

The Lot: Stories From the Modern American High School

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## Abstract

*The Lot: Stories From an American High School* is a creative thesis project that takes an honest, modern look at the American High School. *The Lot* is a five-episode short-form, fictional television series that would be developed for Quibi, a brand-new streaming platform that produces videos in ten minutes or less. Over the course of the series, *The Lot* tells the stories of five students. While the series is fictional, it attempts to give an accurate account of what it is like to be a teenager in a high school in 2020. Told in a “handoff” style, a different protagonist will pick up where the previous episode ended to showcase how the characters intertwine with each other. *The Lot* is the American high school; it’s reflective of individuals who are there, every day.

## Executive Summary

*The Lot: Stories from the Modern American High School* was created because I found a problem with the majority of television about teenagers. Shows about high schoolers (*Euphoria*, *Gossip Girl*, *Riverdale*, and *Thirteen Reasons Why* are just a few examples) are not representative of the average American teenager's experience. Those shows miss the mark of what it's like to be a high schooler. *The Lot* attempts to steer clear of the glamor and produce a clear example of high school today. While writing my story, I had casual conversations with different teenagers currently in high school because I wanted to hear what they had to say about their lives. I wanted to hear about their relationships with their friends, parents, and romantic interests, if there were any. Speaking with them helped me capture the honesty in the show that I am so proud of. In *The Lot*, each episode focuses on a different character to accurately reflect the differing experiences of high school students today. I used five characters that are loosely based on the experiences and stories of teenagers I spoke to. I felt like I would be contradicting myself if I tried to write this only using my experience, or by finding influences from other series that have already been produced. I wanted to make this as realistic as possible.

While the reader might see underage drinking, or hear some undesirable rumors, they are written as they were told to me; in the way that these high schoolers experienced them. Parties in tight spaces in someone's basement; tangible awkwardness between crushes. There is hurt. There is anger. But it is honest. It is relatable. *The Lot* encourages the reader to see themselves in their old shoes; as they once were. To remember how tough it was to be in high school. Unlike almost every television show that exists in our modern day, this project does not intend to just show high schoolers getting drunk and having sex. It encourages the reader to reflect and remember how they too once felt the way these high schoolers do. It attempts to give high schoolers honest

and accurate content that they can stream quickly, enjoy, and think, “wow, maybe I’m not alone in this.” The series focuses on Mallory, Alex, Nolan, Bailey and Theo. Five ordinary high schoolers at Pine Valley High School who are brought together at the end for doing something they probably shouldn’t have.

The structure of the story was extremely important to me. The series title, *The Lot*, represents the ubiquitous high school meeting spot: the parking lot. Everyone congregates there before and after school. Mallory and Dana gossip. The athletes linger there after the game. Bailey isn’t really accepted there because she isn’t an upperclassman with a license. The lot is where everything happens; party plans are made, enemies are accosted, and rumors are spread. I chose to write the series as a “handoff,” where each episode picks up where it left off. I did this, mainly to prove how the actions of one can affect the others, usually without knowing it. *The Lot* may start and end in a simple parking lot, but the events that take place there are catalysts for change. I wrote it as a short-form series because that’s what high schoolers watch today. It’s no secret that teenagers prefer watching YouTube videos to television. I thought this would be a perfect way to encourage teenagers to watch a series that actually represents them and looks a little more like real life.

*The Lot* strives to explore the journey of the average American high schooler in 2020. There are “parties” that consist of only a few people in a basement. There is toxic masculinity alive in the locker room. There is a theatre department full of students who are looking for a safe place. There are nasty rumors that couldn’t be further from the truth. And there are lots of mistakes. High school wouldn’t be high school without mistakes.

## **Acknowledgements**

This is for my parents. I would not be completing an honors thesis project if it weren't for their constant support. I am so grateful for everything they have done for me, in every capacity of my life, especially during this stressful time during the coronavirus pandemic.

