

CHASING TRUTHS

For every 12-year-old who ever wanted an EZ Bake Oven and got
something heavy instead.

Written by

Dennis J Manning

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NOTE ON MUSIC

*Song selections (Miley Cyrus, Elton John, Madonna, Depeche Mode, Janis Ian, Sister Janet Mead, etc.) are used as **temp score references** to communicate tone, emotional resonance, and character perspective. Final music is subject to licensing, or may be replaced with original compositions inspired by these artists.*

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A NOTE FROM THE WRITER

This is not a coming-out story.

It's a **coming-through** story.

Chasing Truths is memory as movement, confession as color, pop music as prayer.

It's a film about survival – told through dance, dreams, hall passes, and chocolate chip cookies.

It's about what we carry when the people we love didn't always know how to carry us.

The story bends time, memory, and reality, just like grief and love do.

This isn't one person's biography.

It's a shared memory.

At some point, we've all been the last one on the bench, waiting to be picked.

Tired. Fierce. Flawed. And full of grace, we never expected.

Thank you for picking this up.

Thank you for reading.

- Dennis J. Manning

CHASING TRUTHS



Screenplay by
**DENNIS J.
MANNING**

His hand slips from the counter. His knees buckle. He falls into a dark hole.

SFX: WHOOSH—

The kitchen light strobes—ON, OFF, ON, OFF—

MATCH CUT TO:

INT. EMERGENCY ROOM

POV - From above dennis on the operating table. Blood soaked. Oxygen on. Machines whirring. IV tubes 2 doctors, 4 nurses. Dennis lifeless. Low hear beat.

DOCTOR

Come on you, Bastard, stay with me.

The camera swirls up to the ceiling lights and the out into the clouds.

Quick travel, like going through a time tunnel, into a museum.

INT. GRAND MUSEUM - SILENCE

Dennis stands barefoot in the middle of an impossible museum — endless corridors of art, shadow, and echo. It's both modern and classical, pristine and cracked.

He's no longer in sweats — he's wearing a tailored suit. A deep burgundy tie. He looks incredible. He looks scared.

WHISPERS around him.

He walks forward.

INT. GALLERY - CONTINUOUS

The MONA LISA is lit alone on a wall. She blinks. She SMIRKS.

MONA LISA

He's not going to get it, is he?

Dennis steps back. Blinks.

GIRL WITH A PEARL EARRING
(from another frame)
I don't think he's ready.

VENUS DE MILO
(standing in the middle)
I'm so tired of "poor me, nobody
understands me.

AMERICAN GOTHIC WOMAN
(another frame)
What I wouldn't give to have his
life.

The portraits begin talking over each other, rising tension.

MONA LISA
Look at him. Still aching for some
man who doesn't even remember his
name.

PAM TILLIS V.O.
(singing)
Dry your morning-after tears
'Cause what's done is done.

VENUS
He just wants applause for
surviving.

PEARL EARRING
Who doesn't?

DENNIS
Okay, okay—I get it. Jesus.
Even my trauma's got critics now.

They suddenly turn on each other.

(beat)

Stillness.

Then—

AMERICAN GOTHIC MAN
(to Mona)
You're one brushstroke away from
irrelevance, Lisa.

VENUS
(to Mona, ganging up)
At least I have texture.

MONA LISA
 (To Venus)
 At least I have arms.

VENUS
 (To Mona)
 No you don't. Bitch

PEARL EARRING
 (To Venus)
 You were never even finished.

Their insults morph into Dennis' voice – distorted, echoing:

VOICES (V.O.)
 You're too much.
 You're too soft.
 You're just a phase.
 You'll never matter.

The insults spiral. Paintings yelling. The noise surges.

DENNIS
 (muttering, half-laughing)
 Okay... this is officially too gay
 to process.

He clutches his chest.

Staggered breath.

Heartbeat accelerating.

NURSE (V.O.)
 Sir? Can you hear me? Do you know
 what day it is?

SFX: HEARTBEAT – now pounding.

Dennis' eyes flutter.

The lights in the gallery flicker—then blur, smear, melt.

The paintings collapse into color. Time bends.

A single rosary bead rolls across the gallery floor.

A basketball bounces once, then disappears.

His knees give out.

He falls—into another room.

INT. GALLERY - NIGHT

Silence.

Dennis steadies himself.

He looks around, dazed.

DENNIS
(softly, realizing)
It's Sunday.

Before him, in impossible clarity:

****"A Sunday Afternoon on the Island of La Grande Jatte."****

Everything else falls away.

From the PAINTING - a voice emerges:

MANDY PATINKIN (V.O.)
Order.
Balance.
Design.
Harmony.

The opening chords of "Sunday" begin - soft, sacred.

MANDY (V.O.)
*Sunday,
By the cool,
Purple, yellow, red water...*

The music floats. The world holds its breath. Dennis stands still.

Tears fall. No shame. Just release. For a moment- Everything is still. And beautiful.

DENNIS
This painting. This musical.
Changed my life. I was so lost.

MOM (V.O.)
Dennis...

He turns.

INT. MONTAGE - FAMILY MEMORIES SPIRALING THROUGH DENNIS'S MIND

- A roast chicken hits the floor. SLAP.

- Dead silence at the table. Madonna's boyfriend stiffens.
- MARGE, calm as a saint, says:

MARGE V.O.

Don't worry. I have another one in the oven.

- She exits.

SFX: Sink running. Oven door WHOMP.

