

Birdwatcher

by

Paul J. Marano

INT. CAR - DAY

We see JERRY DAVIS reach back from the camera and adjust himself in his seat. We see ZERO, a white lab or some other agreeable, easy going breed of dog, try to enter into frame.

JERRY

Not yet boy. Not yet.

Zero steals a few licks before being nudged aside by Jerry.

JERRY (CONT'D)

Uhh thanks for that. Now I can't remember... uhh, yeah, all right.

Jerry is in character. He has a put on smile and fake, happy cadence to his voice.

JERRY (CONT'D)

Hey guys, it's Jerry the Bird Guy here with a special episode of birding with Jerry... birding with Jerry - it's birding with Jerry. Birding with...

Jerry trails off and repeats the whole thing again and again until-

JERRY (CONT'D)

Hey guys, it's Jerry the Bird Guy here with a special episode of birding with Jerry. We did it or well I should say you all did it. 10k subscribers...10k! I....

(pauses too long)

Am at a loss of a words. I don't know what to say. I thought it was a fluke when I got 100 people, complete strangers, because I don't have that many friends. I don't have any friends...human Friends that is.

(forced laugh)

No, no, no we-we'll cut that. That-that didn't land. That won't land.

(takes deep breath)

because I don't have that many friends, but I appreciate all of you and what you have done to help me grow my channel. I remember when I was just some guy who saw a Calliope hummingbird and uploaded a video. Now, I got ten thousand people watching my videos. That, or you're all birds.... (pause for cringey joke)

(MORE)

JERRY (CONT'D)

Now, I got ten thousand people watching my videos, that's like a small town of people. That's amazing. To celebrate, I thought I give you all back something just as amazing, especially since some of you have been requesting it.

Jerry turns the camera. He pets Zero before turning the camera to the view outside his car window.

It's a scenic view of WENATCHEE NATIONAL FOREST.

JERRY (CONT'D)

Wenatchee, isn't she beautiful?

EXT. PARKING LOT - DAY

We see Zero sitting happy and excited, but sitting obediently as Jerry films him.

JERRY (O.S.)

Of course, it wouldn't be a birding with Jerry video if my best friend and colleague wasn't coming along. Zero, say hello.

Zero barks.

JERRY (O.S.) (CONT'D)

Good boy.

Jerry feeds Zero a treat before turning the camera around on himself.

JERRY (O.S.) (CONT'D)

He only works for food.

We hear Zero bark offscreen.

JERRY (CONT'D)

What was that boy?

He turns the camera back to an excited Zero who is trying to give him kisses.

JERRY (CONT'D)

That and my love and affection.

EXT. PARKING LOT - DAY

Jerry stands in front of his car all decked out in gear.

JERRY

I had to go all out for you guys. It is the 10k special after all. Who knows if I'll ever make it to 20k. Then again, that's what I said about 5k and 1k and 500 and 100 and 50 and well... I think- I think they get it Jerry.

Jerry frowns then looks back at the camera and gets back into character.

JERRY (CONT'D)

It's gonna be a blast!

Janky cut to Jerry awkwardly framed by a tree.

JERRY (CONT'D)

So, I know what you're all thinking right now. What bird has Jerry Davis - me - what bird have I chosen for the 10k special. I have chosen my white whale for this one. A bird that I have only seen with my own eyes once in my entire birdwatching career and that one time was captured in my very first video on the channel way back when. I'm of course talking about the fabled Calliope hummingbird...Endangered might be a better word than fabled - fabled makes its extinction sound whimsical - I'm of course talking about the endangered Calliope hummingbird. The last of its tragically dwindling population can be found in only the most remote parts of Washington. Thanks to a viewer submission of this photo.

Jerry fumbles a photo of the bird in front of the camera.

JERRY (CONT'D)

Taken at the very same cabin location that I will be staying at, this may be it. Ahab may finally get his white whale... again. I hope your excited if you haven't already, make sure to leave a like and subscribe-

JUMP CUT TO:

EXT. CAR - DAY

Jerry is packing supplies in his car. After a moment, he stops.

JERRY

This is dumb. They're not gonna want to see this.

Jerry walks over and grabs the camera.

JUMP CUT TO:

INT. CAR - DAY

Jerry is driving with Zero in the passenger seat. Camera is on the dash facing them.

JERRY

Fun fact Zero, you want to hear a fun fact? Did you know, and this is for all of you back home as well, did you know the forest is statistically one of the most dangerous in the country as it has the highest rate of missing persons?!? I know not really a FUN fact, but here's - here's the fun part, well, here's the part that makes it a little better. You see, it's such a small population around here, just a few incidents can skew the results. You know, people go missing in the woods all the time. It's probably not the boogeyman.

EXT. GAS STATION - DAY

Jerry is filming himself getting gas.

JERRY

Would you look at this? Gas prices am I right! This 10k video better make me some money with how much I'm paying for gas on this trip. That's actually a perfect segway for a shameless plug of my Patreon. Please subscribe! It would really help me out-

INT. CAR - LATER

Jerry is waiting in line in a drive thru.

JERRY

(to himself)

I would like a number 12 with fries and medium coke.

Jerry repeats over and over to himself before pulling up to order.

SPEAKER (V.O.)
Welcome to McDonalds, may I take your order?

JERRY
I would like a number 12 with fries and medium coke.

SPEAKER (V.O.)
Any sauces?

JERRY
What?

SPEAKER (V.O.)
Would you like any sauces?

JERRY
N-no, n-no thank you.

SPEAKER (V.O.)
All right, payment will be at the window up ahead.

Jerry lets out a sign of relief as he pulls ahead, credit card already in hand.

CASHIER
That'll be \$12.50.

He pulls up and hands the card to the cashier. Zero steps forward toward the window.

CASHIER (CONT'D)
Oh my god, you're dog is so cute.

JERRY
Thanks.

Jerry lets Zero do the socializing as he gets the pay and food.

EXT. PARK - DAY

Jerry eats at a park. He plays fetch with Zero and spots some birds that he films. A GIRL in her late teens/early twenties walks up.

GIRL

Excuse me, are you filming me and my friends?

JERRY

What, oh gosh no! I was actually filming the birds.

GIRL

The birds?

JERRY

Yeah, you see I run a bird watching youtube channel-

GIRL

Yeah, ok, uh that's like cool and all umm... I'm still gonna have to ask you to stop filming in our direction. Its just really creeping out my friends.

JERRY

Oh-oh gosh sorry. I wasn't meaning to film at you guys, its just all the common swallows seem to be nesting over there-

GIRL

Fuck you asshole!

The girl storms off. Jerry points the camera at Zero.

JERRY

What did I say? They are nesting over there. I spot at least three.

He zooms back in on the trees with the swallows and resume his bird watching. Eventually, we hear a voice...

GUY (O.S.)

Hey bird bitch!

He zooms out to find an angry boyfriend coming his way.

JERRY

Oh, uh, hello.

GUY

You filming my girlfriend and her friends?

JERRY

What, oh gosh no! I was actually filming the birds.

GUY

The birds huh?

JERRY

Yeah, you see I run a bird watching
youtube channel-

Jerry is cut off by the guy grabbing at him and knocking the camera down. We hear a scuffle and Zero barking as the birds stir to a high pitched shriek.

Jerry picks the camera back up and has Zero keeping the guy at bay while he backs away.

JERRY (CONT'D)

GUY

Stay away, stay away, stay
away, stay away!

I'll fuck you up man. Take
your kitty bait dog and get
the fuck out of here!

Zero bites the guy and Jerry pulls him off and runs as we hear a girl screaming. We watch Jerry run for a bit before-

JUMP CUT TO:

INT. CAR - NIGHT

Jerry is in his car. He looks shook by the events and sleep deprived. By the looks of it, he's been driving all night.

JERRY

Hey guys...

(voice breaking)

Just wanted to let you all know how much
I appreciate all your guys' viewership
and if you haven't already, make sure to
leave a like and subscribe-

(breaks down crying)

Please, it would really help me out.

Zero licks him to make him feel better as he is overcome by emotion.

INT. CAR - LATER

Jerry is waiting in line in a drive thru.

JERRY
(to himself)
I would like a number 12 with fries and
medium coke, no sauce.

Jerry repeats over and over to himself before pulling up
to order.

SPEAKER (V.O.)
Welcome to McDonalds, may I take your
order?

JERRY
I would like a number 12 with fries and
medium coke, no sauce.

SPEAKER (V.O.)
Will that be all?

JERRY
Yes, thank you.

SPEAKER (V.O.)
All right, payment will be at the window
up ahead.

Jerry pulls ahead, card in hand. Zero gets ready to charm
the cashier. Jerry hands her the card and Zero does his
thing.

CASHIER
Hey, the card was declined.

Jerry smiles and takes the card before immediately
driving off in embarrassment.

