

Golden Boys

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A THESIS SUBMITTED TO
THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER
OF FINE ARTS

GRADUATE PROGRAM IN FILM
YORK UNIVERSITY
TORONTO, ONTARIO

September 2025

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Abstract

Golden Boys is a 102-page fiction screenplay centered around Salem and Caleb, two teenage boys and best friends, who are spending one of the last days of their summer break together, as their lives are about to move in different directions. Both boys struggle with self-image, insecurities, young love, personal expectations, and attempting to maintain their slowly disintegrating friendship. The boys' long-lasting friendship comes to a head, and they gain perspective on how instrumental the other has been in shaping their lives.

Taking a traditional American teen comedy and reframing it within a modern Canadian context, this film explores how collective memory and cultural influences recontextualize our identities amidst societal changes in Wasaga Beach, Ontario. Developed using primary and secondary research, as well as first-hand accounts, this script reflects a personal journey of artistic self-discovery and acceptance, echoed in the escapades of the central characters. This paper documents the process of reaching the idea for *Golden Boys*, finding a specific film reference as a starting point, and navigating the merging of genre and social awareness within the cultural context of a grander film lexicon and an authentic Canadian portrayal of Wasaga Beach.

Acknowledgement

This has not been an easy process. That may not come as a surprise to many, but it was a surprise to me. A junior writer with passion and enthusiasm entered this program, and although he is still there, he is buried beneath a callous exterior. Just as *Golden Boys* suggest, this process has been one of evolution. Ideas of what a writer is, and my place in writing. My ideas of film and what makes cinema true have been in a constant state of flux. I have been in this program a little longer than expected and have gone through two Supervisors. To Howard Wiseman, I have nothing but gratitude and thanks. Pushing me beyond my ego around writing and thrusting me into the light of traditional storytelling. Helping me become ruthless in my ability to eliminate what I may love, but that does not fit the story. And to Fabio Basso Montanari, the supervisor who met me where I was, as I rebuilt my thesis from the ground up. With his positive and collaborative mentorship, I learned more about truth and authenticity in writing than I ever dreamed. The only reason this screenplay exists is due to the personal support of both amazing mentors.

I want to thank all the other incredible professors and my entire cohort who helped support my journey through this program. Whether directly or indirectly, they have all contributed to opening my eyes to seeing what is possible when it comes to independent film and artistic expression. A very special thank you as well to Kouwei Lee and Aishah Rashid for their work in keeping this program together.

My parents, Anne and Brian. My sister, Brenna, and her partner, Robyn. I hoped to put their belief and faith in me somewhere useful, and I hope that I achieved that. They never stopped pushing me, even in my darkest moments. And lastly, to my partner, Jennifer. Who has

done more than she could have ever known. Who has kept me off the ledge. Who talks me down.
You push me into the world with more gusto than I could ever concoct myself.

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INTRODUCTION

I once heard an anecdote about the creation of the statue of David. Once unveiled, someone asked Michelangelo how he was able to create such a masterpiece from a simple block of marble. How did he do it? What was the process? And Michelangelo replied.

“I just removed everything that wasn’t David.”

Although likely a false quote, I think this anecdote holds an undeniable truth. Your story is there. You just need to cut through the noise to find it. But the question I arrive at now, as I finish this screenplay, is...

“How do you know that David is what is hidden in that block of marble?”

Golden Boys is a summation of themes, characters, and ideas that did not come easily. It is truly defined by the word “process.” Many iterations of the same story existed before this final version. In some ways, this script was a restless leg, shaking at every thought that crossed its page. And as frustrating as that was, I felt I reached an honesty in this project that was foreign to my previous writing. Before entering this program, my writing was consistent but stagnant. My visual language and direction outshone the emotion I was trying to communicate. To grow, I joined this program. But it was not long before I discovered my issue. A lack of truth and authenticity. My concepts were helping me obfuscate the emotion of the story. Attempts at grounded stories with “relatable” themes felt as if I was crafting a connection for the audience, but never within myself. So, my goal was to find a story I could authentically identify with.

Golden Boys follows two best friends, Salem and Caleb, as they spend a day together in the hometown of Wasaga Beach. Salem, a kid smitten with the idea of filmmaking and quite popular for his TikTok edits, needs to film the last few pieces of a college application video

before it is due at midnight. Caleb needs a ride to pick up a motorcycle that he has been saving up for all summer. It is an opportunity for autonomy from his family, but he must pick it up by 8 o'clock tonight, or else miss out. Caleb offers to help Salem film to complete the application faster. Leaving enough time to get the motorcycle together and end the night at a classmate's party. Caleb wants to show off his new bike and earn some respect, while Salem can finally hook up with his crush, Sandy, before he leaves Wasaga.

The project is a look at insecurities and authenticity through the guise of a teenage adventure film. Akin to films like *Kids* (Clark, 1995) or *Superbad* (Mottola, 2007), the boys' journey through Wasaga Beach is filled with locals and visitors, reflecting aspects of this evolving town. As the day goes on, they struggle with their relationship, acknowledging that they have been growing in separate directions, with priorities shifting. It is only when their identities are challenged, and they are forced to confront themselves, that they realize their differences strengthen their relationship. The process to arrive here was wrought with endless headaches and heartbreaking decisions. Later in this paper, I will explore the versions of this story that did not make it this far, and the consistent themes that carried through multiple versions of this project.

It took a long time to discover that I was telling a coming-of-age story. Originally, I did not have any interest, as I found this genre of films to be rather singular in the relationship they explore. But as I worked, I realized that Wasaga Beach itself is just as much a central character, equally in transition, as its city council is currently planning radical changes. And so, I found a triptic. The film itself, my journey, and Wasaga Beach are all in this state of evolving. And so, I asked the question, "How can the genre of coming-of-age comedy help portray authentically Wasaga Beach's change?" And through *Golden Boys*, I pursued this inquiry.

BACKGROUND – CANADIAN AUTHENTICITY

Superbad seemed a strange landmark for this script initially. A lynchpin of my teenage growth, Seth and Evan's hectic journey through their California suburb was the definition of comedy for a 15-year-old boy such as myself. Having been written by Evan Goldberg and Seth Rogen, just out of high school, I felt it was authentic to my experience growing up in a middle-class suburb. My friends and I saw ourselves in the ridiculous characters, identifying with their quest for romance and parties.

It was the first film reference I connected with when realizing the core of *Golden Boys*. A coming-of-age film that structurally exists in one day, primarily about the two central characters' friendship. Previous drafts and thesis projects had struggled with self-seriousness, confused motivations, and artificially inflated stakes. But by embracing a more comedic tone to better connect to my authentic self, I found the devil-may-care attitude of the characters, the crass comedy, and the straightforward structure enticing, as a way to mix up what I had done before. In seeing these similarities, I revisited it, and my past viewing was immediately recontextualized. Although I still enjoyed the humour and performance, my growth as a filmmaker meant I found *Superbad* to be lacking when it came to its complexity. Having spent years developing a taste for more complicated films regarding their themes, politics, and social critique, I found *Superbad* comparatively simple and easy to digest. That was no doubt its intention as a film, but I needed to find a way to take that levity from *Superbad* I enjoy so much and still engage with the social and economic issues in Wasaga Beach that lie at the heart of this film. I didn't want the film to be a version of an already established movie; I wanted it to speak to these quintessentially Canadian issues occurring in Wasaga Beach, while holding the feel of a teenage comedy. This became the central focus of my research.

I decided to investigate the history of youth in cinema. Linda C. Ehrlich states in *The Name of the Child: Cinema as Social Critique*, when speaking about children in cinema, “On a significant level, they are used to reflect the value of society and its relative state of health.” (Ehrlich, 12). Touching on films like *The 400 Blows* (Truffaut, 1959) and *The Apu Trilogy* (Ray, 1955 – 1959), Ehrlich specifically leans into examples of poverty and economic collapse as being what the children in these films represent. Antonie’s detached parents shipping him off to a centre for troubled youth is meant to denote the apathy and social strife of 1950s France. Antonie’s interactions with the city, while avoiding his home life, significantly informed my approach to the landscape and its relationship to our central boys. Evan and Seth’s journey to lose their virginities in *Superbad* or Amy and Molly’s attempt to let loose in *Booksmart* (Wilde, 2019) are references of mine rooted in a middle-class, American experience without actively engaging with the suburban landscape around them. So, it’s more prudent to explore the social issues in Wasaga Beach if Salem and Caleb mull around the town, parents mostly absent, victims of the changes occurring around them, like Antonie. I shifted my mostly house-based scene setups to something that felt more landmark-oriented, taking the boys out of comfortable spaces and placing them against iconic Wasaga Beach landmarks, allowing their acknowledgement (or lack thereof) to comment directly on how they relate to the history of Wasaga. Although pushing them into the interactive environment makes them feel more representative of the state of Wasaga Beach, in the way that they react and vocalize their feelings about the town, the beach itself functions very differently from the environment in the films Ehrlich speaks to.

By contrast, *The 400 Blows* creates a desolate environment of dirty streets and rundown buildings for the characters, with no real relief. In opposition to this, Wasaga is full of life and energy as a bustling tourist town, so I needed to find a way to maintain a genuine representation

of the place while still giving the boys a story with depth and stakes. Antonie in *The 400 Blows* has real pressing concerns he is faced with, not having a place to sleep, suffering abuse, and looking for food. The stakes for Antonie are real and present, indicative of the environment he must trudge through. Although Wasaga Beach suffers from issues connected to poverty and exploitation, it is a lower-middle-class tourist town, presenting a less severe and arduous environment for Caleb and Salem. On the surface, if the boys were representative of the town, they would be energetic, carefree lads, not struggling. Much like the mold of a classic American teenage comedy, this setting does not carry a harshness that creates high stakes. Even trying to recontextualize it in a specifically Canadian context, the countries mirror each other in so many ways that the only option for putting them in a more dire position would be to shift location completely. A more comparable film would be *Sleeping Giants* (Cividino, 2015), also a Canadian film about a group of young boys in cottage country, but between the more isolated Thunder Bay and the drama layered throughout the film, it feels as though it touches on aspects of a summer in cottage country, but doesn't fully embrace its setting in a way that feels explicitly Canadian.

In Wasaga, the boys are surrounded by bright lights, fast food, and tourist attractions, which do not lend themselves to stakes that feel profound in an external way, and I wanted to stay focused on this township and its present issues with gentrification as a thematic throughline in the film. It was this conclusion that led me to consider how one could explore conflict within an environment that, for the most part, carries a positive connotation on its surface. Circling back around to Americana, I immediately thought of a film like *Blue Velvet* (Lynch, 1986), which presents this ideal suburban identity but hides a darker world underneath. This made me consider whether I wanted to add a darker layer underneath my story, but I quickly remembered much of the feedback my past drafts had regarding obfuscating emotion with high-stakes external

elements and how they had detracted from the narrative. But this led to me looking at the film subtextually, and the way *Blue Velvet* puts Jeffrey's mental crisis at the forefront of the film, highlighting his internalized struggles with identity after his encounter with Dorothy Vallens showed me the perfect catalyst for conflict within a seemingly picturesque environment. Exploring the mental struggles of the characters versus artificially creating external conflicts.

As seen in reports by the World Health Organization, we are currently living through a mental health crisis in adolescents (Nissim et al, 1-41). Collecting evidence from adolescents aged 11-15 from Europe, Canada and Central Asia, it concludes that social media and gaming have led to an increase in mental health issues and problematic behavior amongst teens. To properly represent the mental health status of Caleb and Salem, I began searching for works that focused on a character's mental health as the main source of conflict, while being informed by the film's world. Jarrod Carmichael's *On the Count of Three* (Carmichael, 2022) was particularly helpful in finding a balance between the environment and internal conflict. The film frames its narrative against an average suburb where most people would find some comfort. It is only in the central character, Val's dissatisfaction with his life and the malaise that comes with his middle-class existence, that the film comments on the mental health struggles associated with this kind of complacent, static life. He has responsibilities to his girlfriend and a possible child on the way, but the mundane pointlessness that he sees in his daily life lulls him into a stagnant depression, preventing him from seeing purpose in his responsibilities. The film pushes back against Val's feelings with Kevin, who feels more justified in his suicidal ideation given his abuse as a child. The film opens a conversation around the absurdity of suicide and whether someone else is more justified in it than others. The film showed me that I can maintain the bone fide, light nature of *Wasaga Beach* and its changes, without having to manufacture unrealistic conflicts for the

characters. The stakes can be internalized, connected to their identity, and reinforced through interaction with the town.

I decided to take a step further in this direction, digging into whether modern teen films have shifted to this mental health focus or if the stakes still exist entirely externally, considering their modern relevance. As explored in Elissa H. Nelson's *The New Old Face of a Genre: The Franchise Teen Film as Industry Strategy*, the introduction of social media and streaming has shifted how teen coming-of-age films are being marketed to kids. Following the success of interconnected, multi-film franchises like Marvel films, the new meta seems to be an extension of the YA adaptation boom of the 2010s, but shifting it from a classic teen comedy into something more fantastical. These films attempt to establish multi-film franchises that tackle societal issues. Films like *Uglies* (McG, 2024), based on a YA series, try to connect with their audience this way, and the results can be inconsistent. In the case of *Uglies*, an allegory for puberty as seen through a dystopian lens, without much success.

