

**Chimaera Cries
ON STREAM!!!**

Francis Bass



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Characters

JOSEPH YANYUK “CHIMAERA”

Male, 23. A Russian-born video game speedrunner and live streamer with a fairly large following, currently residing in the US.

Setting

A room in Chimaera’s apartment in present day St. Louis.

Set: Lights are down. A table and chair sits at center. CHIMAERA is seated in the chair, wearing a headset. On the table is a keyboard, mouse, SNES controller, and two computer screens—though the computers are not seen by the audience, because they sit directly in front of CHIMAERA and would block him from view.

At Rise: CHIMAERA stares intently at the left computer screen, getting ready to start his live stream. After a few seconds, he clicks on something, and the lights go up.

CHIMAERA

To audience. He is completely silent, so he is only mouthing the following words.
Hey, everyone! I'm back! Chimaera's back. MosCon was awesome, hopefully you guys saw some of that—I think there's actually, they should have—wait. Wait, am I not ...

He stares at the left screen for a second, clicking a few times. Laughs, he is now audible.

There we go! Woops. Hello, chat. It's me, Chimaera. How's everyone doing? I just got back from MosCon, like, four hours ago, so I've had four hours of sleep—it's fine. It's all good. I'm ready to get back on schedule. So ... I need to get the timer set-up and everything ... but ... then we will start.

Chimaera goes back to staring at the screen. Occasionally, he will look to the left screen, out to the audience, reading the chat. Reading from the chat.

“Chimaera, how was the motherland?”

Looking back to his setup.

Oh my god. “The motherland.” Mother Russia. It was good. The thing is, I'm not like—I'm not really Russian, like, I moved to the US when I was six, and so, I do have *some* cousins there, and I hung out with them, but ... yeah, it was cool. I was surprised how much of Moscow I actually, like, recognize, from being a kid there, I guess ... I kind of wanted to walk around the city more, but our schedule was super packed, so ...

Reading from the chat.

“Chimaera, thoughts on Minty's *Zelda* run?”

Looking back to his setup. Laughing uncomfortably.

Uh, no. No thoughts. I mean, look, guys, MosCon is not like—it's not really a competition, okay, it's just a showcase for speed-runners to show off some cool stuff, so was he—here's the thing, even if he was cheating, it's like, who cares, you know? It's not about—and this is my thing, too. Like, it's cool to get a personal best, and if, some day, some how, I got a world record speed run in some game, that would be awesome. But I really just want to have fun, and show people something cool.

Pause. Glances over to chat.

I'm running—I'm doing *Super Mario World* any percent. Uh ... cloud glitch. If you saw me at the—it's the same run I did last day of MosCon. It's—the thing is, with the run I did at MosCon, I lost the cloud during the Bowser fight, so I had to just complete it regularly, and it tacked on like, thirty-three seconds. So I'm going to try *not* to do that this time. But, okay, so the way they had it—

Looking to his webcam, perched between the two screens—straight out to the audience.

They had these big ballrooms full of people going to the convention, right, and they would have these huge screens up above, with the game showing on it. And then, the

speedrunner—so like I would be at the front of the room, with this shitty little screen sitting on a table in front of me, so for all of the stuff where it needs to be pixel perfect—it sucked because they had this tiny screen, and so you had to look up at the big screen to get things lined up right. *But* the big screen was just a millisecond behind, so it ... uh ...

He clicks on something, which opens up a video. He watches it for a second then his eyes go wide, and he looks at it skeptically.

Uh, anyway.

Looking to the chat.

Pandamanda, no, I'm not making excuses! I'm just telling you, it was a bad set-up! It was not good for the runners to have ... oh, everyone's saying I'm a sore loser now—I didn't lose though! This is what I'm saying, it's not a competition! Whatever, I'm going to get started.

He picks up the controller, and presses start. Reading chat more.

Karnor is hosting me? Awesome. Hello, everyone from Karnor's stream. Hello. I'm speedrunning *Super Mario World*, any percent, basically beating the game as fast as possible, using whatever glitches or cheats I can—just as long as I beat Bowser at the end. Hoping to get a new personal best time on the final world, but who knows. First, I have to start every game by waiting for all the cutscenes to go by. I'm still hoping someone will find a way to skip the cutscenes. Because you have to sit through them after each world you beat ...

