APARTMENT B: AN EXPERIMENT IN
TRADITIONAL NARRATIVE STRUCTURE

A CREATIVE PROJECT

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Part I: Introduction

The film produced as my creative project, Apartment B, is about a man who fights with his inner demons after losing his wife and daughter. The man goes through extreme depression but throughout the film. The viewer does not know why he is depressed nor why he acts the way he does. Everything he has ever known becomes nightmarish and every day is harder to live than the previous. It is my intention to make the audience believe nothing is out of the ordinary. However, throughout the film I drop subtle hints that everything is not as it seems. Many examples such as the sound of people checking out and beeps of a scanner in the grocery store allude to something not true. The audience may suspect something is not right but my intent is for them not to figure out what the missing element until the end of the film. More examples are provided in the project discussion.

The film was a large undertaking but I feel that it was well worth it. I learned so much throughout every stage of the process: Preproduction, Production and Post-Production. Therefore, I found this to be an excellent opportunity for me not only to broaden my horizons as a filmmaker, but also to become a better storyteller by telling a story in an unconventional way.

My goal with this film was to bring an idea to the screen that audiences could believe could actually happen. Psychological thrillers have always intrigued me--so much that I knew that some day I wanted to make one. A psychological thriller relies on making people think and in a sense messing with their minds. Apartment B employs an interesting narrative device in which the main character, Paul, is the only character and the audience learns about his world and his situation through his perspective. This is a unique element because it is the basis of a
potential “unreliable narrator”. From the beginning of the film, it was my intention that the audience knows something is wrong. Paul is alone and there has to be something that he is not telling us. Therefore we, as an audience, can be taken on any roller-coaster on which the film wants to take us. Because we do not see anything wrong with his world we choose to believe, or at least that is what is intended, that everything is fine. A lack of comparison between his world and what is “supposed” to happen brings the audience along the path making it hard to distinguish between what is right and “wrong”. This narrative device is much different than those utilized by other psychological thrillers. *Apartment B* uses this exploration through one character to its advantage. What we need to know is that *Apartment B* employs this unorthodox storytelling technique and that is why this film is different than other psychological thrillers. I will further explain the narrative device and approach in discussion section.

Normally, films present characters through their interactions with other characters and the dialogue that explains the situation at hand. My film, on the other hand, has little interaction between characters and little dialogue. So in turn, audience members have to come up with their own interpretation of the film. It is my intent that each audience member leaves the theatre entertained but also questioning.

I intend the audience to constantly draw conclusions as to what is happening. With this interesting perspective we are presented with an opportunity to tell a story in an alternative way. Rarely are we as an audience presented with only one character to tell a story. Isolation is a central theme for this film; therefore I thought that the presentation of having only Paul present for the majority of the scenes would be the proper way to tell it. I wanted the audience to live through Paul’s experiences and I felt that the best way to do that would be to give them only his perspective.
This project is the capstone to my graduate degree because it is by far the most complicated film I have ever undertaken. The dark theme of depression proved to be very difficult to portray and the cinematography is, to me, my best work. I wanted this project to represent me as a filmmaker and also as a writer. I wrote the script as well as produced, shot and directed and edited the film. Looking back, I wish that I would have been able to get a team to help me with the production but I was able to manage without one. For this project, I wanted to attempt things that I have not attempted before. I wanted to get away from the “matter as a fact” director that I have become, where all my images have no drama or no questions to answer, and really create a “voice” that is not easily forgettable.

This paper is a contribution to the art form because it seeks to explore a narrative form with which audiences have become comfortable. Most movies have used character interaction and dialogue to explain and create empathy; however, my film tries a different approach. That being said, my film is not the first film that has explored this approach. There have been other examples of one-character films such as Buried and All is Lost, Moon, and 127 hours. An important thing to note as well is that most of these films rely on the presence of others to help tell the story.

The hardest part of this process was to create empathy with a character when the character in question has little or no interactions with others. To address this challenge answer I will first review research on audience empathy, unreliable narration and the “conventional” modes of storytelling. Throughout this paper I will mention what the rules consist of but first let us define what it takes to create empathy with the audience.
Part II: Review of Literature

Audience Empathy

What makes a successful film? Is it the story, locations, special effects? I believe that a successful film is successful because of one thing, empathy. This is a very old term defined as the feeling that one understands and shares another person's experiences and emotions: the ability to share someone else's feelings (Merriam-Webster). This means that an audience has to put itself in the character’s shoes and understand their situation. I recently watched The Secret Life of Walter Mitty, (2014). The film is about a negative accounts manager, aka film negative filer, who after losing a very important frame of film sets out on an adventure to find the photographer to get it back so it can be printed for the cover of the magazine. This film made me laugh and also think about my life and its direction. Am I supposed to stay here and work in Indiana, or move somewhere else and do something truly remarkable? Movies force us to think, or at least they should. The director or writer needs to make a person feel something or that person will not care about either the characters or their situation. That is by definition empathy and it is what makes audiences care about the outcome of your project. One must create a situation that deals with a basic human emotion such as love, happiness or anger. These are all emotions that we have all felt many times in our lives.

Moon (2009) depicts an astronaut, Sam Bell who is tasked with gathering helium-3 on the surface of the moon using a device called a harvester. His only companion is a robot named GERTY, voiced by Kevin Spacey. He lives out his days on the moon working, eating and sleeping. One day while harvesting he hallucinates causing him to crash the rover into the
harvester. Losing oxygen he quickly passes out and awakens back in the station. Sam awakes in the base infirmary with no memory of the accident. He overhears GERTY receiving instructions from Lunar Industries not to let him outside the base and to wait for the arrival of rescue team "Eliza". His suspicions aroused, he manufactures a fake problem to force GERTY to let him outside. He travels to the crashed rover, where he finds a doppelganger Sam Bell, unconscious. He finds out that he and the doppelganger are in fact clones of the original Sam Bell and that his entire existence is memories of somebody else. (Wikipedia: Moon) This movie is an excellent example of one-character plot lines. However it still has characters in it to explain the situation and dialogue to explain how the character is feeling. Apartment B does not have a lot of dialogue and no other characters. My intention is that the audience will feel something for the character during Apartment B, since we as an audience will be tasked with coming up with our own interpretation of the film, each outcome might be different from spectator to spectator.

