

HENRY FOOL

Written by

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SHOOTING DRAFT

EXT. JUNK YARD -- DAY

A garbage truck roars by and...

Simon Grim hangs from the back of it. He is a shy, skinny and terrified-looking guy around thirty years old.

The truck rumbles to a halt and Simon climbs down off it to go punch out at the time clock.

EXT. BEHIND THE WORLD OF DONUTS -- DAY

Moments later.

He comes walking up a small alley and sits to drink his beer.

He begins to relax. This is his quality private time.

Then he hears something and looks up.

He peeks up over the edge of some junked kitchen appliances and sees...

Two teenage kids -- Warren and Amy -- smoking crack and having sex.

Simon looks on, intrigued, as Warren smokes, then...

WARREN

(to Amy)

You want some?

Amy takes the pipe and smokes as he feels her up.

Simon is fascinated. He drinks and looks on as...

Amy grins up foolishly at Warren and lowers the pipe. The boy undoes his belt and hikes up the girl's skirt.

Simon can't believe this. He looks around to see if the coast is clear, then returns just in time to see...

Warren takes Amy by the waist and enter her.

The pipe falls from the young girl's hand.

Warren throws his head back and grinds himself into her.

Simon's mouth falls open in awe.

But Amy tosses her head back to the side and sees...

The amazed garbage man; caught.

Amy starts screaming insanely.

Simon runs for his life.

Amy and Warren throw rocks and bottles at him as they chase him away.

INT. THE GRIM HOUSE -- DAY

Moments later.

Simon runs up and throws open the screen door. He stands there in the doorway catching his breath.

His sister, Fay, is at the kitchen table watching a small portable TV while their mother, Mary, sits a few feet away in the living-room watching another TV tuned to a different channel.

FAY

(to Simon)

Where the hell have you been?

(to Mary)

Mom, come on and eat.

MARY

I'm not hungry.

FAY

(pissed)

Then why'd I cook!

Mary is a manic-depressive, still in her bathrobe at six in the evening.

MARY

I don't know why you cooked! I don't know why you bother!

Fay holds her head in her hands and sighs. She glares at her brother.

FAY

Sit down and eat, Simon.

Simon sits at the table and Fay slams down before him a bowl

of some sort of gruel. He hesitates, then lifts his spoon. Supper is horrible and he screws up his face in disgust. Fay gives him a sideways glance and he leans back down over the bowl and eats some more.

Pushing the bowl away gently, he reaches out for the container of milk on the table and drinks straight from it.

He suddenly jumps back and spits out sour milk all over the table. The container drops to the floor and thick globs of cheese roll out.

He stands back against the fridge, holding his stomach while...

Fay and Mary look on in disgust.

EXT. THE GRIM HOUSE -- DAY

Moments later.

Simon crosses the lawn and sits on the curb outside his house. He stares at the ground before him as he holds his stomach and spits, sickened.

He looks up, though, and sees...

A little seven-year-old girl -- Pearl age seven -- standing there in the street watching him.

Simon tries to smile at her.

But she throws a rock at him and hits him in the head.

He falls forward, hurt, as the little girl runs away. Lowering his hand, he sees he's bleeding. Desperate, lonely and ill, he drags his bloodied fingers across the coarse pavement.

Fay slams out of the side door of the house in a tight-fitting dress and stands on the lawn, applying lipstick.

FAY

God, I wanna get fucked.

Fay snaps shut her compact, straightens her skirt and sighs.

FAY

You OK?

Simon loses track of what he is hearing and relaxes. He looks back at his sister.

Fay fluffs out her hair and walks off.

FAY

See ya later.

Simon watches her go, but is still drawn to something he seems to hear up the street in the other direction. He cocks his head, sits perfectly still and listens.

He hears it now. We do, too. Footsteps. Big ones. Like a giant somewhere in the distance. The neighborhood trembles.

Titles begin.

Simon tries to figure out where it's coming from; the sky, the house, the highway at the end of his block... Finally, he focuses on...

The blacktop right before him, smeared with his own blood.

Music starts.

He kneels out slowly into the street and stares at the pavement. He stretches out his hand and places it flat on the road. The pounding is louder now, becoming the beat of the music over the scene.

Simon lowers his face to the pavement, closes his eyes and...

Puts his ear right down against the road. He hears...

The steady tread of somebody very much larger than life.

Kneeling forward, with his ear to the ground, Simon opens his eyes and sees...

A man approaching. The music swells up full.

Simon lifts his head slowly from the road, looking off in wonder at...

This stranger coming towards him; an oddly handsome freak striding over the crest of the distant intersection with a windswept mane, two over-stuffed suitcases and a crumpled tie fluttering back over his broad but crooked shoulders.

Simon rises till he's kneeling up straight in the road.

Henry Fool finally reaches him and stops.

Titles finish.

Simon says nothing and watches as Henry looks off at the house.

Satisfied, but wary, Henry Fool looks around the neighborhood and then down at Simon.

HENRY

Get up off your knees.

He tosses the suitcases down in front of Simon and walks off

towards his new home.

EXT. BACK OF THE GRIM HOUSE -- DAY

Henry comes around behind the house and finds the door to his basement apartment. He approaches. Simon follows, carrying the suitcases.

INT. HENRY'S APARTMENT -- DAY

Moments later.

The door is wrenched open and Henry is hit square in the jaw by a decade of dank airless gloom. He coughs.

Entering, he finds a few old wooden chairs littering the main room. He inspects the old wood stove, then takes a chair and smashes it. He tosses the wood in the stove.

Simon looks on, amazed. Henry lights a fire with unusually quick results, then stands back and looks at Simon.

HENRY

Where you gotta go to get a six-pack
of beer around here?

INT. WORLD OF DONUTS -- DAY

This is a convenience store with a number of tables at which to eat donuts.

Warren is shoplifting while Amy terrorizes Gnoc Deng, the Vietnamese cashier, who stares out at them from behind the safety of the counter.

AMY

Say something.

WARREN

(calling)
She's mute.

AMY

What?

WARREN

She don't -- you know -- talk.

Amy looks back at Gnoc, snarls, then follows the cashier's gaze to the door.

Simon enters. Clutching Henry's cash, he stops dead in his tracks when he sees...

Warren and Amy.

He steps forward and approaches the beer cooler.

Warren and Amy hover around, just out of reach, like a couple of vampires.

Dragging a six-pack out of the cooler, Simon crosses to the counter. Warren and Amy hang back, silent and threatening.

Gnoc rings up the purchase and glances over at...

Amy, staring a hole into the side of Simon's skull.

Gnoc hands Simon back his change and he makes for the door, but...

Warren shoves himself between it and Simon.

Simon freezes. Warren is expressionless. Simon looks back at Amy. She turns away, reaches up under her skirt, jerks down her panties, then leans forward on to the counter. Leering back over her shoulder, she hisses...

AMY

Kiss my ass.

Simon is nonplussed.

Gnoc presses a button on the wall that sets...

A red light flashing above the stockroom door.

Warren grabs Simon by the neck and drags him over to Amy's bare behind. Amy laughs as Simon is forced to his knees and has his face shoved up right into the crack of her ass.

But then... Simon throws up all over her.

Warren falls back in disgust.

Gnoc covers her face with her hands.

Amy looks around at herself, realizes, and starts screaming bloody murder.

Simon falls back on to the floor, clutching his stomach, as Amy staggers around with her vomit-strewn underwear down around her ankles.

Then Gnoc's father, Mr Deng, appears at the stockroom door holding a shovel and ready to fight.

WARREN

(scared)

Oh, shit!

Mr Deng comes running at them and Warren drags Amy from the store. Simon crawls out of the way as the old man throws open the door to the parking lot and screams at the retreating

delinquents...

MR DENG

(in Vietnamese)

Stay the hell out of my store, you
good-for-nothing punks!

Having scared them off, he comes back in and starts screaming
at Simon.

MR DENG

Look at this! What's going on here?
Simon, get up off the floor! Is this
beer paid for?

INT. HENRY'S APARTMENT -- NIGHT

Later.

Simon splashes water over his face at the kitchen sink, then
watches as Henry unpacks one of his suitcases. It is filled
with dozens of old, worn notebooks. Henry stacks them on the
mantelpiece over the fireplace; the fire is now crackling
and bright.

Simon steps over and looks at...

The name tag on the other suitcase: 'Henry Fool'.

HENRY

(off-screen)

Centuries ago it had an 'e' at the
end.

Simon looks over and sees...

Henry's silhouette against the fire. He steps forward into
the light and grabs a beer from the six-pack on the floor.
He hands one to Simon.

Simon takes it and stares at it a moment before raising his
eyes to Henry.

SIMON

Where do you come from?

HENRY

Nowhere in particular.

He winks at Simon, then struts around the room, hugely
impressed with himself.

HENRY

I go where I will and I do what I
must.

(stops, drinks)

That's why I'm in trouble. I'm sort've

what you might call... 'in exile'.

SIMON

Why are you in trouble?

HENRY

(stopping)

An honest man is always in trouble,
Simon. Remember that.

Simon comes away from the fire, watching him carefully. Henry stands in a dim corner across the room.

SIMON

How do you know my name?

Henry pauses, looks aside, drinks, then grins demoniacally. He steps forward and comes face to face with Simon. He lifts his finger and points to...

Simon's name stitched upon the breast of his work shirt.

Realizing this, Simon moves off and thinks.

Henry throws more wood on the fire, glancing back over his shoulder, laughing mischievously.

SIMON

(stopping him)

I am not retarded.

HENRY

(pauses)

Well... I'll take your word for that.

SIMON

(explaining)

People. I mean. They think. You know.
Because.

He tries to articulate what he thinks he feels but winds up gesticulating curiously with his hands. This finally dissolves into a dumb stare into empty space.

HENRY

I see.

Simon looks at him. Henry stands and grabs a notebook from off the mantelpiece. He tears out a few pages and shoves them in his pocket. He hands the now fresh writing tablet to Simon.

HENRY

Here. Take this. And...

He searches his pockets and finds a pencil.

HENRY

...this. Keep them with you at all times. You ever feel like you got something to say and you can't get it out, stop and write it down. OK?

Simon hesitates, then accepts the gifts. Henry goes for another beer while his new friend studies the dozens of notebooks on the mantelpiece.

SIMON

What are these?

HENRY

(proudly, returning)
This? This is my life's work. My memoirs. My 'Confession'.

SIMON

(carefully)
What have you done?

Henry drinks and looks down into the raging fire.

HENRY

(wistfully)
I've been bad. Repeatedly.
(shrugs and steps away)
But why brag? The details of my exploits are only a pretext for a far more expansive consideration of general truths.
(contemplating the notebooks)
What is this? It's a philosophy. A poetics. A politics, if you will. A literature of protest. A novel of ideas. A pornographic magazine of truly comic-book proportions. It is, in the end, whatever the hell I want it to be. And when I'm through with it, it's gunna blow a hole this wide straight through the world's own idea of itself!

He smokes. Simon is impressed. They hear a bottle smash outside in the street and Henry goes to the window. They're throwing bottles at the house.

HENRY

(throwing down his cigarette)
Come on, let's go break their arms!

Simon jumps up.

SIMON

No!

Henry stops. Simon looks away and sits back down.

SIMON

(pauses)

If I'm quiet.

He is ashamed of himself.

Henry sees this and settles down. He considers his new friend with genuine care as he gets himself a new cigarette. He lights up, thinks, then grabs another chair and sits close by Simon. They sit there in silence a while, then...

HENRY

Once. I forget where I was. Central America maybe. Somewhere hot. Stupid job. Bad pay. Dangerous location and water so foul the natives wouldn't even piss in it. This crowd of drunken motherfuckers hired by the local drug cartel shows up at my hotel room and threatens to tear me limb from limb. And I say, listen, hombres, OK, you've got me outnumbered four to one and you're gunna kill me here tonight and not a soul in this dimly lit world is ever gunna notice I'm gone. Fine. But one of you... one of you... one of you is gunna have his eye torn out. Period. Silence. I repeat myself. One of you poor, underpaid jerks is gunna have an eye ripped out of its socket. I promise. It's a small thing, perhaps, all things considered. But I will succeed. Because it's the only thing I have left to do in this world. So why don't you just take a good look at one another one last time and think it over for a few minutes more.

(smokes, waits)

They sober up a little, look at their shoes in confusion, then step out into the hall to talk among themselves.

Henry stares into the flames and falls silent. Simon is riveted. He leans forward, on the edge of his seat...

SIMON

What happened?

HENRY

(winking)

Well, here I am, still, after all.

INT. THE GRIM HOUSE. UPSTAIRS -- NIGHT

Later that night.

Simon climbs the stairs and stops when he hears raunchy sex from his sister's room. He stands outside her door and listens.

MARY

(off)

Did you throw up all over some girl?

Simon looks up the hall and sees his mother in her room, sitting on the edge of her bed, smoking. He approaches and stands in her doorway.

MARY

They were throwing bottles at the house.

Simon says nothing. He looks down at his feet.

MARY

(gesturing to Fay's room)

She's got some ex-con in there she met at the bar. Tattoos all over himself and a big red bloated nose.

SIMON

Did you take your pills?

Now she says nothing. She smokes and looks away.

Simon steps into the bathroom and gets her medication. He runs a glass of water and brings it in to her.

She swallows the pills and washes them back with water.

SIMON

You want me to tell her to be quiet?

She looks away, unconcerned and cynical.

MARY

What's the use? She might as well get it while she can. She's not always gunna have the ass she has now, you know. That's just how life is.

She throws the blanket over herself and turns off the light. Simon stands there in the dark.

INT. THE GRIM HOUSE KITCHEN -- NIGHT

Moments later.

Simon comes downstairs into the quiet, dark kitchen and sits at the table. He listens to the traffic on the highway and stares off into space. Finally, he takes the notebook Henry gave him from his pocket and places it before him. But then he just gazes off into the dim living-room and scratches his head. Returning his attention to the notebook, he digs down into his pocket and retrieves his short stub of pencil.

He opens the notebook and carefully flattens back the cover. Lifting the pencil, he pauses and stares at the blank page. Then, after more intense hesitation, he brings the pencil's dull tip to the very top left edge of the page and begins writing in a slow, laborious hand.

INT. THE GRIM HOUSE KITCHEN -- DAY

The next morning.

Henry barges in the kitchen door with two containers of coffee and some jelly donuts. Simon jumps up from where he sits asleep over his notebook at the table.

HENRY

Good morning, Simon! Glorious day,
huh? Here, have a donut. Can you
lend me twenty dollars?

Simon rubs the sleep from his eyes, blinks, disoriented and reaches for his wallet.

HENRY

Thanks. Where's the library in the
scruffy little burgh?

SIMON

(handing him cash)
Down the highway about a mile and a
half and then make a left.

HENRY

Excellent! I'm polishing up the final
chapters of my 'Confession' and I
need a reasonably well-stocked
reference section.

He lifts up Simon's notebook.

HENRY

What's this?

Simon hesitates, shyly.

SIMON

I thought. Um. I was. I wanted to.
Maybe.

He gives up, sighs and gazes at the floor. Henry flips through the book, impressed. It is full from cover to cover, every page dense with Simon's cryptic scrawl. Henry frowns, intrigued. Then...

HENRY

Can I take this?

Simon looks up, terrified. But his friend puts him at ease.

HENRY

I'll correct the spelling.

EXT. JUNK YARD -- DAY

Later that day.

Simon finds a number of volumes of the classics while crushing garbage.

EXT. BEHIND WORLD OF DONUTS -- DAY

That evening.

Simon sits with his evening beer and his new collection of soiled classics. He cracks open a volume of Shakespeare and tries to read. It's an obvious struggle. He puts it aside and lifts up Wordsworth, studying its cover and the texture of the pages. A page flutters away and he climbs down to the edge of a greasy puddle to retrieve it. It's now wet and torn, so he flattens it out on the concrete and tries to fit it back into the book.

He reads a little, furrowing his brow, then drinks. He bites his lip and tries again.

He sits back, exhausted and thinks. He hears a twig snap and looks back over his shoulder to see...

Amy throws a bottle at his head.

Smash!!!! He falls to the ground, blood streaming down his neck.

Warren runs over and grabs him by the shirt, lifting him out of the puddle and smacking him in the head.

Amy runs forward and waits with a rolled-up newspaper which she sets aflame with her lighter.

Warren punches Simon in the stomach and throws him to the ground, then unzips his fly and pisses on him.

Amy watches, giggling excitedly, waving the flaming torch.

Simon crawls away and grabs hold of an old section of fence,

while Warren zips up and grabs the fire from Amy.

Simon pulls himself to his knees, rests his face against the rusted fence and gasps for breath. Warren waves the flaming torch in his face.

SIMON

(weakly, unheard)

One of you is gunna lose an eye.

Amy comes nearer with a can of gasoline. Simon pulls himself to his feet as she splashes him with fuel. Warren is waving the torch deliriously above his head.

SIMON

(screaming)

One of you is gunna lose an eye!

Warren stops.

Amy steps back and lowers the gas can.

Simon turns with effort to face them, adjusts his glasses and continues...

SIMON

One of you. I promise.

Warren watches him blankly, then is burned by the torch which is too hot to handle. He drops it.

Amy giggles, then stops, excited, but confused.