I am so grateful to everyone in Newhouse, including, but definitely not limited to, Michael Schoonmaker, Evan Smith, Ben Fraham, Fiona Chew, Imraan Faruhki, and Bob Thompson. It's not often you find a professor who can get you excited about going to class. I was lucky enough to have six (+) of them. I am so appreciative for every opportunity they have presented in front of me. It was an honor to learn from all of them.

To every high school student that spoke with me for this project – you are all incredible people. I am so grateful for everything you contributed. You will go so far.

And finally – thank you to everyone who pushed me to keep writing. Even when I told myself I couldn't do it, you told me I could. You know who you are!

“Your life is not an episode of *Skins*. Things will never look quite as good as they do in a faded, sun-drenched Polaroid; your days are not an editorial from *Lula*. Your life is not a Sofia Coppola movie, or a Chuck Palahniuk novel, or a Charles Bukowski poem. Grace Coddington isn’t your creative director. Bon Iver and Joy Division don’t play softly in the background at appropriate moments. Your hysterical teenage diary isn’t a work of art. Your room probably isn’t Selby material. Your life isn’t a Tumblr screencap. Every word that comes out of your mouth will not be beautiful and poignant, infinitely quotable. Your pain will not be pretty. Crying till you vomit is always shit. You cannot romanticize hurt. Or sadness. Or loneliness. You will have homework, and hangovers and bad hair days. The train being late won’t lead to any fateful encounters, it will make you late. Sometimes your work will suck. Sometimes you will suck. Far too often, everything will suck - and not in a Wes Anderson kind of way. And there is no divine consolation - only the knowledge that we will hopefully experience the full spectrum - and that sometimes, just sometimes, life will feel like a Coppola film.”

- Anonymous



## Chapter 1: Introduction

I love television. Everything about it. I watch it all from *The Sopranos* to *Brooklyn Nine-Nine* to *Grey's Anatomy*. For as long as I can remember, I have wanted to work in television. Since we're in the third golden age, I felt like my capstone would be a perfect opportunity to write a series of my own. I've been writing content since I started college. My education in Newhouse has centered on screenwriting because I've always enjoyed it – simple as that. Those classes never felt like work for me. So, for my capstone, I knew I wanted to write something short-form, mostly because it's all the rage these days. But I never had something I was dying to write about. While nothing was really off limits, I wasn't sure if I had one specific thing I wanted to write about. The stories I've written that I was most proud of were either about sharing meals with someone you care about (one of my favorite things to do) or about Italian families (like mine). I always felt like if I wrote about things that I could relate to, then my writing would be more honest. From the beginning of my writing career, I've strived to write about things that could actually happen. I decided to pick something that I could get emotional about, and really tell the truth about. So, I chose high school.

Ever since I was 14 and watched *The O.C.* with my cousin, I knew that television made American high schools look WAY more sophisticated than they actually were. But the more I explored the topic, I realized how glamorized television for the teenage demographic was. I felt like if I took this opportunity to talk with current high school students, take elements of my own experience, and write a show about high school in a way that could quickly and easily be consumed, I would be able to create the “realistic American high school.” I wanted to create content that was honest and real, not just interesting to watch. When chatting with my mentor, Evan Smith, about the project, he suggested I use a device of some kind that connects all of the

kids together. A neutral space where everyone belongs. I tossed around some ideas. The cafeteria didn't excite me –my high school had open campus, so no one ate there, and I couldn't relate – and the auditorium didn't seem organic enough. I decided to use the parking lot. *The Lot* was born. The point of using a parking lot as the device to hand off the episode to each character was deliberate. To prove that we are all connected. Whether high school kids believe it or not.

