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Mix Tape

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Mix Tape

By Michael Davis

Presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements
For the Bachelor of Arts in Creative Writing

Linfield College
Thursday, May 22, 2014

Approved by *Signature redacted* _____

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Grey Giants

Sometime early in the morning...

“Wake the fuck up Mike! We gotta go man we’re on the safari together, remember? You paid 300 dollars!”

I get up. My brain vibrates because I drank way too much alcohol last night. My eyes fight to stay open on the bus ride, then Louis yells, “Come on Mike! We have to get off the bus. Grab your shit, let’s go, I paid to see some animals!”

A dark skinned man with a dirty safari hat leads our group. Louis grabs the closest seats, and I join him. He is my guardian angel, keeping me sane. “Jesus Mike, how much did you drink?” I tell him about the six- 3-dollar Caribbean shots, the four gin and tonics, the three jack and cokes, the two tequila shots, but I leave out the beer because I lost count. “Jesus,” he says. The man in the hat speaks:

“We must be quiet when we approach the animals. We are about to enter their home a and if they feel there is an intrusion they might run, sometimes towards us at full speed, but no worries, we will still try to get as close to the animals as we can.”

I look over at Louis. He is focused, prepared and ready to capture everything through his multiple expensive lenses. I search for my camera and reach for my backpack. It isn’t in the side pocket, it isn’t in my pants, and it isn’t under my ass. Fuck! “I think I left my camera on the bus.” Louis’s expression reminds me of the look my father gives me when I come home too late. “You’re an idiot. Here, take my camera, but don’t drop it”.

Louis shields his eyes with thick silver-framed sunglasses. His grey sweatshirt reads “MARINES, CLASS OF ‘97” in large print. He is a bit overweight, but not unhealthy looking. He sports the typical marines hair cut- short on the sides, more on top. Louis talks to me about his Semester At Sea experience; I work hard to listen. “So far, I’ve gone shark cage diving and bungee jumping and mountain climbing.” Looking at

him, I find this hard to believe. Then Louis shows me pictures of the shark, “Dude it was fucking insane!” he says, “I mean, look how close he got!” This is followed by silence, thank god. I am content with just sitting as the jeep rocks. In my head a song called “Suburban Dogs” starts and my curtains, my eyelids, close. The two psychedelic tone guitars rise and fall and slap and buzz, and even though I appreciate their dialogue, the theme is sadness. Still, it bounces like a racquetball, rapidly switching from the left to the right hemisphere of my brain. Louis looks at me, “Dude after this is all over, I’m going to enroll in the marines like my dad.” I realize I know nothing about Louis when he says this. He is the son of a Marine and we have psychology together, that’s it. I watch him look out into the vast desert for guidance, something I cannot give him. “Anyway, I can’t wait man. I just think that sounds super badass and I just want to do something with my life, before Obama ruins it. In my opinion, he is destroying our country with his socialist ways, well that’s what my dad says anyway.” I want to switch seats with someone.

The jeep rolls around sage bushes and over cow shit. Louis spots the first animal. The tan hide looks blonde in the sun. “Look Elk!” Clicks chatter on and off for ten minutes.

“That is actually the native South African Springbok,” says the man in the safari hat. “They are common in the South Western region of Africa and can reach up to speeds of 100 kilometers... but don’t be alarmed they are vegan. They prefer to feast on shrubs over college students.”

“Well” Louis says, turning his head towards mine, “They look like a bunch of damn elk to me.”

It is freezing today. Even in Africa, the cold and mix of wind chill dries out my knuckles. I thought it was hot in Africa the whole year. Louis and I share a wool blanket that barely covers me. Louis says, “I did not sign up for this,” but I don’t mind. His big body blocks the wind chill then a guy that I didn’t talk too much on the ship yells from the back, “LOOK GUYS A GIRAFFE!” I study the lone giraffe while everyone takes pictures. He is clearly afraid, why are we doing this? I watch the lanky animal drift. He searches for trees and hills to hide behind, but in this desert there are no trees, there are

no walls. I fantasize about hijacking the jeep, driving away with my middle finger out the roof and my bare ass out the driver's side window. I'd say "FUCK YOU ALL, FUCK EVERYTHING" and drive until I reached the shrubs on the horizon. As we get closer the lone Giraffe's speed beats the Jeeps horsepower. Everyone is pissed, still the guitars chant in my ears lulling me to sleep.

This hangover kills me. I feel like someone small is inside my brain, knocking to see if I'm awake and unfortunately I am because two older, loquacious Jewish ladies sit behind me. Out of the two, the one that reminds me of my grandmother says, "Was that it? Only ONE giraffe...there's got to be more giraffes... We can't give up...we have to see more! Can HE hear me! SIR... we have to see MORE!" I have to stop myself from yelling, "SHUT THE FUCK UP!" I don't have it in me to pick on a Jewish lady from the Bronx, not today. I know what I should do. I should turn around and give the two seniors a nice, concise speech about safaris, about how they are like anything else; sometimes there are good days and sometimes there are bad days. But I don't say anything and when the guitars return I hold on to my chair and grip the edge of the blanket. I am sick of the melancholy soundtrack that clings. For one thing, it makes it hard to swallow, but I deep down I know that I love her. I clench harder.

The dark skin man tells his friend to stop the jeep so everyone can get a closer look at the family of lions that sit on a patch of grass. We all sit, gas cooking, motor roaring, half a football field away. Every five minutes one of the Lions yawns as another turns over. "Come on guys, say hi." Louis baits. "Come on guys....say cheeeeeeseeee. Give me something here, Jesus Fucking Chris. Man they suck!" Louis' breakdown continues, "I really wanted to see the lions in full action... Why are they not moving? WHY AREN'T GUYS NOT FUCKING MOVING?" Still, everyone takes pictures and still the guitars converse and still you are on my mind. I think about the other night. We were at "Mercury," a small dive bar adjacent to the club everyone else went to. We talked and drank and I studied your face and watched as you studied mine. The alcohol began to settle like a spill on top of the complementary oysters. I felt your soft hands skate the sides of my legs, and when our faces met, our lips also met and our mouths opened revealing tongues that also met, tongues that danced. Friends came and left,

tapping us on the shoulder, saying things like “Guys we’re leaving now…” and “Time to go, Love birds,” but we didn’t pay them mind. Their nudges tickled and even enhanced the sensations.

Louis pokes my side. “Dude so it’s got this cool icon, check it out. You can make everything black and white, except certain things. Check it out, look, see that Elk sitting there? Watch me make it green.” The guitars sweep me out of his words, though somehow, I am able to lend a nod when it’s appropriate. I think about the day I met you. I played cards with people in the Piano room and you were on the couch beside us, watching our hands slap spades. You wore a mustard colored cardigan and maroon pants. Your golden hair fell over your face. I approached you and asked you if you wanted to play. The next day you got to class early and I go there late, but you saved a spot for me. A gap. An invitation. We studied after hours together and watched the sunrise and cascade over the silky water. You’d say, “I can tell you’re an Aries like me, because you’re creative and extremely disorganized.” When we traveled together, you left me several times. I looked for you in Africa; a blonde, white girl should be easy to find. You weren’t. You have always been lost.

“Look man Elephants!” cried Louis. Two elephants stood facing each other in the distance.