Simon grips the rusted chainlink so that it cuts into his hands and stares straight at Warren.

SIMON

You can set me on fire. But one of you is gunna have an eye torn out of your head. I promise.

Warren is transfixed. He shivers and looks at Amy, who steps back, scared, and puts down the gas can. She turns and walks away.

Warren looks back at Simon, troubled.

He hangs there still, glaring at him.

Further away, Warren rejoins Amy and stares at his hands. Amy looks ill.

WARREN

Fuck.

AMY

Take me home.

INT. WORLD OF DONUTS -- DAY

Henry is at one of the tables, correcting the spelling in Simon's notebook, when he looks up and sees...

Simon stumble in, beaten and bruised, dropping his classics to the floor. Henry and Mr Deng rush over to him.

HENRY

(scared)

Simon! Who did this to you?

SIMON

I was gunna tear out their eyes. I knew I could do it.

HENRY

Whose eyes?

SIMON

I told them. Like you said. I told them. And I knew I could do it.

He passes out. Henry looks at Mr Deng.

MR DENG

You should take him home. He smells like a toilet.

Henry nods, agreeing, then lifts Simon off the floor. Mr Deng holds the door open as Henry carries his friend out into the parking lot.

Meanwhile, Gnoc gathers up the classics from the floor and places them beside Simon's notebook, where it still sits open on the table. She looks at it, then reads. She lifts it off the table and reads further, immediately and deeply engrossed.

Mr Deng watches as Henry departs with Simon, then comes back into the store and stops, startled, when he sees...

Gnoc sitting there, staring off into space, the notebook open in her hands before her, singing quietly.

INT. THE GRIM HOUSE -- DAY

Twenty minutes later.

Fay is in the bathroom helping Simon out of his clothes, trying to clean his wounds.

FAY

(calling)

Shit, Mom, we gotta get him to a hospital!

SIMON

No!

FAY

Oh, shut up! Turn around.

Henry is at the kitchen table with Mary. She watches him suspiciously. He lets her.

MARY

This kinda thing has happened before.

HENRY

(standing)

It won't happen again.

She watches him as he walks around the room, browsing.

MARY

How do you know?

He stops and lifts a small framed photo of a soldier off the piano.

HENRY

This your husband?

Violated somehow, she gets up and snatches it out of his hands. She puts it in a drawer and cringes as Henry plays one note on the piano.

MARY

Stop that.

He fixes her with a steady, knowing stare which causes her to gather the collar of her bathrobe up around her neck. She steps back, exposed, when there's a knock at the door. They look over to see...

Mr Deng enter with the notebook.

MR DENG

(nods to Mary, then)

Mr Fool, what is this?

HENRY

It's poetry.

MR DENG

Are you sure?

Henry comes over, takes the notebook from him and shoves it in his pocket.

HENRY

Of course I'm sure. I corrected the

spelling myself.

MR DENG

It made my daughter sing.

HENRY

Yeah, well, you know -- that's what poetry does.

MR DENG

But she has never spoken in her life.

Meanwhile, back in the bathroom...

SIMON

Owww!!!

FAY

Keep still!

SIMON

Let me do it!

FAY

(fed up)

Fine! You do it, Simon! I don't care!

She storms out to the top of the stairs, cocks her hip and whines...

FAY

Mom! Simon's got a broken rib, his shoulder's dislocated or something, and he won't let me disinfect the gash in his head!

MARY

Fay, just take him to the hospital, will ya!

FAY

(stamping her foot)

But he won't go!

MARY

(screaming)

Simon Grim, you go to the hospital with Fay right now, do hear me!

Simon reaches out and slams the bathroom door.

Fay looks from the bathroom door down the stairs to Mary. Mary, her nerves rattled, glances over at Mr Deng, who turns and leaves the house.

Henry lights a fresh cigarette, loosens his tie and heads upstairs.

INT. THE GRIM HOUSE BATHROOM -- DAY

A moment later.

Henry throws open the door and enters. He steps over Simon, who is on the floor, folded up against the toilet.

HENRY

We gotta talk.

Henry sits on the edge of the bathtub and takes the notebook from his pocket.

HENRY

What the hell were you trying to do when you wrote this thing?

Simon just looks at him, not certain what he means.

SIMON

Nothing.

HENRY

Well, you know you wrote it in a kind of iambic pentameter.

SIMON

Iambic what?

HENRY

Verse.

He scratches his chin and smokes.

HENRY

Look, in my opinion, this is pretty powerful stuff. Though your spelling is Neanderthal, and your reasoning a little naive, your instincts are profound. But the whole thing needs to be given a more cohesive shape. It can be expanded. Followed through. Unified.

(smokes, then)

You see what I'm getting at?

Simon just stares at him, overwhelmed. Henry drops the notebook on the floor and points at it with his cigarette.

HENRY

Are you willing to commit yourself to this? To really work on it? To give it its due? In the face of adversity and discouragement? To rise to the challenge you yourself have set?

Simon just blinks, looks away and wonders.

HENRY

And don't gimme that wonderstruck
'I'm-only-a-humble-garbage-man'
bullshit, either.

SIMON

It hurts to breathe.

HENRY

(nodding)
Of course it does.

Simon coughs and Henry leans back and smokes.

INT. THE GRIM HOUSE UPSTAIRS -- NIGHT

An hour later.

Fay cringes outside Simon's room as Henry goes about setting her brother's arm.

SIMON

Like this?

HENRY

Yeah. No. OK?

SIMON

Wait!

HENRY

Don't move! Fuck. There.

SIMON

Are you sure that's right?

HENRY

Yes. Now shut up and lie back.

Simon does.

SIMON

Is this gunna hurt?

HENRY

Yes.

He pauses, then leans back.

HENRY

You gunna be alright?

Simon nods and stares at the ceiling. Henry hands him a towel.

HENRY

Here. Bite on this.

SIMON

(spots blood on it)
What's that?

HENRY

(looking)
It's blood. From your head. Lie back.
Shove that in your mouth and hold on
to something.

Simon bites down on the towel and grips the edge of the bed with his free hand. Henry sits on his legs and gently raises the broken arm.

Outside the door, Fay bites her knuckles. Further down the hall, Mary listens from her bedroom.

HENRY

Okay. You ready?

Simon nods. Henry grabs hold of the arm, swallows and braces himself. Simon waits, then Henry tugs the arm straight.

SIMON

Aaagghhh!!!!!!

Fay turns and runs down the stairs. Mary backs away into her room and shuts the door.

INT. THE GRIM HOUSE KITCHEN -- NIGHT

Later that night.

Henry comes downstairs and stops, tired. Fay is sitting at the table with a bottle of gin and two glasses. She has dolled herself up a little and Henry likes what he sees. He looks her over and she smiles. He sits. She pours. They drink.

FAY

So, do you have, like, you know, a
girlfriend, Henry?

HENRY

No.

They drink again in silence. He lights her cigarette and they watch each other closely. Finally, Fay leans on the table and twirls a strand of her hair between her fingers.

FAY

Do you find me attractive?

HENRY

Yes, I do.

FAY

I look young for my age, don't I?

HENRY

How old are you?

FAY

How old do you think I am?

HENRY

You look young.

FAY

(playfully)

How young?

HENRY

I don't know. Young.

FAY

But how... I mean, do I look more
like twenty, or... you know, thirty?

He drinks and studies her. She presents her profile. Finally,
he leans back.

HENRY

Thirty.

Fay jumps up, furious.

FAY

Listen, you geek, after a couple of
drinks plenty of people mistake me
for eighteen!

She grabs her bag and storms out of the house. Henry watches
her go, then chuckles deviously and splashes himself another
drink.

EXT. WORLD OF DONUTS -- DAY

Next morning.

A thirty-year-old cocktail waitress named Vicky walks up and
stops when she sees...

Warren, sitting back against the side of World of Donuts,
smoking a joint and thinking about his future.

She sighs and approaches.

VICKY

Hey, Warren, are you a registered
voter?

WARREN

Bug off, Vicky!

Unruffled, she hands him a flyer.

WARREN

(reading)

'Saving America From Itself.' What the fuck is this?

VICKY

It's everything you need to know about the upcoming elections and congressman Owen Feer and all the really good things he wants to do for our country.

He takes deeply, then...

WARREN

Oh yeah, like what?

VICKY

He wants to win back this country for us Americans, Warren, and restore some kind of cultural-moral standard to our way of life.

Warren looks over the flyer, then reconsiders Vicky.

WARREN

What time's your kid go off to school?

VICKY

(carefully)

Nine o'clock.

WARREN

How about I come over and visit you later?

Vicky sighs, troubled. She adjusts her waitress uniform and looks mildly offended.

VICKY

Well, I don't know, Warren. I mean...

Warren gets up, too.

WARREN

Come on. I mean it. I'm trying to change.

Vicky is hard-pressed. She wants to believe him, but knows better. She thinks about it while...

Henry passes by and approaches the store.

INT. WORLD OF DONUTS -- DAY

Same time.

Henry enters and takes Simon's notebook from his pocket. He flips through a few pages and selects one in particular.

He tears it out of the book and tapes it up beside the register so customers can read it. He winks at Gnoc. She smiles shyly and makes him a coffee. He takes it and moves off to a table just as...

Vicky enters. She starts accumulating groceries, placing them on the counter one item at a time.

Henry settles down and watches as...

Vicky returns to the counter with a bottle of orange juice and notices the poem. She reads, holding the orange juice out to her side.

Gnoc starts to ring up the other purchases as her father comes up behind her, busying himself with an inventory of the cigarettes.

Vicky's lip starts to tremble as she reads, a horrified expression clouding her face. Finally...

Smash!!!! She drops the bottle of orange juice and stands back. Mr Deng and Gnoc jump back, alarmed.

Henry tilts his head and pays close attention.

VICKY

(screaming at Mr Deng)
How dare you put something like this
up where anyone can see it!

Mr Deng looks from her to the poem and then over at Henry. Henry urges the man to stand up for himself.

MR DENG

(to Vicky)
It's poetry.

VICKY

It's pornography! The product of a
diseased mind! You oughta be ashamed
of yourself, Mr Deng!

MR DENG

It made Gnoc sing.

VICKY

(pauses, confused)
It's disgusting! There oughta be a

law or something!

She grabs her things and leaves. Mr Deng holds his head and looks over at Henry.

HENRY

(winking)

There's no accounting for taste, is there, Mr Deng?

Mr Deng has no idea. He sits, worried, as Gnoc comes out from behind the counter and begins mopping up the mess.

INT. THE GRIM HOUSE KITCHEN - DAY

Later.

Henry is at the kitchen table with Simon, working on the poem. Simon is bandaged up, his arm in a sling, black eyes, etc.

HENRY

See, Simon, there are three kinds of there. There's 'There'. T-H-E-R-E. There are the donuts. Then there's T-H-E-I-R; which is the possessive. It is their donut. Then, finally, there's 'they're'. T-H-E-Y-'-R-E. A contraction, meaning they are. They're the donut people. Get it?

SIMON

Uh-huh.

Henry lifts up one of Simon's newly acquired classics...

HENRY

And look, if you're gunna read Wordsworth you've gotta get a more up-to-date edition. This odoriferous tome you're so attached to doesn't even have all fourteen books of the Prelude. And you need notes. Commentary. I'll go to the library and find you the best edition they have.

SIMON

Thank you, but that's OK. I'll stop there on my way back from work. Well, yes, maybe not today, but, you know, tomorrow, probably.

HENRY

Quit.

SIMON

My job?

HENRY

Yeah.

SIMON

Why?

HENRY

You need time to write, Simon. To study. To reflect.

SIMON

But I like my job.

HENRY

We all have to make sacrifices. A vocation like ours, Simon, is not a nine to five thing. You can't put a fence around a man's soul. We think and feel where and when we can think and feel. We are the servants of our muse and we toil where she commands.

Simon looks past him and Henry follows his gaze to find...

Mary standing at the foot of the stairs, listening to them. She says nothing. She looks Henry up and down, then shakes her head disdainfully and grunts. She throws herself on the couch and turns on the TV, casting acid glances over at the kitchen.

EXT. THE GRIM HOUSE - DAY

Moments later.

Henry and Simon come outside...

SIMON

She's clinically depressed.

HENRY

Yeah, and what's that mean?

SIMON

(thinking, then)

I guess it means it's not her fault.

Henry wanders out to the road, checking his wallet, then...

HENRY

(sighing)

You ever think of leaving?

SIMON

Here?

HENRY

Yeah.

SIMON

To go where?

HENRY

Out there. You know, into the world.
Where ever.

Simon looks off, thinks it over and slowly nods.

SIMON

Yeah, I guess.

HENRY

(reciting)
'Opportunity will step away and make
room for a man to pass it by.'

SIMON

Is that from your book?

HENRY

No. I found it in a fortune cookie.

He pulls the tiny piece of crumpled advice out from one of
his pockets and shows it to Simon.

SIMON

Can I read your confession?

HENRY

No. Not yet. Soon. We'll see.

SIMON

Is it almost finished?

HENRY

(puffing himself up)
Well, you know, Simon, a piece of
work like this, it's... A vocation
like ours... You can't put a fence
around a man's soul. What I'm trying
to achieve, it's... Well, it takes a
lifetime really. It's a life's work.
(looking around)
But soon. Don't worry. I'd appreciate
your feedback. I gotta go. See ya.

He hurries away around the corner. Simon walks back to the
house and stops when he sees...

A plain-clothes policeman, Officer Buñuel, drive up and park
before the house.

Simon spies as the man gets out of his car and knocks on

Henry's door. He, of course, gets no answer.

INT. THE GRIM HOUSE KITCHEN -- DAY

Later that day.

Simon works on his poem at the kitchen table while Fay flips through a magazine and watches TV. Mary, lying on the couch in her bathrobe, watches her own TV.

The cacophony is augmented by the rattling dishwasher and the trucks rumbling by on the highway outside.

Mary looks over at her son, suspicious, and leans off the couch.

MARY

What are you doing there, Simon?

He carefully finishes writing a word, then looks up and pauses.

SIMON

I'm writing a poem.

Mary looks at Fay, who looks up from her magazine and considers her brother. Then they break out laughing.

Simon looks on.

They laugh and laugh and laugh...

INT. WORLD OF DONUTS -- DAY

Later.

Simon is bent over his notebook, consulting a dictionary, hard at work.

Amy and three kids are grouped around the register, reading the page Henry taped up earlier. As they read, Amy glances anxiously back at Simon.

They finish reading and stand back.

PAT

So what? It ain't so great.

CHRIS

(to Amy, of Simon)
That him?

Amy nods 'Yes', then leads them towards Simon.

Simon scribbles away.

AMY

(off)
Pardon me, Simon.

He looks up, sees her, panics and slides away on the seat.
Amy looks down and bites her lip, contrite. She sighs.

AMY
Uhm. Look, ah... I'm the editor of
the high school newspaper now and...

PAT
One of the editors.

AMY
One of the editors, and we...

PAT
You.

AMY
I... wanted to know if we could print
your poem in this month's issue.

Simon looks around at them all, threatened.

SIMON
Why?

AMY
Because I think it's great.

PAT
I don't.

CHRIS
(to Pat)
Who cares what you think?

TED
You're a drag.

CHRIS
A well-known drag.

AMY
(to Simon)
Please?

Simon fumbles with his pencil, ill at ease and self-conscious.
Then, to get rid of them, he nods his consent.

INT. THE GRIM HOUSE -- DAY

That evening.

Fay comes downstairs in only a towel and wet hair. She
switches on the TV and looks for cigarettes. She finds Mary's

pills on the table and remembers to ask...

FAY

Ma, you take your medication?

Mary is lying on the couch. She drags her eyes from the TV and glances lazily at Fay, then back to the TV.

FAY

(to herself)

Guess so.

She sits at the kitchen table and lifts her magazine.

Henry shows up at the kitchen door with a pile of library books. His eyes brighten when he sees...

Fay sitting there wearing only her towel. He knocks. She looks back over her shoulder and sees him.

HENRY

Evening, Fay.

FAY

(disdainfully)

What do you want?

HENRY

I've got these books for Simon.

She turns away.

FAY

Well, leave 'em there on the counter, then.

He comes in and stacks the books near the sink. Fay pretends to ignore him, but rakes her fingers through her wet hair anyway, to show more shoulder.

This is not lost on Henry, who tarries and leans back against the counter, salivating.

Fay flips through her magazine and Henry steps closer and leans against the fridge.

She casts a bored glance in his direction, then returns her attention to the TV. She senses him step aside and follows his movements without turning. Suddenly his hand appears from behind her and gently strokes her hair. She freezes, waits, wonders...

He leans his face down beside her. She looks at him. He looks at her, then down to...

Her bare legs crossed before her on the kitchen chair. His hand moves down and slides itself deep in between her things.

Her mouth drops open.

He looks back up at her. He grins.

Fay jumps up and away, breathlessly clutching the towel around herself.

Henry casts a glance over her body, throws his hair back out of his face and shivers with lust.

Fay steps back and grabs hold of the staircase banister, making an unconvincing gesture of injured pride.

Henry comes closer and she steps backwards up the stairs.

He stops, loosens his tie, holding her with his gaze.

She readjusts her towel, throws back her wet hair, sighs defiantly, then sashays into her room, leaving the door ajar.