## Chapter 2: Influences

My influences for *The Lot* were mostly the antithesis of it; things that are not representative of the high school population today. Most of my influences were things that I saw wrong with content for the 14-18 demographic. I was inspired to cut out most of the glamor that other shows use to bring drama to their series. Because I wanted to tell the stories of real teenagers, the ubiquity of unsavory behavior, blatantly older actors, and unrealistic relationships in other modern shows were huge factors that inspired me to write *The Lot*. However, there was also one web series I found that served as a huge artistic influence for me. *Summer Break* is another short-form show that attempted to tell the truth about high school life. That, in connection with unrealistic network shows, influenced me to write *The Lot*.

### ***Euphoria & Unrealism***

Many shows attempt to show teenagers committing serious crimes, doing hard drugs, and binge drinking alcohol at wild parties. However, recent studies show that this new generation of high schoolers is one of the mildest ones yet (Sanger-Katz & Carroll, 2019).<sup>1</sup> Additionally, the age of actors is one of the most common inaccurate portrayals of high schoolers. This sets

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<sup>1</sup> Sanger-Katz, M. & Carroll, A.E. "The 'Euphoria' Teenagers Are Wild. But Most Real Teenagers Are Tame" *The New York Times*.

unrealistic body standards and expectations for teenagers who might look in the mirror and around the hallways at school and see absolutely no one who looks like the people they watch on TV. Additionally, the types of connections television characters share with each other seems extremely unrealistic. According to the CDC, the number of high school juniors who have had sexual intercourse is less than 50%. The number of juniors who have had sex with four or more partners (behavior that is shown in many television shows) is less than 11%.<sup>2</sup>

*Euphoria* contains all three of these issues through most of the series. It was my biggest inspiration to write *The Lot*. In all honesty, *Euphoria* is incredible; the shots are gorgeous, the writing is powerful, and Zendaya is incredible as Rue. I think the show is fantastic; it's just totally unrealistic. The series is the most glamorized, scary, adult-ified version of high school I have ever seen. Even I, a 21-year-old, felt embarrassed and scared at times while watching the show. The drugs are hard, the sex scenes intense. The content is made for adults. And while the show's main demographic is adults in their 20s and 30s, it has received criticism for its tendency to market it to high schoolers. 65% of its viewership is not viewed live, meaning that whoever is watching it is watching it from other platforms at a later date, which is indicative of a younger demographic.<sup>3</sup> It is very likely that there are high school students watching this that are intrigued by the glamor *Euphoria* contains. In the pilot, Rue, the protagonist, is fresh out of rehab. As she prepares to return to high school and settles back into her hometown, she is shown taking a hallucinogenic, attempting to shock her body with niacin so she can produce clean urine for an at home drug test, and calling nude photographs that get sent around "the currency of love," as boys

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<sup>2</sup> Sanger-Katz, M. & Carroll, A.E. "The 'Euphoria' Teenagers Are Wild. But Most Real Teenagers Are Tame" *The New York Times*.

<sup>3</sup> Naftulin, J. "HBO teen drama 'Euphoria' portrays wildly exaggerated sex and drug use, but an addiction specialist said the show could still harm youth." *Insider*.

in the locker room share nude photographs of another female classmate. These three things happen in the first 30 minutes of the pilot episode.

What always bothered me about these types of scenarios in television is that they are so blatantly exaggerated. Sure, there are wild high school parties that aren't supervised by parents, and kids that do hallucinogenic drugs. But *most* parties aren't like that. And *most* kids aren't doing hard drugs. *Euphoria* isn't the only culprit; *Gossip Girl*, *Riverdale*, *Skins*, *Degrassi*, and countless more shows portray scenarios like this. Sometimes, they're not even that intense. I remember being bothered by a small moment in *Riverdale* when every student received a group text about new gossip at the exact same time. It's not crazy, it's just unrealistic. Some of the most popular shows on cable TV or streaming services today are extremely unrealistic, but they are the shows high schoolers are watching, setting expectations for themselves before they even start the ninth grade. While they are entertaining and have exciting, beautiful storylines and actors that students are attracted to, creators are sacrificing truth. Isn't art supposed to be honest? My love for writing content and my passion for amazing television inspired me to tackle *The Lot*. I believe that story doesn't have to be falsified for it to be entertaining. Often times, the best stories are the ones that are true.

