

Frago

Written By

Jake Witherell

INT. LIBRARY

BLACK SCREEN

MALE VOICE (O.S.)

Now, let's analyze our protagonist  
through the tragic hero lens.

SMASH CUT TO:

TOM, an intelligent-looking boy with a charming face, sits  
at a table in the library, leading a book club discussion.

TOM

Can anyone break this down for the  
rest of us?

HARRY—a clean-cut boy wearing a nice sweater and a button  
down shirt—raises his hand, but Tom ignores him.

TOM (CONT'D)

Anyone?

Harry raises his hand higher; Tom continues to ignore him.

TOM (CONT'D)

Reggie?

REGGIE—a large, thuggish delinquent who is evidently at the  
meeting as a punishment—does not acknowledge him.

TOM (CONT'D)

Marcos?

MARCOS—a small, skinny foreign exchange student with a  
confused look on his face—frowns as he struggles to  
comprehend.

TOM (CONT'D)

Penelope?

PENELOPE—an energetic, pretty girl who is staring fondly at  
Tom—splutters unintelligibly.

TOM (CONT'D)

If no one has anything to add, then  
that concludes this discussion.

Harry leans forward in his chair, then speaks.

HARRY

Actually, I think that the reversal  
in chapter thirteen—

TOM  
No one gave you permission to  
speak, Frago!

Harry slumps back in his chair, furious.

HARRY  
(Mumbling)  
It's Harry.

Tom does not hear him.

TOM  
Everybody read the next two  
chapters for our next meeting.  
Until then, fellow scholars, keep  
an open book and an open mind!

The only noise in the room is the sound of Penelope hyperventilating. Then Reggie stands up and walks away. The others hesitantly follow suit.

Harry glares at Tom, then turns away and walks over to Ms. Jordan.

HARRY  
Hey, Ms. Jordan, I was on the  
NSBC-double-A's website last night  
and I came across this scholarship  
that goes to a member of the book  
club.

Tom suddenly appears over Harry's shoulder.

TOM  
What's this I hear about a book  
club scholarship?

MS. JORDAN  
Oh, right. I forgot about that.  
Well, it's a very prestigious  
scholarship that will only go to  
the most talented and upstanding  
member of the book club.

As she says this, she looks directly at Tom, completely ignoring Harry.

Harry is silently fuming.

MS. JORDAN (CONT'D)  
So I guess if you boys are really  
interested in it then we'll just  
(MORE)

MS. JORDAN (CONT'D)

have to see who earns it in the next couple of weeks.

TOM

Alright, thanks, Ms. Jordan!

MS. JORDAN

Anything for YOU, Tom!

Tom exits the library with confident strides; Harry follows with dragging footsteps.

INT. HALLWAY - THE NEXT DAY

Harry stands at his locker, gathering textbooks for class. On the door of his locker there are miniature posters of famous authors, i.e. F. Scott Fitzgerald and Ernest Hemingway, that appear as if they should be of rock bands. On the top shelf of his locker are several paperback novels, the bindings worn thin from overuse.

Coming from the other end of the hall, Tom walks in Harry's direction, Penelope trailing him. He is halfway through a story.

TOM

...and then I said to him, "That's a limited edition copy of *Catcher in the Rye* with the original cover art. You'd better not mess with that."

PENELOPE

(Hyperventilating)

You're my hero!!

Tom grins arrogantly. As he walks, he accidentally bumps into a large football player, who shoves him across the hall with ease.

FOOTBALL PLAYER

Watch where you're going, loser.

Tom looks disgruntled for a moment, then turns back to Penelope and continues bragging.

Down the hall, Harry angrily slams his locker door.

INT. CAFETERIA - LATER

In the corner of the cafeteria sits a intimidating, burly student, STEVE. Wearing a zip-up hooded sweatshirt and work boots, he does not appear to care about his appearance. He

stares ahead pensively.

Harry approaches him nervously.

HARRY  
Are you Steve?

STEVE  
Yeah.

Harry sits down across from him. He appears to be on edge.

HARRY  
I'm Harry Frago.