Henry waits there at the foot of the stairs, reaches down, grabs his crotch and repositions his hard-on. He takes a step up the stairs, then stops. He looks over to the couch and sees...

Mary, lying there, sedately amazed.

He pauses, then grins.

Mary blinks and smiles sleepily.

INT. WORLD OF DONUTS -- DAY

Same time.

Simon sits back from his writing and rubs his neck. Putting down his pencil, he looks up and sees...

Warren enter the store and grab a beer from the cooler. Seeing Simon, he waves and approaches.

WARREN

Hey, Simon, you a registered voter?

Simon hesitates, but then nods uncertainly. Warren hands him a flyer. This year when you go to the polls, I want you to consider Congressman Owen Feer. He wants to restore America to its position of unmatched wealth, power and opportunity; to revitalize American civilization and lead the human race to even greater levels of freedom, prosperity and security! He's a good man.

He steps over to the register and pays for his beer. Mr Deng glares at him, distrustfully. Warren stops on his way out and snarls at the old man...

WARREN

Immigrant.

He leaves. Simon looks down and studies the flyer.

INT. THE GRIM HOUSE. UPSTAIRS -- DAY

Same time.

Fay lies across her bed in her towel, holding a pose and glancing anxiously back at the door. Finally, losing her patience, she gets up.

FAY

Where is he?

She opens the door and looks out into the hall.

He's not there.

She steps out into the hall and listens.

FAY

Henry?

Nothing. She comes to the top of the stairs and hears faint activity from down below. She proceeds downstairs.

She sees no one in the kitchen, then looks in the living-room and stops. She goes white, her mouth falling open in horror.

Henry and Mary are screwing one another on the couch. Sloppy, impassioned, brute sex.

FAY

(screaming)

Mommy!!!!

They fall away from each other in terror and fatigue. Mary clutches wildly at her bathrobe as Henry falls over the coffee table, stumbles to his feet and pulls up his trousers.

Fay is crushed. She breaks out in tears and runs upstairs.

Henry catches his breath and starts after her, but stops, uncertain and confused.

MARY

You bastard!

HENRY

What?

MARY

Get out!

INT. WORLD OF DONUTS -- DAY

Simon is asleep with his head down on the table. He wakes finally and sees...

Henry sitting across from him, gripping a beer and reading the poem. He finishes, shuts the book and drinks.

HENRY

Listen. I know a man. He's a big shot in the publishing business. Angus James. Smart, adventurous and tons of integrity. When this thing is ready, I'll recommend he reads it. He'll respect my opinion.

Simon takes this in, then looks down at his hands and proceeds carefully.

SIMON

A man was here today looking for you.

HENRY

(alert)
What man?

SIMON

I don't know. He drove by the house a few times.

Henry throws his eyes heavenward and pulls his hair. Jumping to his feet, he paces maniacally.

HENRY

Why do they torment me like this?
Why? They're like a bunch of fucking mosquitoes!

A customer a few tables away gets nervous and leaves.

SIMON

What do they want from you?

HENRY

They want to suffocate me, Simon!
They wanna extinguish me like a flame!

Some kid named Tim, sitting at another table, turns around and asks...

TIM

But why?

HENRY

They're afraid, that's why! They're afraid of what I might do! What I

might say! Think! They're afraid of
my ideas!

He drinks, then returns and sits beside Simon.

HENRY

You and I are alike in this way,
Simon.

SIMON

Yeah?

HENRY

We're outsiders. We think and feel
too much and too deeply. And the
world can't handle that. Our mere
existence is a threat to its illusion
of security. Sure, they'll name a
wing of a new library after us when
we're dead! But now... Now, when
we're alive... Now, they wanna burn
us at the stake!

He drinks, burps, then slams down the can. He glances over
at Tim who is still looking on.

HENRY

Scram.

Tim hesitates, but then obeys. He gets up and leaves. Henry
returns to Simon.

HENRY

For example, I made love to your
mother about half an hour ago and
now I'm beginning to think that maybe
it wasn't such a good idea.

Simon blinks. Henry adds...

HENRY

I mean to say, I think Fay may be
jealous.

Simon is deeply confused. He looks ill. He stands and takes
a few steps away, staring at the floor.

SIMON

I don't want to think about this.

HENRY

Bad move, Simon.

Simon stops and looks at him.

HENRY

(pointing at him)

A poet has got to be able to think
about anything.

Simon pauses, then comes closer to Henry and stops.

SIMON

Am I really a poet?

Henry jumps up, strides around the store and speaks at the
top of his voice.

HENRY

Of course you are! A great poet! But
you need experience. You need to do
something to be ashamed of every
once in a while, for cryin' out loud.

He walks to the door.

HENRY

Come on! Let's go out! There's a den
of iniquity right across the street!
You got any money?

He strides out of the store.

Simon stands there, stunned and looks at Mr Deng as the old
man wipes off the table with a wet rag.

INT. THE INFERNO -- NIGHT

Later that night.

Henry is dancing wildly on the bar with two sloppy-drunk
topless dancers. The place is rocking and the crowd cheers
them on.

Simon sits perched on a stool, gripping the bar with white
knuckles and clutching a beer, looking on in terror as...

Henry starts stripping.

INT. THE GRIM HOUSE -- NIGHT

Later that night.

Simon stumbles in and heads upstairs. But he stops, seeing...

Mary, sitting on the top step, smoking. She looks guilty and
tense. So does Simon.

MARY

That man's a bad influence.

SIMON

On who?

She gets up and storms into her room.

INT. FAY'S ROOM -- NIGHT

Moments later.

Simon comes upstairs and stops outside his bedroom door when he sees...

Fay, passed out drunk on her bed. Her clothes are half off and her lipstick smeared. She still grips a bottle of tequila in her hand.

Simon hesitates, but then goes in and removes her shoes. He gets her out of her jacket and rolls her into the bed.

Her bare limbs have their effect on Simon and he finds himself staring at her thigh.

He reaches out and almost caresses her leg where her hiked-up skirt reveals the bottom of her behind. He catches himself, snaps his hand away and covers Fay with a blanket.

He flees.

INT. SIMON'S ROOM -- NIGHT

Moments later.

Simon is alone in the room with his bed.

The pale sheets beckon.

He is flushed. He blinks.

INT. THE GRIM HOUSE KITCHEN -- NIGHT

Moments later.

He creeps down the stairs with an arm-load of books. Sitting at the table, he wrenches a nearby lamp into a more useful position and begins to read.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. THE GRIM HOUSE -- DAY

The next morning.

Henry stumbles up the stoop carrying a laptop computer, its various accessories and a couple of coffees.

He lets himself in and dumps the computer on the kitchen counter.

Simon is asleep on the couch, still in his clothes.

HENRY

(shoving him)
Simon. Hey, Simon.
(Simon wakes)
Come on. I got ya some coffee.

Henry trudges back to the kitchen, where he whips out his red pen and immediately begins to correct Simon's poem.

Simon rolls off the couch and makes his way to the table. Seeing the computer...

SIMON

What's this?

HENRY

It's a computer. You write on it.

He reaches into his pocket.

HENRY

Here's the manual.

Simon looks over the computer and flips through the manual.

SIMON

Where'd you get it?

HENRY

I stole it. Now listen. Remember how yesterday we discussed the relative desirability of cadence in relation to the readability of...

FAY

(off)
Oh, shit! Not you again!

Fay is on the stairs, hungover and disgusted. Henry throws up his hands and gets up to go.

HENRY

Simon, I can't work under these conditions.

FAY

Yeah! Get outta here, you freak!

HENRY

Get a life!

FAY

Eat shit and die, Henry!

Mary throws open her bedroom door.

MARY

(screaming)
Beast! Fiend! Rapist!

FAY

Oh, shut up, Mom!

Fay stomps back upstairs. Mary slams her door shut. Simon runs out after Henry.

EXT. WORLD OF DONUTS -- DAY

Moments later.

Simon follows Henry out into the street and over towards World Of Donuts...

SIMON

Henry, wait up!

HENRY

I am not a rapist!

But Henry stops short, seeing...

Officer Buñuel enter World of Donuts.

HENRY

Shit. Come on, this way.

And he runs down the street in the opposite direction. Simon hangs back, but then follows...

INT. CHURCH -- DAY

Moments later.

They scramble in and Henry is out of breath. He slumps down into a pew.

HENRY

Keep a look out. Tell me when he's gone.

Simon does, but then...

SIMON

Henry, what's going on? Who is that guy? What's he want?

HENRY

He wants to help me! He wants to be my friend.

He pats his pockets, looking for his smokes. Simon looks on, baffled. He comes closer.

SIMON

Help you with what?

HENRY

(suddenly)

Shhh!

He hears something, stands and moves further into the church. Simon hesitates, but then follows. They hear someone crying. Finally, in a pew off to one side in the shadows, they find...

A young priest named Father Hawkes. He's a wreck. He looks up from his quiet sobbing and sees...

Henry and Simon standing there looking on with embarrassed distaste. He lowers his head in shame. Henry moves closer and sits beside the distraught priest.

HENRY

What's wrong?

The priest sighs hopelessly.

FATHER HAWKES

I doubt.

Henry leans back with a sigh and reaches for his cigarettes.

HENRY

So, you're an honest man. Why beat yourself up about it?

He offers a cigarette to the priest and he accepts.

FATHER HAWKES

I don't know if there are grounds for faith. Is my vocation relevant? Does it make a difference?

SIMON

A difference in what?

FATHER HAWKES

The world. The way it is. Is this a way to help relieve suffering?

HENRY

Your vocation makes a difference.

FATHER HAWKES

How can you be so sure?

HENRY

Because vocation is the difference. Only someone who really cares doubts. Listen, father, as I was about to tell my friend Simon here, I am, without doubt, the biggest sinner

within a hundred miles of this parish.
But still, I've gotta stay up late
at night to outdo the unending parade
of mundane little atrocities I see
committed every day right out in the
open spaces of this loud and sunlit
culture we call home.

FATHER HAWKES

You seem to me to be a sensitive and
generous man.

HENRY

I like to think so. But the fact is
I appreciate depravity. Nevertheless,
I insist your vocation makes a
difference, because to hold out
anything other than a spiritual
yardstick to reality is to be jerking
off grandly into the abyss. Listen,
have you got any money? Let's go
have a drink.

EXT. WORLD OF DONUTS -- DAY

Warren is stopping people on their way in and out of World
of Donuts.

WARREN

Excuse me, miss, are you a registered
voter?

MISS

Oh God, really I don't know.

WARREN

Well, I'd like to give you some
information about Congressman Owen
Feer. This man is gunna make a big
difference in the lives of every
American in the years to come...

MISS

Thanks, sure. I gotta go, thanks.

A man, Bill, steps up...

WARREN

Pardon me, sir...

BILL

Fuck off!

WARREN

Right.

Warren stands back and loosens his tie. He looks over at

Pearl age seven, who is sitting outside the store.

WARREN

What time's your mother get off work?

She doesn't respond. He shakes his head and approaches. He sees Fay exit the store...

WARREN

Fay, are you a registered voter?

FAY

(stopping)

Don't you dare talk that way to me!
And keep your hands off my brother.
Pearl, what are you doing here?

WARREN

I'm watchin' her.

Fay figures it out and approaches.

FAY

You and Vicky get back together?

WARREN

I gotta regular job now and
everything.

She lifts a flyer and reads.

FAY

I saw this retard on TV this morning.

WARREN

He's gunna be the next president of
the United States of America, Fay.

FAY

Keep dreamin' Warren. The guy's a
Nazi.

WARREN

I like him!

FAY

Gimme a light.

WARREN

(lighting her cigarette)

He's a decent man. He takes
complicated issues and totally
simplifies them. And I appreciate
that.

FAY

You still sell dope?

WARREN

No. You know what the problem is with this country, Fay? Me. I'm the problem. We live in a culture of poverty and crime, where the work ethic is undermined and male responsibility is made irrelevant.

She studies him a moment more, lost, then shakes her head and helps the child off the car.

FAY

Come on, Pearl, let's go play at my house.

WARREN

She gives you any trouble, Fay, you just let me know.

INT. THE INFERNO -- DAY

An hour later.

Henry and Father Hawkes are drinking. Simon leans on the bar, nodding off to sleep. After a while, Father Hawkes leans back and...

FATHER HAWKES

Do you think human beings are innately bad?

HENRY

Worse than bad! Monstrous! But I love that about them.
(banging on the bar)
Wake up, Simon!

Simon falls off his bar stool.

EXT. WORLD OF DONUTS -- DAY

Moments later.

Warren straightens his tie and looks over to see...

Simon stagger up.

Warren shakes his head in dismay and approaches. Simon steadies himself against the wall of the building.

WARREN

Jesus Christ, Simon, you're letting yourself go to hell! You read that flyer I gave you?

SIMON

What?

WARREN

Simon, wake up and smell the coffee,
huh! It's up to guys like you and me
to help create a better tomorrow!

Simon is lost.

INT. WORLD OF DONUTS -- DAY

Moments later.

He staggers into World of Donuts and heads for the coffee machine, but stops when he sees Buñuel talking to Mr Deng. Buñuel looks over. Their eyes lock.

EXT. WORLD OF DONUTS -- DAY

Same time.

WARREN

(to Vicky)

Why would I steal a computer from
the campaign office?

VICKY

I'm not saying you did, I'm just
saying one was and since you do have
this criminal background...

Whack!!! He slaps her...

WARREN

(pointing)

Don't judge me!

Simon runs out of the store and limps away towards home as Buñuel storms out in pursuit. Simon tries to run, but Buñuel catches him easily.

BUÑUEL

Look, I know you know him. People
have seen you around together.

Simon ceases to struggle, but shakes himself free and stands looking down at his feet. Buñuel stands aside and watches him a moment, then reaches in his jacket and brings out his badge.

BUÑUEL

I'm his parole officer.

Simon studies the badge and waits a little, before asking...

SIMON

What did he do?

BUÑUEL

I'm not supposed to talk about that stuff with people.

SIMON

He's my. Friend.

Buñuel pauses, then puts away his badge and looks around the parking lot.

BUÑUEL

Mr Deng says you're some sort of a poet, or something.

Simon doesn't corroborate this. He looks away and readjusts his sling. Buñuel scratches his head, satisfied and prepares to leave. But first...

BUÑUEL

You tell Henry to call me -- Officer Buñuel -- pronto! Or they're gunna chuck his ass straight back into jail! Got it?

Simon shrugs.

Buñuel waits a moment, then steps away and gets back in his car. Simon watches as the parole officer drives away and passes...

WARREN

Vicky, look I'm sorry.

VICKY

Don't you even come near me!

INT. THE GRIM HOUSE KITCHEN -- DAY

Later.

FAY

What do you mean, you quit?

SIMON

I quit my job.

FAY

Why!

SIMON

There are things I want to do.

FAY

Like what?

Simon thinks of trying to explain, but then decides not to.

SIMON

'Opportunity will step out of the way to let a man... pass it by.'

FAY

Are you drunk?

SIMON

Now you have to go out and get a job!

FAY

I am not gettin' a job!
(paces, then)
Who's gunna look after Mom!

SIMON

I will.

Fay looks at the ceiling and sighs.

FAY

Pearl, go outside.

They wait as the child goes outside.

Mary listens, unseen, from her bedroom door.

Fay comes over and frowns at her brother. She's about to lecture him, but he cuts her off.

SIMON

If you treat Mom like a sick person, she's gunna stay like... you know, a sick person.

Fay tries to control herself. She sighs tiredly and attempts to reason with him...

FAY

Simon, don't be retarded...

SIMON

(banging the table)
I am not retarded!

Fay steps back, startled. Simon stands, but can't decide which way to go. He sits back down.

SIMON

I can see with my own eyes.

Mary turns away from her door and sits on her bed.

Fay leans over the stove, where a large pot of water is beginning to boil.

FAY

Mom can't be left alone with no one
to keep an eye on her.

Simon is frustrated and lashes out.

SIMON

Well, who's been keeping an eye on
her while you've been out getting
fucked by every OTB winner in town?

Fay's mouth falls open and she staggers back, hurt.

Simon regrets it already and stands to leave, scared. But
Fay grabs the pot off the stove and hurls it at him, splashing
boiling water all over his back.

SIMON

Agggghhhh!!!

Outside, Pearl turns and looks back at the house.

Simon lies gasping on the floor of the kitchen. Fay falls
back against the stove, terrified and drops her head into
her hands.

INT. THE GRIM HOUSE BATHROOM -- DAY

Later.

Fay is crouched on the floor, sobbing, while Simon lies in a
tub of cold water. Mary comes in with a pathetic little
freezer tray of ice cubes and dumps them into the tub.

She steps back into the hall and throws the ice tray down
the stairs. She glares back at Fay, who cries even louder as
Simon stares up at the ceiling.

Mary shakes her head and walks into her room, slamming the
door behind her.

FAY

(sniffing)

What happened to her, Simon? How did
she get this way? Will it happen to
me too? Huh? Why are we so fucked
up?

Simon has no answers. But he reaches out and touches his
sister's hand.

INT. LIBRARY -- DAY

Evening.

Simon comes limping in, all stiff because of his scalded

back. He's not familiar with the library, so he stands looking around, trying to figure it out.

