

MASTERS OF HORROR 2

"Valerie on the Stairs"

Teleplay by

Mick Garris

Based on a Story by

Clive Barker

BUFF REVISIONS, 08/21/06

Pages: 57

GOLDENROD REVISIONS, 08/18/06

Pages: 1, 2, 3, 5, 5A, 14, 31, 32, 36,
37, 37A, 41, 42, 46, 47, 52, 53, 54,
55, 57, 58, 58A, 60

GREEN REVISIONS, 08/16/06

Pages: 46, 47, 61, 62

YELLOW REVISIONS, 08/11/06

Pages: 14, 15, 18

PINK REVISIONS, 08/10/06

Pages: 5, 5A

FULL BLUE, 07/21/06

FULL WHITE, 07/13/06

FADE IN:

NOTE: we SEE and HEAR the TITLES as they are TYPED over the following images, MISTAKES and all. When there is a mis-type, the TITLE TYPIST backs up and corrects it.

1	OMIT	1
2	OMIT	2

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

3 OMIT 3

3A TITLE SEQUENCE 3A

As the TITLES are TYPED on the SCREEN, we DISSOLVE through a MONTAGE of IMAGES from the life of ROB HANISEY: mostly they are REJECT LETTERS from PUBLISHERS for his novels, with titles like A BULLET THROUGH THE HEART, THE DEATH OF LOVE, and the like.

We see "RENT DUE" notices, a SNAPSHOT of a SMILING, GOOD-LOOKING YOUNG MAN and WOMAN, torn in half, a spilled-over MATEUS BOTTLE.

A COMPUTER SCREEN, with a SENTENCE being typed out: "*I had only briefly shaken hands with love... and then I found that that hand was a claw.*" It keeps being typed and deleted.

A hand-scrawled DEAR-JOHN LETTER: "Rob-- This is just one time too many. Please don't try to reach me. I have to get away from this whole thing for a while. -A"

We HEAR horrible, intrusive SOUNDS: SIRENS, BARKING DOGS, LOUD GUITAR PRACTICE, an ARGUMENT, a CAR CRASH.

After DISSOLVING through the final REJECTION NOTICE, we END UP on an ANSWERING MACHINE. There is a BEEP and it PLAYS BACK. An OFFICIOUS WOMAN'S VOICE is recorded on it (NANCY BLOOM):

NANCY BLOOM

Hello, Rob Hanisey? This is Nancy Bloom at Highberger House. A room has opened up here, and I was curious if you were still interested in residency. If so, please give me a call right away at 212.555.3924...

DISSOLVE TO:

4 EXT. HIGHBERGER HOUSE - DAY 4

We round the CORNER with Rob to reveal, in a low, wide-angle Hill-House shot, the HIGHBERGER HOUSE, as he stands before it, SUITCASES at his FEET.

(CONTINUED)

Highberger House was beautiful once, but is now a tired old harridan, tall and narrow, ramshackle, an old boarding house, reaching high into the sky.

Rob goes to the front door and pushes the bell. Nothing. Just as he knocks, the DOOR comes swinging OPEN to REVEAL:

NANCY BLOOM, tough, tiny, and in her 40s, taking a long drag off a short BUTT. She blows the SMOKE out of the side of her mouth, squinting as she peers around the door.

NANCY BLOOM

Rob?

ROB

Yes. Nancy?

NANCY BLOOM

Ms. Bloom. Come in, come in.

Up above, a WINDOW opens, and someone LEANS OUT to peer down at them, then pulls back in and slams the door shut.

Ms. Bloom, no more than five feet tall, leads him down the dowdy, cluttered hallway. He looks up the stairwell at the floors above.

NANCY BLOOM

Come into the library.

She leads him into the dusty, sagging room and its POOLS of weak, yellow LIGHT. The WALLS are BOOKCASES, brimming with books. There are PILES of PAPERS: manuscripts, reject letters, etc. A cemetery for trees.

She waddles behind the ancient DESK and flips on the LAMP, illuminating every crevice of her SMOKER'S FACE from below.

ROB

I'm very pleased that there was an opening...

NANCY BLOOM

What, you're *glad* that Terry died?

ROB

I'm sorry... I didn't realize...

NANCY BLOOM

Suicide. Thirty-nine reject slips for Terry's latest novel. Even the vanity press wouldn't take it. A piece of shit, between you and me, but Terry's heart was in it. About your age, I'd guess.

(holding up a sheet of paper)

Your application states you've never been published.

ROB

That's right.

NANCY BLOOM

Don't be embarrassed; that's why you're here in the first place. Old Cap Highberger took the building over in the thirties as a place for unpublished writers to work, to hone their craft, to become published writers and move on. He was a frustrated author himself; those are his unpublished manuscripts over there... all forty-seven of 'em. What do you write, horror stories? That gruesome stuff?

ROB

No, no, I just want to write stories that touch people's hearts.

NANCY BLOOM

Oh, a people's-hearts kinda guy. Had a few of those. How many books have you written?

He hefts his suitcase up and pops it open, revealing thick, bundled manuscripts among his personal items.

ROB

Five. Well, I'm working on number five now.