Of course, there are outliers. These things do happen in American high schools. And of course, the drama is interesting. Creating unrealistic scenarios is an easy way for writers to intrigue viewers and set up the next storyline. But it's a falsified version of high school. I always thought that my high school experience must've been "lame" because of the people I watched on TV. It wasn't until I got to college that I learned that high school isn't glamorous because it isn't supposed to be. *Euphoria* might be attempting to create the "perfect" high school show, but it is so completely off base. It is attempting to glamorize drama and harmful situations. I was inspired

to create a show that didn't have to show the characters overdosing on drugs to get people to watch it. I wanted to prove that honest, accurate writing can still be entertaining. I didn't want to have to tell lies to get people interested. That is what *The Lot* is all about.

### ***Summer Break: It Is Possible***

When I was in high school, I found myself watching shows not intended for my demographic. Every show starring high school aged kids was either on Disney Channel (and totally watered down) or on the CW and had 30-year-olds starring as teenagers. I felt like I had never seen a show about teenagers that was made for teenagers. However, in my COM 117 class, Seth Gitner showed us a web series created for YouTube called *Summer Break*. The series follows the lives of teenagers living in Los Angeles that are about to graduate high school and embark on their last summer at home. While it was not necessarily focused on their day to day lives at school, and it's a reality show, I still felt the content was the most accurate account of high school I've ever seen. The episodes are extremely short in nature ranging from 7 minutes to nearly 20 minutes. Due to their length, it's easy to watch a bunch of episodes and get hooked – which is exactly what I did.

Each season focuses on a different group of protagonists. Of course, Los Angeles is a beautiful place to live, and it's much different than the average part of the country. But I loved *Summer Break* for what it was; it doesn't edit out pimples, nor does it try to compromise honesty for entertainment. The show is about teenagers and how they act around their friends, significant others, and their parents. It's an honest look at what it's like to be a teenager. The YouTube channel has nearly 500 thousand subscribers, and each episode has over 200 thousand views. After seeing this, I knew that it was possible to create a show like *The Lot*. So, when I heard

about new streaming platform *Quibi* launching April 6, 2020, I knew it would be perfect to write short-form episodes. *Quibi* will be the first ever streaming platform specifically for short-form content. It was the perfect setup for me to begin *The Lot*. Today, the average teenager's attention span for entertainment content is much shorter. A lot of the students that I have spoken to in different capacities of life have confessed that they don't even watch that much television anymore. Short-form content is all the rage; with the premiere of *Quibi* in April, I knew this would be the perfect way to introduce my series.

### Chapter 3: Background

A huge component of the TRF major is understanding storytelling. While visual storytelling itself is an introductory class and production is obviously a huge element of storytelling, I always enjoyed writing the story more than producing it. In my TRF 205 class, I was chosen as the development coordinator for my team and rewrote an adapted script for us to film. Instead of being behind the camera, I elected to be in front of it and got to act as the star in our short film. While I enjoyed being a part of a team and working to create a final product, I loved being able to say that I developed a story for the screen. That experience solidified my distaste for production elements; I knew I would prefer to write and create content before it was shot. My passions continued in my TRF 211 class. I wrote an entire short film on the importance of sharing a meal with someone you care about. I found even more inspiration in TRF 340 where I learned about the second golden age of television and got to watch some of the classics. The excellence of television is so often in the writing. *Moonlighting*, *Hill Street Blues*, and *St. Elsewhere* were three shows we studied with one thing in common: phenomenal writing. And my love for comedy writing was even further explored when I took TRF 422 the fall of my

senior year. That class challenged me to my full potential when I had to write a sitcom pilot. I created a Staten Island Butcher Shop secretly running as a mafia operation. I have found a personal connection to my writing and knew that I wanted to complete a capstone project that allowed me to hone those skills while exploring the passion I have for television.