STEVE  
Joel said you'd be here for first  
lunch.

HARRY  
Joel told me second lunch!

STEVE  
Well he told me first lunch.

HARRY  
Sorry about that, it must have been  
a mix-up.

Steve dismisses the incident and moves past it; his time is too valuable for trivial things.

STEVE  
You got the money?

HARRY  
Well, no, not yet, but I'll have it  
for you just as soon as the job's  
done. You see, there's this two  
hundred dollar scholarship—really  
big money here—that's awarded to  
the highest performing member of  
the book club. So once I get the  
scholarship, you'll get your  
cut—about twenty-five percent.

STEVE  
This whole thing doesn't make sense  
to me. You seem like the kind of  
kid who'd have scholarships up the  
wazoo, so why is this one so  
important?

HARRY

I had other scholarships—and good ones, too—but, well... Let's just say NHS doesn't have too great a sense of humor.

He chuckles nervously.

STEVE

Alright, and what is it you want me to do exactly?

HARRY

Well, you see, there's this other kid in the book club, a really top-notch analyzer, who I'm worried is gonna get the scholarship. So I need you to—

He gestures with his thumb.

HARRY (CONT'D)

—get him out of the picture.

STEVE

And how do I do that?

HARRY

I dunno, I'm sure you can figure something out. And then as soon as the job's done and I get my scholarship, I'll give you your cut.

STEVE

Alright, sounds easy enough.

HARRY

And don't screw up!

Steve glares at him menacingly.

HARRY (CONT'D)

But I'm sure you won't. Alrighty, have a good one, Steve.

Harry looks nervously over both of his shoulders, then stands up and rushes out of the cafeteria, leaving Steve to himself.

Steve bites off a piece of his thumbnail, then spits it out and takes a bite of the odd-colored mystery meat that sits on his plate.

INT. LIBRARY - LATER

The book club, a sorry sight, sits around a table with Tom at the head, fervently leading a discussion. Each member has a book open in front of him or her. The books look weathered and are falling apart at the seams.

TOM

...and the flowers are symbolic of how Persephone's love for Emilio will fade like the setting sun.

There is silence for a moment.

PENELOPE

That's beautiful.

TOM

Thank you, Penelope. And unfortunately, you crazy book lovers, that concludes today's discussion. Until next time.

Everyone stands up and leaves the library, with Harry lagging behind.

INT. HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER

With his usual charmingly smug look on his face, Tom saunters down the hall. He stops at his locker and takes some books out.

A little ways down the hall, Steve appears. Carrying a large burlap sack, he lumbers towards Tom.

Tom glances up as Steve approaches, and a look of terror grows on his face. Steve opens the burlap sack and attempts to capture Tom with it. However, Tom, shrieking like an orphaned schoolgirl, darts away.

TOM

(Terrified)

No, please! Somebody help! Are there no adults in the building?!

His lack of coordination gets the best of him, and he trips and falls headfirst into a locker, passing out.

Steve clumsily shoves the limp body in the burlap sack, hoists it up, and carries it awkwardly down the hall.

A teacher, CASHMAN, rounds the corner and passes Steve. Then he stops and abruptly turns around.

CASHMAN

Hey!

Steve freezes and slowly spins around to face Cashman.

CASHMAN (CONT'D)

What's in the sack?

STEVE

My lunch.

Cashman stares at the feet poking out of the sack for a moment, then gives him a thumbs up.

CASHMAN

Cool, man. Take it easy.

They walk off in separate directions.

EXT. SCHOOL GROUNDS - MOMENTS LATER

Sack draped over his shoulder, Steve traipses across the lawn towards the drama shed. When he arrives there, he pulls open the door and hurls the sack inside. Then he slams it shut and bounds away.

INT. CLASSROOM - THE NEXT DAY

Harry waits in class, sitting forward in his chair. He frequently sneaks glances at the clock. His leg bounces up and down.

INT. LIBRARY - LATER

Harry enters the library and crosses over to the book club's usual table. He sits in Tom's seat, takes out his book, and waits, back straight and hands folded on the table neatly.

