Memoir audiobook scripts

30 practice scripts from VO Journey Academy. Free to record, free to use in your reel. Download the PDF to mark up in the booth, or print it straight from here.

The Kitchen Table After Dark

Family, Southern · Adult (40-55) · Southern US · 30 seconds

Mama always said the kitchen table was where the truth lived. Not the polished version we gave to neighbors or the preacher — the real thing, the kind that only comes out after midnight when the coffee's cold and everyone's too tired to pretend. The night she told me about my father, the overhead light was humming, and the linoleum was peeling at the corner where my heel always caught it. Some things you don't forget because they matter. You forget them because they're the only things that do.

Borrowed Time in Kabul

Travel, journalism · Adult (40-55) · Neutral British · 30 seconds

On my second morning in Kabul, a boy no older than nine handed me a glass of tea through the window of a moving car and disappeared into the crowd before I could thank him. I've spent fifteen years trying to understand that moment — the casualness of it, the grace. I went there a journalist looking for a war, and what I found instead was a city still deciding whether to bury itself or bloom. I think I was deciding the same thing.

Every Scar Has a Season

Illness · Adult (25-40) · Neutral American · 30 seconds

My oncologist had the kind of calm voice that nurses probably spend years practicing. She said the word — malignant — and I remember thinking about the potatoes I'd left boiling on the stove at home. That's grief before it knows it's grief. The boiling potatoes. The parking ticket in my glove box. The dentist appointment I'd need to cancel. Your mind hands you the small things to carry because it knows the big one will flatten you.

The Last Language

Immigration, family · Adult (40-55) · Light Eastern European · 30 seconds

My grandmother came to America with seventeen words of English and a photograph of a house she would never see again. By the time I was born, she had stopped speaking Ukrainian altogether — not because she'd forgotten it, she told me once, but because it hurt too much to use. A language can become a wound. I didn't understand that until the year I spent in Lviv trying to learn it back, trying to recover something neither of us had names for yet.

Running Toward Nothing

Divorce, recovery · Adult (30-45) · Neutral American · 30 seconds

I ran my first marathon six weeks after my divorce was finalized. People assumed it was a metaphor — rebuilding myself, proving something, all that. The truth was simpler and more embarrassing: I didn't know how to sit still in the apartment anymore. The furniture still held his shape. Running was the only time the silence felt earned instead of imposed. By mile eighteen of that first race, I was crying and couldn't tell if it was from the pain or everything else. It didn't matter. I kept moving.

What My Father Kept

Grief, family mystery · Adult (30-45) · Midwestern US · 30 seconds

In the weeks after my father died, I found things: a stack of birthday cards he'd never sent, a leather journal with three pages filled and the rest blank, a phone number with no name beside it written in pencil on the inside cover of a Hemingway novel. We think we know our parents. We know the performance they gave us, and we love it completely, but the man underneath was always moving in ways we couldn't track. I spent a year following the clues he left behind. This is what I found.

Between the Diagnoses

Parenting, illness · Adult (30-45) · Neutral American · 30 seconds

They gave my son the first diagnosis when he was four and the second when he was seven. Between those years was a kind of suspended life — not quite knowing, not quite not knowing — where I learned things about love that I'm not sure I could have learned any other way. I learned that hope is not the opposite of grief. They live in the same house. I learned that some days the bravest thing you do is make breakfast and get everyone out the door.

Forty Dollars and a Bus Ticket

Migration, coming of age · Mature (55+) · African American · 30 seconds

I left Birmingham in 1987 with forty dollars, a duffel bag, and a bus ticket to Detroit that I'd bought with money I borrowed from a woman at church who never asked me to pay it back. Everybody who leaves something behind has their own math they're doing — what they're giving up, what they're running toward, how much they can afford to lose. I was nineteen. The math felt simple then. I'm fifty-seven now, and I've been running the numbers ever since.

A Woman I Didn't Recognize

Marriage, identity · Adult (40-55) · Neutral American · 45 seconds

There's a photo from my wedding where I'm laughing at something off-camera. I look at it now and I can see it — the way my shoulders were already curving inward, the way the laugh was real but something behind my eyes was already going quiet. I didn't know then that I was disappearing. You rarely do. The woman in that photo loved her husband. She also barely existed. This is the story of how I found my way back to a self I hadn't met yet — and what I had to leave behind to do it.