During my education, I have been trying to understand why there is so much misrepresentation of high schools today. The answer mostly points to the need for profit. The more glamorous and drama ridden a series is, the more people will watch it. A lot of people have asked me why I care so much about this. In all honesty, I didn't have the best time during my four years in high school. The reason I decided to write the realistic high school series was because everybody I met in college seemed to go through similar scenarios that I did when I attended high school. Everyone I know had trouble rallying someone to invite people over on a Saturday night at least once. Everyone has used their car as a safe haven, because they had nowhere else to go. A lot of people relate to these moments and have experienced them. Despite this, I never saw any TV character suffer through a Friday night desperately searching to find someone to have people over. I never watched a TV character drive around in the middle of the day because they had nothing better to do. My biggest qualm with television made for high schoolers though, is the glamorous tone that is painted over a four-year public school. In my high school, I struggled to find people I related to. The boys I was friends with were mean and immature, not star quarterbacks. They were rude, ignorant and toxic. The girls were friendlier, sure. But at the end of the day, high school is a place where you're supposed to grow. You realize that the time you spend caring about other people is pointless. I wanted to create this series to prove that high school shows made for television do not have to be so off base or immature. They can be accurate, honest, and representative of all kinds of people.

## Chapter 4: The Process

The hardest thing I've ever done was begin this project. I knew exactly what I wanted to say, what I wanted to write about, and how I wanted it to end. Getting words to paper, however, was not that easy. Sitting down in front of my laptop, with 0 episodes written, watching my Final Draft cursor blink, still haunts me to this day. The problem was getting started. In my opinion, there is no clear-cut writing process for screenwriters. Sometimes genius will strike, and other times, there will be nothing. I rewrote Episode I about fifteen times. I hated it every time. I'm still thinking of ways to improve it. After my first revisions were submitted, I rewrote it again before I even got the feedback. I knew how I wanted the series to end – just not how I wanted it to start. The four following episodes were much easier. I got going in the direction where I knew how I wanted the story to go. Additionally, being home during the COVID-19 Pandemic definitely helped channel some angsty energy for the editing process. I was stuck inside with my family, I couldn't see my friends and I was sleeping in my childhood bedroom. I was constantly reminded of the feelings I had when I was in high school. Obviously, this was not the most ideal situation to complete the capstone process, but it was weirdly inspirational. Additionally, in most types of writing, the work is never truly finished. It can always be edited, improved, restructured, etc. The greatest challenge in writing a script is trusting that the decisions you've made are the right ones.

### Conversations With Students

When I came up with the idea for *The Lot*, I knew I should talk to actual high schoolers. I thought that if I just wrote it from my own experience, or used my friends' younger siblings, it would end up turning out way too much like my own high school. Of course, I tried to get as much diversity as possible. I posted on Instagram and asked my followers if anybody was or



knew somebody still in high school that I could talk to. A few reached out and some others were mentioned to me. These were casual conversations – I’d take them to coffee if they were regionally close enough, or I’d FaceTime them and we’d just talk about their lives. I was also an intern at WCNY in Syracuse and was fortunate enough to chat with high schoolers that participate in their Media Marketing Communications course. I never wanted to make this a formal experience, or a legitimate interview. I felt like if I did that, I’d be pressuring them to fabricate details for my sake or tell me specific things that they didn’t feel comfortable sharing. By creating a casual environment and allowing the students to dictate the flow of the conversation, it allowed me to talk to them about things that they felt were imperative to the high school experience.