Marcos enters the room and walks over to the table. He sits down and stares at Harry.

HARRY

Hello, Marcos!

MARCOS

Hola.

There is silence for a moment. Then:

HARRY

What do you think of the book so

(MORE)



HARRY (CONT'D)

far?

Marcos stares blankly at him.

HARRY (CONT'D)

Do you like it?

Marcos continues to stare at him. Without breaking eye contact, he slowly lifts a small toy horse onto the table. Then he turns to the horse and starts playing with it, making quiet galloping noises.

MARCOS

Cah-lup, cah-lup, cah-lup...

After a moment, Reggie and Penelope enter and sit down at the table.

PENELOPE

Where's Tom?

HARRY

Tom isn't here today, so I'll be leading our discussion. Let's get started. In chapter—

PENELOPE

But... but... we can't have a meeting if Tom isn't here!

REGGIE

She's right, man. It's Tom or nothing.

Marcos nods in agreement.

MARCOS

Si.

HARRY

TOM'S GONE! And we are GOING to have this discussion without him!

The others stand up and head for the door.

HARRY (CONT'D)

Wait, where are you guys going? We need to have this discussion!

The door slams behind them and Harry is left alone at the table. Dejected, he slumps back in his seat.

EXT. SCHOOL GROUNDS - AFTERNOON

Carrying a greasy brown paper bag, Steve makes his way over to the shed. He whistles.

STEVE  
Come 'ere, li'l doggie, it's  
feedin' time!

He unlatches the shed door and swings it open.

The second he does so, Tom darts out, still stuck inside the burlap sack. He knocks Steve over, who falls to the ground. Stumbling, Tom sprints off awkwardly.

STEVE (CONT'D)  
Goddammit!

INT. LIBRARY - MOMENTS LATER

Harry despondently approaches Ms. Jordan's desk.

HARRY  
Hey, Ms. Jordan?

MS. JORDAN  
(Annoyed)  
What do you want, Frago?

HARRY  
I wanted to see if you had picked a  
winner for the scholarship yet.

MS. JORDAN  
Not yet, I'm waiting until we have  
a meeting where all members of the  
book club are present so I can make  
sure all potential candidates are  
there to receive it.

He stares at her angrily. At that moment his phone rings, and he pulls it out to answer it.

MS. JORDAN (CONT'D)  
Take it outside!

He sighs in frustration and quickly walks into the hall.

INT. HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Harry taps his phone screen and puts the phone up to his ear.

HARRY  
Hello?

STEVE  
 (Through phone)  
 We've got a problem.

HARRY  
 What is it?

EXT. FOREST - AFTERNOON

Holding his phone up to his ear, Steve stands alone in the middle of the forest, the now empty burlap sack by his feet.

STEVE  
 He got away.

INTERCUT - HALLWAY/FOREST

HARRY  
 What do you mean he got away?

STEVE  
 (Through phone, angrily)  
 I mean he got away.

HARRY  
 How?

STEVE  
 I went to feed him and he ran away.

He pauses.

STEVE (CONT'D)  
 I gotta tell ya, Frago, this situation's gettin' out of hand. I'm gonna need more money.

HARRY  
 (Anxious)  
 How much more?

STEVE  
 Fifty percent of it.

HARRY  
 (Through phone)  
 Fifty percent! There's no way—

STEVE  
 Fifty percent or maybe administration can find him for you.

HARRY  
 Alright, alright! Fifty percent!

STEVE  
 Good.

Harry hangs up the phone and hits his head against the nearest wall.

INT. HALLWAY - THE NEXT MORNING

Looking haggard, Harry moves sluggishly down the hall. He appears to have not gotten much sleep.

Penelope runs up alongside him, anguished.

PENELOPE  
 Hey, Frago! Have you heard anything from Tom? I've looked all over for him but I can't find him.

Harry grows uncomfortable at the question.

HARRY  
 No, I haven't seen him. He's probably just sick or something.

PENELOPE  
 Oh, I hope he's not too sick! What if he has strep? Or mono? Or yellow fever? Oh no...