Traditional coming-of-age seems to have shifted towards a newer variant, focusing on the millennial generation and their struggles associated with a modern listlessness. Films like *The Worst Person in the World* (Trier, 2021) and the previously mentioned *On The Count of Three*, are all suggestive of this late twenties, early thirties coming-of-age, and are highly regarded for this approach as a way to reflect on the state of the modern world. Julie and her search for something of substance amongst this love triangle in *The Worst Person in the World* interrogates this myth of adult expectations and stability, which were very similar conflicts to Salem and Caleb were dealing with, just grounded amongst high school drama versus the adult world. The way *The Worst Person in the World* tackles personal evolution in a modern way helped me realize just how universal the mental struggles I could implement into the script could be for

people within transitional spaces in life, like leaving high school, moving cities, getting married, starting a family, etc.

Upon seeing this shift to millennial-focused stories, I understood the appeal of a later coming-of-age movie, dealing with large existential issues where characters may have more at stake in their adult lives. But what I saw was an opportunity, based on the research I had already put into the script, to take these existential concerns and ground them within the framework of an American teen comedy. My goal became to frame this traditional comedy within the veritable mental struggles of a modern teen, which would be in dialogue with Wasaga Beach's rapid social and economic changes. I realized from watching these films that the concerns that these 30-something characters deal with are not that much different than what the boys would be dealing with. Personal identity and what they want to do with the rest of their lives are questions that films like *The Worst Person In The World* are actively engaging in. If the stakes of the conflict rest within the mental struggles of both boys, it allows me to expand their characters at this transitional moment in time. This also freed the story up to explore external conflict of lower stakes, meaning that my portrayal of Wasaga Beach did not need to be inflated with faux danger. The story could maintain its small-town high school-oriented approach while challenging the boys profoundly with their internal conflicts. Something that I realized felt far more universal in its approach, especially to a modern teen audience. And upon thinking of universal appeal and authenticity, it brought me back to why I connected with *Superbad* in the first place.

My attraction to the film was the juvenile nature of its comedy, but in viewing these other films, it helped me find a different kind of authenticity. Rather than one dominated by comedy, this was a dramatic authenticity, shaped substantially by my research into the mental health crisis amongst teenagers. But because I can contextualize these questions with this low-stakes high

school comedy, within this small suburban town, it would allow me to maintain the levity in my film, while finding moments of reflection for the boys to deal with these concerns. And it was at this point, the only thing I felt I was missing was a concrete external goal for their day. The film might be juvenile, but it does feel true in representing the objectives of the characters. Evan and Seth only want one thing: to lose their virginity before high school is over. The worries about their friendship and college boil under the surface but never reach the forefront. It was whilst considering these external priorities that I realized that how I had been thinking about this project had been flawed.

The town they live in exists in a kind of middle-class stasis from which they are disconnected. Seth and Evan are not strong representations of their grander society. If anything, they reflect a moment of early 2000s American normalcy but never engage in anything beyond their upper-middle-class suburbs. The film came out in 2007, just before one of the largest economic collapses the United States had encountered. In a way, engaging with the film in this context presents me with exactly what it is: a bubble. The worst thing that happens in the film is that a party gets broken up at the end. Seth is hit by a car in a parking lot and shrugs it off. The boys steal alcohol for the party and run away without being caught. However, this safety bubble can now speak to how society was viewed and represented before the economic collapse. Picturesque, everything was running smoothly, without realizing the incoming shift waiting in 2008. In a way, the film does engage with Ehrlich's ideas, in the sense of seeing the world through these boys, albeit a very shallow viewing of it. But all this textual and metatextual insight is geared specifically through an American lens, and *Golden Boys* is inescapably a Canadian film. Although the writers of *Superbad* are Canadian, they grew up within an American industry, and the film is set and produced in the United States. It was through this metatextual

look at *Superbad* that allowed me to see that the last bit of authenticity I was missing, beyond the setting of Wasaga and the teenage boys, was that of being Canadian.

My initial thought when it came to separating *Golden Boys* from the American films I had based so much of the story on was that I didn't know if it was something I *could* do. Canada and the United States share a lot of similarities, and I didn't want to focus on the superficial elements like the seriousness with which American students treat things like prom or homecoming as the differentiating factor. The only thing I could think of was differentiating Canada from the United States in the same way the US differentiates itself: regional personality.

The best way to portray this Canadiana was to revisit Wasaga, both in my memories and as it exists now. This visit helped me fill out the final piece of the script, the authentic texture of the town by allowing the cultural and historical aspects to inform the secondary characters and prime external conflicts of the film. External conflicts were easier to pin down, knowing that Wasaga's history with bikers amongst the locals helped inform Caleb's motivation. Having spoken to younger folks and university-age people within my cohort, a common thread was a desire to escape from their small towns, which led directly to Salem's desire to leave the town. The rowdy college-age and high school kids at night on the strip informed Rory and his band of aggressive bros. A conversation I had with an artist regarding a documentary about the indigenous origins of the Wasaga River, created Mabel and her group. The more I researched in the town and the increase in first-hand encounters I had, the more they helped shape this film into becoming starkly more Canadian, breaking away from this white-picket fence Americana that so many of my references had been steeped in.

I could lean into the more stereotypical examples, like how Rory is a riff on the college-age hockey boys and the sub-cultural idiosyncrasies found in Canada. I could speak to the

geographical or temporal difference in streetlights and starting time for high school and college but the truth of the matter is that the film is Canadian because it is a film about Wasaga Beach, and speaks to the deep history and culture that gives it the dimension required to house both a teenage comedy, and a socially complex story. Authentic to itself.

WASAGA BEACH – PAST, PRESENT, FUTURE

Pink, Taylor, and Wetzler write in *Measuring and Promoting Wellbeing: How Important is Economic Growth?* that progress in society has for a long time been measured by gauging economic growth predominantly, but it was not until the latter part of the twentieth century that other social factors began to shift this idea. Based on this, the middle-class stasis of these early 2000s teen films reflects progress in maintaining the status quo. *Superbad* views its middle-class neighborhood as a playground. It is beautiful, clean houses and mostly empty streets reduce the severity of the bullying and embarrassment that the boys face. A film like *Vivarium* (Finnegan, 2019) depicts the same, but with a feeling of dread, reflected in the copy-paste, cold production design of house after house on a deserted street. This instead demonstrates a cold, empty atmosphere in a similar setting. As Wasaga expands, with plans for rapid development, it remains to be seen how people might see this change, but this isn't the first time the beach has experienced radical change.

During the "Ontario Biker Wars," Wasaga was a hotspot for parties and gatherings, bringing in drugs, gambling, and other criminal activity to the area. It even held meetings between chapters, such as the approval of the first Satan's Choice chapter in la belle province. However, as the years went on and the police got a foothold in handling biker activity in Ontario, their presence began to fade, and their clubhouse eventually fell away and was demolished. Regardless, the biker culture became deeply entrenched within the bedrock of Wasaga Beach, and bikers are a common sight for people on the strip. Motorcycle shows, gatherings, and meetups are still a regular occurrence, especially near the beach, but as the criminal element left the town, it gained a new reputation for tackiness. Normally catering to families out at the beach for the weekend, Wasaga quickly became a go-to stop for middle and upper-class teenagers and

college students, looking for a cheap place to stay and drink. Both pre- and post-COVID, the city has been working on ways to shift this reputation, “asking Ontario Parks to hire more park wardens for enforcement, and to ‘drastically’ increase fines for anyone breaking the rules.” (Adams, 2024). And although this article in particular pinpoints one dubiously credible situation, it does communicate the idea that the reputation of Wasaga Beach has soured in public opinion.

But then, COVID-19 hit, and things shut down. During this time, the Wasaga City Council committed to a more radical change. As per the *Downtown Development Master Plan*, submitted by the Town of Wasaga Beach, the goal is to: “Rebrand Wasaga Beach to promote a more inclusive, family-friendly identity; Revamp the existing planning policy framework to encourage private sector investment while transforming the Downtown into a place for both residents and visitors; Encourage medium density mixed-use housing forms in the downtown that will increase the quality of short-term accommodations and improve the urban realm;” (Wasaga Beach City Council, slide 11). All this suggests catering to the newer transplants from Toronto, focusing on those looking for an escape from the city, hoping to seize on cheaper property rates. This development was actively opposed, and led to protests, with the head of the Ratepayers Association claiming that locals were being “shut out” of town halls (Town of Wasaga Beach). The lower-income locals were being ignored and pushed out, as Wasaga did not seem interested in keeping them. The town understood that to prevent all this money and new folks from going to the upper-class catering town of Collingwood, they needed to change more drastically, at the cost of the culture of the community.

So here, we have the story of Wasaga Beach. A middle-class town is knocking down the strip that it is so well known for, to build a new, sterile resort hotel for the richer community that is growing in the area. This redevelopment plan served as the core of interest in Wasaga Beach.

Its radical approach, rejecting protests and specifically catering to a richer group of people, spoke directly to the themes of progress that I wanted to explore within the script. It too lives within a transitional space and gives us the perfect environment to entertain the questions of this thesis. A town full of character and charm, with comedic opportunities for our boys. A beach full of history, allowing Caleb's motorcycle obsession and Salem's artistic leanings to exist in the same space, but still struggle against each other as the town tries to accommodate both. It was an ideal setting for this attempt to blend the teen comedy genre with the Canadian social politics of the time, as the town was, in real time, going through a process of gentrification, expansion, and cultural redefinition as the classic Wasaga Beach strip was being peeled away.

With an upper-middle class from the surrounding cities attempting to escape the growing cost of living, it connects directly to the kinds of social and economic issues that would affect the towns teens, as Ehrlich mentioned, while also being a busy and energetic community. It is a town that negates the middle-class stasis, which was such a sticking point in my research, and allows us the perfect balance of fun and gravity, with the town shifting as much as Salem and Caleb. Slow and incremental, but consequential, and chaotic, nonetheless. The goal became clear: how do I best approach depicting the social and economic change that is drastically sweeping Wasaga Beach, but in a way that doesn't sacrifice the new style of writing that I am approaching, in which the boys can still be representative of the surface-level fun that Wasaga Beach is known for?

To that end, I went back to Ehrlich's examples and, in searching for them, I found exactly what I was looking for, in the film *Kids*. Larry Clark's early 1990s film strives for a verité quality that attempts to portray these teenagers as raw as possible. Telly's sexual exploits, Casper's substance abuse, and Jennie's desperate search for Telly to tell him about his HIV diagnosis are

all meant to portray a rougher picture of the more impoverished kids within New York City. The film is natural, with comedic moments coming partially from their erratic behavior, indicative of the rough environment where they grew up. Watching the film and seeing the kids move around without a care is a combination of freeing and terrifying. Telly's selfish disregard for the others around him suggests how inwardly focused these kids are. He says that the only worthwhile thing in the world is sex, driving home just how single-minded he can be.

Although teenagers are more connected and in-the-know today than when these films were made, their concerns stay insular. A study from the National Library of Medicine, studying perspective and memory in male adolescents and young adults, "we found an age-related decrease in egocentric biases in perspective taking from adolescence to early adulthood" (Scheuplein, 2023). Adolescent teens tend to focus on themselves, so the characters do not need to take their societal issues seriously. They can be victims without knowing. What the world is doing affects them, but do they need to care? No. Because they have motorcycles to buy, college to apply for, and girls to kiss. The town becomes this backdrop that the boys move through, like shadows being cast by light from a projector. These active entities move through space without seeing the tableaux behind them. I feel as though the process of discovering this revealed how insulated and single-minded my approach to writing was, which is indicative of the work I was doing before this project.

MY BACKGROUND – MY TIME UNTIL NOW

My time creating and working in film has culminated in 12 years of writing. With over 30 short projects during that time, my writing found a comfortable pocket of quiet, tense drama, mainly inspired by the likes of David Lynch, Stanley Kubrick, and David Fincher. The cold calculated focus on craft is what started me on my film journey. During these early movies, I focused primarily on my directing skills, and my screenwriting became a vehicle for a visual showcase of atmosphere and mood. As I grew, I found myself lacking in the emotional impact of the stories. Critiques from peers, professors, and festivals left me with similar notes. I was capable, but the pictures left people confused or cold. They had no staying power.

This phase was more obvious in my films *Spike* (Griffin, 2019) and *Banshee* (Griffin, 2021). Both shorts focus on quiet protagonists who spend more time within an interior world than communicating with the world of the film. One had shut down because of the death of her father, and the other was growing paranoid from an act of industrial espionage. Both characters are victims of not only unseen dangers but the atmosphere of the picture. Heavy black and white, dense sound design with sharp spikes and dramatic twists without the emotional strength to support them. The films were stylistically interesting but narratively inert. After some previous success with a more character-driven play at a local theatre festival, I wanted to challenge myself more acutely, to bring those character-driven elements to my screenwriting. I wrote relentlessly, and although I had a few good scripts, I realized that I had stagnated and that my directing efforts were far more developed than my writing.

With this script, I wanted to open myself up to challenges, tackling a variety of things both emotionally and technically. Writing a single-day structure, writing a comedy, and writing a character-driven story first felt new and exciting to me. But at the same time, thematically, this

was new ground for me. The closest thing I have done that has tackled this was my recent short film, *Swans* (Griffin, 2024). The approach to this movie was drastically different than anything I had done before. We allowed the actors to run the ten-page scene in single takes with a digital camera, doing all the work independently of us, inside the garage set. They were in control, and for me, the freedom that allowed was exciting and deeply uncomfortable. They would make their own changes, move the scene in surprising ways, and it helped open my eyes to how I could find honesty and emotionality within the absurd. To this day, it has been one of my more popular short films, with an emotional core that I find to be very successful. I realized that the form must not overcome the human within a script. A purpose is first and foremost, and I think my struggle to find a purpose for my work, a “why,” was my biggest obstacle. What did I care about? What did I feel deeply was bothering me about the world? What did I question, and how do I hone in on the right question to ask?

