

THE BIBLE FOR...

**CONDOLENCES FROM THE VULGAR
TONGUE
OR (BONER)**

A FILM BY CHRISTINA FIDLER



SYNOPSIS

Huxley, a jaded dog and victim of the universe, shuts his brother out and chooses to burden himself with the responsibility of arranging his mother's funeral. Little does he know, by enlisting in a questionable marketing scheme as a door-to-door bone salesman, his success comes at a price.

ARTIST STATEMENT

“Condolences from the Vulgar Tongue or (Boner)” is a 2D-animated short (with soft stop motion elements) that explores the cold and almost comically uncaring nature of a world through the jaded and cynical eyes of our four-legged anthropomorphic dog friend, Huxley. When his mother dies, Huxley’s brother reaches out in an effort to mend old wounds. Loss is often used as a time for reflection. Self-righteous and stubborn, Huxley shuts his brother out and makes the decision to arrange Mother’s funeral all on his own. To cover the costs of a service he cannot afford, Huxley enlists in a sketchy marketing scheme to make up the difference.

Taking inspiration from the phrase “Cut off your nose to spite your face,” which dates back to the 1796 edition of Grose’s Classical Dictionary of the Vulgar Tongue, I’ve chosen to develop the experience of spite and stubbornness into a dark comedy. Quirky, grim, and high-energy, “Condolences” explores the ongoing battle for control over all elements of one’s life. How the more one fights the current, the deeper they sink. If we give in to the stubborn, over-the-top, and self-righteous part of ourselves, there are often self-destructive consequences.

This project is predominantly rendered in 2D, with digital characters and traditionally rendered drawings with digital coloring. I find that my lines are more precise and my textures and mark-making more subtle when I hit pencil to paper. There are also heavy aesthetic influences from the works of Victoria Vincent (“Cat City”, “Mask Dog”), and Chintis Lungren (“Manivald”).

I’ve chosen to use off-kilter humor to scold my own past choices. Those decisions have not only impacted my relationships, but my perception of the world. It is a dangerous feedback loop of justifying my own sense of victimhood in the universe. This film is a letter to those who know they can do better, yet still find themselves frozen in an endless cycle of internal conflict.



BEEP!

We cut to a corner of the room. The album gets tossed in a box labeled "MOM'S."

VOICE MAIL 2 (O.S.)

Pick up the phone, man. You know mom would want us to put that stuff aside for her.

PRE—PRODUCTION

A paw signs a legal document.

BEEP!

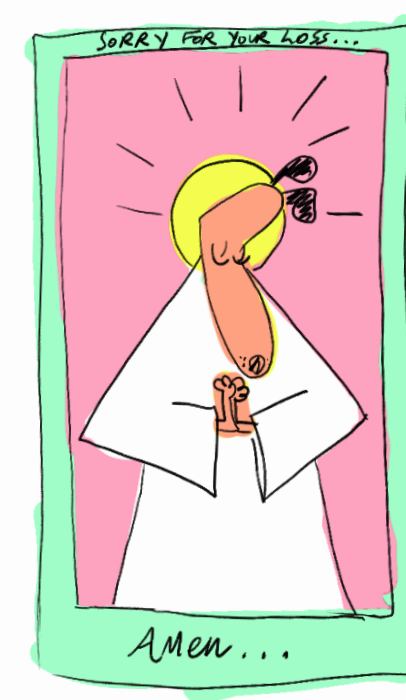
Condolence and mass cards scattered on a table. The saints are dogs. One reads something funny and brash (Don't worry, we spoke to God...All dogs DO go to heaven!). A paw clears the table as we hear the final voice mail.

VOICE MAIL 3 (O.S)

Pick up the phone. I'd feel a lot better if you'd at least let me help out. I can write a check for the cask--

We cut to HUXLEY, our dog clad in a messy button down and

World building through mass cards.



Mental illness, trauma, and a plethora of past experiences color the relationships we have with ourselves and others. The wacky world of Hollywood in *BoJack* or Bird Town in *Tuca & Bertie* are refreshing vessels for a story we're all living every day. And for "Condolences", much of the inspiration for that cruel and upbeat universe comes from the juxtaposition of cute characters and wacky fictional circumstances with the very real experiences of anger, resentment, and consequence.