Conventional Modes of Storytelling

What does it take to create an empathetic audience? The spectator has to feel something. Therefore a filmmaker must present the situation in a way that makes the audience feel a certain way. One way directors and directors of photography do this is by shot selection. Consider this example to illustrate: Tom is breaking up with his girlfriend, Lisa. If we keep the shot wide, the audience will not care what Tom is doing. However if we see the look on Tom’s face when he is breaking it off with Lisa, we would see that he is in fact distraught about the entire situation, as evidenced by the tears streaming down his face. Through this use of what is known as a Point-of View shot, or POV, we can really understand what the character is feeling without any spoken dialogue attached.
The POV shot is one of the many devices used to create an empathetic audience. In fact, the POV serves a higher purpose according to Vaage (2010), “The POV structure is a cinematic elaboration of our natural tendency to explore another’s gaze and facial expression for information.” I find this concept intriguing. I understand that we need to do certain things when creating a film, but I never quite understood why it is that we need to have certain shots or why they evoke a certain emotion. As Vagge notes,

“By mimicking the way we engage perceptually in someone we are interested in empathically in real life, the POV structure does perhaps signal to the spectator that the character is now experiencing something of relative importance; that it is worthwhile to engage empathically in his state of mind in order to maximize narrative engagement”.
(Vaage, 2010 p. 161)

During Apartment B, I utilized POV shot and reaction shots. One shot in particular, is when Paul is sitting on a park bench. He stares forward as we dolly in on his face; we hear giggles and a small voice from behind. The scene shows a little girl, Emilia, his daughter, motioning for him to follow her. The POV shows the importance of the shot and the reaction shot shows his hesitation and disbelief in what he is seeing, for his daughter is dead yet here she is in the flesh.

Many films use this technique to show the audience what is important to the story. One film, in particular, is Shutter Island (2010). This film is about a U.S. Marshall who has been assigned to find a missing patient on an island for the criminally insane. Throughout the film, our main character Teddy Daniels becomes more and more paranoid of his surroundings. He is sure that everybody at the institution is in on a conspiracy. Towards the end of the film, Teddy has a vision of his wife and a young girl. He has just used his tie as a fuse, dosed it in gasoline and
stuffs it into the supervising doctor at the institution. He uses the explosion as a diversion to uncover the truth about a mysterious lighthouse after his partner is missing. During the vision, the camera slows down the two girls standing in front of the car and a reaction shot from Teddy. This shot indicates many things to the audience the most important being that his wife or at least her memory does not approve of her actions. This is illustrated by her presence in front of the car suggesting that what he is doing is wrong and that she is stopping the explosion from happening. There are many examples in the film that indicate her memory is not an advocate for Teddy’s actions; this causes tension between them.

I chose to write a film about depression because I believed that many people could relate to the themes presented in the film. In fact 1 in 10 Americans suffers from depression according to Healthline.com and 80% of those suffering are not receiving treatments for their illness. Also, as I mentioned before that the strongest, most compelling stories are stories that are rooted in our own personal experiences. A personal experience of my own was when I lost my fiancé. I knew there was a lot of heartache that needed to be dealt with. I decided to do what any creative person would do and that was to use the pain in a productive and cathartic way. The story was too good to pass up and I knew that I had to use it.

Unreliable Narration

The term unreliable narrator refers to the main character providing the audience with false information either knowingly or unknowingly casting the audience astray. The unreliable narrator is an integral part to the genre of psychological thriller because the audience could be following the ramblings of a mad man either known or not known. However as the audience you have no choice other than to continue watching. This idea of unreliable narration has been around for hundreds of years. It is interesting to note that an unreliable narrator could be labeled
as a liar; however, usually they are judged by a separate set of standards than by the moral code we live by.

According to German scholar, Dr Ansgar Nunning, unreliable narrators are not to be understood in relation to a moral code or implied author but rather from the viewpoint of frame theory (Hansen, 2008). When a narrator becomes unreliable it is at this time that we judge his actions based on our moral code. This is not true however because unreliable narrators do not abide by the moral rules we have placed in our world. For example, we know that killing is wrong but an unreliable narrator may not see it that way. For the unreliable narrator, the frame of the story dictates how the character should act. The character Patrick Bateman in American 

_Psycho_ however does not see the world the way the audience does. He does some horrendous things such as murdering a co-worker, having a threesome with prostitutes then murdering them. These actions are conventionally wrong and evil, however the mindset that Patrick Bateman has in the film, “though it does sporadically penetrate how unacceptable some of what I'm doing actually is, I just remind myself that this thing, this girl, this meat, is nothing..." (Ellis, 1991). This suggests that Bateman knows that what he is doing is wrong, but he finds his victims to be nothing more than meat, not human beings at all. It reminds me of the same Nazis strategy; to get the Germans to support the cause against the Jews creating faceless, less than human examples--leaving the Germans to believe that the Jews were in fact the cause of all the hardship.
Part III: The Production Process of Apartment B.

The motive of the film was to present an idea on screen that has yet to be accomplished at this capacity: could we pull off a film centered on one character and a set of flashbacks? The idea seemed to rock the bases of film because most other films deal with the interactions of characters on screen to define those characters and their personalities. I felt that the isolation of one character would make for a dramatic story, as well as a relatable idea that many people have personally lived through. Apartment B focuses on Paul, a young math professor, who used to be full of life, but after the loss of his wife, Ashley, and daughter, Emilia, he starts to lose his grip with reality. Paul denies his situation and creates a coping mechanism in which he is isolated from everyone. He goes through his day only to be bombarded with horrors past his understanding. He encounters faceless beings stalking him while leaving work and while he visits his deceased daughter’s favorite playground he sees her there motioning for him to follow her. Paul eventually snaps after finding a locket in the middle of an unfamiliar alleyway that is remarkably similar to one that he gave to his daughter, Emilia.

