

stranger than fiction
new screenplay by zach helm

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you may notice that at cert in moments of the script there
re references to music tr cks th t ppe r on cd th t
ccomp nies the script. if you received copy of the
script without cd, ple se yell t whomever g ve the
script to you nd then c ll linds y dor n t 310.443.5344
to request one. we're serious. thank you

for the sovereign state of punk rock
and those whose names begin with l.

The following appears on screen:

"Life is the crummiest book I ever read." -- Bad Religion
Godspeed You Black Emperor's "Lift Your Skinny Fists Like
Antennas To Heaven" begins (track 1 on your cd).

FADE IN:

Darkness. We hear RUSTLING and a small GROAN. Then there
is silence for several seconds.

As the trumpet comes in, the screen is suddenly filled with
the iridescent, turquoise blue glow of a wrist watch whose
face plainly reads 7:15am.

It suddenly begins to beep.

INT. BEDROOM -- MORNING

The lanky man under the covers reaches out from underneath
his modest blanket and grabs his watch. He presses one of
its buttons, stopping the beeping.

We hear a female NARRATOR speak:

NARRATOR (V.O.)

This is a story about a man named
Harold Crick...

He places the watch back on the nightstand.

NARRATOR (V.O.) (CONT'D)

...and his wristwatch.

Harold's arm retracts back under the covers.

NARRATOR (V.O.) (CONT'D)

Harold Crick was a man of infinite
numbers, endless calculations and
remarkably few words.

(pause)

And his wristwatch said even less.

INT. BATHROOM -- MOMENTS LATER

HAROLD brushes his teeth in his mint colored bathroom, the
door open. We see a tiny blue glow from the other room.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

Every weekday, for nine years, Harold
would brush each of his 32 teeth 76
times. 38 times back and forth. 38
times up and down. His wristwatch
would simply look on from the
nightstand, quietly wishing Harold
would use a more colorful toothbrush.

INT. CLOSET -- MOMENTS LATER

Harold flips an orange necktie over itself as he looks at
himself getting dressed in his closet mirror, his watch now

(CONTINUED)

on. His apartment is very clean and modern. We may notice that his only source of time is his watch.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

Every weekday, for nine years, Harold would tie his tie in a single Windsor knot instead of the double, thereby saving him up to 43 seconds every morning. His wristwatch thought the single Windsor made his neck look fat... but said nothing.

EXT. STREET CORNER -- MOMENTS LATER

Harold, Granny Smith apple between his teeth, hurries after a departing bus while putting on his black overcoat and carrying a briefcase, the cold, sleek city jutting out behind him.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

Every weekday, for nine years, Harold would run at a rate of nearly 57 steps per block for 6 blocks nearly missing the 8:17 Faraday Bus. His wristwatch would delight in the feeling of the crisp wind rushing over its face.

Harold is just able to make the bus in time.

INT. OFFICE -- LATER

Harold races through the corridors of an expansive office building, occasionally peeking his head into a cubicle or reviewing the work of one of his peers.

HAROLD

(handing a folder to someone.)

1412 paragraph 8, Diane. Thanks.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

And every weekday, for nine years, Harold would complete 7.134 tax files as a senior auditor for the Internal Revenue Service.

CO-WORKER

Harold, 89 times 1,417?

HAROLD

126,113.

CUT TO:

INT. WAREHOUSE -- DAY

Harold, sitting alone at a small steel desk in the corner of an industrial warehouse, eating lunch amongst very tidy stacks of work.

(CONTINUED)

NARRATOR (V.O.)
 ...only taking a 45.7 minute lunch
 break and 4.3 minute coffee break.
 Timed precisely by his wristwatch.

He finishes his last bite just before his watch begins to beep.

EXT. CITY STREET -- LATER

Harold strolls past small urban shops uptown, their colorful facades and clean windows displaying everything from women's shoes to travel packages. Harold pauses momentarily as he passes a window displaying various guitars.

NARRATOR (V.O.)
 Beyond that, Harold lived a life of
 solitude. Harold would walk home
 alone...

INT. KITCHEN -- LATER

Harold finishes eating a modest meal in his pale red kitchen while looking through a calculator catalog.

NARRATOR (V.O.)
 He would eat alone...

INT. BEDROOM -- LATER

Harold crawls into bed, gently removing his wristwatch and placing it on the nightstand next to him. He presses a few of its buttons probably to set its alarm. With a tug of a chain the yellow light next to him goes out and the room returns to darkness, save for the blue glow of his watch.

NARRATOR (V.O.)
 And at precisely 11:13 every night,
 Harold would go to bed alone, placing
 his wristwatch to rest on the
 nightstand beside him.
 (pause)
 That was, of course, before Wednesday.
 (pause.)
 On Wednesday, Harold's wristwatch
 changed everything.

The drums explode as we...

Blackout.

The credits roll and the music continues triumphantly. We find ourselves inter-cutting between two scenes played mute.

In one scene, a young blonde-haired boy removes his hands from his eyes, revealing a brand new bicycle with a bow on it. His jaw drops. He looks at his dad who stares on with a gleam in his eye.

The other scene is of a middle-aged black woman looking through the employment ads in her cramped kitchen.

(CONTINUED)

She holds a red pen over the page hunting for a job for which she's qualified. A view of the paper reveals that she has circled only one ad.

No explanation is given for the scenes as the credits and music come to an end. The following appears on screen:

"I woke the same as any other day except a voice was in my head." -- Soundgarden.

INT. NIGHTSTAND -- MORNING

We return to the glow of Harold's wristwatch which reads:

7:15am

It promptly begins beeping.

INT. BATHROOM -- MORNING

Harold is once again brushing his teeth meticulously.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

If one had asked Harold, he would have said that Wednesday was exactly like all the Wednesdays prior. And he began it the same way he--

Harold suddenly stops as does the narration. He begins looking around, obviously hearing something. He pauses and listens. There's nothing there. He resumes brushing. The narration resumes as well.

NARRATOR (V.O.) (CONT'D)

And he began it the same way he always did--

Harold stops again and the narration stops abruptly with him. He definitely hears something. He looks at his toothbrush.

HAROLD

Hello?

He holds the toothbrush to his ear to listen. Nothing. He shakes it. Then he holds it stiffly and shakes his head. He resumes brushing and the narration immediately returns.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

He began it the same way he always did. When others' minds would--

He stops once again, now a little worried. He puts his toothbrush down and looks in his shower.

HAROLD

Hello? Is someone here?

Heart racing, he looks around but finds no evidence of anyone else. He slowly lifts his toothbrush to his teeth and begins to carefully brush again.

(CONTINUED)

NARRATOR (V.O.)

When others' minds would fantasize about their upcoming day, or even try to grip onto the final moments of their dreams... Harold just counted brush strokes.

Harold suddenly stops once more and so does the narration.

HAROLD

Alright. Who just said: "Harold counted brush strokes"? --And how do you know I'm counting brush strokes!?

(pause)

Hello?

He looks at his toothbrush once again. He inspects it. Paranoid that somehow the toothbrush might be causing the voice, Harold delicately places it on the edge of the sink and walks away.

INT. CLOSET -- MORNING

Harold folds a red tie over itself as he watches himself in the mirror.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

It was remarkable how the simple, modest--

Harold stops. He sighs. He looks over both shoulders. He closes his eyes. He picks up his tie.

NARRATOR (V.O.) (CONT'D)

It was remarkable how--

He stops again. He turns and begins to search his apartment in the hopes of discovering where the sound is coming from.

He looks at his watch. He has no choice but to resume getting dressed. He takes his tie in hand...

NARRATOR (V.O.) (CONT'D)

It was remarkable how the simple, modest elements of Harold's life, so often taken for granted, would become the catalyst for an entirely new life...

Harold just tries to ignore it.

EXT. CITY STREET -- MORNING

Harold again runs down the street, this time with a pear in his mouth, a red tie knotted in a single Windsor.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

This was the last dash Harold would make for the 8:17 bus, the last morning Harold would hear his breath

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

NARRATOR (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 leap from his throat, the last day
 his stiff leather shoes would make
 that terrible squeaking sound as
 they flexed against the concrete.

Harold stops running. He looks down at his feet and wiggles them. They squeak against the concrete. He wiggles them again. More squeaking. He looks up, amazed.

The bus quickly passes and Harold breaks out of his stupor to run after it.

NARRATOR (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 ...for this was an extraordinary
 day. A day to be remembered for the
 rest of Harold's life.

Harold misses the bus and throws his arms up in disgust. He comes to a stop next to a short Polish Woman who also just missed the bus.

NARRATOR (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 But of course, Harold just thought
 it was a Wednesday.

Harold grabs the woman by the shoulders.

HAROLD
 Did you hear that?

The woman just stares at him.

HAROLD (CONT'D)
 The, the, the... the voice. Did you
 hear it?-- "Harold just thought it
 was a Wednesday..."

POLISH WOMAN
 Don't worry. It is Wednesday.

HAROLD
 No. Did you hear it: "Harold just
 thought it was a Wednesday."

POLISH WOMAN
 Who's Harold?

HAROLD
 I'm Harold.

POLISH WOMAN
 Harold. It's okay. It is Wednesday.

HAROLD
 No. I... No. The voice said it was
 "just a Wednesday."

POLISH WOMAN
 Voice is right. It's Wednesday.

(CONTINUED)

HAROLD
I... No. I'm...[Christ.]

The woman looks at him for a second, then just walks to the other side of the bus stop to stand.

INT. OFFICE -- DAY

Harold once again passes through the corridor of the IRS, but he seems distracted, almost frazzled, stumbling past co-workers as he reviews a mess of files that nearly topple out of his arms.

NARRATOR (V.O.)
Harold couldn't truly concentrate on his work.

FEMALE CO-WORKER
Harold? Can you...

Harold nearly knocks her over but keeps going. Another co-worker approaches.

NARRATOR (V.O.)
He was lost. He struggled to compute arithmetic he could normally calculate effortlessly...

ANOTHER CO-WORKER
Harold. 67 times 453?

HAROLD
Uh...

He closes his eyes and tries to shake off the voice.

HAROLD (CONT'D)
Uh...

ANOTHER CO-WORKER
Harold?

HAROLD
I...

NARRATOR (V.O.)
When a co-worker asked the product of 67 and 453, he drew a blank.

HAROLD
(to the voice)
I can't think while you're talking.

ANOTHER CO-WORKER
What?

HAROLD
What?

Harold realizes what he's just said.

(CONTINUED)

HAROLD (CONT'D)
 Uh... nothing. Nothing.

NARRATOR (V.O.)
 Harold quickly answered 30,351.

HAROLD
 (taking cue)
 30,351.

ANOTHER CO-WORKER
 Oh. Thanks.

The co-worker walks away.

NARRATOR (V.O.)
 Despite the answer really being
 31,305.

HAROLD
 [Sonofa--]
 (calling after co-
 worker)
 --Wait! Wait!

INT. ARCHIVES -- DAY

It's only midday but already Harold looks ready to go home. His tie is loosened, his hair is a mess, he looks tired, his papers are scattered and he's just staring at the water cooler in the archives room, a file open in his hand as if frozen in the middle of filing.

A short, overweight, horribly sweaty co-worker with stains on his short-sleeved button down shirt (DAVE) comes barreling past Harold to the water cooler.

DAVE
 Dude, I've repoed 5 sports cars, two
 boats and a condo and it's not even
 lunch yet. I tell you... it's a
 shame they don't give out an Auditor
 of the Year award.

Harold just stares forward. Dave waits for a response.

DAVE (CONT'D)
 Dude?

Harold slowly turns, as if waiting for the voice to start speaking.

DAVE (CONT'D)
 Are you okay?

HAROLD
 Dave. I'm being followed.

DAVE
 (looking around)
 How are you being followed? You're
 not moving.

(CONTINUED)

HAROLD

I'm...

Harold looks up to make sure the voice won't start.

HAROLD (CONT'D)

(pause.)

It's by a voice.

DAVE

What?

HAROLD

I'm being followed by a woman's voice.

They just stare at each other for a moment.

DAVE

(concerned)

Okay. What is she saying?

HAROLD

She's... she's narrating.

DAVE

Harold. You're standing at the water cooler. What is she narrating?

HAROLD

I... I... I had to stop filing.
Watch. Listen. Listen.

Harold continues to organize papers into files.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

The sound the paper made against the folder had the same tone as a wave scraping against sand. And when Harold thought about it, he listened to enough waves every day to constitute what he imagined to be a deep and endless ocean...

Harold stops organizing the papers. He turns to Dave.

HAROLD

Did you hear that?

DAVE

You mean, you filing?

HAROLD

No. The... the... *The voice.*

DAVE

Nu-huh.

HAROLD

[Oh God]... Dave it's, it's, it's...

(pause)

The frightening part is that sometimes I do imagine a deep and endless ocean.

(CONTINUED)

DAVE

What ocean?

HAROLD

The one made up by [me filing the
stupid...]--
(sighs)
Forget it--

A SECRETARY passes by and hands Dave two folders.

SECRETARY

New audits! Have a good day!

Dave looks at them. One folder is an inch and a half thick, the other is remarkably slim.

DAVE

Okay. We got a baker and a securities trader.

He looks at Harold, who stares at the files, eyes bugged, mouth agape. Dave hands him the slim folder.

DAVE (CONT'D)

You know what... maybe you should take the baker.

CUT TO:

INT. LIBERTY BAKERY -- AFTERNOON

ANA

You're completely fucking kidding me!

Harold stands across from ANA PASCAL, the aforementioned baker: a young, attractive woman with tattoos up on her thin, pale arms, her hands and face dusted with flour, slipping baguettes into paper sleeves in the back kitchen.

The bakery is crowded with CUSTOMERS who clamor over the searing PUNK ROCK that plays. The walls are covered with propaganda calling for the release of Leonard Peltier, the armament of the Zapatistas, and even a mangled, upturned American flag that reads, "Boycott Starbucks." All of the WORKERS look under the age of twenty-one. Most have tattoos or piercings and one has a spiked, yellow mohawk. In the corner, a HOMELESS man enjoys a cup of coffee and a Danish, a MONGREL DOG lapping at a bowl of water at his side.

And oddly enough, all the bustle, propaganda and punk rock is surrounded by chiffon birthday cakes, poppy-seed muffins and the fluffiest, most delicious-looking creme puffs you've ever seen.

ANA (CONT'D)

Like, seriously fucking kidding me...

HAROLD

No. It's illegal for me to joke about audits.

(CONTINUED)

ANA
 God-fucking-damnit. Fuck. Fuck!
 (pause)
 Fuck!

HAROLD
 I understand--

ANA
 Fuck you.

HAROLD
 Alright...

ANA
 Sonofa... Fuck. I can't believe
 this.

People are beginning to watch.

HAROLD
 Listen. Is there somewhere else we
 can speak about this... an office or--

ANA
 Oh no... we're talkin' about this
 right here, thank you.

HAROLD
 (kindly)
 Okay. Now, you know you only paid
 part of your taxes last year.

ANA
 Yes. Of course I know.

HAROLD
 You know? I believe only 73 percent.

ANA
 Yes. I know. Yes.

HAROLD
 But-- so... you did it on purpose?

ANA
 Yes.

HAROLD
 So how can you not be expecting to
 get audited? You stole from the
 government.

ANA
 I didn't steal from the government.
 I just didn't... pay them entirely.

HAROLD
 Ms. Pascal, you can't just not pay
 your taxes.

(CONTINUED)

ANA

Yes I can.

HAROLD

Well, you can if you want to get audited.

ANA

Only if I recognize your right to audit me, Mr. Crick.

HAROLD

Ms. Pascal, I'm right here, auditing you. And now, I have to go over your past 4 years of returns to make sure that's all you haven't paid.

ANA

Fine.

Ana returns to slipping baguettes into sleeves.

HAROLD

I mean... is there, I don't know-- a specific reason you feel exempt from the United States Tax Laws?

ANA

No. Listen, I am a big supporter of fixing potholes and erecting swingsets and building shelters. I'm more than happy to pay those taxes. I'm just not a big fan of paying the percentage the government uses for national defense, corporate loan-outs and campaign discretionary funds... so I didn't pay those taxes. I believe I sent a letter to this effect with my return.

HAROLD

Would that be the letter beginning with, "Dear Imperialist Swine?"

ANA

Yes.

HAROLD

Ms. Pascal, what you're describing is anarchy.

ANA

Okay. Maybe.

HAROLD

So... you're an anarchist?

ANA

Like, am I a member...

HAROLD

Of an anarchist group, yes.

(CONTINUED)

ANA
Anarchists have a group?

HAROLD
I believe so. Sure.

ANA
They assemble?

HAROLD
I don't know...

ANA
Doesn't that completely defeat the purpose?

He can't help but laugh.

A timer begins to ring and Ana walks away to turn it off, not deigning to answer Harold's inquiry.

NARRATOR (V.O.)
It was difficult for Harold to imagine Ms. Pascal as a revolutionary:

HAROLD
(sotto)
Not now.

NARRATOR (V.O.)
...her thin arms hoisting protest signs, her long, shapely legs dashing from tear gas...

Ana returns with fresh muffins which she begins to place on a cooling rack. Harold tries to shake off the voice.

HAROLD
I'm sorry. I don't know if, uh...
... what we can do is... uh... uh...

He becomes lost in her eyes.

NARRATOR (V.O.)
Harold wasn't prone to fantasies...
and so he tried his best to remain professional.

HAROLD
Uh...

NARRATOR (V.O.)
But of course failed.

HAROLD
I... uh...

NARRATOR (V.O.)
He couldn't help but imagine Ms. Pascal stroking the side of his face with the soft blade of her finger...

(CONTINUED)

HAROLD

Uh... I uh...

NARRATOR (V.O.)

He couldn't help but imagine her immersed in a tub, shaving her legs...

ANA

--Mr. Crick?

HAROLD

(jolted)

Yes. Uh... Uh..

Harold stares at her.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

And he couldn't help but imagine her naked, stretched across his bed--

ANA

Mr. Crick!

Harold is jolted back to reality.

HAROLD

Yes? What is it?

ANA

You're staring at my tits.

HAROLD

Uh. No. Of course not. I... I... wouldn't... I...

(frazzled)

If, if... If I was... I can assure you it was only as a representative of the United States Government--

(looks at watch)

I should go. I'll, uh... I'm sorry. I'm having some issues today, so... I'll be back... I'll come back on Monday.