She lights up another CIGARETTE, squinting through the smoke.

NANCY BLOOM

Hmmph, well it ain't the Four Seasons but it's free room and board for as long as you're here.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

NANCY BLOOM (CONT'D)

Once you're published, you're out
of here, you understand?

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

NANCY BLOOM (CONT'D)

Then the next unlucky bastard takes your place.

ROB

I understand. And I really appreciate this opportunity, Ms. Bloom.

NANCY BLOOM

I've seen a lot of writers come and go here, some clever, some fools, half of them drunks and dope fiends, and damn near all of them no more likely to write a best-seller than my mother.

ROB

Is your mother a writer?

NANCY BLOOM

Nope. Mama's dead.
(changing the subject)
Welcome to Highberger House. Sign here.

She hands him a PAPER, and he signs it.

ROB

This opportunity marks a big change in my life. I'm going to be published, if it's the last thing I do.

NANCY BLOOM

Careful. Terry said the same thing. This place is all about keeping you away from distractions, to give you a quiet place to write. You have family? Girlfriends? Boyfriends? Are you...
(sarcastic)
... *in love?*

FLASH CUTS

Quick SILENT CUTS of Rob and the GIRL from the PHOTO in his room flash by, almost subliminal: KISSING, FIGHTING, a BOTTLE thrown against the wall, TEARS, a RING thrown back at him.

5B RESUME LIBRARY - DAY

5B

ROB

The hell with love. I'm going to
live my life for my books.

She smiles. She's seen it all before.

NANCY BLOOM

Good for you. Here's your key:
room 217. One flight up.

ROB

Thank you. Really. I can't tell
you how much I appreciate--

NANCY BLOOM

Just write the goddamn Great
American Novel, okay?

ROB

(excited, shaking her
hand)

Deal.

6Pt.1 INT. STAIRWELL - DAY

6Pt.1

This is a dark, gloomy place, with a BARTON FINK grimness.
SHADOWS reach around to grab you from every corner. It is
hushed, quiet as a museum.

Rob, dragging his battered SUITCASES, heads down the HALL and
up the STAIRCASE. As he passes various APARTMENTS, the
occasional DOOR opens, with the various ODD FACE peering out
at him before it eases shut.

Behind the apartment doors, we HEAR the BANGING of
TYPEWRITERS, the SCRATCHING of PENS, the CLATTERING of
COMPUTER KEYBOARDS.

6Pt.2 As he reaches the next level he looks down...

6Pt.2

6Pt.1 ...to see a couple of the RESIDENTS come out of their
apartments and LOOK UP at him. Spotted, they go back
inside, a couple of them conspiratorially entering
into the same room.

6Pt.1

7 INT. HALLWAY IN FRONT OF ROB'S APARTMENT - DAY 7
Room 217. Rob unlocks the DOOR and steps inside.

8 INT. ROB'S APARTMENT - DAY 8
It's a small, one-room apartment with a tiny bathroom. There is a SINGLE BED, BOOKCASES lined with dusty old BOOKS, a DESK and CHAIR, and a SINK and TOASTER OVEN, stripped of the previous tenant's possessions. Notably: NO TV.

The LIGHT through the single crusty-dusty WINDOW is DIM, and the room is filled with SHADOWS. But it's still a step up from the place he just left. Well, maybe a half-step. At least the rent is free. He KICKS the DOOR shut behind him and drops the suitcases to the floor.

ROB
Be it ever so humble...

There is a KNOCK on the DOOR. He walks around his suitcases back to the door, and pulls it open.

8Apt.1 INCLUDE HALLWAY 8Apt.1
There is no one there. The welcoming SMILE drops from his face. He looks up and down the hallway: nothing. He calls out.

ROB (CONT'D)
Hello?

Still nothing. He looks down the...

8Apt.2 STAIRWELL. 8Apt.2
Empty.

8Apt.1 Confused, he heads back inside. 8Apt.1

8B INT. ROB'S APARTMENT - RESUME - SAME - DAY 8B

POV

Baffled, Rob turns to his work. He hefts the two suitcases onto the swaybacked BED, and starts to unpack them. Then, another distraction: *POUNDING NOISES in the WALL.*

(CONTINUED)

He stops, looks around. The POUNDING STOPS. Silence. He turns back to unpacking his meager belongings.

Then... another THUMP.

ROB

What the fuck?

He goes to the door, looks around. Nothing. Listens for a beat, then goes back inside, closing the door behind him. Listening. But all is quiet.

He goes to the desk and takes a seat.

Then, distant, another sound reaches into the room like smoke: CRYING. A child? A woman? An animal? It comes from far away, echoing strangely.

He can't tell where it's coming from. He follows the sound to the WALL, and puts his EAR to it. It seems to be coming from within the wall. Then another odd, THUMPING SOUND: footsteps? Fists? The CRYING TRAVELS the length of the ROOM. Rob moves with it, his EAR against the wall, tracking the sound.

Suddenly, right next to his EAR, there is a loud, shocking THUMP at the end of the far wall. It SHAKES the apartment and makes him JUMP. Distantly, we HEAR the sound of WHISPERING VOICES. And then, that mournful CRYING: animal, child, woman. We cannot tell.