INT. CAR - DAY

We see a shot of the open highway.

JERRY (O.S.)
Man, there's a whole lot of nothin in the
middle of Washington.

Pans down to gps saying another 5 hours.

JERRY (O.S.) (CONT'D)
And we got plenty of nothing more to go.

Turns the camera on himself.

JERRY (CONT'D)

To my Pateron supporters, I want to send a special shoutout. That 110 dollars will keep me alive for-

He turns the camera back to show the low gas.

JERRY (CONT'D)

At least another 3 hours.

Turns on the camera back on himself with a yikes face.

JERRY (CONT'D)

We'll cross that bridge when we get there...or we won't because we won't have enough gas.

Jerry shrugs.

EXT. GAS STATION - DAY

We see Jerry trying out different credit cards at the pump. Each one getting declined.

JERRY

No, no, no-

Finally one is accepted.

JERRY (CONT'D)

And we have a winner! If you haven't already, please subscribe to my pateron, Me and-

He turns the camera to Zero in the passenger seat.

JERRY (CONT'D)

My dog's life literally depend on it.

INT. CAR - NIGHT

Jerry is dozing off while driving and Zero has to wake him before they crash.

INT. CAR - LATER

We see dash footage of Jerry and Zero sleeping in the car.

INT. GROCERY STORE - DAY

Jerry takes his dog into a grocery store to buy food. He quietly puts some food back for himself, so he can afford more dog food.

INT. CAR - DAY

The roads are getting more rural.

INT. CAR - LATER

They pull up to a forest.

JERRY
I think this is it.

INT. CAR - LATER

More dirt road ahead.

JERRY
Never mind, there's still more nothing to go. At least, it's prettier nothing now.

Jerry pans around to show the scenic nature.

INT. CAR - DAY

They pull up to the cabin.

JERRY
Now we've arrived.

Jerry pans over to Zero who looks worried.

JERRY (CONT'D)
You excited boy?

Zero gives him nothing.

JERRY (CONT'D)
Ok, well, I think you'll like it.

Jerry gets out the car and points his camera at the RENTAL CABIN, an older cabin deep in the woods. Zero barks in the background and starts to shit on the grass.

JERRY (CONT'D)
Right, Zero. I gotta shit too.
 (mumbling)
 Probably should cut that, too
 crass.
 (back to normal)
*Right Zero, I have to go to the
 bathroom too!*

He fumbles around the camera as he stops recording.

JERRY (CONT'D)
 That was better.

EXT. CABIN - CONTINUOUS

Jerry goes to unlock the door to the cabin, which is locked
 by a beefy electronic combo lock.

JERRY
 Wow, this place is perfect!

He goes to enter the code before turning the camera away from
 the lock. Beeps are heard as he inputs the code.

JERRY (CONT'D)
 No code for you guys haha, the
 rental guy was very adamant on that
 one.

Jerry and Zero walk into-

INT. CABIN ENTRANCE - CONTINUOUS

Camera shows an old but well kept cabin interior.

JERRY
 Ok, let me show you guys around!

INT. LIVING ROOM - CABIN - CONTINUOUS

JERRY
 So here is the living room, super
 nice and cozy for Zero and I to
 relax in after a day of birding.
 Just kidding, I am probably going
 to be up all night editing so I can
 get this video up as soon as
 possible...
 (muttering)
 Actually...
 (MORE)

JERRY (CONT'D)
yeah that makes me sound desperate?
I don't know, never mind....

EXT. CABIN PORCH - CONTINUOUS

Jerry is back to his normal self on the cabin porch.

JERRY
And here is the porch. Not a super
crazy view or anything but plenty
of trees which hopefully will be
full of bird activity. Fingers
crossed.

We hear something land on the porch near Jerry.

JERRY (CONT'D)
What was that?

Jerry looks down to find a DEAD BIRD.

JERRY (CONT'D)
Oh my god! It's a horned lark. They're
endangered in this area. It just-

He looks up confused.

JERRY (CONT'D)
fell out of the sky. Uh oh - in these
situations...

Jerry puts on a latex glove that he already has at the
ready in his pocket and picks the dead lark.

JERRY (CONT'D)
It's best to just let nature take its
course.

He throws it off the balcony into nature to be dealt
with.

He then takes off the gloves and heads inside. We see it get
thrown back up onto the porch, but when Jerry comes back out
to grab the camera, he is none the wiser.

INT. MOVIE ROOM - CABIN - CONTINUOUS

The movie room is well decorated with movie posters, a
decorative VHS recorder camera, a projector, and a shelf of
VHS tapes.

JERRY

We have this really cool home theatre, really cool if you had friends with you to watch a movie. Zero isn't much of a movie buff though.

(forced)

Haha!

INT. BEDROOM HALLWAY - CABIN - CONTINUOUS

JERRY

Here is the bedroom, with a nice comfy bed that I'm sure Zero will take up 90% of.

INT. KITCHEN - CABIN - CONTINUOUS

JERRY

And here is the kitchen, nothing too crazy except for this right here-

Jerry shows a high-tech wifi router and some other related gadgets in the corner of the room.

JERRY (CONT'D)

You all would not believe how many places I looked at didn't have internet at all, but lo and behold, this cabin has faster wifi than my apartment! It said on the rental page they have some super expensive satellite wifi, which also powers the 5g signal booster which is apparently the only way to get anything resembling cell coverage. Super nice so I can back up footage, but also expensive. But that is why I have a patreon for you all to donate-

Zero barks offscreen.

JERRY (CONT'D)

Zero, could you be quiet boy?

Zero stops but continues to growl for a moment before stopping. Jerry looks as if he is coming to a tough decision.

JERRY (CONT'D)

(to camera)

But, that is why I have a patreon
for you all to help me out at, link
in the description! Now time to get
settled in.

(beat)

Dammit.

EXT. OUTSIDE CABIN - MOMENTS LATER

Jerry sets up his camera on a tripod to record him unpacking his car. As he does so, Zero once again starts to growl, this time towards the forest.

JERRY

Hey Zero quit it! I don't know
what's gotten into you.

Zero follows Jerry as he goes inside while carrying a suitcase. After a moment of peaceful nothing, a blurry movement is seen in the woods, indiscernible.

As Jerry comes out to grab another load of stuff, more movement is seen. Jerry goes in, then out again, and as his back is turned, the movement, now clearly a distant figure a head of an odd shape, leaves the forest and heads towards the porch.

A moment later, Jerry comes out again, closes up the car and grabs the camera.

INT. LIVING ROOM - CABIN - MOMENTS LATER

Jerry is packing a backpack and getting another camera ready to go on a hike. The window in the background is ever so slightly cracked open.

JERRY

Now time for our first excursion of
our trip, you ready Zero?

Jerry does a hand signal and Zero barks. Jerry gives him a treat.

JERRY (CONT'D)

That's right! Me too. Now lets get-
a goin-

He spots the cracked window and walks over to shut it.

JERRY (CONT'D)
 Well, this place sure is living up
 to its age, crappy hinges and all.
 Well, make do with what you got.

EXT. TRAIL - MOMENTS LATER

Jerry and Zero are happily walking down a trail going
 birdwatching.

JERRY
 Oh my god, look a horned lark.

Jerry notices one in the tree.

JERRY (CONT'D)
 (to himself)
 Its good to see one alive.

BEGIN BIRDWATCHING MONTAGE

- Jerry names bird species he spots as he hikes.
- Jerry practices his bird calls.
- Jerry approaches a bird.

JERRY (CONT'D)
 Hey, have you seen the Calliope
 Hummingbird?

- Jerry approaches a flock of birds.

JERRY (CONT'D)
 Hey, you corral of Brown headed Cowbirds
 know where a Calliope hummingbird is? I'm
 just looking for one. I don't need to
 find a whole corral like you got there.

Jerry does plenty of "wacky" zooms on the corral of
 cowbirds.

- Jerry approaches a chipmunk.

JERRY (CONT'D)
 Alllllllvin!

The chipmunk runs away.

JERRY (CONT'D)
 Have you seen the Calliope Hummingbird?!?

- Jerry sneaks up on a deer.

JERRY (CONT'D)

Hey, have you seen the Calliope-

The deer runs off.

JERRY (CONT'D)

Darn, some people are so scared of social interaction.

- Jerry does the "Have you see the Calliope Hummingbird?"
Bit to a few more animals, at least until the bit has
long outworn its comedic value. The funny montage
abruptly ends when-

- Jerry finds a dead lark.

END MONTAGE

EXT. WOODS - DAY

JERRY

Another dead lark.

Zero goes in to sniff. Jerry pulls him away.

JERRY (CONT'D)

Zero, get back!

Jerry zooms in on it.

JERRY (CONT'D)

It's one of those horned larks.
They're an endangered species in
the area.