ANA

Mr. Crick: I'm a very nice, kind, mild-mannered person, but if you show up on Monday... I guarantee the most tedious, painful and unfruitful audit you've ever performed.

He grabs her hand and shakes it fervently.

HAROLD

I can't wait. Have a good day.

Flustered, Harold is barely able to make it out of the store, slamming the door behind him with the RING of the overhead bell.

EXT. LIBERTY BAKERY -- CONTINUOUS

Harold quickly walks out of sight of the bakery and stops. He stands for a moment and takes a deep breath, trying to avoid hyperventilating.

HAROLD
Come on, Harold, get it together.

NARRATOR (V.O.)
Harold suddenly found himself beleaguered and exasperated, standing outside the bakery...

HAROLD
(to the heavens)
OH SHUT UP!!!

NARRATOR (V.O.)
...cursing the heavens in futility.

HAROLD
No I'm not! I'm cursing you, you stupid voice! So shut up and leave me alone!!!

Blackout. The following appears on screen:

"You control what I'll be. You control who I see. And if I let you, you'll control me." -- Bad Brains

EXT. ROOFTOP OF BUILDING -- DAY

As "And You Will Know Us By The Trail of Dead" begins to play (track 2 your cd), a woman in an oversized black shirt and gray flannel pants (KAY) approaches the ledge of a skyscraper. Her face is worn beyond her age, her skin has a yellowish complexion and her body looks not unlike a piece of paper, crumpled into a ball and then thoughtlessly restored. The pants and shirt ripple around her in the wind. Her face is serene as she draws a drag from a cigarette.

She gently steps up onto the ledge, the rest of the city becoming visible underneath her.

Kay looks down. Across the street she notices the middle-aged black woman from the earlier scene. She's dressed very nicely and compares a written out address on a scrap of paper to the address on the building.

Kay turns her head. Coming down the street is the young blonde boy, pedaling his bicycle quickly down the sidewalk, heading directly for a large puddle behind the black woman.

Kay coughs a nasty, hacking cough. She puts out the cigarette on the ledge.

She reaches into the breast pocket of her shirt and pulls out a wadded piece of tissue which she opens, revealing several half smoked cigarettes. She puts her current half smoked cigarette into the tissue paper, re-wads it and replaces it in her breast pocket.

(CONTINUED)

She looks across the street again. The young blonde boy is only a few yards away from the puddle.

Kay closes her eyes and lifts her arms up. The wind courses against her face, her clothes, her skin.

The boy's bicycle strikes the puddle, splashing rain water onto the pants of the middle-aged black woman.

Kay dangles a single foot over the ledge...

And with the strike of the final, singular violin note, she jumps...

WOMAN'S VOICE

Excuse me... Excuse me...

We...

CUT TO:

INT. GARMENT LOFT -- AFTERNOON

Kay stands on the end of a factory table in a large, poorly converted downtown loft. She wears the same clothes as she did on the building and her foot dangles over the edge.

PENNY (O.S.)

Excuse me.

Kay turns.

A formidable, stern-looking woman in a sensible outfit stands in the doorway of the loft with a laptop case held by her side.

Kay looks on, not moving. We can see the table is surrounded by dozens of wadded up tissues, several errant cigarettes and what look to be a bunch of letters strewn about as if recently looked through. The city shines through the numerous, filthy windows that stretch across the downtown garment loft which has been renovated into a large office.

PENNY (CONT'D)

Are you Ms. Eiffel?

KAY

(in a hoarse voice)

Yes.

PENNY

Excellent. What are you doing?

KAY

Standing on a table.

PENNY

Why?

KAY

Research.

(CONTINUED)

PENNY
Am I interrupting?

KAY
Sort of.

Penny puts her laptop case on an available table.

PENNY
My name's Penny Escher. I'm the assistant. The one the publishers hired.

KAY
The watchdog.

PENNY
The assistant.

KAY
So you're her to answer phones, file files, type memos...

PENNY
Yes.

KAY
And watch over me so I don't get distracted.

PENNY
I'm here to make your life easier while you write.

KAY
So I don't get distracted.

PENNY
To help you...

KAY
Because they think I'm distracted.

PENNY
Yes.

KAY
Because they think I have writer's block.

Penny looks for a way to change the subject.

PENNY
(sees pages on floor)
Are those pages?

KAY
They're letters. To me.

PENNY
Are you writing back?

(CONTINUED)

Penny looks at her with a looming eye.

KAY

No.

Penny comes over to pick up the letters. She notices the cigarettes.

PENNY

Ah. And I imagine you smoked all these cigarettes?

KAY

No. They came pre-smoked.

PENNY

(without even a smile)

Right. They mentioned you were funny. Well... please... don't let me distract you.

Kay steps to the other edge of the table, finds a cigarette in a tissue and lights it.

KAY

What do you think about leaping off a building?

PENNY

I don't think about leaping off a building.

KAY

Yes you do.

PENNY

No. I try to think of nice things.

KAY

Everyone thinks about leaping off a building. Everyone.

PENNY

Well, I certainly don't think about thinking about leaping off a building.

KAY

They say-- I read this in this fantastically depressing book-- that when you jump from a building, it's rarely the impact that actually kills you.

PENNY

Well, I'm sure it doesn't help.

KAY

There's a... There's a photograph in it, a photograph, from the L.A. Times around forty years ago. Called "The Leaper".

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

KAY (CONT'D)

It's old but... it's beautiful.
From above the corpse of a woman who
had just leapt to her death. There's,
there's blood around her head...
like a halo. And her leg is...
buckled underneath her. And her arm
has snapped like a twig.

(pause)

But her face is so serene. So at
peace.

(pause)

And I think it's because when she
died... she could feel the wind
against her face.

Kay puts out her cigarette.

KAY (CONT'D)

(with vulnerability)

I don't know how to kill Harold Crick.

PENNY

(reassuringly)

I know. I've heard.

KAY

I can't just... It has to be perfect:
exact, specific, poetic but not...

PENNY

I know.

KAY

I... I just...

(sighs)

As much as I'd like to, I can't just
throw Harold off a building.

PENNY

Ms. Eiffel. Kay. I have been an
assistant for 18 years. I have helped
more than 20 authors complete more
than 35 books. I have never missed
a deadline. I have never lost a
writer to a block for longer than
three weeks. I will be available to
you every minute of every day of
every week until the final punctuation
is embedded on the final page. I do
not like loud music. I do not abide
narcotics. I prefer to be called
Penny, not Ms. Escher. And I will
gladly and quietly help you kill
Harold Crick so we may both go on
with our respective lives.

(pause)

And if you'll allow me, I think it
would benefit you greatly if you'd
cut back on the smoking.

INT. OFFICE -- AFTERNOON

Later that afternoon, Harold arrives at his desk at the end of a long row of cubicles to find a note taped to his computer monitor.

He peels the note off and reads it:

"Let's chat! -Dr. Cayly"

Harold just sighs.

INT. HUMAN RESOURCES OFFICES -- MOMENTS LATER

The open layout allows for noise and activity spillage from the day care center into the common area right outside the door of Dr. Cayly's office. Currently, three four-year-olds are building a tower out of Lego blocks.

Harold passes by, but stops just before he enters the office. He looks at the tower, then the blocks.

CHILD

Hi.

HAROLD

You're gonna have an extra block.
Probably a red one.

The kids just look at him.

INT. CAYLY'S OFFICE -- CONTINUOUS

Harold sits in a small office lit by candles and Chinese lanterns across from an older man in a puffy sweater with his legs tucked under him in an office chair (DR. CAYLY).

Behind their scene we can hear the sound of CHILDREN FIGHTING OVER BLOCKS.

CAYLY

I had a very interesting little
"convo" with someone in your section.

HAROLD

Yeah...

CAYLY

They said you're feeling a little
"wibbly-wobbly"...

HAROLD

Uh...

CAYLY

Catch a little cubicle fever?

HAROLD

I don't know. I think I'm okay.

(CONTINUED)

CAYLY

Harold: a tree doesn't think it's a tree. It is a tree.

Harold stares blankly.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

Why was Harold talking to this man?
This man was an idiot.

Harold looks up. Cayly speaks, but we can't hear him as the Narrator continues.

NARRATOR (V.O.) (CONT'D)

This man used words like "wibbly-wobbly" and "convo" and explained that trees were trees. Of course trees were trees. Harold knew trees were trees. Who doesn't know that trees are trees.

The camera begins to zoom in on the (concerned) face of Harold's watch.

NARRATOR (V.O.) (CONT'D)

What Harold didn't know was why he couldn't shake the smell of brownies from his senses, why Ms. Pascal had made his fingertips quiver and lips go numb. And this man wasn't helping to explain that at all, nor anything at all really. Something had to change.

Suddenly Harold's watch begins to BEEP. He's jolted back to reality and Cayly stops talking.

Harold looks at his watch. The face flashes blue, almost as if sending a warning.

HAROLD

Sorry... my... that's... it's not supposed to be beeping. Sorry. Sorry.

Harold quickly stops his watch. He looks at it. It looks back.

CAYLY

Harold?

HAROLD

Huh? Oh. Sorry.

CAYLY

What's going on, Harold?

HAROLD

I... Well.
(pause)
Nothing.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

HAROLD (CONT'D)

(pause)

Everything's fine.

Cayly opens a file.

CAYLY

Listen, according to your record you haven't taken vacation for a few years now. How about you take a break. Use some of that "vaycay" time.

HAROLD

Yeah. Maybe that's a good idea.

CAYLY

Harold. I'm not really supposed to do this but...

Cayly gets out of his chair and gives Harold a big hug.

HAROLD

Uh... Thanks.

CAYLY

Take some "me time", Harold. Maybe a bubble bath.

Cayly winks.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

Suddenly, Harold was nauseated.

INT. HUMAN RESOURCES OFFICES -- CONTINUOUS

Harold comes out of Cayly's office and leaves the Human Resources offices.

The camera pans down to reveal the blocks built into a series of buildings on either side of a city street, one extra red block lying uselessly in the middle.

The camera reveals a little Lego man in a black suit standing next to one of the buildings... until he's run over by a Lego bus handled by one of the toddlers.

DISSOLVE
TO:

EXT. BUS STOP -- LATER

Harold stands at the bus stop next to several other COMMUTERS. He looks ready to go home, crawl into bed and possibly never come out. He is so worn out, he doesn't notice Ana walking up the sidewalk across the street.

Harold's watch notices, as we reveal its (excited) face, but Harold just stands there, staring reticently at the asphalt.

Suddenly there is a BEEPING sound. A few people look around, even check their cell phones.

(CONTINUED)

Harold looks at his watch; its blue face flashing as it BEEPS loudly and constantly.

Everyone looks at Harold.

Ana continues up the street. The watch keeps beeping at Harold.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

Harold assumed his watch was simply on the fritz, and never even thought about what it was trying to tell him.

Harold quickly presses a few buttons, but the watch will not stop BEEPING nor flashing. Harold shakes his watch.

He drops his briefcase to deal with the watch, but the BEEPING only gets louder. Everyone begins to stare. Ana is almost gone.

NARRATOR (V.O.) (CONT'D)

In fact, Harold had never once paid attention to his watch, other than to find out the time. And, honestly, it drove his watch crazy.

Harold looks at the sky, shaking his head. Harold puts his watch behind his back, to muffle the BEEPING.

NARRATOR (V.O.) (CONT'D)

And on this particular Wednesday evening, as Harold waited for the bus, his watch suddenly stopped... if out of nothing else but sheer frustration.

But only for a brief moment, after which it immediately stops BEEPING and flashes "Enter Time". Ana is gone. Harold never saw her.

Harold looks at his watch. He presses a button on the side.

HAROLD

Uh... Does somebody happen to have the time?

COMMUTER

I've got 5:47.

Harold quickly resets his watch to 5:47 and saves it.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

So Harold's watch thrust him onto the mercy of the inmitigable path of fate. For as he reset the time of his watch, little did Harold know that this simple, seemingly innocuous act would ultimately result in his death.

The air is sucked out of Harold as he hears this.

(CONTINUED)

HAROLD

What?

He looks up. Everyone looks.

HAROLD (CONT'D)

What!? Hey!

(pause)

Did you... Did you just... Did...
You said it would ultimately result
in my death!? ... It would... I'm
sorry... Hello-- did you say in my
death?

(pause)

Hello?

Harold quickly tries to change the reading on the watch. Frantic, he is unable to get his fingers to work properly. He looks up.

HAROLD (CONT'D)

Why? Why my death!? Hello! Why!?

(pause)

Talk to me!!

But there is no response.

Harold continues to yell into the sky but he is drowned out by the SCREECHING BRAKES of the bus, which comes to a stop directly in front of him.

INT. LIVING ROOM -- LATER

Harold comes barreling into his living room, throws down his briefcase and overcoat. He nearly trips over his ottoman.

HAROLD

Okay. Where are you?

INT. BATHROOM -- CONTINUOUS

Harold bursts into his bathroom and immediately grabs his toothbrush. He looks up, expecting to hear the voice.

He puts toothpaste on it. He runs water. He begins brushing his teeth, and with each move he pauses in the hopes the voice will return.

HAROLD

Why won't you say anything!?

He throws down his toothbrush.

HAROLD (CONT'D)

I heard you. "...that would ultimately
result in his death." I heard you!!

He spits and storms out.

INT. BEDROOM -- CONTINUOUS

Harold randomly begins grabbing things: Ties, lamps, pillows, etc. trying to elicit a response from the omniscient voice.

HAROLD

Come on you stupid voice! "Harold, frantic, picked up his lamp."

(shakes the lamp)

"Harold, incensed, shook the hell out of it for no apparent reason."

Overcome with anguish he drops the lamp he's picked up.

HAROLD (CONT'D)

"Upset, he dropped the stupid lamp!"

"The lamp crashed to the ground and shattered into a hundred pieces..."

"Harold stormed to his closet!"

Something!

(pause)

SAY SOMETHING!

He collapses against his bed.

HAROLD (CONT'D)

"Harold, distraught, began to just..."

(pause)

"Harold, distraught, could not..."

(pause)

"Harold, distraught..."

Blackout. The following appears on screen:

"I don't get an answer except 011 011 01..." -- Sleater-Kinney

INT. THERAPIST'S OFFICE -- AFTERNOON

Harold sits across from a thin, very old woman in bifocals, DR. MITTAG-LEFFLER, in a large and upscale office. He seems uncomfortable on the long, leather sofa, sitting at the far end with his legs folded and arms crossed.

MITTAG-LEFFLER

So you're here, not because you heard voices, but because you stopped hearing voices.

HAROLD

I... I suppose.

MITTAG-LEFFLER

I'm afraid what you're describing is schizophrenia.

HAROLD

No. No. It's not schizophrenia. It's just a voice in my head. I mean... I mean, the voice isn't telling me to do anything, it's telling me what I've already done.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

HAROLD (CONT'D)

Accurately, and with a better vocabulary.

MITTAG-LEFFLER

Mr. Crick, you have a voice speaking to you.

HAROLD

No. Not to me. About me. I am somehow inextricably involved in some type of story. I'm like a character in my own life. But... see the problem is that the voice comes and goes, like there are other parts of the story not being told to me and I need to know what those other parts are before it's too late.

MITTAG-LEFFLER

Before the story concludes... with your death.

HAROLD

Yes.

She shakes her head.

MITTAG-LEFFLER

Mr. Crick, I hate to sound like a broken record, but that's schizophrenia.

HAROLD

You don't sound like a broken record, it's just not schizophrenia.

She just looks at him.

HAROLD (CONT'D)

Okay. What if what I said was true. What if, please... just, hypothetically. If I was part of a story... a narrative, even only in my own mind...

(pause)

What would you suggest I do?

MITTAG-LEFFLER

I would suggest you take prescribed medication.

HAROLD

Other than that.

MITTAG-LEFFLER

I don't know... I would... I'd have you speak to someone who knows about literature... I suppose.

(CONTINUED)

HAROLD

Okay. Thanks. Thank you. That's...
yes. That's a good idea.

He stands.

MITTAG-LEFFLER

But please Mr. Crick, if the voice
tells you to quit your job... or
move into a refrigerator box... or
make any unusually large weapon
purchases... please call me.

INT. OFFICE -- AFTERNOON

Harold sits in his cubicle, scouring through information
online. He rubs his eyes. He clicks on a link.

A new window opens to reveal a picture of a man behind a
desk in an office filled with books. Harold scans the web
page, coming across text that reads something to the effect
of, "Literary Dean Emeritus: Professor Jules Hilbert."

He clicks on the name. A new photograph is revealed of
Hilbert conducting a seminar. The caption reads: "Professor
Hilbert in his most popular course: The Entire History of
Everything Literate.

Harold scans the caption. His fingers stop on the name,
"Professor Hilbert."

EXT. URBAN UNIVERSITY CAMPUS -- AFTERNOON

The campus is situated in the middle of the city: several
tall buildings situated around a common area: a smaller,
more metropolitan version of a quad.

Harold consults a folded piece of yellow paper trying to
compare what it says to the series of large, imposing
buildings around him.

There are several COEDS studying, playing catch and relaxing
on the lawns. An OLDER MAN stands upright, holding an old,
beat up pair of glasses a couple feet below him, apparently
using them to read a book that lies open at his feet.

Harold continues a few steps before stopping a passing
STUDENT.

HAROLD

Excuse me... Hi. Can you tell me
where The Erdos Offices are?

STUDENT

Sure. They're right back over there
behind that big brick building. Hey
are you the new econ professor?

HAROLD

No. Why would you--

(CONTINUED)

STUDENT

Listen, how hard's your class. I need an easy A.

HAROLD

I... I don't...

STUDENT

Is showing up mandatory?

HAROLD

(pause)

No. Come whenever you like. Bring beer. Where are the Erdos Offices, again? I have a meeting with Professor Hilbert.

STUDENT

Oh. He's not in The Erdos Offices.

HAROLD

He's not?

STUDENT

No. He's standing with his glasses out right next to that oak tree.

Harold turns.

HAROLD

Oh.

STUDENT

See you in class.

INT. ERDOS OFFICES -- MOMENTS LATER

Harold is led down a long, dark corridor with rows of offices on either side by PROFESSOR HILBERT, a short, older man who speeds down the hall at a clipped pace, one arm through one sleeve of a tweed jacket holding a cup of coffee, the other out of the jacket holding the book he was reading.