- 2 minutes later, same carved chicken, same gash.

She returns. Places it on the table like nothing happened.

- The boyfriend stares.

BOYFRIEND

So good you had a backup chicken, Mrs. Manning.

- MARGE just smiles. No comment.

DENNIS (V.O.)

Marge never let you see her sweat. Neither did Dave. That was the first time I saw someone *rewrite reality* - without lying.

(beat)

We laughed about that chicken for years. But I think something *true* landed with it.

Sometimes grace is just knowing when to say,

"I've got another one in the oven."

MOM (V.O.)

You are never stuck.

You can always come home.

SFX: SMASH. SUNDAY IN THE PARK FRAME BREAKS.

PAM TILLIS

No use crying over, no use crying over, No use crying over, spilled perfume.

A close-up of the shattered frame on the museum floor. A single drop of red paint rolls down the glass.

THEN-FADE TO
BLACK.

MR. MCKAY (V.O.)
Mr. Manning. Hall pass?
(beat)
You're wandering again.

DENNIS (V.O.)
(sigh)
I thought you and I were friends...

SISTER JANET MEAD (V.O.)
(singing, distant,
echoing)
"Our Father who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name..."

INT. GREY ROOM SINGLE LIGHT ON.

Dennis opens his eyes.

A folded piece of paper appears in his hand.

It reads: ***"HALL PASS - DENNIS J. MANNING"***

He looks up—The floor beneath him glows like polished glass.
A tiger walks by.

SFX: Distant wind in the trees. A low rustle. Jungle-like.

DENNIS (V.O.)
I always hoped the tiger would turn
back. Just once. Just to say
goodbye.
(beat)
But it didn't. And I told myself I
didn't care.
(sniff of a laugh)
Because who cries over something
that was never really there?
(beat)
Me. I do.

A TIGER WALKS BY. SLOW. SILENT. NEVER LOOKS BACK.

A distant door creaks open. He steps through.

SMASH CUT TO:

INT GRAND HALL OF THE MUSEUM

DENNIS V.O.
God, I, I just want to wake up.

MONA LISA
 He's still not getting it.
 (sigh)
 Art is wasted on the emotional.

GIRL WITH A PEARL EARRING
 (from another frame)
 I don't think he's ready.

VENUS DE MILO
 Can someone give me a hand?

ALL the paintings clap.

VENUS DE MILO (CONT'D)
 (scoff)
 And you'll are just two dimensions.
 Try living like this – in pieces.

DENNIS V.O.
 Oh my God...

VENUS DE MILO
 (to Dennis)
 Oh, now you have an opinion?
 (turns to Pearl Earring)
 And you – that pearl is fake.
 I can see it from here.

GIRL WITH A PEARL EARRING
 (quietly, wounded)
 It was a gift...

She starts to cry. Dennis gently offers a handkerchief. She takes it. A real moment – in a room full of performance.

MONA LISA
 (sly, in French,
 subtitled)
 Il ne va jamais comprendre.

AMERICAN GOTHIC WOMAN
 (stamping her pitchfork)
 English, please!
 (to Dennis)
 We're in your head. We know that
 you don't know French.

MONA LISA
 (tsk, tsk)
 Je ne comprends pas.

DENNIS
I took two years in high school.
And the language app.

VENUS DE MILO
(scoffs)
How'd that work out for you, boy?

DENNIS
Can't say it often enough: change
your hair, change your life.

GIRL WITH A PEARL EARRING
(softly)
Shade.

AMERICAN GOTHIC MAN
(Nods)
Most certainly shade. (beat) Plus
one for DJ.

All heads turn. MONA LISA looks smug as hell. PEARL EARRING
pretends she didn't mean to cause a stir.

VENUS DE MILO –
(Venus mouths like an 8-
year-old brat)
"Plus one for DJ."

VENUS
(snippy)
Not listening.

Dennis tries not to react. Fails. A flicker of a smile – not
smug, not gloating – just a quiet moment of recognition.

AMERICAN GOTHIC MAN
Well then—what does Mona's line
mean?

VENUS
(flips her head toward
them)
Oh now you want my help?
(sassy)
Fine. It means, "About damn time
someone did something real."

Dennis pulls a roll of duct tape from nowhere. He tears a
strip and sticks it firmly over Venus's mouth. She stares,
muffles a scoff, and slowly turns her back to all of them.

DENNIS
 (quietly)
 Finally.

A long beat. They stop judging. For once... they just look at him. He looks back.

And for the first time, he doesn't flinch.

SISTER JANET MEAD
 (singing, ethereal)
 "Thy kingdom come, thy will be
 done..."

SFX: A single heartbeat. Then—Silence.

INT. DENNIS' BEDROOM - NIGHT

Clothes on the floor. Laptop open. Chat apps glowing. Dennis scrolls. Stares. Closes it. Opens it again.

SFX: STATIC—

The song clicks in: SARA EVANS "I Keep Looking"

SARA EVANS (RADIO)
*When my low self esteem
 Needs a man loving me
 And I find me a perfect catch*

MONTAGE -THE SONG CONTINUES

- A bar hookup that ends with silence.
- Waking up next to a stranger, not remembering the name.
- A mirror. Shirtless. Aging. A sigh.
- Scrolling photos of "the one that got away."
- Voice messages never sent.

DENNIS (V.O.)
*I always wonder what's on the other
 side Of the number two door
 I keep looking. Looking for
 something more*

He dials.