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Autotheory In Film

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AUTOTHEORY IN FILM

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A capstone project submitted for Graduation with University Honors

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University Honors
University of California, Riverside

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ABSTRACT

Recently there has been talk in the contemporary field of literature about an idea known as “autotheory.” Autotheory is described as the integration of autobiography and theory to produce a work of literature that breaks typical genre conventions and disciplinary boundaries. The current canon of literature that is considered to be autotheoretical is largely rooted in questions of gender and sexuality that emerge from feminist and queer studies. This being said, the inclusivity of the canon’s terms remains to be tested. Due to autotheory being primarily grounded within literary studies, it has not been explored outside of the constraints of prose. Therefore, I aim to test the limits of autotheory by creating a screenplay that attempts to answer the question of how autotheory can be applied to another mode of art—film—by adapting a heteronormative literary narrative into a work that combines autobiography and theory to the screen. In doing this, I am able to create another avenue in which autotheory can be applied, and perhaps see a new genre of film emerge.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

My faculty mentor, Judith, who helped me curate my ideas and turn them into something real.

And Sophia, for lending me her copy of *The Catcher In The Rye*.

IN THE RYE

Written by

ELY BRAGER

Based on *The Catcher in the Rye*

May 1, 2023

FADE IN

MUSIC CUE: "How Soon Is Now? - 2011 Remaster" by The Smiths

ESTABLISHING LONG REAR SHOT - someone holding a football and walking across a field covered in a thin layer of snow, and then across a street. Sometimes throwing the ball in the air and once or twice fumbling it.

As the music fades, they reach a house (CLOSE UP SHOT OF THEIR FEET AS THEY WALK) and attempt to hide the ball in one of the bushes at the front, wiping their hands on their pants before knocking on the door. We hear footsteps, and then the lock unlatching and the creak of the door as it opens to:

MEDIUM CLOSE UP SHOT - of OLD SPENCER, 75, a history teacher at Pencey Prep. He sighs through his nose, moves aside to let the young person in, and closes the door on the camera.

CUT TO:

INT. OLD SPENCER'S HOUSE - DAY

OLD SPENCER, sitting on his rocking chair and flipping to the final page of a stapled school paper. He takes a moment to adjust his glasses. The rest of the room is very quiet, except for the faint chirping of birds outside.

OLD SPENCER

(reading from the paper)

" - all right with me if you fail me though, as I'm failing everything else except English anyway. Respectfully yours, Holden Caulfield." Now... Do you really blame me for giving you an F, boy?

He looks up at HOLDEN, 16.

MEDIUM SHOT - of an androgynous-looking teenager wearing an off-center football jersey and pants.

HOLDEN shifts uncomfortably in the middle of OLD SPENCER's living room. The papers make a loud noise as SPENCER shuffles them back to the beginning.

CUT TO:

Title Card: **HOLDEN GETS KICKED OUT.**

HOLDEN

No, sir. I definitely don't.

HOLDEN starts to pace slowly, lingering by a picture on one of OLD SPENCER's cabinets by the wall. It shows a young boy in black in white, smiling and holding a baseball bat, posed to hit.

OLD SPENCER

Well, what would you have done if you were me? I mean, how do you feel about getting kicked out? I heard you also had... difficulty...
at Whooton and Elkton Hills.

CLOSE UP - HOLDEN's eyes, then their HANDS as they touch the frame of the picture.

HOLDEN (V.O)

I didn't get expelled from Whooton or Elkton. I left because I was surrounded by phonies. Just like I am here.

Another shot of SPENCER, setting the essay aside. HOLDEN lets go of the picture.

MEDIUM SHOT, ZOOM OUT ON HOLDEN

HOLDEN

I don't really feel much of anything, sir.

OLD SPENCER

Well, I didn't want to fail you. But you understand that I had to, right?

HOLDEN

Yes, sir. It's not like it's your fault that I'm an idiot.

CLOSE UP ON SPENCER'S WINDOW. A wintery scene outside, the field leading to Pencey is coated with dew and in some spots, snow.

HOLDEN (V.O)

I wonder if the lagoon at the park will be frozen over when I get home. If it is, where did the ducks go? Does someone come to take them away, or do they just fly off to the next lagoon?

OLD SPENCER

And what about this school?

MEDIUM SHOT - HOLDEN, picking at their jersey. Today will be the last time they wear it.

HOLDEN

You mean, about how I've flunked out?

OLD SPENCER

Yes. Do you have any particular qualms about leaving?

OLD SPENCER leans forward to listen closely. He is interested in what HOLDEN has to say.

HOLDEN

Oh, I have a few qualms all right, but not too many. I don't think it's really hit me yet. It takes things a while to hit me.

OLD SPENCER

Do you feel no concern for your future, boy?

HOLDEN (V.O)

I wished to hell he'd stop calling me that.

HOLDEN

Oh, I feel some concern for my future, all right. But not too much I guess.

OLD SPENCER

You will, boy. And by then it'll be too late.

HOLDEN (V.O)

I hated hearing those words out of his mouth. "Too late." Like I was dead or something.

HOLDEN
I guess I will.

HOLDEN stands.

OLD SPENCER
I'm trying to help you, you know. By telling you all of this.

HOLDEN
I know you are. Thing is, I have to get going now, but I appreciate the talk. Really.
[pause]
Look, sir. Don't worry about me. I'll be alright. I'm just...going through a phase right now. Everybody goes through phases. Don't they?

A pause.

OLD SPENCER
Would you like a cup of hot chocolate before you go, Holden?

HOLDEN
I would...I would, but I do have to be going now. Thanks, though.