PROFESSOR HILBERT

So you're the young gentleman who called me about the narrator?

HAROLD

Yes.

PROFESSOR HILBERT

Says you're gonna die.

HAROLD

Uh... yes.

PROFESSOR HILBERT

Uh-huh. How long has it given you to live?

HAROLD

I don't know.

(CONTINUED)

Professor Hilbert stops and looks squarely at Harold.

PROFESSOR HILBERT
Dramatic irony. It'll fuck you every
time.

He pats Harold on the shoulder than leads him into an office.

INT. HILBERT'S OFFICE -- CONTINUOUS

Hilbert's office is quite the same as the photograph and matches him perfectly: There are books everywhere except on the bookshelves, various lateral-thinking puzzles are strewn about (almost all solved) and several rolled up carpets inexplicably lean in the corner. A currently brewing coffee maker sits on the windowsill.

PROFESSOR HILBERT
Please. Recline.

Hilbert offers Harold the couch which is covered in books. Harold finds a six inch space and sits. Hilbert tosses out his coffee and pours himself another cup.

PROFESSOR HILBERT (CONT'D)
Coffee?

HAROLD
Uh... no. No thank you.

PROFESSOR HILBERT
Sure?

HAROLD
Yes.

PROFESSOR HILBERT
So, you're crazy or what?

HAROLD
Well--

PROFESSOR HILBERT
Are you allowed to say that to crazy
people?

HAROLD
I don't know.

PROFESSOR HILBERT
Oh well. How many tiles in the
hallway out there?

HAROLD
What?

PROFESSOR HILBERT
You were counting them as we walked
weren't you?

HAROLD
No.

(CONTINUED)

PROFESSOR HILBERT
Of course. What bank do you work
at?

HAROLD
No bank. IRS Auditor.

PROFESSOR HILBERT
Live alone?

HAROLD
Yes.

PROFESSOR HILBERT
Any pets?

HAROLD
No. If we could just--

PROFESSOR HILBERT
Friends?

HAROLD
No. Well. Dave. At work.

PROFESSOR HILBERT
I see. The narrator. Exactly what
does he sound like?

HAROLD
It's... it's a woman.

PROFESSOR HILBERT
Huh. Is it a familiar woman? Someone
you know?

HAROLD
No.

PROFESSOR HILBERT
But this woman told you you're going
to die?

HAROLD
Well, she didn't tell me, she told--

PROFESSOR HILBERT
But you believed her.

HAROLD
Well... She'd been right about a few
other things.

PROFESSOR HILBERT
Such as?

HAROLD
How I felt about work.

PROFESSOR HILBERT
You hate your work.

(CONTINUED)

HAROLD

Yes.

PROFESSOR HILBERT

Well. Not the most insightful voice in the world is it... 1st thing on a list of what American's say they hate? Work. 2nd? Traffic. 3rd? Missing socks. See what I'm saying?

HAROLD

Sort of.

PROFESSOR HILBERT

I told you you were going to die, you believe me?

HAROLD

No.

PROFESSOR HILBERT

Why?

HAROLD

I don't know you.

PROFESSOR HILBERT

But you don't know this narrator either.

HAROLD

Well...

Hilbert swallows the rest of his coffee in one gulp and goes to refill his cup.

PROFESSOR HILBERT

Okay, Mr. Crick. I can't help you.

HAROLD

Why?

PROFESSOR HILBERT

Well, I'm not an expert in crazy. I'm an expert in literature and I gotta tell you, thus far there's not a single literary thing about you.

HAROLD

What?

PROFESSOR HILBERT

I don't doubt you hear a voice, but it couldn't possibly be a narrator because frankly there doesn't seem to be much to narrate. Besides that, this semester I'm teaching five courses, mentoring two doctorate candidates and I'm the faculty lifeguard at the pool.

(CONTINUED)

HAROLD
(devastated)
Oh. I... I just, I thought you--

PROFESSOR HILBERT
(feeling sorry for
him.)
Perhaps you should keep a journal,
write down what she's said to you or
something.

HAROLD
I can barely remember it all. I
just remember, "Little did he know
that this single, seemingly innocuous
event would lead to his death."

PROFESSOR HILBERT
(overlapping)
[Aaah... I'll tell you... Hawaiian
coffee is simply--] What?

HAROLD
"Little did he know this--"

PROFESSOR HILBERT
Did you say, "Little did he know?"

HAROLD
Yes.

PROFESSOR HILBERT
Dear God. I've written papers on
"Little did he know..." I nearly
taught a course on "Little did he
know..."

Harold shrugs.

HAROLD
Oh.

PROFESSOR HILBERT
--Sonofabitch. Harold, "little did
he know" means there's something he
doesn't know. That means there's
something you don't know. That's...
Christ... the voice is literally in
3rd person. Did you know that?

HAROLD
No. I didn't know that. I also
don't know what "innocuous" means.

PROFESSOR HILBERT
Harold. I want you to come back on
Tuesday. No. You could be dead by
Tuesday. Come back tomorrow. At
1:30.

(CONTINUED)

HAROLD

Five seconds ago you said you wouldn't help me.

PROFESSOR HILBERT

It's been a very revealing five seconds, Harold.

HAROLD

(pause)

Okay.

(pause. reassured)

Okay. Thank you.

PROFESSOR HILBERT

Good. Good. Listen. If the voice returns, don't resist it. But don't provoke it. And it's probably wise to avoid starting sentences with "This is the last time I dot dot dot"...

Hilbert winks at him.

PROFESSOR HILBERT (CONT'D)

I'll see you tomorrow.

INT. BUS -- EVENING

Harold sits alone in a seat towards the back of the bus. He stares out at the sleek city as it passes by his window. He seems deep in thought.

NARRATOR

Harold was deep in thought...

Harold looks up at the voice quickly. He then rummages to find a legal pad and a pen and begins transcribing the narration as best as he can.

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

For a few brief moments, from Born Boulevard to Euclid Ave., all the calculations and all the time and all the precision of Harold's life just faded away.

The bus comes to a stop and PASSENGERS get off and come on.

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

How perfect then, that in this space, Ana Pascal would appear.

He quickly looks to see Ana Pascal walking up the aisle towards him. She sees him and immediately turns around and starts to walk back towards the front of the bus.

HAROLD

Ms. Pascal!

(pause)

Ms. Pascal!

(CONTINUED)

She can't move forward any further as a VERY LARGE MAN is standing in her way. She's stuck.

HAROLD (CONT'D)

Ms. Pascal, it's me... Harold Crick...
from the IRS!

She turns around. In fact, everyone turns around.

ANA

Hi.

HAROLD

(indicating the several
empty ones)

Hi... would you like a seat?

ANA

No.

HAROLD

There's eleven open ones.

ANA

I don't care.

The bus starts moving forward, propelling her towards the back. Off balance, she just sits down across the aisle from Harold.

They look at each other uncomfortably.

HAROLD

How are you?

ANA

Lousy. I'm being audited.

HAROLD

Oh. Of course.

ANA

By a real creep too.

HAROLD

Oh.

They sit, awkwardly and silently.

HAROLD (CONT'D)

Uh... I think I owe you an apology.

ANA

Really?

HAROLD

Well... IRS auditors are given
rigorous aptitude tests before we
can begin work... We're tested on
arithmetic, number theory, memory,
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

HAROLD (CONT'D)
cognitive skills, synthesis... the
whole gamut...

(pause)

Unfortunately for you, we aren't
tested on tact or good manners.

(pause)

So... I apologize I... uh... ogled
you.

Ana thinks about it.

ANA

Apology accepted. But only because
you stammered.

They smile at each other.

Harold's watch looks on (happily).

NARRATOR

Harold nervously made small talk.

HAROLD

So, you're a frequenter of the
metropolitan transit authority too?

NARRATOR

Very small talk.

ANA

No. I'm just late.

HAROLD

Ah... big flag burning to get to?

ANA

My weekly evil conspiracy and
needlepoint group. Would you like
to come along?

HAROLD

No. I left all my thimbles and
socialist reading material at home.

She laughs. A real laugh. The kind you get from people who
actually like you.

HAROLD (CONT'D)

You uh... you... have... uh... very...
straight teeth.

ANA

Thanks. They're real.

NARRATOR

Harold quickly calculated the odds
of making an ass of himself in ratio
to the amount of time he stayed to
chat.

(CONTINUED)

HAROLD
 Actually I should go. This is my
 stop.

The side door opens and he hops out. She smiles to herself.

EXT. OUTSIDE BUS -- CONTINUOUS

Harold steps down, somewhat relieved that the conversation was not a total travesty.

NARRATOR (V.O.)
 Harold was elated and surprised by
 his somewhat flirtatious encounter
 with Ms. Pascal.

Harold beams upward.

NARRATOR (CONT'D)
 So elated he exited the Transit
 Authority Bus a good 27 blocks too
 early and would now have to walk.

He looks around. His shoulders sag.

HAROLD
 Goddamnit, couldn't you tell me that
 earlier? [Sonofabitch.]

He begins to walk down the street. Bad Religion's "Stranger Than Fiction" begins (track 3 on your cd).

INT. BATHROOM -- NIGHT

HAROLD brushes his teeth in his mint colored bathroom, still counting brush strokes but slightly less emphatically. His wristwatch looks on from the nightstand in a close up.

INT. BEDROOM -- MOMENTS LATER

Harold crawls into bed, gently removing his wristwatch and placing it on the nightstand next to him. He presses a few of its buttons to set its alarm.

EXT. CITY STREET -- MORNING

Harold, peach between his teeth, hurries towards the bus stop while putting on his black overcoat and carrying a briefcase. He counts his steps coming to a precise halt as he reaches the stop, his lips moving slightly to himself.

He looks. The bus is just now approaching. He made it with plenty of time.

His watch (smugly) peers up at him.

The music fades...

INT. HILBERT'S OFFICE -- MORNING

Professor Hilbert, a book open in his hands, opens his door and lets Harold in. The office is much the same.

(CONTINUED)

Rain taps on the window with wet fingertips.

PROFESSOR HILBERT

Mr. Crick, come in come in... Please.
How are you?

HAROLD

I'm... I'm alright actually.

PROFESSOR HILBERT

Good. Great. Count the tiles
outside?

HAROLD

(lying)
No.

PROFESSOR HILBERT

(also lying)
Of course not.

He jumps from his seat grabs a notebook and pen and a pair of bifocals. He quickly pours himself a cup of coffee.

PROFESSOR HILBERT (CONT'D)

I've devised a test-- how exciting
is that!-- with around 23 questions
that I think might help uncover more
truths about this narrator. Now,
these may seem silly, but your candor
is paramount.

HAROLD

Okay. Agreed.

He places the notebook on the desk in front of him and holds out his glasses.

PROFESSOR HILBERT

Good. So... we know it's a woman's
voice, the story involves your death,
it's modern, it's in English and I'm
assuming the author has a cursory
knowledge of the city.

HAROLD

Sure.

PROFESSOR HILBERT

Good. Okay, question 1: Has anyone
recently left any gifts outside your
home... anything: gum, money... a
large wooden horse?

HAROLD

What?

PROFESSOR HILBERT

Harold, just answer the question.

HAROLD

Uh... no.

(CONTINUED)

Hilbert writes down the answer but does not stop.

PROFESSOR HILBERT

Good. Do you find yourself inclined to solve murder mysteries in large, luxurious homes to which you may or may not have been invited?

HAROLD

No. No. Listen--

PROFESSOR HILBERT

Okay. On a scale of one to ten, what would you consider to be the likelihood you might be assassinated.

HAROLD

Assassinated?

PROFESSOR HILBERT

One being very unlikely, ten being expecting it at every corner.

HAROLD

I don't... I...

PROFESSOR HILBERT

Perhaps, let me re-phrase this. Are you the King of anything?

HAROLD

Like what?

PROFESSOR HILBERT

Anything. King of the Lanes at the local bowling alley.

HAROLD

King of the Lanes?

PROFESSOR HILBERT

King of the Lanes? King of the Trolls? A clandestine land found underneath your floorboards? Anything?

HAROLD

No. That's ridiculous--

PROFESSOR HILBERT

Agreed. But let's start at ridiculous and move backwards. Now... was any part of you now at one time part of something else.

HAROLD

Like, do I have someone else's arms?

PROFESSOR HILBERT

Well, is it possible that you were at one time made of stone, wood, lye, varied corpse parts or earth made holy by rabbinical elders?

(CONTINUED)

HAROLD

No. No. That's. No... I'm sorry,
what do these questions have to do
with anything?

PROFESSOR HILBERT

Nothing. That's the point.

HAROLD

What?

PROFESSOR HILBERT

Harold. The only way to find out
what story you're in is to determine
what stories you're not in. Odd as
it may seem, I've just ruled out
half of Greek literature, seven fairy
tales, ten Chinese fables, and
determined conclusively you are not
King Hamlet, Scout Finch, Ms. Marple,
Frankenstein's monster or a golem.

(pause)

Aren't you relieved to know you're
not a golem?

HAROLD

I... I guess.

PROFESSOR HILBERT

Good. Then just answer the
questions...

A SCREECH of tires and suddenly And You Will Know Us By The
Trail of Dead (track 4 on your cd) begins to play...

CUT TO:

EXT. INTERSECTION -- CONTINUOUS

To avoid the young blonde boy on his new bicycle, an SUV
with Kay inside is now spinning out of control across the
wet surface of a rainy intersection.

The SUV hops the curb, heading directly towards a boutique
shoe store.

CUSTOMERS and EMPLOYEES (including the middle-aged black
woman, now in an employee's uniform of khakis, white shirt
with a name tag) dive out of the way as the SUV crashes
violently through the front display window and into the store,
the impact thrusting Kay to crash through her windshield.
The SUV sends shoes and glass everywhere and comes to a halt
in the middle of the store.

People rush from outside towards the store. Some just stand
in shock.

The young boy rides his bicycle, disappearing behind a corner.

Rain pours over the gash in the window, jagged shards of
glass framing the destroyed SUV and Kay's corpse on its hood,
surrounded by scattered shoes.

(CONTINUED)

From behind a pile, the middle-aged black woman rises, unhurt and relieved to be alive. With the single note of the violin we...

DISSOLVE
TO:

EXT. CORNER ACROSS FROM SHOE STORE -- CONTINUOUS

Across the street sits Kay on a bus stop bench, staring across the street and smoking. She just shakes her head and disposes of her cigarette in her bizarre, disgusting manner. Next to her is Penny, holding an umbrella. Both stare at the shoe store, which is completely intact.

PENNY

Kay. May I ask what we're doing out here?

KAY

We're imagining car wrecks.

PENNY

I see. And we can't imagine them *inside*?

KAY

No. Did you know 41% of accidents in this city occur in times of inclement weather?

PENNY

So do 90% of pneumonia cases.

KAY

Really? Pneumonia. That's an interesting way to die. But how would Harold catch pneumonia? Besides, it takes forever to kill someone with pneumonia. Even if he caught it in Chapter 10, he wouldn't finally keel over until Chapter 17 at least.

Penny shakes her head.

PENNY

Kay. Have you actually written today?

KAY

No.

PENNY

I'd like you to write at least a page upon our return to the office.

KAY

Fine.

(CONTINUED)

PENNY

And I would be remiss not to remind you that the publishers expect to see something soon.

KAY

They can see my ass.

She hacks a terrible cough. Penny pulls a pamphlet out of her jacket pocket and hands it to Kay.

KAY (CONT'D)

What is this?

PENNY

Literature on the nicotine patch program.

KAY

(coily)

Penny. You should just take up smoking. It's much more enjoyable.

CUT TO:

INT. HILBERT'S OFFICE -- CONTINUOUS

We catch back up with Hilbert and Harold as they finish the quiz.

PROFESSOR HILBERT

Okay. We're almost done, Harold.
Just a few more.

(pause)

Do you subscribe to any belief system?

HAROLD

Is math a belief system?

PROFESSOR HILBERT

Sure.

HAROLD

Good. I believe in math.

PROFESSOR HILBERT

Alright. What's your most favorite word?

HAROLD

(pause)

Integer.

PROFESSOR HILBERT

Good. Good. Do you aspire to anything: conquer Russia, win a whistling contest... anything?

HAROLD

Uh... no.

(CONTINUED)

PROFESSOR HILBERT
Harold. You must have some ambition.

HAROLD
I don't think so.

PROFESSOR HILBERT
Some underlying dream...? Think
Harold.

HAROLD
Uh... I've always wanted my life to
be more musical.

PROFESSOR HILBERT
Like West Side Story?

HAROLD
No... like, well...
(pause)
I've always wanted to learn to play
the guitar.

PROFESSOR HILBERT
Okay. That counts. Good. Very
good.
(pause)
Last one: What's your secret?

Harold looks at him.

HAROLD
My secret?

PROFESSOR HILBERT
Yes. What is it about you that no
one but you knows?

Harold thinks for a moment.

HAROLD
Well...
(pause)
I count things.

PROFESSOR HILBERT
Harold. That's not a secret. It's
absolutely obvious you count things.
Why do you count things?

Harold takes a deep breath.

HAROLD
I don't know. Sometimes, if I feel
a little strange, it just makes me
feel better.

They share a look between them. Hilbert nods.

PROFESSOR HILBERT
Okay. We're done. Excellent.
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

PROFESSOR HILBERT (CONT'D)

I think the next step is to determine conclusively if you're in a comedy or a tragedy. To quote Italo Calvino, "The ultimate meaning to which all stories refer has two faces: the continuity of life, the inevitability of death."

HAROLD

(pause)

What?

PROFESSOR HILBERT

Tragedy you die. Comedy you get hitched.

HAROLD

(facetiously)

Oh. Great.

PROFESSOR HILBERT

What's wrong?

HAROLD

I haven't even been on a date in three years.

PROFESSOR HILBERT

Well... most comic heroes fall in love with people who are introduced after the story has begun, usually people who hate the hero initially, although I can't imagine anyone hating you.

HAROLD

Professor Hilbert. I'm an auditor. Nobody likes me.

PROFESSOR HILBERT

Not dislikes you. Hates you. Detests you. Loathes the very core of you. Anybody like that?

Harold thinks.

HAROLD

There's somebody who I just met who I know really really doesn't like me.

PROFESSOR HILBERT

Well, that sounds like a comedy... try to develop that plot.