Jerry looks up into the trees and sees no birds are around.
He returns his camera to the dead lark on the ground.

JERRY (CONT'D)

I guess it's endangered for a
reason because birds in the wild,
unless there's like a disease
involved or a pollutant, they
don't... they don't die this
peacefully - w-what I mean is
predators usually tear them to bits
so like, I should probably make the
park's service aware as soon as I
have reception. For now, I got
footage of it and that should be
enough-

ZERO BARKS OFF SCREEN. Jerry swings the camera around to see Zero growling at seemingly nothing in the brush.

JERRY (CONT'D)
Zero, what is it?

Jerry tries to find what he's growling at with the camera.

JERRY (CONT'D)
I'm not seeing it boy. Where is it?
(to camera)
Zero thinks there's something in the bushes. Probably some wildlife, probably not a Calliope Hummingbird, but what kind of nature Youtuber would I be if I didn't go see what animal is given my dog's the spooks. I'd probably be a living one, but you know what then I wouldn't have student loans to pay off soooo...

Jerry forges ahead into the brush without hesitation.

INT. BRUSH - CONTINUOUS

Jerry roots around in the brush.

JERRY
I'm not seeing anything, so whatever it was must be long gone.

The camera auto focuses on a odd colored feather in the canopy.

JERRY (CONT'D)
What's that?

Jerry reaches out and takes it.

JERRY (CONT'D)
Well ain't you a beauty...

As Jerry goes to leave he rustles a branch that causes something to fall on him. It's another dead lark. Jerry steps back in disgust. As he does more dead larks rain down on him.

JERRY (CONT'D)
Ahh what the fuck!

Jerry looks up to see a whole lot of dead larks entangled in branches over his head. He starts to panic and rushes out of the brush.

INT. TRAIL - CONTINUOUS

Jerry leaves the canopy with the new feather. Zero barks again as if someone is behind Jerry. Jerry turns the camera to see nothing.

JERRY

Don't fucking scare me like that Zero!

Zero whimpers.

JERRY (CONT'D)

I'm sorry Zero. I'm sorry I yelled.
It was just a bird Zero, a whole
lot of birds, come on.

Jerry tries to get him to come along, but Zero can't take his eyes off something in the brush.

JERRY (CONT'D)

Zero come on!

Zero is slow to follow.

JERRY (CONT'D)

Zero it's time to go home!

Zero perks up at the word home and finally follows Jerry.

JERRY (CONT'D)

Home, yes, let's go home boy.

INT. CABIN - CONTINUOUS

Jerry arrives to the cabin and settles down for the evening. He notices the window is open.

JERRY

Did I leave this open again?

Jerry sets down the camera and closes the window. He shrugs and goes to turn the camera off.

JUMP CUT TO:

INT. CABIN - EVENING

Jerry has the camera on him vlog style with the feather in front of him.

JERRY

So, the ranger station won't pick up about the birds. No idea if it was because of the bad reception or not, but I am drafting an email as we speak. Also, though, I had time to figure out who this belonged to (gestures to feather) and the answer is... worrying to say the least.

He points to a picture on the computer of a Gyrefalcon.

JERRY (CONT'D)

It's a Gyrefalcon feather. These are some real scary birds of prey. They're the largest falcons in North America, like, that's Canada and Mexico too, uhh they're like the meanest as well some would say, and I would agree since they've been known to prey mostly on other birds, so it's a bit concerning if one is loose in a designated I.B.A. (a beat)

That's Important Bird Area for any new viewers, they set up these zones for endangered bird populations to safely recover. They can't do that if a predator is their space now can they? I'll be sure to mention that in the email I'm still drafting. If it isn't disease killing those larks first, it'll be one of them, so we need to sound the alarm.

Jerry's eyes light up.

JERRY (CONT'D)

Speaking of alarms!

INT. CABIN ENTRANCE - DUSK

Jerry shows his viewers the high tech security system the cabin has.

JERRY

Don't worry all you at home. The email has been drafted. The magic of editing will just make it seem like I went straight here to show you this high tech alarm system that this otherwise rickety old place has. They must be real worried about bears around here is all I can say. Anyways, the man on the phone I spoke to when I rented this made me e-sign a form stating that I would arm the system every night and every time I was away for 'insurance reasons.' quote unquote.

Jerry arms the system and it gives him an error message.

SYSTEM VOICE (V.O.)

Window ajar.

JERRY

What?

Jerry goes to the window in question and finds it's slightly ajar.

JERRY (CONT'D)

I swear I closed it hard enough.

Jerry opens it and slams it down tight, so he knows its in place.

SYSTEM VOICE (O.S.)

Window closed.

JERRY

Damn right it is.

Jerry turns the camera to Zero who is creepily staring at something out the window.

JERRY (CONT'D)

Come on Zero, time for bed.

Zero seems on guard as he follows Jerry to the bedroom.

MATCH CUT TO:

INT. CABIN - NIGHT

The security system reads out an error message again.

SYSTEM VOICE
Error, resetting system.

It begins a quiet, yet creepy beeping countdown starting from 60.

We then see silent montage of footage, very similar to the cabin tour that Jerry gave earlier, but this time, it's all in the dark of night with no commentary and only the beeping sound of the alarm system resetting in the background.

INT. CABIN BEDROOM - NIGHT

Camera finally reaches the bedroom where we see JERRY and ZERO asleep in bed. Who's holding the camera?

The camera slowly zooms in and out on the loudly snoring Jerry before Zero wakes up. Zero looks on edge at the sight of whoever is holding the camera. Zero starts to growl which syncs with Jerry's snoring and the alarm counting down as the zoom in closes in and out before...

JUMP CUT TO:

INT. CABIN BEDROOM - NIGHT

Camera is flicked on to JERRY now, who grabs the camera.

JERRY
I thought I plugged you in.

He groggily tries looking around with it. Blaring in the background is the robotic security system "*Motion Detected...Kitchen...Motion Detected... Kitchen...*"

JERRY (CONT'D)
Ugh...Zero, I told you to stay in
in your bed tonight...

Jerry gets up and stops moving, standing still staring off screen. He grabs the camera and shows Zero standing attentively at the closed bedroom door, growling slightly.

JERRY (CONT'D)
(timidly)
...Zero?...

Zero lets off another, louder growl, as the alarm continues to sound, then changes to "*Motion Detected...Hallway...Motion Detected...Hallway...*" Zero growls louder.

JERRY (CONT'D)
 (Quietly)
 Come here Zero...

Zero obeys as Jerry steps back. The camera watches through an opening of the door. *"Motion Detected...Hallway...Motion Detected...Hallway...Motion Detected...Kitchen...Motion Detected...Kitchen..."*

It seems to stop. Jerry waits anxiously, breathing loudly. Zero gives out an occasional growl. Moments pass to nothing.

JERRY (CONT'D)
 (Nervous)
 Jesus Christ, Well whatever tripped
 it must have left, right buddy?

Zero gives no answer.

JERRY (CONT'D)
 Ok, here goes nothing...

Jerry slowly makes his way towards the door. He slowly opens it, hinges squeaking slightly yet loudly. He looks down the hall towards the kitchen. Dark, but nothing visible.

JERRY (CONT'D)
 (Shakily)
 H-Hello??? Is anyone there?

Nothing.

Jerry takes out his phone and turns on the flashlight, revealing two eyes reflecting the light back at him.

JERRY (CONT'D)
 SHIT!!!

He stumbles back briefly before calming himself.

JERRY (CONT'D)
 Oh...wow...

He zooms in the camera, which focuses on the creature, a SPOTTED OWL, with unblinking black eyes.

JERRY (CONT'D)
 Holy crap, how did you get in here
 bud?

Jerry clears his throat and "turns on" his youtuber persona.

JERRY (CONT'D)

(quietly)

So look at what we have here everyone, one of the most rare and crazy things to ever happen on this channel. This is a Northern Spotted Owl, right in my cabin! This is absolutely insane!

He slowly approaches the large bird, which is sitting unmoving on a coat rack.

JERRY (CONT'D)

These grand birds, which can sport up to a 40inch wingspan, are differentiated from other Spotted Owls by the size of their dark brown spots compared to their white spots.

Jerry is surprisingly close now, getting closer. The owl has yet to move.

JERRY (CONT'D)

Those who have been subbed to me for a while will remember about 2 years ago we spotted one of these nested up in the rafters of an old-

Jerry is cut off by the Owl's head suddenly sliding off the body and falling to the floor with a bloody splat.

JERRY (CONT'D)

AH WHAT THE FUCK!

Jerry's camera follows it down, then seems to follow a faint blood trail starting from below the still-perched body of the owl, going all the way to the same window he closed earlier, now cracked open several inches.

JERRY (CONT'D)

(Freaking Out)

Oh God...Oh God...