He rushes home to see if the actual locket is where he left it. After placing the locket he found on the kitchen table, he rushes into his daughter’s bedroom and rummages through her things to see if he can find her locket again. Finding it amongst her things, he comes out to the kitchen with her locket and notices the other locket is not sitting there anymore. It is in his hand. This event forces him to remember a repressed memory in which his schizophrenia forced him to lash out aggressively towards his family. One night he binds his wife’s hands, gags her, and drowns her in their bathtub. After the horror subsdues, he moves towards his daughter who was watching the entire thing from the doorway. He picks her up and reenters the bathroom door.
Horrified by this memory, he rushes to the bathroom only to be tormented by Ashley, his deceased wife, blaming him for everything. The next day Paul writes in his journal continually accounts his days in a way to better analyze what is happening to him. He eventually becomes overwhelmed by it all and throws his stuff off the desk. Once he settles down, he notices a hidden page in the cover of his favorite journal. He reaches for the journal and reads the actual account of what happened to his family. Paul was driving one afternoon near the lake and was not paying attention to the road. He veers into oncoming traffic, overcorrects and drives off the bridge. The scene blacks out and Paul breaks through the water. He is the only survivor, Ashley and Emilia did not make it out of the car and drowned. He blames himself for their deaths so he gets a gun out of the desk and contemplates taking his own life.

At this point, Ashley and Emilia show up to let him know that everything is going to be ok and that they forgive him. While Paul makes amends with his family, another faculty member comes into his office to check on him. Nothing is out of place, no alcohol and no gun. He sits there in the same place Ashley and Emilia left him in. After telling the colleague that he is fine, he gives a devious look to the camera indicating that he might or he might not be.

The cast for the film included Roberto Mantica playing Paul, Sophia Stout playing Ashley and Kate Wilson playing Emilia. I could not have asked for a better cast in fact they looked as if they were an actual family. During one of the side shots, we needed to take pictures as props to place in the apartment. The images that we took looked so much like a real family it seemed almost as if it was predestined.

A film of this nature brings out a chance for a director to show disturbing almost ghostly scenes, such as a grocery line that moves but does not move or faceless people present in a college quad. I thought that this was a fun way to give the audience some insight on the true
reality for my main character’s situation. My goal was to make the audience aware that something was off, but not to give away the ending. The powerful ending when the audience realizes that everything they have just seen is entirely in Paul’s mind comes as much more of a shock and is therefore more enjoyable as a whole. As a bonus, the audience hopefully leaves the theatre wondering if the entire film was in his head or if only some of the elements were.

The production of the film was much harder than anticipated. The largest problem was trying to empty every location of people to present the idea of isolation. I tried to make the scope of the film large enough to believe, all the while making sure that no one was present except for who was supposed to be there. When filming inside I was able to quarantine my cast and crew to one area and shut off the location to outsiders. This proved much more difficult when we had to find outside locations. I wanted a large scene in which the audience really starts to understand Paul’s perspective. We needed a location that would be empty but still had to fit within the concept of the film. Originally the faceless scene called for a street corner or street, but this came at a cost. I was in talks with the Marion VA Hospital in Marion, IN, however this came with a $500 price tag that I could not pay. In my dealing with the VA, the representative Michael Brady mentioned that I needed production insurance. This presented a problem because I had none; I had never needed it for any project before. I found a company that offered insurance for short-term productions under 12 days for $500. This coverage would have covered any stunts that we would have done but I could not afford the expense. We opted to go with a cheaper alternative. Since I received my bachelor’s degree from Indiana University Kokomo, I had a few connections with people there that could help me get some locations. It helped that in the script I wrote Paul to be a college professor, teaching math. So I called up Tara Scott, the person in charge of special requests for IU Kokomo. She said she would be happy to help out and effortlessly gave
us access to all the locations we needed. Luckily, when we shot on campus it was Easter weekend. This meant almost no one would be present on campus. We shot in the quad and kept all shots tight and close up, which was not what I would have originally preferred. Being that he is the only character present throughout the entire film, I really wanted this location to further sell his isolation. This would have been better seen by providing him with a large wide shot to run through, showing the emptiness of his world. However as it is in indie filmmaking with no budget productions, you have to make due with what you have.

Another problem I had with location was the drowning scene. The scene originally shows the car slowly sinking as Paul finally comes to, realizing he and Ashley are surrounded by water. Ashley screams trying to free herself but she cannot seem to get the seatbelt to free itself. After looking back to check on Emilia and realizing she is gone Paul turns his attention to Ashley. After some struggle, Ashley tells him it is ok and he should carry on without her. The water gets to her and she drowns. Out of all the scenes I wrote, this scene was my favorite. However with such a limited budget, no stunt team and no real way to get a car in the water without getting arrested, we opted to go with a different alternative. Roberto and I sat down and discussed the possibilities for the shot. The scene was too important to skip and I firmly believed that it needed to be there. We worked for several hours and ultimately settled on the idea that we would use sound and a blackout to convey the idea that the car crashed. The scene then opens up to an empty reservoir when Paul emerges forcefully from the water. He screams and dives down for Ashley and Emilia, but to no avail. The audience then realizes that they either drowned or died on impact.

This new version helped in many different ways. First, I did not have to have Sophia or Kate present at all for the shoot, which helped with scheduling issues. Secondly, I did not have to
place a car in the water. Although I still do believe the shot would have been effective, I know that logistically it could not have been done with the time and lack of funds I had. Lastly, this new version allowed the audience to come up with its own version of what happened which is much more powerful than actually seeing it. An example from another film that involves the audience using its imagination is a scene from *Reservoir Dogs* (1992) The scene depicts Mr. Blonde interrogating a cop for information. He dances to the song “Stuck in the Middle with You” by Stealers Wheel, which makes the scene seem much more devious, being that he is making light of the whole situation. He then jumps on the cop’s lap and cuts off his ear, however, the audience does not see the act. The camera moves away, while the audience hears sound effects and screaming. The suspense of wondering what is happening helps the mind to create the worst outcome, making the moment just that much more intense.