HAROLD

How?

PROFESSOR HILBERT

There's no real approach.
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

PROFESSOR HILBERT (CONT'D)

Except... well, if push comes to shove... ask her to talk about the past.

Harold looks at his watch.

HAROLD

Uh-oh. I don't want to be late.

Harold gets up and begins to leave.

PROFESSOR HILBERT

Alright. Take care. Call me if the plot twists.

INT. LIBERTY BAKERY -- MORNING

Harold comes into the bakery carrying not only his briefcase but his pad of paper and a pen. The bakery is not as busy as before but still bustles. The homeless man is back with his dog. Harold sees Ana behind the counter. He waves. She doesn't.

Harold makes a mark in his pad. He comes to the side of the counter where Ana meets him.

ANA

Morning, Mr. Crick.

HAROLD

Morning.

Harold makes another mark in his pad.

ANA

You're here early. Must have a lot of people to extort.

He forces a laugh, smiles and makes another mark.

HAROLD

No. No. Just you. Actually, it should only take me the day to make sure the 27% is all you owe.

ANA

I won't be paying, no matter the percent, Mr. Crick.

HAROLD

I know. But the percent determines how big your cell is.

He chuckles. She doesn't.

HAROLD (CONT'D)

And... you can call me Harold.

ANA

I know. I don't want to.

(CONTINUED)

HAROLD

Oh.

He makes another mark in his pad. She notices.

ANA

What are you marking?

HAROLD

Oh. This? Uh... Nothing. Nothing.

He holds it close to himself to hide it from her.

HAROLD (CONT'D)

Why don't we start with your tax files from the previous four years.

ANA

Sure.

She gives him a coy smile and lifts the counter top so he may pass through.

ANA (CONT'D)

This way.

She leads him towards the back.

He loosens his grip on his pad.

A close look reveals that he's made two columns: Comedy and Tragedy. He's been marking those things that lean towards each, respectively. It's currently two to two.

INT. OFFICE -- MOMENTS LATER

Harold sits down at a desk and is presented with a large box full of loose papers.

HAROLD

What's this?

ANA

My files.

HAROLD

What?

ANA

My tax files.

HAROLD

In this box?

ANA

I'm sorry. I wasn't informed they had to be presented in an organized fashion.

HAROLD

You keep your tax files like this?

(CONTINUED)

ANA

No. Actually I'm very fastidious about my filing. I put them in this box just to fuck with you.

The Hives' "Knock Knock" begins to play (track 5 on your cd).

WE BEGIN A MONTAGE:

Harold takes off his coat and rolls up his sleeves.

Ana helps customers out in the bakery.

Harold can't make heads or tails of the papers.

Harold very kindly confronts Ana about a few figures, only to have her ignore him.

Harold marks his pad. He checks his watch: 1:00 pm

Harold comes out of the office and stretches. As Ana passes he tries to strike up a conversation. She just walks right past him. He shakes his head.

He marks his pad.

Harold comes out the back door of the bakery, carrying a paper sack lunch and his pad. He approaches Ana who sits on the break bench eating. Harold sits next to her and she quickly tosses out her sandwich and goes inside. Harold opens up his pad.

Ana struggles with a hot cookie sheet. Harold tries to help by taking it from her but isn't wearing oven mitts and burns his fingers.

Ana suggests that maybe he return to his work.

Harold marks his pad.

Harold shakes his fists in frustration at the work.

Harold hangs his head, exhausted.

Harold finishes his work. He rubs his eyes and checks his watch. It's 8:30 pm.

The music fades...

INT. KITCHEN -- CONTINUOUS

The bakery has shut down for the evening save for a small area of the kitchen where Ana is transferring cookies from a sheet to a cooling rack. There are only a few lights on and Ana works silently and peacefully.

Harold comes out of the office, exhausted, carrying his briefcase, jacket and pad. He stands for a moment and watches her.

(CONTINUED)

ANA

(pause)

Hi.

HAROLD

(pause)

Hi.

ANA

(pause)

Everyone's gone.

HAROLD

(pause)

I know.

ANA

(pause)

I made too much batter so I'm baking off some cookies.

HAROLD

(pause. looks around.)

Where did all the other food go?

ANA

Well, we try to only make what we think we'll sell. The small amount left over we give to the shelter up the street.

HAROLD

Ah... well... goodnight.

He goes to leave. She looks after him.

ANA

Want a cookie?

Harold stops, and thinks, but he's given up.

HAROLD

Uh... No.

ANA

Come on. They're warm and gooey, fresh out of the oven...

HAROLD

No. I don't like cookies.

ANA

You don't like cookies?

HAROLD

No.

ANA

(pause)

What the fuck is wrong with you?

(CONTINUED)

HAROLD

I... I don't...

ANA

Everybody likes cookies.

HAROLD

I just--

ANA

After a really awful, no good day, didn't your mother ever give you milk and cookies?

HAROLD

No. My mother couldn't bake. All the cookies I ever had were store bought.

ANA

What about birthday cakes?

HAROLD

Store bought.

ANA

Breakfast muffins?

HAROLD

Store bought. Frozen. Thawed in the oven.

ANA

Bake sale brownies?

HAROLD

Private school. No bake sales.

ANA

(pause, sincerely)
That's probably what turned you into an evil government drone.

HAROLD

No. Actually, I was kidnapped by gypsy accountants as a teenager.

She laughs.

HAROLD (CONT'D)

Really. A nomadic tribe of abacus builders.

It's that same laugh. The wonderful, human, loving one from the bus.

Suddenly she stops and looks at him. They stare at each other for a moment.

Her lips part.

His fingers twitch.

(CONTINUED)

Harold's watch looks on (anxiously).

The pad of paper reveals their lopsided fate: comedy 7, tragedy 114.

Harold's watch waits. Then...

ANA
(ordering)
Okay. Sit down.

HAROLD
Listen, I should be...

ANA
No. Sit down.

He sits on a stool across the butcher block from her. She goes to a cupboard and pulls out a glass and a plate. She goes to the refrigerator and pulls out a bottle of milk, then pours some into the glass. She brings the glass and plate over to the block, places a single cookie on the plate and places the plate in front of Harold.

HAROLD
Thank you. I...

ANA
Eat the cookie.

HAROLD
I really--

ANA
Eat the cookie.

HAROLD
Ms. Pascal--

ANA
(sweetly)
It was a really awful, no good day.
I know. I made sure of it. So pick
up the cookie, dip it in the goddamn
milk and eat the fucking thing.

She slides the plate closer to him.

He cautiously takes a cookie, dunks it and bites into it. His eyes light up, his shoulders relax, he breathes.

HAROLD
Wow... that's... that's a... *really*
good cookie.

Once again she suddenly stops and looks at him. They stare at each other for a moment.

Her lips part.

His fingers twitch.

(CONTINUED)

Harold's watch looks on (anxiously).

The pad of paper reveals their lopsided fate.

Harold's watch waits. Then...:

She takes the plate and goes to get him more cookies.

HAROLD (CONT'D)

So...

(pause)

When did you decide to become a baker?

ANA

Oh. In college.

HAROLD

Oh. Like, "cooking college?"

ANA

No. I went to Harvard Law.

HAROLD

Oh. Oh. Geez. I-- sorry. I just assumed... Sorry.

ANA

No. It's alright. I didn't finish.
I uh... uh...

She brings a plate with more cookies to Harold.

HAROLD

Did something happen?

ANA

Not really. I was... I was barely accepted. I mean, barely. The only reason they let me come was because of my essay. How I was going to make the world a better place with my degree. And I went there thinking... well, I went thinking that I might make a difference and uh... well... Harvard Law has the smartest people in the world, people who will one day shape the earth, and it's competitive and vicious and exhausting... And I'd have to participate in these study sessions, classmates and I, all night long. Sometimes for a couple days straight. And so...

She trails off, staring into space again, unsure whether to proceed.

Once again she suddenly stops and looks at him. They stare at each other for a moment.

Her lips part.

(CONTINUED)

His fingers twitch.

Harold's watch looks on (anxiously).

The pad of paper reveals their lopsided fate.

Harold's watch waits. Then...

Gently, Harold pushes the plate of cookies across to her.

She looks at him, then at the plate.

She sits down, picks up a cookie, then continues...

ANA (CONT'D)

And so I would bake-- cookies usually-- so no one would go hungry while we worked. I'd bake all afternoon in the kitchen in the dorm before a big study session and write down what I was doing in one of those black Mead Journals they sell by the gross in the Campus Bookstore. And I'd bring my little treats to the study groups... and people loved them. Oatmeal Cookies. Peanut Butter Bars. Chocolate Chip and Macadamia Nut Wedges. And everyone would eat and stay happy and study harder and do better on the tests and more people would come to the study groups and the study groups got better and I would make more snacks and try to find better recipes and the results would always get better and better and soon it was Cheese and Apricot Croissants and Mocha Bars with Almond Glaze and Lemon Chiffon Cakes with Zesty Peach icing and our study groups were famous around all of Cambridge: not because we had the most copious notes, or the smartest people, but because we had the best snacks...

She gets up and goes to the cookie sheet and begins to remove the cookies and put them on a large paper plate. She yanks a strip of plastic wrap from a tube and wraps the larger plate of cookies.

ANA (CONT'D)

And at the end of the spring term... I had 27 study partners, eight black Mead journals filled with recipes... and a D average.

(pause)

So I dropped out. Simply, without alarm, and without any regrets.

(pause)

I just figured, if I was gonna make the world a better place... I'd do it with cookies.

(CONTINUED)

Harold stares at her, obviously enamored. She looks at his plate. There's only one cookie left.

ANA (CONT'D)

I'm glad you liked them.

HAROLD

I uh... I did. Thank you for forcing me to eat them.

ANA

You're welcome.

They look at each other for a moment. Harold finds himself suddenly nervous. He looks at his watch.

HAROLD

I should go. Thank you. Thanks again. I mean. For the cookies.

She takes a moment, then she offers the larger plate.

ANA

Why don't you take them?

HAROLD

No.

ANA

"No?"

HAROLD

No. Really.

ANA

I... Are you...

HAROLD

No.

ANA

Oh.
(slightly hurt)
Okay.

HAROLD

I mean. I... I would but, uh... I can't.

ANA

You can't.

HAROLD

It... See, it constitutes a gift and we're not allowed to...

ANA

Oh.

HAROLD

I shouldn't have even had the other ones.

(CONTINUED)

ANA

I'm not going to tell anyone.

HAROLD

I know. But if you did, I could--

ANA

I'm not going to--

HAROLD

I know, but if you did-- I could...

(pause)

Tell you what, I'll purchase them...

ANA

What? No. That's... no... nevermind.
Go home.

HAROLD

I could...

ANA

No. That... that... [totally defeats
the purpose]. No. Go home.

HAROLD

But I really--

ANA

Go home.

He stops. He gets his coat, picks up his briefcase and heads for the door. He suddenly realizes and turns around.

HAROLD

(pause)

You baked those cookies for me didn't
you?

Embarrassed, she simply shrugs.

HAROLD (CONT'D)

You were trying to be nice to me and
I totally blew it...

She shrugs.

HAROLD (CONT'D)

And that may very well be the last
time you try to be nice again...

She looks at him... and then, once more, shrugs.

He hangs his head. He pulls out his pad and his pen. He opens the pad and makes one last mark.

HAROLD (CONT'D)

I know this'll just sound like
gibberish to you...

(pause)

...but I think I'm in a tragedy.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

HAROLD (CONT'D)

(pause)

And if I am... it's no one's fault
but my own.

He turns and leaves.

EXT. CITY -- NIGHT

Harold walks down the sidewalk, the lights of the city playing
against all the glass and steel.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

Perhaps, to say Harold Crick did not
give enough credit to fate is similar
to saying that he did not give enough
credit to major locomotive train
accidents. As anyone else could
explain, the precision with which
fate must work in order to cause two
trains to exist on the same track at
the same time, in spite of all the
technology and human resources is
absolutely remarkable and unlike any
phenomena of the modern world.

Harold has a seat at the bus stop, the homeless man and his
dog sitting next to him.

NARRATOR (V.O.) (CONT'D)

Harold's death was quickly
approaching... and he still remained
completely oblivious to the moment
when his, Carla's and the boy on the
bicycle's courses would smash into
each other. Here he was. Alone.
Ms. Pascal blocks away, walking in
the opposite direction.

Harold writes down the name "Carla".

NARRATOR (V.O.) (CONT'D)

Fate, like two careening locomotives,
would occur with or without his
participation. And the miraculous
mathematics of this remained
inconceivable for even a true
calculator such as Harold.

He writes down "boy on bicycle".

NARRATOR (V.O.) (CONT'D)

Harold could not understand fate.
He could not understand the behavior
of his watch. He could not even
understand the desires of his own
heart. So he certainly couldn't
understand the poetry of train wrecks.

He sighs.

CUT TO:

INT. LOCKER ROOM -- AFTERNOON

A locker closes, revealing Professor Hilbert.

PROFESSOR HILBERT

Well the first thing is don't get on any trains.

Harold stands in a suit, carrying a briefcase next to OTHER SWIMMERS who dry off from the showers. We can see that Professor Hilbert is wearing a neon green Speedo cap, with orange goggles and a pair of really tight purple Speedo shorts. Hilbert locks a combination lock and tosses a towel around his shoulders.

PROFESSOR HILBERT (CONT'D)

Any idea who "Carla" and "the boy on the bicycle" are?

HAROLD

I think they're other characters.

PROFESSOR HILBERT

Maybe. Maybe. Fantastic.

They begin to walk past the lockers and around a corner. Past the coach's office where Hilbert takes a whistle off a hook.

HAROLD

Professor Hilbert, please. I totally failed at the comic hero thing. In fact, I think she likes me even less.

PROFESSOR HILBERT

I know. It's great.

HAROLD

What?

They walk towards a set of doors, behind which we hear water and giggling.

PROFESSOR HILBERT

You proved something else entirely. The voice seems to be dependent on actions you take. You say the voice arrives when you do certain things, then stops when you *don't* do those things. It may be that you yourself are perpetuating this story.

HAROLD

Okay.

PROFESSOR HILBERT

So I suggest we try something else.

HAROLD

What about Ms. Pascal?

(CONTINUED)

PROFESSOR HILBERT

Forget her.

HAROLD

Forget her? Other than numbers she's all I think about.

PROFESSOR HILBERT

Harold, if you want to stay alive, you have to try something else.

HAROLD

Try what?

PROFESSOR HILBERT

Nothing.

HAROLD

Nothing?

PROFESSOR HILBERT

See... some plots are moved forward by external events or crisis... others are moved forward by the characters themselves.

He points to the door.

PROFESSOR HILBERT (CONT'D)

If I go through that door that plot continues. The story of me through the door. If I stay here... that plot can't move forward, the story ends.

(pause)

Also, if I stay here, I'm late.

Hilbert goes through the door. Harold follows.

INT. SWIMMING POOL -- CONTINUOUS

Several faculty members use the pool, most of whom in terrible swim attire. None of them pay any attention to Harold or Hilbert.

PROFESSOR HILBERT

Harold. Don't do anything tomorrow.

HAROLD

What?

PROFESSOR HILBERT

Stay home. Don't answer the phone. Don't open the door. Don't brush your teeth.

HAROLD

What about work?

PROFESSOR HILBERT

Call them tonight. Tell them you're not coming.

(CONTINUED)

HAROLD

Don't go to work!?

PROFESSOR HILBERT

Don't do anything that may move the plot forward. Instead, let's see if the plot finds you.

He puts his nose plugs in and climbs up to the lifeguard's chair. Harold is left standing.

INT. BEDROOM -- NIGHT

Harold turns down his sheets, about to climb into bed. He starts to take his watch off but stops.

CUT TO:

INT. LIVING ROOM -- MOMENTS LATER

The area immediately surrounding the couch has been transformed into a makeshift campground: a cooler rests at one end of the couch, a bowl full of water rests on the coffee table next to a bar of soap and a hand towel, and bags of beef jerky and chips are piled on the floor next to couch. Harold tosses a pillow down on the couch as a final touch.

He takes his watch off.

DISSOLVE
TO:

INT. LIVING ROOM -- MORNING

Harold's watch, at rest next to the hand towel, displays 7:15 and begins to BEEP. Harold appears from underneath a blanket on the couch, already dressed. He turns off the beeping without looking at his watch.

He sits up and looks at the television, which is already on. He shifts as he realizes he has to pee.

He sighs, then reaches underneath his coffee table to pull out a tupperware jar. The camera respectfully looks away.

DISSOLVE
TO:

INT. LIVING ROOM -- MID-MORNING

Harold continues to sit in the middle of the couch, watching television. The glow from the television quickly changes.

TELEVISION

She's a robot! She's a girl! She's a barrel of laughs! Coming up next: four hours of "Small Wonder" back to back to back as part of our Super Eighties Marathon!

(CONTINUED)

Harold picks up the remote to change the channel but remembers. He puts the remote down.

DISSOLVE
TO:

INT. LIVING ROOM -- NOON

Harold munches on packaged popcorn and watches the television vapidly.

The phone RINGS. Harold looks at the phone. It RINGS again. He just stares at it. It RINGS again.

He looks at the television then back at the telephone, longingly.

DISSOLVE
TO:

INT. LIVING ROOM -- MID-AFTERNOON

Harold is virtually comatose.

TELEVISION
Awww... that was the last episode
of "Small Wonder" for today...

Harold's eyes pop open. He looks at the television excitedly.

TELEVISION (CONT'D)
But don't worry, we have three full
hours of MR. BELVEDERE!!!

Harold's face drops. The phone RINGS again. Harold sinks his head into his hands.

DISSOLVE
TO:

INT. LIVING ROOM -- LATE AFTERNOON

Harold stares at the television, the sun setting behind it. There is a SOUND at the door. Harold turns to look.

The mail slot opens and several different sized pieces of mail come through the door and plop onto Harold's floor.

The phone RINGS. Harold's face twinges with frustration. The phone RINGS again. The t.v. audience laughs.

Suddenly Harold's watch begins to BEEP. Harold, shocked, goes to shut it off but stops.

A shadow quickly descends over the apartment and a large CREAKING sound can be heard. Harold sees something out of the corner of his eye. He turns.

Harold's POV: Outside his bay window, behind the television, quickly approaches a wrecking ball, headed straight for the back of Mr. Belvedere's head and the rest of Harold's apartment.