She wanders off continuing to mutter to herself, lost in her own thoughts. Harry calls after her halfheartedly:

HARRY  
 And it's Harry.

Harry watches her go and continues walking, a worried look on his face.

EXT. FOREST - DAY

Steve walks along a path in the forest, on the prowl. Paying little attention to where he is going, he walks into a tree branch, which smacks him in the face. He clutches his cheek in agony.

STEVE  
 SWEET MOTHER OF—

INT. CAFETERIA - THE NEXT DAY

Alone at a table in the cafeteria, Harry sits, reading a

book and occasionally munching on an apple.

From the other side of the cafeteria, Steve approaches him, looking upset. He sits down aggressively at the table across from Harry.

STEVE  
I found him.

HARRY  
What?

STEVE  
I found Tom.

HARRY  
That's great!

STEVE  
And I want all of it.

HARRY  
I'm sorry?

STEVE  
I want ALL of it.

HARRY  
I can't give you all of it!

Steve suddenly leans forward and grabs Harry forcefully by the shirt collar.

STEVE  
Blood has been spilled, Harry!

HARRY  
But I need that money for college!

STEVE  
No, you need me to hide Tom for you. Because if I choose to let administration know where he is, then you can say good-bye to your hopes of going to college.

HARRY  
(Frightened, desperate)  
Alright, alright! You can have all of it.

STEVE  
You're damn right I can.

He stands, glares at Harry for a moment, then leaves the cafeteria in a huff. Harry watches him go, helpless.

INT. MS. TOBEY'S OFFICE

MS. TOBEY sits behind her desk, leaning forward slightly. She is having a meeting with MR. HAND, who sits across from her in a small, stiff chair.

TOBEY  
So that should cover funding for  
the math department...

She crosses something off on a piece of paper that sits on her desk.

TOBEY (CONT'D)  
And next we have the attendance  
policy.

HAND  
Right, right... What's our  
attendance policy again?

At that moment, Tobey's phone rings loudly.

TOBEY  
Sorry, Bryan, I need to take this.

She picks up the phone.

TOBEY (CONT'D)  
Ms. Tobey. Uh-huh. Uh-huh. I see.  
I'll get right on that.

Hanging up the phone, she turns back to Hand.

TOBEY (CONT'D)  
I'm sorry, Bryan, but can we  
reschedule? That was Imbusch,  
apparently there's a missing  
student. Something to do with the  
book club. And we don't want to  
have to deal with another phone  
call from an upset parent, so I'd  
better go look for him.

Mr. Hand shakes his head.

HAND  
Parents these days. They'll  
complain about anything.

TOBEY  
They sure will. See ya later,  
Bryan.

She gets up and leaves the office, leaving Hand alone.

He calls out to her as she goes:

HAND  
Bye, Lee.

MONTAGE: TOBEY'S INVESTIGATION

SPLIT SCREEN

--Tobey enters the library and crosses the room.	--Tobey approaches Ms. Jordan and interrogates her.
--Scouring for clues, Tobey makes her way down the hall.	--Tobey picks up a book with a piece of burlap on it.
--Tobey interrogates an apathetic Reggie.	--Pacing the bookshelves, Tobey stops to examine a hole.
--A footprint mars the school grounds.	--Tobey treks across the vast lawn, staring at the ground.

SPLIT SCREEN ENDS

INT. BALKUS' ROOM

A teacher, BALKUS, sits at a desk in the corner of the room, taking attendance on his computer. Surveying the classroom, he notices an empty seat.

BALKUS  
Has anyone seen Tom?

STUDENT  
He hasn't been in school for a few  
weeks.

BALKUS  
Where is he?

STUDENT  
I think he got abducted. He's  
probably dead by now.

BALKUS  
That's a shame. Billy, you can  
probably stop taking notes for him.

He turns back to his computer to finish taking attendance.

INT. CASHMAN'S ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

A few journalism students work quietly at computers, while Cashman grades papers at his desk.

Tobey enters and approaches him. She stands over him.

TOBEY

Hey, Conor, got a sec?