“Holy cow,” yelled the old women behind me. The elephants are bathing; the male drops his snout and soaks it. First the male cleans his counterpart, then himself. The dark skinned man in the worn out hat baits. He wants the elephants to come closer. He clicks his teeth with his tongue. Then he whistles. Still, the grey giants don’t budge. “heyyyoouooooooooo heyooooooooo coooooo coooooooooo heyyooooooooo” he says. “Heyooooooooo pyooooooooo pyooooooooo.” Cameras click on and off while the guitars taunt. I want to play the principle and confiscate the machines from the children. I want to throw them at the ground, before the gray giants as a gesture, one that clearly states, “Here, revenge. Step on it!” Then, I look up and they approach. Faster and faster, large giants. This is it.

Louis screams, “Quick, Mike you have my camera. Take it out!”

The ten thousand pound African elephants take their steps. My heart beats like the drums Whitman described in one of his poems. The male's snout appears to my left and just now the guitars subside. The giant searches around my hair, flipping it in the wind. This tickles. What a rush! Then the male giant sniffs Louis. Everyone clicks before they move on. Louis yells "Fuck! Holy Fuck! Mother Fuck! That was fucking Insane!" I hate to admit it, but he's spot on.

Everyone is silent on the bus ride back to the ship, our home, except Louis. "I STILL CANNOT BELIEVE IT! I JUST DON'T BELIEVE IT" then his voice drops a few octaves, "I really felt like that elephant knew who I was, knew us man. Didn't you feel that? I think he was trying to tell you something dude... I'm certain he told me something, I'm just not sure what it was...Damn what a fascinating species." I stare out into the faces of dark woman who hold balance baskets on their heads. Not a single grape drops as the woman line up and bend down by blue tents. For a while, the bus weaves and all that surrounds us is nature. The guitars wash away. I feel an emptiness for two reasons: One, I am starving, and two, I remember yesterday. You and I found a place that served fresh seafood and sangria on the wharf. I recall our conversation:

Me: "What did you end up doing last night?"

You: "Well I met the most amazing guy ever! It happened so randomly too! He is from Argentina."

I almost choke on a pear.

Me: "You.. you met a guy?"

You: "Yes! Oh my god Michael you'd love him! He plays music and is tall and wants to open his own restaurant and wants to visit me in Santa Cruz. He also ..."

I sat there, listening to her rave about the foreign Fabio for the rest of lunch until a band played and cut her off.

Louis says, "You okay Mike?"

"I will be."

Purple Jasmine

I remember my father driving slow, weaving around the narrow driveway. I called out when I saw a deer, as other wild life surrounded the hills of the house. We parked next to my uncles red mustang. I remember seeing two black Labradors rush up to us before our doors opened. I can still hear Lucy and Grace bark. I remember opening the car door and smelling the fresh pine trees. I remember watching the car door rise, revealing blue ribbons stuck to snowmen wrapping paper; the presents packed vertically and horizontally. I unhooked the rusted metal lock with my toe, balancing the several red and green gifts up against my stomach with my elbows. The presents looked like chimneys on top of the dark rose wood.

I remember the kitchen view, how it overlooked the garden. Tomatoes and squash grew next to purple jasmine and sunflowers that reached great heights. I remember watching the tadpoles squirm around like little spots of light. I watched them for long periods of time, waiting to catch their transformation, an exciting introduction to a new stage of life. Everything was alive and green. The walls were a bright orange like the walls in Van Gogh's, "The night Café." Hundred of colors swirled together to create one beautiful shade. I remember the ceiling towering over all of us, as the men in the family circled around my uncle Tony to watch videos of his kids. I remember the pungent scents of taco meat and cilantro. I remember watching my grandmother cook; she picked up the heel of the blade after every strike, chopping and dicing, chopping and dicing. Precise red squares would accumulate on the cutting board. I remember watching my grandmother drop the vegetables into a white blender. I watched them rotate and spin. I remember tapping her on the small of her back while she was making the shells. I gave her rosy cheeks a soft kiss.

I used to wander around my Grandmothers house, admiring all of the shapes and colors. The black Labradors slept under the half spiral staircase next to hundreds of books. I never read any of these books, but I remember watching my father go through them as I ran around with my cousins, who hung on me like a tree.

I remember the phrase, “Tacos!” My grandmother would shout this over the sizzling grill. I remember running to the dining room salivating. My grandmother would serve everyone first, even the dogs, and only when everyone had a full plate she’d sit. I remember how I could taste the garden in every bite. The fresh tomatoes and lettuce crunched together with my grandmother’s special salsa. I remember the taco eating contests we had where my dad ate thirteen of my grandmother’s tacos, but I don’t remember seeing him the rest of the night. I remember “Linus and Lucy” the song my uncle Matt would play on the piano every Christmas Eve and the ornaments; ruby red and emerald green.

I remember the oak tree. There was a rope attached to the tire that hung from the tree. My sister used to push me and watch as I soared amongst the Northern California hills. I remember slipping in the pond outside the house during a game of hide and seek. It was dark and I was running to find my cousins Nicholas and Read. Frogs croaked around me as my sister pulled me out. I remember learning how to shoot a bow and arrow with a man named Dick. He carried a long pipe with a Native American chief ingrained in the wood. I remember how he never wore shoes. His tan feet walked along the splintered wood as if they were hot coals. I remember playing catch with my uncles on the endless fields behind the house. The seams of the ball spiraled over my reach, collecting speed with the wind down the yellow mountainside. I remember teaching my cousin Nicholas how to shoot a basketball, even though he was more interested in throwing snails that stuck to the gravel driveway.

Then there were the drives. I try to forget them, but I can’t. On the I-5, heaps of cows stood still on knolls. I remember my focus was not on the animals but on the hills. I would study the contour, watch the peaks rise and fall a dying man’s flat-line. I remember the vineyards and the mathematics in the spacing. My eyes would focus on a spot where for a brief moment, time stopped.

I remember fighting with my sister on these long drives to my grandmother’s house. I would pull her beautiful curly hair and yell awful things. “YOU UGLY BITCH”

I’d say. My parents had to stop the car. I remember the words “He can’t help it,” and how they made me feel like a monster. I remember looking at my sister’s beautiful

hair and wishing I hadn't touched it. I remember her eyes, red and wet. I also remember turning and looking at the green house propped up on wooden stilts. I remember hugging my sister, crying into her arms and holding her tightly, apologizing for being a horrible person, friend and brother.

I don't remember my last conversation with my Grandmother.

I felt content when I was in her home and even after she passed, after the chemo finally caught up to her, she was felt. Her presence was there. During the final days, she would still yell "Tacos". Though during these nights, she would retire to her room early. I remember Nick and Read, my cousins, devouring their presents like Pterodactyls and how my grandmother took joy in watching them, but during the last days, she could not withstand the noise.

She could have been an actress in the 60's. She was beautiful and loved by all.

The Cameraman

There's this guy, we'll call Matt, who dances around campus with his camera and takes pictures of everything. I mean EVERYTHING. Dogs, trees, kids eating ice cream, old people eating ice cream, boys playing basketball, people talking, people undressing, pictures of trash. There's no limit. I went to college with Matt in Ohio; Emerald fields, endless possibilities, the whole drill. Anyway, one day I saw Matt on campus with his camera by a tree, taking pictures of the ground, trigger-happy. I remember my friends laughing at him like hyenas. I got up and walked over to him. He was dancing, camera leading and I said, "You know they're laughing at you, right?" He smiled, searched my face, picked up the camera and fired.

