some people are predisposed to having greater character than others. But I know for a fact that it isn't unchangeable. People can change their character. I know. I've changed mine. Life experiences build character. The more life you have seen, the more likely you have a colorful character. But have you seen darkness? Those that make it through the night in pitch blackness, and go on to light the way for others... that builds the brightest character. So, are you willing to face your darkness, whatever it is? You must fuel the flames constantly, forever. Are you willing to do that for others? Are you willing to make that sacrifice? Building character is not easy. In fact it is the hardest thing to do. You have to care because if you do not care, your light will falter. When you falter, lives will be lost. So face your darkness. Burn your light for others. If you do not do this, people will die.

(MORE)

RYAN (CONT'D)

Your spirit will die. People's spirits will die. So burn brightly. Everyone is counting on you. What you must do I cannot tell you. This is for you to find out. This is your fight and your fight alone. No one else can do it for you. If you do not wish to fight, then you are lost. Do not lose at life.

INT. FARAWAY FILM FESTIVAL PANEL - EVENING

MODERATOR

So Owen, what are some of the key takeaways of your film?

OWEN

Work, love, and play are going to be the main foundations of being human and no one or thing should ever rob a person of these rights. A person cursed with mental illness must find ways to overcome and seize these fundamental human rights. And if you are not willing to put in the work, they can be taken away... no... they WILL be taken away and then you are left with not a life, but rather a shadow.

MODERATOR

How do you propose to solve this issue? Many people suffer from mental illness and it is not an easy problem to tackle.

OWEN

There are many ways, and specifically ways that are not really being utilized at this moment. From the clinical perspective, we are doing what we can with providing medications and constantly developing new drugs to be more effective.

(MORE)

OWEN (CONT'D)

There is psychotherapy, which brings in a behavioral intervention to help relieve some of the stress and symptoms that build up along with illness. However, we are not looking into more creative ways outside of science and hospitals. Once the acute phase is resolved, there is much to yearn for in life that leaves a person quite lost and deflated. This part of a person's life, must be earned. It cannot be given, like a treatment. To do this, we have to let the person decide and make the choice to earn their rights to life. Because while these are rights, they are not passively given to you.

MODERATOR

So it comes down to choices. How do we influence people's choices?

OWEN

We can through connecting with these people. Showing the human side of every challenge that has been overcome and showing that they too can be like that. We dissolve the notion that there are things that are impossible by doing exactly those things.

MODERATOR

So we have role models of people who were in their shoes and who succeeded and triumphed.

OWEN

Yes, but we have to not only be role models but paint the picture. When we paint, we create the emotional impression that will stick with people. They need this imprint so that when times get tough, they will have the drive to keep going. When we show how it was painted, they will see why it was so difficult and why we as mentors and role models did what we did.

(MORE)

OWEN (CONT'D)

For them.

MODERATOR

What kind of painting are you talking about? It sounds like something really big, like a masterpiece.

OWEN

Yes, literally it has to be that way. That's how you get at the raw and primal change that needs to be there for people to be willing to embark on that self-journey to transform their lives.

MODERATOR

This is your first movie. Do you feel like this has lived up to its purpose?

OWEN

I hope so. This is like my masterpiece.

INT. AUDITORIUM - EVENING

Owen is in the audience as the host for the Academy Awards comes on stage.

HOST

As our time comes to an end here, I'd like to say a few words. When we all go our separate ways, we'll take some of what was shown here today with us. That is the way with the Oscars. We are touched by what brilliance has been demonstrated by these talented and gifted individuals. None more so than our final individual whom we award Best Picture. Everything that this individual represents is bestowed in his dedication to taking the human spirit to the next level.

(MORE)

HOST (CONT'D)
We'd like to award this distinction
to Owen Lee's "Reflections."

The audience claps and cheers.

EXT. TOP OF TWIN PEAKS IN SAN FRANCISCO - SUNRISE

Owen and Ben sit atop a hill, overlooking the city.

OWEN
We made it.

BEN
Sure, you made your movie, I wrote
my book.

OWEN
It feels good. But then again, it
isn't over.

BEN
We go back to our lives. We'll get
married, have kids, do all the
normal stuff. The mission is
complete.

OWEN
I don't want to settle down Ben.
This is just the beginning.

BEN
You got what you were after, what
are you talking about? What else is
there to say?

OWEN
I'm changing the game.
Revolutionizing the field. This
takes years to do and it isn't a
one man job.

BEN

I'm pretty sure you've made a statement already. I know I have. Life as an orphan through the eyes of the beholder.

OWEN

The momentum needs to keep moving. We have to train future generations to innovate and keep the field fresh. We can't lose our image.

BEN

So what, you keep making movies? I'm sure as hell done with my message.

OWEN

Yeah movies. But I'm thinking a whole new field here. We could develop incubators, production companies, businesses, and even research in this area. It's the image Ben.

BEN

C'est la Vie. That's a shit ton of work.

OWEN

Oh I know it is. C'est la Vie.

EXT. YOSEMITE - EVENING

Owen and Sam gaze at the stars outside at night.

OWEN

Remember that night I showed you the kaleidoscope?

SAM

Yes it's starting to make sense now.

OWEN

We need more people to be stars.

INT. CLASSROOM - DAY

Owen (age: 12) goes up in front of the classroom. He visibly trembles. His notecards are wet from the sweat on his hands. He fumbles with the cards.

OWEN

Once upon a time, um, there was a little hare who dared to dream. He came from, um, a family that loved their home. He had bigger plans. Um, he wanted to go into the unknown to see what life was all about. Um, he ventured far and wide and discovered that life, well um, life was about looking into the stars and seeing your reflection. To get there, um, well there is a vast amount of space and the distance is unknown. Um, but somehow, you have to cross it. You have to know it in your heart, or you'll never make it. Um, you have to be willing to go into the unknown which is risky because you may get lost, you may lose yourself in space which is very cold, and um, there are pirates. But once you get there, you'll know. Um, because you'll see what you've become and the place that you came from, from earth, you won't see it anymore. You'll be that light that guides others along the way. Um, he knew that was what life was about.

FADE TO BLACK.