My crew was small yet efficient. The people who I had on my crew knew nothing of the filmmaking process, however with my direction they ended up doing an excellent job. For the most part, we kept everything light and guerilla style. I shot the film on a canon 7d and used existing locations for the most part. We dressed up the apartment and made it look like someone was living there. Because of time constraints and deadlines we did very little production design in the apartment. This was also an aesthetic choice because Paul’s life is empty and I wanted the locations to reflect his mindset. All of the scenes from the film were shot in locations such as: an apartment given to me rent free, a local grocery store after hours, my insurance salesman’s office, a school classroom and quad, and a local reservoir. In the beginning I felt like the small amount of locations we had would help to focus things down and make for an easier film, but I was mistaken. I definitely underestimated the scope of the film. There was an abundance of things I did not think about. One scene in particular was, again, the faceless scene. During the
scene, Paul was supposed to run to his car for shelter. However after some unfortunate events that forced me to replace Roberto’s water pump in his car, we had to adjust the scene. The scene was not as dramatic and intense as I would have liked due to the change but I had to make do with the situation at hand.

Being mobile and adaptable was important during the filming process. We had a very limited time window to shoot all the scenes. In fact, there was one scene where Roberto had to jump in a freezing cold reservoir and then dry off, get warm, then get over to film at a grocery store for another three hours. I had to put a lot of stress on my cast and crew sometimes resulting in 12 or 13 hours days because of the tight deadline we had in finishing.

The soundtrack for Apartment B has two composers, Dean Schimplefennig, who wrote the theme, and Roberto Mantica, who wrote the background ambient tracks and other, featured music. Any featured music in the film had to compliment great cinematography. As with any suspense film, the music, or lack thereof, needed to be timed right with the film. Roberto took the film first and after a rough cut was done, scored the film according to the proper moments. I also contacted Dean about writing the theme song. I told him that I wanted something pretty and suspenseful all at once. I shared with him that I wanted something like the track Doc’s Song for the movie The East (2013). The track proved to the underlying feeling of the movie, subtlety was the key. Dean’s track needed to be something that could evoke a certain emotional response for the audience and also make the film beautiful yet creepy altogether.
Part IV: Discussion

I felt this film needed to be made for two reasons. One, I needed to tell this story. I felt that this story would be one that many could relate to. It has such real world themes and the scope of true depression presented in the film shows the audience in part what it means to be depressed. Two, I wanted to know where the limit to storytelling was. I know that there is a certain way in which we normally do things, however, I was wondering if we could push the boundaries to what we know. Can we break the rules of everything?

I have often heard the phrase, “once you know the rules, you can break them, but you have to master them first.” This rule tends to apply to most people except for artists like Wes Anderson, who usually does not follow the normal rules. He usually places his characters in the middle of the screen, which is considered a “crime” or uses weird compositional choices. This does set him apart from everybody else and has become his personal style however according to the rules of filmmaking the rule of thirds exists to tell the shooter where is the strongest position for the characters to be. The rule of thirds mentions that the best position for your characters to be is where the lines intersect if the screen were to be divided in thirds.

*Apartment B* is full of metaphors and allusions such as one example where Paul is not surrounded by anybody. Everybody in the film is gone. In every scene, the audience only sees Paul, until the very end when another co-worker comes into frame. I showed the film to a coworker of mine just test out the rough cut, and the first thing he asked was, “Where is everybody?” I was excited because that meant that he was engaged enough to notice that there were no other characters in the film. The missing characters are a metaphor to illustrate the loneliness one experiences when one is depressed. When going through depression, at least from my own experiences, one forgets people are all around you. I went through about six months of
feeling like I was hopelessly alone and that no one was there for me. I felt that it was impossible to get anyone to care about me, or my situation. This is portrayed in the film by presenting all other characters as “invisible” to him. Although the audience does not see anyone and their existence is only slightly hinted. They are actually there. In many scenes throughout the film, we allude to the presence of others. However, as mentioned before Paul’s emotional state the audience does not see these other people.

The film is loosely based on my experiences and even some events I lived out after going through depression myself. I was engaged to a woman for two years and she ended up breaking it off because she did not want to marry me after all that time. We had an apartment and two cats. I was with her for four years and thought I was going to be with her forever. However, plans change. This loss was devastating for me. I found myself unable to perform the easiest of tasks like eating and going to work. I started seeing a friend of mine soon after the break-up, which was only three weeks afterward. My friend and I were together for one year and then broke off our relationship because I was still hung up on my ex. Come to find out I had liked my recent ex much more than I let on and the loss of her sent me spiraling out of control. I attended therapy twice a week to talk through my issues and was on two different types of anti-depressants. I could not shake the memory of both women. Eventually, I decided to clean up my act and go to New Mexico for the summer where I really found myself again. Everybody out there liked me a great deal and I enjoyed everybody’s company. When I was depressed there were many people - who said they were there if I needed them and if I needed to talk, all I had to do was ask and. I heard their words but did not really take to heart what they said; I ignored them and continued to feel sorry for myself. This situation was a powerful source of inspiration. Heartbreak is
something almost everybody can relate to and as we now know the main goal in film is to get the audience to have empathy with the main character.

Almost every element presented in the film directly relates to an actual event from my own experiences. The “faceless beings” scene was something that happened to me with many people wanting to reach out and help me. The scene is supposed to be unsettling because we are seeing it through Paul’s eyes. He is in such a fragile state to where his paranoia starts to really play a role on his interpretation of reality. The faceless people in reality are nothing more than concerned students and faculty members that happen to notice a man acting strange. He “places” mask on them to signify the faceless people present in a depressed person’s life. People reaching out to help from every direction can sometimes be too overwhelming when one is depressed. Given Paul’s emotional state, depression can also be terrifying. I wanted the audience to feel everything as Paul does, so we as an audience see the faceless people and believe them to be a nightmare but in reality they are normal, helpful people who see a man they know and care about becoming very combative and violent.