The dynamic pairing of Raphael Bob-Waksberg and Lisa Hanawalt of *BoJack Horseman* and *Tuca & Bertie* fame was a great influence in the world-building of my film. They are experts at hiding layers of jokes in the backdrops of their shows. Those bits go on to build the foundation for an eccentric, animal-heavy universe that still maintains the capacity to house deep emotion.

- When you're
ready to
talk

- BOWER?

- AFTER THE BEEP

- Welp

- Condolences from the
Vulgar Tongue

Documented evidence of my process for finding a title

"Condolences from the Vulgar Tongue or (Boner)", with its obnoxious, pseudo-intellectual title, is a film that mocks my flaws. It is a reminder of how much I need to work on some of my more unhealthy habits. Habits that have damaged relationships, led me to believe that I am some victim of this imaginary mass stupidity of the world -- habits that have left me bitter, jaded, and have made me miss out on experiences that could have enriched my life. I've dealt with OCD for as long as I can remember. I will go to great lengths to make sure I can justify depending only on myself. This desire for control is exhausting, yet so addictive, despite its many consequences.



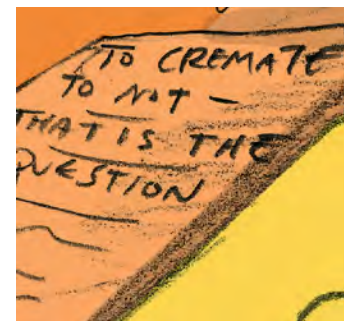
Huxley's final turnarounds



Huxley doesn't speak in the film. In some ways, he is a man of mystery. It took a lot of thought to find the balance between clearly articulating some of his emotions and leaving some ambiguity for the audience.



Much of the aesthetic influence comes from my own life growing up in Bensonhurst. Swirly, ostentatious metal fences, houses next to apartment buildings, giant Catholic churches, and the strange combo of a quiet, yet very green city life. Additionally, I grew up with a family that had a very surface-level following of Catholicism. We had little Jesuses on the walls, I would get yelled at for using the Lord's name in vain, I was forced to go to CCD (Confraternity of Christian Doctrine) class as a child because I once walked up to my mother and asked her who created God. Yet none of these family members would ever be caught in church on a Sunday. Or practicing any of the pillars of Christianity for that matter. Some of that pent up religious resentment was bound to find its way into a film of mine.



Puns, text-based jokes, and the tiniest windows into Huxley's universe are sprinkled all throughout the film.