Let me backtrack. When I first moved into college, I remember looking out the window of my father's dark blue Lexus; nervous teenagers with bulky colored bags avoided eye contact with one another. We were all preparing for a new life away from nagging parents. My parents were sad to see me go, but I was ready to live without being hounded. My dad popped the trunk. It only took two trips, and then everything was in. My roommate was on his bed the whole time. He had headphones on, and held an expensive looking camera. "Hello" I said. "I'm Monty, your roommate." All I got was a nod. No name, just a nod of agreement, that he believed me, that this was in fact my name. My father told me not to worry, he said, "It'll fade in time," referring to the silence. My sister laughed because she was young and uncomfortable. My mom was too busy working to notice my roommate, "We should put your blanket and sheets on your bed, and fold your clothes," She said, "Oh and we need to get all your textbooks and register you and we should probably get more towels for you and then call your grandparents because I told them that--"

"Grace, Monty's not a baby anymore. He's about to start college. He can do all of that on his own. He does not need us." Said my father, rescuing me.

I hugged my mother and told her not to worry. I was excited. "I promise to call," I said. I felt quiet eyes like an itch on the back of my neck. They were apparent when my

family was in the small white room, and they were there when they left, but I was too tired to mind. I collapsed on my bed. Class would begin the next day.

Matt and I had descriptive Astronomy together. The universe fascinated me, but not like music, my Major. Guitar was my instrument. I could play guitar for hours, and I did. Every Tuesday and Thursday of every week, I saw Matt sitting in the back honing in on the professor, who lectured about gaseous planets and vacuums of nothingness. At lunch I saw my roommate, the cameraman who ate with his toy on chair next to him. No one seemed to notice him, but I couldn't take my eyes off of him. I wanted him to be sad, but he wasn't sad, matter of fact he was content. He was fine.

I had strummed my acoustic guitar and sang for hours with Matt on the side, listening to "Monty Unplugged". Loud Friends came over, leaving empty potatoes chip bags and plates. Jackie, my girlfriend kissed me, Matt right beside us. Still, he never spoke, not even a remark or a complaint. I remembered my father's words when, "It'll fade," he said referring to the my quiet roommate. When it hadn't faded, when the silence made me nervous, I said something. I asked him what his name was. It bothered me that my friends branded him with "Loner Lens" and "The Quiet Queer". They'd say, "Hey did the quiet queer talk yet, of course not!" He took his headphones off, looked at me and said,

"Mathias. But I like Matt better."

Okay I thought. Now we're cooking. This was progress. I had to keep the conversation moving like a blind date.

"So is photography your major?"

He frantically tapped the screen of the camera, scrolling through pictures

"I don't know," he said. "It might be."

"Well can I see some photos?"

He glared. "I don't know man. I have a lot of work to do." He put on his headset and that was that.

I hate to jump around like this, but it will all make sense, I promise. That year, freshman year, I was dating a girl named Jackie, an intelligent, beautiful, pretentious girl who frequently changed the color of her hair. We met at a rock concert our school put on, some shitty band with a name I can't remember, something like "Road-kill Perfume". Her eyes reminded me of the water I stared at as a kid on a family trip to the Caribbean; deep blue with flecks of hunter green. She was a singer, a dancer, an actress, a painter and a poet and she was damn good at it all, and she knew it. On a random weekend during the semester, when her hair was platinum blonde like Debbie Harry's, we spent time at her father's cottage in Lake Tahoe.

"I want to show you something." She said.

She reached for her bag, which was on the ground and handed me a picture. The colors were flushed with blues and greens and yellows and oranges. The subject, a large willow tree home to critters and creatures. We had willow trees everywhere on campus and I recognized a sliver of Mac Hall, the science department, which stood shy in the background. The limbs of the willow tree resembled dangling arms.

"I found it in the trashcan along with others outside the art building. I thought it was nice so I took it." She said this with a cute smile. "And look there's more."

She took out the others: a close up of an old woman, whose wrinkles looked like fine leather. A tan little boy and a tan little girl sat on a red bench in another. The pink scoop on the little girl's ice cream had fallen off her cone and the little boy, probably her brother, was laughing. The next photo was taken outside, at a basketball court. Through gated squares boys playing basketball, the ball suspended in the air as they waited for the result

Okay, fast-forward two days: The bell rang and reminded everyone that our weekends were over. The Professor talked about Jupiter and its many moons. I looked for Matt. I found him and gave him a friendly nod, but he didn't receive it. He looked at me with cold eyes and then started drawing something. When I got back to the room he was on his bed listening to music.

“Hey man everything cool” I said.

Nothing.

“Hey man, I’m talking to you...Are you just gonna ignore me?”

Nothing. I got no response.

I took my guitar and left. I found the weeping willow tree in the picture and sat against its trunk. The low hanging branches felt like curtains. As I fiddled I thought about the ski trip with Jackie and how her father, who used to play professional hockey almost walked in on us; a used condom would have stuck to his big toe. Then I set the guitar against the tree and took the picture out of my pocket. I pretended to point and shoot. I felt like Matt. Then it hit me. Matt took the pictures. Matt was an artist. An artist who for some reason disliked me.

I ran to Jackie’s apartment. “It’s my roommate,” I said. “I know it is,” I said with conviction. All of her roommates stared at me, dinner plates in front of them. “Where’s Jackie” I said.

“I don’t know but you can’t just barge in here,” Said a blonde girl.

“Sorry” I said and fled for the door.

When I got home all of the boys on my floor were outside my room watching the scene. “He just keeps kicking and screaming,” said a boy when I asked what was happening. It was the most noise I had ever heard from him, and maybe the most noise he ever made. Our resident advisor, Paul was with Matt, patting the small of his back, whispering quiet, comforting words into his right ear. “Hang in there, I’m right here, I’m right here.” We all watched Paul lose the fight. “Easy there” Paul said, “Hang in there buddy, listen to my voice.” The second Paul stopped patting, Matt’s eyes opened; a pool of salty sweat surrounded him. I busted through the crowd.

“You guys can all go home now” I said to the bystanders and closed the door.

“What happened?” Begged Matt.

“You had a seizure,” Paul said, “but you’re okay now. You’re here.”

“Everyone must think I’m a freak.”

“You’re not a freak,” I said, but it was too late. I could see that Matt made up his mind, convinced that the thoughts he carried about himself were valid. He turned over and shut Paul and I, and the rest of the world out.

There was an awkward sound the next day in class. It came from the back and sounded like an animal rustling in a bush. It was Matt. He was in the middle of putting his books in his bag. He looked at me and then proceeded out the door. The professor said something as he walked past him. We all watched him leave.

That night I told Jackie I needed space. For hours I strummed the rosewood acoustic guitar that my parents bought me. I changed chord formation, hands dancing on the neck like crabs. The E chord was my favorite. The E roared. The E was in charge. Matt never came home. I must have played for hours, my mind went to better places as I strummed and sang improvised lyrics. Then I put my guitar back against the wall. I opened my drawer. The picture of the Weeping Willow tree sat on top of quarters and candy. I took it out. What a sight.

Two days later I came home to a man and a woman dismantling Matt’s side of the room. The man was dressed in shorts and a t-shirt and the woman wore a green dress.

“You must be Monty,” said the woman in the dress.

“Yeah hi. Sorry who are you?”

“We’re Matt’s parents,” said the casually dressed father.

I was relieved to find out that Matt’s stuff was being picked up, that he had two nice looking parents whom made the trek to the campus. I sat on the bed and watched his mother fold and his father toss.

“Is Matt, okay?” I said.