Zero barks in the background.

CUT TO:

INT. CABIN - MORNING

Jerry zooms in on the approaching car of the park ranger.

JERRY (O.S.)
About damn time.

EXT. CABIN DRIVEWAY - DAY

Jerry comes out to meet RED(40s), a park ranger in a dirty uniform.

JERRY
Hi, I'm the one who called about
the-

RED
Owl. Yeah, I got your call. All two
dozen or so of them.

JERRY
I'm sorry, it's just...wait, have
you also gotten my emails about the
larks?

RED
Son-

JERRY
Jerry, the name is Jerry.

RED
Nice to meet ya Jerry. They call me
Red.

JERRY
Oh, Red the ranger. That's a fun name, is
that your given-

RED
Why are you filming me Jerry?

JERRY
Uhh no, I-I'm a bird watcher. you
see I run a youtube channel, uh, I
came out to here to uh- look, it's
not important. I just need to show
you the footage or else you will
not believe me when I tell you what
happened.

RED
You don't need to film me. You know
I'm not a cop right?

JERRY
What?

RED

Relax man, I'm not gonna arrest you for anything. I'm not gonna get mad at ya for some stupid reason and if I were to shoot you-

Red gets out his rifle.

RED (CONT'D)

It be because you're a bear.

JERRY

Woah.

RED

You don't look like a bear to me.

Red keeps the rifle out.

JERRY

I-I just called about the owl. Like I said, it be easier if I'd show you what happened.

RED

Then show, don't tell.

JERRY

Uh ok, it's inside. You won't need the rifle.

RED

Out here Jerry, you never know where a predator might strike.

INT. CABIN - CONTINUOUS

Jerry and the ranger enter inside. Zero is strangely hesitant to approach him.

RED

Hi there pooch. What's its name?

JERRY

His name's Zero.

Zero growls at Red as he goes to pet him.

JERRY (CONT'D)

I'm so sorry. He's not usually like that with people.

RED
It's all right. Now where's the mess?

JERRY
It's right over here. I must warn you, it's quite graphic.

RED
This place hasn't changed much since I've last been inside.

JERRY
You've been here before?

RED
Yup, we always have issues with this place.

JERRY
Really, that's well... that might help explain this.

Jerry shows him the mess. Red bursts into laughter.

RED
(laughing)
Oh lord above.

JERRY
W-what, what's so funny about this?

RED
This must have gave you quite a scare.

JERRY
It did! Yes, it really did! I really don't see what's so funny about it?

RED
You have to understand, from my perspective this happens all the time in these parts.

JERRY
Owls just decapitate themselves all the time out here!

RED
Over rotate.

JERRY

What?

RED

You said you're a bird expert
right?

JERRY

Bird watcher.

RED

Either way, you should know about
this? It's pretty common.

JERRY

What is?

RED

You know how owls can twist their
heads 360 degrees?

JERRY

270 but yeah.

RED

I was testing ya there bird expert.
You passed.

JERRY

You're saying the owl twisted its
own head off!?!

RED

Did you shine a flashlight at it?

JERRY

Yeah.

RED

Well bird expert, there you go. You
shined a light at an owl's eyes too
close, it over rotated its head
with too much force snapping its
own neck and you know how fragile
birds are, it doesn't take much
much to-

He gestures to the decapitated head.

RED (CONT'D)

Break a piece off.

Red pulls the wing off clean.

RED (CONT'D)
Here want some owl wing?

Red laughs while Jerry gags.

JERRY
That's disgusting.

RED
You don't think this is funny?

JERRY
No. There's nothing funny about dead birds.

RED
Says the guy who shows up in a designated I.B.A. and suddenly horned larks start dropping like flies, you're really not expecting me to be a little suspicious?

JERRY
What are you talking about?

RED
I have been getting your emails Jerry. We take bird death very seriously around here.

JERRY
Good, I take bird death very seriously.

RED
We'll look into it.

JERRY
Thank you.

RED
For now-

Red goes up to the window.

RED (CONT'D)
I recommend shutting your window real tight.

Red slams it down a little too hard, breaking the latch.

RED (CONT'D)
That way no more curious night owls come paying you a visit.

JERRY
Yes sir. Thank you sir.

RED
You don't need to call me sir.
Remember I'm not a cop.

JERRY
You're like a forest cop.

RED
(laughs)
You know what, that I am.
(into camera)
I am the law in these woods! Sorry
if I scared ya by shouting.

Red goes to leave.

JERRY
Aren't you going to take the body?

Red reacts like he forgot his hat.

RED
Oh yeah...

EXT. CABIN DRIVEWAY - DAY

Jerry and Zero see Red off.

JERRY
That guy was a bit weird and that
saying something coming from me.

INT. CABIN - CONTINUOUS

Jerry sets up the camera pointed at the window as he goes to
check it's shut.

JERRY
What the hell.

Jerry goes to grab the camera to show us what he's found.

JERRY (CONT'D)
The lock's broken.

Jerry shows the broken latch.

Cut to later with Jerry bringing out his tools.

JERRY (CONT'D)
It's a good thing I brought my
tools boy.

He picks up the drill and it revs to life, nearly causing Jerry to drop it and Zero to run back. Jerry looks at the camera confident he will be cutting that in editing.

JERRY (CONT'D)
All right guys, I know this bird
watching channel, but today we're
gonna have a special home
improvement episode.

BEGIN MONTAGE OF JERRY FIXING WINDOW AND MAKING SURE IT
SHUTS.

JERRY (CONT'D)
There we go. Maybe I should start a
home improvement channel... I
already said that...I'm gonna cut
that.

BANG! A bird hits the window leaving a speck of blood where it hit. Jerry looks at the camera terrified.

EXT. CABIN - DAY

Jerry is looking to see where the bird's body fell. Zero is helping.

JERRY
You see it boy!

Zero barks. He found it. Jerry comes over to Zero who's sniffing it. It's the body of a horned lark.

JERRY (CONT'D)
Oh my God!

Zero sniffs the body.

JERRY (CONT'D)
Zero, get away! It might be sick.

INT. CABIN - DAY

Jerry sits down vlog style.

JERRY

So, I haven't done much bird watching today beyond a finch or two that passed by my window.

He awkwardly pans the camera over to the window. It's a pretty day out.

JERRY (CONT'D)

Why might I be spending all day inside instead of outdoors doing what I came here to do, well, uh, there's a good reason. The ranger said something about a "last time" that kind of unnerved me. Since I've been here, things have felt off to say the least. I-I just wanted to know what he meant. I kind of wish now that I didn't.

Cut to computer screen displaying headline that says

"Search For Missing Couple on Their Honeymoon Called Off"

JERRY (CONT'D)

Yeah, this a bit alarming. These must be one of or I guess I should say two of those missing persons cases that give this area such a bad reputation. Like I said, the statistics are probably skewed, especially if there going missing in couples. Still, uh, pretty...pretty creepy especially since they were staying at this same cabin. So, If uhh-

He pans the camera over to Zero who looks on guard.

JERRY (CONT'D)

We go missing boy, don't say I didn't warn ya.

Jerry smiles awkwardly at the camera.

EXT. CABIN - DAY

Jerry is now outside with Zero. He is setting up a water bottle and practicing Zero fetching it.

JERRY

Water boy, go get me water.

Zero fetches the water bottle.

JERRY (CONT'D)

Good boy!

Jerry goes out farther from the cabin and tests Zero again.
Zero fetches the bottle.

JERRY (CONT'D)

Good boy!

EXT. WOODS - DAY

We see Jerry is out far enough to just be out of sight of the cabin. Zero comes into view with a water bottle.

JERRY

You did it again boy! You're so good! Even knew how to get back home and everything! This is gonna look so good for the video.

EXT. CABIN - DAY

We see Jerry is now back at the cabin.

JERRY

All right guys, Zero and I are heading out for another hunt for the Calliope Hummingbird. I'm confident we'll find it this time. Ain't that right boy?

He pans the camera to Zero, who looks happy.

JERRY (CONT'D)

Oh yeah, he's ready. Let's go!

As Jerry and Zero head out, Jerry suddenly stops.

JERRY (CONT'D)

Almost forgot..

Jerry sets his water bottle down on the porch for later.

EXT. FOREST TRAIL - DAY

Jerry and Zero walk along the scenic trail. Jerry spots a horned lark.

JERRY

It's good to see one alive for
once.

Jerry sits down looking all tired with the camera
suspiciously pointed at himself. It feels a bit staged,
because it is.

JERRY (CONT'D)

I need water! Water! I need water,
boy!

Jerry pats himself down and looks in his backpack a little
too quick.

JERRY (CONT'D)

Zero, I forgot my water!

Jerry looks into the camera with a forced smile.

JERRY (CONT'D)

You guys want to see a cool trick I
taught Zero.

