

1 INT. STUDIO - AFTERNOON

1

Paintings and sculptures line the room as the sun rays hit the windows leaving the dust twirling into the classroom.

LEON (18) blows a strand of dark hair out of his bright blue eyes as he writes notes down--sketches of items around the room and some brainstormed ideas.

A group of college students sit attentively as PIERRE (50), a French man in chic wire framed glasses, points to a messy scrawl reading, "Self portrait" on the blackboard behind him.

PIERRE

Do not think of this as an assignment, but as a conduit of ton essence. We are not looking for perfection, but rather who you are! Who is this artist, how do you see yourself?

Students turn their heads in confusion. JAMIE (20), a class clown with an unruly head of hair laughs.

JAMIE

Oui oui what are you going on about?

The kids around him laugh.

PIERRE

Ah you are funny. But listen clearly, this is an opportunity to impress me.

Jamie rolls his eyes.

PIERRE (CONT'D)

AND have your work exhibited in a real gallery!

Kids start to raise their heads, his comments sparking interest in all, but Leon, who is concentrating on his drawing.

Jamie throws a small paper airplane at Leon.

JAMIE

Hey! Good morning.

Leon frowns, as Pierre walks, weaving through the desks beelining towards him.

LEON

I'm awake hi what?

Pierre turns to address the class, stealing a glance at Leon.

PIERRE

Two of you will be selected to have
your sculptures displayed in an
authentique gallery.

The class loudly discusses with each other. Pierre sits on
top of his desk with a wistful expression on his face.

PIERRE (CONT'D)

Ah to be young and inspired again.
To be able to-

JAMIE

Sir?

PIERRE

Oh right.

Pierre clears his throat and turns to the class.

PIERRE (CONT'D)

And begin!

Students scramble to grab their materials.

PIERRE (CONT'D)

Who are you my children, what do
you have to share with the world?

They roll their eyes, smiling and beginning to mold new
blocks of clay.

Leon sits, pondering, as he tugs at his hair, unruly strands
flop over his eyes.

His vision blurs, clay bits swirling around him.

He grabs the chunk and begins shaping a rough oval. Digging
his nails into the eye sockets and shaping a sharp jawline.
He's focused, precise.

He leans back to look at his work, frowning, as Jamie pops up
behind him!

JAMIE

Why the long face?

Leon jumps. He's startled, and slightly annoyed.

LEON

Jamie we have a week for this
project, I'm getting this right.

Jamie smirks, tossing a small block of clay in his hands and swinging himself onto the corner of Leon's desk.

JAMIE

Cmonnn!

Leon scowls and ignores him.

JAMIE (CONT'D)

You gotta loosen up man. Look at mine, she's a beaut!

A slanted oval leans against Jamie's water bottle, shockingly, a resemblance of his smirk is reflected in the lump of clay.

Leon frowns at his sculpt the again. The bell rings.

2 INT. APARTMENT - NIGHT

2

A timer goes off as Leon opens a toaster oven with his frozen meal. He looks into the reflection of the microwave above and tugs at his ear while humming.

Leon walks over to his dining table and sits to eat. He stares at childlike paintings lined along his walls.

After he finishes his meal, Leon walks to the bathroom and inspects himself in the mirror.

He rubs his face in a similar way to the clay he was sculpting, pulling at his cheek. After a while, he stops, with an unsatisfied expression on his face.

3 EXT. STREET - DAY

3

Leon walks to the studio, upbeat music blaring through his headphones. He opens the door to his studio and begins.

4 INT. STUDIO - DAY

4

Leon sits in an empty studio, sunlight bouncing off his face.

Cut to: Digging his hands into the clay.

Cut to: Reshaping the ear.

Cut to: Students coming in and out in the background.

Cut to: Reshaping the ear.

Cut to: Leon watches as Jamie cracks joke after joke with a crowd of students, turning to his work his hands gliding along the sculpture grinning at each curve and smear.

Leon lays his head on the table in defeat spreading a pinch of clay along his desk.

Pierre looks at him, concerned, but decides to leave him be.

5 EXT. STREET - NIGHT

5

He stumbles home, the lights around him blurring as his breathing becomes labored. He grabs his head as the ringing increases, tugging on his ear.

6 INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT

6

He stumbles up the stairs, leaning on the banister, digging his fingers into the wood. His hand catches on a corner and begins dripping blood.

He ignores it as a single drop travels down the creases of the railing. He jiggles the lock of his front door, his image distorted by the keyhole.

LEON

Damnit.

He drops the keys, tries again, and stumbles into the room.

8 INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

8

Everything blurs, the world spinning around him, the microwave hums and his hands shake as he goes to grab some food from the fridge. His knees buckle and he slides down a nearby counter.

Blackout.

Eyes open, drooping, the clock sits, teasing him as he scrambles up and races to school.

9 EXT. STREET - DAY

9

He sprints down the street panicked, adjusting his jacket and shoes as he holds his key chain willy-nilly before nearly dropping it into a sewer.

10 INT. STUDIO - DAY

10

Students file into the classroom, talking amongst themselves. Pierre leans against the desk, a mug of coffee in hand. He's already started telling a story to the class.

PIERRE

So by then, I'm on my third cup of coffee and-

JAMIE

Sir, what does this have to do with our art?

Leon bursts into the doorway turning everyone's heads.

PIERRE

So nice of you to join us Monsieur.

He shuffles to his seat.

PIERRE (CONT'D)

Now as I was saying, the waiter-

Jamie snores loudly from the back of the class.

PIERRE

Oh alright "man," I do believe it would be best to indulge your desire.

Pierre makes a dramatic sweeping motion with his arm.

PIERRE (CONT'D)

To your stations, les élèves!
Hasten your work, for you have just one week left!