Raised by the River

Poverty, Appalachia · Mature (55+) · Appalachian · 45 seconds

We lived so close to the Elk River that in spring the floodwater came up under the back door, and Mama would stack the kitchen chairs on the table and say, well, it's that time of year again. Growing up poor has its own texture — the feel of it — that no amount of distance fully erases. I've had a good career and a nice house for twenty years now, and I still flinch when the grocery bill gets high. That river is still in me. I stopped being ashamed of that the day I decided to write this book.

The Year I Stopped Pretending

Recovery, addiction · Adult (30-45) · Neutral British · 30 seconds

For eleven years I drank the way people drink when they're trying to solve a problem they haven't named yet. It was my secret and my companion and the thing I turned to when the person I'd built — successful, composed, funny in the way that keeps people at arm's length — started to feel like a costume I couldn't get off. Recovery didn't give me back the person I was before. There was no before. It gave me the first version of me that had ever been honest.

Letters I Never Sent to Seoul

Adoption, identity · Adult (25-40) · Neutral American · 45 seconds

I was adopted from South Korea at five months old and raised in Minnesota by a family who loved me completely and understood almost nothing about what I was. That's not blame — it's just the particular kind of loneliness that comes with being the only one. I started writing letters to the country I came from when I was twelve. I never sent them. When I finally flew to Seoul at thirty-one to search for my birth mother, I brought the letters with me — not to deliver them, but because I needed proof that I had always been looking.

My Name is His Handwriting

Grief, long marriage · Mature (55+) · Neutral American · 30 seconds

Six months after Harold died, I found a grocery list in the pocket of his winter coat. Milk. The dark bread I like. Batteries (check drawer first). He'd written my name at the top — just my name, no reason, the way you write something when you're thinking about a person while you're writing something else. I sat down on the floor of the hallway and didn't get up for a long time. This is a book about sixty-two years with one person, and what the silence sounds like when they're gone.

Undocumented and Dreaming

Immigration, identity · Adult (25-40) · Light Mexican Spanish · 45 seconds

I learned I was undocumented the same week I was accepted to a university I couldn't attend without a social security number. My mother told me at the kitchen table with her hands folded in front of her, in the careful voice she used when she was trying to protect me from her own fear. I wasn't angry — I understood too much by then to be angry. But I sat with it for a long time, that gap between who I was and what the paperwork said I was. This is the story of crossing that distance.

The First Time I Felt Safe

Trauma, healing · Adult (30-45) · Neutral American · 30 seconds

I was twenty-six years old the first time I felt safe in a room. Not comfortable — I'd managed comfortable before. Safe. The kind where your body stops scanning the exits and your voice comes out at its actual volume and you laugh before you think about whether the laugh is appropriate. I was in a therapist's office in Portland, and she'd asked me something ordinary, and I'd answered honestly, and the world didn't end. I've been chasing that feeling ever since. Learning to make it somewhere I could live.

Lessons From Losing Everything

Business, failure · Adult (40-55) · Neutral American · 30 seconds

By the time the bankruptcy was finalized, I had already grieved the house, the business, and most of my dignity. What I hadn't expected to grieve was the version of myself that had believed those things were what made me worth knowing. That man had to die before I could figure out who was underneath him. I'm not going to tell you losing everything was a gift. It wasn't. But it was an education, and what I learned, I wouldn't trade.

Coming Out at Sixty-Four

LGBTQ, late life · Mature (55+) · Neutral American · 45 seconds

When I told my daughter I was gay, she was quiet for a moment and then she said, Mom, I've known since I was about twelve. I have thought about that sentence almost every day since. The things we hide to protect the people we love — they usually already know. They've been waiting, sometimes for decades, for us to catch up to what they could see clearly. I spent sixty-four years inside a life that fit me almost right. This is the story of the year I finally stopped adjusting and started living.

A Soldier's Wife, A Soldier's Widow

Military, grief · Adult (40-55) · Neutral American · 30 seconds

People want to call military widows strong. They say it constantly — you're so strong — as if it's a choice, as if the alternative exists. Marcus was killed on a Tuesday in March. On Wednesday I made lunch for our three kids and helped the youngest with his spelling words and answered forty-seven texts from people who didn't know what to say. That's not strength. That's a body that doesn't know yet how to stop. This is the real account — the one behind the folded flag and the formal condolences.