INT. LIBRARY STACKS -- DAY

Moments later.

He wanders into an aisle, overwhelmed by all the books. Coming to the far end of the aisle, he looks off to his left and sees Henry sitting on a small stool, reading, with ten or twenty open volumes scattered around him on the floor.

SIMON

(approaching)

Henry?

HENRY

(looking up and rising)

Simon! What are you doing here?

SIMON

Henry... Your parole officer, Officer Buñuel, came by again today.

Henry sighs and sits back down.

SIMON

He told me to tell you that if you don't call him they're gunna put you back in jail.

HENRY

Simon...

SIMON

He gave me this number...

HENRY

Simon...

SIMON

He was talking to Mr Deng too, and, well, you know, I was thinking...

HENRY

Simon, just shut the fuck up!

Simon blinks and looks down at his feet, unable to respond. Deeply hurt, he simply turns to walk away. But Henry reaches out and grabs his arm. Simon stops, pauses and looks back at his friend.

HENRY

Forgive me.

He lets go and turns away on his stool.

HENRY

Forgive me, Simon.

Simon comes back over to him.

SIMON

Call him, Henry. Please.

Henry gives in slowly to the inevitable. He sighs deeply and stands, handing Simon a book...

HENRY

OK. Look, do me a favor. You got a library card?

SIMON

Yeah.

HENRY

Check this out for me.

Simon looks at the cover: Paradise Lost.

HENRY

Milton. Seventeenth century. English. You see, Simon, it's important my 'Confession' dig up the past, comb previous evidence and help chart the historic -- even the aesthetic -- inevitability of my ideas. And...

A young woman passes by, scanning the stacks. She and Henry have a split second of eye contact, then she turns and moves away. Henry straightens his tie and watches her go.

HENRY

This place is crawling with chicks, Simon. Wander around. Leer a little. Cop a feel. Impose yourself on 'em. See what happens.

SIMON

I make girls uncomfortable.

HENRY

Bullshit! You've got a rough hewn charm that sets 'em on edge. Now, listen, I gotta go.

SIMON

Henry?

Henry stops and turns. Simon pauses, then...

SIMON

What did you do?

Henry watches him for a moment, then swaggers closer...

HENRY

I got caught.

Simon waits for more but is disappointed. With one final cracked grin at his friend, Henry throws back his shoulders, slicks back his hair and strides off. Simon watches him go and frowns, not comforted. He flips through the pages of Paradise Lost.

SIMON

(voice over)

'Whereto with speedy words the arch-fiend replied Fallen Cherub, to be weak is miserable...'

INT. LIBRARY READING ROOM -- DAY

Moments later.

He comes out from the stacks, working his way through the first page of Paradise Lost. He nearly bumps into a girl and they stop and look at one another. He tries to hold her gaze for a moment, challenging himself, but then turns away and stalks to a table. He sits and leans over the page.

After a moment, though, he lifts his face and glances at...

Another girl, sitting further down the table. She looks up from her reading and returns his gaze.

He smiles at her.

She gets up and leaves.

Simon frowns, confounded and returns to his book. He takes out his notebook and pencil, meaning to take notes, but sees instead...

A third girl sitting at another table, listening to her Walkman and typing her homework into a laptop computer.

He finds himself staring at her and forces himself back to his book. But he can't help himself and glances back over at her.

With a sigh, he begins to write in his notebook...

SIMON

(voice-over)

Why is it this beautiful girl makes me sad? Does she know how beautiful she is? Do people tell her? Does she ever feel stupid?

He looks back over at her. She happens to look up and their

eyes meet. She smiles. Horrified, he looks down.

SIMON

Why don't I smile when she looks at me? I look away. Ashamed of myself.

He watches her again, thinks, then writes...

SIMON

Her figure makes me violent. I want to somehow break her. But tenderly. How is this possible? Ask Henry.

He writes a few moments more, scribbling across the page, then stops and looks back over at the girl.

SIMON

(voice-over)

I can't breathe.

He tears out the page and folds it in half. Then he gets up and crosses the room to where the girl is busily engaged in her work. She looks up, sees him, and removes her headset with a pleasant smile. He places his note on the table before her, then turns and walks quickly away.

The girl watches him go, confused, then lifts the note and reads...

SIMON

(voice-over)

Why do I do this to myself? And why do I reduce you to only one possibility? These are not even questions anymore. I know the answers myself. This isn't a page of notes. It's a letter. A letter to you. A desperate act. You are a miracle to me. I can't breathe.

By now, Simon is gone from the library. The girl finishes reading the letter and looks around in astonishment.

INT. WORLD OF DONUTS -- DAY

Evening.

Henry enters and sits with Buñuel.

BUÑUEL

How are you, Henry?

HENRY

(frowning)

Peachy. Gimme a light.

BUÑUEL

Have you found a job?

Henry just glares at him and smokes.

BUÑUEL

How 'bout those Alcoholics Anonymous meetings, did you go over and visit them yet?

HENRY

What happened to this assistant librarian position you were supposed to set me up with?

Buñuel looks down, disappointed.

BUÑUEL

I tried, Henry. I really did.

HENRY

So what happened?

BUÑUEL

Henry, with your background... Well, I mean, with your record, they didn't think it'd be right to have you at the neighborhood library.

HENRY

Why not?

BUÑUEL

They thought you'd be a bad influence on the kids.

Henry sits back, offended.

BUÑUEL

(adds)

Or worse.

HENRY

So my word is not enough. My promise worthless. The fact I've served my time nothing but the emblem of my continuing guilt.

BUÑUEL

Apparently.

Henry leans back and sighs, furious and indignant.

INT. THE GRIM HOUSE -- NIGHT

Simon comes in, excited and preoccupied, and finds Fay working at the computer.

FAY

What's up?

SIMON

(guiltily)

Nothing.

FAY

I'm creating my résumé. This computer's got a program especially for it. I bought some special stationery too. It's scented. Look.

She shoves a sheath of papers up under his nose and he backs away in disgust.

FAY

It's roses.

Simon takes his notebooks from a cabinet above the fridge.

SIMON

Can you type my poem into that thing?

FAY

(shocked)

That's your poem?

SIMON

Yeah.

FAY

(smokes, then)

Simon, Mom's right about you. A poem's supposed to be a small, delicate kinda thing. Kinda feminine. Gentle. Look at this. You've made a fuckin' telephone book.

He places the notebooks on the table and leaves the house. Fay clears the computer screen, pulls the notebooks closer and gets down to work.

INT. HENRY'S APARTMENT -- NIGHT

Moments later.

Simon arrives with a six-pack and finds Henry sitting in front of the fire, staring into the flames, brooding darkly.

HENRY

I was caught. Yes, I was caught... once. I was caught in flagranti delicto screwing a thirteen-year-old girl named Susan. She was an ugly and mean-spirited kid, but she knew how to play upon my weaknesses which,

I admit, are deep and many.

He drinks, then looks at Simon and adds...

HENRY

You appear shocked.

SIMON

(he is)

Sorry.

Henry stands and leans over the fire.

HENRY

It was a pathetic little conspiracy.
A transparently desperate attempt to
discredit me and my ideas; to label
me a mere pedophile. As if I'd be
ashamed of such a thing. As if
Socrates himself hadn't been taken
out of circulation for corrupting
the youth of Athens!

He comes over and takes a beer. He strides around the room,
thinking, reflecting.

HENRY

Seven years. Seven years for one
afternoon of blissful transgression.
But what of it? Who cares? Prison's
not so bad; particularly if one's a
sex offender, free from the popular
and conventional horror of sodomy.

Stops, drinks declares...

HENRY

They were not 'lost years'.

He approaches the notebooks lined up on the mantelpiece.

HENRY

I put them to good use. I began my
major work. My opus.

He glances over at Simon, who sits gripping his beer,
watching, rapt.

HENRY

Believe me, Simon, this incident
with the girl, prison... It pales to
insignificance in the wider context
of my career.

He pauses and swills back some beer. He brightens up, gets
excited...

HENRY

Nothing in comparison to the day my
'Confession' is unleashed.

(beginning to pace)

What an orgy we'll have then, huh?
What shouts of outrage from the
offended populace, from the
sanctimonious purveyors of culture
and quality, the righteous defenders
of what ever inane and haphazard
notion of progress then in vogue.
They'll be beside themselves with
fiercely reasoned critical analysis.
Apoplectic with indignation!

Drinks sloppily, burps, wipes his mouth with his arm.

HENRY

Their feelings will be hurt.

He smashes the bottle in the fireplace.

HENRY

Yes, like a mirror which reflects
only the inside of the person before
it, my 'Confession' will lovingly
render humanity's common monstrosity
in all of its lurid wide screen glory.

He grabs a new beer and twists off its cap.

HENRY

Why should I blush or feel shame
before the common lot of humanity,
anyway, for a few banal and, again I
admit, inelegant transgressions?

He drinks, sighs and sits back down.

HENRY

After all, really, I'm doing
civilization a favor.

Simon sits back in awe. He waits a moment and thinks. Finally
he stands and approaches the 'Confession'. He reaches out
and drags his hand across the notebooks.

SIMON

When can I read it?

Henry sits staring into the flames again. He pauses, then...

HENRY

Soon.

INT. CHURCH -- DAY

Next day.

Simon and Father Hawkes are deep in conversation.

FATHER HAWKES

We are told not to judge. But to
forgive. Not to look into our
neighbor's eye to find the bad, but
to find the good.

(pacing)

Now this is difficult. I admit.

(pause)

But having a good friend is not always
easy.

Simon listens and carefully considers all the priest says.

SIMON

Yes, but... do you think Henry is...
dangerous?

Father Hawkes pauses, then comes closer and sits.

FATHER HAWKES

He needs help. Our help. Yours
especially.

SIMON

But what can I do?

FATHER HAWKES

The best parts of himself come to
the surface when he's helping someone
learn. I've seen this. Let yourself
be taught. Show your appreciation
for his guidance. In this way, you
know, perhaps. Well. There's hope
for everyone. Even. Even Henry.

INT. WORLD OF DONUTS -- DAY

Fay comes walking up through the parking lot with Simon's
notebooks and a pile of typed papers. She's a wreck; tear-
stained face and a ball of tissues gripped in her hand like
a weapon. She throws open the door to the World of Donuts
and looks around.

The place is crowded with teenagers hanging around like it
was a café or student union.

Fay sniffles tragically and falls on the counter.

FAY

Gnoc, gimme a value pack of Kleenex,
will ya?

Gnoc gets the Kleenex while Fay overhears two kids near

Simon's poem...

TIM

The violence of the imagery reminds me of early Clash, while the lyricism of the verse recalls, for me, Walt Whitman.

BIBI

I would have said Dickinson, maybe even Eliot, and so on. But I agree with the punk roots...

Fay pays for her tissues and makes her way to the back of the store where she finds Simon with Henry, who is holding forth to his friend and the small coterie of high school students surrounding them...

HENRY

The greats all say the same thing: little. And what little there is to be said is immense. Or, in other words, follow your own genius to where it leads without regard for the apparent needs of the world at large, which, in fact, has no needs as such, but, rather, moments of exhaustion in which it is incapable of prejudice.

(drinks)

We can only hope to collide with these moments of unselfconsciousness. This divine fatigue... this...

FAY

(sitting)

Push over.

Henry takes the typed manuscript from her and continues...

HENRY

As I tried to make plain in Paris:
'Nous savons que nous avons chuté
parce que nous savons qui nous
sommes.' 'We know we have fallen
because we know who we are.'

FAY

(skeptically)

When were you in Paris?

HENRY

(interrupted)

That's beside the point. But did they listen to me? Of course not!

Fay blows her nose and Simon is concerned.

SIMON

You alright, Fay?

FAY

(lighting a cigarette)
No, I'm not alright! Your poem brought
my period on a week and half early!
So just shut up. Everybody just shut
up!

She drops her head to the table and cries. Henry and Simon
look on in silence. Then Henry continues...

HENRY

For is this not the best of all
possible worlds? Are not the evils
of this world necessary components
of a cosmos that could not exist
without them?

Amy's girlfriend, Chris, leans forward studiously and asks...

CHRIS

So, do you believe in God?

HENRY

(smokes, shrugs)
Unfortunately.

FAY

(lifting her head)
Yeah, but when were you in Paris?

HENRY

(aggravated)
At. One. Time.

CHRIS

Simon, can I have your autograph?

Simon looks from her to Henry. Henry winks at him.

HENRY

Go ahead. But never let yourself be
flattered.

Simon signs the girl's book.

FAY

(to Henry)
So what about this friend of yours,
Hot Shot? The publisher.

HENRY

Who?

SIMON

(reminding him)
Angus James.

FAY

Yeah. Angus James. How about sending
this poem to him?

Henry seems a bit put upon.

HENRY

Because it's not done yet.

FAY

(to Simon)
When's it gunna be done, Simon?

SIMON

I don't know.

FAY

Well, you oughta be home writing
instead of hanging out over here
with all your groupies.

AMY

Hey, I'm not a groupie.

FAY

Pardon me, swivel-hips. Is that your
PowerBook?

AMY

Yeah.

FAY

Can I see it?

Fay and Amy talk tech as...

HENRY

(continues)
The thing to do is to send parts of
it to different magazines and literary
journals first. That kinda thing.
You know. Substantiate it.

AMY

(looking up)
What's 'scatalogical' mean?

Henry sips his beer and looks at her.

HENRY

Filth, child. A preoccupation with
excrement. Why?

AMY

That's what the Board of Education
called Simon's poem, yesterday;
scatological.

Henry reaches across the table and shakes Simon's hand.

INT. THE GRIM HOUSE KITCHEN -- DAY

The next day.

Fay is frying something on the stove, a cigarette hangs from
her lip. A middle-aged woman with a press ID on her lapel
appears at the kitchen door and taps.

EDNA

Hello?

FAY

Yeah, I'm listening.

EDNA

My name is Edna Rodriguez and I write
the human interest column for the
Queens County Examiner and I was
just wondering if I could have a
word with Simon Grim?

Intrigued, Fay steps over to the door with her spatula. She
looks Edna over, studies her ID, then steps away and screams
upstairs.

FAY

Simon!

EDNA

(startled)
Thank you.

Fay comes back over near the door, waving her spatula.

FAY

You can't talk to him for, you know,
too long or anything, 'cause he's
gotta, you know... he writes all
day. That's all he does. Can you
believe that?

No response.

FAY

(calling again)
Hey! Simon! Get down here!

Simon finally shuffles into the kitchen.

FAY

Simon, this is Edna. She's from the newspaper.

EDNA

(rapid fire)

Simon, the Parents' Association at the local high school are calling your poem pornography. The teachers are defending the students' right to exercise their critical tastes and sensibilities. The county agrees with the Church and considers the poem emblematic of modern society's moral disintegration. How do you feel about these controversial reactions to your poem?

Simon says nothing. He just stares at her.

FAY

(punching him)

Simon, answer the woman.

Simon just looks away, thinks, then wanders back upstairs. Mary passes him on his way out of the kitchen and comes up to Fay and Edna at the door.

MARY

I need my prescription filled.

FAY

Mom, this is Edna. Edna, Mom.

EDNA

Mrs Grim, what was Simon like as a child?

MARY

We all thought he was retarded.

FAY

Everyone did.

MARY

Never said a word.

FAY

He masturbated constantly.

MARY

Had no friends.

FAY

Till he met Henry.

MARY

And that's when all the trouble really

started.

INT. HENRY'S APARTMENT -- DAY

Henry is shaving. Simon sits in the kitchen, sorting through rejection letters...

SIMON

(reading)

Dear Mr Grim, we here at the magazine consider ourselves and the publication open-minded and cutting edge and have consistently printed the work of the most brilliant and farseeing young talent of the day. Every week we are forced to return writing which we can not for one reason or another publish and include a brief but polite refusal. But this tract you've sent us demands a response as violent as the effect your words have had upon us. Drop dead. Keep your day job. Sincerely, The Editors.

HENRY

De gustibus non disputandum est.

SIMON

(thinking)

You can't argue with taste?

HENRY

About taste. You can't argue about taste. God, Simon.

Simon gives up and pushes the letters away, beaten.

SIMON

The other twenty-five are almost as bad. I don't know why I bother.

Henry drops his razor and stomps out into the hall.

HENRY

What do you mean you don't know why you bother? You bother because you know the poem is excellent!

SIMON

Do I?

HENRY

Of course you do!

SIMON

I'm not so sure sometimes.

HENRY

Can you sit there, look me straight
in the eye, and tell me you don't
think this poem is great? That it is
not at once a work of great lyrical
beauty and ethical depth? That it is
not a genuine, highly individual,
and profound meditation on the miracle
of existence?

Simon holds the stare, overwhelmed.

SIMON

I, ah...

HENRY

Can you?

Simon looks away, thinks a moment, then looks back at Henry.

SIMON

No. I can't.

HENRY

So, you see, you have no choice!

He goes back into the bathroom. Simon thinks a while, then...

SIMON

(calling)

Can you recommend it to your friend,
the publisher?

No response.

SIMON

Henry? Can you recommend the poem to
him?

Still no response. Simon gets up and stands in the bathroom
doorway. Henry is shaving.

SIMON

I mean, I think it's finished and,
for better or worse, it is book
length.