OLD SPENCER
Well, if that's the case...

OLD SPENCER stands and holds a hand out for HOLDEN to shake.
HOLDEN stares at it a moment before taking it uneasily.

OLD SPENCER
Then I wish you good luck.

MEDIUM CLOSE UP SHOT OF HOLDEN'S EXPRESSION.

MUSIC CUE: "First Love/Late Spring" by Mitski

CUT TO:

Title Card: **HOLDEN WRITES ANOTHER ESSAY**

INT. HOLDEN AND STRADLATER'S DORM ROOM - NIGHT

REAR VIEW SHOT OF HOLDEN - at their desk, looking down at what they're doing. There are remnants of a snow fight on their shoulders and they sport a hunting hat and pajamas.

MUSIC CUE: Fade song after lyric "where you sleep."

HOLDEN (V.O)

It's been a long while since my brother died but I can remember it like yesterday. He had this left-handers baseball mitt and he used to write poems all over the fingers and the pocket and everything, in green ink. That was just his thing. I think, if he had grown up, he would have become a poet or something, if not a baseball player. But this mitt, it was an old one my dad used to use when he played as a kid. It was faded brown and before my brother started to play I used to see it sitting sometimes in the garage gathering dust. I think Allie was a much better player than dad must've been. He was much better than lots of people. When I remember he's dead, it doesn't feel real.

CLOSE UP on HOLDEN's fingers, pressing carefully on each key of their typewriter. We watch the typewriter punch out: 'feel real.' on the bottom of the page.

HOLDEN (V.O)

(Cont.)

The night he died I slept in the garage and broke all of the windows with my fist because I felt like it. Sometimes it still hurts, and I can't really make a fist properly anymore. The last time I saw the mitt, I was placing it in his coffin over his heart. He looked like he was sleeping.

HOLDEN hears the door unlock and turns in their chair to face STRADLATER, 17. He's wearing a bulky letterman over a business casual outfit, stuffing his keys back into his pocket and closing the door behind him.

STRADLATER

Jesus, is it fucking cold out.

HOLDEN

Back, finally? What the hell took you so long?

STRADLATER dismissively waves his hand and starts undoing his tie.

STRADLATER

How's the paper coming?

HOLDEN turns back to give it a look, and plucks it from the typewriter. They hand it to Stradlater, and STRADLATER takes it. He reads the first few sentences, and then flips it around to look at the back. He holds the essay up.

STRADLATER

The hell is this?

HOLDEN

The assignment was to write a paper about something descriptive. That mitt has a lot of descriptions on it.

STRADLATER crumples the paper in his hands and throws it angrily at HOLDEN.

STRADLATER

You don't do anything the way you're supposed to. I mean it, man. Not a single thing!

HOLDEN

What-?

STRADLATER

I can't turn this shit in. It's— he's not gonna believe for a second that I wrote this. My brother doesn't play ball, for chrissake, Holden. This paper wasn't supposed to be about you.

HOLDEN

Well then maybe you should have written it. You know I'm flunking out of this place for a reason.

STRADLATER takes off his shoes and flops onto his bed, obviously stressed and annoyed.

STRADLATER

Yeah, but I thought you were good at English.

HOLDEN (V.O)

Turns out, I actually am good at English.

STRADLATER

That's it. I'm ruined. Thanks to you.

HOLDEN grabs the crumpled up paper, uncrumples it, and tears it into tiny pieces.

STRADLATER

What the hell did you do *that* for?

HOLDEN doesn't answer, only walks to their bed, turns off the light, and gets settled for the night. After a minute or so of silence, STRADLATER gets undressed down to his shorts and disappears to the bathroom to brush his teeth.

HOLDEN listens to him get ready for bed. When the bathroom light switches off and STRADLATER comes back into the room, HOLDEN shifts under their blanket.

HOLDEN

Jane make it back before 9:30?

STRADLATER

Just a minute or two late.

He begins clipping his toenails by the light of the moon. HOLDEN cringes, looking up at the ceiling.

HOLDEN

Did you tell her what I said? About if she still keeps all her kings in the back row?

STRADLATER

No, of course not. That's a weird thing to say, out of nowhere.

HOLDEN

So where did you two end up going after all?

STRADLATER finishes cutting his nails. HOLDEN watches his silhouette make its way over to HOLDEN's bed. STRADLATER sits on the edge of it. Then he sits again, hard enough for the bed to shake. The bed creaks a little under their weight, and STRADLATER does it again a few more times.

HOLDEN

Cut that out. Where did you go?

STRADLATER

Nowhere, Jesus. We just sat in the goddamn car the whole time.

STRADLATER stops rocking the bed and instead socks HOLDEN playfully on the shoulder.

HOLDEN

I said stop. Whose car?

STRADLATER

Ed Banky's.

HOLDEN

Our basketball coach? And what did you two do in there?

STRADLATER

That's a professional secret, buddy.

HOLDEN stands, as if getting up to use the restroom. Then HOLDEN turns to STRADLATER in the dark and socks him on the side of the head, shaking out their hand afterward.

HOLDEN

Fuck!

STRADLATER

What the hell is the matter with you?

STRADLATER pushes HOLDEN to the ground and straddles them with his knees. He forces HOLDEN's arms down as best he can.

HOLDEN

Get off of me! Get off!

STRADLATER holds fast.

HOLDEN

You're a moron, you fucking idiot! How could you not remember her name?

STRADLATER

Shut up now, Holden. I'm warning you.

HOLDEN

Get off of me!

STRADLATER

If I get off, will you be quiet? You're waking up the whole school, damn it.