Another large misdirection is the inclusion of the murder. The original script did not have a murder in it but I felt that the story needed a turning point. It needed to be abrupt and terrifying. I wanted a scene that would really make the audience think about how they feel about Paul. It explains everything, or so they think. The scene is one of my favorites because of a few reasons. It has the most drama out of any scene in the film. Up until this point, the audience has already drawn conclusions to what Paul’s situation is and they might even conclude that his family died, evident by the empty scenes and the photo frames. However they were not expecting the deaths to be caused by Paul. This would explain the reason why he acts the way that he does. I love the cinematography in this scene above all as well. It took me about an hour to light this one specific
scene because having just the right pools of light was very important.

The lighting had to be dramatic and eerie, therefore we placed a soft box, dimmed in the bedroom and used the can lights in the hallway. A soft box was great for most applications because it allowed us to get light lots of light while not creating shadows. The benefit to a soft box as opposed to a can light is that a soft box is a self-contained light with a large piece of diffusion over the lighting reducing shadows cast on the adjacent walls. Can lights or hot lights would not have been good for this application because we did not want to have harsh shadows on the scene except for the areas over his face. At one point, Paul stands in the hallway with the overhead lights shining on his face creating great shadows for his face and a hard side light from the a hot light in the bathroom, on his left side. This created an almost two-faced look, which represented his split personality at that moment. In order to make it look like night, even though we shot during the day, we covered all windows and doors to cut all outside light using black wrap and black table clothes. The last light we placed was a key light on Roberto in Emilia’s bedroom, which also acted as Emilia’s backlight. This setup was the most complex lighting setup I have ever used, but ended up being important to the plot.

Another element I will mention is audio. This ended up being crucial for without it the film would be nothing. I learned so much from editing audio for this film. I learned how to use Adobe Audition and Premiere Pro seamlessly and how to apply many different filters and effects. The dynamic link from Audition to Premiere Pro made everything much easier to handle. Many times the audio we recorded on set was not loud enough for the microphone to hear it. After noticing problems in post-production I could not re-shoot I had to work the hardest on improving the audio using post processes. I knew that if anything were going to be my downfall it would be weak audio. I utilized multiband compressors, notch filters, and parametric
equalizers, amplify, noise reduction and many other audio effects. There are many instances in which the audio is weak. However that was used as an aesthetic decision to illustrate Paul’s lack of conscious hearing. When depressed, people tend to not hear certain frequencies. I wanted to illustrate this as best I could by muting certain tones as appropriate times.

The film also presented multiple opportunities to perform Foley sound effects. Foley is a process where the sound effects of the scene are recreated and recorded to make the scene more believable such as: a door slamming or footsteps. Some examples that I did were a kiss, recreated by kissing my hand or replacing giggles lost in natural sound recordings by using a process call Automated Dialogue Replacement or ADR, which allows the actor to rerecord their dialogue over the original tracks. The audio I present with this film is some of my best so far. My hope is that every project I continue to place a higher and higher importance on audio and sound in my films.

If a film ceases to raise enough money for its production, then there is no film.

Filmmaking is an expensive art form requiring lots of people and lots of money. You can pull off a film with very little budget but if you want the production to be good the funds have to be there. On Apartment B I wanted to raise some money to help out with production costs. I opened up a kickstarter, created a video and posted it all over social media; this, it seemed, was not good enough. The marketing of the fundraising effort left something to be desired. I had never before raised money for a film I had no idea what I was doing. I read and watched videos about how to pull of a successful Kickstarter campaign and other tips however none of it worked. I looked at other Kickstarter funded films and analyzed what they did right and wrong. The campaign failed raising only $105 of $1,500 goal. This was disappointing because all of the funds came out of my pocket. I worked so the film could thrive. I saved so the film could live. This took a lot out of
me while putting me in a financial bind but in the end, I ended up spending $2,500 roughly and I do not regret any of it. This experience will make my next film just that much better. I know that the skills I learned on this film will transpire to all other projects in the future.
Part V: Conclusion

Looking back on the film, I wish I had done a lot of things differently. I wish that I had taken more time for preproduction to get a better understanding of everything. I was naïve coming into this project thinking I had everything figured out. I soon realized after my first meeting that I had much more that I needed to do than I originally thought. We had an early production meeting in February 2014 in which the producers, the assistant director, and myself sat down and discussed our plan. We realized shortly after the meeting started that we had nothing accomplished. We had missed obtaining all the props, location permissions, filming schedules, gear and costumes. Biz, my executive producer, was instrumental in the success of this film. She has produced plays and musicals for many different organizations; she knew what needed to be done. She gave each of us a list of tasks to complete by the next meeting. My list was much lengthier than anyone else’s as I was the director. I was asked to finish revisions on the script, get availability of actors so we could schedule shoots, find props and get some of the location permissions. I knew that producing a film would be a difficult task but I never realized how much needed to be done before we could shoot.

It seemed that anything that could go wrong did go wrong with this project. The first set of days I had set aside for filming was difficult. Three days after I sent out the schedule, Roberto told me that he could not make it to any of these shoots. I had allotted shooting over 6 pages of the script within two days. Because of Roberto’s absence I had to improvise. What we ended up shooting, instead, were flashbacks and POV shots, using the camera as Roberto’s point of view. I even, at one point in time, use Sophia’s boyfriend Paul as a body double in order to get one of the scenes. Overall, I was not pleased with the shots we did, so I cut them from the film. They did not help the story. Absences and scheduling conflicts were by far the biggest hurdles I
encountered.

Another problem we dealt with was producing the drowning scene. This scene was the climax of the film and it needed to be great. I feel that my writing was bigger than my budget. I had watched drowning scenes like the one’s in *iRobot* and *Unknown*, where the car fills up with water and the actors are trapped by the rushing water. Scenes like these are always full of drama and they end up becoming my favorite scenes. When a character is close to death they reveal who they truly are. There is something so visceral and real about these scenes that I felt such drama needed to be portrayed in *Apartment B*. It disappointed me that we were not able to play the scene the way I had wanted, because of time and budget constraints. There was no place to put a car in the water without getting arrested. I even looked into DNR and Indiana Water Conservation policies, which stated that the car had to be free of any fluids and completely gutted. I did not have the capability or the time to do all of this so we chose an alternative path. Although the scene did not play out the way I had originally envisioned, it still worked.