STOP—MOTION

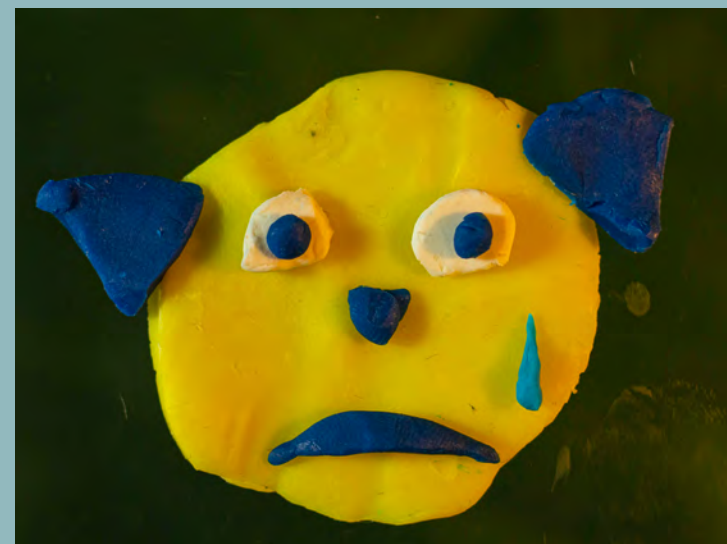
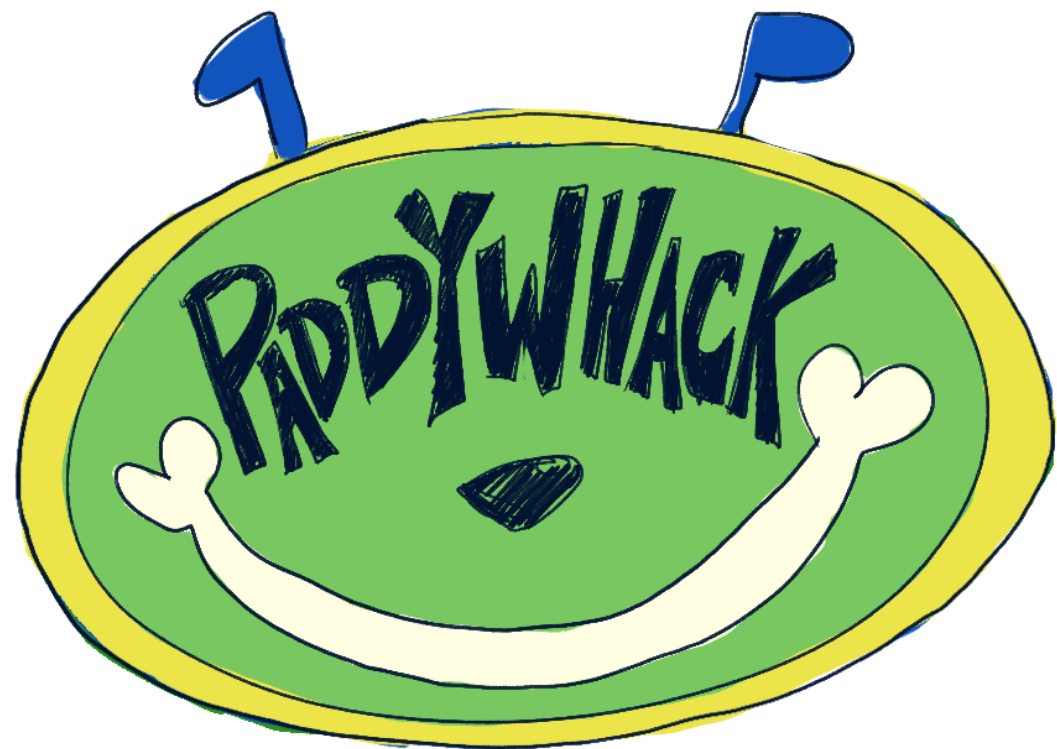


The stop motion portion of the film was intended to feel mildly dystopian and out of place -- heavily influenced by the infomercial scene in Boots Riley's *Sorry to Bother You* and the visual gag techniques of *SpongeBob Squarepants*.





From digital line...



...to clay.



**THIS PROJECT WOULD NOT HAVE BEEN POSSIBLE
WITHOUT THE TALENT AND INSIGHT OF SOME
INCREDIBLY SKILLED ARTISTS**

To Uriel Cruz, Nastia Garatchenko, Theresa Gartland, Izzy Geffner, Rachel Hall, Ferris Hamleh, Nick Hughes, Aster Lobel, Jack Mangine, Nick McKernan, Edon Muhaxheri, Bambi Pereria, and Lilly Sparks each of you has made an indelible mark on this project.

To Isma, Adam, and Andrew, thank you for believing in me, for reminding me of what it is I bring to the table, and for being some of my biggest cheerleaders.

To the friends from every sphere of my life, I am humbled by your patience, generosity, and support.

ARTIST BIOGRAPHY



Christina Fidler is a 2D character animator, screenwriter, and community arts organizer. Born and raised in New York City, she took the journey to Baltimore, Maryland to receive a BFA in Animation at the Maryland Institute College of Art (MICA). She is the former President of the only student chapter of Women in Animation in Maryland, where she organized panels, film festivals, and professional development workshops for students involved in the arts. Some of her more recent endeavors include completing her thesis film, hosting an award-winning, multi-disciplinary, and multi-university-wide film festival in collaboration with the Maryland Film Festival, and freelance independent film work.

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