The student that inspired Mallory’s character told me about how she felt people had tendencies to act like they had gotten more drunk than they actually were. She herself felt pressure to act like that, when she felt nearly nothing. And the boy whose story inspires Alex’s episode explained how he is surrounded by bystanders. The boy who told his story explained how when people used words like “faggot” and “gay” it made him uncomfortable, but not uncomfortable enough to say anything. No one wants to be the guy who questions the seniors, he said. I felt like having those conversations with the high schoolers was one of the most important aspects of my project. Anyone can write fiction. But I was lucky enough to talk to people who have experienced these tribulations, as trite as they might seem. The students I spoke with were excited to talk to me about things they felt were not shown on television, but almost everyone who has attended high school can relate to. The scramble to have someone host a party that isn’t really a party – it’s twenty people in a basement. The hurt you feel when someone tells you that they hate you – even if you know it’s for a valid reason. The anger at your parents when they beg

you to tell them about your day. The stress over other people's decisions. I felt it was important to bring voices that were not mine to Pine Valley High School.

### **Writing Five Episodes:**

One of my biggest problems I encountered during this project was that I tried to do the most. I always do. At first, I wanted to do eight episodes. I wanted to make them fifteen pages. However, using the style of "hand-off" that I did, I struggled to keep eight character's stories straight. I was also making it harder on myself; it would've been tough to put eight people together at the end. Prof. Smith asked me which episodes were my top five. When I replied, he told me to stick to those five episodes. That way, he told me, you have five stories you really like. And if it turns into more, great. But why try and write ten bad episodes, when you can have five amazing ones? I thought that was amazing advice. Plus – less tends to be more.

The process continued with choosing which types of characters I'd have. I didn't want to do popular girl, nerdy boy, star athlete, etc. That's boring and unrealistic. I tried to go with some unconventional tropes in my story. The reader loves Alex at first. He's charming. He doesn't start in the soccer game, but you still root for him when he plays well. Then, he doesn't stand up for Hershman. He's a bystander. Later, he grows violent. Not so much your perfect character anymore. Nolan isn't the pompous, confident theater kid. He's an insecure jerk. Younger sibling Bailey isn't afraid to stand up for herself, even though she's younger than the rest of the group. Theo, the school "drug dealer," isn't your perfect kid. In the end, he's the one who chose to sell weed out of his car in a high school parking lot. He's not suave, he's messy. I chose to stay away from stereotypes we're so accustomed to because I wanted to prove that there is more to high school than what we are used to seeing on TV.

When you're writing for the screen, you just have to push on. No matter how much you want to give up. There were so many times I wanted to forgo the creative aspect of the project and just write a research paper on misrepresentation in television – I found a lot of previous research and I could have done it. I cried to my mom, so many times. And then, COVID-19 hit. Think of a more drastic scenario that could have happened during my senior year. I wanted to give up. I hated Mallory. Episode I gave me the most trouble. At first, I had Mallory as a perfectionist. She got into Tulane and Ethan didn't. He got mad at her. They broke up. I ended up changing it because Mallory didn't have any character appeal. I had her and Ethan make up at the party. It didn't make sense. So, I changed it again to have Mallory get too drunk at the party and have Ethan take care of her. But I felt like that was straying too far from what I was told during my conversations. I felt like if I had Mallory get too drunk, it would be glamorizing the party aspect. So, I changed it again to have him get into Tulane and her not, which caused her to go a little nuts. I was even told to lose the Tulane aspect all together, but I really wanted to highlight how the college process can affect students. I was conflicted, and I ended up keeping it the way it was because at the end of the day, it's my story. On top of that, Nolan kept ruining the flow of the story. I didn't know he was going to be the villain until I finished the third episode. At first, I wanted him to be the boy everybody loved at school. He was the star of the play. I wanted to add a little diversity and conflict and actually make him gay. Cause even more tension between him and Alex. But, at second read, I felt like I was creating stereotypes. And I knew that there had to conflict throughout all the episodes, so I created Harper.