More SOUNDS, more and more mysterious. Creepier and creepier. More THUMPING. Some TAPPING, the CREAKING of BOARDS. And very distant, the CRYING. Or HOWLING. Or whatever the hell it is. *SOMETHING is going on behind these walls...*

And then it STOPS, and the room is cloaked in silence. Rob, chilled, stands in the middle of the room, listening. But whatever it was... it's GONE now.

Rob has his COMPUTER set up on the old desk, and his face is lit by its GLOW in the darkness. He STARES at his own REFLECTION in the FRAMED MIRROR hanging on the wall above the desk (ROB is infecting its silvered backing), but inspiration is keeping its silent distance.

The computer's BLUE LIGHT casts a huge shadow of Rob on the wall behind him, keeping him company. He pecks at the keyboard, but it doesn't help.

There is a TAPPING, as if someone gently rapping, on the DOOR. Startled, Rob turns to it in the ancient chair with a RUSTY CREAK.

ROB (CONT'D)

Who is it?

Silence. Nothing. After a few beats, Rob turns back to the desk. In the dim light, it seems that there is A FIGURE behind him reflected in the mirror before him-- a FEMALE FIGURE-- and he STARTS. But on close inspection, he's alone.

He looks around and stares into the mirror, but he's definitely alone. He turns to the computer's monitor, lays his hands on the keyboard.

More TAPPING. Rob spins around to face the door.

ROB (CONT'D)

What do you want?

No answer. He stands up. Girding himself, he crosses the room, slowly, gingerly approaching the door. The *now-silent* door.

He slowly reaches for the doorknob, and **BANG! BANG! BANG! BANG!** There is a violent POUNDING on the door that almost knocks it off its hinges, and Rob off his feet.

Rob gets to his feet, his HEART POUNDING, several feet back from the door.

ROB (CONT'D)

Goddamn it, *who's there?*

No answer. Of course.

Silence... *except...* in the distance, the CRIES resume. He cautiously goes to the DOOR, and slowly OPENS it.

8Dpt.1 INT. HALLWAY - SAME - NIGHT

8Dpt.1

No one there. The dim amber LIGHTBULB at the end of the HALLWAY starts to FLICKER in the otherwise dark and gloomy corridor, a silent-movie STROBE.

(CONTINUED)

8Dpt.1 CONTINUED:

8Dpt.1

The CRIES are clearer now. He looks around, down over the BANISTER to the LOBBY.

8Dpt.2 NOBODY DOWN THERE.

8Dpt.2

8Dpt.1 At the far end of the hallway

8Dpt.1

, where the light is FLUTTERING with the SHADOWS of a confused MOTH. Nothing.

But at the OTHER END of the HALLWAY, at the top of the STAIRS on the DEAD END LANDING, deep in the BLACK SHADOWS of the end of the line... a FIGURE is huddled. And CRYING.

Rob steps out onto the hallway, takes a few steps closer, staring up at the mournful character.

ROB

Hello?

He can make it out in the dim light of the LANDING, but only barely: a YOUNG WOMAN, crouched down in the SHADOW BLANKET at the top of the stairs, sobbing, VULNERABLE. Draped in thin, tattered clothing, she seems to be trying to disappear into the shadows.

ROB (CONT'D)

Are you okay?

He gingerly climbs the STAIRS toward her, but when he reaches the top of the stairs, she is GONE.

Rob looks around; there is no trace of her. She has just *DISAPPEARED*. Finally, he goes back down the stairs and into his apartment.

9

INT. ROB'S APARTMENT - NIGHT - LATER

9

Rob is back at the desk in front of his computer. His chin rests on his chest; he has fallen asleep.

As he SLEEPS, the DOOR slowly CREAKS OPEN, casting flickering LIGHT from the hallway. We HEAR the familiar CRYING.

Rob WAKES, slowly turns to the door. He SEES a SHADOW move along the hallway, and gets up and goes to the door.

10Pt. 1 INT. HALLWAY IN FRONT OF ROB'S APARTMENT - NIGHT 10Pt. 1

Rob steps back into the hallway, and looks back up at the stairs. After a few moments peering into the dark, there she is, still in tatters, still hunkering, still in tears.

ROB
What's wrong?

She can't answer; she can only sob and try to hide in the SHADOWS. He crosses the hallway and heads up the STAIRS to her.

As he approaches her, she looks up at him, the narrow SHAFT of LIGHT in the darkness thrown across her WIDE EYES as she looks up at him in horror and surprise.

She thrusts a REACHING HAND out into the flickering LIGHT, terrified, reaching for his help.

YOUNG WOMAN
Help me!

Rob cannot believe what he's hearing. He rushes up the steps toward her as she pulls back into the shadows.

By the time he gets up the LANDING, she has DISAPPEARED into the shadows. He reaches, feels the walls, but there is no door, no opening, no way for her to have escaped. She is just... GONE.

He pounds on the walls, making quite a racket.

ROB
Hello?

Nothing.

NEELY (O.S.)
What's the matter?

Rob looks over the balustrade...