HOLDEN

Fine.

STRADLATER lets go and stands up. He offers a hand to HOLDEN, but they ignore it and brush themselves off.

HOLDEN

Screw you, asshole.

STRADLATER steps close to HOLDEN, anger evident on his face—more than before.

STRADLATER

Watch it, man. Or I'm going to—

HOLDEN

Going to what? Continue to drool from your mouth like an idiot?

STRADLATER shakes his head, begins to turn away, and then—SMACK! Hits HOLDEN square in the face. HOLDEN drops to the floor again with a *thud*, holding their nose in pain.

STRADLATER

I told you to stop. You asked for it, alright? I didn't want to.

HOLDEN tries to hold back tears, wincing when they move their face the slightest inch.

STRADLATER

Go wash your face. I'll get the light.

Wordlessly, STRADLATER switches the light back on, and HOLDEN has to blink away the searing pain behind their eyes. STRADLATER turns his back on HOLDEN as he walks into the bathroom.

HOLDEN (V.O)

If this is what it's like being a boy, I'm not sure I want any part of it.

MUSIC CUE: "Obstacles" by Syd Matters

CUT TO:

Title Card: **HOLDEN'S GOLDEN TIME**

HOLDEN is shoving the last of their things into bags, fresh and crusted blood on their face from STRADLATER's punch. The door to their dorm clicks shut quietly, and HOLDEN walks across the hall and knocks softly on the door. After a moment of waiting and shifting their weight, it opens.

HOLDEN

I lent you my typewriter.

STUDENT NO. 1

Holden? What happened to you?

HOLDEN

I'll let you keep it for twenty bucks.

STUDENT NO. 1 rubs his eyes, looks at HOLDEN, sighs and retreats back into the room. He returns with two twenties and hands it to HOLDEN.

HOLDEN
Tha-

STUDENT No. 1 shuts the door.

CUT TO:

EXT. OUTSIDE OF PENCEY PREP - NIGHT

HOLDEN, walking with Pencey Prep to their back. The camera stays fixed as HOLDEN walks farther away, down the street to the bus stop. They are wearing their hunting hat and carrying their bags on their shoulders. A puff of frozen breath hangs in the air.

CUT TO:

INT. HOTEL ELEVATOR - NIGHT

The elevator door opens and HOLDEN walks in. There is still blood on their face from the fight. Just before the doors close, the DOORMAN steps in beside HOLDEN.

The elevator doors slide shut. It's just the two of them.

DOORMAN
Interested in having a good time?

HOLDEN
Sorry...what?

DOORMAN
You look like a lonely fella. You interested in having a good time tonight or is it too late for you?

HOLDEN looks down at their watch and frowns.

HOLDEN

Uh-

DOORMAN

I'm talking about having some *fun* tonight. With a lady type of fun. You get me? How old are you?

HOLDEN

Why- twenty-two. Why?

DOORMAN

Right. Well, what do you say then? I'll do ya forty for a night, eighty til noon. Won't find those kinds of prices anywhere else 'round here.

HOLDEN

Um. Yeah. Okay, sure. Yes.

HOLDEN (V.O)

I'd like to clarify here that I wasn't entirely certain about what this guy was offering, but that it was probably against my principles. But man was I depressed, and you'll say just about anything when you aren't thinking. Kind of like when you're talking and somebody hands you something and you just take it.

DOORMAN

Okay what? A night or til noon?

HOLDEN

Uh, a night. I'll just do a night.

DOORMAN

Room?

HOLDEN looks down at the red key card they were given.

HOLDEN

Twelve twenty-two.

The DOORMAN claps HOLDEN on the shoulder, the same one STRADLATER had playfully punched earlier. HOLDEN winces.

DOORMAN

Alright, I'll send someone up in about fifteen minutes. Can ya wait that long?

The DOORMAN smiles and HOLDEN pulls their shoulder away from their grasp.

HOLDEN

Sure, yeah. I'll wait. Hey, is she pretty? The girl?

The elevator stops and the doors open to HOLDEN's floor.

DOORMAN

Don't worry about it, pal. She's *bella*.

HOLDEN

Who do I pay?

DOORMAN

Her.

By now HOLDEN has been ushered out of the elevator and the doors shut in front of them. They walk slowly down the hall to their room. They unlock the door.

INT. HOLDEN'S HOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

HOLDEN looks out of their hotel room window, where we can see the occupants of some other hotel rooms across the street. The camera watches a woman reading a book under lamp light, then pans to a person putting on drag. HOLDEN's eyes— and the camera—linger here for some time, watching as she puts on her wig and tucks something into her bra. She turns, as if realizing suddenly that her curtains aren't fully drawn, and looks up and down the street. Amazingly, she catches HOLDEN's eyes for a brief moment before they are disrupted by a knock at the door.

HOLDEN

Hell-o.

The woman, SUNNY, looks young and expressionless. HOLDEN thinks she might even be around their age.

SUNNY

You the guy Maurice said?

HOLDEN

Is Maurice the doorman?

SUNNY

Yeah.

HOLDEN

Then yes, I am. Come on in.

SUNNY enters the hotel room and sits on the spare chair, jogging her leg as soon as she sits down. HOLDEN sits opposite her on the bed.

HOLDEN

My name's Jerome Salinger. What's yours?

SUNNY

How old do you happen to be?

HOLDEN

Twenty-two.

SUNNY

Right.

HOLDEN

How old are you?

SUNNY

Old enough to know better. You have a watch on you?

SUNNY stands and takes off her overcoat and her green dress. HOLDEN watches her do this with little to no interest.