Bailey's story never changed. I wanted the younger sibling to have a voice, too. As a younger sister myself, I found that one the easiest to write. The fifth episode was easy to start. I was pleased with how it ended. One of my friends told me that he didn't like the way that it

ended. That was a blow to my ego. But again, this is my work. My story. I had to stick with what I thought was right.

While I originally was writing each episode one at a time, towards the end of the process I ended up pulling all five of them up at once so I could edit accordingly. The first page of each episode has the same few lines of dialogue as the last page of the previous one. There were countless changes to be made. Also, I had a lot of trouble telling the truth. A lot of the time I thought it would be easy on myself to dramatize something to make it easier to bring the characters together. But I stuck to my guts. I wanted to tell the honest story: so that's what I did. I really believe I captured the essence of high school.

### **Chapter 5: Significance, Conclusions, and Takeaways**

I am really proud of the work that I did on this project. I am excited that I produced a miniseries. It's cool to have something added to my portfolio. But in all honesty, I finished an honors thesis. It is something that I truly never thought I would accomplish.

#### **Significance:**

The biggest goal I had for this project was to capture the essence of the true American high school. I believe that I did. This project is significant because it doesn't glamorize life during ages 14-18. It doesn't create beautiful scenes that are filled with dishonesty. It doesn't do anything that the poem at the beginning talks about. But it accomplishes a lot. It proves that honest, engaging, and good television does not have to be glamorized to be entertaining. *The Lot* strives to showcase high school students in their element, as real, true people. I am so proud of what I have developed, mostly because it is an accurate, honest look at the American high school, produced for television. I wanted to do that from the beginning, and I believe its

significance lies in the writing. It doesn't lie. I am proud of the characters I created; sure, they're not perfect. But no high school students are. They make mistakes, as we all did, and will continue to do. I believe that *The Lot* is only further proof that we are all connected, as our actions influence and affect others. The lot of us can be severely impacted by the decisions that others make.

### **I Hate Production and That Won't Change:**

Every production class I've taken has been in my opinion, brutal. I don't like technical camera work and I found working on set extremely tedious. And that's okay! The whole point of my education was to figure out what I loved and what I didn't love. During this process when I explained my project a lot of people asked me, "Wow! So, are you going to film it?" When I said no, it's almost as if the validity and monumental amount of work was diminished. I didn't film this project because I don't want to produce, direct, or edit television for the screen. I want to write, develop and market television. Hence, why this project was what it was. It is five screenplays, ready to be developed for Quibi. That's what I wanted it to be. In my eyes, this project is not any less successful or important because I didn't film and produce it. I wanted my capstone to be something that I enjoyed doing; I had to work on it for three semesters. I don't think I would've had as much fun working on this if I had to produce and film it myself. Plus, five episodes would have probably been too much. I wanted to walk away with a series. I'm glad I made the choices I did.

### **Constructive Criticism is OKAY:**

Another huge thing I learned is that productive feedback is not a bad thing. While this seems obvious for anyone in college who has received any sort of feedback, I always found it hard when screenwriting. This field is very subjective; it's hard to tell someone their creative

vision needs edits. However, I tried to pick an advising team that would give me the most productive and helpful structural feedback. Prof. Smith never questioned my creative choices. Plus, he always says “it’s your story. Do what you want.” His advice never made my idea, or the overarching theme of the story seem bad. He helped me with story structure, dialogue, and edits to make my creative project the best it could be. It was productive and helpful. He never discouraged me.

**The Next Step:**

Will I ever sell *The Lot* to Quibi? I’m not sure. A story is never truly done; if I ever do sell it, it’ll be edited by another slew of writers. It might lose a lot of its integrity and it might lose the honesty I am so proud of. However, there are a lot of other scripts and projects (and ideas!) that will be hopefully written and developed by me, one day. I am incredibly proud of this project, and I hope that I do sell a script during my life. But one thing is for sure: I will work in television. It has been a dream of mine for as long as I can remember. I cannot wait for it to come true.

## Works Cited

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