The process of working on this script was the thing that brought that out of me. With *Golden Boys*, I wanted to work towards a conversation about progress and identity. In our quest for forward progress, what do we lose? If identity is fluid, then what do we shed as we move on and evolve? I considered these themes through the lens of personal experience. My growth as an artist, watching my family renovate the cottage I love and strip it of all character and charm. This story became inseparable from me as an artist dealing with the same issues as the boys.

Revisiting Wasaga Beach recently for research gave me pause, as the city continues to move forward with “updating” the beach with its new resort concept, regardless of community pushback. Gentrification is not new, but I think the specific circumstances in this situation are unique. With Covid creating an influx of newer and richer residents, and a focus on economic

growth via more heightened tourism, the city wishes to replace its grimy image with something more sanitized.

And all this research helped shift the process of writing this project significantly. My approach was much slower and methodical, taking substantially more time outlining what Caleb and Salem want and need. How they interact with the town, their opinions, and feelings. I distanced myself from attempting to “find” all of it in the draft, knowing that the specificity of the messaging and themes would not lend itself well to that process. The boys needed to be layered, and with the understanding that they would be just as much a representation of the grander change Wasaga is going through. Considering that boys were not meant to directly engage with the societal elements in the background, it allowed me to approach the writing process by isolating the boys’ story from Wasaga Beach, keeping it small-scale and personal, and then shifting to the story of the town through more descriptive background elements.

With the advice of my supervisors, I found films to work with comparatively. Knowing that I wanted to craft a teen comedy meant I should embrace the traditions of the genre. In past writing, my aversion to a three-act structure led me to find a structure after most of the story beats had been plotted out, causing an uneven sense of pace, with no real direction. This seemed mostly from a place of insecurity, wanting to create a unique film that was not dominated by an obvious structure. As I embraced this three-act structure, I found that the uniqueness developed from the context of the story, and that the more I deepened the characters and complicated the relationships, the more integrated the structure. My desire for obfuscation in my past films was warranted, but had been put in the wrong place, and it was by embracing the three-act structure that I found ways to hide and bend it to give the film an idiosyncratic feel. Once I had a sense of the direction of the movie within that structure, I experimented within it, most significantly by

dividing the second act into two parts, one specifically focused on Salem, and one specifically focused on Caleb. Not only did this decision allow me to take full advantage of the environment by following the boys through varied spaces, but it also communicated to the reader that these boys hold equal weight within the story, allowing an audience to feel the absence and begin to miss the boys as a unit. I wouldn't have been able to find this if not for committing to convention.

The town needed its moments to stand out as a character, both as a landscape and as represented by the people within it. During my time in Wasaga Beach, I found it imperative to touch upon the visual distinctions between the old and new and find some way to depict them through character. Mabel is representative of this larger ideal: that the faster we push into the future, the more willing we are to bury and forget the past, and by refusing to build upon what has come before, it ceases to exist. Mabel's childhood is something she cannot remember, because her passion and goals for the future drove her so hard that she did not have time to create memories worth remembering. And her way of dealing with it opens us up to comedic opportunities, misplacing passion with anger, and playing with the irony that this is what Salem thinks is what a "real filmmaker" is like. On the opposite side of the spectrum, Ted is a character who is built around the ideas that Wasaga is pushing towards. His goal of enriching himself and his community has caused him to see anything from the past as something to be dealt with. He leads the charge in new construction developments, employing many people in the town while also encouraging richer folks to move in. But we see when Caleb comes to buy the motorcycle that his life is dictated by control and shaping the people around him into what he thinks is acceptable. Caleb's ability to reject him and refuse to prove to him that he deserves this motorcycle is indicative of the struggle long-term residents of Wasaga are having. These people

who are being bought out of their properties and encroached upon by these expanding communities have every right to stand up and push back, as the President of the Wasaga Beach Ratepayers Association, Faye Ego, has done since the introduction of the Financial and Development plan for the strip. They do not need to prove they can live here. They should try to maintain whatever sense of Wasaga's past that they have. All these additional characters highlight perspectives that speak to the themes of this project, helping to resolve the question of this thesis. Outlandish characters, indicative of systematic issues, challenge the boys and how they feel about themselves and the town.

But for me, it is through the boys that we can see salvation. For us to grow and progress, our movement cannot be predicated on the lifeless regurgitation of similar ideas within shiny new boxes. Within 50 years, Wasaga Beach might very well be a terrible place to live, hypothetically. With increased algae in the water, the beach may be red and not swimmable, as Brennan Doherty's TVO article, *"It's 2050. Here's what a day at Wasaga Beach could look like"* states (Doherty, 2022). A town that tourists do not visit anymore due to these factors, and a housing market that is tanking, as too many cookie-cutter houses were built too fast and priced too high. It is these issues that we see if we continue to focus on today's solutions without considering tomorrow's problems. We solve a problem today, without thinking about the problems we create for tomorrow. We are haunted by the culture we choose to forget and the future we will never have because of it. But in my conceptualization, as seen later, I attempted to take these feelings and communicate them in far too serious a tone. Not to say that the harshness is not warranted given what is occurring in Wasaga, but the severity stripped away what I felt like was a rounded and human experience of the people within the town, and the self-actualization of Salem and Caleb.

These boys, who learn that their identity is tied to each other, are another way they are preventing themselves from growing beyond the antiquated ideas of who they are. And it is only through the separation from one another and the comfort that these boys have given each other that they can confront and discover the truth at the core of who they are. And it is only through this realization of their flaws that they can self-actualize and, upon doing so, find their way back to each other. Reforming a friendship that has now grown stronger, deeper, and more powerful from the absence of their misconceptions of each other.

DRAMATIC CONSTRUCTION

Yet this idea, of merging the social issues of more dramatic coming-of-age films with those of the American teenage comedy, did not come quickly. As I said, the common thread through all these drafts was this focus on a sense of place and using the film to tell a story about a place, just as much about characters. Working on previous ideas, you will see how this concept evolved into what it is now, while following my journey of embracing levity and finding truth.

Second Story Man

My initial project was inspired by the book *A Burglar's Guide to the City*, by Geoff Manaugh. Within this book, Manaugh breaks down the myriad ways that burglars can access people's homes and how law enforcement needs to adapt their expectations and execution of arrests, depending on the environment. The crux of the book is looking at a building in a way that a burglar would, seeing access points, hidden areas, and the space between walls as just as significant a part of the house as the living areas.

I have always been deeply captivated by the space people choose to occupy, and the histories they hold. In Robert MacFarlane's book, *Underland*, he approaches these spaces through the guise of deep time. The thin line of time between the cave you visit on vacation, and the cave where a neanderthal gasped their last breath is nothing in the realm of deep time. All by the scratches and carvings on the cave walls. This obsession with space is something I am still interrogating to this day, but at the time, I was interested in investigating the ideas of home, time, and perspective when it came to burglary.

And so, I attempted many different versions.

- A burglar who posts his break-ins on social media is blackmailed into bringing along a young girl after he is caught by her, and they work to break into her father's mansion to steal back a priceless family heirloom.
- A crime thriller about a young woman working for the mob who is torn between her new family and old connections when her burglar boyfriend asks for help on one last job.
- A Coen Brothers-like caper about a well-known burglar who, in her last job, is pulled into a mess of warring criminal factions as she is framed for the murder of a mob boss's son.

From a thematic standpoint, this story was always meant to explore how we view the idea of home and how a burglar might see things in a house that we would never understand. It would speak about copy-paste suburban development and the damage that conformity and sameness can have on the people within the homes. But these versions never stuck. Inspirations were drawn from films like *Cache* (Haneke, 2005), *Mikey and Nicky* (May, 1976), and *Thief* (Mann, 1981). The voyeuristic quality of *Cache*, mixed with the tense friendship of *Mikey and Nicky*, and the slick style of *Thief*, was what I was working to create. But this was a point in the process that I was approaching too eagerly. The ideas were too raw. Flaws and criticism would be pointed out, and my stories would crumble. Many of Professor Wiseman's critiques at the time pointed to the listless quality of the script, with characters lacking motivation and substantial stakes within the story. I was dealing with ideas and themes so conceptual that I was forgetting that stories are about people. And the people were getting lost. But this began what would become an incredibly significant part of my thesis, presenting the questions of how a setting and the societal factions

within that setting help to shape the story at large. It suggested ideas of gentrification that would shape the remaining scripts.

Prepper

The next substantial attempt was one based on growing anxiety. Around the time of my previous drafts, I was given an ultimatum. I cannot keep changing topics so radically. If I were going to move away from *Second Story Man*, it would need to be definitive. I believe the authenticity lacking from my writing was because I was not choosing to focus on material that I felt was emotionally significant to me. I was focusing too much on the captivating idea. I did not come from an emotional place. So that is what I did, and the place I began to write from was one of paranoia, dread, and fear.

Prepper was a story that revolved around a rotating cast of family members. At one time or another, the younger brother, the older sister, and their father all took on this film as the central character. An apocalyptic nihilism had sunk its teeth into me during the time of writing this version, driven mostly by fears of increased right-wing ideologies within Western nations, the war in Ukraine, and increased tensions between Russia and the United States. And it was then that I saw an opportunity to interrogate these feelings. The film begins with Theo, a young man, very entrenched within Manosphere politics and Cold War paranoia, who decides to purchase an abandoned missile silo in a Fort McMurray-like town to transform into a doomsday bunker. We follow his sister, who attempts to bring him back to civilization, but ends up helping him complete it to find some sense of closure. The story focused on this self-isolation and how extremists sabotage themselves, as their paranoia pushes away the people that they love. The ones most likely to pull them out of what they are buried in. It was a story about a young man struggling to find purpose and control in knowing that he will be the one to survive when

everything falls apart. He will be the one in control. He will be the one who will say I told you so, but no one will be there.

This story also took on many versions:

- We follow the sister as she attempts to pull her brother out of the bunker, only to get wrapped up in the small-town politics around the land and its history.
- We follow the father, after Theo had gone missing while building his silo, as he visits the town to finish what Theo started. While there, he is confronted with the damage he has done to the town when he was a General at that very missile silo 30 years prior.
- We follow the sister, now a reporter, investigating her brother's disappearance at this silo, which then evolves into a murder investigation including an oil sands baron, wildfires in the town, and a serial killer.

But at the core of all these stories was an attempt to grapple with my feelings around paranoia, isolation, and what felt like the end of the world around every corner. It was emotional, but reactionary. I thought this was an answer to Professor Wiseman's previous criticism around motivation and stakes, with a story focused on people willing to die for their ideals, regardless of how irrational, based on paranoia or fear. And it was not working either. Inspiration pulled from films like *Dog Day Afternoon* (Lumet, 1975), *The Man Who Wasn't There* (Coen, 2001), and *We're All Going to the World's Fair* (Schoenbrun, 2021), the script felt moody and atmospheric, but not much else. The goal was to take the structure of the standoff from *Dog Day Afternoon*, the supernatural backdrop of *The Man Who Wasn't There* and the dreadful tone of *World's Fair*, but my focus on making these separate elements come together meant I was neglecting the characters. I would draft and draft, and after some feedback, would see aspects of my story fall

apart. Wiseman's more pointed notes came from the perspective of the protagonists, feeling as though we lacked insight into what he or she was truly feeling, and justifying this paranoia as the primary driver for his or her actions. The drafts would grow more expansive, attempting to shift perspective to understand these tortured characters from an outside viewpoint. But the work became overwhelmed with the idea of the haunted military past of the silo, pushed to the forefront instead of allowing it to be a background to the drama of the actual characters. This script started to shape the ideas of putting the social commentary elements in the background and encouraged me to shift into a smaller-scale story. The separation of those pieces that were imperative to the thesis and its questions of exploring Wasaga through the guise of a teenage comedy was founded in the draft, as I struggled to grapple with that balance.

Dirty Rotten Teeth

Finally, we arrive at something like what *Golden Boys* is. Writing my thesis, I carried on writing numerous other projects. I was exploring the newfound perspective that the program had given me. And it was in this that I found one of my favourite playwrights, Sam Sheppard. The raw, tactical quality of his conflict and character motivations was something my supervisor told me I needed. And so, I set about working on something comparable to that.

Using *True West* as a basis, I began writing a feature alongside the *Prepper*. I wrote it during the evenings and weekends, but it started to occupy more of my time, becoming more like what was being asked of my thesis. And it was only at a moment of crisis, as a new year crested, that I concluded I no longer had any heart for my *Prepper* story. I had worked out what I needed to work out, and I had nothing left to give, as my life became consumed by this other script. And so, I shifted gears for the final time to this new script. And believe it or not, it had plenty of iterations:

- A novelist and her redneck brother attempt to mend their struggling relationship as the novelist rushes to complete her latest children's book by her publisher's deadline.
- A novelist returns to her old family cottage and encounters her brother, on the run from the police. As they rekindle their relationship, they are terrorized by a group of teenagers, planning to rob the house.
- A group of boys obsessed with the Hell's Angels Motorcycle Club plan to rob a cottage to get enough money for a motorcycle. But when they encounter a cottage with a young writer and one of the boys' outlaw brothers, their interests conflict with their new and old love of these alluring adults.

The last one had the most iterations, built upon the bedrock of this novelist, attempting to find something lost within her past, and using the teenage boys as a surrogate for her nostalgia. Pulling inspiration from *True West* and the film, *Paris, Texas* (Wenders, 1984), it was raw and honest, drawing on Travis's high-stakes personal journey of reconnection in *Paris, Texas* as the guiding light. But even though it was all of that, it came down to one thing: this is a film script. And as a film script, it was boring. Predictable. Professor Wiseman's notes allowed me to clarify what I was leaving up to the audience in these versions. Character motivations were there, but they were loose, and his critiques allowed me to find a good balance between mystery and clarity. But the double-edged sword became that to an average reader, the script became predictable because of how everything was being telegraphed.