The cutscenes are over and he starts playing, using the controller, looking to the right screen.

Although it is nice getting a chance to take a break and look at stuff in chat. After each world.

Beat. He glances very briefly at chat—only moving his eyes, not his whole head—then back to the game.

People say I should read chat more during ... while I'm playing. It's not like it breaks concentration, once you've really got a game down. Like if I was just learning a new route, it would be harder, but at this point I've done this route so many times, I can just look over and be like ...

Doing so, reading from chat, then looking back.

“EllaRuns says you were hitting on—” okay, look, that's. That is not. Look, don't just ... don't try and start live stream drama. Because this is what happens, right, someone will go to one streamer's chat, and say “so-and-so said this about you,” and then that streamer will start talking shit, and then they'll go back to the other streamer's chat, and they'll make it out worse than it is, and like—

Glances at chat, then back to the game.

“Chimaera, someone bombed the Kremlin.” Okay,

Laughing.

now that is like, like an extreme example of shit-talking—but yes, that is, I guess the kind of ...

Concentrating harder as he gets to the end of the world.

Whew. Okay. Time for cutscenes. Whoa. Whoa. Wait ... two seconds? I shaved—how did I get two seconds faster than my personal best? That is a ... that is a huge split. That's ... oh shit, what is ...

Clicking on a video link in chat, watching. It's a video of EllaRuns shit-talking him.

Whoa whoa whoa whoa whoa. Whoa.

He clicks away from it, resumes holding his controller, starts playing.

Okay, so you guys were not lying ... about Ella ... look, I don't know what she saw, but there are just—it's like any convention right, at MosCon, there are constantly people around you, people who want to interact with you, to—especially at the bar, people want to buy you drinks, so—I don't know what she saw. I was definitely hanging out with a lot of girls, some of them girl streamers. I don't know. I wasn't "hitting on them and getting rejected by them," so ... you know I'm not going to MosCon looking to hook up. I ...

Leaning in to the right screen, lining his character up just right to execute the glitch. He nails it.

Whew! Okay, so that part there, where I have to make sure I'm in the right spot, during the run at the convention, I was craning my neck up to look at the big screen ...

He finishes the level.

That was a pretty good World 2. No stupid RNG, got the cloud pretty quickly ... And I'm 2.5 seconds under my previous best. Holy shit. Guys ... that ... okay. I have four worlds left ... to screw this up ... but this could ...

He clicks on something in the chat, a video plays, and he recognizes it instantly.

Stop—shit—

He rapidly resumes control of the controller and starts playing again.

People, stop posting this car bombs driving into St. Basil's Cathedral video in the chat. You're not going to fool me. I've seen it, it's a hoax.

Beat.

Okay, so look, if Ella wants to start telling stories, about MosCon, I can tell stories too. And I wasn't going to, but if she's going to start talking shit about me—alright, seriously ... she was in a different streamer's hotel room, like every night. Three nights—four nights. And who knows what else, okay. So she shouldn't ... shit ... I got slow jumps ...

Rapidly tapping the jump button as fast as possible. Clenching his teeth, tensed.

Shit ... go faster ... there it goes ... maybe. God. Come on. No fireballs. Please? Please? Yes! Holy shit, guys, this could be the run! Under ten minutes, I've got, so far I've got ...

Glancing at the chat. He just reads for a while, as the chat informs him of a terrorist attack in Red Square which just took place.

Everyone keeps posting about this hoax. Guys, it's a hoax. The Kremlin—St. Basil's Cathedral thing, it's not real. Like if you watch it, you can see the people—the cars running into the people, they're just dummies. They just flop over, they don't even bleed or anything. And when the cathedral blows up ... "It's real, look it up"—how can I look it up, I'm playing this—

He goes back to the game, concentrating.

Give me an actual link to the BBC or something, not just some random YouTube video. Okay, I need good zips here. Or else I'm going to screw this whole ... thing ... That's one! Got that one!

Glancing to the chat, then back to the game.