Cashman lethargically looks up from his work.

CASHMAN

I guess so.

TOBEY

I'm investigating the case of a missing student, Tom Fitzgibbon, who disappeared a couple of weeks ago. He was in one of your classes, so I was wondering if you had seen him recently.

Cashman frowns, thinking.

CASHMAN

Tom, Tom... Nerdy kid, kinda full of himself, likes to read books all the time?

TOBEY

Sounds like him. He was in the book club.

CASHMAN

I hate that kid.

TOBEY

(Exasperated)

Okay, but have you seen him?

CASHMAN

Not for a few weeks.

She sighs.

CASHMAN (CONT'D)

Why don't you ask one of the other kids in the book club where he is? Like, uh... what's that kid's name...

He frowns, concentrating.



CASHMAN (CONT'D)  
Fuller... Feldman... I think it's  
Frago. Harry Frago.

TOBEY  
Harry Frago? There was no Frago  
there when I went.

CASHMAN  
Well, he's in one of my classes and  
he won't shut up about that damn  
book club.

TOBEY  
What does he look like?

CASHMAN  
Kinda short, skinny... wears dorky  
sweaters... He's like, one of those  
kids that you know is a loser, and  
you wanna feel sorry for him, but  
he's SUCH a loser that you just  
wanna shove him in a locker. I hate  
him even more than I hate Tom.

TOBEY  
Uh... Thanks, Conor... I'll check  
in the library for him.

Not sure what else to do, she leaves the room.

Cashman resumes grading papers.

INT. LIBRARY - LATER

Harry walks through the bookshelves, perusing the books. He  
pulls one off the shelf, and casually reads it.

Tobey marches into the library, looking around the room.  
Noticing Harry, she approaches him.

TOBEY  
Are you Frago?

Looking up from his book, Harry's expression is momentarily  
terrified, but he quickly hides it.

HARRY  
It's Harry, actually, but yes, I  
am.

TOBEY  
I'm investigating the disappearance  
(MORE)

TOBEY (CONT'D)

of Tom Fitzgibbon, and I was wondering if you knew anything about it.

HARRY

Well, um, you see, I never really saw Tom all that much.

TOBEY

But you were in the book club together, weren't you?

HARRY

Yes, but—

TOBEY

So you saw him once a week.

HARRY

Well, I... Listen here, Ms. Tobey, I don't appreciate being called a criminal, and in my own library nonetheless!

TOBEY

I'm sorry to offend you, Frago, but it's my job to get to the bottom of this.

HARRY

It may be your job but that doesn't mean you have the right to— Look, I'm innocent, I tell ya!

TOBEY

I'm sure you are. Can I ask you a few more questions in my office?

HARRY

Well, um... Yeah, okay, can I just check this book out first? The library's gonna be closing soon.

TOBEY

Yeah, sure, go right ahead.

HARRY

Thank you.

She lets him pass, and he starts to walk towards Ms. Jordan to check out the book.

Tobey looks down at her watch, checking the time. When she looks up, Harry is out the doors of the library, sprinting down the hall.

TOBEY

Oh, come on!

INT. HALLWAY - LATER

As Steve lumbers down the hallway, barrelling through smaller students, Harry scurries up next to him.

HARRY

Alright, Steve, I got you the money. I had to withdraw it from my college fund, but since I'm getting that scholarship I'll be fine.

He hands him a thick envelope.

HARRY (CONT'D)

Now, can you tell me where Tom is?

STEVE

He's in the drama shed.

EXT. SCHOOL GROUNDS - MOMENTS LATER

Stumbling, Harry struggles to make his way across the lawn. He finally gets over to the shed and pulls on the door, but it does not open. He pulls again and it swings open, knocking him to the ground. He sits up and looks inside. His mouth drops wide open.

The shed is empty.

INT. LIBRARY - THE NEXT DAY

Apprehensive, Harry sneaks into the library, glancing around to see if Tobey is there. After he sees that the coast is clear, he walks farther. He approaches the book club, the entirety of which is clustered around a table.

HARRY

Hey, guys, sorry to keep you—

He stops just outside the group and stares ahead in horror.

