

## INTRODUCTION

First of all, thank you for inviting me to your pitch and for our interesting and informative conference call. Everyone wants to be free. Freedom is the most basic human instinct. Whether you're an impish toddler running away from Mom, or Thomas Jefferson crafting the American Constitution, freedom is the natural fuel of the human spirit.

Conversely, what does it feel like to be controlled and trapped? Unable to make our own decisions? This spot is about the importance of making our own choices. Being set free. Even though this is a story about a toy figure we've got to bring out his humanity and feel for him. I would love to even call him Joey. We've got to make Joey's plight relatable.

I want us to root for this guy and feel deep empathy. That's the story here. We need to be in Joey's head when he's trapped. We need to see ourselves in the driver's seat both when his destiny is being externally manipulated, and feel his spirit soar when he's unchained. We need to rejoice alongside him when he's liberated. Joey's journey must resonate with us on the visceral level, making us reflect on our own lives. The payoff? Our audience's awareness that, *hey, hang on, are those other travel sites are funneling us toward their choices for us?* Kayak on the other hand provides an unlimited vista of unbiased options, free from their own self-interest.

The best way to make Joey's experience relatable is to shoot really practically, using as little special effects as possible. Another powerful key would be to shift our storytelling's POV. Visually, the distinction between Joey being controlled and him being free should be massive.

When Joey is manipulated by The (Controlling) Man, whom I would call Herman, our visuals would be objective, told from Herman's standpoint. Our camera movements would be more rigid, almost militaristic. Our lens would be at human eye level. We would see Joey as Herman sees him. Underpinning this stiffness would be a claustrophobic score dominated by heavy woodwinds.

With regards to Herman, I think we never see him completely. We might catch his profile, bits of his facial expressions, or see him mostly from behind. I like the idea of keeping him somewhat obscured. This is our little guy's story. I want to keep this a man. A child becomes too sad.

The moment that Joey is set free, we would kick over to his subjective POV, seeing this amazing, new world of infinite options from his exhilarated perspective. Our lensing would be low angle, giving us an exploratory feeling of a new toddler's first taste of the world as he learns to walk. Very quickly however, our pacing would accelerate, gaining in confidence, as we realize that the world

is our friend, not our prison. A dramatic musical shift would also reflect this pivotal, liberating shift.

Starting on the next page, you will find my director's interpretation in greater detail. Here and there, I have made adjustments to the narrative. Clearly we won't have screen time for all this content. All this is meant to heighten the contrast between when Joey is virtually enslaved to Herman's will and when he is set free to find discover his own choices and identity. I want to indicate the tone with which I would seek to infuse the film. Also important to me was giving a sense of us having a cathartic dramatic arc, replete with a conflicted beginning, expository middle and triumphant conclusion.

In addition, I have enclosed as many visual references as possible in order to best convey my ideas. Of course, nothing is set in stone. Please see these initial notes as a creative blueprint, meant to further stimulate our creative discussions.

Please let's reconnect soon,

## STORYTELLING

We open tight on a constraining seat belt. It seems to want to pinch the very life out of its charge, far more than to protect from any potential harm. Widening out we take in Joey's tense expression. In a word, misery. As he jerks forward, we widen out even further to see the shadowy, ominous figure of Herman in the background. He reminds us of one of the bad guys from *The Matrix*.

Close on Herman's hands as he pushes the discolored joystick in his giant palm to aggressively to the right. With a loud tire screech, Joey's car turns to the raggedly to the right.

We cut back to Herman, only seeing half of his sardonic smile, and a hint of amused teeth. Back with Joey, he seems to sigh in frustration, as if to say, "*here we go again.*"

Close on Joey's feet on the accelerator. We naturally assume that he wants to advance. No Joy. Herman shifts the remote control into reverse, throwing Joey backward into an unexpected puddle. *Splash*, a wash of water even further serves to humiliate our hero.

Herman on the other hand, is having the time of his life. Well, to be honest, Herman actually has no life. He's clearly a grown man who still plays with boyish toys in darkened, dank garages.

With a casual flick of his forefinger, Herman pushes the joystick forward and we see Joey jerk forward past a window with bars on it. The shadows from the window bars curves across Joey's profile. We see his suffering in stark bas-relief.

Herman decides to expand his playground. The garage door starts to slide up a crack and we see that's its actually full daylight outside. Under the bright light of day, Joey seems a bit pale, perhaps even tinged slightly green, as though he's been living in a cage for a century.