(CONTINUED)

Harold is just able to grab his watch and jump over the back of his couch before the wrecking ball SHATTERS the front of Harold's apartment with a tremendous CRASH.

Glass and debris are sent flying into the room as the walls crumble around the enormous ball... which stops short of the couch at the end of its swing.

Harold remains crouched behind his couch, until he hears the large CREAKING of the wrecking ball retreating. He peeks over the back.

Although his couch remains intact and unmoved, the rest of Harold's living room is now a gaping hole. Harold slowly stands and can see a large crane with a wrecking ball on the street two stories below.

He walks towards the edge of his apartment.

A large CREW OF PEOPLE in hardhats stand in the street surveying the wreckage.

HAROLD

HEY!!

At first no one notices.

HAROLD (CONT'D)

HEY!! WHAT ARE YOU DOING!? HEY!!!!

He shakes his arms at them.

EXT. STREET -- CONTINUOUS

The FOREMAN and a few members of the crew look up.

On the third story of a partially demolished brownstone stands Harold, yelling from the precipice of his apartment.

FOREMAN

Holy crapping hell!

CREW MEMBER

Who the hell is that?

FOREMAN

Stop the crane-- Stop the crane!!

ANOTHER CREW MEMBER

STOP THE CRANE!!

The Foreman walks over to the sidewalk underneath Harold's apartment.

FOREMAN

Hey!

HAROLD

Hey! What are you doing!?

FOREMAN

Us? What are you doing?

(CONTINUED)

HAROLD
Well, I was watching Mr. Belvedere!

FOREMAN
We're demolishing this place!

HAROLD
I noticed!

FOREMAN
(looking in)
Is that... Is that a couch?

HAROLD
Yes it's a couch. It's my couch!

FOREMAN
Well what is your couch doing in there?

HAROLD
I live here, Stupid! This is where I keep my stuff. My name's on the goddamn buzzer! "Harold Crick. Apartment 3B. 1893 McCarthy."

The Foreman pauses momentarily.

FOREMAN
Did you say Eighteen Ninety Three McCarthy?

HAROLD
Yes.

The foreman looks at his pad.

FOREMAN
Oh.
(pause)
Whoops.

CUT TO:

INT. CLASSROOM -- LATER

Professor Hilbert addresses his class until he is interrupted by Harold who just barges in.

Harold is a complete mess and carries two suit cases on either side of him.

HAROLD
So... I was doing nothing, like you said... and then... a wrecking ball came flying into my apartment.

PROFESSOR HILBERT
Holy crapping hell.

(CONTINUED)

HAROLD

It was... I'm not exactly sure it was plot... I was hoping you'd just say it was a very bad coincidence.

PROFESSOR HILBERT

Meeting an insurance agent the day your policy runs out is coincidence. Getting a letter from the Emperor saying he's visiting is plot.

(pause)

A wrecking ball... is something else entirely.

Hilbert's class writes this down emphatically.

CUT TO:

INT. HALLWAY -- MOMENTS LATER

Harold and Professor Hilbert stand in the hallways, continuing their conversation.

Hilbert takes a big, deep breath.

PROFESSOR HILBERT

(pause)

You don't control your fate, Harold.

HAROLD

(audibly despondent)

I know.

PROFESSOR HILBERT

It's... Harold... let's: This is a last ditch effort but it's possible, I mean-- do you still have the journal of things the narrator says?

HAROLD

Yes.

PROFESSOR HILBERT

Well, it's possible, through analysis of sentence structure and some extensive vernacular profiling, I could conceivably figure out who's writing this story.

HAROLD

And then what?

PROFESSOR HILBERT

And maybe, possibly, you could ask her to stop... but I can't make any guarantees.

HAROLD

I'll help you.

(CONTINUED)

PROFESSOR HILBERT

No. You-- Harold.

(pause)

You were right. This narrator might very well kill you.

HAROLD

So, can't we... can't we...

PROFESSOR HILBERT

So, I humbly suggest that you forget this and just go live your life.

HAROLD

Go live my life? I am living my life... I'd like to continue living my life.

PROFESSOR HILBERT

Of course. I know. But I mean all of it. However long you have left... you can, Harold, you can use it to have an adventure, or discover something, or, or, or finish reading Crime and Punishment... hell, Harold, you could just eat nothing but pancakes if you wanted.

HAROLD

What's wrong with you? I don't want to eat nothing but pancakes, I want to live. Who, in their right mind, in a choice between pancakes and living, chooses pancakes?

PROFESSOR HILBERT

Harold, if you'd pause to think I believe you'd realize that that answer is inextricably contingent upon the type of life being led.

(pause)

And, of course, the quality of the pancakes.

They look at each other. Harold opens his case and hands Professor Hilbert his pad.

PROFESSOR HILBERT (CONT'D)

Do you understand what I'm saying?

HAROLD

Yes. I do. But you have to understand that this isn't a philosophy, or a literary theory, or a story to me. It's my life.

PROFESSOR HILBERT

Absolutely. So go make it the one you've always wanted.

This finally lands with Harold.

EXT. ACROSS THE STREET FROM LIBERTY BAKERY -- EVENING

Harold stands on the sidewalk, still carrying his suitcases, looking across the street.

Ana is inside the bakery. She looks lovely and smiles as she hands the HOMELESS MAN a sandwich and gives his dog some water.

Harold just takes a hefty sigh. He looks up, as if asking the voice for guidance.

None comes.

Harold watch looks on (hopefully).

But Harold just turns and walks up the street.

INT. DAVE'S GUEST BEDROOM -- LATER

Dave opens the door to his guest bedroom, a small room dedicated exclusively to Battlestar Galactica paraphernalia including posters, models of the ships and dozens of life-sized cardboard cut-outs of the characters all standing in a group, facing the bed. Harold looks at the room, trying to hide his fear and repulsion.

DAVE

Here's your room. Or as I like to call it: Sleep Pod 2.

Harold enters and puts down his suitcases.

HAROLD

Thanks, Dave.

DAVE

No problem, Dude. It'll be nice having you around. How long are you planning on staying again?

HAROLD

(pause)

Well... I'm not sure.

INT. DAVE'S LIVING ROOM

Harold and Dave sit across from each other at the IKEA dining room table, eating. Harold looks through a calculator catalog as Dave works on several audits. Harold puts the catalog down.

HAROLD

Dave. Can I pose a somewhat abstract, purely hypothetical question?

DAVE

Sure.

(CONTINUED)

HAROLD

If you knew that you were going to die. Possibly soon. What would you do?

DAVE

Huh. I don't know. Am I the richest man in the world?

HAROLD

No. You're you.

DAVE

Huh. Do I have a super power?

HAROLD

No. You're you.

DAVE

I know. I'm me. But do I have a super power?

HAROLD

No. Why would you have a super power?

DAVE

I don't know, you said it was hypothetical.

HAROLD

Fine. Yes. You're really good at math.

DAVE

That's not a power. That's a skill.

HAROLD

Dave-- You're good at math and you're invisible. There.

DAVE

Okay.

He thinks.

DAVE (CONT'D)

Easy. I'd go to space camp.

HAROLD

Space camp?

DAVE

In Texas. Where kids go and learn how to become astronauts. I've always wanted to go. Since I was nine.

HAROLD

You're invisible and you'd go to space camp?

(CONTINUED)

DAVE
I didn't pick invisible. You picked invisible.

HAROLD
Aren't you too old to go to space camp?

DAVE
You're never too old to go to space camp, Dude.

HAROLD
No, I mean... [forget it] nevermind.

Harold looks at Dave, who resumes working.

HAROLD (CONT'D)
Think you'll ever go?

DAVE
Space Camp? Not with my volume of audits.

HAROLD
Auditor of the Year?

DAVE
All mine, Baby. All mine.

INT. DAVE'S BATHROOM -- LATER

Harold stands in front of the mirror, brushing his teeth precisely before bed...

HAROLD
24... 25... 26...

He stops for a moment, thinking. Then resumes.

HAROLD (CONT'D)
27... 28...

He stops again and looks at his toothbrush. He takes a few deep breaths...

Then suddenly begins brushing his teeth with random, varied strokes.

He stops and spits, then looks at himself in the mirror, invigorated.

HAROLD (CONT'D)
Space Camp.

INT. MUSIC STORE -- AFTERNOON

Harold stands in the electric guitar section of a large corporate music store, staring at the rows of guitars that hang in front of him.

The Narrator begins to speak.

(CONTINUED)

NARRATOR (V.O.)

122 guitars. 732 strings. 257 pickups. 189 volume nobs. Here Harold stood, face to face with his oldest desire... and stand is almost all Harold did.

Harold looks up at the voice. He shakes his head, then turns to look at some of the guitars that hang to his right.

NARRATOR (V.O.) (CONT'D)

It wasn't just about finding a guitar... it was about finding a guitar that said something about Harold...

Harold picks up and inspects a black Les Paul guitar with a rose emblazoned on its body.

NARRATOR (V.O.) (CONT'D)

Unfortunately this guitar said, "When I get back to Georgia, that woman gonna feel my pain."

Harold puts it back. He touches a Flying V shaped Peavey painted silver.

NARRATOR (V.O.) (CONT'D)

This one said something along the lines of, "Why yes, these pants are lycra."

Harold walks a few steps and stops at an acoustic guitar.

NARRATOR (V.O.) (CONT'D)

"I'm very sensitive, very caring and I have absolutely no idea how to play the guitar."

Harold eyes a totally tricked out Double Neck Gibson SG with a pickup toggle, various knobs, a whammy bar and a picture of a dragon airbrushed on its facade.

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

"I'm compensating for something. Guess what."

Slightly exasperated, he turns away from the wall and suddenly stops short.

Across the room, under a sign that reads, "USED, SLASHED PRICES, AS IS" is a beat up old Fender Stratocaster with a chunk missing out of the top of the body.

Harold smiles.

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

And then Harold saw it: a damaged and terribly mistreated Fender staring back at him.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

Despite its obvious maladies, the guitar spoke with conviction and swagger. In fact, it looked Harold directly in the eye, and very plainly stated, "I rock."

CUT TO:

INT. SHEET MUSIC DEPARTMENT -- MOMENTS LATER

Harold approaches a young, pimply faced SALES REPRESENTATIVE in a large room with various books of sheet music filed in bins. He carries his briefcase in one hand and his Fender in the other.

HAROLD

Uh... excuse me...

SALES REPRESENTATIVE

Yeah?

HAROLD

Well... I want to learn the guitar. And I... I wanted to know if there was, like, a book or a pamphlet or something.

SALES REPRESENTATIVE

Sure. Sure. What is it you want to play?

HAROLD

(pause)
Guitar.

SALES REPRESENTATIVE

Right. What kind of guitar?

HAROLD

(pause. holding up
the Fender)
This guitar.

SALES REPRESENTATIVE

No. Like... Okay. Okay. What kind of music do you listen to?

HAROLD

I don't really listen to music.

SALES REPRESENTATIVE

Oh dude... alright. What kind of music does the person who will be listening to you play the guitar listen to?

Harold looks at him.

(CONTINUED)

NARRATOR

And for the first time in his life,
Harold Crick honestly wondered what
anarchist bakers listen to.

Blackout. The following appears on screen:

"Celebrate this chance to be alive and breathing." --Tool.

INT. HOSPITAL EMERGENCY ROOM -- MORNING

Kay and Penny sit against the wall of an emergency room.
Kay fiddles compulsively with a wadded tissue and Penny takes
notes as they watch PATIENTS wait to be called by an old,
dry-looking NURSE.

Penny points to an OLD MAN WITH A BROKEN LEG across the room.

PENNY

What about him?

KAY

Probably fell in the shower. Not
dead.

PENNY

Okay. The woman in the blue.

Kay looks. A WOMAN holds a severe head wound.

KAY

Hit with a skillet by an angry
neighbor. Interesting, but after
some stitches, she'll live.

A gurney is rushed by with a YOUNG MAN writhing and screaming
from a gunshot wound. He's immediately rushed through the
doors.

PENNY

There you go.

KAY

No. Shot in a gang fight.
(pause)
Harold's not in a gang.

PENNY

Man in tweed.

A little man hunched over nervously in the corner, wearing a
tweed jacket.

KAY

There's nothing wrong with him. He
just likes looking at sick people.

PENNY

Oddly spoken with disdain.

KAY

This isn't working.

(CONTINUED)

PENNY

You haven't even--

KAY

I told you this wasn't going to--

PENNY

Just try it and see what--

KAY

Penny. These people aren't dead...
they're just maimed.

PENNY

Listen, it's better than--

Kay gets up and walks across the room, past sick and suffering patients, beginning to tear little shreds from the tissue. She approaches the check-in booth.

KAY

Excuse me-- where are the dying
people?

The CHECK-IN NURSE just stares at her blankly. Penny puts her head in her hands.

KAY (CONT'D)

Most of these people are sick or
injured... which is great, don't get
me wrong-- But they're gonna get
better, which really doesn't help.
Is there-- Is there any way to see
the people who aren't going to get
better?

CHECK-IN NURSE

Excuse me?

KAY

I'd like to see-- if at all possible--
the one's who aren't gonna make it.
The dead for sure ones.

CHECK-IN NURSE

I... Are you...? You can't-- Are
you... I'm sorry. Are you suffering
from anything?

KAY

Just writer's block.

INT. DAVE'S LIVING ROOM -- EVENING

Harold sits on Dave's couch, practicing the guitar, referencing an open tablature book that rests in front of him. He tries as best he can to hum along to his relatively simple guitar playing.

Harold's watch looks on (peacefully).

(CONTINUED)

NARRATOR (V.O.)

With every awkward strum, despite his approaching demise, Harold felt a little more at peace.

CUT TO:

INT. DAVE'S DINING ROOM TABLE -- MOMENTS LATER

Harold and Dave sit across from one another at the dining room table, eating their sandwiches and laughing.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

Harold no longer ate alone...

INT. DAVE'S BATHROOM -- NIGHT

HAROLD brushes his teeth in Dave's bathroom without rhyme or reason, yet bobs his head along with an imaginary beat.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

He no longer counted brush strokes...

EXT. DAVE'S FIRE ESCAPE -- MORNING

Harold sits out on Dave's fire escape eating cereal and looking out at the city as Dave hurriedly gets dressed for work.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

He no longer worried about the time it took to put on his tie...

EXT. CITY STREET -- LATER

Harold strolls past the bus stop and towards a park, looking at the stiff commuters with a smile.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

He no longer counted his steps to the bus stop...

INT. MOVIE THEATER -- DAY

Harold sits in a matinee of Manhattan, eating popcorn and laughing by himself.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

Instead, Harold did that which had terrified him before. That which had eluded him Monday thru Friday for so many years...

Harold lets out a hearty laugh.

EXT. CITY STREET -- EVENING

Harold walks past the bus stop again and watches the same commuters from that morning, now exhausted, flustered and frustrated, exiting the bus. He tries to hide his glee.

(CONTINUED)

NARRATOR (V.O.)

That which the unrelenting lyrics of those numerous punk rock songs told him to do.

(pause)

Harold Crick lived his life.

INT. DAVE'S LIVING ROOM -- NIGHT

Harold once again sits on the couch, strumming the guitar with more confidence. He sings with vigor, his hand pounding on the strings, his head rocking.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

And with every strum, he became stronger in who he was, what he wanted, and why he was alive.

INT. BEDROOM -- LATER

Harold crawls into bed, still bobbing. He moves his laptop case off the bed, gently removes his wristwatch and places it on the nightstand next to him. He turns the light off and crawls into bed.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

But despite resuscitating his life, reviving his hope and developing a few wicked calluses, Harold's journey was still incomplete.

(pause)

And Harold's wristwatch wasn't about to let him miss another opportunity.

Suddenly Harold's wristwatch begins to glow. Harold at first looks at the watch, but then notices what his watch is casting light upon:

A file, peeking out of Harold's laptop case, and on its tab a name: Ana Pascal.

Harold looks at his watch, then takes a deep breath.

EXT. LIBERTY BAKERY -- EVENING

Harold approaches the bakery, carrying a large carton. He fortunately arrives just as Ana is locking the bakery up for the night. She turns and sees him approach.

ANA

Mr. Crick.

HAROLD

Hi.

ANA

Hi.

HAROLD

(pause)

Hi.

(CONTINUED)

ANA

(pause)

Hi.

HAROLD

I uh... I'm glad I caught you.

ANA

Oh. Why?

HAROLD

Well...

(pause)

I wanted to bring you these.

He holds out the carton, filled with several squat little bags filled with various types of powder. She looks, puzzled.

ANA

(not impressed)

Really?

HAROLD

Yeah...

ANA

So, you're not allowed to accept gifts, but you can give them.

HAROLD

Listen, about the cookies--

ANA

Seems a little inconsistent, doesn't it Mr. Crick?

HAROLD

Listen-- yes... it seems very inconsistent. But these--

ANA

You know what... I'll purchase them.

HAROLD

(embarrassed)

No. I just... I made a mistake...

ANA

No. Seriously. I'll purchase them. What are they?

Harold mumbles something.

ANA (CONT'D)

I'm sorry?

HAROLD

(sighs)

I brought you flours.

Her attitude suddenly drops. She just looks at him. Slowly, she smiles.

(CONTINUED)

ANA

That's... uh... that's surprisingly funny.

She begins to laugh.

HAROLD

It only took me all day to come up with.

ANA

You uh... you carried these all the way here?

HAROLD

I would have carried them anywhere.

Suddenly she stops and looks at him. They stare at each other for a moment.

Her lips part.

His fingers twitch.

Harold's watch looks on (anxiously).

Harold's watch waits. Then...

HAROLD (CONT'D)

Ms. Pascal... I...

(pause)

I've been odd, and I know I've been odd and...

(pause)

I want you.

ANA

What?

HAROLD

There are so many reasons; so many influences in my... uh, in my life, that are telling me, at times quite literally, that I should ignore the common wisdom and come here and bring you these.

(pause)

But I'm doing it because I want you.

ANA

(pause)

You... "want" me?

HAROLD

In no uncertain terms.

ANA

I... uh... um...

(pause)

Wow.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

ANA (CONT'D)

(pause)

I... isn't there some... some very clear, established... rule about fraternization, or a particular... uh...?

HAROLD

Auditor/Auditee protocol.

ANA

Protocol. Yes.