10Pt.2 ...to see an OLDER MAN with a Hemingway beard looking 10Pt.2
up from the floor below: EVERETT NEELY. Next to him
is PATRICIA DUNBAR, 40s, who has the delicate beauty
of a Blanche Dubois (and a mouth fouler than any
sailor's).

10Pt.2 CONTINUED:

10Pt.2

PATRICIA (CONT'D)

And I hate happy little fucking
faces like yours.

ROB

So give up writing. Become a nun.

PATRICIA

I was a Sister of fucking Mercy for
seven fucking years, you little
cocksucker know-it-all! So don't
get smart with me!

She storms into her room, slamming the door in her wake.

NEELY

She does have a command of the
language, doesn't she?

10Pt.1 Rob looks around, deflated and confused, and
descends the threadbare STAIRS to his own floor,...

10Pt.1

10Pt.2 ...as Neely and the other curious authors go back
into their apartments.

10Pt.2

NANCY BLOOM

Do try to keep it down, Mr.
Hanisey. We appreciate the quiet
here.

And she is gone.

BRUCE SWEETLEND smiles up at him from the doorway of his room
on the floor below. He's in his forties, and has a long grey
PONYTAIL, his face still flush with youthfulness.

10Pt.1

ROB

So much for the love and support of
my fellow artists.

10Pt.1

10Pt.2 Bruce steps out of the CLOUD of SMOKE that seeps
from his apartment.

10Pt.2

BRUCE

Fuck them. Anybody gives you any
shit, you just come to me. Bruce
Sweetlend. I'll set 'em straight.
You want to just shoot the shit and
learn the lay of they land, come on
down. The door's never locked
here. Number 117. And welcome to
Highberger House.

(CONTINUED)

10Pt.2 CONTINUED: (2) 10Pt.2

With a jolly little salute, he starts back into the fumes of Apartment 117. Rob, still a bit freaked, stops him.

10Pt.1 ROB 10Pt.1
Hey, Bruce?

10Pt.2 BRUCE 10Pt.2
Yeah, man?

10Pt.1 ROB 10Pt.1
Is... is this place haunted?

10Pt.2 BRUCE 10Pt.2
Only by the spectre of failure.

He gives him a LAUGH and a WAVE, and goes back inside.

10Pt.1 ROB 10Pt.1
(to the empty stairwell)
Thanks.

11 INT. ROB'S HIGHBERGER APARTMENT - NIGHT 11

It's late: well after midnight. Rob has unpacked and settled his few belongings into his new room. The old COMPUTER is glowing on the DESK, next to an open BOTTLE of MATEUS.

Rob is at the desk in the dim little room, his FACE lit by the MONITOR SCREEN and a SMOLDERING CIGARETTE. He STARES at the SCREEN, and at the first sentence of his new novel, but nothing is coming. It is AGONY. He SIPS at the bottle, then looks up to see his drinking reflection in the mirror.

11A FLASH CUTS: NO SOUND 11A

The GIRLFRIEND in the photo POURS LIQUOR down the SINK and throws the bottle against the WALL, much to Rob's FURY.

11B RESUME ROB'S APARTMENT - SAME 11B

Rob CLOSES his EYES, trying to shut it out. It hurts.
He gets up with the bottle and crosses the room...

11C INT. ROB'S APARTMENT - BATHROOM - SAME 11C

into the bathroom. He starts to pour the wine down the toilet, sighing with loneliness.

(CONTINUED)

11C CONTINUED:

11C

He turns his head and sees:

BLOOD SPATTERS the BATHTUB and WALL in a CRIMSON TAPESTRY of GORE!

Rob JOLTS and drops the BOTTLE, which SHATTERS on the FLOOR. But when he looks back... the BLOOD is GONE.

He feels like he's losing his mind. The bathroom, though grimy, is bloodless. Only Mateus and broken glass despoil the place.

Rob bends down to pick up shards of broken bottle when... There is a SOUND from the MAIN ROOM: something FALLING, and the BREAKING of GLASS.

11D INT. ROB'S APARTMENT - SAME

11D

Rob emerges out into the room, looking around.

Above the desk, no sign of the MIRROR. Rob goes to it, bends down behind the desk, and brings up the mirror in his hands. But now it's not a mirror; there is a PICTURE in the frame behind the broken glass.

*It is a PHOTOGRAPH of a beautiful woman... **the woman on the stairs.***

Then: we HEAR distant CRYING in the WALLS. Rob stands and listens as FEAR tickles the hairs on the back of his neck.

The CRYING shifts, moving behind the walls, and he tracks it with his eyes. The eerie horror continues to build. Rob finally goes to the door.

12 INT. HALLWAY IN FRONT OF ROB'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

12

Rob steps out onto the HALLWAY and LOOKS UP. He HEARS the gentle SOBS, and peers into the shadows on the landing above. He goes to the STAIRS.

ROB
(whispering)
Hey!
(the sobs stop)
Are you okay?

A SNIFFLE in the shadows. He can SEE the SILHOUETTED FIGURE of the mournful YOUNG WOMAN crouched in the corner, her tattered clothing barely concealing a lush body.

(CONTINUED)

She looks up at him, trying to hide in the SHADOWS, crouching. They speak in whispers.