HOLDEN

No, I don't. What did you say your name was?

SUNNY

Sunny. Let's get going, huh?

HOLDEN

Don't- don't you want to talk for a while first?

SUNNY sits back down.

SUNNY

What would you want to talk about...?

HOLDEN

I don't know...just...

SUNNY

Well if you're going to talk then do it. If not, then we should really get this going. I haven't got all day.

HOLDEN scratches their head awkwardly, looking between SUNNY and the door.

HOLDEN

Yeah. Honestly, Sunny, I'm not really ah...feeling myself tonight. I've had a pretty rough night so far. Do you mind if we don't do anything? I'll pay you and all, but I'm really not feeling up to it.

SUNNY

What's the matter?

SUNNY stands and moves towards HOLDEN, standing very close.

HOLDEN

No-nothing, it's just. I broke my...clavicle. Last month, I broke my clavicle. And you see, it's not totally healed up yet. So I don't think I should risk, ah, sex. Right now. I'm sorry.

SUNNY sits on HOLDEN's lap.

HOLDEN

Do you mind cutting it out? It's really—I just got surgery and all, and my clavicle hasn't healed well yet.

SUNNY

Listen. I was sleeping when Maurice woke me for this—if you didn't want anything from me then what the hell d'you tell him you wanted a girl for?

HOLDEN

It's a—sorry. I thought I felt a bit better than I do. Turns out I was wrong. If you just get off me I'll get my wallet, swear.

SUNNY looks put off, but gets off of them and crosses her arms as she waits for HOLDEN to retrieve the money.

HOLDEN digs for the forty STUDENT No. 1 handed them earlier for their typewriter out of their back pocket and hands it to SUNNY.

SUNNY

This is only forty.

HOLDEN

Well, yeah. That's what Maurice said. For a night.

SUNNY

It's eighty for a night.

HOLDEN

I'm sorry, I really am...but that's all I've got to give right now. Maurice said forty for a night.

SUNNY takes the money and HOLDEN grabs her dress for her to put back on. She salutes them and leaves out the door. Once she's gone, HOLDEN turns off the light and slumps onto the bed, looking up at the dark ceiling.

HOLDEN

Allie, this whole thing's gotten out of control. I mean, a prostitute? You know I'm not like that. I mean... wasting her time and everything. I don't know what the hell I'm doing.

HOLDEN (V.O)

Allie doesn't answer, but I imagine he's floating sort of over-above me when I talk to him, and that he's listening even if I can't hear him.

HOLDEN

I don't feel like I know anything anymore.

MUSIC CUE: "Stay Soft" by Mitski

HOLDEN sits up all of a sudden and begins searching the drawers for a Bible. Nothing. Then, a knock at the door. HOLDEN startles.

HOLDEN

Who's there?

MAURICE

Open up, buddy.

HOLDEN

M-Maurice?

MAURICE

You didn't pay my girl her share. I told you, buddy, eighty for a night.

HOLDEN approaches the door a bit closer.

HOLDEN

You said forty.

MAURICE

Open up.

HOLDEN hesitates, and then the lock clicks and the door swings open. MAURICE and SUNNY come inside, backlit by the light in the

hallway. Shit. HOLDEN is pushed further back into the room by MAURICE's large hand.

MAURICE

Alright, let's see the cash. I've got to get back to work.

HOLDEN

I don't know how many times I have to tell you. I don't owe you anything. You said forty, I paid my forty. You're trying to chisel me!

MAURICE

Let's have it, buddy.

HOLDEN

No.

MAURICE walks toward HOLDEN, towering over them as if to make a point.

MUSIC CUE: *You stay soft, get eaten. Only natural to harden up.*

HOLDEN

Listen, I don't owe you anything. If you try something, I'll yell like hell and wake this whole hotel up. Get out of my room.

SUNNY

Here's his wallet. It was on that side table there.

HOLDEN

Hey!

SUNNY

I'll just take these two twenties, 'kay? Just what you owe me, see? I'm no crook.

HOLDEN looks frustrated and upset. Their eyes start to glisten with tears. Maurice shoves them on the shoulder again. HOLDEN does their best not to cry.

SUNNY

Hey, we got what we came for. Leave 'em alone, Maurice. C'mon, I mean it. Let's go.

HOLDEN

Yeah, go. You moron. Idiot. In a couple of years you won't even have this job anymore. You'll just be one of those scraggly guys begging for money on the street and trying to cheat everyone, just like you are now. It's pathetic.

MAURICE has had enough. He swiftly and quickly socks HOLDEN in the stomach, winding them. HOLDEN is on the floor again, and watches as both MAURICE and SUNNY leave the room.

When the door shuts, HOLDEN finally bursts into tears in the dark.

CUT TO:

Title Card: **HOLDEN'S NEAR-DEATH EXPERIENCE**

EXT. BY THE LAGOON - NIGHT

MUSIC CUE: "i was all over her" by salvia palth

HOLDEN (V.O)

I decided after that, and after drinking all of the liquor they supplied me in the hotel room, to go searching for the lagoon to see if it was frozen, and if the ducks were still there.

We hear HOLDEN's footsteps scuffing against the cement and the snow as they come to a stop at the edge of a park. The camera stays put and watches HOLDEN leave and approach the bench by the lagoon.

HOLDEN (V.O)

I was carrying this record I bought for Phoebe, my younger sister.

HOLDEN walks further, out to the edge of the water. They stoop down and squint, as if looking for the ducks in the shadows. In standing back up, one foot slips against the slick of the water, and they drop the record in their hands. It shatters on the

ground, and HOLDEN does their best to pick up the pieces, cursing all the while.