HAROLD

Yes. But I don't care.

ANA

Why?

HAROLD

Because I want you.

She looks at him.

ANA

Do you mind carrying those a little farther?

EXT. RESIDENTIAL AREA -- MOMENTS LATER

A bus stops and the two get out and begin to walk down the street, Harold carrying the flour and Ana carrying a take-out bag. She is laughing at something he's just said.

Suddenly Ana stops.

ANA

Would you like to come up?

HAROLD

Um... to your place?

ANA

Yes.

HAROLD

Uh... well...

ANA

Come up.

HAROLD

I guess... I guess I could.

ANA

Have dinner with me.

HAROLD

Uh... I'm... uh...

(CONTINUED)

ANA

Wasn't that the idea with the flours
and everything?

HAROLD

Honestly... I only figured it out up
to "I want you."

ANA

Listen: I think I like you, Mr. Crick.
And before I do anything rash, I'd
like to make sure.

HAROLD

Really? I was pretty sure you hated
me?

ANA

No. I... I think I like you. You
definitely have a certain quality
that makes me want to eat near you.
So I want you to come up.

Harold's watch looks on (longingly).

HAROLD

(pause)

I'd be honored.

She leads him up quickly up the stoop of a Brownstone
apartment.

ANA

I've never had anyone, ever, in my
whole life [tell me they want me]--

(pause)

Okay. I uh... I think I got a little
too excited. I don't live here.

He can't help but laugh.

ANA (CONT'D)

I uh... I'm... that way a few doors.

INT. ANA'S APARTMENT -- CONTINUOUS

Harold and Ana finish their sushi at Ana's quaint dining
room table. Her apartment is small, but very cute and
uniquely homey, with the occasional "U.S. Out of My Uterus"
poster for good measure.

ANA

(continuing)

Is it really that bad?

HAROLD

Oh yeah... once this demented
Portuguese guy got so upset about
the audit he tried to take a contract
out on my life.

(CONTINUED)

ANA

What?

HAROLD.

Yeah... he was nuts though. He got caught when he went to have the contract notarized.

She laughs again. She points to his plate.

ANA

Good?

HAROLD

Very.

ANA

Good. Let me... Let me just clean up. If you want... you can relax on the couch.

Ana takes the plates into the kitchen. Harold meanders over to the couch which is a total mess. He moves some laundry aside, revealing an acoustic guitar. He looks up. He looks back at the guitar.

HAROLD

Do you play the guitar?

ANA

No. Someone traded it to me for a wedding cake. Wait... does that mean I have to claim it on my taxes now?

HAROLD

I'll leave it out of my final report.

ANA

Do you play?

HAROLD

Not really. I only know one song.

She returns from the kitchen.

ANA

Play it.

HAROLD

No. I don't even know it that well.

ANA

It's the best way to seduce a woman, you know... provided you don't play, "Yes, We Have No Bananas."

He laughs.

ANA (CONT'D)

Please.

(CONTINUED)

HAROLD

Okay...

Harold goes and picks up the guitar and has a seat on the couch. He picks at the strings a little.

HAROLD (CONT'D)

Um... okay. Keep in mind I just learned.

ANA

I will.

HAROLD

Okay.

He begins to strum the opening chords to "Punk Rock Girl" by the Dead Milkmen (track 6 on your cd). He hits the main riff and begins to sing:

HAROLD (CONT'D)

One Saturday I took a walk to
Zipperhead/ I met a girl there and
she almost knocked me dead/ Punk
Rock Girl/ Please look at me/ What
do you see/ Let's travel 'round the
world/ Just you and me punk rock
girl...

Harold continues to strum and smiles shyly.

HAROLD (CONT'D)

I tapped her on the shoulder and
said do you have a beau/ She looked
at me and smiled and said she did
not know/ Punk Rock Girl/ Give me a
chance/ Let's go slam dance/ We'll
dress like Minnie Pearl/ Just you
and me punk rock girl... We went to
the Philly Pizza Company/ And ordered
some hot tea/ The waitress said "Well,
no... we only have it iced."/ So we
jumped up on the table/ And shouted
"Anarchy!"/ And someone played a
Beach Boys song/ On the juke box/ It
was California Dreamin'/ And so we
started screamin' on such a winter's
day...

Ana purses her lips and taps her feet.

HAROLD (CONT'D)

She took me to her parents for a
Sunday meal/ Her father took one
look at me and he began to squeal/
Punk Rock Girl/ It makes no sense/
Your dad is the Vice President/ Just
ask the Duke of Earl/ Yeah, you're
for me punk rock girl...

Harold stops.

(CONTINUED)

HAROLD (CONT'D)

Okay. Now there's a solo part that I can't do.

ANA

Skip it.

Harold shrugs and resumes playing. Ana just stares at him, her eyes alight.

HAROLD

We went to a shopping mall/ And
laughed at all the shoppers/ And
security guards trailed us/ To a
record shop/ We asked for Mojo Nixon/
They said, "He don't work here."/ We
said, "If you don't got Mojo Nixon/
Then your store could use some
fixin'... We got into her car, away
we started rollin'/ I said how much
you pay for this, she said--

Suddenly Ana grabs the guitar by the neck, abruptly ending the song.

ANA

Nothin' man... it's stolen...

They stare at each other for a moment, their lips quivering. They suddenly kiss and the *actual* song kicks in, in full force:

DEAD MILKMEN

Punk Rock Girl/ You look so wild/
Let's have a child/ We'll name her
Minnie Pearl/ Just you and me/ Eat
fudge banana swirl/ Just you and me/
We'll travel 'round the world/ Just
you and me... PUNK ROCK GIRL!!!

The song ends. But, Harold and Ana continue to kiss, deeply and fully, unaware of anything else.

We wait for them to stop, which they don't. The song returns.

DEAD MILKMEN (CONT'D)

Punk Rock Girl/ You look so wild/
Let's have a child/ We'll name her
Minnie Pearl/ Just you and me/ Eat
fudge banana swirl/ Just you and me/
We'll travel 'round the world/ Just
you and me... PUNK ROCK GIRL!!!

Ana takes her shirt off, but they don't stop kissing. She begins to take his shirt off. The song just returns.

DEAD MILKMEN (CONT'D)

Punk Rock Girl/ You look so wild/
Let's have a child/ We'll name her
Minnie Pearl/ Just you and me/ Eat
fudge banana swirl/ Just you and me/
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

DEAD MILKMEN (CONT'D)
*We'll travel 'round the world/ Just
 you and me... PUNK ROCK GIRL!!!*

Harold parts his lips just enough to speak.

HAROLD
 Ms. Pascal, I...

ANA
 I know... I want you too.

DISSOLVE
 TO:

INT. ANA'S BEDROOM -- MOMENTS LATER

The room is dark and all we can see are shadows and silhouettes but the sounds are decidedly sexual. They suddenly take a moment...

HAROLD
 Wow.

ANA
 What?

HAROLD
 I'm not counting.

INT. ANA'S BEDROOM -- LATER

The camera hangs above Harold as he lies in bed next to Ana. Both are asleep, Ana tucked in Harold's clavicle, Harold flat on his back. The camera slowly descends, drawing closer to his face. It swings to reveal the room: the socialist propaganda, the red star flag, the sleek furniture... and back to Harold, who rests peacefully... tranquil, still.

NARRATOR
 Harold's life, like the life of every human being, was filled with moments both significant and mundane.

He opens his eyes.

NARRATOR (CONT'D)
 But to Harold, those moments remained entirely indistinguishable... except for this.

Ana sighs and nuzzles his chest.

NARRATOR (CONT'D)
 As Ana let out a soft sigh and repositioned herself against him, Harold knew, somewhere, this was one of the significant moments. He knew she had fallen in love with him.

Harold smiles and simply closes his eyes.

INT. ANA'S BEDROOM -- MORNING

Ana wakes up to find Harold excitedly putting his clothes on.

ANA

Harold?

He looks up at her.

HAROLD

Good morning!

He grabs her and gives her a huge kiss.

ANA

What... What are you...?

HAROLD

I have to go... I'm sorry. I really...

(pause)

You're awesome.

ANA

I am?

HAROLD

Entirely. I uh... I just... I'm sorry I have to rush.

ANA

It's... is something wrong?

HAROLD

No. Everything's great. Everything's perfect. I'll... Ana. I'll explain it all later. But I have to go...

(pause. looks at his watch)

I heard something. Something very important.

EXT. MARKET -- CONTINUOUS

Kay exits a small, poorly maintained market carrying three packs of cigarettes and a package of travel tissues. She ceremoniously packs each cigarette pack and puts each in a separate pocket. She then opens up the tissues and removes one then puts the tissues away. She takes out a pack of cigarettes, opens it, removes a cigarette, puts in her mouth, and is about to light it when a YOUNG WORKER spills a box of fresh Granny Smith apples.

The apples topple and roll around the sidewalk, one in particular quickly rolling into the street.

Kay stops. She doesn't light the cigarette. For a moment she just stares at the apple which comes to rest on its side in the road.

(CONTINUED)

KAY

My God...

INT. HILBERT'S OFFICE -- LATER

Harold comes into Professor Hilbert's office without knocking, interrupting Hilbert in the middle of standing and reading.

PROFESSOR HILBERT

Harold?

HAROLD

Professor Hilbert--

Hilbert mutes the television which Harold notices is playing an interview between two dour looking women on some book channel.

HAROLD (CONT'D)

Professor Hilbert... It's a comedy.

PROFESSOR HILBERT

What?

HAROLD

A comedy. I... this woman... she... last night...

(pause)

She's fallen in love with me.

PROFESSOR HILBERT

She has?

HAROLD

The voice confirmed it in the middle of the night.

PROFESSOR HILBERT

That's... Harold that's wonderful. It completely nullifies my list but... Harold, that's fantastic.

HAROLD

What list?

PROFESSOR HILBERT

Oh.

He hands Harold the list.

PROFESSOR HILBERT (CONT'D)

These are the seven living authors whose prior work would seem to make them likely candidates to write your story, based on the criteria you and I have already determined. If your narrator is alive... she's on this list.

HAROLD

Wow.

(CONTINUED)

PROFESSOR HILBERT
But it appears the list is of little
use to you now.

HAROLD
I suppose. Although I can hang on
to it--

PROFESSOR HILBERT
Hold on a minute...

Hilbert turns up the volume on the television. Perhaps to
our surprise, one of the dour women is in fact Kay, who sits
in a black Donna Karan suit across from a very smarmy-looking
ANCHORWOMAN with short, sensible hair. The interview is
obviously years old and Kay is much healthier.

PROFESSOR HILBERT (CONT'D)
Oh. Just a rerun. This woman: Karen
Eiffel... one of my favorite
authors... beautiful tragedies...
just beautiful. Watch.

ANCHORWOMAN
(overly dry)
--and we, of course, anticipate the
next book.

KAY
Oh. Thanks. I just started.

ANCHORWOMAN
And may I ask what this book will be
about?

KAY
Well... It's about inter-
connectivity... and the looming
certainty of death... men's fashion
accessories.

HAROLD
I think... I think I might go...

Harold folds the list to take with him.

ANCHORWOMAN
Uh-huh.
(deadpan)
Sounds great... may I ask what it's
called?

KAY
"Death and Taxes."

Harold stops and quickly looks at the television.

ANCHORWOMAN
(without feeling)
Wow. You know, I'm from Texas.

(CONTINUED)

KAY

What?

ANCHORWOMAN

Born and raised in San Antonio. In fact, that's where they have Space Camp.

KAY

No. Not. No. Not Texas. Taxes.
"Death and Taxes." Death and Taxes.

Death and Taxes. Death and Taxes. The words repeat themselves as we cut between the television and Harold, whose eyes widen as he hears those words repeatedly in his head. He suddenly breaks out of his daze.

HAROLD

(abruptly)

Oh my God. That's her.

(pause)

That's her.

PROFESSOR HILBERT

What?

HAROLD

That's her. That's the voice.
That's... She's the narrator.

(pause)

That's her.

PROFESSOR HILBERT

Harold. Harold. Are you sure?

HAROLD

I'm positive.

PROFESSOR HILBERT

(pause)

Oh no...

HAROLD

Why? What's wrong?

PROFESSOR HILBERT

First of all, she wasn't on my list.

HAROLD

Oh. Well...

PROFESSOR HILBERT

And she... She doesn't...

(pause)

Harold. She kills people.

Harold just looks at him.

HAROLD

What?

(CONTINUED)

PROFESSOR HILBERT
 In every book. She... The books are
 all about... They die. She kills
 them.

HAROLD
 Who?

PROFESSOR HILBERT
 The heroes.

Harold quickly looks...

HAROLD
 Where is she?

PROFESSOR HILBERT
 Harold. I... she's untraceable.
 I've... believe me. I used to teach
 a class on her work. I've written
 her letters. She's a hermit. A
 recluse. I mean... she hasn't
 published anything in ten years.

Harold goes to Hilbert's stacks and finds one of the many
 copies of Kay's books and opens it up to the copyright page.
 He grabs a pencil and a document from Hilbert's desk.

HAROLD
 Can I write on this?

PROFESSOR HILBERT
 No. Harold you--

Harold ignores him and begins to write anyway, mumbling to
 himself.

HAROLD
 ...Edison Press... 2267 Wallace...

PROFESSOR HILBERT
 Harold, even if you find--

HAROLD
 Okay. I'm gonna find her--

PROFESSOR HILBERT
 Harold, listen, she only--

HAROLD
 I'm gonna-- It's. I'm gonna find
 her.

PROFESSOR HILBERT
 Harold--

HAROLD
 I have to *do something*. I'll find
 her.

Harold bolts.

(CONTINUED)

PROFESSOR HILBERT
 (Harold can't hear...)
 Harold. She only writes tragedies.

INT. GARMENT LOFT -- MORNING

Kay enters the loft (carrying yellow sheets of paper) to find Penny already at work. Kay seems oddly not depressed.

KAY
 I figured out how to kill Harold this morning.

PENNY
 Excellent. What is it?

KAY
 It's perfect. I can't believe I didn't think of it earlier. It's... it's simple, ironic, possibly heartbreaking.

PENNY
 That's very good to hear. What is it?

INT. EDISON PRESS -- LATER

Harold bounds into the loft-like, upscale offices of Edison Press: exposed brick walls, old printing presses, elevated offices, etc.

A YOUNG RECEPTIONIST reads a magazine behind her desk.

HAROLD
 Hi. Hello. Hi.

RECEPTIONIST
 May I help you?

HAROLD
 I need to speak with Karen Eiffel.

RECEPTIONIST
 I'm sorry?

HAROLD
 Karen Eiffel. One of your authors. I need to speak with her. It's urgent.

RECEPTIONIST
 Well... sir, she's not here.

HAROLD
 I know. I just... I need to find her. I need to know where she is.

RECEPTIONIST
 We're just the publishers.

(CONTINUED)

HAROLD

Right. Of course. But you have to have a way I can contact her.

RECEPTIONIST

We have the address where her fan mail is sent.

HAROLD

I can't send mail. This is urgent.

RECEPTIONIST

Is it a family emergency?

HAROLD

No. Not really.

RECEPTIONIST

Then how do you know her?

Harold takes a deep breath.

HAROLD

Okay. I'm one of her characters. A new one. I'm in her new book, and she's going to kill me, not actually, but in the book, but I think it'll actually kill me... so I have to talk to her, and ask her to stop.

The receptionist just stares at him.

RECEPTIONIST

Okay. What you do is go back down the stairs. At the door that leads out to the street you'll find a gruff looking guy in a blue jacket with an embroidered badge on the sleeve that says Ausberg Security. Tell him what you just told me and he'll be happy to escort you directly out of the building.

CUT TO:

EXT. CITY STREET -- MOMENTS LATER

Harold stands on the sidewalk outside the publishers, trying to figure out what to do next.

An idea suddenly strikes him. He takes off running.

CUT TO:

INT. OFFICE -- MOMENTS LATER

Harold whizzes by his colleagues in a beleaguered state.

CO-WORKER

Phones are out.

Harold doesn't even flinch.

(CONTINUED)

CO-WORKER (CONT'D)

Harold?

Harold stops at his work station and immediately boots up his computer. He begins typing frantically trying to find something.

Harold highlights something with the cursor then quickly writes it down on a post-it.

INT. OFFICE (MAIN COMPUTER)-- MOMENTS LATER

Harold scans over a large computer screen with the cursor, dragging the mouse hurriedly. He clicks. Moments later a large printer begins to print a document.

We can see that part of what Harold has highlighted is the name Karen Eiffel.

Harold waits impatiently then grabs his printout and takes off down the corridor, almost smiling to himself.

INT. ARCHIVES -- MOMENTS LATER

Harold is rifling through files, referring to the printout. His fingers work nimbly, his eyes fixated.

Harold finds a file and yanks it out. He opens it and scans the pages until he finds a certain page, yanks it out, and returns the file.

INT. OFFICE -- MOMENTS LATER

Harold picks up a phone on a colleague's desk and hurriedly dials. Nothing happens. He hangs up and tries again.

He taps the receiver, trying to get a dial tone.

Dave stops as he passes by.

DAVE

Phones are out.

Harold drops the receiver.

HAROLD

Dave, do you have a cell phone?

DAVE

No reception up here.

HAROLD

Goddamnit...

DAVE

Are you alright?

HAROLD

Dave. I need a favor.

DAVE

Sure. What is it?

(CONTINUED)

HAROLD
 (holding out hand)
 Change.

CUT TO:

EXT. CITY -- MOMENTS LATER

Harold speeds down the sidewalk, the sheet in one hand and loose change in the other.

NARRATOR (V.O.)
 Within moments, Harold found himself nearly running down the sidewalks of downtown, searching for a pay phone.

Harold scans the street corner furiously.

NARRATOR (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 He spotted one. On the corner of 8th and Newton.

Harold jumps off the sidewalk and runs across the street, nearly getting hit by a taxi cab. A few loose coins drop from his fist in the hustle, but he doesn't have the time to pick them up.

He makes it across the street, but just as he approaches the phone booth an OLD MAN climbs in. The man looks as though as he will take a while.

NARRATOR (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 But just as Harold neared the phone, it became occupied by a nearsighted octogenarian determined to reach his niece in Denver, no matter how many quarters it took.

Harold heaves an exasperated sigh.

