





Cover: Main photo: Brad Jones; Andrew Siegel; Paul Birman; Mike Sierakowski; Jonah Quickmire Pettigrew

Pages 20–21: *Manneken Pis*: © Ronald Sumners/Shutterstock; *Belgian flag*: © Jim Barber/Shutterstock; pages 22–23: *Brussels Grand Place*: © CRM/Shutterstock; page 26: *Old fan*: iStockphoto; *Outdoor fan*: iStockphoto; page 34: *Andrew playing basketball*: Chase Media Group. © 2003 All rights reserved.; page 36: *Budding Spielberg*: From *The Journal News*, May 15 © 2003 *The Journal News*. All rights reserved. Used by permission and protected by the Copyright Laws of the United States. The printing, copying, redistribution, or retransmission of this Content without express written permission is prohibited.; *Film buff*: © North County News; page 81: *Premiere*: © Stephen Lovekin/Getty Images; page 96: *Room 335*: © *Variety*; page 97: *From college dorm to nursing home*: From *The Journal News*, January 13 © 2008 *The Journal News*. All rights reserved. Used by permission and protected by the Copyright Laws of the United States. The printing, copying, redistribution, or retransmission of this Content without express written permission is prohibited.; *Youthful filmmaker*: © *Daily News*, L.P. (New York); page 110: *Bobby V. in costume*: © MLB.com; pages 150–151: *Q&A*: © Scott Wintrow/Getty Images for Tribeca Film Festival; page 153: *Andrew on WNYC Radio*: © Jody Avirgan/WNYC Radio; *Andrew at Tribeca Film Festival*: © Bryan Bedder/Getty Images for Tribeca Film Festival; *Promoting*: © Andrew Marks/Corbis; page 193: *College speaking*: © Chris Neverman; pages 208–209: *MTV filmmaker visits SCSU*: © Nick Simmons/*University Chronicle*; *At JMU*: © *The Breeze*; *At Columbia college*: © Ashley Osborn.

#### The publisher wishes to thank the following for use of their photos.

Akshay Bhansali, Paul Birman, Bruce Bohman (especially for those movie posters), ESPN, Will Godel, Jonathan Jaeger, Jenks family, Brad Jones, Brian Lindenbaum, Chris Lopez, MTV, Andrew Muscato, Tom Oliva, Jonah Quickmire Pettigrew, Phoenix Film Festival, Luca Repola, Andrew Siegel, Mike Sierakowski, Kassie Thornton Bobby Valentine, Daniel Zinn

#### Copyright © 2013 by Andrew Jenks

All rights reserved. Published by Scholastic Inc. scholastic and associated logos are trademarks and/or registered trademarks of Scholastic Inc.

No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise, without written permission of the publisher. For information regarding permission, write to Scholastic Inc., Attention: Permissions Department, 557 Broadway, New York, NY 10012.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data Available

ISBN 978-0-545-41727-3

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1 13 14 15 16 17/0

Printed in China 38
First printing, March 2013
Book design by Rick DeMonico

### **Contents**

Introduction	6
Chapter One Blow This Thing Up	10
Chapter Two  I Want to Live with Old People	44
Chapter Three Sex, Oxygen Tanks, and Bingo	56
Chapter Four The Big Time (Sort Of)	80
Chapter Five <b>Be My Valentine?</b>	106
Chapter Six  I'm Famous in Japan	120
Chapter Seven MTV Comes to My Bedroom	148
Chapter Eight Whose World Is It Anyway?	168
Chapter Nine Yo, Jenks	192
Acknowledgments	224

### Introduction

# A few people are calling me. Where did he go?

I get a voice mail from my mom: "Andrew, aren't you at the VMAs? Thought you flew there. Maybe I am confused. I forget what city you're in. Dad can't remember either. Anyway, call us tomorrow; we're heading to bed."

I just locked myself inside a bathroom at the VMAs. And I don't want to get out. MTV's Video Music Awards, which ten million people are currently watching, is airing. And inside the bathroom, I can hear the loud noises only a few feet away. The premiere of my show airs directly after.

I've just been on the red carpet with the world's biggest stars. Lady Gaga. Justin Bieber. Kanye West. A publicist directed me toward the top of the red carpet, where I did a live interview on MTV.

During the opening of the awards, I sat in awe as Eminem performed, and when he was done, I checked my e-mail. We're still in the middle of editing my new show, and I'd just gotten the latest cut of an episode we'd been working on for months. I decided to go to the bathroom. You just can't top Eminem—and it was more productive to do some work. I thought nobody would notice I'd gone other than the seat filler who took my seat.

Now, in the bathroom, I'm watching on my phone. Pausing every few minutes to take notes. My leg shakes uncontrollably—it usually does. As I sit on the toilet, I watch my eight days living on the streets of San Francisco with a homeless young woman. I want to see how the show has developed before

I head to a Dallas prison to do an interview for an entirely different episode. The show is getting better, but there is still work to be done.

My phone rings. I pick it up.

It's J.J. Hill, who's been one of my best friends since elementary school. We talk a lot.

"Yo, Jenks."

"What's up, man?"

"Why are you whispering?"

"What are you working on in the bathroom?"



"I feel like the show needs work. I am just working on it in here. It's easier."

J.J. knows me too well to question what I am doing. So he just continues...

