

FOCUS

Written by

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FADE IN:

INT. OFFICE - CHARLIE'S CUBICLE - DAY

CHARLIE is a 30-year-old white guy, dressed Normcore with an underlying flair of mod. He sits slumped at his desk with his eyes shifting around his computer, his desk, his pen, his hand, the clock, his computer again. He's wasting time and getting no gratification from it.

CHARLIE (V.O.)

I don't care what anyone tells you about multi-tasking. You're only focusing on one thing at a time. You might be able to walk and chew gum and think about your job all together, but you're not focusing on all of them. Just one at a time.

Charlie's mouth is hanging open now as he clicks through a Reddit article online about Lego. Then to Facebook. Then again to the clock.

CHARLIE (V.O.)

Look at all these different points of focus I have. Look at me. It doesn't help that I'm the social media outreach manager. What a glorified title for what I do. Andy Borowitz said there's a thin line between social networking and wasting your fucking life. In fact, that's his twitter tagline ... Or is it still?

(typing)

@Borowitz Report - Yeah ... Yeah, it's his tagline. Jesus. What am I doing? Get it together. Get it together, Charlie. See, when you keep shifting your focus from one point to the next, it's tough to get very deep into anything at all.

He closes the twitter browser window. The next tab over is Facebook.

CHARLIE (V.O.)

I know what I have to do. This shouldn't be that difficult to ... Man, there's a lot of people having kids. My Goodness! Hey, let's get it together here, Charlie, ha? ...

Charlie opens an email and starts to type. He stops and does another slack-jawed visual sweep around his cubicle.

CHARLIE (V.O.)
But no matter how scattered your
focus gets,

Rod, a chubbier, older man, with his polo tucked in like he's going to play a lousy round on the back 9, peaks around the corner of Charlie's cubicle with a coffee cup in his hand.

CHARLIE (V.O.)
You get the right focal point
coming at you from the right place
at the right time, and it'll
command your focus like it's
gripping your balls in its hand.

ROD
Charlie?

Charlie spins his head around, guilty of being essentially asleep on the job. Rod is uncomfortable about having to approach Charlie.

CHARLIE
ROD! How's it going?

ROD
Hey, good, Charlie. How's it-
(glancing around)
How's it going with you?

CHARLIE
Good. Good. Good, just making sure
we're interacting with our key
audiences.

Ron nods, looking around and fidgeting a little. God, this is uncomfortable for him.

ROD
Charlie, do you got a minute?

INT. ROD'S OFFICE - DAY

Rod closes the door to his office, and walks around to his desk chair. Charlie stands next to the chair on the opposite side of Rod's desk.

ROD
Oh, please, sit, Charlie. You can
have a seat.

Charlie sits. Both he and Rod are uneasy about this confrontation. Rod breathes in deep.

ROD (CONT'D)
So how's it been going, Charlie?

CHARLIE
Well. Ya, know. It's been going pretty well. You know, we're up five percent with our followers, but we're up twenty-five percent with interactions. So we're ... We're strengthening the connections with our audiences who really care.

ROD
Is everything good with you outside of work? Everything at home's good? Anything on your mind while you're here?

CHARLIE
Well, now I'm not sure how to respond to that. Is this a question about job performance?

Worried that Charlie will become defensive, Rod gets up out of his chair and walks around his desk. He sits next to Charlie and they both look toward Rod's empty chair. He still seems afraid of confrontation, but he's more comfortable in his own office.

ROD
Charlie, the community events page hasn't been updated in a week and a half.

Charlie gasps, dropping his head into his hands. How could he have forgotten?

ROD (CONT'D)
And the graphics that go with them, I mean are there, is there any, uh -

CHARLIE
No, no, no, no, no, no. I'm so sorry, Rod. I can't believe I - oh, my goodness, I can stay late, I can have those in by as soon as-

ROD
Charlie, I'm not asking you about the events page, we can talk about that.

(MORE)

ROD (CONT'D)

But are you - Are you having
trouble focusing on what you want
to focus on, Charlie?

Charlie's head springs up, his eyes widen, and he is transported in his memory by the words.

INT. DOCTOR'S OFFICE - DAY

Slow motion in a doctor's office. Everything awash in the sterilized greenish fluorescent light of the room, hazy in Charlie's memory. YOUNG CHARLIE sits on an examining table looking on as THE DOCTOR, a middle aged man in a white coat, speaks with Charlie's mom and then turns to Charlie. Charlie is innocent and compliant.