Jerry grabs the camera and puts it on Zero's collar. He takes
out his phone so he can film on his end as well. We cut back
and forth between his phone and Zero'S POV.

JERRY (CONT'D)

I forgot my water boy. Go home,
fetch water.

Zero takes a moment to understand, but as Jerry repeats the
command, Zero slowly gets it and starts to head out.

JERRY (CONT'D)

That's it boy. That's right. Go
home. Fetch water.

Zero runs off. Jerry smiles into his phone.

JERRY (CONT'D)

He'll be back, don't worry.

EXT. WOODS - DAY

We cut between footage of Zero running through the woods and
Jerry birdwatching around the area and mumbling species names
to himself.

Cut to Jerry singing to some birds and them singing back,
much to his delight.

Cut to Zero finding a dead lark on the trail as he runs along. He sniffs it and moves on.

Meanwhile, Jerry spots something in the trees.

JERRY
Is that... what is that?

EXT. CABIN - DAY

We see Zero approaching the house.

EXT. WOODS - DAY

Jerry clumsily walks through the foliage to get to what he spots in the trees. He grabs it and its a bright colored graphic T.

JERRY
Damn litter bugs.

EXT. CABIN PORCH - DAY

Zero walks up to the cabin porch where the water should be. It's not there. Zero's POV focuses on the empty spot in confusion, that's when he pans over to notice the door, which wasn't previously open, now is.

EXT. WOODS - DAY

Jerry is filming a falcon circling over his head.

JERRY
No way, is that it? That's the gyrefalcon! There it is. He's circling. They only do that when they spot prey!

INT. CABIN - DAY

Zero walks through the house until he finds the water bottle sitting in front of the open door to the basement/movie room. There is no light other than the bit that shines down on the water bottle. Zero does not move toward it.

EXT. WOODS - DAY

We see Jerry walking back. The falcon is still overhead.

EXT. CABIN - DAY

Jerry returns to the cabin.

JERRY

Zero!

He goes up to the porch and finds the water bottle missing and the door open.

JERRY (CONT'D)

Zero! Where are you boy?

INT. CABIN - DAY

Jerry enters the cabin to find Zero cowering over the steps to the basement, the water bottle sitting at the bottom.

JERRY

What the? You move it down there
boy?

Zero just stares at the bottle.

INT. MOVIE ROOM - DAY

Jerry goes down the steps and grabs it. He looks into the dark movie room to find the tv on blaring static, which he enters to turns off.

INT. CABIN - LATER

Jerry looks deflated.

JERRY

Today has been another bust. Its got us
down in the dumps, Even Zero....

Zero is moping by his bowl.

JERRY (CONT'D)

He's been like this all day. He won't
even eat.

We hear a bang at the porch window. Jerry gets up to investigate.

EXT. PORCH - DAY

He goes out and finds another dead lark.

JERRY

Oh no...

INT. CABIN - DAY

Jerry stares down the camera vlog style.

JERRY

I won't lie to you guys. It's been rough. It's been a struggle. It's been difficult. It's been... *my hardest bird watch yet! But I'm not deterred. the Calliope hummingbird may be my white whale after all. Don't you hate when you make an overzealous joke and it becomes so true that it almost stops feeling like a joke. That's where I'm at with the hunt for my white whale.*

Jerry's smile fades and he goes to grab the camera.

INT. CABIN BEDROOM - DAY

Jerry is at his laptop.

JERRY

So the place I booked this cabin through has this weird rule that you can't be booked for more than a week. They claim it's for conservation reasons. I don't know if I buy that. It's not exactly a fool proof system as I was easily able to rebook another week here. I didn't even need to pay, which I thought was weird. Like, they should have charged me again right? They don't have any of my cards on file since I paid for the first week here via check. I mean, I kinda needed this so you know feeling blessed, hashtag blessed.

Turns the camera to Zero. Instead of being cheery like usual, he is sullen.

JERRY (CONT'D)

Ain't that right Zero. Ain't we blessed? Ain't that right, hashtag blessed? Zero, you ok?

(MORE)

JERRY (CONT'D)

You good boy? Zero, We're staying a whole another week! Aren't you excited? Another week here instead of the big, stinking city! Zero, you ok?

Zero whimpers.

JERRY (CONT'D)

Don't be a cry baby. You're really telling me you're homesick for the stinkpad. You're probably hungry for all those delicious roaches we got back at home.

(fake laugh)

Well I'm not. I want to move us out of that shithole... *that crudhole.*
I want to move us somewhere better.
Come on boy, you're all right.
Let's go.

Jerry slowly pulls Zero to his feet.

JERRY (CONT'D)

That's it boy. That's it. come on. We got a hummingbird to find.

Zero fights him.

JERRY (CONT'D)

Zero!

Zero whimpers.

JERRY (CONT'D)

What has gotten into you? You're that homesick-

Zero vomits as if to instantly rebuff Jerry.

JERRY (CONT'D)

Oh no...

Jerry drops the camera and cuts the feed.

EXT. CABIN - DAY

The camera is on again. All we see, however, is Jerry's legs. Jerry is running to his car carrying Zero.

INT. CAR - DAY

The camera is on the passenger seat next to Zero. We see Jerry frantically driving to the vet.

JERRY

It's gonna be ok Zero. It's gonna be ok.
It's gonna be ok. Say it with me huh
Zero.

(awkward laugh)

Please let it be ok.

The scene cuts to black.

INT. VET'S WAITING ROOM - DAY

We cut to Jerry sitting in the vet's waiting room. He is eyeing the RECEPTIONIST (female, any age), who is the only other person in the room. The receptionist's phone buzzes and she picks up. Jerry immediately sits up and they make eye contact, Jerry reflexively looks away.

RECEPTIONIST

You can go in now sir.

Jerry gets up and quickly shuffles to the vet's office in the back.

JERRY

Thank you.
(as he is walking)

INT. VET'S OFFICE - DAY

Zero is sitting on a table with the VET (female, 20s-30s) standing nearby. Jerry walks in.

JERRY

Zero! Are you okay boy.

Jerry pets and comforts Zero, who weakly reciprocates.

VET

His tests came back negative for any infections or anything major, so he should be fine. I'm put him on some Quadritnol. Have him take these over the next few days and he should make a full-recovery.

She hands Jerry the medicine. He holds out his hand and takes it but is still only focused on Zero.

JERRY
Thank you so much!

VET
I am going to have you some questions
however.

JERRY
Sure.

Jerry continues to comfort Zero and doesn't make eye-
contact with the vet.

VET
Has he eaten anything
(searches for the words)
Out of the ordinary, or
(a beat)
strange?

JERRY
No, just the usual food I feed him.

VET
And what would that include?

JERRY
Y'know, the usual, like dog food and
stuff?

VET
Well, does the usual include rotten meat.

JERRY
What!? No I would never do anything like
that!

Jerry, in shock at the question, finally makes eye-
contact with the vet. The Vet is thrown off by Jerry's
sudden aggressiveness. Jerry sees her discomfort and
nervously looks away.

VET
He started vomiting when I was treating
him. One of the objects was, something
rotten.

JERRY
I would never feed Zero anything like
that.
(comforts Zero)
Only the best for the best boy, right
boy.

The Vet looks at her clipboard.

VET

Well it says here that you also mentioned something about coming across some bird corpses, when you checked in? Could he have got to any of those?

JERRY

Maybe, I don't know how. I've been with Zero whenever we found those birds.

(a beat)

And I made sure to safely dispose of them.

VET

Well, that's the only explanation for what's causing your dog's illness.

JERRY

But, I, I just came home and Zero was scared and sick. I left him alone for just a few minutes. And, and, it, it...

(realization)

It can't be the birds. I brought them with me.

VET

You brought the dead birds with you. Uh, do you collect them?

JERRY

No, no, it's like I said to the receptionist, I'm out here bird-watching, and these dead... and uh, uh.

As Jerry stammers over his words, the Vet makes an suspicious face towards him.

JERRY (CONT'D)

Just come with me, I'll show you.

Jerry leaves the vet's office and Zero, who is a bit better, is able to follow him out. The Vet decides to go as well.

EXT. PARKING LOT - DAY

Jerry is opening the trunk of his car. Zero and the Vet follow. Jerry pulls out a plastic bag with the two dead birds.

JERRY

I've been finding these out in the woods,
and one of them even crashed into the
cabin I'm staying in.

VET

Oh, that's unfortunate, they're so rare.
Especially in this area.

JERRY

Oh are you into birds as well?

VET

I am a veterinarian.
(awkward chuckle)

JERRY

Oh right.

The Vet takes the bag away from Jerry and backs away as
she examines them.

VET

Sir, it looks like these injuries were
inflicted on these birds.

JERRY

Yeah, there's also a gyrefalcon in the
area, he must have got them.