His mother's hands flattened shirts; the stack accumulated on the bed. She had blonde hair and green eyes.

"He will be," she said with a smile.

The scene felt like a tragedy, as if Matt had died. His presence strong in the room like a ghost. I looked around; maybe there was something to do. Matt didn't have anything on his walls, so there were no posters to roll. There wasn't any trash near his desk, so there was nothing to throw away, but my eyes kept searching.

"Don't feel like you need to help, Monty" said his father.

"Okay, but I mean I'd like to do something," I said.

"Why don't you play some music for us," his mother said, "If you want to, of course."

When she said this, I wondered if Matt talked to them about my music. Had he talked about it being too loud? Did he say I played too much? Maybe he enjoyed it. Maybe he hated it. What if his headphones covered his ears but relayed no sound. I reached for my guitar and tuned it as they packed. I was working on a song the last few nights, while Matt was gone. I usually got nervous when I sang in front of people, but not this time. There was something spellbinding about them. I cleared my throat and strummed the guitar. My voice spilled out with the E chord. His mother stopped folding and the two of them sat on their son's bed and listened to me. When I finished, I was applauded.

"Well done," said the father.

"You're even better in person than Mattie said you were. The sign of a true artist," she said with a wink.

"Matt talked about my music?"

"Quite often," she said.

As they were leaving, as they made a few trips to the car and back to the room, the same trips I took with my family, I reached for the picture of the weeping willow tree. While they were outside I took one good look at the picture and then handed it over to his parents.

“You guys should have this,” I said.

They both took an end and held it up to the light.

“Our son took this?” Said the father.

“Yes sir.”

“Wow Frank, he’s good.”

“Really good,” I said.

They both thanked me and then Matt’s mother gave me a big farewell hug. His father reached out his hand and I gripped it tight. They were in the hallway when I blurted out, “Can you tell him I’m sorry I didn’t try hard enough and that I should have done more?”

His mother looked at me. She motioned for the father to wait by the car, and then she came in the room and sat next to me on my bed.

“You can’t blame yourself Monty. Matt is just...he’s having a hard time with some things right now. He’s just... he... we should have known not to send him here, but then again I don’t know.”

Now it was me that was comforting Matt’s mother, something I could never do for Matt, because he never let me. I put my guitar down and said the only thing words I could muster, “I know it’s hard, but give it time, it’ll all fade in time,” I said.

Bubby Rose

FADE IN:

INT. JASON'S ROOM- 9 AM

A young boy stands in front of an orchestra. He is wearing a suit that is twice his size. The sleeves droop past his arms, but he still waves his hands from side to side, guiding the musicians. He signals to the horn section, then he isolates the violinists, and then he faces the percussion section where symbols and gongs collide. The crescendo builds and builds as all the notes resonate off the high beams. The boy's hands raise and drop. The boy turns around to face the audience. Everyone rises and claps as he bows.

We hear a YELL come from downstairs.

Jason, a 10-year-old boy, wakes up.

He lies in bed listening to the yelling and bickering.

He stares out his window.

The faces of Beethoven, Mozart, Bach and Chopin hang in framed pictures on the walls. Star Wars action figures stand like armies on his bookshelf.

Jason finally lifts himself out of bed. He walks over to his cassette player and presses play.

For a moment, the cassette player makes the kind of noise you'd hear at a dentist office.

Then the music starts. It is the Star Wars Theme song conducted by John Williams.

We see Jason jump from his bed to the floor to the beanbag couch next to his TV. All the while he is waving his hands from side to side, humming.

We hear a knock.

Jason goes to the door and opens it.

FATHER

See if it were I, I'd want to
wake up to something more along
the lines of "eye of the tiger".

Father does his best Rocky impression. He bends his knees, squares up his shoulders and puts

His dukes up.

FATHER (CONT'D)

C'mon give me your best shot!

A beat.

Father goes over to the tape player and presses pause.

FATHER (CONT'D)

I'm kidding Jay... Jesus...
Anyway, I came up here because
your mom and I have something to
discuss with you. We will be
downstairs. Try not to take too
long.

Father leaves.

INT. LIVING ROOM-15 MINUTES LATE

Jason's parents are sitting on a couch in the living room.

They are wearing Hawaiian shirts. They also have sandals on.

A plane ticket is in the father's hand.

MOTHER

I feel bad Howard.

FATHER

Look he can handle this. We've left him alone before-

MOTHER

You left him by alone! *You* snuck out to the casino after he was asleep.

FATHER

Well... I won didn't I?

MOTHER

No Howard! You lost four hundred
bucks!

A beat.

FATHER

I just want some alone time with
you.

MOTHER

I want some alone time with you
too Howard but-

Just then Jason enters.

FATHER

There he is!

MOTHER

Hi honey.

JASON

Hi.

Jason looks at his parent's clothes.

JASON (CONT'D)

Wait why are you guys dressed
like that?

Mother looks at Father. Father looks at Jason.

FATHER

That's what we wanted to talk to
you about. We're leaving Jason.

MOTHER

Well don't make it sound SO
dramatic Howard... We're only
going to be gone a few days
honey-

JASON

But it's Hanukkah! And it's only
the third day!

Mother reaches under the couch and pulls out a
small blue and gold gift. The wrapping paper is
covered with multi colored dreidals.

Mother hands Jason the present.

MOTHER

Well here's day three.

Jason opens the gift. It is a video game called "Drift 4".

MOTHER (CONT'D)

The guy at the store said this was the hottest game!

Jason looks at the game stunned.

JASON

But I don't even play videogames; you guys don't even know me! I don't even have a game system..

Father reaches under the couch and pulls out another box.

FATHER

This should cover nights four through eight.

Jason tears open the wrapping paper. It is an Xbox 360. There is a wireless wheel attached to the console.

JASON

Thanks?

Father checks his watch.

FATHER

Crap... Cheryl we have to leave.
The cab will be here any minute.

A beat.

FATHER (CONT'D)

Look you're grandmother will be here in a little, can you be a good boy and play the game upstairs until she comes?

JASON

Wait *whose* coming?

MOTHER

My mother.

JASON

But I don't even know her!

FATHER

We know and that's our fault.

JASON

Why am I just meeting her now?!

A beat. Parents look at each other.

FATHER

Jason, do you know what "AA"
stand for? -

MOTHER

HOWARD!

FATHER

What? What? He's old enough to know-

MOTHER

That's exactly why he shouldn't know! He's only 10!

A beat.

MOTHER (CONT'D)

She just called Jason and she *really* wants to see you... Just try and have some fun, okay?

We hear a honk from outside.

It's the cab.

JASON

But what if she hurts me? What if she tries to touch me? What if-

FATHER

Jason enough! Stop worrying.

MOTHER

Jason call us whenever you want-

FATHER

Well actually don't call
whenever... Phone bills are
expensive nomad-

MOTHER

Howard!

FATHER

What? What?

Father picks up the bags.

BOTH PARENTS

We love you more than life
itself.

Parents leave.

Jason goes to the window and watches his
parents drive off.

Then he walks upstairs with the game.

INT. JASON'S ROOM- CONTINUOUS

Jason collapses onto his bed. After a moment he gets up.

He opens the Xbox, plugs it into his TV and puts the racing game in.

We see an avatar with a green Mohawk. Jason flips to another avatar. This one is a girl with blonde hair, big breasts and jeans shorts. Jason stays on her for a few seconds before flipping to another one. The next one is an average looking male no taller than five eight. He is wearing a grey shirt and blue jeans. Jason picks him and a red mustang.