And so, as we look back on these versions, what do we see? We see a young man out of place. At odds with his professors and peers, whose approach was being challenged. We see a young man scared, isolated, pushing away those around him out of insecurity. We see a young man who desperately reached back to a world that he knew. One he was familiar with, to find

something that he felt like he was missing. Something that would make him what he knew he needed to be.

Thematically, the exploration of space as a character and speaking to societal issues through these spaces was one of learning that space should not be the star. It can be an element, but if it overwhelms the characters, then we lose track of the emotional resonance the space may have as the characters exist within it. From Professor Wiseman's feedback, it became clear that my ideas and concepts were overwhelming my previous pieces, and the seriousness with which I was approaching this material hindered my ability to be honest. I am not a very serious person, and my humor got me through many of the trials associated with this process. But the thing that resonated with me the most, through all of Professor Wiseman's feedback around *Golden Boys* and *Dirty Rotten Teeth*, was that the boys were everyone's favorite part. Their back-and-forth camaraderie and casualness with each other brought life to this script. And when Professor Montanari came into the picture and looked over this piece, he said the same thing. And that moment was when I realized that I needed to shift gears. I needed to go directly to the source of where I was pulling these chaotic, comedic character conversations from. The American Teenage Comedy.

I knew what I wanted and needed my story to be about. It was about how the façade we shape for ourselves influences how we grow and expand into the world. Because of that, the few things that survived were the boys and the setting. The script swiftly became about the adventures of our troublesome group of friends. By opening myself up to the comedy and levity that my writing was so greatly missing, I found something the characters were lacking. A sense of life and authenticity. As a boy, my summers were spent at Wasaga Beach, on stupid adventures like what these boys go through. It was a time of fun and carefree-ness. My cousins and I would

terrorize each other for fun, spend all day on the beach, and tackle one another into the water. It was a time I drew on deeply for this project. It was the point in my writing process that I wanted to go back to Wasaga Beach and re-experience it, to bring this project to life. During this time of revisiting these memories, I learned that the authenticity I sought was not meant to be a recreation of direct events, but to find the feeling I connected with the most. To look back and distill those complicated feelings into truth. Look at it honestly, and reflect, not just regurgitate moments as they happened, to hope they resonate.

Through this, I realized Wasaga Beach was just as much of this story as the boys were. The carnivals I used to frequent no longer come around as more land is being taken up for mansions and larger suburbs that seem geared for an upper-middle class. When I was a teenager, the threat of Hells Angels bikers was still present. We visited the strip often but it was never a place I felt comfortable in. Teenagers and college kids binge-drinking and fighting. Older bikers with tattoos and patches that reminded you exactly where you were. And although, as a child, I looked at this in fear and anxiety, what I see now is character. It is history, as chaotic as it may be. And I was watching it be washed away. I was so caught up in the history and the drama of Wasaga Beach that my drafts reflected that. Crime-obsessed, high-stakes stories distracted from the truth of the piece. Professor Montanari said the same as Professor Wiseman once said regarding Prepper. The piece is too caught up in the crime and violence to create drama, and it is getting away from what I know. And what I know is the fun childhood I had at Wasaga Beach. So, I embraced it.

This is where a lot of my research began to step in. I concluded that I could still manage to have this story centered around what was happening with Wasaga Beach in terms of gentrification and displacement. I could speak to that through the boys, while not necessarily

having them be concerned with it. In *Gentrification is Making Us Sick*, by Zoe Levitt, they connect displacement and gentrification with an increase in health risks, brought about by stress, travel time, loss of access to local resources, and so forth. Based on my conversations with Wasaga locals, most resources became out of reach of the older neighborhoods as the Big Box Stores are built within the newer suburbs, with local business owners saying it's harder for them to maintain business, especially during the off-season for tourists. Without a strong public transit system, many locals are also forced into longer drives to reach those incorporated stores, especially if they live outside of the more tourist-dense area, which gets clogged up with motels and rental properties. The more I investigated the town, the more I realized that while not as dramatic, the stakes that Ehrlich refers to in these more dire films are present in one way or another in Wasaga. It is just about handling it with an appropriate tact, and the struggle came with trying to find how to maintain the comedy without mocking these issues. It is this logic that drives the way the boys move through space, whether they know it or not. They can joke about how far Bowers is when going to get the motorcycle, without really reckoning with the fact that it is so far away, because that is where the people with the wealth in this town now live. They do not mock the issue; they laugh at the situations that these issues put them in.

Coming from the previous drafts, I approached this one with a lighter attitude. What are the stakes for these boys at this transition? The answer seemed clear: the latest toy, the girl you have a crush on, and a future you dreamed about. One of the things I was often criticized for in previous drafts was a lack of driving motivation. "It's a film, but it's not a story" was a common refrain that rang in my ears as I worked away. The idea of this motorcycle at the centre of everything has always lingered, through multiple drafts. Beyond its obvious ties to the bike culture of Wasaga Beach, it was always something more than that to me. It was a symbol of

freedom and escape. The irony in this motorcycle was always the idea of what it meant to everyone else, through Caleb's eyes. Most people have moved on from the rugged charm of a motorcycle gang, but he still holds on, so his attempts to impress the other teenagers are empty. He never will. But at least, in some way, he can validate his passions. His desire for mobility and freedom. For him, it's a baptism into a world he always wanted to be a part of. With that strong connection between Caleb and the motorcycle, I knew that if Salem was still in this story, then I would need something to challenge that passion equally. In previous drafts, the struggle was always that Caleb's want and need for this motorcycle bulldozed everyone else.

For this draft, I decided to work doubly hard on giving Salem something just as substantial a drive. Professor Montanari's major note was Salem's passive qualities in the story. The film seems more Caleb's than a balance between the two. Salem was always a voyeur more so than an active filmmaker. By working to capture the world in front of you, what do you miss by not interacting with it? Watching series like *How to with John Wilson* (Wilson, 2020) brought up these feelings, but the issue became that everyone else in this story was so much more active. John Wilson's adventures through New York City always put him at arm's length from his subjects, using his camera as a device to hide behind, which is what I initially saw for Salem. But that made him too inactive and prevented him from having a life that would put him in conflict with Caleb. I grappled with this inactivity in Salem for a long time. Conceptually, I wanted to have the character be shyer and reserved and allow a lot of the dramatic action to be dominated by Caleb. I did not find many issues in this initially, because the idea stemmed from the truth of a friend group I was in. A shy kid dragged along by a stronger-willed and risk-taking cabal of teenagers. But I realized after numerous drafts that I wasn't projecting the honest sense of friendship I wanted these boys to have, and what I was crafting was a toxic friendship, instead of

the earnest and caring one I wanted. I was letting the shyness get in the way of these boys being friends and comfortable around one another. I don't necessarily believe you need to have an active protagonist to craft an interesting story, but for what I wanted this film to be, I needed Salem to become an active part.

So, to change that and I relied on the tropes of the genre. Two friends, both active in their own rights, have maintained a long-lasting relationship since they were kids, with conflict forming in the ways they both are pushing in different directions. It was a compromise to traditional tropes, but I made sure to subvert in a way that felt modern and unique. I didn't want to betray the core of this thesis, sacrificing the societal focus. For both Salem and Caleb, I wanted to bring them down to what I would feel would be more accurate depictions of young boys, conflicts, and how a teenager would go about filming in a fun and casual way. Which inherently brought me to TikTok.

Embracing modernity helped me give Salem a sense of self. His little camcorder was given to him by his mother, and there was always this sense of obligation to her for that, but instead of reverting to a shy, isolated kid, I decided to go the other way. If that obligation created a sense of pressure to perform, to prove oneself, then what kind of person would be born out of that? That is how we arrived at Salem's driving force: his future. His skill with the camera made him popular amongst peers as TikTok content skyrockets amongst teenagers. He becomes "the guy" to make cool videos for their TikToks. He wants to be a "FILMMAKER" (whatever that means) and that comes with a specific identity. His perfectionism towards his application video is one built on fear. Fear of being told that he is not the ideal of a filmmaker. This fear manifests itself in procrastination, in his constant desire to film more. It is found in his need for acknowledgement from others, especially Mabel, a person he sees as someone already in the

position he wants to be in. It is that tension that drives him just as powerfully as Caleb. Professor Montanari was specific in pointing out this note, given the desire to make things feel modern. I struggled with dating a film with social media or trends, but he noted that it is impossible to ignore in today's landscape. So, I chose to embrace it, and it was choosing to give Salem this popularity and this talent that allowed me to step him out of his shell and create this more driven character. The agency helped me correct those issues of character motivation and stakes for both boys, and it allowed Salem to take up space in the story without being a victim of Caleb's bullheaded qualities.

Given that, it seemed only right that they would collide at the quintessential moment of a high schooler's life. That last big party, when it's all out on the table. I wanted this party to feel distinct, so both boys arrived with different goals. The party is meant to present both what they wanted, and for them to decide to sacrifice those wants for the purpose they find in one another. I find that often, this trope results in the party going bust and the characters coming to individual conclusions, resulting in a meet-up after the party. My goal was for the action taken by both Caleb and Salem to be in full view of everyone. To make a public statement regarding their friendship before everything explodes. And finally, I didn't want them to have the satisfaction of what they expected to happen. Caleb's classmates do not care about his motorcycle, and Salem is rejected by Sandy, reinforcing his insecurities. Even in the context of *Superbad*, the boys both get the acknowledgment that they wanted. Jules and Becca admit to liking Seth and Evan, even though the moment is ruined. I wanted to avoid that satisfaction so that the boys could find each other at a low point and decide to come back to their relationship. One that feels like the only honest relationship they might have, even if it is fraying.

Sandy was quite a late addition, as I did not have much in the way of love interests for either of the characters, but I realized I was missing a massive part of the teenage experience at this phase: crushes and heartbreak. The idea that this party was a final meeting point came in strong, supported by notes from Professor Montanari, as it was a way for both boys to solidify their newfound identities. In our discussions, he felt these boys needed a central point to move towards. Something that would bring them together, but for their reasons, as a way for them to collide once more, and the party fell into place perfectly once Sandy was expanded upon. Sandy spoke to the heart of the film. She approaches leaving Wasaga in the same way Salem does, but has zero reverence for it. She does not engage with anything regarding its past and effectively exists as this modern representative of a teenager in Wasaga with zero concept of the town's past. That does not mean she is inherently negative as a character, but it does mean that she reflects the future because of what is happening to the town.

After getting the motorcycle and realizing that he does not need Salem or the praise of others to gain the confidence he needs in his ideals, Caleb goes to the party to show off. A new man. Salem, on the other hand, suffering a crisis of identity, seeks the party to validate himself. Sandy would be the person to validate him as more than just a filmmaker. She would tell him that he was a sweet and thoughtful boyfriend. A good person. But the final blow is dealt to his ego, as Sandy admits she just wanted him to film some cool TikTok videos for her. To her credit, she is honest, always. But his crush blinded him to thinking things were different. The identity he crafted became the only thing that his peers saw. And now that it seems as though he wants to escape it, he has not set himself up like anything else. It is when he steps in to help Caleb, risking himself to stand up for this friend, that his real sense of self materializes. The party was a perfect

pin to put on this piece, allowing all our main characters to collide at the right moment to prove to themselves the changes they have made.

And this party helped solidify the thematic points of the film as well. Salem, an ambitious boy, rejects the past that made him and is trying to push forward with an idea carved out of the expectations of others. Caleb, a bullish kid with antiquated ideas of freedom, lives in a past that he wants to keep everyone else in. The separation and collision of these ideals, representative of Wasaga's transitional struggle, helped us find some conclusions. The idea that progress does not mean pushing away the past, but acknowledging it, and learning from it, making the future something that is not just a replay of the same mistakes made. I found a confident answer to my question, "How can the genre of coming-of-age comedy help portray authentically Wasaga Beach's change?" As the boys wake up the next morning and rekindle their friendship, going about their day, it is their reconciliation that I hope for the town. As more private businesses take advantage of the increasingly wealthy transplant population, I hope there is some way to save the soul of Wasaga Beach while making it a better place.

The comedic tone was something I did not think would work within the confines of something I took so seriously, but I think that earnestness brought the comedy out. The boys do not see the factors shaping their lives as much as they should, and very few of us do. And even if we did, our ability to change it is marginally small in the face of a larger, societal force. In some ways, when Caleb throws the rock through the real estate poster, mocking Ted, it is indicative of what we can do. We can throw sticks and stones, try to shape our lives, but we are moved with the current. And I think humour is a very human way to deal with that fact. And I think every joke has some truth, and every laugh has a little bit of sadness in it. I know that Wasaga will change whether I want it to or not. And I will remember it as best I can. But that doesn't mean I

need to like what it is becoming. And I would rather laugh, than sit in somber seriousness as I watch it disappear before my eyes. Regardless of intent, all the films mentioned speak to the time they were created, whether directly or indirectly. The question at the core of this thesis is of merging serious issues with traditional comedic tropes, and I believe that to be deeply possible. But no matter how much you choose to focus on the issues and bury them within characters, setting, and ideas, an authentic approach makes all that secondary. An honesty in creating, whether that be a comedic style or a serious look at a town changing, can find harmony together if the truth exists at the forefront.

ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

A core aspect of this process has been the authenticity of my writing, and I understood that going into the script with just personal experiences of Wasaga Beach as a teenager was not enough to portray both the town and the boys honestly. So, my research began, both online and on the ground. I decided to head back to Wasaga Beach and find my way into the community to make sure that memories would be reflected accurately. Primary and secondary research gave me the tools to revisit my memories and artistic creation, in search of that more authentic approach. While there, I spent time on the strip, visiting landmarks and local haunts. I could not help but visualize different shots and considered interesting and iconic places to stage these moments. I took it upon myself to photograph a large portion of the strip as it exists, for reference during the writing process later, and have included a series of those photographs in the Appendix.