The Proof

Career, rural roots · Adult (30-45) · Rural Midwestern US · 45 seconds

I grew up without reliable internet on a grain farm in Nebraska. By thirty, I was leading an engineering team at a company worth more than some small countries. People in Silicon Valley thought my background was charming — a novelty, good for an origin-story paragraph. What they didn't understand was that the farm wasn't a thing I came from. It's still the thing I am. Every decision I've made in tech — about who we hire, what we build, who it's for — runs through that dirt road. I wouldn't have it any other way.

The Mother I Chose to Forgive

Family, forgiveness · Adult (40-55) · Neutral American · 30 seconds

Forgiveness is not the same as absolution. My mother was not a good mother — that's a sentence it took me forty years to say out loud without flinching. She was also funny and generous with strangers and could grow anything in any soil and died alone in a hospital room because I didn't make it in time. Both of those things are true. People want stories of forgiveness to be clean, but the kind worth telling never is. I forgave her because I needed to. I also never pretended she deserved it.

The Polar Pail

Coming of age, comic · Young adult (18-25) · Neutral American · 45 seconds

The summer I turned seventeen, I worked the window at an ice cream stand called the Polar Pail, which was in Ohio and shaped like a barn. It had me, a boy named Trevor who could not count change, and a soft-serve machine that made a noise like it was being murdered.

I learned a lot that summer. I learned that people will lie to your face about whether they were next. I learned that a toddler can hold a grudge. I learned that nobody has ever, truly, needed the large.

And I learned that when you hand a stranger a cone on a hot day, for about one second, you are the best thing that has happened to them.

The Margaret Anne

Family, working life · Mature (55+) · Scottish · 90 seconds

My father named every boat he ever owned after my mother, and my mother hated all of them.

The first was the Margaret, a wee wooden thing with an engine that coughed like an old man at a funeral. The second was the Margaret Two. The third, when he'd had a good year and a bank manager who liked him, was the Margaret Anne, because he said she deserved her full name on something that size.

She never once set foot on any of them. She said the sea had enough of her husband without her going out to visit.

I started on the Margaret Anne at fifteen. My job was to gut fish and keep my mouth shut, and I was only any good at one of those. We'd go out from the harbour in the dark, and I'd stand at the rail watching the lights of the town get smaller, thinking, one day I'll leave, and I'll never smell herring again.

I did leave. Thirty years in Glasgow, in an office with a window that looked at another office.

When my father died, the Margaret Anne was the only thing he left me. The whole town expected me to sell her.

I've had her out every Saturday since. I've not caught much. That was never the point.

My mother still won't come aboard. But she walks down to the harbour every Saturday to see me in.

School of the Air

Childhood, rural · Adult (40-55) · Australian · 1 minute

I went to school through a radio in the corner of our kitchen, four hundred kilometres from the nearest town.

Every morning at eight, Mum would switch it on, and a crackly voice would say good morning, and twelve kids spread across a patch of country the size of a small European nation would say good morning back, one after another, whenever the static let us.

My best friend was a girl called Lainey. We talked every school day for six years. We met in person twice.

People ask if it was lonely. I suppose it was, the way the sky out there is big. You didn't notice until someone from the city pointed at it.

When I moved to Adelaide for university, I sat in my first lecture with three hundred people close enough to touch, and I have never felt so far away from anyone in my life.

Four Coats

Immigration, new country · Adult (30–45) · Light Indian English · 1 minute

The first thing I bought in Toronto was a coat, and the man in the shop laughed at me, kindly, because it was September.

I had come from Chennai, where the only cold thing is the inside of the fridge. I had a job offer, two suitcases, and a list from my mother of relatives' friends' neighbours I was permitted to call in an emergency. There were eleven names on it. I knew none of them.

That winter, I learned to walk on ice like a newborn deer. I learned that people here apologise when you bump into them. I learned to say fine, thanks, when someone asked how I was, even when the true answer was a long one.

In February, a woman at my office noticed I ate lunch alone every day. She did not say anything. She just pulled up a chair.

I have been here twelve years. I own four coats. She is my daughter's godmother.

Nine Minutes

Work, emergency services · Adult (40-55) · Neutral American · 90 seconds

For nineteen years, my job was to be the calmest voice on the worst night of someone's life.

I was an emergency dispatcher. You sit in a dark room with three screens and a headset, and the phone rings, and a stranger tells you the thing they never thought they'd have to say out loud. My husband isn't breathing. There's smoke under the door. I can't find my son.