VET

These aren't the injuries a falcon would
inflict.

JERRY

It's got to be. I saw one flying over
earlier. And like I said earlier, they've
been crashing into my window.

VET

I'm saying their necks were broken before
they hit the window. Direct impact
against glass wouldn't twist their heads
like this.

JERRY

What, how is that possible?

VET

I'm not the one that found them so I
can't say.

JERRY

Yeah, but you're a Vet, don't you have to look into situations like these.

VET

Yes, I will.

The Vet is slowly backing away from Jerry as she says this. She is still holding the bag with the birds. Jerry sees how suspicious she is of him.

JERRY

Wait, you don't think? I'm not the one who did this. I love birds. Really, you gotta believe me. You see I run a YouTube channel. Just for birdwatching.

Jerry frantically pulls out his phone.

JERRY (CONT'D)

I'm not getting any reception right now, but. Oh I know, come back with me. You'll see I'm telling the truth. This area's just bad for birds it seems. There was this owl too, that overextended its head turn.

VET

Wait, it what?

JERRY

Y'know, this was my bad, but I shone my flashlight at the owl that flew into my cabin, and that caused it to turn its head too suddenly and it slid right off.

VET

That's not a thing sir.

JERRY

It is, the ranger said that's what happened. It happened right in front of me. What? Are birds just dropping dead around me or something.

He awkwardly laughs. The Vet doesn't know how to respond.

JERRY (CONT'D)

Just, come with me and you'll see. I'm also looking for the calliope hummingbird that's supposed to be here. Maybe we'll catch a glimpse of that.

VET

I understand sir.

(a beat)

You've done the right thing. You dropped them off. I'll look into the situation. It's best we go on with the rest of our day.

JERRY

But, but.

Jerry points to the bird pin on her jacket.

JERRY (CONT'D)

That's a Moluccan Eclectus pin on your jacket. I bet people say it's a parrot pin, which it is, but it's an Moluccan Eclectus to be exact. It's a girl one too.

VET

You can tell it's a girl? The pin?

JERRY

Well yes, I can tell due to the red and blue coloring of the plumage. The boys are green.

VET

I didn't know that.

JERRY

You didn't?

VET

No, I just thought it was a parrot.

JERRY

Oh...

VET

If that's all, my office will follow up with you in a couple days to check up on Zero's condition.

JERRY

All right...

VET

Until then, take care.

The vet looks ready to flee when Jerry speaks up.

JERRY

If I don't pick up send help to the cabin
down Hawthorn road.

VET

Hawthorn road?

JERRY

Yeah.

VET

Why are you all the way up there.

JERRY

To see a hummingbird for my youtube
channel.

VET

Calliope Hummingbirds?

JERRY

Yeah.

VET

They're beautiful. I hope you get to see
one while you're up there. Trust me,
they're worth it.

JERRY

Thanks. I saw one once before and they
really are something else.

VET

Great, well then, you and Zero have a
nice day and safe travels back to your
cabin.

She nods and quickly opens the door into her building.
Jerry stands there with Zero. He begins to hit himself in
his head, embarrassed by his own behavior. Zero stops
him.

INT. CAR - DAY

We see a feed of Jerry driving along. We see shots of the
local hotels/motels with high prices.

JERRY

Those are tourist rates if I ever
saw em. If it weren't for the vet
bill, I would book us in one of
those cozy inns Zero, I would boy.
It's just...I don't...

(MORE)

JERRY (CONT'D)

(laughs)

I don't have the money. I don't
have any more money boy. I really
bet it all on this fucking
hummingbird video.

Jerry stops the car and breaks down into laughter that turns
to sobbing.

JERRY (CONT'D)

I don't know what to do boy. I
don't know what to do! I fucked up!
I fucked up again!

Zero licks his face to help calm him down. We see Jerry
slowly put himself back together and get back on the road.

INT. CAR - LATER

We see a silent feed of the road as Jerry drives along the
backroads to the cabin.

SUDDENLY, upon making a turn, we see Red standing over a dead
deer with an axe planted in its head.

EXT. ROAD - CONTINUOUS

Jerry gets out. He tells Zero to stay inside the car. He
walks up to Red apprehensively.

JERRY

What's going on? What happened?

RED

You have eyes don't ya?

JERRY

I...

RED

Axe murderer on the loose.

JERRY

What?

RED

I'm just kidding. This was me.

Long, pregnant pause.

RED (CONT'D)

The poor thing got hit by someone.
I needed to put it out of its
misery.

JERRY

Oh god, that's terrible.

RED

I think it's actually rather kind
of me to put this poor creature to
rest. It's either I did it or it
would have laid here dying on the
road.

JERRY

No, of course.

RED

Alone and afraid... I can't think
of a worse fate.

JERRY

Of course, I-I just mean - the
whole situation is terrible.

RED

It is... It is...

(pause)

Only one other car than mine would
have any reason to travel up this
road...

JERRY

I'm sorry that this happened, but I
didn't hit a deer going into town.
If you don't believe me you can
look at my car. It's not dented or
anything.

Red gives the camera a pointed look.

RED

Are you recording me again?

JERRY

It's for my channel.

RED

Bird expert right?

JERRY

Yeah.

RED

Well bird expert, word of warning-

Red takes the axe out of the deer.

RED (CONT'D)

Those dead larks you've been finding, they go in and out of endangered status often in this forest whenever an invasive species moves in. When too many dead ones are found, the whole area is shut down from entry until the population can recover and the invasive species can be removed.

JERRY

There's... there's a falcon. That might be what's doing it!

RED

You saw a falcon?

JERRY

A gyrefalcon! It was huge. It's in the video I sent you.

RED

Until I see it with my own eyes that falcon is as real to me as Bigfoot.

JERRY

I-I can give you a feather I found.

RED

No, that won't do. Next time you see this falcon-

Red walks over to his truck and puts away his bloodied axe. hands him a walkie talkie.

RED (CONT'D)

You call me with this and tell me where you are. I don't take feathers and giant footprints as proof.

Red grabs the deer and drags it to his truck.

RED (CONT'D)

Help me out here.

JERRY

Uh ok.

Jerry helps and gets blood on himself much to his disgust.

RED

I'll blow that bird out the sky and then maybe I'll believe it wasn't you snapping all them lark necks. Not that a falcon is any better an explanation now is it bird expert?

JERRY

I-I would never hurt another living creature and how did you know their necks were broken?

RED

The Vet called us, the police, about everyone she damn well could to them about you and your bag of dead birds.

JERRY

I didn't hurt any birds. I just found them.

RED

I don't know Jerry.

Red wipes the blood of his hands with a bloody rag from his truck.

RED (CONT'D)

You're kind of suspicious...

JERRY

I-

Red gets in his truck.

RED

No more dead larks Jerry or the woods gonna have to go back to being all quiet and peaceful, just as nature intended.

Red drives off.

EXT. CABIN - DUSK

Jerry helps Zero in and is sure to be careful as he helps him along.

INT. CABIN BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Jerry gets Zero settled and goes to get him a bowl of water.

INT. KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

He enters the kitchen and grabs Zero's water bowl, but as Jerry does, he smells something. He looks over at the food bag and notice flies hovering around it. He goes to check inside and finds a dead lark rotting away deep in the dog food.

INT. CABIN - NIGHT

A scared Jerry sits in front of the camera.

JERRY

I don't have enough gas to leave. I don't know where it all went, but it's all gone. My tank was syphoned while I wasn't looking. I smelt the gasoline in the air!

(a beat)

I-I did the math and I'd be dead on the road not even half way out of these woods with the little I have. I could hike out but I have a sick dog. I could call the cops, but I don't think they'll trust me all the way out here alone with my camera. They'll think I'm pulling a prank or trying to go viral or something. Especially since I...I have a history of uhh freakin-freaking out and calling cops and being wrong about the things I-I tell em and not knowing I'm wrong. I could be wrong. I really, really, hope I-I'm wrong. I don't want them to come out here though... because if I am wrong, they might take Zero for good this time.

Jerry fights back tears. Zero comforts him.

INT. CABIN - CONTINUOUS

Jerry does a silent and tense version of the house tour, checking to make sure every window is shut and every room is clear.

He then tries to arm the security system, but it keeps giving him error message along with that annoying countdown. Zero barks off screen. Jerry grabs his camera to investigate.

JERRY

Zero, what are you doing up?

Jerry looks off into the dark hallway behind him. Jerry approaches it and grabs his camera.

POV: We face the dark and eerie hallway. We see a pair of eyes staring back at us. The countdown plays in the background, slowly building tension. There's a creak of a board and then a sudden chorus. As the eyes get closer, a panicked Jerry grabs Zero, rushes to the bedroom, and locks the door behind him.