HENRY

That might not be as easy as it seems.

SIMON

Why?

HENRY

Well, it's been a long time. My name
might not carry as much weight as it
once did with Angus.

SIMON

But he's your friend, right?

HENRY

We were close at one time.

SIMON

You said he respected your opinion.

Henry puts down his razor and looks at Simon in the mirror.

HENRY

Look, Simon, opinions come and go.

He sees Simon looks worried.

HENRY

To be honest; my ideas, my writing,
they haven't always been received
well or even calmly. They're
upsetting. I'm a controversial man.

He walks around the bathroom, gesticulating.

HENRY

You see, what I'm doing is too
radical. Too uncompromising. It'll
take time for people to see its value.
It's ahead of its time, perhaps, or
maybe just...

(stops)

A recommendation from me might do
you as much harm as it does good.

Simon patiently absorbs all this, then walks through the
kitchen and looks across at the 'Confession' notebooks.

SIMON

Henry, why can't I read the
'Confession'?

HENRY

Because certain work needs to be
experienced all at once in order for
one to appreciate the full force of
its character.

INT. WORLD OF DONUTS -- DAY

Simon talks with Fay as she eats her lunch.

FAY

Simon, wake up! The guy's in a dream
world!

SIMON

He's afraid that his reputation will prevent people from giving my work an honest chance.

FAY

His reputation as what?

SIMON

As a writer.

FAY

Gimme a break.

SIMON

He's kinda like in exile. Marginalized on account of his ideas.

FAY

If he's such a great big fat genius, why doesn't he write books? Like you do.

SIMON

He has. He's written a book. It's almost completed. He's been working on it for years. It's just not published.

FAY

Yeah, I bet. It's probably disgusting.

SIMON

(defensively)

It's a quite serious and difficult piece of work, apparently.

FAY

Have you read it?

SIMON

No. Not yet. Soon. Certain work needs to be experienced all at once in order for one to appreciate the full force of its character.

FAY

Yeah, well, what ever. Listen, Simon, forget Henry. Go straight up to this Angus James character yourself and make him read your poem.

She gets up to go. She's wearing a smart outfit.

FAY

I'm gunna apply for a job at the one-hour photo joint and then go over to the Mall to see about that job in

the bank. Make sure Mom takes her pills. See ya.

INT. THE GRIM HOUSE -- DAY

Mary is sitting, brooding in front of the TV, which displays only static white noise. She turns it off with the remote and sits in silence for a moment.

She gets off the couch and moves to the kitchen table, where Fay's computer sits. She goes over and reaches up above the fridge, opening the cabinet containing Simon's notebooks.

She hesitates, then takes them down and holds them in her hands, as if to begin reading. But then she puts them back.

She walks over to the piano and stands there, hesitating, before slowly sitting down and opening it. She lifts her hands to play, then pauses and looks around behind her, making sure no one is there.

But, finally, she turns back and begins playing.

She plays a sad-sounding modern classical piece with rusty accomplishment. At one time she was probably quite good.

She plays for a while, gradually letting herself become moved by the music. But then she stops, pauses, and looks behind her.

Simon is standing in the kitchen. He has been deeply affected by her playing.

SIMON

Please don't stop.

She stares him down a moment longer, then looks away and closes the piano. She returns to the couch and switches on the TV.

Simon comes closer. He sits.

SIMON

That was nice what you were playing.

MARY

Yes, it was nice. But it was unremarkable.

Simon waits. Eventually...

SIMON

Does that matter?

MARY

(looking right at him)
Yes. It does.

She gets up off the couch and goes upstairs. She slams her bedroom door and leaves Simon alone on the couch. He thinks. Then, he gets up and goes into the kitchen.

He takes the typed manuscript of his poem from the cabinet above the refrigerator and goes to the door. He pauses, clutches the poem and goes out.

EXT. SUBWAY STATION -- DAY

Simon waits, clutching his poem to his side, as a train pulls into the station. Excited and determined, he gets on.

INT. TRAIN -- DAY

Simon travels to New York City. He finds an envelope on the floor to put the poem in.

INT. MARY'S ROOM -- DAY

Mary wakes up and sits on the edge of the bed, feeling regretful about her tone of voice with Simon.

INT. THE GRIM HOUSE KITCHEN -- DAY

Moments later.

Mary comes down into the kitchen and listens.

MARY

Simon?

No answer. She steps over to the cabinet and almost takes down Simon's notebook. But doesn't. She grabs her pills and is about to take them. But then she stops. She puts them down and goes to the cabinet. She takes down Simon's notebooks and sits at the table, pauses, then pulls them closer and begins to read.

INT. PUBLISHING HOUSE LOBBY -- DAY

Simon enters a big, posh lobby and checks the registry.

INT. PUBLISHING HOUSE RECEPTION -- DAY

Moments later.

Simon comes out of the elevator and enters the reception area of James Midriff and Sutton Publishing. He walks hesitantly up to the receptionist, a bright and spirited young woman named Laura.

LAURA

Hi, I'll take that.

Simon steps back defensively.

LAURA

Aren't you the messenger?

SIMON

No.

LAURA

Are you here to fix the plumbing?

SIMON

I'm here to see Mr. Angus James.

LAURA

(amused)

Are you?

SIMON

I'm not a plumber. Or a messenger. I was once a garbage man. But now I'm a poet.

Laura steps back, cocks her head and removes her designer eye-wear.

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM -- DAY

Same time.

Angus is at a big table with two other men, Steve and Barry.

BARRY

The book, as we know it, Angus, will be a thing of the past within the next few years. Novels, articles, newspapers will all be downloaded on to our personal computers anyway.

ANGUS

So you're telling me to get out of the publishing business?

STEVE

No. But we've got to re-invent the publishing business for the electronic age.

Laura knocks.

ANGUS

Yes, Laura?

LAURA

I'm sorry to disturb you, gentlemen, but... Angus, there's a particularly wound-up young garbage man out here who seems to have written a poem. A

long poem. And I recall how, at last month's meeting, you stressed the need for us to be on the look-out for more marginalized verse from unestablished quarters of the American scene.

ANGUS

Did I say that?

Steve and Barry nod.

STEVE

Yeah. You did.

BARRY

Twice.

ANGUS

Well, OK. Make an appointment, Laura. Sometime next month.

LAURA

Right-e-o.

And she's gone.

ANGUS

(returning)

So, anyway, how is the digital revolution going to help me sell books?

INT. PUBLISHING HOUSE RECEPTION -- DAY

Simon looks disappointed.

SIMON

Why can't I see him now?

LAURA

(sincerely)

Because he's a very important man and, well, you're not.

Simon just looks down at his shoes. Laura touches his arm and reassures him.

LAURA

Be reasonable.

He looks up, pauses, then...

SIMON

Why?

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM -- DAY

Same time.

ANGUS

I don't think people are going to prefer reading books on television, Steve.

STEVE

It won't be television!

BARRY

It'll be interactive.

STEVE

Angus, look, we have a number of charts here...

BARRY

In every home in America the PC will be where the TV used to be.

STEVE

And it'll be a direct connection to all forms of media.

BARRY

An unprecedented transformation of American social life...

STEVE

We'll all become better informed, more literate, increasingly productive, and... Well, and, like I said, we have a number of charts...

Laura re-enters...

LAURA

Sorry to disturb you again, gentlemen, but... Angus, I'd like to call security for this one. Though, before I do, I just wanted to ask just how marginal the as yet undiscovered voice of American poetry should be?

ANGUS

(thinking)
Pretty damn marginal, I'd think.

BARRY

Down right controversial, probably.

ANGUS

How's he strike you?

LAURA

He's been denounced by his local
Board of Education.

BARRY

Oh, I read about him in the paper.
Hangs out in a delicatessen somewhere
and writes pornography.

INT. PUBLISHING HOUSE RECEPTION -- DAY

Moments later.

Angus comes out to the water cooler and glares at Simon as
he gets a drink.

ANGUS

Hello, and why do you think I should
take valuable time out of my busy
schedule to read...

He grabs the envelope and sees no title.

ANGUS

This?

Simon is stumped. He looks over at Laura, who purses her
lips and tilts her head. He twists a button on his shirt,
thinking, then returns to Angus.

SIMON

Because it's a masterpiece.

ANGUS

Really?

SIMON

Yes.

ANGUS

(to Laura)
Are you hearing this?

LAURA

He's adorable.

SIMON

I wouldn't want to waste your time.

ANGUS

I'm sure you wouldn't and I appreciate
you being so straightforward.

SIMON

Thank you.

ANGUS

I assume you can take straightforward

criticism?

Simon looks over at Laura.

LAURA

Just say 'Yes'.

SIMON

(looking back)

Maybe.

ANGUS

Get him a coffee, Laura.

LAURA

Have a seat, Mr Grim.

ANGUS

Hold my calls for the next half hour.

LAURA

What about Steve?

ANGUS

He doesn't drink coffee. Steve, do you drink coffee?

STEVE

(off)

Angus, listen to me!

INT. WORLD OF DONUTS -- DAY

Henry paces back and forth. With the fingers of one hand pressed against his forehead and his eyes closed tight in concentration, he dictates to Amy, who is sitting at a table with her laptop computer, typing his every word.

HENRY

In the infinite amplitude of his love, God wants to create the largest number of best elements that can exist together in one cosmos... OK.

Amy types away, fascinated by Henry's intelligence.

HENRY

In an instantaneous calculation made in eternity, God computes the best possible world and creates it. Fine. This 'decision' by God is uncontingent and eternal rather than temporally or ontologically sequential.

Stops, zeroing in on his point.

AMY

How do you spell that?

HENRY

What?

AMY

Ontologically.

HENRY

O-N-T... Don't you have some kinda spell-check on that thing?

AMY

Never mind.

HENRY

It is impossible for every perfect good to be compatible with every other perfect good. The intense beauty of the mountain must be set off by the fertility of the plain, so to speak.

He smokes, drinks, paces some more. Amy waits with bated breath, devastated by his obscure profundity. He comes back and sits beside her, reaching his conclusion.

HENRY

The good of freewill must entail real choices for sin.

She gazes at his profile, in love.

Henry sits thinking and Amy watches him reverently. She leans over close and whispers in his ear. He turns and looks at her, alarmed.

HENRY

Listen, Amy, back off. I'm on parole.

AMY

You feel the same way. I can tell. I can see it when you look at me.

Henry jumps up and looks around, paranoid. He keeps his voice down and points at her.

HENRY

Hey! I don't look at you.

AMY

Yes you do. In the street. In the parking lot yesterday. That night on the highway.

HENRY

I look at a lot of people that way.

Disappointed, Amy turns away and sulks.

AMY

You think I'm stupid.

Henry sees she's genuinely upset and feels bad. He sits back down and lays his hand on hers.

HENRY

No, as a matter of fact, I think you're a real bright kid and I like that about you.

AMY

(looks up, pouts)
You do?

Now Henry tries to scare her away. He leers at her.

HENRY

I like it so much I've got half a mind to do perverse things to you. Right here. Right now. Things you might just learn to like.

She just stares at him, blinks, then looks away and tries to imagine this. She takes her laptop and leaves, confused and blushing.

Henry watches her go and grins, satisfied with himself.

INT. PUBLISHING HOUSE RECEPTION -- DAY

Angus throws on his coat and thrusts the poem at Simon as they walk down the hall.

ANGUS

This is really quite unbelievably bad, my friend. I mean, I'm all for experimentation and I've made a career out of a healthy disregard for convention, but... Look, this is profoundly irrelevant material. This is only my opinion. But it's an opinion I value highly. Goodnight, Laura. Call Norton Press. We're still on for tomorrow.

Simon looks pale as Angus strides towards the elevator.

ANGUS

I've been wrong before as a publisher. But I refuse to admit I've ever been wrong as a reader. You have talent, I admit. You have an innate sense of the musicality of language. A good

ear, maybe. But you do nothing significant with it. And this twisted reasoning that poses as... conviction or insight, it's... well, it's embarrassing.

They reach the elevator and stop. Simon tries to catch his breath.

ANGUS

Why did you bring this thing to me, anyway?

SIMON

(weakly)

A friend of mine spoke of you. He said you had a lot of integrity.

ANGUS

Yes, well, of course, I do. But I'm not crazy, am I? Who is this person? Do I know him?

Simon hesitates, almost decides against it, but then...

SIMON

Henry Fool.

Angus looks back at him.

Simon waits.

Angus looks aside, thinks, then shakes his head.

ANGUS

Never heard of him.

Simon just looks at him blankly, confused.

The doors slide open and Angus gets in the elevator. He's gone. Simon sinks into a chair and stares at the carpet. He is so surprised and hurt he gasps for breath.

His poem slips from his hand and falls to the floor.

LAURA

(off)

I remember Henry.

Simon doesn't register this right away. But then he looks up and over at the receptionist.

Laura stands and comes around her desk. She pauses, seeing his disappointment, then comes closer and picks up his poem. Handing it to him, she explains...

LAURA

He used to be the janitor here.

He just stares at her, demolished.

EXT. SIDEWALK/SUBWAY ENTRANCE -- DAY

Later.

Simon dumps his poem in a trash can, pauses, then enters the subway.

INT. WORLD OF DONUTS -- DAY

Henry is leaning on the counter, flipping through pornographic magazines and smoking.

MR DENG

(off)

Henry, put those magazines back.

HENRY

I'm just looking at the pictures.

MR DENG

It's not good for you.

Henry flips through pages and nods, impressed.

HENRY

I learn so much from these magazines,
Mr Deng. I refuse to discriminate
between modes of knowing.

MR DENG

And you can't smoke in here anymore.

Henry looks up, outraged.

HENRY

Why not!

MR DENG

It's the law.

Henry throws his cigarette to the floor, steps on it and returns to his magazine.

HENRY

This place is losing all its charm,
Mr Deng.

MR DENG

Business is good. The kids, they
hang out all day and drink coffee,
talk about art and read poetry.

Henry shakes his head in dismay and studies a centerfold.

HENRY

It's just a fad, Mr Deng. These kids today, they're just slaves to fashion.

INT. THE GRIM HOUSE KITCHEN -- DAY

Same time.

Fay comes in, hot and tired from walking around in high heels.

FAY

Anybody home? Mom?

She stands on the stairs and hears the water running in the bathroom.

FAY

Ma, that you?

No answer. She discovers she's out of cigarettes.

INT. WORLD OF DONUTS -- DAY

Henry is leaning on the counter with a six-pack of beer, pleading with Mr Deng.

HENRY

Come on, Mr Deng! How much do I owe you?

MR DENG

Twenty-five dollars.

HENRY

That can't be right! And so what? My credit's good.

Warren comes in.

WARREN

Henry!

HENRY

Hey, Warren, you gotta couple of bucks I can borrow?

Warren reaches for his wallet.

WARREN

Listen, Henry, I wanna remind you to vote this Thursday.

HENRY

Ah, yes, of course. When noble minds shrink from the task of leadership scoundrels will rush in to fill the

void.
 (takes cash)
Thanks.

WARREN

It's every American's right. A blessing. Yet another opportunity to save America from itself.

Henry pays Mr Deng for his beer.

INT. HENRY'S APARTMENT -- DAY

Moments later.

Fay bangs on the door.

FAY

Hey, Henry, you in there? Gimme a cigarette.

No answer. She tries the door. It's open. She hesitates.

FAY

Henry?

She goes quietly in.

EXT. WORLD OF DONUTS -- DAY

Moments later.

Henry steps out of the store and stops when he sees Amy standing there, pouting. He looks away and sighs. Amy picks at the fabric of her stockings and bites her lip.

AMY

Henry?

Henry smokes.

HENRY

Yeah.

AMY

What kind of... Well, I mean... What kind of... perverse things would you do to me?

It's more than he can stand. He holds his head.

HENRY

Take a powder, cupcake.

AMY

No, really.

HENRY

Evaporate!

Crushed, she breaks out in tears and flees.

INT. THE GRIM HOUSE -- DAY

Same time.

Simon comes in, furious and throws open the fridge. He finds nothing to eat or drink. He slams the door, then hears the water running in the bathroom upstairs. He stops and listens.

The bathroom door; the water heard running steadily.

Simon turns away then sees...

The poem notebooks face down on the table.

He thinks.

The bathroom door; the water heard running...

INT. HENRY'S APARTMENT -- DAY

Moments later.

Henry comes into his house, hot and bothered, cradling his six-pack. But he stops, listens, then steps through the kitchen towards the living-room. He stops in the entrance and sees...

Fay on the floor of the living-room, reading his 'Confession', her mouth hung open in an astonished 'O'.

He drops his six-pack and...

She spins around, caught in the act.

Henry stands in the doorway, pent up, sweating and with perverse things on his mind.

Fay, her hands palm down on the floor behind her, bites her lip, coquettishly.

Henry looks her over like she was something good to eat.

She feels his gaze all over her and twists to one side with a breathless little shudder.

He steps nearer, stands over her and she looks up at him.

INT. THE GRIM HOUSE -- DAY

Same time.

Simon climbs the stairs to the bathroom...

INT. HENRY'S APARTMENT -- DAY

Same time.

Henry and Fay kissing passionately...

INT. THE GRIM HOUSE -- DAY

Same time.

Simon knocks on the bathroom door.