YOUNG WOMAN
You've come back!

ROB
I want to help you...

YOUNG WOMAN
Oh, yes, please! I need you! I
need your help!

Rob makes his way carefully up the creaking steps toward her.

ROB
Who are you? What's the matter?

The beautiful, tender young woman looks desperately behind her into the shadows, terrified.

YOUNG WOMAN
No, stop! You'd better go back!

ROB
Why? I want to help you...

YOUNG WOMAN
Sshhh! He's coming!

He takes another tentative step toward her, the wooden step GROANING under his weight. Her terror is growing.

ROB
Who? Who's coming?

Another step closer, the tension building, her hysteria infectious. She reaches out for him.

YOUNG WOMAN
Oh, God, no no no, please!

Finally, he is close enough to touch her hand. He reaches out and grasps her hands in his.

YOUNG WOMAN (CONT'D)
Please, please help me!

ROB
What do you--

12 CONTINUED: (2)

12

And she is suddenly and violently YANKED from his hands, back into the SHADOWS, and out of his life.

ROB (CONT'D)

No!

He lunges after her, but just slams into the blank, dead-end wall. Once again, she has disappeared, leaving Rob to stand there on the steps in baffled horror.

13 INT. HALLWAY OUTSIDE SWEETLEND'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

13

Rob taps quietly on the door of Room 117; Bruce Sweetlend opens the door to a cloud of CANNABIS SMOKE, half a BLUNT in his fingers.

ROB

Um... I... I heard you typing, and I... well, you said...

BRUCE

Come on in, man. I'm a night guy, and I could use the company.

14 INT. SWEETLEND'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

14

The room is very much like Rob's: smokier, perhaps, but just as Spartan. He has a well-worn TYPEWRITER on the old DESK, and there are several high-stack MANUSCRIPTS about.

There are lots of PICTURES of WOMEN, beautiful and otherwise, pinned up on the walls; Bruce is in several of them (the pictures, not the women).

ROB

(joking)

You've got a lot of sisters.

BRUCE

Girlfriends. Well, ex-girlfriends. And an ex-wife or two.

ROB

I can relate. The "ex" part, I mean.

BRUCE

(offering Rob a hit)

Care to partake?

(CONTINUED)

ROB

No thanks.

BRUCE

Don't worry, I'm not going to try to get you high and fuck your ass. I'm not gonna shoot my creative juices, even if I did swing that way. Can't waste a drop; I've got to give it all to the book. A fuck? A quick hand-job? That's at least a chapter tossed out with the Kleenex, man. Probably squandered a dozen novels on those beauties on the wall. I'm a fucking monk, man.

He holds out the joint again, and Rob takes it, and takes a hit off it.

ROB

It's quiet in here.

BRUCE

Like the proverbial fucking tomb.

ROB

A lot quieter than my place.

BRUCE

Really? What do you hear?

ROB

Like, some kind of, um, you know, noises. In the walls.

BRUCE

Probably the pipes or something. Not a lot of maintenance goes into this place, as you might have noticed.

ROB

You haven't heard anything like that?

BRUCE

Nope. 'Course, when I'm working, I don't hear shit.

ROB

You haven't heard any... voices?

(CONTINUED)

BRUCE

What kind of voices?

ROB

Like... crying?

BRUCE

(a Rod Serling impression)

"There's a signpost up ahead. Your next stop: The Twilight Zone!"

It's easy to see and hear weird shit in this place. It's a weird place full of weird people. I mean, they're *writers*, man. I wouldn't worry about it. I mean, it's not like *ghosts* or anything.

ROB

So you said...

15 INT. ROB'S APARTMENT - NIGHT 15

Rob is ASLEEP in his bed, his COMPUTER SCREEN glowing softly in the corner, casting the only light. His EYES are REMMING in DREAM SLEEP, and his FOREHEAD WET with PERSPIRATION.

He is breathing faster; obviously his DREAM is erotic.

15A ANOTHER ANGLE - ROB'S DREAM 15A

Rob's dream accelerates; the YOUNG WOMAN is now atop him, RIDING him, stroking his face. Their FACES are right up against each other, breathing each other's BREATH.

HIGH AND WIDE

The temperature is white hot as their lovemaking amplifies. As they COUPLE, the DOOR EASES silently OPEN, casting an amber SLICE of LIGHT over them.

An IMAGE steps into the OPEN DOORWAY: human, but more than human, very large, with a tremendous torso. Its SHADOW creeps up and over the DREAM LOVERS as it fills the doorway. It drags a thrashing TAIL behind it.

(CONTINUED)

15A CONTINUED:

15A

Then, after watching them couple, it takes silent steps across the floor, and, just as CLIMAX is upon them, *SNATCHES the woman from the bed*, in a LIGHTNING FAST maneuver, and pulls her out of the room, the DOOR SLAMMING SHUT in its wake.

15B INT. ROB'S APARTMENT - NIGHT - RESUME

15B

ANGLE ON ROB

Rob WAKES to the DOOR SLAM, ALONE, covered in SWEAT, having spilled his creative juices in his dream.

There goes another chapter.