As the garage door comes fully open, a fiery red sports car zips into frame. Joey can't believe his eyes. *What is that?*

The sports car driver turns his head to take a look at pathetic Joey. Somehow Joey can't quite return his gaze. With a rueful smile, as if to say, "*Poor guy,*" the driver takes off, leaving a light trail of exhaust to float over Joey's crestfallen face.

Angrily inspired, Joey makes an attempt to steer the car to the right. As if sensing Joey's quest for freedom, Herman abruptly moves the remote control to the left. Not only does he move the joystick, but his whole body as well, as though instinctively, physically fighting the burgeoning free spirit in his command.

Joey spins around in a dizzying 360, promptly put back in his place. Feeling vindicated, Herman puts the remote control down and returns to the house. Cutting back to the garage door, however, we see that in his haste, Herman's left the garage door open just a crack, *Ooops*.

We shift to Joey's POV of the crack in the garage door. We can see his wheels turning, *hmmm*, as the sun sets.

Under the cover the last strands of dawn, we see Joey's hand grasping a suitcase. He silently slips into the car, and puts the key in the ignition.

He floors the accelerator, and leans his head back to embrace the G-force. He heads straight for the crack in the door. Cutting outside the door, our hearts soar as we see Joey narrowly escape through the bottom of the garage door.

A slow, "*I made it*" smile slips across Joey's face as he makes it out into the rising sun.

With childlike wonder, Joey begins to explore the suburban neighborhood around him. From his low level perspective everything is massive in scale.

Our musical score becomes giddy and explorative, as Joey sees for the first time a dog seeming to chase after birds in flight. A handful of carefree neighborhood kids play in the water from a lawn sprinkler. As some droplets of water land on Joey, it feels like a welcome baptism. It is a far cry from yesterday's murky puddle in the garage.

From Joey's emotional perspective, this is one of those Pamplona, running of the bulls moments. He seems to shoot down a barrel of urban skyscrapers. Excitement courses through his veins as he takes in even the simplest of pleasures. Because he is so small compared to his environment, everything is overamplified as though he were on a mild form of ecstasy.

We both see and feel his experience in bits, quarks of emotion, as he moves from the suburbs to the city. He takes in the smoke from the construction in the city. Joey is awed by the way smoke seems to want to ascend into the limitless sky.

A young couple shares a vanilla ice cone. One single drip comes down and it appears huge. Joey's face says, "*Hhmm, wants that? I want some.*" He steers away from the giant drip, looking for his next taste of this new thing called freedom.

In slow motion he sees a boy and a girl, both holding red helium balloons. The boy (who eerily reminds us of Herman) jealously holds onto this balloon.

Meanwhile in slow motion, the girl willingly sets hers free. The balloon wastes no time, it catches the first tailwind as races away into distant lands.

**Vroom.** We first hear, then see the red sports car from earlier pull up alongside Joey. The driver looks to Joey and smiles, impressed, but Joey is more mesmerized by the ornament hanging from the sport car's rearview mirror.

It is a little globe.

With a mysterious internalized smile, we see Joey take off the moment the light changes.

We go close to see Joey's tire speeding along the white dividing line on the urban street.

A moment later, we match cut to his tiny tire pulling up to another white line.

This time however, as we widen out, we see that he has driven directly onto an airport tarmac.

From Joey's elated perspective we see take in the plane's massive dimensions, the wheels, the engine, the wings.

A moment later, we see Joey recline into a business class seat. His little head looks out the huge window at the cityscape just outside.

From our lenses perspective just next to the abandoned toy car, in an instant, we see Joey takes off into the sky, destination unknown, but of his choice.

## **CINEMATOGRAPHY**

As we discussed in the call 90% of the success of this film hinges on cinematography. We want our audience to experience both Joey's suffering and liberation alongside him.

Lenses such as the Frasier would allow that allow us to get down into Joey's POV. This would be a very small, agile kind of system that allows us a vaster depth of field while being down on the ground. We would never want to be even a few inches above – it needs to be true to his size. When he experiences his new freedom this will be heightened from this perspective.

## **JOEY' CHARACTER DESIGN**

In terms of his look, Joey should be tactile and somewhat old fashioned. His car should have a handmade quality to it. He's a bit older, like Herman got from Joey his Dad. Or maybe he made Joey himself.

Given that we are shooting everything practically, Joey must too, must feel authentic.