The film was a success in that I as an artist found my voice and I hope that I will not lose this new vision. My hope is that things will continue to get better and offer new opportunities. This process has created many different improvements. Improvements such as better eye for composition, finding and managing locations, and displaying a more cinematic image to help convey the story better. The film would have gone smoother if I had a dedicated crew the entire time. There were multiple times when I did everything by myself and in doing so, dented the project in certain ways. When the crew was present, everything moved fluidly. However, when I was the only crew member present--running camera, directing, lighting and running sound-- the project definitely suffered from the lack of specialization. My hope is that if anybody wanted to a film like this again, they would know to have a dedicated crew for the entire time shooting. This
was something I did not see as a problem until I was in the middle of post-production.

This experience has really opened my eyes as a filmmaker and storyteller. I discovered that one can tell a story without dialogue but the other elements have to be there. I now know why those other films I mentioned; always give the actor a person off of which to act. The story has to be told in some way, either through dialogue or non-verbal communication. It would have been a good idea, after all, to place other characters in the film with whom Paul could have interacted. However I believe the film was a great success and I think people will really enjoy it.

I had a lot of fun working on this project and I now know what is required to get a film from concept to finished project. It takes a lot of hard work from many different people. Filmmaking is a collaborative art and everyone is crucial to the final product. I am planning on placing the final product of *Apartment B* into many different film festivals either this year or next year such as Heartland Film Festival, Indianapolis International Film Festival, Student Academy Awards, and other such contests. I cannot wait for the world to see *Apartment B*; I am excited to see the response to the film.
References


Appendix I: Script

APARTMENT B

Written and Directed by
KEVIN BOUCHER

Revision:
2/28/14
4/9/14

Kevin Boucher
kaboucher@bsu.edu
765.419.5048
INT. APARTMENT, HALLWAY

We move down the hallway slowly and turn towards his apartment, apartment B. Move through the door and step into the apartment.

INT. APARTMENT, MORNING

The apartment is bare with remnants of a past family-oriented atmosphere. Frames of a happy family with one face ripped out show that the occupants were very happy but now there is something different about THIS environment.

Quick flashbacks of an accident of some kind, we aren’t entirely sure what happened, are intercut with movement throughout the apartment.

INT. APARTMENT, BEDROOM

Paul, a twenty something man, tosses and turns in his bed, obviously having a nightmare of some kind, until he eventually rises abruptly and sits with his head in his hands.

OPENING TITLE: APARTMENT B

INT. APARTMENT,

Paul gets ready for work. His bedroom is very minimal as is the rest of his apartment. He showers.

INT. APARTMENT, KITCHEN

Paul then fixes breakfast while operating with a precision that you don’t see very often.

INT. APARTMENT, KITCHEN TABLE

Paul pops some pills and always seems to be contemplating something but never says anything.

EXT. SMALL TOWN

The Paul drives through his home town which is a small to mid-size town littered with houses and cars but not occupants. The entire town is empty and he is the only living person in the area.
INT. CAR

The man, Paul listens to the radio with hopes that he could find some good news however every station has only static. He passively listens to radio static as he drives on and Pops some more pills.

INT. EXT CLASSROOM DOOR

Paul walks down the hallway towards an empty classroom. He reaches for the door knob.

INT. CLASSROOM

(Flashback)

A somewhat younger and more carefree Paul is seen teaching class. He wears bright colors while making jokes

PAUL
Now I know you all don’t care about math but humor me for a second. A father, angry because his teenage daughter had missed her curfew, told the teenager, "I told you to be home by a quarter of twelve!" The girl responded, "But my math teacher said that 1/4 of 12 is 3."...

Class laughs

PAUL
Alright, enough fooling around. You’re all having way too much fun (class laughs) take out you’re textbooks and turn to page 450.

We fade to a grim version of the same classroom with no one present. He sets his books down and writes on the board. The first bell rings which indicates that it’s class time. He looks around hopeful but no one shows. He continues to write.

Second bell rings. He sighs and sits at his desk at the front of the classroom waiting for the class.

After some time passes, he sighs and leaves the classroom apparently no one is coming to class.
INT. OFFICE

Paul writes in a little red book that contains all his notes for his classes as well as his life experiences. He keeps every detail very organized and is enamored with making sure all events following the incident is in it. We focus on words and phrases like "why?" "I should have done more" "ACCIDENT" and "FAULT" wrote over and over. After he’s finished writing he closes the book with his left hand and places the pencil strategically to the right of the journal. The day is done. He rises and turns off the desk lamp.

INT. GROCERY STORE

Paul walks down the empty aisles of a grocery store. He is completely uninterrupted by anything. Very determined to get what he wants he swiftly walks through the aisles grabbing the items he needs.

INT. GROCERY STORE, CHECKOUT LINE

Paul stands at the checkout line while no one stands there. He stays about ten feet back despite no one in front of him. He slowly moves as if the "line" is moving. The beeps of a scanner are present. His actions unaltered.

INT. APARTMENT, KITCHEN

Paul enters the apartment, paper sack full of groceries. He moves to the kitchen and sets down his bags very neatly. He pauses awhile hanging his head before reaching into the sack to put them away.

FLASHBACK TO:

He comes into the apartment with bags of groceries in his hands. His daughter Emilia, runs through his legs and darts into the kitchen in front of him. He tosses the groceries aside and runs after his daughter.

FLASHFORWARD TO:

PRESENT

He continues to put away his groceries.
INT. APARTMENT, BEDROOM

Paul enters his bedroom when all of a sudden a vision comes over him. His wife, Ashley, is brushing her hair and places the brush on the vanity. She then turns to look over her shoulder at him and soon disappears. He lays in bed motionless staring at the ceiling.

INT. PAUL’S DREAMS

Paul’s dreams depict images of his family: his wife, Ashley and his daughter, Emilia. They go to the lake to fish. Scenes of sunsets and loving action towards each other. Smiles and other happy thoughts.

Paul goes in for a kiss when...

ABRUPT: Ashley’s face slowly being covered by water as she struggles to keep her head above. Each breath harder than the last.