"You want to play ball tomorrow? I got a good group of guys to play."

"I am in Los Angeles, man. At the VMAs."

J.J.'s forgotten. Typical. I've had the same group of friends my whole life. They are everything to me. And they couldn't care less about the VMAs. In fact, most of them have never attended any one of my movie premieres. But if I ever told them I needed their help—they would drop everything and run.

In this case, J.J. just wants me to play basketball.

```
"Well, call me when you get back tomorrow. I am telling you, it's going to be a great pickup game."
```

I put down my phone and look around.

#### I am 23 years old. How did I get here?

Why is the awkward kid who went through puberty way too early and pretended he was a filmmaker by practicing his Oscar speech in the mirror now at the hottest show on the planet?

I've had some wonderful experiences:

- I moved into a nursing home when I was 19 and made a movie about it that sold to HBO.
- I dropped out of college and moved to Japan to make a movie for ESPN.
- I created and starred in my own MTV show.

#### Of course, there's more to it. A lot more.

There is not just the wild, outlandish, risky, and sometimes lavish journey I have been on, but above all, there is the story of the work: shooting tens of thousands of hours of footage; late nights focusing to the point of forgetting an outside world exists; crying over the ones I've lost; recovering from trying to absorb the worlds I'm forced to leave; having people ground me, give me their time, pick me up when I think it's all over, and take a big chance on me; feeling guilty and angry for not doing the right thing; and feeling proud of what I have done.

That night in Beverly Hills, I went to bed as five million people watched my show and I started to trend on Twitter worldwide. As I was falling asleep, J.J. calls.

```
"I am telling you, this is going to be an amazing game."
```

"I know, man. I am taking the first flight back."

# chapter one BILOWTHIS THEITS











## Thursday nights in the dorm were always brutal.

The *O.C.* theme song started ringing through the hallways at ten P.M. By eleven, you heard bottles opening. By midnight, you heard them crashing. At one A.M., things started to smell odd. By two, there was yelling from the street. And at three in the morning, another kind of yelling.

Through it all, I sat at my laptop, staring at a nun making the best sex joke I'd heard in years, trying to match her words with the video. It wasn't in sync. Nothing was working.

I was in my first year of film school at New York University, the best film school in the best city in the world. The hallways and rooms, lined with Martin Scorsese and Spike Lee posters, had a lot of history. Everyone walked with a certain swagger. My dorm was on Washington Square West, a loud, lively, artistic, near-perfect part of the city.





**But I was completely miserable.** Everything was hopeless—making friends, becoming a filmmaker, even going to class. I hadn't shown up for one of those in a while.



I did not get the other kids. The most popular guy was an actor who'd had a bit part in *Mean Girls*, and that's all he would talk about—how funny Tina Fey was on set or what it was like to be in the same car with Lindsay Lohan (I know because, of course, I was in every class with him). Everyone was so geeked out about it and couldn't get enough of his endless stories. That's what college was about: being a star, or at least being near one.

**Meanwhile, I wanted to disappear.** Every night around one A.M., I ate at a tiny sandwich place with a guy who' d lived on MacDougal for the last thirty years. I can still remember the leather jacket he wore every night, his cigarettes, his raspy voice. He'd tell me how he used to eat sandwiches on the same street with Bob Dylan and Jimi Hendrix and a bunch of other celebrities back in their prime.

Now we both sat. Him thinking about what once was. Me thinking about how the heck I ended up here.

Night after night, I returned to my dorm room to work on a trailer about a group of residents at a senior citizen home that I'd shot the summer before freshman year. I tuned out the sounds of Lower Manhattan and buried myself in their images—drooping eyelids, decaying or too-white teeth—and their wise and funny jokes, like those of the nun asking if I'd heard the one about the eighty-year-old husband who couldn't get it up with his wife anymore. But I had screwed up the trailer; the sound didn't match the picture, a common mistake for anyone who is editing and learning at the same time. Trying to piece the audio tracks back with the visuals was driving me so completely insane that my leg started to shake uncontrollably.

I was just about to bang my fist on the desk when my roommate opened the door.

"Dude," he said. "Old people? Again?"

fast. But I knew I was too old to cry and go home.

# Looking back, it's not a surprise college was a bust. I never liked being away from home. Around third grade, when sleepovers were a big night out, I was horrified. Unable to fall asleep anywhere, except in my house and in my bed, I'd lie in the dark, staring at nothing, listening to my friends snoring, until I couldn't take another second. "Anyone still awake?" I asked. At one in the morning, I broke down and begged my mom over the phone to come get me. When high school

rolled around, I wasn't any different. I guess the only difference is that I had the courage to stay the entire night. I wouldn't sleep. My heart would beat

My chronic homesickness has always been a strange fact. I spent a lot of time as a kid traveling, because my dad, Bruce (British accent, with a beard, Oxford PhD, and a brain most, including me, have issues keeping up with), worked for the United Nations. He moved our family to Nepal for a couple of years when I was six months old, which I don't remember (even though Nepali became my first language). And then, in 1995, when I was nine years old, we moved to Belgium.

Top: My dad in Tiananmen Square, Beijing—1991 Bottom left: My dad in Belgium, listening to an interpreter—1995 Bottom right: My dad with Prince Charles—2011