Jason chooses the track set in Paris. We watch him veering right with the wheel.

We watch him veer left and crash into a wall.

EXT. OUTSIDE HOUSE- 20 MINUTES LATER.

An old white Mercedes speeds up to the house and hits Jason's purple mailbox.

The Mercedes has a few dents on the side. The left mirror is also detached and the windshield is slightly cracked.

The driver is Grandma Rose, a 75-year-old who lives for like she's in her twenties. She has short red hair and wears a multi-colored sweat suit. She has white and red high top Adidas on. She also wears a red fanny pack.

She reaches in the back seat and grabs her cane. Grandma Rose gets out to assess the damage.

The purple mailbox is sticking out from under the car.

Grandma Rose surveys the neighborhood.

There is a ditch across the street.

She takes her cane and scrapes the mailbox towards her. She slowly bends down and picks it up. She tries to put it back but fails.

Then she walks over to the ditch and hawks it.

GRANDMA ROSE

I mean who has a puce colored
mailbox?

Grandma Rose walks back to Jason's.

We hear the videogame from outside.

GRANDMA ROSE

Hello?! Hello! Are you up there?

Grandma Rose slowly bends down again. This time
she picks up a small rock by her feet.

She throws the rock at Jason's window.

The rock splits the glass.

INT. JASON'S ROOM- CONTINUOUS

Jason pauses the game.

He goes to the window.

JASON

Hey! What are you doing?

EXT. OUTSIDE JASON'S HOUSE- CONTINUOUS

GRANDMA ROSE

Sorry about that bubby, but I am
looking for someone.

She looks at her left hand

GRANDMA ROSE (CONT'D)

Is this 2570 Inverness Avenue?

INT. JASON'S ROOM- CONTINUOUS

JASON

Yeah?

EXT. OUTSIDE HOUSE- CONTINUOUS

GRANDMA ROSE

Oh good! Then you must be...

Now Grandma Rose looks at her right hand. In blue ink the
name JASON is written.

GRANDMA ROSE (CONT'D)

JASON! Hi! I'm Rose. I'm your mother's mother.

INT. JASON'S ROOM- CONTINUOUS

JASON

So *you're my* grandma?

EXT. OUTSIDE HOUSE- CONTINUOUS

GRANDMA ROSE

Yes, but please don't refer to me as "grandma" it makes me feel obsolete.

INT. JASON'S ROOM- CONTINUOUS

JASON

Obso-what?

EXT. OUTSIDE HOUSE- CONTINUOUS

GRANDMA ROSE

A thing of the past. Old news... Anyway why don't you come down here and give me a hand.

Grandma Rose is outside, staring at the palm trees.

Jason sneaks up on her.

GRANDMA ROSE

Oh bubby you startled me!

A beat.

GRANDMA ROSE (CONT'D)

Wow you look just like him.

JASON

who?

GRANDMA ROSE

Dean. Your grandfather. He died three days
before you were born. It's a damn shame too!

Grandma Rose opens her trunk.

Five red bags are piled high in the trunk.

Grandma Rose shrugs.

Jason struggles to keep his balance. He sweats as he makes
three runs through the house, balancing the heavy bags
against his chest.

INT. KITCHEN- CONTINUOUS

GRANDMA ROSE

You hungry? I'm hungry!

INT. INSIDE CAR- DAY

GRANDMA ROSE

Okay buckle up! You're in for one hell of a ride!

Jason examines his seatbelt. There are three different buckles.

JASON

But there are so many? Why are there so many? Are you sure this is a safe car? I've seen cars like-

GRANDMA ROSE

Easy bubby, this is the safest car around, but make sure you fasten those seat belts...my last passenger... my friend...didn't... and well... she..

Grandma Rose pats the wheel.

Jason looks like a mummy next to her

GRANDMA ROSE (CONT'D)

Anyway let's hit it Jake!

Grandma rose turns the key clockwise and floors the car down the residential street.

JASON

It's JAAAASSSSSOOOOOON!!!!!!

Screen says 3 days ago.

INT. PORTLAND SOBRIETY CENTER-DAY

There are twelve people in a circle including Grandma Rose.

The people range in ages, though Grandma Rose is by far the oldest.

The group leader is Jim (37). He has a shiny baldhead that is covered with a black yamakah. He wears glasses and is wrapped in a grey cashmere sweater. He sits with one leg crossed over the other. A clipboard is positioned on his lap.

JIM

(Calm voice)

So..

Jim looks at his notes.

JIM (CONT'D)

Carrie. How are you doing today?

Carrie is biting her nails. She looks up.

CARRIE

I'm okay... Well actually I'm not doing so fucking great Jim. Actually, fuck you Jim! You judgmental cocksucker. You know you look like a penis!

A beat. The room tenses.

CARRIE (CONT'D)

I'm sorry Jim... I just need a cigarette.

Carrie stands and faces everyone.

CARRIE

(Sarcastic)

It's been almost nine days today people! Big whoop.

Carrie leaves.

JIM

She just needs a second. She will be okay.

A man in a green shirt slouches in his chair and drinks out of a silver flask.

JIM

Are you kidding me, Larry? Are you actually drinking in an Alcoholic anonymous therapy session?

Larry

Sorry Jim.

JIM

Go home Larry!

Larry leaves.

JIM (CONT'D)

Does anyone here respect the program?

Jim looks at his clipboard.

JIM (CONT'D)

Rose. How are you?

Grandma Rose fiddles with three purple chips.

GRANDMA ROSE

I'm fine; It's just amazing that it will be two four years on Monday.

JIM

Wow Rose, mazeltov! Does your family know how well you're doing?

GRANDMA ROSE

What family?

A beat.

GRANDMA ROSE (CONT'D)

I left the only family I had.

JIM

Well maybe it's time you gave them a call.

CUT TO:

Montage:

Grandma Rose walks outside the sobriety home.

There is a pond outside. We watch her sit by a wooden bench.

In the distance, a family hugs an older man who comes out of the sobriety center. A kid runs up to the old man and squeezes his waist

We watch Grandma Rose as she tries to hit a few ducks near her with her cane.

-We watch her in her room searching in her drawers.

-She pulls out a small picture with a baby on it and examines it.

-Next to the picture is a yellow sticky note with a number on it.

-She sets the note on her desk and puts the picture on her wall.

-she traces the babies face with her fingers and falls asleep

CUT TO:

INT. KITCHEN-LATE AFTERNOON

Screen says 2 days earlier

Mother is downstairs cleaning.

The phone rings. It is an unknown number.

MOTHER

Hello?

INT. GRANDMA'S ROOM- CONTINUOUS

GRANDMA ROSE

Cheryl?

INT.KITCHEN- CONTINUOUS

MOTHER

Mom?

INT. GRANDMA'S ROOM- CONTINUOUS

GRANDMA ROSE

Hi Cheryl... How are you?

INT. KITCHEN-CONTINUOUS

MOTHER

I'm... I'm okay... I can't believe you're calling. I thought you died... I haven't heard from you in several years.

INT. GRANDMA'S ROOM- CONTINUOUS

GRANDMA ROSE

Well I'm alive and in relatively good shape, all things considering.

INT. KITCHEN-CONTINUOUS

MOTHER

Where are you mom?

INT. GRANDMA'S ROOM- CONTINUOUS

GRANDMA ROSE

I'm in Oregon... but I'm driving down to Los Angeles tomorrow and-

INT. KITCHEN-CONTINUOUS

MOTHER

Let me guess, you need money?