Zero growls and Jerry does his best to hush him. We hear a few more faint creaks before they recede off. Jerry tries to call the cops but sees the reception is gone and so is the wifi. He remembers the walkie talkie.

JERRY (CONT'D)

Hello? Ranger Red? Hello? I need
help...please, I need help...
(keeps repeating)

All Jerry hears is static. He keeps trying all the same.
We fast forward to...

INT. CABIN BEDROOM - MORNING

the camera has been filming all night. Jerry has been wide awake the whole time trying to radio Red. Once he can hear that it's morning due to the bird chirping, he finally stops and grabs the camera.

He slowly opens the door to look around the house. As soon as he opens the door, he is greeted by a dead owl. He jumps back and screams. Zero attacks it and the head falls off with little force needed. He tries the walkie talkie again as he moves through the house.

JERRY

Hello, you there Red?

Eventually, he gets a response.

RED (V.O.)

Blah, blah, blah! Is that all you fucking
do?

JERRY

Red?

RED (V.O.)

Unless this is about the falcon, I ain't hearing it.

Jerry peers over to the dead owl.

JERRY

I need help...I'm in danger.

Radio silence.

JERRY (CONT'D)

Red? Hello?

EXT. CABIN - DAY

We see Jerry outside looking distraught. His tires are cut open

JERRY

I think, No, I-I know I'm in danger. I don't know if anyone will ever see this-

Pans around to show the cut internet cable then back on him.

JERRY (CONT'D)

Because the internet has been cut, so I'm completely alone out here. I can't even send out a goodbye video to you all.

(somber)

I had one planned for a very long time. This will have to be it, I guess.

Jerry smiles.

JERRY (CONT'D)

I wish I was born a bird. I think I would have been better off.

Jerry sees something off screen. He turns the camera around to show Zero.

JERRY (CONT'D)

He'd be better off too.

Zero gets close and tries to comfort Jerry. This seems to stir him into action.

INT. CABIN - DAY

Jerry gathers all his things and arms himself with a kitchen knife. He checks to make sure Zero is strong enough to go with him and leashes Zero up before heading out.

EXT. WOODS - DAY

Jerry is going along when he spots the falcon circling overhead. Jerry might as well try to radio one last time.

JERRY

Hello?

No response.

JERRY (CONT'D)

Hello, I spot the falcon.

Radio silence as usual.

JERRY (CONT'D)

I said I spot the falcon!

RED (V.O.)

You best not be crying Bigfoot.

JERRY

I'm not, I'm not! You can hear it shrieking right now if you listen close.

Jerry holds up the radio so the ranger can hear.

JERRY (CONT'D)

Can you hear it?

RED (V.O.)

I hear it!

JERRY

I'm not even 15 minutes hike up the road from my cabin. I don't think you even need to hurry. It doesn't seem to be going anywhere.

RED (V.O.)

I'm close by.

JERRY

You are?

RED (V.O.)
Yeah, I can hear it shrieking with
my own ears.

JERRY
See, it's real. I wasn't lying
about the falcon and I'm wasn't
lying about the intruder last night
either. You hear me, I'm not-

RED (V.O.)
What was that?

JERRY
You hear me...hello? I said I see
the falcon-

The falcon is shot out of the air.

RED (V.O.)
I wasn't talking about the falcon.

JERRY
What were you-

RED (V.O.)
What do you call someone when
they're somewhere they do not
belong?

JERRY
I don't know.

RED (V.O.)
Guess, you've already said the word.

JERRY
An intruder?

RED (V.O.)
Do you belong out here Jerry?

JERRY
I...I don't know.

RED (V.O.)
Is that your answer Jerry?

JERRY
No, no, I don't belong out here.

RED (V.O.)
Then you're the intruder Jerry...

A long pause follows.

JERRY
Please, I need help.

RED (V.O.)
I don't care.

JERRY
Please...

RED (V.O.)
I don't care. You're on your own.

JERRY
Please don't. I really do need help.

He gets nothing but radio static which fills the silent air.

Jerry begins to hyperventilate. Zero tries to comfort him but its not helping. As he panics, he picks some movement up in the trees. They're BIRDS.

Jerry calms himself down from his panic attack by bird watching and naming the species. It's here we get our first glimpse of the BIRDMAN. It's brief, but we for sure can tell it's a large man in a terrifying bird mask watching Jerry before vanishing back into the trees.

JERRY (CONT'D)
Holy shit! What was that? Who was that?

Jerry grabs Zero and flees back to the cabin.

INT. CABIN - CONTINUOUS

We see Jerry do his best to lock the place down and barricade himself in again. He finds a corner to hide in with Zero and starts mumbling bird species to himself as he panics some more. We hear a smattering of gunshots in the distance. His walkie talkie, which has been emitting static the whole time, finally has a voice break through.

RED (V.O.)
That you bird fucker!

Jerry stops his mumbling and listens.

RED (V.O.)
Pick up pussy! I know it's you behind that fucking tree!

We hear more gunshots.

JERRY

It's not me.

RED (V.O.)

Yes it fucking is!

We hear more gunshots.

JERRY

Did you get me?

RED (V.O.)

What the fuck!

JERRY

It's not me Red. I was trying to tell you, but you wouldn't listen...

We hear more gunshots.

RED (V.O.)

What the fuck is going on!

JERRY

I don't know, but you're on your own.

Jerry turns off the walkie talkie and listens to the gunshots as they get fewer and farther between before stopping all together.

INT. CABIN - CONTINUOUS

Jerry leaves the room and explores the cabin to make sure it's safe and everything is still locked up. ESPECIALLY THAT FUCKING WINDOW!

INT. MOVIE ROOM - DAY

Jerry enters the VHS room and decides to watch some movies. We see a silent and awkward edit of him watching various films on VHS without any expression on his face. Zero is snuggled close to him. The footage fast forwards to show him watching every film in the VHS pile until he gets to a blank one. He shrugs and puts it in.

EXT. PORCH - DAY

It's video of the missing couple.

WIFE

Ok close your eyes!

HUSBAND

Why?

WIFE

It's gonna be a surprise, close your eyes.

HUSBAND

All right.

The husband closes his eyes.

INT. CABIN - DAY

The wife goes inside and grabs a SHIRT, the same SHIRT Jerry found out in the woods.

EXT. PORCH - DAY

WIFE

It's you're favorite!

The wife steps out to find the husband dead on the porch with the BIRDMAN standing over him. She gets out only the briefest scream before the Birdman rushes her and cuts the tape to black.

INT. CABIN BASEMENT - NIGHT

Jerry sits in the silent glow of the tv now knowing his death is coming for sure.

INT. CABIN LIVING ROOM - LATER

Jerry sits down for one last vlog.

JERRY

I'm gonna die. I'm not a survivor. I'm not a hero. I'm just Jerry the bird guy.

(pauses)

I just...I just wish I was alone. This wouldn't be so bad if I were dying alone.

Jerry breaks down crying. Zero tries to comfort him, but for once, it isn't helping. Jerry breaks down and throws the camera.

JUMP CUT TO:

INT. CABIN - LATER

We see Jerry filming out the window. The camera feed is glitching here and there to show its a bit damaged. He watches the tress sway and the birds perched among the branches. He mumbles bird names when he spots them. He stops once he notices something small on a littlest branch.

JERRY
Wait, what's that?

Jerry zooms in and he almost can't believe it.

JERRY (CONT'D)
No way...

It's a Calliope Hummingbird. Jerry has found his white whale.

JERRY (CONT'D)
That's it! That's the Calliope
hummingbird. Zero, come look, we
found it boy! We finally found it.

He pans over to Zero who is still cowering in the corner.

JERRY (CONT'D)
We did it. We-

The wind picks up and Jerry's view of the bird is obscured.

JERRY (CONT'D)
No, no, no, come on. Dammit, I need
a better shot than that.

Jerry gets up to go outside and get a better shot. Zero whimpers and tries to stop him.

JERRY (CONT'D)
Zero, it's ok boy. I'll be back, I
swear.

Zero whimpers some more.

JERRY (CONT'D)
I said, I'll be back!

Jerry pets Zero.

JERRY (CONT'D)
I'm sorry Zero. I didn't mean to
yell... I just...
(MORE)

JERRY (CONT'D)

I just need to get this shot, ok. I
just really need to do this...even
if it's the last thing I do.

INT. CABIN - CONTINUOUS

Jerry is a man on a mission as he charges out of the cabin.

EXT. CABIN - DAY

Jerry approaches the tree where he seems almost transfixed by the hummingbird. That's when he notices the string. He grabs it and pulls down the dead body of the hummingbird. It was a trick.

JERRY

No...

We hear Zero yelp in the distance.

JERRY (CONT'D)

No!

Jerry rushes back to the cabin.

INT. CABIN - CONTINUOUS

Jerry rushes insides to find Zero is gone.