What I found when I was there was exactly what the film explores: a town in transition. The surrounding area is being filled with massive suburban developments, with the expectation of more people coming in. A lot more upscale coffee shops and big box stores to add to the influx of transplants making their way to the town I was lucky to chat with the Arts Council in Wasaga Beach, as they had recently updated their leadership. The new head of the council had plans to encourage artistic expression within the community, facilitating a growth in events and shows to bring artistic culture to Wasaga. She aimed to make Wasaga as much an artist's paradise as it was for drunk high schoolers and college students. In a way, I agreed with a lot of what she was encouraging, but the issue remained that she seemed dependent at that time on people like me, not native to Wasaga Beach, but with a passing relationship with it, to help facilitate this change and be a part of it. It felt as though she was counting on those tourist coming to Wasaga, and less of those within it. This transitional dichotomy was everywhere in Wasaga while I visited.

Moving through newer and older areas of the town, you could see the shift physically, and it helped immensely to help me paint a more vivid picture of how the town is divided in tangible ways. I attempted to speak to the city council, but without much luck. I chose to do my due diligence regardless, and through the redevelopment documents I have found, the ones both accepted and rejected by citizens of Wasaga, the focus seems to be on increasing tourism and creating a family-friendly hub for the future.

From a character perspective, I needed to take a different approach. My main concern with the teenage characters was coming off as someone guessing what teenagers sounded like. I could have just taken the style of dialogue from the films that inspired me, but as Fabio had mentioned, the realities in which we live affect how they talk and behave. I have a group of teenage cousins growing up in Brantford, Ontario. Brantford would be classified as a small town when it comes to Ontario, but the reason I specifically wanted to chat with them was because Brantford has a similar gentrification effort happening as Wasaga. Additionally, my cousins come from a household that reflects that of Caleb and Salem; single-parent homes with a few siblings, lower-middle class in a blue-collar town. They were the perfect surrogates for the boys.

I initially sat down with my cousins and talked through the film. We read some of the dialogue, and they were both interested enough to point out things that might sound weird or outdated. Although the goal was to portray the boys authentically, I still needed them to be characters within my story. The experience that my cousins might have had, the way they chose to engage with pop culture, was not what I wanted for Caleb and Salem. My cousins would spend their time hanging out on their phones with some friends, mulling around a few different spots throughout Brantford in a rather listless way. I did find a way to fold some of the languid hanging out into the film, but the rather accurate phone addiction did not lend itself well to the

story I was aiming for. So, I attempted to find a way around that. With the use of Salem's camera and his popularity on TikTok, I suggested his familiarity with his phone and social media, without making it a major behavioral point. A similar workaround needed to be found for the slang the boys used. Slang and trends on the internet move so quickly that it is impossible to replicate them in a way that would not immediately feel dated. So, we worked together to land on a way these boys would talk that would still feel authentic, while being "of the time." What we landed on was some universal slang that has stood the test of time, but mostly staying away from pop culture references completely. I give all the credit and thanks to both my cousins and the community of Wasaga Beach for helping me conquer these concerns with ease and allowing me to be authentic in my portrayal of both the boys and the town.

My last consideration was that of the tropes of the genre. A film like *Superbad*, with its juvenile humor, can perpetuate harmful sexual stereotypes. Many "classic" films have been recontextualized since the #MeToo movement, with comedies like *The Breakfast Club* (Hughes 1985) and *Sixteen Candles* (Hughes, 1984) being scrutinized for their scenes in which sexual harassment is played for laughs. *Superbad* is no exception. Having been a writer for some time, I took special note to avoid these stereotypes within my film and drew most of my dialogue and interactions from the teenagers I had spoken to and how my cousins spoke of their classmates. I didn't want this script to dive into anything inherently sexual and made a firm choice to steer away from the sex comedy genre that often shares spaces with these early 2000s teen comedies that I was referencing. Considering the more serious, social slant I wanted to take with this film, I felt a tropey sex comedy would only dilute the message for cheap laughs.

CONCLUSIONS

During this process, I went back. I went through all the master documents I have written for every thesis idea. All the drafts and outlines. I reviewed all of it, because this paper is nothing without speaking on the progress that was made. And I discovered that I had collectively written somewhere in the world of 100,000 words. I used to tell myself that this was all part of the process. But I did not believe myself. I grew annoyed. Frustrated. Upset with myself and those around me. Every draft felt like a failure to reach what was standing right in front of me. It seemed easy. As if it were just waiting for me. David is in the block of marble. Just cut away what is not him. But I realized that this script was not that block. I was. This process, both for the script and myself, has been a chipping away at an idea of what I thought screenwriting was. An idea of the kind of writer I thought I was.

Focusing on drama, crime, atmosphere, mood, tone, and visuals got me far, but this process helped me on the last leg of the race. Looking back, as I compiled my notes, I truly saw myself reflected in this process. A young man was coming into a space in which he felt out of place, unsure of his skills, and doubting his abilities. That transitioned into attempting to connect deeper with writing by pushing myself to be more emotional. Writing from a more personal space. But those emotions were reactionary, pulled out of a want, instead of something natural and authentic. And finally, we land at the self-actualization of myself, within *Golden Boys*, a writer and person, who was able to let go of past ideas of who was able to embrace something that feels more honest, to what they want to do as a writer. I discovered things I cared about, characters I loved, and a story to which I felt deeply attached. I came back to writing stronger.

I was able to tackle the question at the core of this project, and at the core of the film itself. How do I merge the societal conversations brought about by more dramatic coming-of-age

films, without losing the authenticity I discovered when expanding into a more traditionally comedic style? How do I merge this style of writing with an honest portrayal of the changes Wasaga is going through?

The answer to that question came out in the form. Staying focused on the characters and allowing the themes to speak through the environment allowed me to maintain an emotional story between the boys. By prioritizing the boys' authentic concerns at that age, I kept the levity of the piece. By attaching the most intense conflicts to internal strife instead of external threats, I was able to keep the stakes profound and avoid artificial inflation. I had larger background elements that affect the boys, such as gentrification, but they remain unaware of the gravity of the situation. Their journey, traveling through this town as its landmarks shift, environment changes, population either gets pushed out or swallowed, is all indicative of the changes currently happening, and in some ways, their lack of noticing what is happening is just as much a reflection on the audience as it is on them. We are bound to become a character like Mabel, not realizing that the culture and memories that we have are slowly disappearing in front of us, as we are consumed by the petty dramas of our own lives.

As I put the finishing touches on this script and this paper, I think about what might be next for this project. This process solidified the idea that "writing is rewriting," and just like Wasaga and its ever-constant changes, I might also revisit this script, rewriting as it evolves and grows. Or maybe this script was meant for me, and only me. I have always had the opinion that filmmaking can be quite a selfish profession. There is something deeply personal about this script and this process that I hope will speak to others. But at the very least, it speaks to me. It speaks with a soft voice, half-whispered.

"You did a good job. Sleep in a little while longer."

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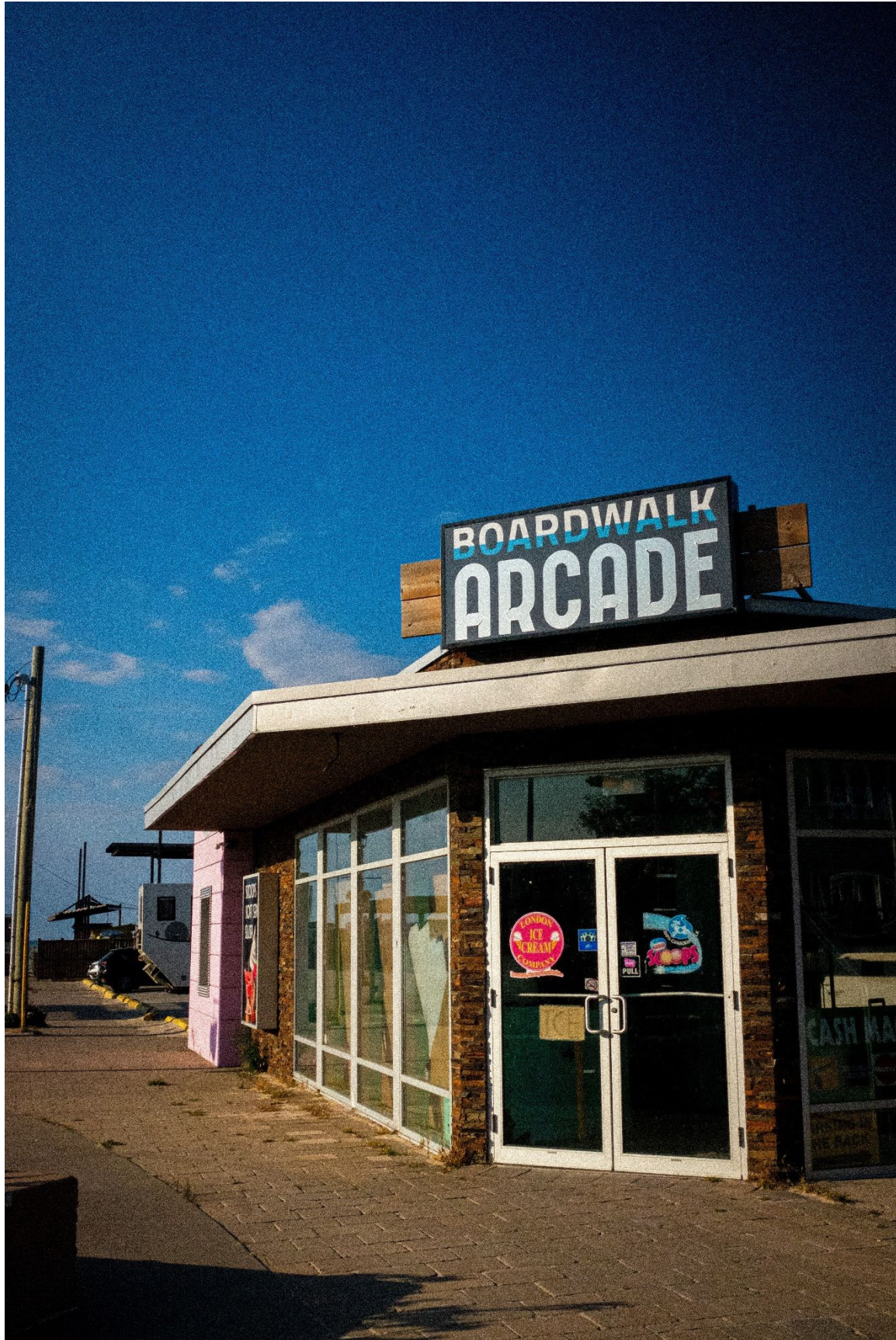
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Appendices

1. Photos from Location Scouting Trip to Wasaga Beach. (October 2024)











2. First 10 pages of Golden Boys Screenplay

1 INT. KITCHEN - SALEM'S HOUSE - DAY - 2018

THROUGH THE EYES OF A DIGITAL VIDEO CAMERA:

SALEM (12) takes the camcorder in his hand, bringing it up to reveal his mother, **MISSY (35)**. Missy smiles as she looks into the camera, helping Salem find a frame.

SALEM
Yep, I got it. It's recording, right?

MISSY
That little red light is on.

Missy backs away from the camera, deeper into the kitchen. We can see Missy's gaunt expression. She looks ill. Tired.

SALEM
This is so cool.

MISSY
I'm glad you like it. I thought it could be something fun. I always wanted to be a movie star, y'know. Maybe you can make me one.

Salem peruses the kitchen, looking up at the fridge, full of photos and magnets. The kitchen table is covered in half open baking ingredients. A flour bag torn, baking soda with a cracked lid.

SALEM
So what do I do now? What should I film?

MISSY
Whatever you want, Salem. Whatever you think is worth filming.

Salem begins closing in on Missy. Missy chuckles, but begins coughing. He reaches for a tissue.

CALEB (V.O.)
GET OUT HERE, ASSHOLE!

The fit subsides as Salem looks on.

MISSY
Why don't you go outside for a little. I have to finish your cake.

SALEM
Okay Mom!

Missy walks over and gives Salem a motherly kiss on the forehead. She leans into the camera.

MISSY
I'm so excited to see what you do
with this.

SMASH CUT TO:

2 EXT. FRONT LAWN - SALEM'S HOUSE - DAY - PRESENT DAY

THROUGH THE EYES OF THE VINTAGE CAMERA:

SALEM (18) pushes through the front door of his house, camcorder in hand. The summer light blinds him briefly as the heat hits him like a truck. Summer in full swing. The cicadas buzz, but nowhere near as loud as **CALEB (17)**, waiting at the base of the driveway.

CALEB
YOU THINK YOU CAN KEEP ME WAITING
CUZ' IT'S BIRTHDAY?

SALEM
Relax! Relax! I'm right here.

Now closer, we can see the fake gold chain that Caleb is wearing with pride. A green hue coming off of the fake gold plate stains his neck. Caleb notices the camera rolling.

CALEB
(to the camera)
To the folks at home, I just wanna
say that Salem made me wait for 30
minutes outside of his house until
his makeup was done-

SALEM
30 minutes? You're fucking crazy.

CALEB
(to camera)
And I want it on record that he's a
piece of shit-

SALEM
Let's just get going, man. I can't
stay out to late, I've got my
application to-

Salem turns the camera away.

3.

CALEB
Blah blah blah. Come on, get on
your bike, pussy. Let's go!