INT. APARTMENT,

Paul wakes up in a cold sweat. He positions himself on the side of the bed, soon rises and does everything the same. He showers, eats and exits the apartment.

EXT. APARTMENT, DAY, STREET

Paul exits the apartment and seems distraught by something beyond the sidewalk. He is unable to believe his eyes. The camera moves around him to reveal that a person is seen leaving a building and approaching a car on the street.

Paul, excited and intrigued with a sense of reservation, moves towards the man. He taps him on the shoulder and the man turns revealing that he is faceless.

The faceless man reaches out for Paul but he falls. As he staggers backward the faceless man moves forwards trying to grab Paul. Paul jumps up and runs away only to run head on into a faceless woman.

Paul, disturbed by this scene tries to escape he turns a corner and runs into another man, then another, and then another. He finally comes to an intersection with faceless beings surrounding every exit.

Paul crouches down feeling his impending doom. When all of a sudden the people are gone.
INT. OFFICE

Paul continues to write in his book. Closes the journal the exact same way and turns off the desk lamp.

EXT. PARK, BENCH

Paul sits on a park bench while eating his lunch. The park is cold and empty and the wind is blowing. As Paul, starts off remembers how the park used to be...

FLASHBACK

TO:

Paul sits on his park bench with a sandwich while children run around happily. He smiles and looks on to a little girl playing on the playground with the other children. He looks approvingly towards her

FLASHFORWARD

TO: PRESENT

Sitting motionless, Paul hears a faint child's laugh and a figure runs in the background behind him. This startles him as he looks around for the source, after he turns a little girl runs out of focus closer to the bench and

EMILIA

(V.O)
Chase me daddy!

Paul looks extremely disturbed but fights the urge to lose his composure. He rises from the bench and chases after the sound.

He notices in the distance his little girl waving him on. He follows.

EXT. CITY STREET, RUNNING

Paul follows after the little girl but something isn’t right. She runs in front of him then disappears, she then pops up in a side alley then disappears again. A game of hide and seek for her.

EMILIA

(V.O) Hurry Daddy!

He comes to the dead end of alley and finds that one half of a locket left in the middle of the street.
6.

He kneels down and grabs the item, he knows it well. He looks around but he is alone once again.

INT. APARTMENT, OTHER BEDROOM

Paul enters the room and walks towards the closet. He grabs something from inside the closet the sound of rummaging through boxes fills the air. He finds what he’s after and leaves the room. It is revealed that the closet is full of little girl things (toys, posters, dresses etc) and a box with the title ”Emilia’s” written on the side of it with lid open and the items sprawled about.

INT. KITCHEN, TABLE

Paul reveals what he was after in the box. He admires the locket he found in the street with the word ”DADDY” inscribed in it and he then grabs what he found in the closet. Its a broken piece to the locket he found. With the words ”LOVE FOREVER” inside it. He places the two pieces together and they fit together perfectly, spelling ”LOVE FOREVER DADDY”. Paul clutches the locket and hold it close to his chest.

FLASHBACK TO:

Emilia stands holding her locket with her hand with the inscription showing.

Ashley is dragged down the hallway. Her feet scraping against the floor as she tries to fight free. She has duct tape over her mouth and her hands are bound. As the scene continues it’s revealed that the person dragging her a long is actually Paul.

He has a deadpan look on his face for he has finally snapped. He drags her into the bathroom and as the bathroom door closes all you hear is screams and the sounds of splashing water soon her screams are muffled by the water.

As the CAM pulls away from the bathroom door, Emilia was there watching the whole thing. The little girl stands motionless and as the sounds of struggle stop and Paul opens the door staring at the little girl.

FLASHFORWARD

TO: PRESENT

He jumps out of his chair and rushes to the bathroom.
INT. APARTMENT, BATHROOM

Paul rushes into the bathroom and throws water on his face, and stares into his reflection in the mirror. Ashley’s reflection is seen but she isn’t in the room. She whispers in his ear

ASHLEY
(whispering)

Paul...

You did this! This could’ve been avoided. We’re gone...because of you...

The whispers continue and elevate. He grasps the bathroom sink and starts to break. Pure terror and anger wash over him. CAM pushes into his face through the mirror.

PAUL
GET OUT OF MY HEAD!

He throws everything off the bathroom sink. The items fall onto the floor and the whispers stop. He breathes heavily and collapses onto the floor. He paces his hand in water that has pooled up leading to the tub. The curtain is drawn. He anxiously approaches the tub and pushes back the shower curtain. Ashley lies in the bathtub staring at him. He reacts. Ashley raises out of the tub with eyes fixed on Paul. He runs out of bathroom and locks the door behind him.

INT. APARTMENT, BEDROOM

Paul wakes up in his bedroom and looks around. He raises and Ashley speaks, he then wakes up again. A dream within a dream

INT. OFFICE

Paul’s clothes are messy and his hair a wreck. He looks like he hasn’t slept in a month. He shakes with every move and his eyes are bloodshot. Angrily out of rage he throws everything off his desk. He notices the journal he writes in every day has a new addition, a hidden page showing from within the cover of the journal. He reaches for the page and continues to read. The date shows the date of the accident and is the actual account of what happen to his family.

FLASHBACK TO:

Paul, Ashley and Emilie are out driving on a nice Sunday afternoon. The day is cold but beautiful. Ashley reaches

(CONTINUED)
Appendix I: Script

CONTINUED: 8.

back to entertain Emilia. While watching Ashley and Emilia, Paul is confronted with the oncoming traffic. In an attempt to miss a head on collision, Paul swerves the car, blanking him out in the process.

BLACKOUT

OMITTED

Paul breaks the surface of water. As he comes to he soon realizes that he is all alone. He searches for his wife and daughter. He dives down again to search for them but no luck. He soon realizes the worst, they’re gone.

FLASHFORWARD TO:

He reaches for a rock glass full of brandy and takes a sip before reaching into his desk for a handgun.

He pauses only for a second to compose himself before placing the gun in his mouth. A single tear streams down his face.

We see a close up of a hand placed upon Paul’s shoulder then a smaller hand placed on the other. It is revealed that his wife and daughter are standing on both sides of him.