INT. GRANDMA'S ROOM- CONTINUOUS

GRANDMA ROSE

No! None of that! I want to see my
grandson.

INT. KITCHEN- CONTINUOUS

MOTHER

Jason? But you don't even know him.

INT. GRANDMA'S ROOM- CONTINUOUS

GRANDMA ROSE

Well then I'll get to!

CUT TO PRESENT.

INT. MERCEDES- NOON

Grandma Rose is speeding down Laurel Canyon.
Jason is holding onto his belts for dear life.

JASON

HEY OLDIE WHAT ARE YOU DOING SLOW
DOWN! THAT WAS A RED LIGHT!

GRANDMA ROSE

Don't call me *Oldie!* And you shouldn't worry like that... You're too young to have a heart attack.

JASON

Did you know that thirty one percent of car accidents occur because of speeding?

GRANDMA ROSE

Well then it's a good thing we're here!

EXT. CAFÉ LA-GRANDE- CONTINUOUS

Grandma Rose and Jason sit outside. The sun glares on their menus as they try and read the entrées.

GRANDMA

I really wish I had my glasses. And sun glasses. (Talking to sun) I mean it's enough already! So what excites you on the menu bubby?

JASON

I don't know. I can't even read this stuff.

GRANDMA ROSE

Okay well you can't know unless you try, right? Go ahead.

Jason attempts to say the dishes.

JASON (CONT'D)

Ugh okay... How about Preg... pregshuto?

GRANDMA ROSE

Prosciutto. Italian meat usually served with melon. Smells kind of funky and we're not in Florence so don't order it.

JASON

Okay... What about Anchowwvies?

GRANDMA ROSE

Anchovies. They usually put them on Caesar salads but they're a bitter, slippery fish and not too kosher with Jews. Try again.

JASON

How about Vehneesun?

GRANDMA ROSE

Venison. It's Latin, means deer. I
accidentally hit one on my to Bach
fest-

JASON

Wait *you went* to Bach fest?

GRANDMA ROSE

Yes bubs.

JASON

Well tell me about it.

GRANDMA ROSE

Well it was pretty phenomenal! I even
shared a dubie with a John Williams
you know the composer of-

JASON

Star Wars! He's one of my favorites.
Wait what's a dubie?

GRANDMA ROSE

Did I say that?

JASON

Yeah what is it? Is it bad that I don't know grandma?

GRANDMA ROSE

No! And don't call me *Grandma!*

A beat.

GRANDMA ROSE

Anyway, what do you think you're going to have?

JASON

No, what's a dubie? I feel weird about not knowing.

GRANDMA ROSE

Jesus Christ, are you always this concerned? (*Looking at the menu*)

A dubie is a turkey and cheese sandwich. I guess it's what you'd call a veggie burger.

JASON

So you shared a sandwich with John
Williams?

GRANDMA ROSE

Yep!

JASON

(incredulous)

I don't know if I believe you?

GRANDMA ROSE

Well believe it!

Grandma Rose looks at Jason. He is having a
hard time reading the menu.

GRANDMA ROSE (CONT'D)

Is your mom a good cook?

JASON

I guess so.

GRANDMA ROSE

Well that wasn't too convincing. What
is it? Too healthy? Too bland?

JASON

Well...

Jason looks around the restaurant

JASON (CONT'D)

It's just that she cooks the same three things every time. If it's not salmon it's enchiladas and if it's not either it's some other mystery fish...they want me to be pescatarian?

GRANDMA ROSE

Pescetarian? That's like depriving people oxygen!

A beat.

GRANDMA ROSE (CONT'D)

Ever wonder what a melty tender Angus cheeseburger would taste like?

JASON

Wait, but aren't you kosher?

GRANDMA ROSE

Ehh to hell with religion! Meat is too good!

A beat.

JASON

My parents say that most beef is contaminated and that I'll get sick and go mad if I eat any cow.

GRANDMA ROSE (CONT'D)

(Dull whisper)

Look, I know of a place. Best Angus burger in Los Angeles! It's called Mel's. I've been going there for over thirty years and look at me... Am I nuts? Actually don't answer that.

A beat.

GRANDMA ROSE (CONT'D)

Well what do you say? Want to ditch these snobs and grab a burger? I won't tell your parents...

JASON

I don't know.

GRANDMA ROSE

C'mon Bubby Live a little!

Jason and Grandma get up to leave.

As they leave Grandma Rose stuffs a few small ketchup bottles in her fanny pack.

GRANDMA ROSE

Souvenirs!

EXT. OUTSIDE RESTAURANT- LATE AFTERNOON

GRANDMA ROSE spots a homeless man on the way to the car. He is young and holds a sign that says: All ALONE ANYTHING HELPS.

This gets to grandma. She digs in her purse and opens up her wallet. She pulls out three twenty-dollar bills, straightens them and hands them to the man like he hit it big.

HOMELESS GUY

Wow! Bless you miss.

GRANDMA ROSE

My suggestion: go somewhere else. Get yourself a burger!

Grandma and Jason walk towards the car.

JASON

I can't believe you gave that
homeless guy 60 bucks?

GRANDMA

Believe it!

JASON

My dad always says not too help those
people because they'll probably buy
beer or something.

GRANDMA ROSE

Well if you were homeless wouldn't
you want a beer?

JASON

I'm only 10!

INT. CAR- LATE AFTERNOON- CONTINUOUS

GRANDMA ROSE drives onto a ramp that merges
into the 110 freeway. She does not pause for a
stop sign and swerves in between two lanes.

JASON

You're okay to drive, right?

GRANDMA ROSE

Of course! I used to drive all the time believe it or not. I was married to a big time producer! All the big timers wanted a piece of us. Hefner invited us to a few parties.

JASON

Who?

A beat.

GRANDMA ROSE looks straight ahead and drives. Her eyes squint at the sun.

GRANDMA ROSE

No one dear.

Grandma Rose cuts off a driver in her blind spot. She speeds past him.

JASON

GRANDMA!

GRANDMA ROSE

Okay that's enough of the Grandma business. From now on you have to refer to me as..

GRANDMA ROSE looks at a billboard in the distance on the side of the freeway. A woman in white caresses a man in a suit.

GRANDMA ROSE (CONT'D)

Coco. Ooh I like that. It's chic.

An angry driver pulls up next to them.

DRIVER

HEY SENIOR LOOK IN YOUR REAR VIEW
MIRROR! YOU ALMOST HIT ME YOU OLD
HAG!

Doing her best coco Chanel impression.

GRANDMA ROSE

Pardon us monsieur. Wee Wee bubby!!!

Grandma Rose speeds past the angry driver,
cutting his lane off again.

GRANDMA ROSE (CONT'D)

Hey can you take the wheel?

JASON

WHAT? But I'm-

GRANDMA ROSE

It's easy! Just keep the wheel straight... I have to dress the part now that I'm in Hollywood.

JASON

I can't! I'm scared.

GRANDMA ROSE

Look at me bubby. You can!

Grandma Rose takes Jason's hands and places them on the wheel.

JASON

(To himself)

This is just like the videogame.
This is just like the videogame.
This is just like the videogame.

Grandma Rose reaches into her purse and pulls out lipstick. She folds down the driver mirror and applies the dark red shade to her lips. She throws the lipstick in the back and reclaims the wheel

GRANDMA ROSE

You did it!