NARRATOR (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 Fortunately, Harold remembered a bank of phones at the 6th street subway stop. One had to be free.

Harold takes off down the street, running as fast as he can.

EXT. SIDEWALK -- CONTINUOUS

Harold weaves in between other pedestrians frantically, disregarding courtesy or the natural flow of foot traffic.

INT. SUBWAY TERMINAL -- MOMENTS LATER

Harold reaches the subway terminal and bounds down the stairs. The subway looks dark, wet and empty save for a few VAGRANTS and COMMUTERS. There, against the yellowy wall, is a bank of open phones.

Harold rushes to them and picks one up.

(CONTINUED)

NARRATOR

The first phone failed to give a dial tone...

Harold slams the receiver down. He reaches for the second, stopping short as he notices it's covered with a greenish, phlegmy material.

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

And the second seemed to be splattered with a fresh batch of mucous. Harold moved on quickly.

Harold picks up the third phone and pushes quarters into the slot.

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

Harold began to dial fervently, still making sure to give each number key a specific forceful push.

CUT TO:

INT. GARMENT LOFT -- CONTINUOUS

Kay sits at her desk writing on a laptop which sits next to the yellow sheets.

She types the words, "The phone rang..."

The phone rings...

Kay pauses, noticing the odd coincidence. She types the words, "The phone rang again..."

The phone rings again...

Kay types the words, "The phone rang a third time..."

Penny goes to answer the phone.

KAY

Don't answer that!

Kay stops typing, finding the coincidence too curious. She very slowly, letter by letter, types the phrase, "The phone rang a final time."

As soon as she hits the period the phone rings.

Kay slowly picks up the phone and holds it to her ear.

KAY (CONT'D)

(pause)

Hello?

HAROLD

(through the phone)

Is this Karen Eiffel?

(CONTINUED)

KAY

(pause)
Yes...

HAROLD

(pause. through the
phone.)
Hi. My name's Harold Crick. I
believe you're writing a story about
me.

KAY

(pause)
I'm sorry?

HAROLD

My name is Harold Crick. And when I
go through the files at work, I hear
a deep and endless ocean.

The camera zooms in on Kay's face as her jaw suddenly drops.
Her lips begin to quiver. She's speechless.

HAROLD (CONT'D)

(through the phone.)
Ms. Eiffel?
(pause)
Hello? Ms. Eiffel?

Kay is too shocked to speak.

CUT TO:

INT. GARMENT LOFT -- LATER

Kay sits, virtually comatose, in the middle of the loft.
She looks absolutely petrified.

Penny sits at her desk, quietly waiting as well.

There is a BUZZ.

Penny looks at Kay.

KAY

(pause)
Let him in.

Penny crosses to the garage door and lifts it, revealing
Harold.

PENNY

Hello.

HAROLD

Hello.

PENNY

I'm Kay's assistant, Penny.

HAROLD

I'm Harold. Her main character.

(CONTINUED)

Penny leads Harold into the loft. He stops as he sees Kay. And Kay sees Harold. Her hand covers her mouth as he approaches.

KAY
[Oh my god... Oh god...]

Harold approaches her.

HAROLD
Ms. Eiffel...?

KAY
[Your suit... your, your shoes...
your hair, my god...]

HAROLD
Hello. I'm Harold Crick.

Kay nods, almost about to cry...

KAY
(pause)
I know.

DISSOLVE
TO:

INT. GARMENT LOFT -- LATER

Harold and Kay sit across from each other, Kay smoking compulsively. Penny sits at her desk across the room, reading the yellow pages.

KAY
How did... How did you find me?

HAROLD
We audited you a little more than ten years ago. Your number was in the file.

KAY
But... I mean... how did you know it was... I was...

HAROLD
Oh.
(pause)
I could hear you. Occasionally... your voice would... I would hear it.

KAY
Hear it?

HAROLD
You were narrating. My life.

KAY
Oh my god...
(pause)
How did this happen?

(CONTINUED)

HAROLD

I have no idea.

KAY

I... I just...

(pause)

This is... I'm sorry, but... this is
incredibly strange.

HAROLD

You're telling me.

KAY

You didn't think you were crazy?

HAROLD

Sort of. Not as crazy as some people
thought... mainly because... you
were right about everything... like,
everything.

(pause)

And then you said "Little did he
know..."

KAY

Little did he know...?

HAROLD

Yeah. It's uh... it's third person
omniscient.

KAY

Jesus...

HAROLD

Which meant it was, you know, someone
other than me. At least that's what
Professor Hilbert said--

KAY

Professor Hilbert?

HAROLD

Yeah.

KAY

Professor Jules Hilbert?

HAROLD

Yeah... he uh... he loves your books.

KAY

(absently)

I love his letters.

They look at each other.

HAROLD

I'm sure you understand. I had to
find you. And ask you not to kill
me.

(CONTINUED)

Suddenly Penny looks over. Kay looks at her, then back at Harold, shocked.

KAY
What?

HAROLD
I mean, obviously you're still...

KAY
No. What... what did you just say?

HAROLD
I had to find you... to ask you not to kill me.

KAY
(pause)
Harold...

HAROLD
What?

KAY
I... I uh...

HAROLD
What? Am I...

KAY
I... I... nothing.

Penny comes across the room, holding the yellow pages.

PENNY
Kay.

KAY
It's nothing.

HAROLD
What is it?

KAY
Nothing Harold.

PENNY
Kay.

HAROLD
I mean, since you've now met me and can see I exist you aren't going to kill me, right?

KAY
I... I just...

Kay looks at Penny. Harold looks as well. There, in her hands, are yellow sheets of paper.

HAROLD
Have you written it?

(CONTINUED)

KAY

I can... no.

HAROLD

Have you written it!?

KAY

(pause)

An outline.

He grabs his chest.

HAROLD

Oh God... I... it's... but it's just
an outline...? Right.

KAY

Yeah... sort of.

HAROLD

Okay. --Wait! Sort of?

KAY

It's just not typed.

HAROLD

Jesus Christ!

KAY

I don't know.... maybe that's okay.

PENNY

Kay.

KAY

I'm sorry.

HAROLD

I... I thought...

PENNY

Kay.

KAY

Maybe it's... it's...

PENNY

Kay.

They look.

PENNY (CONT'D)

Let him read it.

Kay looks at Penny. Harold looks at both of them.

PENNY (CONT'D)

Kay. Let him read it.

Blackout. The following appears on screen:

(CONTINUED)

"We need an instrument. To take a measurement. To figure out if loss could weigh." --Fugazi

INT. SWIMMING POOL -- DAY

Young coed swimmers spin upside down in the pool as the COACH and Professor Hilbert look on.

Harold comes rushing into the pool with a manuscript, complete with yellow pages.

PROFESSOR HILBERT
Harold? Did you find her?

HAROLD
Yeah...

PROFESSOR HILBERT
And?

HAROLD
(pause)
I may already be dead. Just not typed.

PROFESSOR HILBERT
[Shit...]

Hilbert points to the manuscript.

PROFESSOR HILBERT (CONT'D)
Is that it?

HAROLD
Yeah...

PROFESSOR HILBERT
Did you...

HAROLD
I tried, but... I couldn't. You have to read it. You have to tell me what to do. Or what *not* to do. If... if I can...if I can avoid it... If, please, if I have a chance...

Professor Hilbert sighs.

HAROLD (CONT'D)
Please.

PROFESSOR HILBERT
Okay.

Harold hands it to him.

HAROLD
Please.

INT. SMALL OFFICE -- AFTERNOON

The middle-aged black woman from before (now in her regular apparel) signs a series of documents on the other side of a desk from a SQUAT MAN in a blue uniform of some kind.

She finishes and hands him the papers. He stands up and shakes her hand.

He then hands her a blue uniform in plastic wrapping.

CUT TO:

INT. BOY'S BEDROOM -- CONTINUOUS

The blonde boy from before is handed a brand new bicycle helmet by his father. The father fastens the strap around the boy's chin, it's a little too big and it swings on his head.

The father fixes it atop his head so it doesn't get in his line of vision, then reassures him it'll be fine.

INT. PROFESSOR HILBERT'S DINING ROOM -- EVENING

Professor Hilbert places the manuscript down on his dining room table. He sits down, removes his glasses, pulls out a shammy from a glasses cleaning kit and begins to thoroughly clean his glasses.

Upon finishing, he stands, holds the glasses in front of himself, turns the first page and begins to read.

INT. LIBERTY BAKERY -- EVENING

The door opens with a jingle as Harold walks in. Ana, wiping down the counter, looks up.

Harold looks awful: he is exhausted and distraught.

ANA

Harold?

HAROLD

Hi.

ANA

Harold. What's wrong?

HAROLD

I... I had a really strange day.

I...

(pause)

Ana... something happened.

He sits down on her bench. She immediately drops her cloth and comes to him, squatting in front of him.

ANA

Tell me.

(CONTINUED)

HAROLD

I can't.

ANA

Harold. Tell me.

He just stares at his shoes.

She gets up and goes to the kitchen. Harold sinks his head into his hands as we can hear clanging from the other room.

After a few moments, Ana returns... with cookies and milk.

ANA (CONT'D)

Harold. Please. Tell me.

Harold takes a cookie.

HAROLD

It's you. It's... you've...

(pause)

I've been an auditor for nine years now. I answered a classified ad. I wanted to be a theorist, you know, someone who discovered nuances in mathematical systems, but... I chose auditing because I thought... I figured... it was easy... and I was counting everything anyway. And, I had this unwavering belief in a world of absolutes. And I thought somehow I could prove it. But I couldn't. And before I realized it, I developed this pattern, this compartmentalized approach to every aspect of my life that I maintained so I could be safe. I had become my own mathematical system... with no nuances to discover.

(pause)

And then everything changed. And my watch began to act funny. And I couldn't concentrate. And people began telling me things that made me believe that my world was in fact chaos and anarchy.

(pause)

But it's not. Unfortunately for me... it's not anarchy. Because last night... after we made love... you sighed, and re-positioned your head on my chest... you proved my belief in a world of absolutes.

Ana looks at him... she reaches and takes his face in her hand.

ANA

Come on...

INT. ANA'S BEDROOM -- LATER

The camera hangs above Harold as he lies in bed next to Ana. Both are asleep, Ana tucked in Harold's clavicle, Harold flat on his back. The camera slowly descends, drawing closer to his face. It swings to reveal the room: the socialist propaganda, the red star flag, the sleek furniture... and back to Harold, who rests peacefully... tranquil, still.

Ana sighs and nuzzles his chest.

Harold opens his eyes and we can see that they're now filled with tears.

INT. HILBERT'S OFFICE -- MORNING

Harold knocks on the office door, then opens it slightly.

Professor Hilbert sits behind his desk, calm and reticent. He looks up.

PROFESSOR HILBERT

Hi, Harold. Come in.

Harold comes in. He takes his usual seat on the couch.

Professor Hilbert just stares at his desk for a moment. He is eerily calm.

PROFESSOR HILBERT (CONT'D)

You look tired.

HAROLD

So do you.

PROFESSOR HILBERT

Yes. Why? Do I seem sluggish?

HAROLD

No. No. Just calm.

PROFESSOR HILBERT

Yes... Well...

(long pause)

Harold. I'm sorry.

(pause)

You have to die.

HAROLD

What?

PROFESSOR HILBERT

I'm sorry, but it's brilliant, Harold. It's... It's her masterpiece.

HAROLD

What... what do you mean?

PROFESSOR HILBERT

It's possibly the most important novel in her already stunning career.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

PROFESSOR HILBERT (CONT'D)
And it's absolutely no good unless
you die at the end.

HAROLD
I don't care...

PROFESSOR HILBERT
Harold. You don't understand--

HAROLD
I understand. I just don't care.

PROFESSOR HILBERT
I've been over it again and again.
And I know... I know how hard this
is to hear... but your life... no
one's life... is worth more than
this book.

HAROLD
I... You... You're asking me to
knowingly face my death.

PROFESSOR HILBERT
Yes.

HAROLD
I thought... I thought you'd find
something... I hoped there was... I
don't know...

PROFESSOR HILBERT
I'm sorry Harold.

Harold can't hold it in any longer. He begins to weep.

HAROLD
Can't we...

PROFESSOR HILBERT
Harold...

HAROLD
Why can't... Can't we ask her to...
to just... erase it...

PROFESSOR HILBERT
Harold. It wouldn't matter.

HAROLD
It would matter. It does matter.

PROFESSOR HILBERT
No.

HAROLD
(sobbing)
Yes.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

HAROLD (CONT'D)

Because I could... I could change...
I could be someone else... I could...
go away... quit my job... I could
fall in love... I...

(pause)

I can't die now... I'm just starting
to... I, I can't... it's... it's,
it's just...

(pause)

It's really bad timing.

Professor Hilbert comes over to comfort him.

PROFESSOR HILBERT

No one wants to die Harold. But
unfortunately, we can't avoid it.
Harold. Harold, listen to me: You
will die, someday... sometime. Heart
failure at the bank, choke on a mint,
some long, drawn out disease you
contracted on vacation. You will
die. You will absolutely die. Even
if you avoid this death... another
will find you. And I guarantee it
won't be nearly as poetic or
meaningful as what she's written.

HAROLD

No... No...

PROFESSOR HILBERT

Harold. I'm sorry.

(pause)

It's the nature of all tragedy,
Harold. The hero dies, but the story
lives on forever.

Harold tries to breath, his eyes red, his face streaked with
tears.

INT. GARMENT LOFT -- CONTINUOUS

The garage door slides up and Penny enters. She stops
suddenly...

Kay is flat on her back, perfectly still in the middle of
the floor, surrounded by the broken carcass of her smashed
laptop, the table now tipped on its side, an empty bottle of
Jack Daniels and of course dozens of wadded up tissue papers
and errant cigarette butts.

PENNY

Kay?

Penny takes a few, cautious steps towards Kay.

PENNY (CONT'D)

Kay?

(CONTINUED)

KAY

How many people do you think I've killed?

PENNY

Kay...

KAY

How many?

PENNY

I don't...

KAY

12.

PENNY

Kay. Get up.

KAY

I've killed 12 people. I counted.

PENNY

They're fictional. Get up.

KAY

Harold Crick isn't fictional.

PENNY

Harold Crick is...

KAY

He isn't fictional. Penny. Every book I've ever written ends with someone dying. Every one. Really nice people too. The book about Ellen, the, the, the school teacher...

PENNY

Yeah...?

KAY

I killed her. The day before summer vacation. How cruel is that? I... I killed... I killed... Penny, I kill them all.

PENNY

You kill yourself.

Kay stops.

PENNY (CONT'D)

Get up. Get up off the floor. You kill yourself, Kay. The car wrecks... the diseases the, the... you drown yourself, you set yourself on fire, you hang yourself every single book. Understand? It's you.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

PENNY (CONT'D)

It's why you smoke... why you don't eat... why you sit in the rain... because you're ill, your life has no joy, your work is vicious and dark and you wish you could just die.

(pause)

Well, you can't. It's not that easy. The school teacher can. The lawyer can. But you can't. It's why you had writer's block, Kay. Because your body can't stand the thought of killing itself anymore.

Kay's eyes well.

KAY

What do I do...?

PENNY

(sternly)

Get up.

(pause)

And quit smoking.

The Pixie's "Monkey Gone To Heaven" (track 7 on your cd) begins to play.

INT. BUS -- AFTERNOON

Harold sits in the back of the bus staring out the window. He looks down at the seat next to him. There sits Kay's manuscript.

He looks at it for a moment. Then, as if he has no other choice, he picks it up.

He turns the page and begins to read.

DISSOLVE
TO:

A few people get on the bus as a few others leave. Harold is still in the back, continuing to read. He chuckles to himself at something in the book.

DISSOLVE
TO:

The bus makes a left turn. The downtown skyline becomes visible in the background. The sun is beginning to set and the sky has grown dim. Harold, around half way through the book, turns the page and gasps slightly. We can see he's become involved in the story.

DISSOLVE
TO:

The bus is stopped and there are no passengers and no driver. We can see other parked buses out the window. But Harold doesn't move, still reading the book.

(CONTINUED)

A NEW DRIVER steps on board and sees Harold. Harold doesn't look up. The driver contemplates asking Harold for fare, but decides against it.

DISSOLVE
TO:

Harold continues to read, night having fallen over the city. The bus has begun to move again and the glint of lights pass by. Harold rubs his eyes. He's reached the yellow pages.

He takes a deep breath then continues reading.

DISSOLVE
TO:

Only a few people sit on the bus, all in the front. Harold remains in the back seat, alone. He turns over the very last yellow page of the book.

He looks outside. It's dark. He squints to see a street sign. Then nods. The song ends as he continues to ride on.

EXT. GARMENT LOFT -- NIGHT

Kay closes the large steel door to the loft building her office resides in and begins up the street.

A bus comes to a stop at the nearest corner. Its doors open and Harold steps off.

He sees her and walks towards her.

HAROLD
Ms. Eiffel...?

She looks up.

KAY
Harold...

HAROLD
I... uh...
(pause)
I just finished it.

KAY
You just... oh...

HAROLD
I uh... I read it all, in one read...
on the bus.

She nods, nervously.

HAROLD (CONT'D)
(pause)
It's lovely. I like the part about
the guitars.

(CONTINUED)

KAY

(shrugs)

Thanks.

(pause)

I'm going to--

HAROLD

No... don't...

KAY

Harold... I... Listen--

HAROLD

No... I read it. And I loved it. And there's only one way it can end. It ends with me dying. I mean, I don't have much background in literary... anything, but this seems simple enough...

(pause)

It's my fate. I can't escape it. You can't escape it either. As much as I want to believe that you or I or Professor Hilbert can control when and where I die, or when and where I fall in love, or even when and where my watch goes on the fritz... it's just not the truth. All I know is that a series of events has been set into motion... that none of us are able to do anything about. And so we all have to learn to accept it. And move on with our lives. For however long they last.

He hands her the manuscript.

HAROLD (CONT'D)

I love your book. And I think you should finish it.

INT. LIVING ROOM -- LATER

Harold enters his apartment. He looks briefly at the plastic that now constitutes his front wall. He chuckles and continues towards the bedroom.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

The night before his death, Harold unceremoniously went about some necessary business.

INT. BEDROOM -- CONTINUOUS

Harold goes to his closet and pulls out his nicest suit and his orange tie.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

He chose a suit to wear the next day... He picked up a few odds and ends...