JERRY

No, no, no, no! No, you can't! You
can't! No! No!

EXT. CABIN - CONTINUOUS

Jerry rushes outside and points his camera at the woods.

JERRY

You can't! You can't take him from
me! Please, don't! Don't take him
from me! He's all I have! I'll do
anything! I'll do anything!
Pleeese!

He hears Zero howl. Jerry runs after the sound.

JERRY (CONT'D)

Zero! I'm coming boy, I'm coming!

EXT. WOODS - NIGHT

Jerry searches the woods frantically, getting more and more desperate and full of despair.

JERRY

Zero!

He hears another gun shot and a scream right along with it. It sounds like Red. This stops Jerry in his tracks a moment before he cautiously begins moving in its direction.

EXT. WOODS - NIGHT

Jerry is still searching for Zero. He hears music in the distance.

JERRY

Zero!

He sees a light in the distance. It's an old SHACK? HOUSE? whatever it is, it's lit up like a Christmas tree and blaring music from unseen speakers.

MUSIC CUE - THE LARK ASCENDING - RALPH VAUGHAN WILLIAMS

The house both bewilders and transfixes Jerry. With the serene, beautiful music playing the background, it looks almost dream like.

JERRY (CONT'D)

What the hell? Zero!

He looks unsure of going in, then he hears Zero yelping inside.

JERRY (CONT'D)

Zero!

Jerry rushes inside.

INT. BIRDHOUSE - NIGHT

The inside is gross serial killer's lair. It's covered in bird shit, feathers, and mannequins with bird masks. The music is so loud you can barely hear your own thoughts.

Jerry passes by rows of cages filled with living and dead birds alike. As he pushes deeper inside, the music fades, but its echoes continue to follow Jerry no matter how deep inside he goes.

Jerry suddenly hears a sudden and unfamiliar screech from a room nearby.

He enters a room to see a parrot in a cage.

PARROT
He's behind you.

The parrot repeats the line. Jerry turns the camera to see no one is behind him.

PARROT (CONT'D)
He's behind you.

Jerry ignores the parrot and moves on.

Jerry turns a corner and finds RED pinned up like a scarecrow with his eyes gauged out the dead falcon wings shoved clumsily down his throat.

JERRY
(under breath)
Holy shit...holy fucking shit.

Jerry attempts to moves on but an angry songbird in a cage nearby squawks at him. They keep squawking and cause enough of a ruckus that we hear someone move upstairs. The floorboards above creek with activity and rain soot down on Jerry.

JERRY (CONT'D)
Fuck, be quiet.

The birds do not cooperate and the footsteps get louder and closer with each passing moment. Jerry has no where to hide. He jumps into a big cage full of birds to keep out of sight. This causes a stir among the birds who all start manically chirping. He imitates bird singing to calm them down.

All but one of the birds shut up once the BIRDMAN enters the room. The deranged killer is clad in scary bird mask made of the feathers of the dead falcon. He's also armed with the severed claw of the dead bird and holds it menacingly.

He looks over the work that he had done to Red and scratches him up some more like an artist touching up a painting.

Jerry watches him through the narrow slits in the cage. He does his best to be quiet and calm the one panicking bird who lands on his hand. Birdman begins to slowly approach the cage. Jerry is trapped. Birdman opens the cage and reaches his gloved hand inside to grab the squawking bird.

Jerry is conflicted, but fearfully hands off the chirping bird to the Birdman without alerting him to his presence in the cage. He listens to Birdman snap the chirping bird's neck offscreen and throws it back into the cage.

Birdman leaves and Jerry slowly crawls out from the cage. He gives one last look at Red before cautiously continuing his hunt for Zero

INT. BASEMENT - CONTINUOUS

Jerry reaches a basement. There he finds a long hallway full of birds. They all coo at him as he passes by like they want to be let out. At the end of the hall, is a dark, lonely cage.

JERRY
(whisper)
Zero?

We see Zero slowly emerge from the darkness of the cage. He comes to life at the sight of Jerry.

JERRY (CONT'D)
Zero, oh my god! Oh, thank god! I
got you boy! I got you!

As Jerry leads Zero out of the cage he stops and growls at something behind him.

Jerry turns around to see THE BIRDMAN, A tense stand off ensues. The Birdman circles Jerry like the prey that he is and Jerry grabs Zero by the collar to hold him close as tension builds.

Jerry breaks the stand off by unleashing the birds from their cage. This causes the Birdman to have a crazed meltdown. Jerry and Zero take their chance and flee past him.

INT. BIRDHOUSE - CONTINUOUS

As Jerry passes by each cage, he opens it. As he passes by the parrot, it screams-

PARROT
He's behind you. He's behind you!

Jerry doesn't need to look back to know the parrot isn't lying. He throws some mannequins down behind him as he flees to slow the Birdman. He and Zero end up getting lost in the maze of mannequins, even losing track of where the Birdman is.

Zero stops and stares at a mannequin that looks a lot like the Birdman. Jerry pushes the mannequin over and it makes a loud sound as it hits the floor. We SUDDENLY hear bird wings flutter behind him and Jerry turns to see it was nothing but one of the released birds making noise.

Jerry and Zero continue to try and find a way out of the maze, Zero leads the way. They encounter another Birdman lookalike and after another tense standoff, Jerry confirms it's a mannequin and moves on.

We hear yet another flutter of bird wings behind Jerry as something is knocking the mannequins over and heading their way. This hastens the two to find the exit and leave before it reaches them. They see the way out, but the mannequins make maneuvering tough. Zero stops when they get to another scary Birdman mannequin standing in the doorway.

Whatever it is, finally reaches them. IT'S...THE PARROT. It flies out from the mess of fallen over mannequins and squawks at them. Jerry lets out a sigh of relief.

PARROT (CONT'D)

He's behind you!

Jerry turns to find this mannequin was the real deal and is grabbed by the Birdman. He tears into Jerry who drops the camera and screams. Zero attacks the Birdman and Jerry is able to wrestle free. Jerry and Zero flee as the Birdman slowly gets up from the floor. The Birdman notices the camera Jerry left behind and picks it up.

We are in the Birdman's POV as he follows the blood trail left by Jerry.

EXT. BIRDHOUSE - NIGHT

We see Jerry on his knees with Zero not far from the house. The wound the Birdman gave him is finally taking its toll.

JERRY

Zero, I can't - I can't keep going...

Zero whimpers and licks at his wound. Jerry looks up to see the Birdman's shadow casting over him. The Birdman tosses the camera to Jerry.

We see the upside down POV of the camera pointing at the Birdman as he ominously watches Jerry cower before him.

JERRY (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Zero, I love you. You're the best
dog a guy like me could have asked
for. I didn't deserve you.

Jerry knows his time is short, so he picks up the camera and puts it on Zero's collar. We see Jerry now. His face is covered in blood.

JERRY (CONT'D)
Go home Zero.

Zero's POV looks unsure. The Birdman begins to circle Jerry.

JERRY (CONT'D)
Zero, go home.

The Birdman strikes and Jerry cries out.

JERRY (CONT'D)
Zero! Go! Zero, go home!

Zero whimpers and runs away, but can't bring himself to leave his master, turning back to look.

We see Jerry give one last look to the Zero.

JERRY (CONT'D)
(in pain)
Go home Zero! GO HOOOOOME!

The Birdman cuts Jerry's throat and Zero yelps and flees.

We hear a few more wet, agonized screams as Zero flees into the darkness with the music echoing behind him. He runs, he just keeps running.

CUT TO:

EXT. WOODS - DAY

We see footage of Zero hopelessly running through the woods, he keeps whimpering and stopping due to being afraid. He stops at a puddle to get a drink when he sees a hummingbird and decides to follow it. The camera glitches and eventually, we see him moving through the brush when he hears a-

VET (O.S.)
Hello? Anyone here?

COP (O.S.)
Hello? Police?

Zero's POV steps out to see the VET and a police office. Zero rushes the Vet to gives them licks.

COP (CONT'D)

Holy shit!

VET

Oh my god, there you are, hey,
there you finally are! Oh goodness,
you look happy to see me! Where's
your buddy huh? Where's your owner?

The Vet notices the camera on the collar.

VET (CONT'D)

Hmm, what's this-

Camera glitches...

JUMP CUT TO:

EXT. WOODS - DAY

We see the moment Jerry got his first bird watching footage.

JERRY

Oh my god, no way. no way!

Jerry is through the moon at seeing the Calliope Hummingbird on camera.

JERRY (CONT'D)

It's the Calliope Hummingbird Zero!
It's really one of them! We did it.
We did it boy!

Jerry turns the camera on himself.

JERRY (CONT'D)

Oh my god! This is the start of something
special isn't it boy?

Jerry's crying tears of joy. Zero licks them up. THE END.