He sits and watches his PAPERS settle from the backwash of the slamming door, wondering what the fuck is going on. He turns to see his COMPUTER MONITOR, its glowing EYE staring accusingly at him, its CURSOR blinking. He gets up and goes to it.

On the screen, Rob's first sentence has become a PARAGRAPH, which he READS aloud:

"I had only briefly shaken hands with love... and then I found that that hand was a claw. That claw had held me in its thrall, had threatened not only my heart, but my life. I would kill or be killed for her if need be, so great was my love. And that love was to be tested. And a life was to be given, as if in sacrifice to an angry god."

ROB

Jesus. Did I write that?

The COMPUTER KEYBOARD is WET. Rob touches it with the tip of his FINGER, and it is slightly STRINGY as it pulls away.

ROB (CONT'D)

What the fuck--?

The POWER on the COMPUTER goes out, and the screen goes BLACK. The room is lit only by the MOONLIGHT through the crusty windows.

He wipes off the keyboard with a rag and punches the POWER BUTTON on his COMPUTER again, and it BOOTS UP. He opens the FILE for his novel, but only the FIRST SENTENCE remains. All the new stuff is gone.

(CONTINUED)

15B CONTINUED:

15B

ROB (CONT'D)

Shit!

He sits at the desk and pecks away at the KEYBOARD, trying to revive the missing text.

DISSOLVE TO:

16 INT. ROB'S APARTMENT - THE NEXT DAY

16

Rob is asleep on his arms on the desk, his hand on the KEYBOARD, unknowingly at rest on the "Z" KEY, so that the SCREEN is filling with row upon row of the LETTER Z.

16A FLASH CUTS: ROB'S DREAM

16A

Quick CUTS flash by of Rob and his GIRLFRIEND, no SOUND: the KISSING, the FIGHTING, the BOTTLES BROKEN, a vicious ARGUMENT in the CAR, their FACES filled with ONCOMING HEADLIGHTS, the GIRLFRIEND'S inert BODY, covered in BLOOD, DEAD.

16B INT. ROB'S APARTMENT - RESUME ROB'S ROOM - SAME

16B

Rob STARTS AWAKE with a GASP.

The SUN is up, BIRDS are SINGING outside the WINDOW. Rob sees that he's filling the screen with countless pages of Z's, and sits up, pulling away from the keyboard.

He holds his hand on the DELETE BUTTON and erases all the Z's. Once again, he's back down to that first sentence. It's going to be a very short novel.

17Pt.1 INT. HIGHBERGER HOUSE LIBRARY - DAY

17Pt.1

WRITERS are hovering over COFFEE and BAGELS when a freshly-laundered Rob enters. Bruce, Neely and Patricia are there; Nancy is behind her desk, on her fourth CIGARETTE. All of them STARE and INSPECT him oddly, as if he's on display in a ZOO.

BRUCE

Hey, Rob. How was your first night at Highberger House?

ROB

Okay, thanks.

(CONTINUED)

BRUCE

You get any writing done?

ROB

Uh... not a whole lot. Just getting acclimated first.

Patricia approaches, checking him out. The Grande Dame.

PATRICIA

What are you writing?

ROB

It's a romance. A dark romance.

PATRICIA

Hmmm. A *doomed* romance?

NEELY

That's the best kind.

PATRICIA

What the world needs now: another bodice-ripper.

ROB

Well, I wouldn't call it a bodice-ripper. It's very contemporary, very real world.

PATRICIA

I see. Autobiographical, I assume? The litter of conquests by the great lover?

ROB

No, no. Nothing like that. It's something... personal. Intimate. Really on a small scale.

Patricia smiles at the other would-be authors, makes a fist, and pumps it up and down: the universal gesture of jerking off. They laugh together, and Rob pours himself a cup of coffee, and takes it out of the library and into the hallway.

Bruce follows him out.

BRUCE

Don't worry about them. They're a bunch of failures, too. You're just gonna hafta be the new guy for a while.

(CONTINUED)

17Pt.1 CONTINUED: (2)

17Pt.1

ROB

Thanks. I'm going up to my room;
I've got work to do.

BRUCE

Cool. Good luck, man.

Bruce WATCHES him, weirdly, as Rob takes the COFFEE up the stairs toward his room.

17Pt.2 He PAUSES to look up above at the DARK CORNER at the top of the STAIRWELL. It is dark and quiet; no sign of the naked young woman. 17Pt.2

He looks up...

17Pt.1 ...and down the STAIRWELL; it is still and silent. 17Pt.1

He looks down at the LIBRARY, and all of the other WRITERS are silently watching him from there, COFFEE MUGS held frozen in place. Bruce smiles and flashes the PEACE SIGN. Self-consciously, Rob turns and heads up the STAIRS.

18 INT. ROB'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

18

Rob is halfway through a new BOTTLE of MATEUS and the remains of a PIZZA. He labors over his novel, and the alcohol is taking its toll. Several BUTTS in the ASHTRAY.

His FACE is SWEATY, and he slowly pecks out words that just don't sing to him.

Rob TYPES: "*Darkness fell.*" The POWER in the room suddenly goes OUT, as the MONITOR goes BLACK with the LAMP next to it.