INT. LIVING ROOM -- CONTINUOUS

Harold is on the phone.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

He made few phone calls he had been putting off.

HAROLD

Hi. Hi. Yes. Hi. Yes. Listen...
does your program have an age limit?
(pause. smiles)
Great.

EXT. BUS STOP -- MOMENTS LATER

Harold stands, waiting for the bus, holding his suit and an overnight bag.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

And he traveled to Ms. Pascal's where she made him dinner and the two watched old movies.

INT. ANA'S APARTMENT -- CONTINUOUS

Harold holds Ana in his arms as the glow of the television washes over them. Ana laughs at something she sees. Harold chuckles, understandably distant.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

It was a nice enough evening and in any other circumstance would seem commonplace. In fact, the only thing that made this night significant was the morning it preceded.

INT. ANA'S BEDROOM -- NIGHT

Ana and Harold look at each other, their heads on their respective pillows. Ana traces her fingertips across Harold's shoulder.

HAROLD

(softly)

I have to tell you something.

ANA

(teasing)

Is it a secret?

HAROLD

Sort of.

(long pause)

I adore you.

ANA

(touched)

I adore you.

Harold's watch looks on (despondently).

(CONTINUED)

ANA (CONT'D)

Was that it?

HAROLD

No... I have to tell you this... and I want you to just listen carefully:

Harold takes a deep breath.

HAROLD (CONT'D)

(pause. sincerely)

You can subtract the value of the food you give away every night to the shelter as a charitable contribution. It, in fact, amounts to more than what you're currently withholding and doesn't break any tax laws.

She looks at him, smiling.

ANA

Harold. The whole idea is to break the tax laws.

HAROLD

Well... this way you're not paying for defense or going to jail, and you can still write whatever nasty letters you want.

ANA

You're very strange, Harold Crick. But I like you anyway.

She gives him another kiss.

ANA (CONT'D)

Goodnight.

She puts her head back on her pillow and closes her eyes. Harold looks at her for a moment. Then he turns over, picks up his watch, and sets its alarm.

Blackout. The following appears on screen:

"I can't wait to die. I can find this song. It's where I'll find my life when I'm through with my present one." -- Shellac

EXT. CITY -- MORNING

The sun lifts above the city's skyline, splitting through the buildings and reflecting off the steel and glass...

Traffic moves down the interstate...

Street cleaners motor through the streets...

JOGGERS pass each other on the sidewalks...

Buses leave their terminals...

INT. ANA'S BEDROOM -- CONTINUOUS

And Harold sits at the edge of the bed, staring out the window at the city.

His wrist watch changes to 7:15.

It begins to beep.

Harold quickly turns it off. Ana rustles.

Harold takes a deep breath.

INT. ANA'S BATHROOM -- MOMENTS LATER

Harold brushes his teeth, not paying attention to how he does it.

NARRATOR (V.O.)
That particular Thursday morning was
brisk and unsuspecting, as was
Harold...

Harold looks up, coyly smiling.

NARRATOR (V.O.) (CONT'D)
He brushed his teeth, albeit in
vain...

INT. ANA'S BEDROOM -- MOMENTS LATER

As Ana still sleeps, Harold flips his tie over itself.

NARRATOR (V.O.)
He prepared for work, in vain...

INT. ANA'S APARTMENT -- MOMENTS LATER

Harold eats some cereal while looking through a morning paper.

NARRATOR (V.O.)
And he ate a sensible breakfast,
also in vain...

INT. ANA'S BEDROOM -- MOMENTS LATER

Harold goes to the nightstand, retrieves his watch, and puts it on. He gives Ana a tender kiss on the cheek.

HAROLD
(softly)
Bye.

EXT. CITY STREET -- MOMENTS LATER

Harold calmly walks down the sidewalk, taking in the city air as much as he can.

NARRATOR (V.O.)
Much had changed for Harold over the
past few weeks: his attitude towards
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

NARRATOR (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 work, his eating habits, his habitual
 counting, his love life, his ability
 to rock... but of all the
 transmutations Harold Crick had
 undergone, perhaps the most
 significant was that he was no longer
 late for the 8:17 Faraday Bus...

Harold continues to walk.

EXT. BUS STOP -- MOMENTS LATER

Harold stands at the bus stop, a few other commuters around
 him including the Polish woman from before.

NARRATOR (V.O.)
 What Harold had never understood
 about that Wednesday two weeks prior,
 was that the time he received from
 his fellow commuter was, in fact,
 three full minutes later than the
 actual time, and therefore three
 full minutes later than the time to
 which his watch had been previously
 set. Not the worst of oversights,
 one might assume... but it meant
 that Harold had been living his life
 three minutes ahead of schedule.
 And if Harold had not set his watch
 to the incorrect time, Harold would
 have continued to barely catch the
 8:17 Faraday bus, and he would not
 be at the bus stop precisely at 8:16
 this particular Thursday. An
 otherwise ignorable fact, until the
 unthinkable occurred...

Suddenly And You Will Know Us By The Trail of Dead's "How
 Near, How Far" (track 8 on your cd) begins to play.

:01 The blonde boy, helmet on, comes unsuspectingly speeding
 down the sidewalk on his bicycle.

:05 Harold smiles at the Polish Woman.

:07 The bus comes rounding the corner and towards the bus
 stop.

:10 All the other commuters step forward towards the bus.
 Harold remains staring at the sky.

:13 The boy approaches the crowd of commuters quickly...

:16 As does the bus.

:20 Harold continues to stare at the sky.

:23 The boy swerves to miss the commuters, spilling his
 bicycle off the curb where it topples, sending him into the
 street.

(CONTINUED)

:28 The boy tries to get up but his loose helmet has swung around to cover his face.

:33 Harold calmly steps out into the street.

:38 The bus begins to screech as it tries to brake.

:40 Harold pushes the boy out of the way, but finds himself in the path of the bus. Harold has just enough time to turn, his hand flying up to cover his head before...

SCREECH....

The bus SMACKS into Harold.

Harold's watch shatters as the bus hits it. Glass and small bits of metal fly everywhere. Harold's body distorts as it is pounded by the front of the bus.

Harold is sent flying. He hits the ground with a decided THUD.

His body lies lifeless on the asphalt. As the crowd begins to gather around him, blood can be seen pouring from his head. Despite the chaos that surrounds him, his body rests in perfect stillness.

Harold's body rests, lifeless, in the middle of the street. From above, we see his legs are buckled underneath him and blood has formed a halo around his head, his arm snapped like a twig. But his face is peaceful.

Harold Crick lies dead in the street.

INT. GARMENT LOFT -- CONTINUOUS

Kay sits at her desk, typing. She's obviously crying, her hands trembling.

She reaches in her pocket and pulls out a wadded tissue paper, which she unravels, revealing a cigarette butt. She is shaking so much she can barely coax the cigarette between her lips. She reaches across the desk for a lighter.

Her fingers are no longer functional as she tries in vain to get it to light. But she can't.

And then she stops. She stares at the cigarette. She swallows her tears and crumples the cigarette in her hand.

EXT. BUS STOP -- CONTINUOUS

And You Will Know Us By The Trail of Dead begins once again (track 8 cont'd).

The bus door opens and the middle-aged black woman, incredibly upset, steps off the bus. She wears a driver's blue uniform, her name patch reading, Carla. She is immediately comforted as someone quickly says, "It's not your fault..."

The blonde boy gets up. Other than a scraped elbow, he's perfectly fine.

(CONTINUED)

He is attended to by a CONCERNED WOMAN who leads him to the curb.

But most of the activity surrounds Harold, who has not moved. People hold ONLOOKERS back, a few people sob in despair. Most just stare in horror.

And then suddenly, with the single violin note, Harold's eyes open.

With a rush of sound, a cacophony of people can be heard, saying "You're gonna be okay!" "Call an ambulance!" "Don't move him!"

Harold looks at all the peering faces including the sweet-looking Polish woman.

HAROLD

Am I...
(pause)
Am I dead?

POLISH WOMAN

(kindly)
No. You are alive.

HAROLD

(pause)
Why?

The Polish woman shrugs reassuringly.

POLISH WOMAN

(pause)
If it is any consolation, you are hurt very very badly.

Harold smiles at her.

Blackout. The following appears on screen:

"Of all the minutes that were taken away... will your watch be waiting?" -- At The Drive-In

INT. HILBERT'S OFFICE -- CONTINUOUS

Professor Hilbert stares out his window, looking at the activity of the college forlorn. He sips some juice.

There is a knock at his door.

PROFESSOR HILBERT

Come in.

He doesn't pull away from the window as we can hear the sound of the DOOR OPENING and CLOSING behind him.

KAY (O.S.)

Excuse me... Are you Professor Hilbert?

Professor Hilbert turns.

(CONTINUED)

There stands Karen Eiffel. In his office. Holding the manuscript.

PROFESSOR HILBERT
I... uh... uh... yes...

KAY
Hi. I'm Karen Eiffel.

Professor Hilbert looks at her, amazed.

KAY (CONT'D)
I believe we have a mutual acquaintance.

PROFESSOR HILBERT
Please... please... sit down.

KAY
I just came by... to... uh...
(pause)
Here.

PROFESSOR HILBERT
Is this...?

KAY
Yes...

PROFESSOR HILBERT
Oh... So... you finished it? Typed it and everything?

KAY
This morning.

PROFESSOR HILBERT
I see.

Professor Hilbert hangs his head with despair.

KAY
I think... perhaps... you may be interested in the new ending...

Professor Hilbert looks up at her.

PROFESSOR HILBERT
I'm sorry...?

KAY
The ending. You may want to read it.

She offers it to him. He looks at it.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM -- DAY

Harold wakes up in a hospital room, sunlight pouring in. His leg is in a cast, his right arm in a sling, his head is bandaged and his left wrist is covered in gauze.

(CONTINUED)

A friendly-looking DOCTOR is currently reviewing his file.

DOCTOR
Afternoon.

HAROLD
Oh... Hi...

DOCTOR
Pretty brave thing you did...

HAROLD
(groggily)
What?

DOCTOR
Stepping in front of the bus... pretty
brave. Kind of stupid. But pretty
brave.

HAROLD
Oh. Yeah...
(shifting)
Ouch. Is uh... Is that boy okay?

DOCTOR
Just fine. Scratched up is all.

HAROLD
Good. Am I okay?

DOCTOR
Well, you're not dead. On the other
hand...
(reads, excitedly)
Looks like you cracked your head,
broke three bones in your leg and
foot, suffered four broken ribs,
fractured your right arm... and you
severed an artery in your left arm
which could've been really bad, but
amazingly a shard of metal from your
watch became lodged in the artery,
causing your heart rate to slow,
keeping your loss of blood down enough
to keep you alive... which is pretty
cool.

HAROLD
Wow...

DOCTOR
Yeah. With some physical therapy
and a few months of rest you should
be fine. Well... sort of. We
couldn't remove the shard of watch
without risking major muscular damage.
It'll be okay, you'll just have a
watch piece embedded in your arm for
the rest of your life.

Harold chuckles and looks at his wrist.

(CONTINUED)

DOCTOR (CONT'D)

(pause)
You're very lucky to be alive, Mr.
Crick.

HAROLD

(pause)
Yeah...

A NURSE enters.

NURSE

Dr. Mercator. Mr. Crick has a
visitor...

DOCTOR

Sure...

The nurse opens the door to the hallway and Ana comes in,
carrying a paper plate. She immediately comes to his side.

ANA

Harold...

She begins to cry.

HAROLD

I'm okay...

ANA

Harold...

HAROLD

Hey... I'm alright...

ANA

I... Harold...

HAROLD

Ana... I'm okay.

ANA

No you're not. Look at you! You're
severely injured.

Harold can't help but laugh.

HAROLD

I'm fine.

ANA

I came straight from the bakery...
What happened...?

HAROLD

I uh... I stepped in front of a bus.

ANA

(incredulously)
Why?

(CONTINUED)

HAROLD

I didn't... I wasn't... there was a boy. I pushed him out of the way.

ANA

What?

HAROLD

I had to keep this boy from being hit.

ANA

You stepped in front of a bus to save a little boy...?

HAROLD

I didn't have a choice.

(pause)

I had to.

She kisses him.

ANA

Harold. If anything had happened to you... it would've broken my rebellious little heart... I... I...

(wipes her tears)

You don't know how grateful I am you're alive.

HAROLD

(pause)

I know... Surprisingly, I am too.

Ana takes a breath and calms down a little. She puts the paper plate on the bed next to him.

ANA

Here. I brought you cookies.

He smiles.

INT. HILBERT'S OFFICE -- CONTINUOUS

Professor Hilbert finishes the manuscript.

He puts it down on the couch next to him.

PROFESSOR HILBERT

(pause)

It's... It's okay.

She turns to him.

KAY

It's not great.

PROFESSOR HILBERT

No. But... it's okay. It's not bad. Not the most amazing piece of American literature in several years but... it's okay.

(CONTINUED)

KAY

(pause)
You know, I think I'm fine with okay.

PROFESSOR HILBERT

It doesn't make any sense with the rest of the book though.

KAY

No. Not yet. I'll re-write the rest. My assistant said, she said she'd go back to the publisher and request more time.

He looks at her.

PROFESSOR HILBERT

Why?

KAY

I'm sorry.

PROFESSOR HILBERT

Why did you change it?

KAY

(pause)
Lots of reasons. But... I realized I couldn't do it.

PROFESSOR HILBERT

Because he's real?

KAY

No. Because...

(pause)

It's a book about a man who doesn't know he's about to die... then dies. But if the man does know he's going to die, and dies anyway... dies willingly, knowing he could stop it... you tell me...

(pause)

Isn't that the type of man you want to keep alive?

He stares at her.

Suddenly she stops and looks at him. They stare at each other for a moment.

Her lips part.

His fingers twitch.

The skull on Hilbert's carpets looks on (anxiously).

The manuscript reveals their lopsided fate.

Then...

(CONTINUED)

KAY (CONT'D)

(pause)

Thank you for your letters. I'm
sorry I never wrote back.

PROFESSOR HILBERT

It's okay. Thank you for your novels.

The two just look at each other awkwardly for a moment.

KAY

Is there... uh... is there any chance
you'd like to get a cup of coffee.

PROFESSOR HILBERT

Yes. No. I mean... I can't. I
quit.

KAY

Coffee?

PROFESSOR HILBERT

Yes. Why? Do I seem sluggish?

KAY

No. No. Actually, I just quit
myself. I mean, smoking.

PROFESSOR HILBERT

When did you quit?

KAY

Page 311.

PROFESSOR HILBERT

Ah...

They smile at each other.

PROFESSOR HILBERT (CONT'D)

How about something else...?

KAY

Okay. What do you feel like...?

PROFESSOR HILBERT

I don't know. Seems like a good
opportunity to start a new routine.

KAY

Tea...?

PROFESSOR HILBERT

Tea and scones...?

KAY

That... that sounds... yes.

(pause)

You know, I've heard of an excellent
bakery.

(CONTINUED)

PROFESSOR HILBERT

(nods)
Sounds good. Maybe we can visit
Harold. See how he's doing.

KAY

You just read how he's doing. He's
doing fine.

Professor Hilbert stands and takes her hand. They go to the
door and out into the hallway.

We hear him walk away and the office door close as we zoom
in on the last paragraph, which begins with the words, "As
Harold took a bite of Bavarian Sugar Cookie..."

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM -- CONTINUOUS

Harold takes a bite of Bavarian Sugar Cookie...

NARRATOR (V.O.)

As Harold took a bite of Bavarian
Sugar Cookie, he finally felt as if
everything was going to be okay.

(pause)

Sometimes, when we lose ourselves in
fear and despair, in routine and
constancy, in hopelessness and
tragedy... there are Bavarian Sugar
cookies.

Ana strokes his face... his shoulders...

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

And, fortunately, when there aren't
any cookies we can still find
reassurance in a familiar hand on
our skin...

CUT TO:

INT. GARMENT LOFT

NARRATOR

Or a kind and loving gesture...

Penny takes a pack of nicotine patches and places them
squarely on Kay's laptop.

INT. OFFICE

Dave opens up a manila envelope and pulls out the contents.

NARRATOR

Or a subtle encouragement...

It's an application for Space Camp.

INT. BOY'S BEDROOM

NARRATOR

Or a loving embrace...

(CONTINUED)

The boy's father hugs him tightly.

INT. BUS TERMINAL

NARRATOR
Or an offer of comfort.

Carla is surrounded by co-workers who console her.

INT. HOSPITAL EMERGENCY ROOM -- FLASHBACK

We flash back to the scene with Kay in the emergency room, the young gunshot victim being carried in...

NARRATOR
Not to mention hospital gurneys...

INT. SWIMMING POOL -- FLASHBACK

We flash back to the scene with Hilbert at the swimming pool, putting his nose plugs in...

NARRATOR
And nose plugs...

INT. LIBERTY BAKERY -- FLASHBACK

We flash back to the first scene in the bakery, the homeless man eating his Danish.

NARRATOR
And uneaten Danish...

INT. ANA'S BEDROOM -- FLASHBACK

We flash back to the scene with Harold and Ana looking at each other, their heads on their pillows.

NARRATOR
And soft-spoken secrets...

INT. MUSIC STORE -- FLASHBACK

We flash back to the scene with Harold in the music store.

NARRATOR
And Fender Stratocasters...

INT. BUS -- FLASHBACK

We flash back to the scene with Harold reading the manuscript on the bus.

NARRATOR
And maybe, the occasional piece of fiction.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM -- CONTINUOUS

The Flaming Lips' "Do You Realize?" (track 9 on your cd) begins to play. Ana has a pen and is drawing anarchist symbols and propaganda on Harold's cast. He chuckles.

(CONTINUED)

NARRATOR

And we must remember that all these things, the nuances, the anomalies, the subtleties which we assume only accessorize our days, are in fact here for a much larger and nobler cause.

(pause)

They are here to save our lives.

Finished drawing, Ana affectionately touches the gauze on Harold's wrist.

NARRATOR (V.O.) (CONT'D)

I know the idea seems strange. But I also know that it just so happens to be true.

(pause)

And so it was... a wristwatch saved Harold Crick.

He looks at her and smiles.

INT. HILBERT'S OFFICE -- CONTINUOUS

We pan down the final page of the manuscript, through white, until we reach these words:

The End.