INT. HENRY'S APARTMENT -- DAY

Same time.

Henry and Fay groping and shoving one another as they stagger from room to room.

INT. THE GRIM HOUSE -- DAY

Same time.

Simon bangs on the bathroom door.

INT. HENRY'S APARTMENT -- DAY

Same time.

Fay falls to the couch...

INT. THE GRIM HOUSE -- DAY

Same time.

Simon crashes through the door and finds...

Mary, kneeling over the edge of the tub, her wrists slit and the blood running down the drain, the shower raining down over her back.

Simon looks on in horror.

INT. HENRY'S APARTMENT -- DAY

Same time.

Henry tears open his trousers...

INT. THE GRIM HOUSE -- DAY

Same time.

Simon lifts Mary from the bathtub.

INT. HENRY'S APARTMENT -- DAY

Same time.

Henry and Fay clutch and grind and heave...

INT. THE GRIM HOUSE -- DAY

Same time.

Simon drags his mother from the bathroom and down the stairs.

INT. HENRY'S APARTMENT -- DAY

Same time.

Henry and Fay are making mad, passionate love, oblivious to the world around them.

INT. GRIM HOUSE DAY -- DAY

Same time.

Simon drags Mary through the house.

INT. HENRY'S APARTMENT -- DAY

Same time.

Henry and Fay fuck.

EXT. THE GRIM HOUSE -- DAY

Same time.

Simon drags Mary out the kitchen door and into the yard, looking desperately for help. He reaches the street, her limp body hanging grotesquely before him, and looks helplessly up and down the block.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. CEMETERY -- DAY

Simon, Henry, Mr Deng, Fay, Gnoc and Buñuel stand with Father Hawkes at the grave.

FATHER HAWKES

Let us pray. Lord, grant that peace
be within reach for our friend, Mary.
May the pain and confusion she endured
on earth be fought through in the
after life, so that she may enter
the Kingdom of Heaven and live in
the light of God. Amen.

He sprinkles holy water on the coffin and they all drop carnations at the grave. Simon and Fay remain there looking

down at the coffin. Henry waits for them a few yards away, wishing he could help, but feeling out of place.

EXT. JUNKYARD -- DAY

Simon is back working on the garbage truck. He collects garbage and throws it in the truck as Henry, who is just along for the ride, hangs from the side of the truck and pulls the lever whenever Simon tells him to.

HENRY

So I was a janitor! So what?

SIMON

But Angus James said he didn't even know you!

Henry shrugs and qualifies...

HENRY

Well, I mean, we weren't like bosom buddies or anything. But we used to talk sometimes. In the elevator. In the morning. He said he liked my ideas. Being a janitor's a good job if you're a writer. Especially the night shift; all that time to think and develop my ideas.

SIMON

Do it.

Henry pulls the lever and the garbage gets crushed.

SIMON

Anyway, he hated my poem.

HENRY

Well, what the hell does he know? He wouldn't know a vital piece of literary art if it came up and bit him in the leg. To hell with him! He's not the only publisher in the world!

SIMON

But nobody likes it.

HENRY

(smokes)

It's true. A prophet is seldom heeded in his own land. Remember that.

SIMON

Do it.

Henry is about to pull the lever again, but sees something

in amongst the garbage...

HENRY

Hey, look, treasure!

Henry steps down and leans over into the garbage. Simon joins him as he lifts something that is either a ring or a stray piece of machinery.

HENRY

What is this?

SIMON

Brass maybe. Some kinda copper.

HENRY

It's a ring. Jewelry.

SIMON

I think it's a gasket. A fitting
from off of that old refrigerator
over there.

Henry puts it in his pocket, satisfied and Simon jumps on the back of the truck as it turns the corner and rolls away. Henry starts to walk off in the opposite direction, but stops when he sees Pearl age seven.

EXT. VICKY'S HOUSE -- DAY

Henry comes up the street with Pearl age seven on his back. He walks into Vicky's yard and finds Warren lifting weights in the garage.

HENRY

Hey, Warren, I found Pearl wandering
around by the garbage dump.

WARREN

He lost.

HENRY

Who lost?

Warren rests. He sits up on the bench and takes a toke off the joint he has waiting.

WARREN

Congressman Feer.

HENRY

(realizing)
Oh. Well, you know. Somebody's gotta
lose.

WARREN

What's the fucking use. You make

sacrifices. You try to be a decent human being. Try to contribute something meaningful to society. And what happens? They lose to a bunch of cultural elite liberal fuck-ups. I don't give a shit anymore. People deserve what they get.

Henry pauses, then leads Pearl age seven towards the house. Warren lies back down and continues his lifting.

INT. VICKY'S HOUSE -- DAY

Moments later.

Henry knocks on the door as he enters...

HENRY

Vicky?

No answer. He comes in and finds her sitting on the couch with a drink. She's got a black eye.

HENRY

What happened to you?

VICKY

He's a good man, Henry. Nobody's perfect.

HENRY

I guess not.

VICKY

He's terribly disappointed.

HENRY

I found Pearl wandering around with no shoes on her feet.

Pearl comes over and stands beside her mother.

VICKY

Thanks. She gets scared.

HENRY

And you don't?

Vicky caresses Pearl's hair, then drinks and looks over at Henry.

VICKY

I love him.

INT. WORLD OF DONUTS -- DAY

Moments later.

Buñuel is waiting when Henry walks in and steps up to the beer cooler.

HENRY

(alarmed)
Where's the beer?

MR DENG

No more beer. Coffee. Espresso!
Cappuccino! Café au lait. Carrot
juice. Herbal tea.

Henry looks at the man, disgusted, then falls in to a seat and motions to Gnoc, who is now the waitress.

HENRY

A double espresso and a jelly donut,
Gnoc.

(to Buñuel)
You mind paying? My credit's no good
here anymore, apparently.

BUÑUEL

(nods amiably)
Did you go to the employment agency
today, Henry?

HENRY

No, but it's OK. Simon's gunna try
to get me a job on the garbage truck.

BUÑUEL

Listen, I'm a little concerned about
your friend.

HENRY

Simon?

BUÑUEL

Seems he gave an obscene note to a
girl in the library.

HENRY

Get outta here! When?

BUÑUEL

I'm not sure.

HENRY

It couldn't have been Simon.

BUÑUEL

It almost certainly is. He mentions
you. Look...

He unfolds a print-out of the letter. Henry reads and Buñuel

leans over, pointing out...

HENRY

'Her figure makes me violent. I want to somehow break her. But tenderly. How is this possible? Ask Henry.'

Henry thinks this over, gulps back some espresso and nods his approval. Then...

HENRY

Buñuel, this is obviously a love letter.

BUÑUEL

(taking it back)
We've had complaints.

HENRY

Where did you get it?

BUÑUEL

She posted it on the Internet.

HENRY

Oh, the slut!

BUÑUEL

She was trying to warn other girls about a potential rapist.

HENRY

(smokes)
Is all this true about the Internet? About how you can get pornography on it?

BUÑUEL

Well, yeah, sure. It's a big problem. You can send dirty pictures and everything.

HENRY

On the Internet?

BUÑUEL

Yeah.

Henry is impressed.

HENRY

No kiddin'?

Buñuel gets up to go.

BUÑUEL

See you on Thursday, Henry.

HENRY

(thinking)

Sure. See you.

(calls the waitress)

Gnoc, gimme one of these double espressos to go, will ya?

He is having ideas.

INT. THE GRIM HOUSE KITCHEN -- DAY

Moments later.

Fay, still dressed in black, is tapping away on the keys to the computer, surfing the Internet, as Henry appears at the kitchen door, gripping his tall double espresso.

HENRY

Hello, Fay.

FAY

Go away.

HENRY

You gotta get outta the house, Fay.
You can't blame yourself for not
being here. You did all you could
for her.

She turns and glares at him.

FAY

Is there something you want?

Henry stops, pauses, looks away. Then...

HENRY

You got the Internet on that
contraption?

FAY

(resumes typing)

Yeah. So what?

He changes the subject again, preoccupied and continues tenderly...

HENRY

Look Fay, about, you know, between
us -- what happened...

FAY

I don't wanna talk about it, Henry!

He sighs and drinks his coffee, then looks back at her.

HENRY

Type a part of Simon's poem onto the Internet.

FAY

(stops)

What?

HENRY

Go ahead.

FAY

No.

HENRY

Why not?

FAY

Because.

HENRY

Come on, Fay. It's a great idea.

FAY

I don't know if he would want us to do that.

HENRY

Sure he would. Just the first ten verses.

Fay is tempted.

FAY

I don't know.

HENRY

He'll thank you for it later.

Frowning, she reconsiders. She gets up and takes the notebooks from the cabinet above the fridge. She flips through the pages but suddenly stops and turns to the door with a nicer attitude.

FAY

Henry...

But he's gone. It's as if he has vanished into thin air. She sighs, sits back down, and begins typing the poem onto the Internet.

INT. WORLD OF DONUTS -- DAY

Moments later.

Henry comes back into the store, satisfied with himself. He finishes off his coffee, tosses away the cup and takes a

pornographic magazine from the rack. He leans on the counter where Mr Deng is busy working and flips through the pages.

HENRY

Gimme another one of those tall double espressos, Mr Deng.

Mr Deng starts to make him one and sees him with the magazine.

MR DENG

You gunna buy that?

HENRY

I'm just looking.

MR DENG

Well then put it back.

HENRY

There's this fascinating story about a famous rock band and how they tied a friend of theirs to a bed in their hotel room and inserted a live fish into her vagina.

Mr Deng shakes his head and frowns.

HENRY

(explains)

They say she had numerous orgasms.

MR DENG

Henry, you need to do something with your life. Get a job, or something.

HENRY

I mean, it wasn't the entire fish, it was just, you know, the nose. The nose of the fish.

Mr Deng brings over the coffee. Henry is surprised to notice he is not riveted.

HENRY

You don't find that interesting?

MR DENG

No.

Henry closes the magazine and puts it back. Leaning on the counter, he sips his coffee and ponders.

HENRY

You ever wonder what it would be like to have sex with an animal, Mr Deng?

MR DENG

That coffee is free. Just take it
and get out of here.

HENRY

I mean, some dogs are almost as big
as people and often more attractive.

Mr Deng just goes back to work, leaving Henry there at the
counter thinking big thoughts.

EXT. THE GRIM HOUSE -- EVENING

Simon hangs from the garbage truck as it comes up the street
and pauses in front of his house. He jumps down and the truck
barrels away.

INT. FAY'S ROOM -- EVENING

Simon taps at the door. She looks over at him and he sees
she's been crying. He comes into the room and she sits up on
the edge of the bed.

SIMON

Did you see him?

FAY

He came by this afternoon.

SIMON

Did you talk?

FAY

No.

He comes over and sits beside her. He thinks a moment, then...

SIMON

You've got to tell him, Fay.

FAY

He thinks I'm a slut.

And she starts crying again. Simon awkwardly touches her
shoulder, then moves his hand away. Fay pulls herself
together, snuffles and goes into the bathroom.

INT. THE GRIM HOUSE, AT THE PIANO

Moments later.

Simon comes downstairs and finds Henry at the piano. He looks
ill and is clutching a nearly empty container of espresso.
He is staring sickly at 'the ring'.

SIMON

Henry?

HENRY

Simon, I don't feel so good.

SIMON

What's wrong?

HENRY

I feel all kinda clammy. And damp.

Simon lifts the coffee container and smells it.

SIMON

How many of these did you have?

Henry tries to remember. He squints.

HENRY

Seven.

Simon puts the container down and sits at the table.

SIMON

Henry, we have to talk.

HENRY

Can I use your toilet?

SIMON

Fay's taking a shower.

Henry grabs his stomach. He presses his hand against his chest, holds his head, then stares at the ring.

HENRY

How much you think I can get for
this?

He looks at Simon.

SIMON

(pauses)

Henry, Fay's pregnant.

Henry looks at him.

SIMON

Fay's pregnant with your child.

Henry lets this sink in. He stands and the room tilts. White with fear, he clutches at his rumbling gut.

INT. THE GRIM HOUSE BATHROOM

Moments later.

Fay is in the shower as...

Henry bursts into the bathroom, tearing at his belt and trousers. She starts screaming and wraps herself in the shower curtain. He drops his pants and throws himself on the toilet just in time to begin shitting his brains out. Fay crouches, terrified and disgusted, in the shower.

FAY

Jesus, Henry!

Henry sweats and moans as he empties his bowels in a violent and messy blast of noise and foul air.

Fay covers her face and whimpers sickly.

Finally, he's done. He hangs with his face out over his knees, sick, exhausted and in shock. Fay wraps herself in a towel and steps out of the shower. She creeps carefully around him and flushes the toilet, growing increasingly concerned.

FAY

Hey, Henry. You OK?

He is destroyed, staring down at...

The 'ring' he still holds in his hand.

Fay sees this, looks at Henry, then kneels and takes it from him. He doesn't resist. She lifts it up and breathlessly admires it. Totally misunderstanding, moved beyond words...

FAY

Oh. Oh, Henry.

And she throws her arms around him as he sits there, sweating and spent, on the toilet.

INT. CHURCH -- DAY

A month later.

Mr Deng and Buñuel drag Henry, kicking and screaming, into the church foyer. Once inside, he shakes them off and they stand back. He huffs and puffs and tosses the hair back out of his eyes. He paces back and forth like a caged animal, then stops, sees...

Fay, at the altar, waiting with Simon. She is beautiful.

Henry calms down, deeply affected.

Fay smiles down the aisle at him.

Henry throws back his shoulders, straightens his tie and strides up the aisle.

Also present at the ceremony are Vicky and Warren. Gnoc is

maid of honor.

INT. CHURCH -- DAY

Later.

Henry holds Fay's hand and repeats after Father Hawkes.

FATHER HAWKES

I, Henry, take you, Fay to be my wife.

HENRY

I, Henry, take you, Fay to be my wife.

FATHER HAWKES

And do promise before God and these witnesses...

HENRY

And do promise before God and these witnesses...

FATHER HAWKES

To be your loving and faithful husband.

HENRY

To be your loving and faithful husband.

FATHER HAWKES

In plenty and in want.

HENRY

In plenty and in want.

FATHER HAWKES

In joy and in sorrow.

HENRY

In joy and in sorrow.

FATHER HAWKES

In sickness and in health.

HENRY

In sickness and in health.

FATHER HAWKES

For as long as we both shall live.

HENRY

For as long as we both shall live.

The gasket everyone is now mistaking for a ring is lifted

high before the altar.

FATHER HAWKES

Bless, O Lord, this ring, that he
who gives it and she who wears it
may abide in your peace and continue
in your favor until their life's
end.

The gasket is placed on Fay's finger.

FATHER HAWKES

Whom God has joined, let no man
separate.

The doors of the church swing open with a tremendous creak
and everyone turns from the altar to see...

Amy enter. She steps in and stands there, alarmed, clutching
a long scroll of fax paper.

HENRY

Oh, shit.

FAY

Simon, do something.

Simon walks down the aisle to see to Amy.

The guests watch and wait.

As Simon reaches her, Amy looks away from the altar and shows
him the fax scroll.

AMY

Look.

He studies the fax and recognizes his poem. He grows
concerned.

SIMON

Where did you get this?

AMY

It's all over the Internet.

Simon looks up the aisle at...

Fay and Henry. They look away, caught.

AMY

They're even talking about it on the
TV news.

Confused, Simon starts for the door, shoving the fax in his
pocket. Fay steps down from the altar...

FAY

Simon?

Amy hurries along beside him.

AMY

There's a guy from the radio station
over at World of Donuts and a story
in the newspaper about some kids
burning down a school near Boston!

INT. THE GRIM HOUSE -- NIGHT

Later that evening.

The whole neighborhood is celebrating Fay's wedding. The music is loud. The people are drunk. The place is a shambles. A big dance number is playing. Amidst all the festivities, though, Simon and Buñuel have the small TV propped up on top of the fridge, following the evening news...

REPORTER

(on TV)

It all started right here in Queens, Jim, at World of Donuts about one year ago today, when local garbage man, Simon Grim, put pencil to paper and began to compose what many have come to regard as vicious, antisocial and pornographic poetry -- 112 lines of unrhymed free meter verse which would one day serve to spark the flames of controversy across the nation and -- indeed -- the world.

Fay leads the neighbors in the dance...

OWEN FEER

(on TV)

This is outrageous! Measures must be taken. Have we debased our culture to such an extent that a garbage man with a head full of sick ideas is legitimately referred to as a poet, and where the filth he spews can be accessed by any child old enough to turn on a computer? Is this what we have come to? Not the transmission of our highest ideals, but a cynical, atheistic delirium!

Henry and Fay dance, surrounded by the dancing neighbors...

POET LAUREATE

(on TV)

Poetry of this kind, and this poem in particular, is, I think, a worthy

form of desperation; a digression on the extremes of human experience; of solitude, of community. It is perhaps alarming, even upsetting to some -- myself included -- but it must be allowed to exist.

Henry throws an arm around Warren, who stands looking dejected in the doorway, and raises his glass to the happiness in the room.

ANCHORMAN

(on TV)

Meanwhile, in Rome today, the Pope issued a message of hope for believers in their fight against what he termed the godless and lost. He did not mention Simon Grim by name, but offered a prayer for the young whom he described as sadly in need of faith and not the illusion of conviction offered by rock music, drugs and contemporary poetry.

