

THE TRAIL OF INSPIRATION

Written by

Jonathan Thompson

jonathan@itsjonathanthomson.com
405 Ridgewood Way, Alpharetta, GA 30005
+1 (770) 875-7664

EXT. SKY - DAY

A flock of birds streak across the sky. Carried by the wind they navigate through the clouds with bliss.

Out of nowhere, a ball of oozing sludge pierces through the air. One of the birds gets hit. It's wings are locked in place, covered in thick grotesque material - it begins to fall downwards. This is DAVE THE BIRD.

As Dave the Bird falls through the sky, separating from the rest of his flock, a trail of ooze follows in his downfall.

SUPER: "CHAPTER 1: Displaced"

PSYCHOLOGY PROFESSOR (V.O)
The human connection. We're all
lost without it.

INT. LECTURE HALL - DAY

PSYCHOLOGY PROFESSOR
Because it's quite scary... being
alone.

A student listens intently. He watches the professor's hands as they move whenever he speaks. His eyes are filled with wonder and curiosity. This is JONATHAN (18).

PSYCHOLOGY PROFESSOR (CONT'D)
It's something genetically
programed within our species that
wants us to connect with other
people. To branch out, to share
stories, to spread love. And when
that's taken away from us... we
feel isolated because of it.

Jonathan leans in slightly. He focuses on every lingering word as we

MATCH CUT TO:

INT. ART EXHIBIT - LATER

He stares at a piece of pottery in the exhibit. The vessel contains modeling of a face; its eyes stare back at him.

HISTORY PROFESSOR (O.S)
Diaspora. It refers to the spread
or scattering of people from their
original homeland.

The professor addresses an entire group of students.

HISTORY PROFESSOR (CONT'D)

The Wanderer, a slave ship, was that means of diaspora for over 400 captive Africans, taken from their homeland against their will, to be bought and sold as property and to be treated as such.

Jonathan looks up from the face vessel.

JONATHAN

How did they move past that? Being isolated from their homeland?

HISTORY PROFESSOR

I don't think there is a "moving past that." It's (an impossible)--

JONATHAN

(over)

I mean... Just wasn't it scary - y'know being separated from - from other people and everything that they grew up with?

HISTORY PROFESSOR

Oh of course it was scary. I couldn't imagine the horrors they experienced.

(a pause, then)

But they found a way to hold on to their past - to their culture - to their roots. They crafted face vessels, jugs, cups - that one right there next to you.

Jonathan looks back at the face vessel, this time with awe.

HISTORY PROFESSOR (O.S) (CONT'D)

It's because of their traditions that allow us to appreciate the shared artistic and aesthetic principles that they brought from their homeland.

CUT TO:

EXT. SKY - DAY

Dave the Bird falls faster as time stretches on. He quickly finds the strength to break free of the sludge.

His wings burst out instantly and he begins to fly. The trail of ooze still follows his movement.

SUPER: "CHAPTER 2: Tradition"

BACK TO:

INT. ART EXHIBIT - CONTINUOUS

Jonathan looks back up from the vessel once more.

JONATHAN
Where did you say The Wanderer
ended up again?

HISTORY PROFESSOR
Old Edgefield... South Carolina.

INT. JONATHAN'S HOUSE - DAY

QUICK CUTS:

-Jonathan zips up his bag.

INT/EXT. AIRPORT - LATER

QUICK CUTS:

-Jonathan shows his passport.

-The plane takes off.

-Jonathan nears the exit to the airport and notices a sign that reads: "Who Were the Black Potters of Edgefield? Join us for a conversation this Saturday at 12pm!"

INT. AMPHITHEATER - NOON

Jonathan sits in the middle of the room. All he sees and hears are talking heads.

SCHOLAR 1
...which allowed them to combine
their craftsmanship with their
traditions. Some of these ancestral
traditions included ornate
decorative motifs, unique glazing
techniques...

SCHOLAR 2

...pass on their craft is how traditions are created, but the presence of a community makes those traditions into a culture. Even in vastly more extreme conditions...

SCHOLAR 3

...other African-American potters contributed significantly to Edgefield's ceramic traditions. While their names might be lost, their craftsmanship has left an important mark on history.

Some more time passes, then Jonathan starts to tune back in.

SCHOLAR 4

...Especially one potter named Dave. And he wasn't just a potter, he was also a poet. He inscribed poems on the back of his works in a time where literacy was illegal for enslaved people. He laid out a trail of inspiration and inspired many to come.