HOLDEN sits on the bench and puts the broken pieces of the record beside them. HOLDEN is visibly shivering.

HOLDEN

Where did the ducks go?

The camera focuses on the lagoon, noticing its stillness. After a moment, the scene shifts to DAY, and we see the same lagoon with two children on it. Both of them are wearing ice skates and holding makeshift hockey sticks. They are laughing, pushing an acorn back and forth across the frozen lake. The smaller one swings and falls, and the taller one quickly skates over and helps them back up.

The scene goes back to night, to the quiet of the lagoon now.

HOLDEN

Fucking freezing out here.

The air around HOLDEN isn't turning into white puffs when they breathe. HOLDEN tries to make this happen a couple of times, but to no avail. They rub their hands together.

HOLDEN (V.O)

I thought I'd better go see Phoebe before I died of pneumonia. Probably I thought of her because of Allie and how he died and I would have liked one last talk with him. I figured Phoebe should at least get to have that.

MUSIC CUE: "Back to the Old House - 2011 Remaster" by The Smiths

CUT TO:

EXT. THE CAULFIELD APARTMENT COMPLEX - NIGHT

HOLDEN looks up at the apartment complex where their parents and sister live. They open up the front door with a key and head inside.

HOLDEN makes it up the top flight of stairs and catches their breath before heading for their apartment. There's a key under the mat the HOLDEN retrieves and uses to quietly step inside.

INT. THE CAULFIELD APARTMENT - NIGHT

HOLDEN (V.O)

My parents were at a party on the fourteenth floor that night. So

I snuck over to Phoebe's room, trying to be quiet so the maid wouldn't hear me.

HOLDEN walks carefully and quietly through the dark foyer and down the hall to PHOEBE's room. The camera shows us that there's no light coming from under the door. HOLDEN cautiously turns the handle and opens the door.

HOLDEN sits on the edge of PHOEBE's bed, but doesn't rock it like Stradlater had done to them earlier the same night. They gently place a cold hand on PHOEBE's knee, and ready an index finger over their mouth.

PHOEBE wakes. She stares at HOLDEN with wide eyes, notices their silent finger, and closes her mouth.

PHOEBE

Holden? Is that really you?

HOLDEN

SHhh. Yeah, it's me.

PHOEBE

You're freezing cold.

HOLDEN

Yeah. I was at the lagoon.

PHOEBE

Come here.

PHOEBE makes room for them in her bed, lifting the covers for HOLDEN to get inside with her. They do, as silently as possible.

HOLDEN
Thanks.

PHOEBE
Holden, what are you doing here? Shouldn't you be at Pencey?
Don't tell me...

They share a look.

HOLDEN
You can't tell mom and dad.

PHOEBE
Oh, Holden. What happened?

HOLDEN
Failed history. And math. And science...

PHOEBE
Oh god.

HOLDEN
But I passed English with flying colors, at least.

PHOEBE
You are going to be in so much trouble.

HOLDEN
You can't tell them.

PHOEBE
Still, they're gonna find out, you know. They always find out.

The two of them sit in silence for a moment.

HOLDEN
You've got your play soon, right? Maybe I can actually go and see
it now.

This seems to cheer PHOEBE up considerably. She sits up in bed and faces HOLDEN.

PHOEBE

Really? Dad can't come. He has to fly to California.

HOLDEN

Did they say what time they'd be home?

PHOEBE

No, but not 'til very late.

HOLDEN nods.

HOLDEN

Okay. Listen, I bought you a record, only...it broke while I was at the lagoon.

PHOEBE

Give it to me, I'll keep em. Thanks, Holden!

HOLDEN (V.O)

I never understood why Phoebe was like that, always saving broken things.

HOLDEN

Shh, okay, not so loud. I've got to be going soon.

HOLDEN gives PHOEBE the sleeve of the broken record. She takes it and puts it on her nightstand.

PHOEBE

What? But you only just got here!

PHOEBE crosses her arms and turns away from them.

HOLDEN

I might go get a job out there. I'll keep in touch, of course, while I'm gone. Phoebe?

PHOEBE remains quiet.

HOLDEN

Thanks for sharing your warmth with me, I really needed it. I'm going now. It was nice seeing you. You gonna say bye?

PHOEBE doesn't move. HOLDEN stands and heads for the door.

PHOEBE

Why'd you really get kicked out?

HOLDEN

Bunch of phonies at Pencey.

PHOEBE

You say that about every school. You just don't like anything.

HOLDEN

That's not true.

PHOEBE

Name one thing you like. You can't.

HOLDEN

I like Allie. And I like talking to you.

PHOEBE

Allie's dead. You can't like Allie if Allie's dead, he's moved on-

HOLDEN

I know he's dead! I can still like him though, can't I? He was certainly about a thousand times nicer than anyone I know who's alive, anyway. Besides, like I said, I like talking to you, and spending time together.

PHOEBE

That isn't anything, really.

HOLDEN

Sure it is! Why the hell wouldn't it be?

PHOEBE

Stop swearing and name something else. Something you'd like to be, like, in the future. A scientist or something.

HOLDEN laughs.

HOLDEN

I couldn't be a scientist, I just told you I failed science.

PHOEBE

Well what about a lawyer like dad?

HOLDEN

Doesn't appeal to me. ... You know what I'd like to be, if I could?

PHOEBE

What?

HOLDEN sits back down on the bed.