You learn a rhythm. Address first, always, because if the line drops you need to know where to send them. Then what's happening. Then what they can do while they wait. You say, I'm right here with you, and you mean it, even though you're forty miles away with a cold sandwich going stale by the keyboard.

Then the call ends, and you almost never find out how the story finished. The ambulance arrives, the line goes quiet, and the next call is already blinking.

One night, a woman called about her baby. I talked her through the compressions for nine minutes, counting out loud with her, until the paramedics came through her door and the line went dead.

I never learned what happened. I have thought about that baby every day for eleven years.

This book is about what we carry, those of us on the other end of the line, and how I finally learned to set it down.

Second Bass

Retirement, comic · Mature (55+) · Welsh · 1 minute

When I retired from the post office, my wife gave me three months to find a hobby before she found one for me.

I chose the male voice choir because it met on Thursdays, and Thursday was when her sister came round.

I had not sung in public since 1971, and that was at a rugby match, and I was not strictly sober. The conductor, a small fierce woman called Mrs Pryce, listened to me for about four seconds, said second bass, and pointed at the back row.

We practise in a chapel with no heating. We are, on average, seventy-three years old. Two of us are deaf in one ear, and not the same ear.

Last spring, we sang at the funeral of one of our own, and I stood in that back row and felt the whole chapel shake with us. I have not missed a Thursday since.

Mirror, Signal, Nana

Family, comic · Adult (25–40) · Irish · 45 seconds

My grandmother taught me to drive in a car older than my mother, on roads that were mostly sheep.

Her method was simple. She sat in the passenger seat with her handbag held like a shield and said a prayer under her breath every time I changed gear.

She had never taken a driving test herself. When I pointed this out, she said that in her day you were given a licence the way you were given a cold, and nobody made a fuss.

I passed first time. She told the parish. She told the priest before she told my mother.

She's gone eight years now. I still check the mirror and hear her say, now, love. Look at you.

The Last Shift

Working life, the South · Mature (55+) · Southern US · 90 seconds

The mill closed on a Friday in March, and they gave us each a piece of sheet cake.

I am not making that up. Two hundred and twelve of us, some third generation in that building, and on the last day they set up folding tables in the break room with sheet cakes from the grocery store. White frosting, blue letters. Thank you for your years of service. Like we'd been in the war.

I started there at eighteen, sweeping lint off the floor of the spinning room. My daddy ran the looms across the aisle. My mama packed our lunches in the same paper sack, his on top, because he ate first.

You get so you don't hear the machines. Visitors used to cover their ears, and we'd laugh, because to us that noise was just the sound of the day going on. It was the quiet that scared you. Quiet meant something had broken.

On that last Friday, they shut the line down at two in the afternoon. And it went quiet. And every one of us stood there, not moving, waiting for somebody to come and fix it.

Nobody came.

I took a piece of that cake home for my wife. She asked how it was. I said it was fine. I meant the cake.

Results Day

Education, coming of age · Young adult (18-25) · London (light) · 1 minute

On results day, my mum made me bring the envelope home and open it at the kitchen table in front of everyone. Everyone meant my mum, my nan, two aunties, my little brother, and a neighbour called Deji who'd come round to borrow a drill and decided to stay.

Nobody in my family had been to university, so nobody knew what the letters meant. I read them out, and there was this silence, and my nan said, is that good, and I said, yeah, Nan, that's good, and the whole kitchen went up like a goal had gone in.

Deji hugged me. I'd met him maybe twice.

What I didn't tell anyone was that I was terrified. Not of the work. Of walking into a place where everyone else already knew the rules.

It took me most of first year to work out that half of them were pretending too.

The Shallow End

Midlife, comic · Adult (40-55) · Neutral American · 45 seconds

I learned to swim at forty-one, in a class where every other student was six.

On beach vacations, I read under an umbrella. At pool parties, I was the one holding everyone's phone. It was easier to say I didn't like swimming than to admit nobody had ever taught me.

The instructor was a college kid named Marisol who called me Miss Denise and never once laughed. The six-year-olds were less professional.

On the last day, I put my face in the water, pushed off from the wall and kept going, all the way to the rope. When I came up, a boy in shark goggles was clapping.

I cried, a bit. It's fine. You can't tell in a pool.

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