3 EXT. WASAGA BEACH

3

MONTAGE BEGINS:

THROUGH THE EYES OF THE VINTAGE CAMERA:

The montage is all filmed on Salem's small DV camera, heavily edited with a combination of graphic effects, sound design and frantic energy. Feeling like something made by someone growing up on skate videos and TikTok.

- COTTAGE STREETS - The boys bike, swerving around cars and pedestrians as they move towards the Strip.

- THE STRIP - The boys wander around the shops just off the beach. They try on glasses and hats, and steal a pair of glasses, getting chased out of the store. In the alley nearby, they guzzle beers.

- THE BEACH - The boys sit on the beach and keep drinking, and use the empty cans to play one on one football with each other.

- PARKING LOT - The boys sit on their bikes eating some fast food. Caleb calls out to a group of girls of similar age to them. The girls wave at Salem but avoid Caleb. Caleb continues to flirt with them to little success, as they start to walk away. The few boys that were with them come over and start pushing Caleb. Salem tries to de-escalate but Caleb throws their food on them and takes off.

- CONSTRUCTION SITE - At a site, half-built with the skeletons of similar looking mansions, Caleb pulls a shovel-full of fireworks, laying them out. Salem is in shock and the boys drunkenly start lining them up. The first few shoot off with cheers.

CUT TO:

TITLE CARD - GOLDEN BOYS

CUT TO:

EXT. WASAGA BEACH - DAWN

Salem lays out on the beach, dead asleep. The water pushes onto the sand gently, after a chaotic evening.

A purring sound of a small four wheel ATV comes down the sand, with a **LIFE GUARD**, 20s with sun-kissed hair, standing confidently over it.

It pulls up and stops near Salem. The Lifeguard knocks Salem with his shoe.

LIFEGUARD

Wake up, kid. Time to meet the day.

Salem rolls over and looks at this lifeguard. His long blond hair falling out the back of his hat. Salem's head pounds from his hangover.

SALEM

Am I dead? Are you an Angel?

LIFEGUARD

No, I just look like one. Get the fuck off the beach and dry out.

EXT. CONSTRUCTION SITE - WASAGA BEACH OUTSKIRTS

As Salem bikes home, he passes by the construction site from the night before. A group of workers surround the burnt out fireworks cake. Half-built mansions dot the area.

Salem looks over, smiling to himself, but his grin is cut short by Salem's father, **BRIAN (50)**, grabbing his handle and stopping him. His father wears a branded construction vest.

BRIAN

Morning.

SALEM

Jesus, Dad.

(pausing)

Hi.

Brian tries to be friendly with his son, but Salem's dismissiveness bothers him.

BRIAN

You have fun last night? First time I've seen Caleb in a while.

SALEM

Ya, it was fun.

BRIAN

Know anything about those fireworks in the middle of the lot?

SALEM

No.

Brian looks at his son suspiciously.

BRIAN

You can't keep fucking around,
Salem. This kinda shit can cost *me*
my job.

SALEM

I didn't do it.

BRIAN

You don't have to lie to me. I get
it. Just stop doing it here. What
would your Mom think?

Salem glances down, breaking eye contact. Brian pauses for a
moment, seeing right through his son.

SALEM

Can I go? I need to finish my
application.

Brian nods.

BRIAN

Your birthday present is on the
kitchen table.

SALEM

Thanks.

Brian lifts his hand off of the bike as Salem takes off.
Brian looks after him until suddenly:

BANG. A firework blasts into the sky, lit by one of the
workers. Brian looks over in a fury.

BRIAN

What the fuck was that! Get going!

INT. SALEM'S BEDROOM - SALEM'S HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

Salem rushes into his room. The wall adorned with movie
posters (post 2006 films only), camera gear placed in the
corner, laptop resting on his desk.

Salem places his camera on his desk and collapses into his
bed, trying to get some rest.

He lies down and closes his eyes, but after only a few seconds, he moves his head and opens his eyes. He stares at his desk. On his laptop screen is a sticky note. It reads:

UNI PROMPT: "A FIVE MINUTE VIDEO ABOUT WHO YOU ARE".

He sighs, restless to answer this question. After a moment:

OLIVIA (O.S.)
You look like shit.

Salem turns around to see **OLIVIA (16)**, his younger sister, at his bedroom door. She tunes a guitar in her hand, face painted white like a mime, with a wig fit only for the most glamorous drag queen.

OLIVIA (CONT'D)
You have a fun birthday?

SALEM
I can't remember. You have fun at the circus?

OLIVIA
Can you remember what we have to do this morning?

Salem pauses for a moment, and then remembers, unfortunately.

SALEM
Now? I was gonna lay down for like twenty fucking minutes.

SALEM (CONT'D)	OLIVIA
Can we just-	You said you'd do it!

SALEM (CONT'D)	OLIVIA (CONT'D)
I know I did but I'm so hungover-	You always do this!

SALEM (CONT'D)	OLIVIA (CONT'D)
And I've got my video to finish today by midnight-	It's not my fault you got drunk as fuck last night!

Eventually, Salem has enough. He's not winning this.

SALEM (CONT'D)
Okay fine! Fuck! But then you gotta let me work, I gotta finish my submission video by midnight!

OLIVIA
Great, see you in the backyard!

Olivia prances away, leaving Salem to stretch out in his chair, yelling into his hands as he extends himself, hoping for some energy to find him finally.

EXT. BACKYARD - SALEM'S HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

THROUGH THE EYES OF THE VINTAGE CAMERA:

Another heavily edited video as Olivia performs a song that feels like modern country pop. The edit very much doesn't match the honesty of the song. Olivia wears a large judges wig and heavy make up.

It's chaotic, manic, self-important and erratic. A poor fusion with the music.

INT. SALEM'S ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Olivia stands alone in Salem's room, staring down at his laptop watching the video they have just filmed, slapdashly put together. Olivia stands wearing the same makeup from the video, befuddled to say the least.

Salem walks off from his room, distracted by other things.

OLIVIA
What the fuck is this?

INT. KITCHEN - SALEM'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Salem stands in the kitchen, looking down at the table, with a card and gift resting on it. He glances back to the bedroom.

SALEM
What do you mean? It's fun, it's exciting!

OLIVIA
It's like a seizure. I can't even focus on my own song. You made me put on all this makeup for nothing?

SALEM
It's not nothing.

OLIVIA
It took you like 30 seconds to put together, you could have at least pretended to care.

8.

Salem takes this personally. He shakes his head, frustrated.

SALEM

Whatever.

Olivia begins walking away, heading to the bathroom. Salem opens the gift, revealing to Salem's disappointment, the same branded construction vest. Salem, clearly frustrated, opens the card. It reads:

WELCOME TO THE WORK FORCE.

OLIVIA

I'm not trying to hurt your feelings. It's just not me.

INT. BATHROOM - SALEM'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

White streaks of makeup fall over Olivia's face as she splashes water into it, cleaning up in the bathroom sink. Salem shakes his head, throwing the card down and walking towards the bathroom.

OLIVIA

Can you fix it?

SALEM

There's nothing to fix! Either way, I gotta go film at the strip. I've carved out the whole afternoon for finishing my video, so either post it or not.

He carries on past the bathroom and into his room. He begins packing up his camera gear.

Olivia finishes cleaning her face, wiping it with a towel. Olivia steps out of the bathroom, most of her face cleaned up.

OLIVIA

I'll post it when it's MY video. Maybe I should tell Sandy about it at the party tonight-

KNOCK KNOCK KNOCK-

At the front door. Both siblings grow quiet. Who could that be? Olivia finishes wiping her face and starts walking over.

SALEM

Do that and you aren't getting a ride home.

OLIVIA
I wouldn't worry about being
embarrassed, can't imagine she'd
like you can get any creeper.
Stalker.

SALEM
I'm not-

KNOCK KNOCK KNOCK-

CALEB (O.S.)
OPEN UP!

It's Caleb. He sounds a bit panicked. Olivia goes to open the door. Olivia swings the door open before Salem can answer.

OLIVIA
Hey Cal, what- OH MY GOD!

Olivia sees Caleb clutching his hand, blood streaming down his wrist. Following the blood to its source, we see a large gash on his hand. Caleb makes his way into the house, dripping blood all over the old, beige wool carpet. Salem rushes out of his room.

SALEM
Jesus Christ.

CALEB
It's not that bad-

OLIVIA
That looks fucking bad!

Olivia pushes him into the kitchen. Salem follows.

7 INT. KITCHEN - SALEM'S HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

Olivia helps to wrap up Caleb's hand wound. He winces as Olivia tightens the wrap. Salem films in the meantime.

CALEB
Oh, fuck!

OLIVIA
Sorry, Cal. My first time.

CALEB
It's okay. You should see the other
guy.

3. Second Story Man Outline and Master Sheet

SECOND STORY MAN MASTER SHEET

FILM REFERENCES

- Cache
- Bonnie and Clyde
- Mikey and Nicky
- Thief
- Heat
-

LOGLINE

- When an eccentric and delusional thief gets blackmailed by a teenage girl, the pair are intertwined in a messy robbery that forces them closer together, as they journey for freedom.

THEMES

- Alienation
- Identity in the internet age.
- The commodifying of literal crime as catharsis for others.
- The driving force of capitalism, turning everything into business.
- The decaying of morals in the internet age, apathy.
- Finding connection through any means.
- The struggle of seeing a future ahead of you.
 - o The idea of manifestation, doing everything you can to barely afford the life you want to live.
- The thing we chose to commit to to represent who we are: a house, a car, a family, etc.
 - o And how those are no unreachable.
 - o The quest for something new and something better.
 - o The destruction of that idea.
 - o The destruction of the safety and security that brings.

STORY

- Graham is a delusional Robin Hood like character living in his car. Graham believes in hustle culture and upward mobility, that he will make it rich. He does what he does because it's what people like, it's what they pay him for and he has to follow the money.
- He breaks into people's houses and films it to post on the internet. He gets money from his following through private donation channels.
- He believes he is doing the world a service, showing how vulnerable houses are and how easy it is to manipulate security systems and cameras, etc.
- He uses this to hold himself high above other people.
- He breaks into a house he thinks is empty until he discovers a young girl living there.
- Emma is a rebellious teenager with no prospects, she doesn't see much of future ahead of her and just wants to get away from everything. Nihilistic and vaguely suicidal.
- Graham gets caught by Emma and she threatens to blow up his whole operation

- But he needs to realize that even now, a regular job won't even get you that. And he would rather be on the top of the pile than the bottom, because basically everyone is on the bottom these days.
- Emma (18)
- Huge (50s)

OUTLINE

INITIAL OUTLINE FROM A YEAR AGO

Second Story Man is a 90-minute drama following Graham Nyquest, a promising young architect now turned cat burglar. After suffering a mental breakdown during his studies, Graham lives out of his car, breaking into houses at night to steal only what he needs. He lives by a strict code of no violence and taking things that won't be missed but gets his enjoyment out of the thrill and pride he takes in "besting" the place he's robbing. As successful as he is at this, his routine burglaries are upended when he is caught in one of the houses by Emma Ellis, the 17-year-old daughter of a rich land developer. When Emma blackmails Graham into taking her along for some burglaries, she eventually develops a taste for it and talks Graham into helping her rob her stepdad, in an attempt at petty revenge for her father leaving their family.

Our story begins with a first-person view of a burglary. As the burglar makes his way through the middle-class home, he passes by a series of what some might consider to be high priced items. He ignores them, making his way to the front closet, taking money out of all the wallets. As he goes to leave the house, he looks down at the family photos near the window. He picks one up and looks it over, as if he's found some unrecognizable relic. Suddenly, an alarm trips and he dashes out the window, into the night. At this moment, the film freezes, and we see that GRAHAM (25), our central character, was watching a pre-recorded video of his crime on his laptop. He sits in his car, disappointed that he tripped the alarm in the house. He packs his things into his large and well-equipped car and drives off out of the neighbourhood. He knows with that tripped alarm people will be on high alert, and he must find a new spot to roam.

Graham parks his car near a small field, and we see him live his daily routine out of his car. The car is clean, organized and designed for him to live in it. Minimal, but he has everything he needs. He cleans himself up and eats, goes over his gear, and does a supply run for the next neighbourhood, all of which seem like clockwork to him at this point. After noticing local election signs around a view of the houses, he changes his outfit and dresses up like a political canvasser, clipboard, and all. He promptly walks through a relatively wealthy but tightly contained neighbourhood. He looks over the houses, focusing on windows, front doors, back doors, etc. Eventually, after getting a bit too nosy, he is confronted by one of the neighbours and talks his way into looking inside their home. He then leaves, heading over to his car, having decided that house is the one he will rob. But first, he needs to observe. He waits in the nearby forest, staking out the house during the day and night. During the evening, he sees the comings and goings in the house, including a young girl and her mom coming home, clearly in an argument. During the night, he watches as a young boy sneaks into the house and become romantic with the young girl. The next day he sits in his car, making notes and sketching out an assumed floorplan, prepping as best he can.

- He says he won't get caught because he doesn't have criminal intent but he doesn't believe it really.
- She blackmails him into teaching her things, but her secret motive is to learn what she can, then use him to steal from her Dad.
- When they break into her Dad's house, they find evidence of some very sketchy shit, that was unexpected, and has caused their lives to begin to implode.
- Their relationship grows and intensifies as they try to get to a place that is good for them, but Graham is betrayed and his dreams collapse.