HOLDEN

You know the song 'If a body catch a body coming through the rye'? I'd like—

PHOEBE

It's 'If a body *meet* a body coming through the rye.' It's a poem. By Robert Burns.

HOLDEN

Yeah, I know it's a poem by— anyway. I thought it was 'catch'. It makes me think of some little kids playing a game in this big field of rye.

CUT TO:

Just that; a depiction of what HOLDEN is describing. The lighting seems to be coming from the sun which is still rising under the cliff. It looks like heaven.

HOLDEN

(cont.)

Not just one or two, but thousands of kids, and nobody big's around to watch them except me. And I'm standing on the edge of some crazy cliff. And if they're running and not looking where they're going I have to come out and catch them. That's all I'd do all day. Be a catcher in the rye.

HOLDEN

(cont.)

I know that's not real, but.

PHOEBE's quiet, but she looks a little concerned. HOLDEN makes for the door again.

HOLDEN

I gotta make a call. I'll be right back.

HOLDEN creeps quietly through the dark and finds the phone in the living room. We hear them pick up the phone but don't see them make the call.

MUSIC CUE: "Feel Real" by Deptford Goth

CUT TO:

PHOEBE, still in her bed. There's music playing now softly on the radio. She's taken out the pieces of the broken record and has started trying to piece them back together like a puzzle. The door swings open. It's HOLDEN. They turn the light on and smile when they see what PHOEBE's doing.

HOLDEN

Hey, feel like dancing?

PHOEBE

You have shoes on.

HOLDEN takes their shoes off so they are only in their socks and PHOEBE excitedly jumps out of bed to join them. They dance together to the low music for a while, HOLDEN twirling PHOEBE once or twice. PHOEBE is the star of the show, and twice as energetic as them. When they're done, PHOEBE jumps back into bed under the covers.

PHOEBE
I'm improving, aren't I?

HOLDEN
Yeah.

PHOEBE
Feel my forehead.

HOLDEN feels her forehead. It feels like a normal forehead.

PHOEBE
Is it feverish?

HOLDEN
No, is it supposed to? We barely had one dance.

PHOEBE
Yes, it's supposed to. I'm making it hot. Feel again.

HOLDEN feels her forehead again and keeps their hand there.

HOLDEN
Oh, I think I can feel it now. Definitely.

PHOEBE
I can make it get so hot that you can burn someone's hand.

HOLDEN's eyes widen dramatically and they pull their hand away.

HOLDEN
Jeez, thanks for *telling* me!

PHOEBE
I wouldn't have burned *your* hand. I would've s- shh!!

PHOEBE sits up straight in bed, looking spooked.

HOLDEN
Jesus, what's the matter?

PHOEBE

I heard the front door! It's them!

HOLDEN jumps, grabs their shoes, turns off the light, and runs to PHOEBE's closet to hide. A moment later, the door opens. It's MRS. CAULFIELD, a woman in her mid-forties. HOLDEN can see her through a crack in the closet doors.

MRS. CAULFIELD

Phoebe, don't think I didn't see the light.

PHOEBE

Hi! Sorry, mom, I was having a nightmare. How was the party?

MRS. CAULFIELD

Wonderful. Do you want to talk about your dream?

PHOEBE

Not really, I'd rather just forget about it. Goodnight.

MRS. CAULFIELD

Do you need another blanket?

PHOEBE

No, I'm okay, thanks. Goodnight, mom.

MRS. CAULFIELD

Alright. Goodnight, sweetheart. Turn the radio off now.

The radio goes quiet, and MRS. CAULFIELD leaves the room. A few beats pass before HOLDEN opens the closet door as quietly as possible, and crosses to the bed to put their shoes on.

HOLDEN

Now I've really got to get going, while mom and dad are making noise. You got any money I can borrow? 'S a long story but I'm practically all out of cash.

PHOEBE

Just my Christmas money for shopping.

HOLDEN

Oh. I don't want to take your Christmas money.

PHOEBE

It's okay, I can lend you *some*.

Then PHOEBE goes to her desk and starts opening drawers, looking for the money in the dark.

PHOEBE

If you go, you won't see me in the play.

HOLDEN

Yes I will. I'll go after that. Why would I miss your play? I'm gonna stay at Mr. Antolini's house for a few days. I'll call you if I get the chance.

PHOEBE

Here.

She hands HOLDEN all of her Christmas money. It's about eighty dollars.

HOLDEN

Woah, no—

PHOEBE

Just take it. You can pay me back.

HOLDEN slowly puts the money in their pocket, looking as if doing so hurts them. When they look back up, their eyes are wet with tears.

PHOEBE

Oh, you aren't going to cry are you?

HOLDEN looks away, but it's evident that they're definitely crying. PHOEBE puts an arm around them and they hug.

HOLDEN

See you soon.

CUT TO:

Title Card: **THE CATCHER IN THE RYE**

INT. MR. ANTOLINI'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

HOLDEN sits down on MR. ANTOLINI'S couch beside him. MR. ANTOLINI looks to be in his late twenties, with a reddish beard and dark hair. He's wearing a bathrobe with a shirt underneath it. In the kitchen there are sounds of MRS. ANTOLINI making drinks.

MR. ANTOLINI

So, you and Pencey are no longer one. What happened? Did you fail English?

HOLDEN

No, that I passed. Flunked Oral Expression, though. That was a different class, kind of like Public Speaking. I could never stay on track, there was always something else I wanted to say and my teacher didn't like the tangents. The trouble with me is, I like it when someone digresses.

MR. ANTOLINI

You don't like it when someone sticks to the point when they tell you something?

HOLDEN

Sure, but not too much. I don't like when they're *married* to the point.