JASON

(Shaking)

I did it!

GRANDMA ROSE

See you should trust me more John

JASON

It's Jason!

In the rear view mirror, Blue and red lights
flash and a siren rings.

OFFICER

(On loudspeaker)

DRIVER IN THE WHITE MERCEDES PULL
OVER NOW!

GRANDMA ROSE

(Out load)

But we didn't do anything wrong.

GRANDMA ROSE pulls over on the side of the
road.

GRANDMA ROSE

Hey remember how I just told you to
trust me?

JASON

Yeah?

GRANDMA ROSE

Well now would be a good time.

The police officer gets out of his car and slams the window. He approaches the driver side window. He is tall, mid-thirties.

OFFICER

Ma'am I'm going to need to see some License and registration.

GRANDMA ROSE

Did I do something wrong officer?

OFFICER

Yes you were going 30 over the speed limit.

GRANDMA ROSE

Officer I can explain. See my-

OFFICER

There is nothing to explain. Open your glove box or I will open it for you!

GRANDMA ROSE

Okay, okay Jesus bubby!

GRANDMA ROSE (CONT'D)

(Calmly)

Josh be a dear and open the glove box for the nice officer.

Jason opens the glove box and several tickets fly out.

OFFICER

Are those all speeding tickets?

Grandma Rose is silent.

OFFICER

Ma'am I'm going to need you to step out of the vehicle.

Grandma Rose looks at JASON. She winks at him and mouths the words "trust me".

She gets out of the vehicle.

OFFICER

Put your arms at your side.

Grandma Rose obliges.

OFFICER

Is the little guy your grandson?

GRANDMA ROSE

Yes he is. We haven't seen each other in ages.

Officer writes citation and holds Grandma Rose, but as he is writing a car much faster speeds past them. Trash comes flying out the window.

GRANDMA ROSE

Wow would you look at that?!

Now it is apparent that the officer is in a bind. He looks at the old lady and her grandson and has to make a quick decision.

OFFICER

10-4 Respond over...10-4 there is a suspect
polluting and speeding, I need backup.

No one responds.

OFFICER

Crap, okay you two got lucky.

The Officer gets in his car and books it.

INT. CAR-CONTINUOUS- 4 PM.

Grandma Rose pulls over on the shoulder of the freeway
after driving for a few minutes.

She puts her hazard lights on.

Cars roar past them.

GRANDMA ROSE

So... what did you think? Oscar performance? I
think you deserve the best supporting actor?
You know physical acting is NOT easy.

Jason is quiet. He stares out the window and watches cars
speed past them.

GRANDMA ROSE (CONT'D)

Are you upset with me?

Jason still focuses his attention on other cars.

GRANDMA ROSE

Fine, well this might cheer you up!

Grandma Rose reaches into her purse. She takes out her wallet and removes a hundred-dollar bill.

GRANDMA ROSE (CONT'D)

I bet you this hundred I can read your mind.

If I lose, than this is all yours, BUT if I win you have to break the silence. Deal?

JASON

Okay.

GRANDMA ROSE

Wow you are my grandson... Okay are you any good at math?

JASON

I'm the best in my class.

GRANDMA

Great then should be a piece of cake. I'm going to ask you some basic math questions and you have to try and answer them as fast as you can, ready?

JASON

Okay.

GRANDMA ROSE

5X3?

JASON

15

GRANMDA ROSE

4X2?

JASON

8

GRANDMA ROSE

6+22?

JASON

28.

GRANDMA ROSE

7x6?

JASON

42.

GRANDMA ROSE

5x5?

JASON

25.

GRANDMA ROSE

8X8?

JASON

Uh...64!

GRANDMA ROSE

Okay now think of a vegetable but don't tell me what it is...

JASON

It's a carrot!

GRANDMA ROSE

Ahh goddammit I told you not to tell me what it is!!

JASON

I'm sorry I'm sorry.

Jason reaches into his pocket and pulls out a red inhaler. He takes a full exhale and then inhales while pressing the inhaler. He does this twice.

GRANDMA ROSE

Jesus Jesse are you okay?

Jason reaches over and snatches the hundred out of her hand.

JASON

(Wheezing)

My name is Jason! J-A-S-O-N! And no I think I almost had a heart attack. Thank god for albuterol.

A beat.

JASON

What was that stuff in that bag?

A beat.

GRANDMA ROSE

(Avoiding)

You know I've never lost that game...
"Technically" I still haven't. People tend
to pick carrots when they're under
pressure... I guess carrots are like the
apple of vegetables or the Carry Grant of
vegetables.

A beat. Jason looks out the window.

From his P.O.V we see the thick L.A smog. Through the smog
we can barely make out a few gas stations and fast food
restaurants. Mountains sit off the shoulder, next to the
ca. The slopes look like they want to reach out onto the
yellow dashes on the highway.

Jason turns to Grandma Rose.

JASON

If you won't answer my questions then how I
am I supposed to trust you?

Now Grandma Rose stares out the window.

JASON (CONT'D)

I don't know anything about you!

A beat.

GRANDMA ROSE

Well how about I tell you over a famous
Angus?

EXT. MELS DINER- NIGHT

The place is empty save a few guys at the bar
and a family in a corner booth.

Grandma Rose looks around. A life sized stained
poster of Elvis stands by the door next to an
old jukebox. Pictures of cotton candy colored
Cadillac's hang on the walls next to pictures
of singers and comedians.

GRANDMA ROSE

Wow I remember when this was *the*
place. We used to come here and-

JASON

We?

We see GRANDMA ROSE stare off at the jukebox in
the front.

GRANDMA ROSE

You're Grandfather and I.

JASON

What did you guys do when you
came here?

Grandma Rose directs her attention to Jason.

GRANDMA ROSE

Well we did a lot bubby.

Grandma Rose lets out a big laugh

JASON

What is it?

GRANDMA ROSE

(Still laughing)

I was just thinking about
something he'd do.

JASON

Tell me?

GRANDMA ROSE

Well I guess you'd have to be
there, but he'd do this thing
where'd he'd get up, put fifty
cents in that jukebox over there
and play Elvis' "Love me
Tender".

GRANDMA ROSE (CONT'D)

(Laughing harder now)

Then he'd make an Elvis face.

(She tries)

JASON

Ughh what was that?

GRANDMA ROSE

That was my crap Elvis face... I know it wasn't good.

JASON

No it wasn't awful... go on, what did he do next?

GRANDMA ROSE

Well I suppose he'd find me.

JASON

Find you?

GRANDMA ROSE

Yep in the midst of all the other beautiful gals he'd find me and say,

(Clears throat)

"Rose Baby, I love you more than life itself"

A beat.

JASON

(Softly)

Would I have liked him?

Waitress comes over.

WAITRESS

Sorry to interrupt, but what can
I get you too?

GRANDMA ROSE

Do you trust me Jason

JASON

I trust you.

GRANDMA ROSE

Two famous Angus burgers. Oh and
two cokes please!

Waitress leaves.

For the first time there is a deafening
silence.

Grandma Rose looks around.

Waitress comes back with the food.

WAITRESS

Two famous Angus's!

JASON

How do I do this?

GRANDMA ROSE

Just dive in bubby.

Grandma Rose takes a massive bite of the Angus burger.

GRANDMA ROSE (CONT'D)

Mmmmmmmmm Oh gawd how could anyone *just* eat fish?

Jason watches her.

He can't take it any longer.

He gives in and takes a massive bite.