He falls into Ashley’s body sobbing and crying. He reaches for Emilia on the other side too. The three embrace each other.

PAUL
(crying, muffled) I’m so sorry.
I tried. I tried...

Ashley, lowers down to Paul’s sitting position and pulls his face up. She smiles and brushes his hair back.

Another man enters the office. Paul, sits at his desk, facing straight forward. Nothing out of place, no gun, no disruption. He looks up towards the door. Color starts to rise.

ROB
Paul, are you ok?

Paul smiles
THE END
Appendix II: Shoot Schedule

Thursday, April 3

**LOCATIONS:**
- Apartment, 2301 East Vaile, Kokomo, IN
- City Street, Kokomo, TBA

**Characters Needed:** Paul
Ashley (Call @1:30)
Emilia for 5:30-8)

Call: 8 am for crew
Call: 9am for cast hair and Make-up
Filming: 9am-1pm
  - Scene 3- Tossing and Turning/ opening title
  - Scene 4- Shower
  - Scene 5- Fixing Breakfast
  - Scene 6 – Eating breakfast/popping pills
Lunch: 1pm-1:30pm
Make-up/ Costumes: 1:30pm-2:15pm
Filming: 2:15pm-5pm
  - Scene 16- Post-Kiss
  - Scene 24- Bathroom Torment
Make-up/Costumes: 5pm-5: 30pm
Filming: 5:30pm-8pm- CALL EMILIA
  - Scene 23- Flashback Murder FULL (Subtract Locket reveal)
  - Scene 14- Groceries FLASHBACK (subtract present day)
Wrap: 8pm

Friday, April 4th

**LOCATIONS:**
- Apartment, 2301 East Vaile, Kokomo, IN
- City Street, Kokomo, TBA
Characters Needed:
Paul

Call: 9 am for cast and Crew
Filming: 9-1
  Scene 2 - Items
  Scene 17- Cold Sweat
  Scene 6 – Putting Away Groceries
  Scene 15- Reverse to Brushing Hair
  Scene 7- Wide Drive
  Scene 8- Static
Lunch: 1-1:30pm
Make-up/Costume: 1:30- 2pm
Filming: 2-6pm
  Scene 22- Closet things
  Scene 23- Locket Reveal
Wrap: 8pm

Saturday, April 5th

LOCATIONS:
  - UCT Park, Kokomo, IN
  - City Alley, Kokomo, TBA

Characters Needed:
Paul
Emilia

Call: 9 am for crew
Call: 10am for cast, hair and Make-up
Filming: 10am-12pm
  Scene 20- Park Visit (Subtract Flashback)
Lunch: 12pm-12:30
Travel: Alley 12:30-12:45
Make-up/ Costumes: 12:45pm-1:15pm
Filming: 1:15pm-3pm
  Scene 21- City Alley
Wrap: 5pm
Thursday, April 17th

LOCATIONS:
- Apartment, 2301 East Vaile, Kokomo, IN
- Don Davis All State, 3811 Southland Ave, Kokomo, IN 46902
- 882 County Road N 500 E, Kokomo, IN 46901

Characters Needed: Paul
Ashley (5:30-?)
Emilia

Call: 4:30 pm for crew
Filming: 4:45-6:30pm
  Scene 26- Driving Scene
Travel to Don Davis Allstate: 6:30pm- 7:00 pm
Filming: 7:00-9:00pm
  Scene 11-Office 1
  Scene 19- Office 2
  Scene 26- Office 3/ Potential Suicide
Wrap: 9:30pm

Friday, April 18th

LOCATIONS:
- Indiana University Kokomo,
  2300 S Washington St, Kokomo, IN 46902, Hunt Hall Auditorium

- 579-907 County Road N 400 E, Kokomo, IN 46901 (reservoir)

- Waddell’s Grocery Store,
  125 E Main St, Russiaville, IN 46979

Characters Needed:
Paul
EXTRAS CALL AT 10AM
Call: 8 am for Paul and crew
Filming: 8:30 am- 10
  Scene 10 – Classroom (minus EXTRAS)
Filming: 10 am-1 pm
  Scene 10 – Classroom + EXTRAS
Lunch: 1-1:30pm
EXTRAS WRAP
Travel to Wildcat Reservoir: 2-2:20pm
Filming: 2:30- 3:45
  Scene 26- Drowning
Travel to Waddell’s Grocery Store: 2-2:20
Filming: 9-11pm
  Scene 12- Shopping
  Scene 13- Checkout

Wrap: 11 pm

**Saturday, April 19th**

**LOCATIONS:**
- Indiana University Kokomo, (Quad+ Parking Garage)
  2300 S Washington St, Kokomo, IN 46902, Hunt Hall Auditorium

**Characters Needed:**
Paul

**EXTRAS CALL AT 9AM**

Call: 9 am for cast and crew
Call: 9:30 for make-up and costume
Filming: 10am-12pm
  Scene 18- Faceless
Lunch: 12pm-12:30
Filming: 1-3pm
  Scene 18- Continued (if needed)
Wrap: 3pm
Appendix III: Donation Letter

Kevin Boucher
3548 N. 1200 E.
Greentown, IN 46936

[RECIPIENT NAME]
[COMPANY NAME]
[STREET ADDRESS]
[CITY STATE ZIP]

Dear [NAME],

I am contacting you today in hopes that you and/or your company would give a moment of consideration in supporting my endeavors to produce my creative thesis project and finish my Masters in Telecommunications from Ball State. As a masters student producing a film can be hard to accomplish due to monetary restrictions. My cast and crew have all work hard balancing jobs and the pursuit of our educations and any donation from you would be used to ensure our time and effort on this film would be justified with its completion.

*Apartment B* is an exploration into the mind of a man dealing with a tragic loss. It shows the innermost struggles of man on the brink of sanity. I have worked on this project for many years and I feel that *Apartment B* is a story that could shed light on the inner struggles of a person who suffers from extreme loss.

Your donation will be used to make this extraordinary project a reality, you can help make our dream a reality and we thank you for being a part of this amazing experience.

Thank you for your time,

Kevin Boucher