GENERAL IDEAS

- Based off the ideas of the way thieves view architecture differently from normal people.
 - Seeing doors where there are none. Always looking for a way out or a way in.
- The idea of Youtubers or streams actively committing crimes on the internet as entertainment.
- The Youtube channels that show you the faults of certain security items like locks.
 - What is the benefit? Catharsis? Knowledge to better protect yourself or the ability to show people that all locks can be broken.
 - Better safety or worse safety?
- A romance that forms between two young people wanting to be free and break away. Wanting more from their lives, but in different ways.
 - They search for certain and safety and instead, find it in each other.
- The one-ups-manship or the modern world, always needing more.
- A misplaced sense of superiority for our main character.
 - Breaking into people's house to show how vulnerable they are, but never stealing anything. Living in his car because it's the safety situation for him, but also trying to pretend he's better than everyone else.
- Seeing how far delusional self-identity can take you. When you blot out the world, or form walls around yourself to protect you from the bad things you do.

CHARACTERS

- Graham (26)
 - Deep into hustle culture.
 - A smug sense of superiority.
 - He breaks into people's house, thinking that he is showing folks online how to take better care of their security.
 - He uses this as a learning tool for people.
 - Really, he does it for the personal reason that he feels better than others because he can get into their houses and invade their safety whenever he wants.
 - On the other hand, people love the risk associated with it and pay big money.
 - Most people online think that his videos are fake, but they are very real.
 - He's a liar with a petty giant ego.
 - He lives in his car because he says it's to save money for a real house and that it's the smart thing to do.
 - He knows he needs to be on the move cause the cops could track him super easy if they wanted to.

- He's a conman, got a bit of charm.
- He's taking advantage of his situation, committing crime because people will love it, and puts up walls to defend his decisions morally at all costs.
 - Well, if I don't do it, someone else will, so it might as well be me making the money and then when I have enough, I'll stop and do something else.
- He's got big dreams. Mansion by the water, family, upward mobility, respect. He idolizes the grind but doesn't care that his actions effect people negatively.
 - To him it's the same as selling scams or courses that teach you nothing.
 - The content prays on people's catharsis. Their fear and the risk involved.
- He records things on a small body camera.
- He came from a middle class home, never had any real problems.
 - Father was a hard ass, always complaining about how lazy Graham was, how he never really worked.
 - His mother didn't do much, just followed his Dad's lead.
 - Eventually, he has enough of the pressure and the abuse so he left home at 18.
- He bought a cheap beater car and would do anything he possibly could for money.
- Throughout highschool, he was always put in this mindset of being your own boss, influence by these millionaire 20 year olds who never worked a day in their life.
 - He refused to get a real job and said that he would purely make money on his home, doing his own thing.
 - He did all the hits, online classes, dropshipping, etc, etc.
 - He made a ton of content on Youtube as well.
 - He would do anything for some of that money. That one hit that would make him blow up in the internet age and the more he tried and the less success he had, the crazier it got him.
 - He was obsessed with the idea of quick internet fame. His self imagine was of this self-made man, rags to riches stories and to portray that, he ever got a real job.
 - He completely fell into this mindset, without seeing all of the hidden aspects of these people's lives, coming from money, manipulating others, etc.
 - He saw the lifestyle and pushed for that more then anything else. He wanted the easy.
- And he wants the easy because of all the trying that he did. He Dad beat him down so much for his laziness that he eventually realized, maybe I am. But then if he choses a profession that is one of the hardest and most reandom to be successful at, then it's the ultimate fuck you.
 - In his mind, anyone can be a contractor and make good money from that, but it takes someone special to be an famous content creator. (Even thought it's the exact opposite)
- He's a narcissist, seeing people as pawns more then anything.
- Deep down though, he is a little boy wanting his parents approval. He wants what they have, what we all want. What we are trained to want. Safety, security, money, family, a house. All of the promises that we we're made. And he wants all of it.

The night of the robbery, Graham waits until the house goes to sleep. As the lights go out, he moves carefully through the house, but a sudden noise scares him. As he turns to see what might have caused it, his chest-mounted camera hits the wall and unbeknownst to Graham, the memory card falls out of it. He hears footsteps from upstairs, so he makes a run for it. From outside the house, he sees the same young girl come downstairs, looking around. She looks towards the window he snuck in through and Graham carefully slips away to avoid detection. Back at his car the next morning, he examines his camera, which he realizes is broken, but that he's also missing his memory card. After scouring his car, he realizes that he must have dropped it within the house from last night and decides he must go back to get it. He watches the house for the remainder of the day, with no sign of the police, as he scolds himself for such a rookie mistake. He heads into the house at night but when he arrives where his memory card should be, it's not there. He then finds the young girl standing behind him, memory card and kitchen knife in hand. This is EMMA (17). She tells him to come to her bedroom. Emma says she found the card and looked it over but was curious if he would come back for it. She continues to ask an uncomfortable Graham about the video and the robbery with a rather palpable interest. Clearly wheels are spinning in Emma's mind. As they chat, there is a knock at the bedroom door and Graham is shoved into the closet. Emma originally thought it was her parents, but it turns out to be her boyfriend, sneaking into her house again. Emma tries to get him out of the house but eventually, they start kissing. Graham is stuck in the closet, waiting for them to finish, praying this doesn't go farther than that. Emma's boyfriend eventually runs to the washroom, which gives Emma time to let Graham escape. Emma refuses to give back the memory card tonight, and will return it to Graham tomorrow, as she still has questions she wants answers to. With no choice, Graham leaves through the window.

Nervously, Graham waits by his car the next day for Emma to arrive. Once she does, she immediately takes an interest in his car/house hybrid and eventually asks to be taught how to rob houses. She claims she needs more money for university coming up, but Graham sees something else in her eyes. He tries to reject her but with her having the memory card, she holds some weighty cards. Graham reluctantly agrees and begins showing her the ins and outs of his process, with the intention to steal the card back from her at the earliest opportunity.

As Act 2 begins, they spend time to get to know each other while prepping. Graham reveals that he was an architecture student, following in his parents' footsteps but had a mental breakdown and left school. Wandering listlessly with no job and no money, he began using architecture knowledge to break into houses, stealing whatever he needed. Once he made enough money, he realized he developed a taste for it, and a pride of being able to get one over on people, outsmarting them and sneaking past them. He specifically focuses on high income neighbourhoods, with little sympathy for the rich that he steals from or for the people who live in these houses in general. We learn that Emma has a troubled home life as well. Her father, HUGO (50s) is a land developer, and very wealthy, but abandoned her and her mother after he cheated on Emma's mother with a younger woman. Emma lashes out with misplaced rage, wanting to avoid a similar life that her parents live. She doesn't want to be a victim like her mother, but she also doesn't want to be business and power obsessed like her father. As much as she says she needs more money for school, she also admires Graham and his willingness to live minimally in his van, doing what he wants. She idolizes him in an almost heroic romantic kind of way. After seeing a few burglaries (with Emma watching Graham through windows and binoculars) Emma wants to come along and try. She goes out and buys all the gear she needs, as well as a new camera for herself and Graham. Although Graham is suspicious about all the money Emma must have spent on this

gear, he thanks her and brushes it aside, leading her on their first robbery together, a large house near a river.

They sneak into the house and split up, Emma going downstairs and Graham doing the main floor and upper floor. Emma goes to the basement, and everything goes according to plan, until a woman emerges from the downstairs bathroom. Emma recognizes the woman as the younger woman that her dad cheated on her mom with. The woman stumbles drunkenly through the basement and eventually outside to the small dock that's resting near the water. Emma, in a heightened and anger-driven state, follows her outside and stands over her at the dock as she drunkenly sits in a beach chair, half asleep. Emma thinks about what she could do to the woman, and the rage she has towards her. Eventually, Emma decides to act on her base emotions and pushes the chair from behind, knocking the woman into the water. Emma runs back to the van, thrilled and adrenaline-fueled. At the same time, Graham is examining upstairs and finds out the house is full of a family of three; husband, wife and one kid. As he lingers, he can hear someone stirring and he rushes downstairs to hid as he sees a little boy come out from his room, and head to the kitchen for some water. The boy wonders around as Graham attempts to escape, focusing on finding Emma. He grows more stressed and anxious, chastising himself for even bringing Emma as he struggles to find her. Suddenly, Graham is face to face with the boy and out of shock and panic, Graham punches the boy in the face, knocking him unconscious. Horrified at himself, Graham jumps out the window he came in. He leaves the property and sneaks away.

The pair meet back at the van, and with adrenaline pumping through their veins, Emma tries to kiss Graham. Graham furiously rejects her and scolds her, regretting bringing her onboard. They reconvene the next day and listen to the radio as a news report talks about local burglaries in the neighbourhood and that people should be on high alert. Graham refuses to work with Emma anymore and is still devastated by his sudden decision to strike the young boy in the house. He wants to get out of the neighbourhood but Emma, with a bit of convincing and slight flirting, can get Graham to take on the biggest job she could find. Emma says that once they do this, they will be set for some time and can leave the neighbourhood together. Graham listens as Emma explains her plan. She has an incredibly rich friend at school who she will be visiting on the weekend. She suggests that they rob that friend's house, with Emma taking advantage of the situation and creating an easy access to get in the house during her visit. Emma seems certain this will go off without a hitch and with her apologetic attitude, Graham concedes. On the night of the robbery, everything goes smoothly, with the only strange thing being that Graham notices a familiarity that Emma has with the house that seems too specific. They end up stealing a lock box and a key hidden in an office, along with a large amount of cash. They hop in the van and drive off, celebrating. They grab fast food and drive deep into the country, landing at an old drive-in for the night. They relax, away from their problems, feeling like a pair of outlaw bandits, Bonnie and Clyde-types. Graham comes around to having Emma as a partner and it seems as though their relationship is developing in a romantic way, feeling more dependent on each other than Graham or Emma had thought.

The next day, as Act 3 begins, the pair investigate the lockbox and find some rings, a gold bar, a few photos, and an old document. The document draws Graham's attention. It's a deed to a house, but not any house, a famous house, built by a famous architect in 70s. His experience as a student comes back to him and he gets excited at the idea that this deed is in his hands. He decides to visit the house and drives there with Emma. Once he arrives, he discovers the house abandoned. It's waterlogged and

partially burnt, with broken windows and graffiti all over it. Its design is still striking, but it's a hollow shell of what it was.

Graham and Emma decide to spend the night and play out "house" like children would, but in their ideal version of their life, where they have full control. They bond with one another, far away from their lives and their past. From parental expectation and the worries of their day to day lives. Graham speaks more about his home life, saying that this empty, run-down place reminds him of his house, a cold and over-designed mess, with parents prouder of the things they built then of him. He felt like something to be designed in that house, not cared for. It's that reason why he lives in his car, why he robs houses and disconnects with the people who he steals from. To Graham, houses are things to be conquered, built, and destroyed, not lived in. They spend the night choosing to live the life they imagine for themselves. Emma imagines a life of freedom. Of peace and calm and kindness. She imagines getting what she thinks she is owed by the family trouble she has suffered. She wants to live an exciting life and an alternative one but feels trapped in the shadow of her family. In the night that shadow reappears as Emma receives a phone call from her mother. The next day, the phone calls continue and Emma, against her true wishes but still scared to commit to running away, asks to be brought back home. The 70s house is losing its charm and the imaginary life is fading to reveal the real house they stand in. As much as Emma puts on, she is not yet confident enough to ride away with Graham. She has too much fear. Graham drops her at her house and when Emma enters, she is greeted by both mother, MARY (50s) and her father, Hugo. Hugo immediately starts scolding her, claiming that she stole from his house when she was there on the weekend. It's this moment that we learn that the lock box and the rich house they robbed it from were both owned by her father, something that Emma never told Graham. Emma denies everything while Hugo claims that she must be the thief that has been stealing all over the neighbourhood. As the pressure on Emma mounts, she gives in and quickly to find a scapegoat as to not ruin her future, admits that Graham is the real thief.

Emma hands over footage of the robberies to Hugo and Hugo calls Graham, threatening him. Hugo tells Graham that all the footage taken by Emma, showing their break-ins will be given to the police unless he hands over the lock box, and the deed in particular. Emma's father is willing to give over the footage in exchange. Graham, with nowhere to go, agrees to the terms but wants to meet at the famous house for the exchange. That night, he goes back to the house and waits till the meeting in the morning. He looks around, inspecting the damage and trying to imagine the life he might have if he followed through with his parent's wishes. He thinks about the houses he could make. Hopefully ones that last longer than this one. That are more respected than this one. He feels the hammer coming down on him and tries to consider his options.

When Graham and Hugo meet, Hugo is quick to judge Graham. The pair argue, with Graham explaining to Hugo how Emma thinks of him. Hugo is hurt, but not entirely surprised. Before Graham hands over the lock box, he asks Hugo a question; he asks him for a job. Knowing Hugo is in land developing, Graham asks if there is a world in which Hugo and him might work together, escaping this pride he's developed and following his initial path. Hugo refuses, barely even considering it. Bringing a thief into the land and housing business just seems like a bad idea to him (ironically). Graham, frustrated, then asks about why Hugo would even have this deed, if it's just land with a destroyed house. Graham assumes it's for rebuilding and is insulted that Hugo would knock down this beautiful home. Hugo dispels that idea, claiming that he brought the land to keep the house here. Not restore it, not knock it down, but to keep it here and remember it. To have it so no one else can, because to him, it's a

collector's piece. Disappointed with the answer, the conversation ends and Hugo leaves after they exchange. As Graham goes back to his car, he sees police cars pulling in. He hides inside the house, not knowing what to do. The police grab him, but as he is being led away, he shakes out of their grasp and jumps from the second story balcony, into the grass below. He runs, with nowhere in particular to go. At home, Emma sits watching over the old robbery footage, as well as some footage she took of her and Graham. Her mom comes into the room and hands her what looks like a university acceptance letter.