Jonathan leans back in his seat, intrigued.

CUT TO:

EXT. SKY - DAY

Several hundred people can see Dave the Bird from the sidewalks below. He is not as high as the clouds anymore.

One man on the ground looks up in wonder and quickly draws a portrait of Dave the Bird soaring through the sky. The people around him smile at his artwork.

The oozing trail once again follows Dave the Bird's every move. This time Dave the Bird starts to drift. He moves around in the air, using the oozing trail as his ink. Now, using the sky as his canvas, Dave the Bird spells out:

"CHAPTER 3: The Trail of Inspiration"

BACK TO:

INT. AMPHITHEATER - LATER

The people in the audience walk out the building as the scholars begin to pack up. Jonathan skips the exit, and heads straight towards SCHOLAR 4.

JONATHAN

Hi, it's a pleasure to meet you. My name's Jonathan Thompson. I loved your words about Dave and I was wondering if I could ask you some questions about him if you have the time.

Scholar 4 looks up at Jonathan. She studies him for a moment.

SCHOLAR 4

Sure kid, ask away.

Scholar 4 slumps back in her chair as the other scholars take off. A huge grin sweeps across Jonathan's face.

JONATHAN

Thank you so much! I was hoping you could shed some light on as to why Dave started inscribing poems into his pottery? You said it was illegal, what was his goal?

SCHOLAR 4

Well, I mean we don't know for one-hundred percent certain because we weren't in the guys brain...

Jonathan chuckles.

SCHOLAR 4 (CONT'D)

...but it was most likely an act of defiance on his part.

(whispering)

Which is why we like him so much.

(normal)

In his role as both a potter and a poet he was able to foster small acts of rebellion against the institution of slavery. While they might not have made a super large impact on slavery as a whole, Dave certainly understood the weight of his mutiny.

Jonathan eagerly writes her words in his comically small notepad. Scholar 4 notices this.

SCHOLAR 4 (CONT'D)
 If you're really that interested,
 you should check this out.

She hands Jonathan a small pamphlet. The front cover reads:
 "African American History Uncovered and Transformed: David
 Drake - An Enslaved Potters Tale. Sunday @ 5pm. Be there!"

SCHOLAR 4 (CONT'D)
 It's a carefree way to introduce
 yourself into Dave's world. You'd
 enjoy it.

JONATHAN
 (enthusiastically)
 Thanks!

Jonathan begins to walk away, but stops and turns around last
 second.

JONATHAN (CONT'D)
 What is your personal favorite poem
 that Dave has written?

Scholar 4's face brightens.

SCHOLAR 4
 There is one that reads, "I wonder
 where is all my relation...
 Friendship to all and every
 nation." It's Dave's own
 reflections on the (human con)--

JONATHAN
 (over)
 The human connection?

SCHOLAR 4
 (taken aback)
 Y-Yes. How'd you know?

JONATHAN
 I have some very good professors.

INT. THEATRE - AFTERNOON

Several men and women dance on stage, recreating the imagined
 life and influence of Dave the Potter. Jonathan admirably
 watches, smiling with glee.

INT. LECTURE HALL - DAY

PSYCHOLOGY PROFESSOR
 Wow! That was great, thank you
 Elijah for sharing. Okay, let's see
 here...
 (flipping through his
 binder)
 Next up is... Jonathan. Jonathan,
 come on up.

Jonathan makes his way down to the lecture podium.

JONATHAN
 Hey guys! For my final project I
 wanted to make a poem... It's not
 very long, but it's the thought
 that counts right?
 (he smiles)
 Okay, getting to it.
 (pulling out his notepad)
 For when we are lost, we shall soon
 be found.

EXT. SKY - DAY

JONATHAN (V.O)
 For when we are lost, our roots
 shall hold us to the ground.

Dave the Bird gracefully flies through the sky.

JONATHAN (V.O) (CONT'D)
 For when we are lost, look upwards
 for inspiration.

People on the street look up at Dave the Bird with tremendous
 astonishment. Several contemporary artists have their gaze
 glued to the bird above them.

Dave the Bird's streaks of ooze still ink the air.

JONATHAN (V.O) (CONT'D)	Dave the Bird writes in the
For when we are lost,	sky at the same time: "I
remember, there is friendship	wonder where is all my
to all and every nation.	relation. Friendship to all -
	and every nation."

As everything fades to black, Dave the Bird's words linger on
 the screen.

THE END