CHARLIE (V.O.)

It's a funny progression that leads
to why parents would think hopping
their kids up on a bunch of
amphetamines was a good idea.

The Doctor moves in closer to Young Charlie so they can converse while he examines the boy.

DOCTOR

Are you having trouble focusing on
what you want to focus on, Charlie?

EXT. STREET - DAY

A rainy day as Charlie trudges down the street solo, feeling and looking glum.

CHARLIE (V.O.)

A drug is a substance used to treat
disease or to enhance physical or
mental wellbeing.

The rain clears, the sun is out, the birds are chirping, and Charlie is bright and energized, walking with clear direction.

CHARLIE (V.O.)

You can take a drug to clear up a
headache or muscle soreness.

Charlie catches a football from two kids playing on a lawn and throws it back to them.

CHARLIE

(to camera)

Drugs to fight anxiety. Drugs to get you drunk. Drugs to make your ding dong stand up if you're on anti-anxiety pills and drunk. Drugs to make you sensitive. Drugs to make you numb. Drugs to keep you awake until you're legally insane. Drugs to make you sleep on an airplane ride through a hurricane.

Charlie approaches a nondescript brick building. He opens a door from outside and steps in.

INT. DRUG TESTING LAB - DAY

LAB TECHNICIANS in sterile masks and white lab coats go about their business of testing chemical compounds in drugs. Charlie walks around their sterile lab like he's invisible. No one seems to notice him.

CHARLIE

(to camera)

So when these folks first go to work on a drug, it's for a specific reason. They make the right drug to be used in the right dosage at the right time for the right condition.

Charlie picks up a vile at the end of the room, and looks over to see if the Lab Technicians are watching him.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

(to camera)

Under that perfect set of circumstances, the drug is doing what it's supposed to do. There's no abuse. Everybody wins.

Charlie takes a drink of the vile like it's a shot glass, and looks into the vile to see if there's any left. He tosses the vile in a garbage bin, opens a door and steps into the next room.

INT. PHARMACEUTICAL CORPORATE BOARD ROOM - DAY

Around a boardroom, EXECUTIVES of branches within the pharmaceutical company sit and discuss their business. Charlie walks past the meeting, unnoticed, still addressing the camera.

CHARLIE

But these good natured scientists
gotta work for somebody.

CUT TO:

INT. PHARMACY - DAY

In the pharmacy Young Charlie waits while his Mom takes the pills and pays the pharmacist. The pharmacist explains the medication to Charlie's Mom.

CHARLIE (V.O.)

And pharmaceutical companies gotta make a profit, right? Sounds pretty cut and dry. But how that sausage gets made is a little uglier.

Present-Day Charlie Steps into frame and looks toward the Camera.

CHARLIE

If you do drugs in the United States, then you know ... They can be pretty expensive.

CUT TO:

INT. EUROPEAN UNION MEETING - STOCK FOOTAGE - DAY

STOCK FOOTAGE - European Union Members hear testimony from Pharmaceutical Company Representatives.

CHARLIE (V.O.)

Well, in the rest of the developed world, governments negotiate price caps with pharmaceutical companies under long term contracts. This way the pharmaceutical company can't just arbitrarily jack up the price of your oxy-whatever without a state official calling them up to inquire, and I'm paraphrasing here, 'what the hell?'

CUT TO:

INT. US SENATE HEARING ROOM - DAY

STOCK FOOTAGE - Pharmaceutical Company Representatives testify in front of the US Senate about drugs.

CHARLIE (V.O.)

But here in the U.S. we have patent laws. And those laws stop American officials from following the Europeans and negotiating caps on prices. And Pharmaceutical companies have pockets deep enough to bankroll, say, political campaigns, you'd never get enough senators and congressmen - from either party - to take a swing at this.

CUT TO:

INT. CLASSROOM - DAY

Charlie is standing in front of a chalkboard, looking like a professor with a piece of chalk in his hand.

CHARLIE

(to camera)

That means they have the patent on it, so you can only get it from them. And they won't negotiate the price so they can charge you whatever the hell they want. And that, ladies and gentlemen, is what we call a monopoly.

WRITTEN ON CHALKBOARD:

monopoly |m??näp?l?| noun (pl. monopolies)

1. the exclusive possession or control of the supply or trade in a commodity or service.

CUT TO:

INT. DOCTOR'S PRIVATE OFFICE - DAY

The Doctor sits in his private office going over his mail at his elaborate desk, surrounded by bookshelves.