The LAMP comes on, but only intermittently, fluttering with warm light in the blue-black, bruised darkness.

He HEARS the sound of CRYING from outside his door. It is filled with MOURNING and PAIN.

He goes to the door, a bit unsteady from the wine, fear mingling with expectation and desire. The FLICKERING LIGHT causes the SHADOWS to SHIFT.

19Pt.1 INT. HALLWAY IN FRONT OF ROB'S APARTMENT - NIGHT 19Pt.1

Rob steps out into the hallway and heads toward the staircase. The SOUND of CRYING begins to BUILD. He reaches the foot of the STAIRS, and WHISPERS up to her:

ROB
Are you there?

He tries to peer into the shadows, but can see nothing within. The effect of the WINE has him SLURRING a bit.

ROB (CONT'D)
Are you all right?

No answer. The THUMPING and WHISPERS continue, but the CRYING has ceased. Tension builds.

ROB (CONT'D)
Hello?

Suddenly, a supple HAND touches his face from behind, and he JUMPS and TURNS to face:

The young woman, now NAKED, but SILHOUETTED by the FLICKERING LIGHT behind her. She has her ARMS folded across her BREASTS, and what little LIGHT there is sparkles on the TEARS spilling from her EYES.

She is WEAK, VULNERABLE, barely able to stand without wavering. They stand about six feet apart; Rob's heart is in his throat, pounding like jungle drums.

YOUNG WOMAN
I'm afraid...

Rob takes a step closer, trying not to stare at her nakedness.

ROB
Where are your clothes?

She casts a frightened LOOK over her SHOULDER at the DARK LANDING above her.

YOUNG WOMAN
He took them...

ROB
Who?

(CONTINUED)

She wavers, her face pale and sweaty, and sits on the bottom stair. Rob tries not to stare as her lush body is revealed. But he cannot help it.

She looks up at him from her seat, her eyes staring into his, no longer covering herself. She takes deep breaths, the age of desire overriding her weakness...

ROB (CONT'D)

Are you in pain?

She grips the BANISTER. Her face and body are SHEENED with PERSPIRATION. They share the HEAT as she looks up at him, breathing deeply.

ROB (CONT'D)

What did he do to you?

She STOPS, hearing something, breaking her animalistic attention from Rob.

YOUNG WOMAN

Oh, God, no... *he's here...*

ROB

Who is it? Does he--

YOUNG WOMAN

(cutting him off)

Shhh...

She is being overcome by... *something*. Her EYES roll back in her head, her lashes fluttering. PERSPIRATION is drenching her skin, covering her in an erotic SHEEN.

A MOAN resonates deep in her chest. Rob is transfixed, entranced, his pulse racing as well.

Her EYES OPEN, and she listens to something we don't hear. Then:

YOUNG WOMAN (CONT'D)

We shouldn't talk again. He doesn't want you near me.

ROB

Who doesn't want me near you?

YOUNG WOMAN

Ssshhh... *Touch me...*

(CONTINUED)

She reaches out and he takes her HANDS, TOUCHING for the first time.

She brings his hands to her face, sensually sliding them over her visage. Heating up, she drags them through her HAIR. He is almost unbearably close to her.

She spreads his hands across the sheen of perspiration that covers her body, flesh against flesh, filling them both with physical connection and desire.

She runs his hands over her arms, her chest, down her stomach, down below the frame between her legs. EROS burns through them like a fire.

YOUNG WOMAN (CONT'D)
(breathing heavily)
Am I real?

ROB
What?

YOUNG WOMAN
Am I real? Am I here with you?

ROB
Of course. Of course you are.

YOUNG WOMAN
You can feel me as I feel you?

ROB
Yes... yes, of course I can.

TEARS fill her EYES.

YOUNG WOMAN
Thank you...

She KISSES him, deeply and gratefully, then the SPELL is BROKEN, and she PULLS AWAY.

ROB
Wait! Where are you going?

She CLIMBS the rickety STAIRS, as if in a trance. He WATCHES as she heads up the stairs.

ROB (CONT'D)
Tell me your name!

VALERIE
I'm Valerie...

ROB
Valerie, don't go...

When she reaches the LANDING, a DOOR-- a door that was not there before-- slowly OPENS, revealing WARM LIGHT in the DARK SHADOWS, bathing Valerie's naked body from behind in GOLD.

A CREATURE, a BEAST, the Beast from Rob's DREAM, is in the doorway, tantalizingly seen only in SILHOUETTE. But we can see that he is huge and muscular, with FLESH that is DARK as NIGHT and GLISTENING with a WET SHEEN. A long, saurian TAIL thrashes behind it.

The beast takes her in its dark, gleaming ARMS, enfolding her in its EMBRACE. She surrenders to it, entranced.

Rob heads up the STAIRWAY to her, but she turns to him:

VALERIE
Stay away! He'll hurt you!
Please, just forget about me.

That doesn't stop him, and he increases his speed.

At the top of the LANDING, the Beast yanks her inside, slams the door, and thrusts the landing into DARKNESS again.

Rob runs up to the top of the stairs, but there is NO DOOR there: merely solid WALL behind the shadows. He POUNDS madly on the wall.