TOM (O.S.)

...then I ran as fast as I could through the forest, and I eventually found my way back to the school!

In the middle of the circle, sitting casually on a table, is Tom. He pauses when he sees Harry.

TOM (CONT'D)

Hey, Frago! Good to see ya! You're just in time to hear my triumphant story!

Mouth agape, Harry stands there, flabbergasted.

HARRY

How... How... How did you...

TOM

It wasn't easy, but I was able to outsmart my aggressor and cleverly get away.

He flashes one of his dazzling smiles.

Penelope starts bawling.

PENELOPE

I'm so glad you're okay!

Ms. Jordan interjects from across the room.

MS. JORDAN

Alright, everyone, now that you're finally all here I'm gonna announce the winner of the scholarship.

Harry turns and waits anxiously, while Tom sits back confidently. The other members are apathetic.

MS. JORDAN (CONT'D)

And the winner is...

She pulls a sheet of paper out of an envelope.

MS. JORDAN (CONT'D)

...Tom! Congratulations!

Smiling arrogantly, Tom makes his way over to Ms. Jordan's desk. He holds up his hands as if to silence an audience.

TOM

Thank you, thank you.

Harry watches, horrified.

INT. TOBEY'S OFFICE

Tobey stares menacingly at the door as someone enters. Arms folded in an attempt to look threateninig, Hand lurks behind her.

She gestures to the seat in front of her.

TOBEY  
(Coolly)  
Have a seat.

Steve slowly sits down across from her.

TOBEY (CONT'D)  
You're gonna tell me all about the  
abduction of Tom Fitzgibbon right  
now, or else I'm gonna expel you.

Behind her, Hand cracks his knuckles.

STEVE  
Alright, alright!

INT. CLASSROOM - THE NEXT MORNING

Clothes askew, Harry sits in class, paying little attention to the lesson.

The door shoots open and two janitors burst into the room. Horrified, Harry watches as they storm right up to him.

In spite of his best efforts to resist, they grab him by the arms and pull him out of his seat. They start to drag him away, but he clings desperately to the desk, shrieking.

HARRY  
NO! NO! PLEASE, NO!

INT. CLASSROOM - WEEKS LATER

BLACK SCREEN

HARRY (O.S.)  
Now, let's take a look at the  
protagonist's motivation.

SMASH CUT TO:

Harry sits at a table, leading a discussion. He holds up a copy of *The Hungry Hungry Caterpillar* and points to the caterpillar on the cover.

HARRY (CONT'D)

Why is he so hungry? And what does  
this hunger *symbolize*? Yes, Timmy.

A small boy with a runny nose, TIMMY, stares wide-eyed at Harry.

TIMMY

I saw a caterpillar once! It was  
YUCKY!

Eyes vacant, Harry cracks a slight smile.

HARRY

Yes, Timmy, caterpillars can be  
quite yucky.

Surrounded by kindergartners, he sits at a tiny table, his knees resting above the tabletop. He is dressed in orange prison coveralls.

Flying applesauce hits him in the side of the head.

From a desk off to the side of the room, a teacher calls out:

TEACHER

Okay, kids, that's all we have time  
for. Can everyone say thank you to  
Mr. Frago?

KIDS

(Drawn out)  
Thank you, Frago.

Harry begrudgingly smiles.

HARRY

You're welcome.

He then crosses over to the teacher's desk and hands her a sheet of paper.

HARRY (CONT'D)

Could you just sign here saying I  
fulfilled my community service  
hours?

TEACHER

Of course.

She signs the paper and hands it back to him.

TEACHER (CONT'D)

You were just terrific with the kids today. I was really impressed with how well you analyzed the book.

HARRY

Oh, thank you.

He starts to exit, then turns back.

HARRY (CONT'D)

You know, there's this scholarship for juvenile delinquents—

A prison guard, who is standing by the door, barks at Harry.

GUARD

Hey! I thought we talked about this!

He then moves over to Harry and grabs him by his collar.

GUARD (CONT'D)

Let's go, loser.

THE END