"Ella says you groped Misfire." Ella can just shut the fuck up then, can't she. Because that is some fucking bullshit. That is, that's fucking slander, okay. Like that—what the fuck. You can't just say that, you can't just lie about someone—and by the way, why would I grope Misfire? Misfire is ... she's like twelve. I mean she looks like she's twelve, you—fuck—wait—yes! Holy shit, holy shit guys, this is it, this could be a personal best. Two more worlds, and I—

Looking to the chat.

Okay, look, here we go, let me see ...

He clicks on a link. Reads. It's a BBC article on the bombing.

Okay. Okay it's real. So what? It's just some car bombs. Like, whatever. It's not 9/11, right? "Prime Minister and several diplomats are presumed ..."

He goes back to the game.

I mean I don't know why you guys wanted me to read that. Like, two hundred people dead? Maybe? I don't know what the big deal is. Just because I'm Russian, you think, I have something to say about that? I don't know. It's fucked up. The thing is, I'm not even really Russian, so even if it was like, some big huge tragedy, which it isn't, it's whatever, you know.

Glancing at chat, then back to the game.

"It's Minty haters trying to prove a point"—Ha!

Laughs very hard.

Oh my god, can you imagine. "Not the whole compound, just the cathedral is destroyed." Is it? Okay.

Suddenly he is struck by a terrifying realization about the bombing.

Shit. Um, I should ...

Very tensed as he reaches the end of the level.

I should ... whoa! That's—I'm ten seconds under now. That's a world—if I don't mess up the Bowser fight, that's a world record. That's not just a PB, that's a world ...

Reading chat.

"A lot of people have stopped streaming, it's ..." Yeah, after this run, I'm going to actually take a break, just because I'm really tired—not—like it's starting to hit me, how tired I am now, and ...

He continues reading chat, which is full of information on the death toll of the attack. His voice is shaky.

So I'll take a break for a few hours or something, and then I'll be back. But I have to finish this run up, cause this is a really good run, and I'm not going to let ... being tired stop that. No, not because of the attacks. Guys, I'm fine. "His voice is shaky"—dude, my voice is shaky because I'm about to set a world record for this route! Oh wait, this is—

He resumes looking at the game.

And here we go, cutscene goes to black, and then ... final world.

He starts playing, very tense.

Like, I don't really get affected by sad news stories. Because, it's not happening to me—you know, it's not my city, or my friends getting blown-up, so I just, I ...

He is silent for awhile, intensely focused.

Like, if my cousins had been there, which they could've, but it's super unlikely. I mean, they go there sometimes, but not like every day, so it's super unlikely that they were there—but if they were, then I'd be scared or whatever. And the thing is I'm not—like I've been there, but I don't have a super-deep connection with it, I'm not religious, so it's just a building to me, and if it's destroyed forever, that's—my parents used to take me there when I was a kid, but I don't even really remember it mostly—or if I do it's just from stuff I know, that my parents have told me about it, and—

Pause.

What's funny is, I wanted to go there, during MosCon, but I didn't have time. So I didn't go there, and it's gone now. Like if I had gone there—that's crazy right?

He makes a weird forced laugh.

Like if I had gone, I would've been one of the last people to see the building in tact.

He starts sniffing.

It's—guys, seriously, I'm just really tired and—Here we go! Boss fight. Final fight. The infinitely long cutscenes. Fucking—why are they so fucking long! It's such a fucking pain in the ass! I'm just wanting to go to sleep, and I have to sit through this bullshit!

Mashing buttons frantically to no effect.

Fucking, go faster! God damn it.

Reading chat.

“Why is he crying?” No one's crying. I'm really, really tired right now, okay, like I didn't get any sleep on the plane, I hardly slept three hours before I started up the stream, and EllaRuns is talking shit about me, even though she's a total slut, so I don't know, you guys, like am I crying? I don't know.

He starts playing the game. Less angry now.

That's really dumb though. That I can't go, and see the cathedral. That sucks. And no one else can either, and all those people that died can't see shit, because they're dead. Like, what an asshole-move. To do that to people. To take something beautiful, and ruin it. Screw you. Fucking screw you Bowser.

He wins and hits a key to stop the timer.

Nine minutes forty-five seconds. New world record. I'm going to sleep now guys.

He clicks something on the computer. Lights down. He puts his head down on the table.

END OF PLAY.