CHARLIE (V.O.)

But here's where it gets richer. Drug companies can give bonuses to doctors who prescribe their drug over another.

CUT TO:

EXT. GOLF COURSE - DAY

The Doctor tees off on a bright sunny day, dressed to the hilt in golfer's uniform. Other sprightly older white men stand behind him, approving of the drive.

CHARLIE (V.O.)

And you can't just be informal
about giving a guy a big check. You
gotta invite him out, get to know
each other.

CUT TO:

EXT. GOLF COURSE CLUB HOUSE - DAY

The Doctor stands surrounded by a medium-sized group of other doctors, executives, and their spouses.

CHARLIE (V.O.)

You gotta have him talk with you
and your colleagues about how much
he appreciates your great drug. You
want to believe he's as proud to be
a pusher of your wonderful drug as
you are.

The Doctor shakes hands with executives, and they nonchalantly move to a line for the camera man at the Club House.

Once again unnoticed, the invisible narrator, Charlie steps among the scene between the people and next to the Doctor. The photo line gets tighter, and the men begin to smile, and the Doctor looks like he's about to sneeze as Charlie walks right next to his face and stares a bored stare.

CHARLIE

Some doctors are pulling down north
of \$300,000 a year from
Pharmaceutical Companies.

The Doctor sneezes into the bend of his elbow. The camera flashes. Charlie walks off screen.

That's nothing to sneeze at.

CUT TO:

EXT. SCHOOL YARD - DAY

Charlie steps into screen in front of a fence between him and the schoolyard. In the background, uniformed school children play hopscotch, kickball, and chase each other wildly.
Charlie talks to the camera.

CHARLIE

So in that trifecta of controlling the production, the price, and the doctors who distribute it, which drug for which ailment could guarantee a customer for life?

CUT TO:

INT. SHOPPING MALL DEPARTMENT STORE - DAY

Christmas time is in the air at the department store. A MOTHER, raging on a cell phone, pulling HER SON'S arm as he reaches back for a video game that catches his attention.

CHARLIE (V.O.)

Hyperactivity. Trouble paying attention. You haven't met a kid in your life who hasn't at some point met those qualifications. Parents know the symptoms of this disease: the kid's too hyper all the time; can't pay enough attention.

CUT TO:

INT. DOCTOR'S OFFICE - DAY

The Doctor sits in his magnificent office and reads the file of a patient.

CHARLIE (V.O.)

Well, your friendly, family Doctor just happens to know of a wonderful drug made by a great company for just that ailment.

CUT TO:

INT. ELEMENTARY SCHOOL ROOM - DAY

In an elementary school classroom, children all write diligently in their notebooks.

CHARLIE (V.O.)

And goodness knows the drug works.
You think those folks back in the
lab wanted to make a lousy drug? No
way. They made the most insanely
focusing drug they could make
without actually beaming you into
your point of focus. And with
results like that across the board,
you can believe word spreads.

Tracking down the line of students writing in notebooks.

CHARLIE (V.O.)

Bribes to Doctors aren't as bad now
as they were in the 90s. But there
certainly has been an uptick in
prescription. From 1990 to 2013 the
number of American children on
medication for ADHD rose from
600,000 to 3.5 Million.

One GIRL at the end of the row is writing furiously, but she
slowly glances up at the camera as it tracks toward her.

CHARLIE (V.O.)

That's whole lot of hopped up kids.

The girl jolts her face back down to her book and writes
furiously.

CHARLIE (V.O.)

But you can't argue with results.

CUT TO:

INT. DOCTOR'S OFFICE - DAY

Back in the Doctor's office, Young Charlie is watching his
mother in slow motion again while the Doctor talks to her,
and then turns his attention toward Charlie.

CHARLIE (V.O.)

So like any good parents, mine
wanted to be completely open and
honest with their doctor. Does your
son seem hyper? Does he have
trouble focusing?

The doctor slow motion walks over to Young Charlie.

CHARLIE (V.O.)

And like any kid, I knew the grown-ups were probably right because, at the very least, they knew more.

DOCTOR

Are you having trouble focusing on the things you want to focus on, Charlie?

CUT TO:

INT. ROD'S OFFICE - DAY

Charlie sits next to Rod in the chairs facing Rod's desk. He snaps out of it.

CHARLIE

No, Rod, I have been having some trouble. But I know what the problem is, and I know how to fix it.