That night, Emma takes her camera and breaks into the famous house. She searches around, looking for any sign of Graham. There is nothing, the house is empty. As she walks away, she leaves the memory card in the old 70s house and goes back to her normal life.

Good but needs reworking.

- Deepen the social issues.
- Radical tone change and radical change for Graham's character
- Radical change for the dynamic.
- Need something more intense or sinister for the reveal of what's in Emma's Dad's house.
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4. First 6 pages of the Prepper Master Notes Sheet

DOOMSDAY PREPPER FEATURE SCRIPT MASTER SHEET

LOGLINE

A doomsday prepper purchases an old nuclear silo in a small town to fix up and stay in, but encounters issues as he attempts to find someone to stay with him in the silo.

THERE WOULD BE THOSE WHO REALIZED THE FRAGILITY OF MODERN LIFE AND THOSE WHO WERE CAUGHT IN THE RUBBLE.

FILM REFERENCES

- Were All Going to the Worlds Fair
- Under the Skin
- Dog Day Afternoon
- The Man Who Wasn't There

THEMES

- Paranoia and how it can't ruin your own mind, as well as relationships with others. The mental strain that comes with it.
- Fear and the point in which fear is useful and not useful. Rational versus Irrational. How to best overcome your fear.
- Existential Dread and the different ways people deal with it. The fear of the unknown, or death, or disaster and the lack of control one has over it.
- How do you face your life when you have these fears? How do people manage it? Faith, belief, ignore it, embrace it, rationalize it.
- The importance of having people around you and the supporting those. We are all in this together and getting one up on the system or the people is not how we should be acting.
- NFTs and the internet dynamic created amongst people who now constantly want to be up on the next hottest thing, as to not be left behind has they have been so many times, but unaware that the game is always rigged and rigged from the start.
- **How do you cope with a world where other people can control your death? You find solace in other people and live as best as you can.**
- **WHAT DO YOU NEED TO PROVE? THE SPIRAL YOU CAN FALL INTO WITH THE NEED FOR ACKNOWLEDGMENT AND ACCEPTANCE. A JUSTIFICATION TO BE ALIVE.**

STORY POINTS/IDEAS

- Motivated by rich people buying and building bunkers in New Zealand so that the rest of us can just die and they are safe.
- Our lead is paranoia and neurotic, maybe slightly autistic.
- Made good money from online security and tech work, decided to use all their money for this silo and refurbish it.
- The paranoia prevents them from trying to get help from anyone.
- They think they are ahead of the curve and everyone else is stupid for not getting ready for it.
- The realization comes that they need someone to be with them. Maybe we do a series of failed dated?

- The idea that they actually left a girlfriend behind who is now looking for them, convinced that he is in some kind of paranoid delusion. He left them behind because he was afraid of how much he loved them. Would rather find someone who he can very scientifically procreate with.
- This silo is also used by a lot of local teenagers, who are in some kind of weird cult/gang of their own making. They use the silo as a base and our lead has to chase them out, keep them out.
- Initially a scary thing as neither the group or our lead knows the other one is there.
- A cold war enactment group can come into play as they have drinks or party on this old military property one night.
- The girlfriend eventually arrives to the town, looking for him.
- Maybe a ghost element, or the silo basically never ending.
- At some point, a false alarm triggers and the lead runs and seals themselves in, even though they aren't prepared at all, but also don't realize that one of the gang kids is in there with them.
- It ends up being considered as kidnapping and the police arrive for a stand off.
- Maybe they go deep into the silo with the expectation of some back way out but they never emerge. Just disappear into their delusion.
- Maybe they are considered dead, but are alive, read their own obituary.
- Got what they wanted, which was isolation and no human relationships to be connected to.
- Maybe the father has a last will and testament recording.

CHARACTERS

CARLYLE – LEAD – PARANOID PREPPER

Carlyle is a paranoid 28-year-old. He's an average looking guy in all regards. Incredibly middle class with no real interest or hobbies. Socially awkward but with an undeserved confidence. A constant worrier as well, mostly about things far beyond his control. He's easily manipulated by those in the media and his own life that he trusts, if that come at it from a logical perspective. He focuses mostly on his intellect and considers himself smarter than most, regardless of his literacy in social or emotional situations. He's mostly likely vaguely on the spectrum, with a hyper fixation on facts. He feels as though he can convince others and usually won't let a disagreement go. A bit like Dano's the Riddle crossed with Mark Zuckerberg. Childhood was problematic. Father was a traditional military man, just like his father. He came up and was trained during the Cold War and his first position was the one that Carlyle wishes to go to. His father said that the base was where he really became a man. During Carlyle's birth, his mother died from the strain. His father was heartbroken and harbored a hate for Carlyle since. Carlyle admired his father's toughness but as they got older, they butt heads as Carlyle didn't have many of the same interests that his father did. His father tried to push him into a box and conflict exploded out of that. Constantly fighting, Carlyle grew the obsession with needing to prove to his father that he was a man. He tries the military route, but failed miserably. He worked odd job, hard labour jobs but failed. Eventually, he decided to create his own male identity and became a tech guy. He succeeded well in his field but his father didn't respect him for it. As he grew more distance, he found a male identity within right wing manosphere political. Mysogony masked as a protect attitude of woman. Preparedness, knowing everything, being smart and capable, disregarding the opinions of little people. He became the evolution of those traditional beliefs, the modern day version of those outdated traditional beliefs all dictated by AJ Tucker, a conservative doomsday prepper preaching independence, self-reliance and caution. He now carries a chip on his, trying to prove to his day that he is a man, as his mental health worsens, as the world feels as though it is collapsing and he begins to lose grip on his purpose in life.

This is when he starts listening to AJ TUCKER, an ex-military man and now a private contractor and seller of doomsday shelters. AJ's podcast is religious listening as Carlyle feels as though he is putting these pieces of the world together. He was a person that helped Carlyle make sense of the world as Carlyle's life was being messed with by forces out of his control. The economy and Carlyle's investments would tank. He would get complaints at work about behavior. Online mocking, seeing himself arguing on the internet about whether he was a simp, or incel, or beta or whatever. He would buy into these schemes at the hope of getting rich and proving to people that he was right or ahead of the curve but would always get scammed out. He's a big NFT bro and would defend his purchase till he died because he sunk far too much into it already for him to admit he was wrong and embarrass himself. The shame and the guilt to admit that he was wrong, or that he was on the wrong side of things, is too much for him to take. So he'd rather just commit.

With NFTs going south, he felt left behind and he wanted control over his life. He wanted to be ahead of the game based on some strange sense of superiority to his common man. He wanted to make it out. He wanted to be one of the smart ones and to be proved right. His awkwardness has made him easily

dismissible and his lacking social and emotional knowledge has made him ostracized. His buying of this shelter is a way to prove those people wrong. He wants to be ahead of the rest of them. He is convinced he sees the writing on the wall and knows that the best way to be better than them and to not miss out, to not be the grifted but those who do the grifting, is by being comfortable while the world burns. He idolizes the tech billionaires while not understanding that his cult devotion to them is them taking advantage of him. He cares about them, but they don't care about him. He sees himself on the same level, as he prepares in the same way that they do. He sees the world as entirely transactional. The irony is completely lost on him.

At the end of the day, the truth of it comes down to a very honest and straight forward fear that he has. A fear we all share. He is always that little boy, scared of what might happen, scared of what he doesn't understand, regardless of situation. Once his father suddenly dies, he is hit with a mix of emotions. He is saddened, but also happy that this abusive person who never believed in him is dead. But at the same time, he no longer as someone to prove wrong. He spirals, losing his purpose and decides to grieve/deal with his purposelessness by taking the final thing that his father had, his memories of that base, and he buys it, turning it into something that is his. It's a fuck you to dad, but also an attempt to prove to himself and his Dad that he is a man, and thus, deserving of the life he has. It was him and not his mother that survives and he feels as though he needs to prove that.

CAROLINE – SUPPORTING – DEVOTED GIRLFRIEND

Caroline is a 25-year-old kick boxer. As a girl, she was saved the brunt of her father's abuses and always had a soft spot for her brother. Being outside of their dynamic, she can see her father's pain, and his concern for his kids, to make sure they are tough and able to handle themselves. With her father giving so much attention to Carlyle, she began acting like how he wanted Carlyle to. She took up sports, became active, tough and disciplined. He now kickboxes professionally and had a good relationship with her father, but Caroline quickly learned to not care about what her father says, she was mostly ignored by him, so she had to learn how to not be dependent on him. In a way, her father inadvertently created the son he wanted in Caroline by ignoring her, instead of pushing her.

Once her father dies, Caroline begins to worry more about Carlyle, she knows that he is not exactly in the best mental state and does have some tendencies towards paranoia. He is not entirely isolationist but he does believe in living by himself, spending time by himself and the value of that. She doesn't see him much so when she sees him at the funeral in a very rough space, she grows worried. She cares for him and knows so much of his life is about his father's opinion of him and that he's jealous of her and their dad's relationship.

AJ TUCKER – SUPPORTING – PODCASTER AND IDOLIZED PREPPER

AJ TUCKER is a 60 year old ex-military man and professional prepper. He's based heavily off of Barret Moore, an ex-marine who now owns a company selling a made up doomsday settler to rich people. He is a fear mongered in the same way many people like Ben Shapiro or Alex Jones are, benefitting off of taking advantage of their naïve audience. He uses the guise of global facts and logical reasoning to sell people on the idea that he can save them. He makes videos and guides on prepping, sells his own gear and peddles secret hideouts for the rich who can avoid it. The man is a snakeoil salesman, charming and lethal.

OMAR SHERPA – LEAD – TEENAGE GANGBANGER AND ANARCHIST VOICE OF REASON

OMAR SHERPA is a 17-year-old teenage activist. Omar is a tough kid, very anti-authority. He's permanently stuck in the rebellious teenage stage. The town he lives in is small and he feels as though he doesn't fit in it. It is a lower income, rustic town with old industry chugging away that he wants to escape from. His family wants him to stick around and take over a local butcher shop that they run but he wants bigger things and better things. He's rather nihilistic, not seeing much reason for sticking around, and spends his free time messing around with his friends and causing some controlled havoc. Their favorite spot to hang out is the old, abandoned silo and military based, using it to mock the collapse of the system in that area. This idea that the government has left them out to dry, or that the Canadian government has given up on protecting the people around them. He feels as though he shouldn't have to care either. The boys he rolls around with all have the same scratched in tattoo of a symbol they invented, which they also put-up all-over town and the group uses the silo to meet up and discuss plans, one of which is a large-scale thing that they are trying to organize when Carlyle's purchase and refurbishment begins to cause issues.

Omar just wants to find some peace. He is lashing out against a world he feels as though he was unfairly brought into. Everything is too expensive; jobs require too much experience or too much commitment. He wants to escape his town but doesn't see a way out based on what he likes or what he wants to do and he doesn't know where to go from this point forward. He lashes out at the world around him but at the end of the day, he is a scared boy, not knowing where to go or where to turn. He sees things as unfair and blames the world for making him like this. So he holds onto the things he has hard, with a solid grip, which is why there becomes this struggle between him and Carlyle over who owns the silo.

Omar wants purpose and security. He wants a way out but the lashing out causing a reversal of that. He is rightfully frustrated at the world but his way of dealing with that is childish and immature. He holds on to this silo, but says he wants to leave this town. The hypocrisy is strong. He wants to leave but feels more comfortable staying. As much as the world has changed and things are harder, his rejection of everything is not helping him in any way. Omar needs that sense of belonging. He needs support and something to care for. He needs others, which is why his friends are the most important thing for him. He has all the trappings of a good and confident leader, someone who is very much needed these days, but lacks the self confidence to that that in himself. He needs to gain that true confidence, beyond the posturing and find something constructive to care about. It's not to run for office or become a Politician, but to take his ideas and leadership ability out into the world, to help inspire more people, to fight and force a change upon the world.

MAYA FORRESTER – LEAD – SYMPATHETIC POLICE OFFICER

MAYA FORRESTER is a 26 year old police officer in the town the silo is built in. Maya has lived in this small town her whole life, in a low income household. Her Mom raised her independently and they struggled growing up but it was a happy childhood. She joined the police department afraid discovering that her estrange father was an abuser, and her hope is to help stop those crimes from occurring in the most direct way that she can. She is a fun woman, but a bit cold. She's confident and curious about the world around her, never taking anything at face value. She believes she can see through anyone that comes to her with a story and pick out the truths and the lies. She is very no-nonsense and because of that, she's been single for quick some time, as the men in town find her sharp and intimidating, as she

can easily pick them apart. She doesn't do it maliciously or on purpose, she just doesn't want her time wasted.

Maya is what she wants to police to be. She is kind and understanding, sympathetic but with a sharpness that allows for swift action. She is perfectly fine being a small-town cop as long as she is doing what she does best. She doesn't concern herself with much that is happening outside of the town and tries to live in the moment. She knows almost everyone their, says Hi to many people throughout the day and most of the town respects her, apart from those who have run ins with the police. She has a confident sense of self and it's not that she hasn't thought about what to do with her life, it's just that she is happy keeping people safe and regardless of disaster, she will always do that, and that is enough for her. She can't think of staying in a bunker because people will need her topside when things go down.

Carlyle takes an interest because she is in shape, physically active and tough, attractive and very blunt, with a clear rational and logical mind. Perfect for having kids and keeping them safe with little issues or room for emotions. She also has access to weapons and equipment to help them stay safe. Maya's interest in Carlyle is purely morbid, and to see if he might be dangerous. She wants to get an inside idea of this nut building a shelter in town and maintains this relationship to appease him, basically treating it like an investigation more than anything else. When Carlyle confronts her with his love and request for them to stay down their together, she is blown away and laughs it off, completely dismissing him.