Leon slices off a chunk of his sculpture, frowning. The sculpture is lopsided from his constant fiddling.

JAMIE

(mumbling)

Sir, you really know how to make a class feel comfortable.

Pierre walks over to where Jamie and Leon are sitting.

PIERRE

Alas, it is one of my weaknesses.
But perhaps I should be just a bit harsher hm?

JAMIE

No, no let's not do that.

Jamie regards Leon, who's been sculpting and smashing his clay. After each cycle, Leon steals a glance at Jamie's sculpture.

Jamie notices this. He gets up and leads Pierre out of earshot.

JAMIE (CONT'D)
He's really struggling.

PIERRE
Indeed.

A beat.

PIERRE (CONT'D)
Tell me, how do you think he'll be able to overcome this?

JAMIE
What? I dunno uhhhh...maybe he just needs to be himself? To reflect his own world. Not a perfect one.

PIERRE
Oho? When did you get so wise?

Jamie rolls his eyes.

Pierre pats Jamie on the back.

PIERRE (CONT'D)
Alright, back to your station, monsieur.

Jamie nods and strolls back.

Pierre walks off, mumbling grievances of loud children. He studies Leon's misshapen sculpture, and smiles.

11 INT. APARTMENT

11

Leon stands in his bathroom, looking at himself in the mirror. He tries to smile, but stops after a few attempts. His vision begins to blur and darken. As he continues failing to smile, Leon pictures Jamie surrounded by people and grinning. Leon turns away, unable to keep on looking. The blurriness increases, and he loses consciousness.

Leon's eyes open, drooping, and the clock sits, teasing him. He ponders it, but looks away at first. He stares at this hand, regarding his bandaged finger. He curls it into a fist, only to wince and open his hand again. In the end, Leon slowly gets up and trudges out the front door.

12 INT. STUDIO - EVENING

12

Students file out of the classroom, ready to leave after a long sculpting session.

Leon sits alone, still shaping the clay at his station.

Pierre watches him from across the room as he gathers his belongings preparing to leave.

PIERRE
Monsieur Archer, your time is up.

Leon looks up. His hair sits unruly as his fingers tremble over a lump of clay that's been recently smashed.

He looks back down to the lump and begins molding it again.

LEON
Can't. I'm not done.

PIERRE
There are times when suffering
becomes the very thing that
inspires pieces of such grandeur.
It does not appear to be aiding you
at the moment though.

Leon tugs at his ear and blows his hair out of his eyes.

PIERRE
You are more done than you think.
Perhaps it's time to take a break.

LEON
What choice do I have? I'm running
out of time.

PIERRE
Ah, but you're so young.

A tool slips out of his hand. He curses and slaps his sculpture before bending over to pick up the tool.

Pierre looks at the abused chunk of clay.

PIERRE

What has the clay done to incur
your wrath?

LEON
Nothing...it just won't...move the
way I want it to.

PIERRE
Ah, so it's control you desire?

LEON
I guess? No. Maybe?

He ponders his sculpture for a while, then starts to reshape
it.

LEON (CONT'D)
I feel like I don't even know what
I want. I mean, I want to get it
right. But with everything I do,
nothing seems right. I guess...I
just want to be something. Someone
talented, someone who doesn't take
this long to make a damn sculpture.
If I were more like Jamie...

Leon looks across the classroom at Jaime's sculpture. Pierre
walks over to block the view.

PIERRE
Oh. Him. Quite the talent that boy,
though a bit too loud for my
liking. But he was exactly like you
in your year.

LEON
How?

PIERRE
Motivated, obsessed with being the
best. Even if it comes as a
detriment to himself. Ah, the rough
beginning of an aspiring artist.
But understand, an origin doesn't
define us. Shape us, perhaps. But
in the end, you are the sculptor.

Leon ponders, biting his lip.

LEON
Am I really? I try, but it just
never works out. No matter how much
I want it to, it never does.

PIERRE

Ah, but you are wrong! There is substance in abyss, a value in everything.

Leon looks to Pierre with a confused expression.

PIERRE (CONT'D)

As a guide on your artistic journey, I have to advise you. Scrape away at your very being until you find even a semblance of the authentic you.

LEON

I don't understand.

PIERRE

Why are you here? To make things perfect and beautiful, or grotesque and imperfect.

A beat.

PIERRE (CONT'D)

That is all art. YOU are all art.

Pierre dims the lights with a knowing look

13 INT. APARTMENT - NIGHT

13

Leon looks at himself in the mirror scrunching his face at the figure before him.

His vision blurs before him.

He clenches his hands and grits his teeth, but continues to watch the figure.

He unclenches his fists, dropping his hands to his sides.

His vision clears.

14 INT. STUDIO - DAY

14

Leon sits in front of his lump of clay. As he ponders it, he hears Pierre's advice in his head.

He reaches down and grasps the clay firmly, a determined expression on his face.

15 EXT. STUDIO - DAY**15**

Leon stares intently at something in front of him.

Pierre stands in front of an energetic class.

PIERRE

Allez allez please bring up your
sculptures , maintenant.

Leon picks up his piece and brings it up to the front of the class, where his classmates have deposited theirs.

He walks over to his seat. Jamie is sitting next to him, shaking with anticipation.

PIERRE

And now, my students, the moment
you have been waiting for!

A class-wide drumroll ensues.

16 INT. GALLERY - DAY**16**

Leon, Pierre, and Jamie stand in the gallery, examining the sculptures. Leon's eyes dart around the room, taking in the dozens of people in one corner.

Pierre parts through a cluster of people, patting Leon on the back. Limbs reaching out unevenly face as cracked and weighed down by his ear. The imperfect sculpture stands proudly in the middle of the room, alongside another: Jamie's in all its rough edges, attracting a crowd.

Leon smiles.

Blackout.