MRS. ANTOLINI enters the room with a tray of coffee and sugar and sets it down on the coffee table.

MRS. ANTOLINI

Coffee, boys. I'll be going back to bed now. It was nice seeing you Holden!

HOLDEN

You as well. Sorry for waking you up and all. Thanks for the coffee.

MRS. ANTOLINI

Of course.

MRS. ANTOLINI gives MR. ANTOLINI a kiss on the cheek and leaves the room.

MR. ANTOLINI

I had lunch with your father a couple of weeks ago. Did you know?

HOLDEN

No. I didn't.

MR. ANTOLINI

He's concerned about you. Really.

HOLDEN

I know.

MR. ANTOLINI

Apparently before he called me to have lunch he'd received a long letter from your headmaster saying that you were putting in absolutely no effort at all, cutting class-

HOLDEN

I never cut class. You couldn't.

MR. ANTOLINI takes a swig out of a coffee mug, but the liquid looks nothing like coffee.

MR. ANTOLINI

Frankly, I don't know what the hell to say to you, Holden...I have a feeling that you're riding for some kind of terrible, terrible fall. But I don't know what kind. You listening?

HOLDEN

Yes.

MR. ANTOLINI

It might be the kind where you get to thirty and you hate everyone around you because in your mind they fit into some kind of stereotype. Do you get what I'm saying?

HOLDEN

Yes, but you're wrong about me hating everyone. I don't hate too many people. Maybe I hate them for a *little* while, but not forever. After a while if I hate someone now and again and I don't see them for a while...well, I sort of miss them.

MR. ANTOLINI stands, retrieves ice for his drink, and sits back down next to HOLDEN.

MR. ANTOLINI

The kind of fall I think you're riding for... the person falling isn't permitted to feel or hear themselves hitting rock bottom. They just keep falling and falling. It's because you're looking for something in your environment and can't find it, because you feel it's not for you, so you give up looking. You understand?

HOLDEN

Yes, sir.

MR. ANTOLINI

You sure?

HOLDEN

Yes.

MR. ANTOLINI

Okay. I don't mean to scare you, Holden. If I write something down for you, will you read it later?

HOLDEN nods.

MR. ANTOLINI

Oddly enough it's not by a poet, but a psychoanalyst.

MR. ANTOLINI writes something down on a napkin, pulling the pen from his pocket.

MR. ANTOLINI

'The mark of the immature man is that he wants to die nobly for a cause, while the mark of the mature man is that he wants to live humbly for one.'

MR. ANTOLINI hands HOLDEN the napkin. The camera focuses on it, on HOLDEN holding onto it.

MR. ANTOLINI (V.O)

You're in love with knowledge. I think you'll find that out someday.

CUT TO:

MR. ANTOLINI making up the couch as a bed, and HOLDEN standing aside while he does it, reading the napkin over and over again.

HOLDEN (V.O)

That night I slept at Mr. Antolini's house. I didn't think too much about what he said, because I'm pretty sure I was sick from the alcohol and the cold and the crusted blood. When I woke, it was only thirty minutes after I'd fallen asleep. Mr. Antolini was beside me. I told him he saved my life that night, for letting me stay there. But really, he just saved my life.

CUT TO:

Title Card: **THE CAROUSEL AT THE END OF THE WORLD.**

EXT. THE ZOO - DAY

Overcast. HOLDEN and PHOEBE walk a ways apart at the zoo. PHOEBE is upset because HOLDEN said they wouldn't take her with them. HOLDEN stands in front of a carousel and watches it make a turn, smiling softly at the children having fun. PHOEBE approaches them.

HOLDEN

You wanna go for a ride?

PHOEBE

Too old.

HOLDEN

Says who? Go on, I'll get you a ticket.

PHOEBE

Are you coming too?

HOLDEN

I'll watch.

MUSIC CUE: "I Will" by Mitski

PHOEBE nods slightly, and HOLDEN retrieves a ticket from the booth and hands it to PHOEBE. They watch her make a turn around the carousel, and smiles fully now. It starts to drizzle, and PHOEBE gets off and runs over to them.

PHOEBE

It's starting to rain.

HOLDEN looks up at the sky. PHOEBE retrieves their hunting hat and reaches up to put it on their head.

HOLDEN (V.O)

I miss my sister. And Allie. When I get out of here, I think I'll have enough written for a book. And Phoebe will be happy that I'm finally home.

LONG SHOT ZOOM OUT. CUT TO:

Title Card: **THE END.**

FÍN.

PROCESS, MOTIVATION, & RESOURCES

This Capstone is fueled, by and large, by the story “The Catcher In The Rye” by J.D Salinger. This book is read in many high school classrooms in the U.S and has been part of English classes for many years. Somehow, it always seems to appeal to teenagers regardless of class, generation, or gender. That makes “The Catcher In The Rye” a timeless classic that has since been censored and banned due to its raw and real discussion of a teenager’s life struggling with mental illness. The book is written in the past-tense first person perspective, narrated by Holden after the events that take place over a night and a day post getting kicked out of boarding school. Holden is in a mental hospital at the end of the book, which changes the light in which the contents of the story is reflected in. This made the story prime material for when I delved into autotheory, thinking about how Holden is almost autobiographically discussing their life and also contemplating how it has gone wrong and could be improved.