The TV is switched off. It's later now. People are passed out on the kitchen floor and various neighbors are sitting around the table. Fay steps back from the TV, drains a glass of beer and wipes her mouth on the sleeve of her wedding gown. She hugs Simon, who is deeply unsettled by the news of his growing infamy.

FAY

God, Simon, I mean, like, you're a total fucking rock star.

INT. WORLD OF DONUTS -- DAY

A huge crowd of kids are pressed up against the doors, trying to get a peek at their hero, Simon Grim.

Angus comes away from the window. He stands and regards Simon, who is sitting at a table tearing a napkin to shreds.

ANGUS

I'm willing to negotiate, Simon.

SIMON

I know, it's just...

ANGUS

You've had other offers.

SIMON

Well, yes. But.

ANGUS

What?

SIMON

Why have you reconsidered?

ANGUS

Because I think your writing will be tremendously successful.

SIMON

But you don't like it?

ANGUS

It's growing on me.

SIMON

What made you change your mind?

He points to the fans outside.

ANGUS

Other people's responses. I don't live in a vacuum, you know. Two months ago I didn't have the proof of your poem's appeal. Now I do.

Simon thinks this over, but says nothing. Angus comes over and lays his hand on his shoulder.

ANGUS

Consider my offer carefully. Get some professional advice. I'll call you tomorrow.

Simon nods.

EXT. WORLD OF DONUTS -- DAY

Moments later.

Angus emerges and has to fight his way through the throng of excited adolescents. He reaches his limo and gets in. But he pauses before closing the door and considers the crowd.

Simon emerges from the store and kids begin screaming and shouting for autographs. Angus shakes his head, impressed.

INT. CHURCH -- DAY

Simon consults Father Hawkes.

FATHER HAWKES

What were the terms?

SIMON

A hundred thousand in cash up front.

FATHER HAWKES

Royalties?

SIMON

A seventy/thirty split.

FATHER HAWKES

Well, that could be better. But it is a hundred thousand dollars up front. Guaranteed money. You could use that.

SIMON

So it's a good deal?

FATHER HAWKES

Of course it's good.

SIMON

So I should take it?

FATHER HAWKES

No. Try to get him up to a hundred and fifty thousand.

EXT. JUNKYARD -- DAY

Evening.

Henry stalks along, all fired up. Simon tries his best to keep up with him.

HENRY

I've let myself down, Simon! I've let myself be caught in the bloody maw of banal necessity! How did I get here? How did this happen to me? I'm going to be somebody's father! I need time to think. To write. Time to finish my 'Confession'! I can't work for a living! It's impossible! I tried once. My genius will be wasted trying to make ends meet!

He collapses extravagantly.

HENRY

This is how great men topple, Simon. Their hearts are in the right place too much of the time! They get sidetracked! Distracted. Oh! How could I have been so careless!

SIMON

Henry, please, let me read the 'Confession'.

HENRY

No. Not now. It's not done. I'm all washed up. I'm finished!

SIMON

Angus James is convinced my poem is going to make him incredibly wealthy. He'll read your book and seriously consider publishing it. If I ask him to. I'm certain.

Henry glances back at his friend, digesting this. He thinks it over, then...

HENRY

Really? You really think so?

Having finally got through to him, Simon comes forward, anxious to help Henry.

SIMON

I'll insist he publish the 'Confession'.

He paces back and forth, thrusting out his chest, for the first time in his life displaying something like pride or arrogance.

SIMON

(adds)

Or I won't let him publish my poem.

Henry sits there watching Simon, impressed with this evidence of increased self-esteem. He realizes the profundity of the gesture.

HENRY

You'd do that? You'd do that for me?

Simon stares off into the distance.

SIMON

You saved my life.

Henry is moved. He stands and comes forward. He grabs his friend by the shoulders and turns him around.

HENRY

Do you realize what you're saying?

SIMON

(pausing)

I owe you everything.

Henry steps away, considering, then looks back at Simon and extends his hand.

HENRY

OK.

Simon smiles. Henry smiles. They shake hands.

INT. HENRY'S APARTMENT -- DAY

Simon enters, comes forward into the room and pauses, looking off at...

The stack of twelve books that comprise the 'Confession'.

EXT. HOUSE/BACKYARD -- DAY

Henry stands outside, watching his door.

INT. HENRY'S APARTMENT -- DAY

Simon lifts the first volume, opens it and begins reading. He sits.

EXT. BACKYARD -- DAY

Henry paces, drinking and smoking nervously.

INT. HENRY'S APARTMENT -- NIGHT

Simon strides the length of the living room, reading. He stops, frowns.

INT. HENRY'S APARTMENT -- NIGHT

Simon reads in front of the fire.

EXT. BACKYARD/GARAGE -- NIGHT

Buñuel, Hawkes and Mr Deng sleep sitting up as Henry talks to himself. Fay leans out the back door and interrupts him. He looks at her, but says nothing. She sighs and goes back inside: turning off the lights.

INT. HENRY'S APARTMENT -- DAY

The next morning.

Simon sits wearily reading the final page of volume twelve as the morning sun streaks into the room. Finally, he finishes and slowly closes the book. He stands and crosses the room. Leaning against the wall, he removes his glasses and rubs his aching eyes.

EXT. BACKYARD -- DAY

Simon steps out of Henry's apartment and sees Henry asleep on the back stoop.

EXT. WORLD OF DONUTS -- DAY

Simon stares into a glass of water. Fay sits ten feet away, waiting. Finally...

FAY

It's really that bad?

SIMON

It's terrible.

INT. ANGUS JAMES' OFFICE -- DAY

The 'Confession' lies on the big desk. Angus' hand comes down upon it.

ANGUS

You've read this?

SIMON

Yes.

ANGUS

And you want me to consider publishing it?

SIMON

Yes.

ANGUS

As part of our deal?

SIMON

Yes.

ANGUS

Simon, this book, it's... It's really quite bad.

SIMON

That's what you said about my poem.

Angus pauses and figures. He changes the subject.

ANGUS

I'm offering you a very real expression of my faith in your writing. Two hundred thousand dollars and a sixty/forty split.

SIMON

But just exactly what is the nature of your faith in my writing?

ANGUS

Look, Simon, you don't require my admiration. You require my experience as a publisher. And that experience leads me to believe your poem will

make more money than any book of poetry ever published. In history. Virtually make you a household name within two years. You'll never have to work on a garbage truck again, I assure you. Or do anything else for that matter. Whereas this 'Confession' by Henry Fool...

He is at a loss for words.

ANGUS

The most I can say for this is...
The man is a scoundrel.

SIMON

He taught me everything I know.

ANGUS

No! He encouraged all that was expressive in you to become manifest. He inspired you to act. He influenced your perception.

Simon waits a while, staring at his shoes.

SIMON

How about if my advance is only a hundred thousand?

ANGUS

It's not about money, Simon.

SIMON

We could split the royalties seventy/thirty.

ANGUS

I will not publish Henry Fool's 'Confession'.

Simon sits and lets this sink in. Angus waits, then...

ANGUS

Will you sign the contract?

Simon continues looking out at the city. Angus waits, but there is no response. Finally, Simon turns, pauses and slowly crosses the room.

He sits at the table and looks down at the contract.

He signs.

INT. THE GRIM HOUSE KITCHEN -- DAY

Fay is in labor. Henry helps her into her coat as they rush

for the door.

INT. WORLD OF DONUTS -- DAY

Moments later.

Henry runs into the store and stands there, panicked, looking at Hawkes, Buñuel and Mr Deng. Gnoc runs out to get Fay.

EXT. WORLD OF DONUTS -- DAY

Henry and Gnoc load Fay into the van. The van pulls out.

INT. VAN -- DAY

Henry drives recklessly. Fay rolls around in the back.

INT. HOSPITAL CORRIDOR -- DAY

Fay is in a wheelchair being rushed down the hall. She is gripping Henry's hand as he runs along beside her.

INT. HOSPITAL DELIVERY ROOM -- DAY

Fay gasps and sweats as the Doctor and Nurse prepare her. She is scared. She looks over at...

Henry, looking in through the window. He looks scared too.

Fay is sedated by gas.

Henry is taken away by the Nurse.

Fay stares up at the ceiling.

INT. HOSPITAL WAITING ROOM -- NIGHT

Henry is asleep on a row of waiting-room chairs, exhausted.

Simon comes running up the hall and finds him. It's late and no one is around. He sits down beside Henry and shakes him.

Henry wakes.

HENRY

Simon? You're here.

He sits up and Simon sits beside him.

SIMON

What happened?

HENRY

(coughs)

It's a boy.

SIMON

And Fay?

HENRY

She's alright.

Simon sits back, relieved. Then he remembers the rain-soaked shopping bag he has with him. He pulls out a couple of cans of beer and hands one to Henry.

HENRY

Thanks.

They look around, seasoned conspirators and make sure the coast is clear. Then they pop open the beers and toast.

They drink. Then...

HENRY

How did it go?

Simon pauses, scared, then gets up and crosses the room. He looks out of the window and gathers his strength.

SIMON

Listen, Henry, Angus James didn't like your 'Confession'.

Henry looks at Simon blankly, then blinks and looks away.

HENRY

Ah. I see. Well, what now?

SIMON

What do you mean?

HENRY

Did he suggest changes?

Silence. Simon comes back and sits again.

SIMON

No. He didn't.

HENRY

I mean, after all, there are things I can do to make it more accessible.

SIMON

Accessible?

HENRY

I can soften up some of the language and make it read easier. Take out some of the more intratextual references and popularize the underlying Sturm und Drang, so to speak. I can change its mode. Make

it more of a conventional novel
instead.

Simon just stares at him blankly, then sighs and shakes his
head.

SIMON

No. Don't.

HENRY

(laughing)

Oh, Simon, don't be such a purist! I
appreciate your protectiveness, but
the integrity of the work gives it a
durability that can sustain such
things.

Simon comes over and lays his hand on Henry's shoulder.

SIMON

No. Really, Henry. Don't.

HENRY

What are you saying; that it doesn't
merit revision?

SIMON

I'm saying... Angus James didn't
like it.

He steps away and sits. Henry pauses, then approaches and
leans down over him.

HENRY

Well, did you tell him what you think?

SIMON

What I think doesn't matter.

HENRY

Yes, it does. You've got to use your
influence with him.

SIMON

I gave it to him to read and he hated
it. What more can I do?

HENRY

You can refuse to let him publish
your poem.

SIMON

I can't do that.

HENRY

You said you would.

SIMON

That was before I read your book.

HENRY

(hit hard)

Oh.

SIMON

(looking up at him)

I signed the contract, Henry.

Henry stands there a moment longer, then lowers himself into the nearest seat, weakened.

SIMON

Look, Henry, what did you expect?

HENRY

I... I don't know. Honesty, perhaps.

SIMON

(indignantly)

Look, if I had told you, when at first I read it, that I thought it was no good, what would you have done?

HENRY

I would have respected your opinion.

SIMON

And insisted that there's no accounting for taste.

HENRY

Well, is there?

Simon's words catch in his throat. He turns away, frustrated.

SIMON

I don't know. I didn't bring it to Angus because I thought it was good. I brought it to Angus because you're my friend.

HENRY

(staggered)

Oh how perfectly enormous of you, Simon.

SIMON

(explodes)

Look, Henry, I did it! I wrote. I wrote poetry because you told me to! I worked! I worked while you sat back and comfortably dismissed the outside world as too shallow, stupid

and mean to appreciate your ideas.

HENRY

Is that such a priority? Is that
some sort of measure of a man's worth?
To drag what's best in him out into
the street so every average slob
with some pretense to taste can poke
it with a stick?

SIMON

(sits, tired)
Maybe. Maybe it is.

Henry just stares at him, stands, then turns on his heel and
waves him off.

HENRY

You must be pretty impressed with
yourself, huh? The all too obviously
talented new man, the important new
voice, the early clue to a new
direction, or whatever, etc., etc.,
etc! A popular new trend conveniently
packaged for the distracted young
herd! You want to be liked more than
you know, Simon Grim! You'd be nowhere
without me and you know it.

Simon hangs his head, destroyed.

SIMON

I'm leaving.

Henry is scared all of a sudden. But he puts on a defiant
exterior.

HENRY

Yes. It's time you left.

He stands, drinks and walks over to the window...

HENRY

I saw you for what you were in the
beginning, Simon. I hold no grudge
and I'm certain you will, in time,
leave some serious and small dent in
this world.

SIMON

(weakly)
The world is full of shit.

Henry take advantage of Simon's disillusionment and puts on
a big show of secure wisdom.

HENRY

The world is full of shit. It's true.
And you have to walk through it.
That's your part. I'm sorry. But
you're no good at it. Perhaps I'm
not. Perhaps I wasn't made to walk
through shit. Go on now. Leave. Do
what you're good at. Go.

Simon sits there a moment, numb with grief. Henry, red in the face, stares at the floor. Suddenly, Simon stands and walks out. Henry looks up and watches him go. He can hardly believe it. He almost raises his voice and apologizes, but can't. He lowers his head again and covers his face with his hands, listening to Simon's footsteps receding through the halls.

Simon walks on, away from us, down the hospital corridor.

FADE TO BLACK

EXT. STREET -- DAY

Seven years later.

Fay bangs out of the kitchen door with her seven-year-old son Ned. Frazzled and overworked, she grips a loaded laundry basket to her side as she sits Ned down on the curb and points at him.

FAY

Play!

The kid sits still, obviously guilty of some unspeakable mischief, as Fay storms back into the house. He looks around, bored, then brightens up when he sees...

Henry, coming up the street, hanging from the back of a garbage truck.

INT. THE INFERNO -- DAY

Moments later.

Henry enters with Ned on his back and the bartender, Patty, goes ballistic.

PATTY

Henry, what did I tell you about
bringing the kid in here!

HENRY

Say hello to Patty, Ned.

NED

Hi.

She suddenly becomes all soft and cuddly.

PATTY

How you doin', sweetie? You wanna
Coke?

He nods and Henry stands him on a stool at the bar.

HENRY

So what did you learn at school today,
Ned? Anything?

He shakes his head.

HENRY

Here, I'll teach you something.

He hands Ned a cigarette and lights it for him. Ned takes a
drag and coughs.

HENRY

Horrible, isn't it?

Ned nods in agreement.

NED

It burns.

HENRY

See. That'll teach ya. Here, sip
this.

And he offers the kid his whiskey.

EXT. THE GRIM HOUSE -- DAY

Same time.

Fay comes out of the house and looks for her son.

FAY

Ned!

She comes out to the street and looks around.

FAY

Ned!

EXT. VICKY'S HOUSE -- DAY

Fay comes up looking for Ned and sees...

Pearl, age fourteen, come out of Vicky's House. She is
fourteen years old now. Warren steps out the door and grabs
her by the arm. She shakes him off. He slaps her.

She runs down the steps and glares back at him.

WARREN

(pointing at her)
I'm warning you, Pearl!

Pearl turns defiantly away and walks into the street.

INT. THE INFERNO -- DAY

Same time.

Henry is teaching Ned how to tip a topless dancer. A dancer stands on the bar and stretches her garter as Ned slips a dollar bill in beneath it.

HENRY

That's it. That's it. Perfect!

Some other guy down the bar is reading a newspaper...

BILL

Hey, Fool, it's about your friend --
what's his name. Your brother-in-law.

Henry looks over. The guy, Bill, shows him the article.

HENRY

What about him?

BILL

(reading)

The controversial and reclusive American poet Simon Grim has been awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature. The Swedish Academy, who will confer the award late next week, praised Mr Grim for works of great and difficult striving, for the rendering of the desperate, the ugly and the mundane in a language packed with our shared human frailties...

HENRY

God, they must be hard up for geniuses to pin medals on because, listen, I gotta tell you, when I first met this guy he didn't even know what an iambic pentameter was.

BILL

He's a fraud.

HENRY

Keep a lid on it, Bill, you're outta your league.

BILL

Stir things up so as to stay in the newspapers. That's his racket.

HENRY

He's a great American poet, you dumb fuck!

BILL

Poet, my ass! I could puke all over a piece a loose leaf and be more profound than he is!

HENRY

Come over here and say that and I'll cripple ya in three different ways, you boozed-up Philistine!

FAY

Henry!

Henry and Ned crouch and quiver -- caught. Fay strides up to the bar and grabs the kid.

FAY

Listen, you degenerate, I've had about enough of this!

(smells Ned's breath)

Ned, have you been drinking?

The kid checks with Henry then looks back at Fay and nods. Fay looks at her husband, outraged.

HENRY

(explains)

His throat hurt from smoking.

Fay slaps him across the face -- hard -- and the place goes quiet. Henry shakes his head clear and she pokes him in the chest with her finger.

FAY

Henry, don't come home tonight! I'm warning you! Don't come home at all! Ever!

And she storms out with the kid. Henry snaps his jaw back into place, then looks at Patty and Bill and shrugs. He knocks back his drink and motions for another.

EXT. WORLD OF DONUTS -- NIGHT

Later (evening).

Henry staggers out of the back door of the Inferno and comes across Mr Deng sitting against the wall of the store, watching the basketball game on a small TV. World of Donuts vibrates with loud music.