ROD

I know you can, Charlie. I'd like to avoid any kind of probationary period, if we can.

CHARLIE

I appreciate that, Rod. So would I.

ROD

Well would it be all right if you and I sort of informally check in with each other at the end of each day for a little bit here?

EXT. STREET - EVENING

Charlie walks down the street with an upright posture and a determined stare. He's almost robotic in his movements with exactly the same bend and forward-back swing in each arm.

CHARLIE (V.O.)

I've been off my medication before.

Charlie's robotic walk morphs him into ...

EXT. - US ARMY DRILL PAD - EVENING

An Army recruit, Private Charlie, marching in a formation of other US Army recruits.

CHARLIE (V.O.)
Successfully, too.

CUT TO:

EXT. - US ARMY DRILL PAD - EVENING

A DRILL SERGEANT stands over Private Charlie, screaming indignantly.

CHARLIE (V.O.)
The Army has a pretty expansive list of ways to get your attention and hold it ... But they never had to get very creative with me. They held my attention for an entire three years.

CUT TO:

INT. CHARLIE'S APARTMENT - DAY

Charlie walks around his apartment, brushing his teeth, wiping up the edges of the counters in his kitchen. He appears to be talking to himself as he brushes his teeth. He goes to the cupboard and opens the door to a stack of several large bottles of pills.

CHARLIE (V.O.)

But while I was in, I still had some insurance through my parents, and since the doctor was sure-as-shit willing to prescribe it, I just stockpiled drugs. The truth is that break from the drug in the Arm came at a good time. I was starting to develop a tolerance.

Charlie takes out one of the bottles and looks at it. He's still brushing his teeth and walks over to the sink while reading the bottle.

CHARLIE (V.O.)

Because - and I don't know if I alluded to this strongly enough earlier - but this drug they made is quite a ride. It's pretty much speed, right. So you when you take it, it's grip-you-by-the-balls focus and intensity. You ever see one of those karate guys chop a bunch of bricks in half with their hand?

Charlies spits out the toothpaste and looks into the camera.

CHARLIE

It's like that.

INT. CHARLIE'S CUBICLE - DAY

Rod walks around the corner to Charlie's Cubicle. Charlie's head is buried deep into his computer screen, and he's typing torrentially, then clicking back, then typing again.

ROD

Hey, Charlie, how's everything going this morning?

CHARLIE

Rod!

Charlie swings around with lightning-bolt speed. He raises out of his chair, not speaking to Rod, but singing in a big band show tune style. Music fades in as Charlie breaks into song.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

Look at these tweets that I tweet

Look at these emails I send.

Check out these graphics I've graphed.

I'm everyone's best friend!

I'm so God Damn in the zone

That I don't want to go home

I'm having fun.

I'm getting shit done!

Charlie walks over toward BILL'S Cubicle with some papers in his hand. Charlie's musical demeanor is contagious. Bill is meeting him on his musical journey, singing and dancing along.

BILL

How are we, Charlie?

CHARLIE

We're doing fine, Bill!
I heard your excel won't export
but guess what, mine will!
I added some pages and then
I put your name at the end

BILL

Feelin' good this morning, Charlie?

CHARLIE

I haven't blinked since 9 a.m.!

Charlie dances toward the center aisle of cubicles. Dancing office workers are now joining him as a CHOIR in the Broadway-style musical number.

CHARLIE & CHOIR

(Charlie holding up charts)
Look at our peaks from this week!
Look how we're tracking these
trends!

CHOIR

Charlie's been backing us up.

CHOIR

He's everyone's best friend

CHARLIE

I'm everyone's best friend!
I'm so God Damn in the zone!
that I don't want to go home!
I'm having fun! I'm getting
shit done!

CHARLIE AND CHOIR

(repeat)

He's so God Damn in the zone
He doesn't want to go home
He's having fun he's getting shit
done!

CHARLIE AND CHOIR (CONT'D)

(finale)

He's so God Damn in the zone
He doesn't want to go home
He's having fun he's getting shit
done!

INT. CHARLIE'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Charlie is down in a hard-to-reach corner of his apartment, cleaning with a small brush. The apartment is immaculate, almost too clean. Charlie looks thinner from a distance. He whips himself up and flies with purpose from one end of the apartment to the other to get a better tool. He gets a toothbrush and runs back down to the corner to continue cleaning. His eyes are wide. His jaw is clenched. Charlie is high out of his mind and he looks like a madman.

FADE TO BLACK.