Holden in my adaptation is non-binary. Much of autotheory so far in literature has been mainly focused on women/gender studies and sexuality studies. An important autotheoretical book is *Testo Junkie*, and the subject of that book is taking testosterone and seeing its effects on the body and mind over the course of time. While Holden’s gender isn’t explicitly stated in my script, I added some small details that aid in the audience understanding that Holden is uncomfortable with being referred to as “boy” and “man” over and over. They do continue to go to an all-boys school, as Holden is AMAB (Assigned Male at Birth). I decided to keep this detail in, as I also went to a gendered high school and, as a non-binary person, had to go through the same thing Holden does in terms of gendered phrases and stereotypes. However, gender is not Holden’s main “conflict” in this adaptation, and that’s on purpose. While ‘In The Rye’ touches

on the intersectionality of gender, education, and mental illness, it is more about how mental illness affects queer people, especially queer and trans minors in high school.

As a high school student first reading “The Catcher in the Rye”, I noticed that my group of queer friends and I seemed to be the most affected by the book. Many of us struggled with mental illness in one way or another, and Holden’s story seemed so relatable and easy to understand. Another thing that was important to keep me going in high school, in my lowest of lows, was music. I have closely related “Feel Real,” by Deptford Goth with Holden’s story since I first read the book, and so it only felt right to include that song—and others by queer-coded artists like Mitski and The Smiths—in the script. Music cues were important for me to add here, not only because they set the tone, but they also give a little more context to the story itself, in words that I haven’t explicitly written on the page. As you’ll notice, the music describes the emotional states of the scenes, and the tempo is set to fit as well. “Stay Soft” by Mitski, for example, plays after Holden refuses to have sex with the prostitute and Maurice and Sunny essentially punish them for this in a way. The lyrics “stay soft, get beaten” are quite literal here, and other song and lyrical choices are made for the same reasons.

“In The Rye” consists of only seven scenes, though a lot more happens in the book. These seven scenes, to me, felt like the most crucial ones, and are accompanied by title cards which are both an artistic choice and serve to connect the book to the adaptation. The titles go from descriptive to a little more abstract, but regardless of the changes I’ve made in the adaptation, the cards state that what happened in the book is essentially happening again now. They are a call back to the original, and are a sort of homage to the original story and scenes in the book. You will have noticed that they mark the beginning of each scene and are usually accompanied by a music cue.

As for the time period, “In The Rye” is meant to be ambiguous in terms of time and place. In my reading for my Symposium presentation for this piece, I note that the setting is “Here” and the time is “Now,” and furthermore the place is simply “The City.” These descriptors could also be placed on the first longshot scene, but as that would be decided in the editing process for the film adaptation, I did not include that here. The ambiguity is a callback to what I mentioned earlier—that this story is timeless. It is also the reason why I have chosen a mixture of songs from different time periods, and ultimately the audience member can decide when and where they place this story in time. Holden is also not seen using any “time markers” such as a telephone or a computer. The only item we see is a typewriter when Holden writes about their brother Allie’s baseball mitt. This can be explained by the fact that they go to a boarding school, or that since they are greatly involved in English, they just prefer a typewriter for the writing quality.

Another important part of the screenplay is the inclusion of directorial notes, like camera angles and shots. As the writer, director, cinematographer, costume designer and producer for this screenplay at the time of making this project, certain scenes have a look to them in my mind’s eye that needed to be reflected in the writing itself. For example, the audience will notice long shots and shots where Holden is walking away from the camera, growing smaller. These scenes are meant to showcase that Holden—and Holden’s mind or emotional state—are far away and hard to grasp or understand. Sometimes the camera will focus on minute details, like the first scene in Old Spencer’s house when Holden takes notice of the framed picture of the boy playing baseball. It reminds them of their brother, Allie, who is spoken about in the next scene. Another recurring shot are doors opening and closing — the front door of Old Spencer’s house, the elevator doors at the hotel, the closet doors in Phoebe’s bedroom— all of them meant to

symbolize the doors that have opened and closed for Holden. These shots and angles are meant to add to the understanding of the story as a whole, and again fill in those missing details that aren't explicitly mentioned or said aloud.

An important source of inspiration for this project was actually fanfiction. The online queer community, consisting mostly of queer women, that make up fan bases have a particular way of subverting narratives through fanfiction—in a way that best reflects their own personal (and communal) ideal of queer community, relationships, and even mental health. Being deep within fandom myself, I am not new to fanfiction in any way. In fact, I've written (queer) fanfiction that is 35,000 words in length just for fun. When the story that holds your dearest queer characters messes those characters/relationships/stories up, there is almost always a fanfic to fix it. However, *The Catcher in the Rye* already holds a solid basis for a non-binary character—their name is Holden, after all, and how much more gender neutral can you get? — and also questions sexuality several times within the canon of the book as well. With that in mind, I went into the adaptation of “*The Catcher in the Rye*” as though it were the base media for a canon-heavy fanfiction and I was simply writing it through my point of view and with my perspective lens. Some guiding questions: *How would I have written this to be posted on Archiveofourown? Which scenes or lines spark interest? What do I need to keep? What scenes do or don't serve my story?* Some of the lines in the screenplay are indeed directly taken from the book, though most are rewritten both in slang terms and, again, to sound a bit more timeless. The core, the heart of Holden's story, though—being a teenager looking for direction in a sea of depression—is always there. It is a story that should not be banned, that should continue to be read in high schools, and should remain a part of an adolescent's reading history as mental illness

is so prevalent in teens and adults today. Even if Holden's story doesn't particularly speak to one student, it *will* speak to another, and inform teens about the struggles that some people have, and how those struggles can feel so deep and hopeless when aided by depression or other mental illnesses. My goal with this adaptation is not only to expand autotheory and how it is consumed, but to regift this story to those that need it most, and need to see themselves in someone else.

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