HENRY

Who's winning?

MR DENG

Nobody.

Henry gestures to World of Donuts...

HENRY

What's going on in there?

MR DENG

We gotta have rock 'n' roll shows these days, Henry. The poetry readings just don't pay the bills no more.

HENRY

What did I tell you! It was just a fad. I told you that! I told everyone!

MR DENG

Did you hear about Simon? It was on the news today.

HENRY

Yeah yeah yeah. So what? A Nobel Prize. Anybody can get one of them these days. That's the problem, with this world, Mr Deng... Nobody's got any standards anymore. You seen Fay?

MR DENG

You better sleep in my office tonight, Henry. She was very angry. You've gotta let her cool off.

HENRY

I can't sleep in there with that racket!

MR DENG

Suit yourself.

Henry considers his options, then...

INT. GARAGE -- NIGHT

The place is abandoned.

Henry comes in and, just as he is laying down to go to sleep on an old couch, finds Pearl age fourteen.

She is hardened and disturbed, but frequently vulnerable and scared; a troubled kid.

HENRY

What are you doing here, Pearl?

PEARL

You want some?

HENRY

(pauses)

Some what?

Pearl comes towards him. He is kneeling with his face at her crotch level when she reaches him. She holds out a bottle of cheap rot-gut wine. Realizing, he takes it and drinks. He winces.

HENRY

Shit!

Pearl laughs and falls back onto the couch, her sweater hanging off her shoulder and her skirt hiked up and displaying her underwear.

Henry stands and searches for something to sit on.

PEARL

Come sit here.

She pats the couch beside her.

He comes over, eyeing her carefully and sits. He hands back the bottle. She drinks, winces and sits staring at the flames.

PEARL

That's what my dad always says.

HENRY

What?

PEARL

(dead)

'You want some?'

Henry looks away, uncomfortable. She slides her gaze over to him, their eyes meet, and she pins him to the spot.

PEARL

People say you were once in jail for having sex with a girl my age.

HENRY

That was a long time ago.

He gets up and stands at the window. Pearl age fourteen watches him closely as she drinks, then...

PEARL

You want some?

He looks over at her and she slides her coat off her shoulder.
Henry is sweating.

HENRY

You oughta get outta here, Pearl.

PEARL

I was here first.

HENRY

Go home.

PEARL

You go home.

HENRY

Fine.

And he starts to leave. But Pearl sits up...

PEARL

(scared)

Wait!

Henry stops and looks back at her.

PEARL

(hanging her head)

I can't go home.

HENRY

(concerned)

Why not?

PEARL

He beat her up again.

Henry holds his head, tries to sober up. He looks around the room, then focuses on the girl.

HENRY

Warren beat up your mom?

Pearl stares at the floor. She glances over at him, then back down at the bottle gripped in her hands. She nods.

Henry pauses, then comes across the room, lowering himself tentatively to the couch.

HENRY

Is she alright?

She says nothing for a moment, then...

PEARL

(sadly)

Do you think I'm pretty?

Henry lifts his hand and covers his face. He looks up at the ceiling and sighs. He returns to Pearl...

HENRY

Does she need help?

Pearl reaches over and grabs his thigh. Looking up at him, with tears rolling down her face, she suggests...

PEARL

I'll suck your cock if you kill him for me.

Henry jumps away from her and Pearl throws herself down on the couch, covering her face.

INT. VICKY'S HOUSE -- NIGHT

Moments later.

Henry barges in and starts searching for...

HENRY

Vicky! Vicky, it's Henry from across the street! Vicky!

He runs through the house, checking the rooms. He throws open the door to the bedroom and finds...

Vicky, sitting on the edge of the bed, smoking. She has a black eye and a swollen cheek.

HENRY

(taken back)
Vicky?

VICKY

(standing)
What do you think you're doing, you idiot!

WARREN

(off)
Hey!

Henry looks over and sees Warren stumble drunkenly out of the bathroom. What are you doing in my house?

HENRY

(to Vicky)
It's about Pearl.

Vicky looks troubled. She sits back down with a sigh.

VICKY

Mind your own business, Henry.

WARREN

(shoves him)

Yeah, who the hell do you think you
are, anyway?

Henry falls back and looks at Vicky. She looks away.

Henry looks at Warren, pauses, then gives him a sharp, hard
shove.

Warren stands back against the wall, pauses, then erupts
into viciousness.

He grabs Henry and throws him violently down the hall, where
he hits the wall and collapses.

As Henry gets to his knees, Warren kicks him in the ribs.
Henry curls up and rolls out on to the kitchen floor. Warren
kicks him in the side of the head.

Vicky sits back down on the bed, covering her ears.

Warren beats the hell out of Henry, kicking him in the face
and ribs whenever he manages to get up on his hands and knees.
Henry crawls under the kitchen table for safety. Warren grabs
his feet and drags him out. As he is dragged across the floor,
Henry finds a screwdriver and grabs it. He rolls over on his
back as...

Warren lunges down at him again and...

WARREN

Ah.

Warren is stabbed in the heart.

Henry can't believe it.

Warren can't believe it. He stands there in the middle of
the kitchen, amazed, with the screwdriver sticking out of
his chest.

Henry, semi-conscious and severely beaten, falls against the
back door and coughs up a few of his teeth. Vicky steps into
the hall from her room and shudders.

Warren sits at the table, stunned. He looks from the
screwdriver to Vicky, then...

WARREN

Fuck.

He falls to the floor.

EXT. STREETS -- NIGHT

Henry staggers away, limping. He comes to the intersection at the end of the block and doesn't know which way to run. Panicked, he looks round, holding his arm to his chest. He runs towards the highway.

INT. POLICE STATION -- NIGHT

Later.

Fay is wired beyond belief. Trying to listen attentively, but still too overwhelmed to maintain her concentration.

LAWYER

(off)

It is true your husband served seven years in prison for statutory rape.

FAY

Yes. It is.

LAWYER

And when was that?

FAY

That was... I dunno. Fifteen... Sixteen years ago.

LAWYER

And when were you married?

FAY

We were married seven years ago.

LAWYER

Were you aware at all of the victim's relationship with his daughter?

FAY

Pardon me?

LAWYER

The girl, the daughter, Pearl. She had been having sexual relations with her father.

Fay is overwhelmed.

FAY

I didn't know that. No.

LAWYER

Pearl claims she offered your husband sexual favors if he would kill her father.

Fay just looks at him blankly, overwhelmed, confused. She starts to cry quietly.

LAWYER

I'm just repeating what she said,
Mrs Fool. The victim's wife, Vicky,
claims your husband broke into the
house and forcefully entered her
bedroom.

Fay trembles and catches her breath trying to take this all
in. A cop hands her some tissues. She takes them and tries
to concentrate on what the lawyer says.

LAWYER

Fay, I know this isn't easy. But we
need your help here. The girl claims
she asked your husband to kill her
father in exchange for, well, I guess
the promise of sexual relations with
her.

INT. POLICE STATION CORRIDOR -- NIGHT

Later.

Fay staggers out into the noisy corridor and rests against
the wall. Looking down the hall she sees...

Pearl and Vicky, sitting in a blank, brightly lit room beyond
a glass door.

Fay comes closer and looks in at them.

They don't see her. They stare at the floor before them,
dazed and confused.

INT. THE GRIM HOUSE -- DAY

Morning.

Fay is lying on her bed with her coat still on, trying to
think. Ned stands by the side of the bed, watching her.

NED

Mom?

FAY

Yeah.

NED

Where's Dad?

FAY

I don't know, honey. Leave me alone
a minute, I gotta think.

He picks at the bedspread and looks at the ceiling, then...

NED

Mom?

FAY

What!

NED

Is Dad in trouble?

FAY

Yes, Ned, he is. He's in big trouble.
Now just be quiet for two minutes.

He walks around to the other side of the bed and waits a moment before...

NED

Mom?

FAY

I'm warning you, Ned.

NED

Mom, can I be a mailman when I grow up?

Fay sits up, pauses and studies her son.

FAY

Sure you can, honey. You can be anything you want.

Ned is happy to hear this. He shuffles out of the room and Fay falls back on the bed.

INT. THE GRIM HOUSE KITCHEN -- DAY

Moments later.

Ned comes into the kitchen and digs through the drawers beneath the sink. He finds an envelope. He reads the return address: Chelsea Hotel, New York City.

EXT. SUBWAY -- DAY

Ned approaches the subway station and climbs the stairs to the platform.

EXT. SUBWAY PLATFORM -- DAY

Moments later.

Ned runs up the stairs to the elevated platform just as a train pulls into the station. He runs down a few cars and hops in as the doors slide open.

INT. TRAIN -- DAY

Ned rides the train to New York City.

EXT. SUBWAY STOP -- DAY

Twenty minutes later.

He comes up out of the subway on to the street, looks around.

INT. HOTEL LOBBY -- DAY

He comes into the hotel and rings an annoying buzzer which brings out the concierge, who is in his little office, watching TV.

CONCIERGE

Yeah, what do you want?

NED

My uncle.

CONCIERGE

What's his name?

NED

Simon Grim.

The concierge looks through his book as Ned waits.

CONCIERGE

There ain't no one here by that name.

Ned pulls the envelope from his pocket, unfolds it and shows it to the concierge.

NED

Room 423.

The concierge studies the envelope and hands it back.

CONCIERGE

This is post marked five years ago.

Disappointed, Ned takes back the envelope and stands looking at his sneakers.

CONCIERGE

What does he look like?

NED

(hopeless)
I don't know.

CONCIERGE

Sorry, kid. Can't help ya.

Ned steps away from the front desk and moves towards the

door. But then he stops and looks back at...

The concierge, sitting back in his office, returning his attention to the TV set.

The boy heads for the elevator.

The concierge looks up and sees him.

CONCIERGE

(jumping up)

Hey!

Ned checks his step and runs for the service stairs.

The concierge goes after him.

INT. HOTEL STAIRCASE -- DAY

Moments later.

Ned runs up the stairs, the concierge in pursuit.

INT. HOTEL CORRIDOR -- DAY

Moments later.

Ned jumps out into the hall, narrowly escaping the clutches of the concierge, who falls to the floor.

Ned runs up the hall, checking the room numbers as the concierge gets to his feet. He finds...

Room 423.

He knocks.

The concierge strides up the hall towards him.

Ned knocks again.

The concierge bears down upon him.

He knocks again and...

The door opens a crack, held by its safety chain. A female figure in silhouette is at the narrow gap.

Ned looks from the door to the concierge approaching.

The concierge arrives and reaches out for him, but the door opens wide and Ned dives in.

INT. HOTEL ROOM 423 -- DAY

Same time.

The concierge stands in the hallway. The door swings shut in his face.

Ned kneels on the floor of the hotel room, waiting to be smacked, or something.

But when nothing happens, he opens his eyes and looks back over his shoulder at...

Laura, the secretary from the publishing house. She is dressed for travel and has her coat hung over her arm, a suitcase in her hand. She smiles at him, then looks from the boy to someone across the room and...

Ned follows her gaze to find...

Simon, standing there before him, a suitcase in his hand as well. He looks down at Ned with a calm, intrigued expression.

The boy looks up at him in awe.

Simon steps forward, pauses, then...

SIMON

Get up off your knees.

He does.

EXT. WORLD OF DONUTS -- DAY

A taxi pulls up. Simon and Ned climb out and Laura leans out of the window.

LAURA

Promise me you'll be on that plane at seven, Simon.

SIMON

I'll see you in Stockholm.

They kiss. The taxi pulls away. Simon comes down beside Ned, takes the boy by the shoulders and whispers in his ear.

The kid takes off.

Simon looks over at World of Donuts and sees Gnoc waiting there at the door.

EXT. BEHIND WORLD OF DONUTS -- DAY

Gnoc leads Simon out through the kitchen. A band is seen doing a sound check, inside.

Buñuel and Hawkes are waiting there, looking concerned.

Simon gives Buñuel his passport.

Buñuel nods and leaves.

Hawkes and Gnoc open the cellar doors.

INT. WORLD OF DONUTS BASEMENT -- DAY

Moments later.

Simon is lead down the stairs and stops. He looks on in horror at...

Henry, lying on a makeshift bed, badly beaten up and weak. Mr Deng is wrapping his chest in bandages.

Simon pauses, then comes closer. He reaches out and touches Henry's shoulder, standing there looking down at his friend. Henry looks up at him, pauses and then gestures vaguely with his hand.

HENRY

Look, Simon, the world's a scary place. I admit it. But it's not my fault. I swear!

Simon thinks about this and looks away.

SIMON

I'm sorry, Henry.

HENRY

Don't be. You had things to do.

SIMON

So did you.

Henry thinks about that, sighs and looks away.

INT. THE GRIM HOUSE -- DAY

Fay packs up the many books of the 'Confession' into one of the old suitcases Henry first came to town with. She slams it shut.

EXT. THE GRIM HOUSE -- DAY

Ned runs along the street and stops at the police car. He points down the street with great urgency. The cops jump in their cars and take off. He then looks over at...

Fay, leaving the house with Henry's suitcase.

EXT. WORLD OF DONUTS BACK ALLEY -- DAY

Same time.

Buñuel backs his car into the alley behind World of Donuts. Stepping out of the car he hands Simon back the passport.

Simon checks it and then looks up to see...

Father Hawkes and Mr Deng helping Henry outside. Coming out into the daylight, he straightens up and manages to walk on his own. He motions Ned over and leans down to the kid with difficulty.

HENRY

Gotta light?

Ned does. He has his own Zippo lighter and he proudly lights his dad's cigarette.

Henry smokes, hugs Ned, then leans back and pauses. Finally...

HENRY

Take care of your mom and don't start trouble you can't finish.

Ned nods and Henry pats him on the shoulder. Then he stands before Fay and looks at his feet. With her arms folded across her chest and her hip cocked, she taps her foot impatiently and waits for his last line of crap.

HENRY

I love you, Fay.

FAY

(rolls her eyes)
Yeah, well, tough.

But then she looks at him and softens. He leans in and kisses her passionately on the mouth.

Moments later, they all help Henry into Buñuel's car and Simon gets in behind the wheel. The doors slam shut and Simon steers the car slowly up the alley. Henry gazes out at Fay running along beside the car with the rest of the neighborhood, some of them laughing, some of them crying...

EXT. AIRPORT TERMINAL -- DAY

Simon pulls up at the curb and jumps out. He helps Henry climb out and together they enter the terminal.

INT. AIRLINE TICKET COUNTER -- DAY

Moments later.

Henry steps up.

AIRLINE TICKET CLERK

Passport and ticket, please.

Henry hands them over. He glances back at...

Simon, waiting.

The clerk compares Henry to the picture in the passport, checks again, then...

AIRLINE TICKET CLERK

(recognizes)

It's an honor to meet you, Mr Grim.
Really. I mean, God. Congratulations
on the Nobel Prize.

HENRY

Thanks.

AIRLINE TICKET CLERK

I know all your work by heart. It
changed my life.

HENRY

Yeah, well. Look, thanks, but..

AIRLINE TICKET CLERK

Yes. Of course.

She types something more into the computer, then looks up
urgently.

AIRLINE TICKET CLERK

You'll have to hurry, sir. They're
holding the plane for you on the
runway.

INT. AIRPORT GATE -- DAY

Moments later.

Airline representatives come rushing up with walkie-talkies
to meet Henry and Simon as they run through the terminal.

AIRLINE REP #1

This way, please, this way! This
way, Mr Grim! This way! Excuse me!

As they are ushered up towards the gate, Henry stops and
looks off at the security guards and ground crew waiting for
him, certain they can spot him as a wanted criminal.

SIMON

(shoves him)

Go on.

Henry is ushered through security. They take his ticket and
check his passport again. They take his suitcase and place
it on the conveyor belt. He passes through the metal detector.
They pass the metal detector wand over him and he stands
there with his hands outstretched, as...

Simon waits and watches.

The suitcase rolls out from the x-ray machine and as Henry grabs it, he stops and looks across the security checkpoint at...

Simon, standing there. He steps forward anxiously.

Henry lingers, speechless, but the airline representatives are at his side...

AIRLINE REP

Mr Grim, please, the plane is waiting!
We have to hurry!

They drag him away, but Henry looks back as...

Simon stops and watches.

EXT. AIRPORT RUNWAY -- DAY

Moments later.

The plane is waiting out on the asphalt and the airline representative runs straight for it, calling back over her shoulder to Henry...

AIRLINE REP

This way, Mr Grim! This way!

Runway technicians rush to their positions, but Henry hangs back and struggles across the tarmac, looking back over his shoulder at...

Simon, behind the huge plate glass window of the terminal.

He stops and waits.

Simon raises his hand in farewell and...

Henry raises his in reply.

Then Simon, unheard behind the gigantic glass wall, silent amongst the roar of the runway, says...

SIMON

(unheard)

Run.

And Henry understands. He lowers his hand, waits just a moment, then turns and looks out at...

The airplane. The airline representative is shouting at him from the foot of the stairs and waving him on with her walkie-talkie.

He glances back once more at Simon. Then...

Henry is running, struggling towards us, forcing himself towards the plane, getting stronger and running faster with every step he takes.

CUT TO BLACK

THE END