

INT. INTERROGATION ROOM - DAY

WESLEY and PETER are sitting at a table opposite each other. WESLEY is wearing a police officer's uniform adorned with a National Novel Writing Month patch. PETER is a dorky college student with a flippant attitude. The setting is stark and dreamlike, with a hanging lamp the only set decoration besides the table and chairs.

WESLEY

I know you falsified your stats. The real question is why? Who are you trying to impress? Your friends? A lover? Or maybe your father -- I believe he was a writer too, was he not?

PETER

You've got the wrong guy, I swear.

WESLEY

*(reading from a dossier)*

Peter Norris. Age 19. Seventh time participant in National Novel Writing Month. Won five of 'em. Several misdemeanors regarding pun usage, alliteration, and most recently --

PETER

Fine, fine -- now I'm not saying that I falsified my word count, but if I did -- so what? You say the goal of NaNoWriMo is to encourage the creative process --

WESLEY

It is. And believe me when I say I'm here to help. When you falsify your word count, you're the only one who loses out. And if you admit that to yourself, that's the first step towards improving.

PETER

Isn't this meant to be fun? Leisurely? Seat of your pants? Not a strict regiment?

WESLEY

Writing 50,000 words in the month of November is serious business and requires both commitment and discipline. The moment you signed up at nanowrimo.org you made a promise to yourself. And I'm here to help you see it through.

PETER

So you're interrogating me?

WESLEY

*(kindly)*

No, I'm trying to help you. I need you to understand how serious this is. The real prize of NaNoWriMo is the completed manuscript at the end of the month, but for you, the crown jewel is your education. I presume your end goal is to further your education and to improve as a writer. That's why you're enrolled in English 10A, are you not?

PETER

How did you --

WESLEY

You wouldn't turn in plagiarized work in class, would you?

PETER

Of course not!

WESLEY

It's dishonest and disrespectful, yes. Simply put, it's cheating. Except the only person being cheated here is yourself. It's not shameful to take a down day; nobody would fault you for that. Confess and I'll go easy on you. Why did you falsify your word count?

PETER

*(completely deadpan)*

I wanted the attention of NaNo's most handsome detective, of course.

WESLEY

*(eyebrow quirked)*

Flattery won't get you very far here.

PETER

*(produces a small booklet with gaudy design)*

Perhaps it won't, but maybe this will.

WESLEY

*(glancing at the booklet)*

Is this some sort of a joke?

PETER

Do I look like the type to joke?

WESLEY

Yes.

PETER

*(shrugging)*

Take a look.

WESLEY

Frosty's Adventures? While I dig the design, I fail to see how this is relevant.

PETER

My dad wrote it. You're right, my father was a writer. That was the first publication he worked on.

WESLEY

It's practically a picture book.

PETER

Well, everyone starts somewhere. Growing up he'd tell me these stories -- grand stories of faraway places with heroes and villains as well as down to earth stories of everyday life. Each story had characters that were flawed

and faceted and that blurred the lines between good and evil. When I was old enough to move past bedtime stories, he decided to compile his stories in written form, and Frosty's Adventures was the first.

WESLEY

That's a heartwarming tale, but that doesn't explain why you falsified your records.

PETER

You said I'm trying to impress someone, right? Well, after making it big, my dad quit his job as a software developer to homeschool me and continue writing his stories. I've always been fascinated with his storytelling, and everyone's always expected me to follow in his footsteps as a writer. So when I was twelve I decided to start participating in NaNoWriMo. You've seen my record. Five year consecutive winner.

WESLEY

*(dismissive)*

Yes, quite impressive. I'm willing to bet that not all of what you've written is quality work, however.

PETER

I'd be the first to tell you most of it isn't. But that's beside the point. My dad always encouraged me to write, but I never had any ideas for stories like he did. Most of my stories lack structure and any semblance of a reasonable plot.

WESLEY

You know what we say here at NaNo, no plot, no problem.

PETER

Yeah, sure, but my dad would have none of that. He always pushed for strong character development and conflict and careful planning with meticulous attention to detail, all on the first pass. This past year he started policing my

work and critiquing daily. I've been having writer's block trying to come up with suitable ideas.

WESLEY

So you artificially inflated your word count despite your dad reading your work and being able to see its length? You're not trying to impress your dad then?

PETER

You're right, I'm not. I just made that story up to buy time.

WESLEY

Did you now?

PETER

I did.

WESLEY

Should I add lying to an officer of the law to your list of offenses? We've got you here in the station. You're not getting away with this.

PETER

Damn it, you were supposed to ask why I'm buying time, not latch on to the fact that the story is fabricated.

WESLEY

*(clearly unamused)*

I'm beginning to wonder if anything you've told me is true, but fine. So what exactly are you stalling for?

*(PETER chuckles.)*

WESLEY

What's so funny, punk?

PETER

*(shaking his head)*

You just don't get it, do you.

WESLEY

Get what?

PETER

The word counter? Are you serious? You brought me in to contest the value of a word counter.

WESLEY

Lying about your word count not only ruins your creativity, but degrades both the value of the competition and other writer's accomplishments. Did you even finish all those previous novels?

PETER

I could show them to you right now if you hadn't confiscated my phone. I may have made some mistakes, but no officer, I would never lie on an internet form.

WESLEY

Are you being facetious now?

PETER

Well, given my previous record, is this even a punishable offense?

WESLEY

That's it, I will not tolerate any more jokes! Peter Norris, you are being charged with pun abuse, lying on an internet form, and falsifying your word count. Do you have any objections?

PETER

Yes, I have objections! Is this even a real police department? It looks like something out of someone's college notebook.

WESLEY

You're here, aren't you?

PETER

But look around you -- this is clearly a setup -- it's staged! Why would NaNoWriMo even have a police department? What exactly do you enforce? None of this makes any sense!

WESLEY

*(ignoring Peter)*

You're good... but not good enough. *(calling to someone off stage)* Sean, take him away.

PETER

You can't arrest me for this!

WESLEY

Clearly you didn't read the terms and conditions before you registered, otherwise you'd know that falsifying your word count is punishable by law. *(beat)* So, Peter, this is the last time I'll ask. Your success is in my best interest, and this is your future you're wasting. Why did you falsify your word count?

PETER

Fine, I'll admit. I, Peter Norris, have falsified my National Novel Writing Month word count.

WESLEY

Do you realize what you've done?

PETER

Yes, and I did it for the audience.