GRANDMA ROSE (CONT'D)

There we go! Now you're living!

JASON

Oh my god. Oh my god! Where has this been?

GRANDMA ROSE

(Laughing)

I told you. You got to trust old Rosy once in a while.

They each finish their famous Angus burgers leaving nothing but a white plate.

After a few minutes Jason gets up from the table after digesting.

GRANDMA ROSE

Explosive diarrhea?

JASON

Surprisingly no.

Jason walks over to the jukebox and drops fifty cents in the machine.

Cue Elvis.

He finds Grandma Rose with his eyes and gives her the Presley face. Then he walks towards her.

JASON

Would you have this dance with me Grandma...I mean-

GRANDMA

It's okay you can call me grandma.

Grandma Rose smiles

JASON

Sorry I didn't believe you went to Bach fest grandma?

GRANDMA ROSE

It's okay Jason. I love you more
than life itself.

JASON

I love you too bubby!

Jason put his hand out to Grandma Rose.

Grandma Rose and Jason laugh and dance for the
rest of the night, as the spirit of the late,
great Dean Scarsdale is felt in the empty
Diner.

FADE OUT.

Thesis Reflection

When I reflect on my experience as a writer at Linfield, I think about the things I have learned i.e. valuable techniques and information. For example, I have learned the importance of characters and how without good characters, a story can be dull and mundane. I have learned that taking criticism makes one a good writer. I have also learned that revisions are essential, or as Hemmingway eloquently puts it, "A rough draft of anything is shit." I have learned that professors are more than willing to help and lend ideas; all you have to do is ask.

I have tried my best to implement the techniques that I have acquired from classes here, but it is never easy. One of the classes I took was Miguel's Screen-Writing course. Every Friday we'd sit in the ICE auditorium and watch a film, usually a new release. I remember being captivated by "MUD" in particular because of one thing; there were no loose ends. This was evident in the script. For example, the main character, a fifteen-year old boy has a snake phobia. The viewer receives this information early on in the film. Later, when the "mud" character comes into the picture, the viewer notices his right arm, how there is a tattoo of a snake marked on his bicep. Then, the boy falls into a snake pit and luckily Mud saves the boy. My point is this: anytime something was brought up, it was resolved. To me, this is the sign of good writing, something Miguel stressed. But there are also other measures one must take in order to be a successful writer. Miguel taught me this through visual media, yet books, poems and short stories have influenced me as well.

My dad, who is also a writer once said, “The best writers are the most well read.” When I heard this, I realized I hadn’t read a plethora of novels or books or short stories or poems. In the several English and Creative Writing courses here, I have been exposed to works by Raymond Carver, Ernest Hemmingway, Bernard Cooper, Leonard Michaels, Juno Diaz, Hunter S. Thompson, Walt Whitman, David Foster Wallace, Ann Beatie, Richard Lange, Maxine Hong Kingston, Toni Morrison, Joy Williams, and several others. Linfield has made me a better writer by exposing me to these authors. A lot of these writers are also masters of the short story.

I would say that dialogue, a technique I learned in Scripts, is seen most clearly in my work. This is seen in the script “Bubby Rose”. I tried to create a character in the grandmother who was both crazy and relatable. I used a lot of my own life as research for this character. For instance, my own grandmother steals small ketchup bottles and interrupts people. I also watched movies like “Little Miss Sunshine”, and got inspiration from Alan Arkin’s character. Bubby Rose is also loosely based off of Doris Roberts’ character on “Everybody Loves Raymond”. Even looking at it now, the dialogue feels forced at times and a little over the top. It was hard for me to find a balance. I realized how difficult it is to write jokes, while retaining emotion. I wanted the reader to feel for grandmother, a woman who does not have much and is in desperate need of human communication. Bubby Rose has turned her life around, yet she is still hard to be with. The same can be said for Jason, a character loosely based off past roommates at Boarding School. Jason has aspirations of becoming the next Chopin; music is the language of his world. When Bubby Rose says, “I saw John Williams at Bach Fest,” Jason cannot believe it. “Bach

Fest” is the equivalent of the famous rock concert Woodstock. This is the turning point in the story, the scene where Jason thinks, “Wait this lady is actually cool.”

In “Grey Giants,” I tried to implement techniques I had admired in authors such as Raymond Carver, Leonard Michaels and Hunter S. Thompson. Carver’s voice is simple, tight and to the point. He does not dress up anything. His book *Cathedral* influenced me throughout this process. He is a master of the short story. Leonard Michael’s “City Boy” influenced me as well. I really like Michael’s dirty and raw style- “what you see is what you get” feel. In his story, a young man is forced outside of his girlfriend’s apartment after her father walks in on the two naked. The story shifts from reality to the absurd and then back. The reader is thrown into to it all, to the mind of a twenty something from the hard streets of New York. Michael’s is an expert at dialogue and inner dialogue, something I tried to implement in the narrator of my story. Hunter S. Thompson is great because he does not shy away. In “Grey Giants” I tried to implement Thompson’s hazy, drug related style, which like Michael’s, toggles between the absurd and the real. I also revised and edited this piece until I couldn’t keep my eyes open. Revision is the common technique that I have learned in all of these classes. Much like working on a song, writing takes time. It is frustrating. I spent hours toying with this piece, bringing more Louis, more animals, less Louis and more of the man in the safari hat. It was a process.

In “Purple Jasmines” a memoir about my grandmother, I used a technique that I learned in Joe Wilkin’s “Non-Fiction” course i.e. the use of “I remember”. At the time, this was an effective device for remembering things. Before I wrote the piece I

spent several hours writing down the things that I remembered. By doing this, I discovered that I had forgotten numerous memories. This piece was also workshopped, which definitely helped. Peers commented and gave me constructive feedback.

2. During this process I realize that I work most effectively when I am not in my room, because my guitar lives in my room. Music is a passion of mine, but it often got in the way of my work. I would strum my guitar for hours, forgetting about everything, especially my thesis. Getting out of my room, where there is no T.V. and no guitar was a must. On the other hand, music was an inspiration. When I wasn't playing music, it came out in my writing. I wrote about music because it is what I know. All of my stories have some element or aspect of music. For example, In "Purple Jasmines" my uncle Matt plays "Linus and Lucy" a song that triggers memories of Christmas at my grandmother's house in Paolo Alto, California. Jason in "Bubby Rose" wants to be a classical composer. Originally, in early drafts, Jason wanted to be the next Jimi Hendrix, and instead of Bach Fest, the grandmother went to Woodstock. In the "Cameraman" the narrator, Monty, is a guitarist. I put a lot of myself in this story. The "Cameraman" was based off of old roommates from boarding school on the east coast. In "Grey Giants" the narrator is hypnotized by the melody of guitars. The narrator can't stop thinking about a girl, even though he is on a safari, which isn't cheap. Still, the guitars play in his ear, rattling his senses.

This thesis project has taught me to be determined, and that in the end, hard work trumps all. There were times where I questioned myself. I compared myself to

other writers in my classes. Frankly, I did not think that I was good enough. I remember a workshop in Joe Wilkin's Non-Fiction class. I was in the hot seat and when it came time for everyone to say something that they liked about my piece, a silence ensued. I realize now that people had said good things and that I had put too much pressure on myself. I called my dad that day and I told him that my heart wasn't in writing. He told me to stick with it. I am still a toddler in my writing years. As a writer, I have a lot to learn, but I am excited. Linfield has given me the tools and the foundation. I am excited to see what the future holds.