ROB
Let her out, you son of a bitch!
Let her out of there!

19Pt.2 The racket draws faces out on the floors below:
depressed, exhausted, neurotic, paranoid WRITERS'
faces.

19Pt.2

Nancy, Patricia, Bruce, and Neely are among them.

PATRICIA
It's gettin' old, Lover Boy.

19Pt.1

ROB
There was a woman on these stairs!

19Pt.1

19Pt.2

19Pt.2

The triumvirate of writers-- Neely, Patricia, and Bruce-- share a LOOK, as if they have a secret.

NANCY BLOOM

(dramatically)

Mr. Hanisey, I will not tolerate one more escapade like tonight! You do it again and you're out. Do we understand each other?

As the strange assortment of FACES stares up at him, he realizes the insanity of what he's said... of what he's seen.

19Pt.1

ROB

19Pt.1

Yes, all right. Fine. I'm sorry.

19Pt.2

NANCY BLOOM

19Pt.2

Good. You've been warned.

And she turns to go.

19Pt.1

Rob stops her.

19Pt.1

ROB

What's behind these walls?

19Pt.2

Nancy looks at the other writers.

19Pt.2

NANCY BLOOM

The portal to another dimension.

19Pt.1

That stops him cold.

19Pt.1

ROB

You're kidding.

19Pt.2

NANCY BLOOM

19Pt.2

Jesus Christ, of course I'm kidding. Do I look crazy to you? (well, actually...) It's a crawlspace, what do you think? Hot water pipes, electrical wires. More than a few dead rats, I daresay.

19Pt.1 19Pt.1

ROB
And that's it?

19Pt.2 19Pt.2

NANCY BLOOM
That's it. That and your
imagination.

19Pt.1 19Pt.1

ROB
Are you sure?

19Pt.2 19Pt.2

NANCY BLOOM
Do not press me, Mr. Hanisey. The
gutters are full of young men just
one step away from where you are
now.
(to the others)
Let's all let this young man get
back to work, shall we?

She turns and heads back downstairs. Neely and Patricia
stare at Rob before they disassemble, a shared secret. Bruce
is the last one left on the landing.

BRUCE
She's a tough old bitch, ain't she?

Rob looks at him, then...

19Pt.1 19Pt.1
...Rob looks back up to the dark landing above. No
trace of Valerie or the beast.

19Pt.2 19Pt.2

BRUCE (CONT'D)
She's right, though. None of us is
more than a stumble away from the
gutter. Or worse. A friend of
mine won a Pulitzer when he was
twenty-one, said it was the worst
thing that ever happened to him.
All downhill after that, he said.
Shit. Hung himself last year, ten
years to the day after he got the
good news. Now that's fucked.

19Pt.1 19Pt.1

ROB
You've... never seen anything up
there, on the stairs? Anything...
strange?

(CONTINUED)

19Pt.1 CONTINUED: 19Pt.1

19Pt.2 BRUCE 19Pt.2
There's nothing in Highberger House
that isn't strange.

19Pt.1 Rob stares up into that corner. 19Pt.1

19Pt.2 Bruce takes in his serious expression, gives one
back. 19Pt.2

BRUCE (CONT'D)
Why, you seein' ghosts after all?

19Pt.1 ROB 19Pt.1
Uh... I think maybe I am...

19Pt.2 BRUCE 19Pt.2
Man, that'd be cool, wouldn't it?
Come on in; I got some beers...

20 INT. SWEETLEND'S APARTMENT - NIGHT 20

Bruce shuts the door behind them and leads them into his
apartment.

ROB
The one who had the apartment
before me... how did, um, Terry
die?

BRUCE
Suicide. Razor blade.
(mimes slitting wrists and
neck)
In the tub. Blood everywhere. A
real mess.

ROB
Did she die in the tub?

BRUCE
She? Terry was a *dude*, man.

ROB
Terry was a man?

BRUCE
Young guy. About your age. What
did you see out there? Like, a
person?

(CONTINUED)

ROB
(a long beat)
I saw a woman.

BRUCE
A woman?

ROB
Did a young woman named Valerie
ever live here? Or die here? Long
hair, blue eyes? Beautiful?

BRUCE
Not that I know of. Damn it.

ROB
Well she's here now.

BRUCE
(laughs)
Jesus. The ghost of Highberger
House. The *beautiful* ghost of
Highberger House. Ooo-eee-oooh!

ROB
I have a picture of her in my room.

BRUCE
Cool! I'd love to see it.

Rob turns away, starts to walk past Bruce's DESK. There is a huge MANUSCRIPT stacked next to his TYPEWRITER. A sheet is in the roller, half-filled with TYPE. Rob stops.

ROB
Is that the new book?

BRUCE
That's it. Draft fifteen.

ROB
(pointing to another pile)
What's that? Draft sixteen?

Bruce drops a MAGAZINE on top of the other manuscript.

BRUCE
No, that's something I've been
playing around with for a few
years. I don't know if it's worth
a fart in a windstorm. Here;
(MORE)

BRUCE (CONT'D)

let me get those beers while you
get the picture.

He turns his back and heads into the tiny KITCHEN. Curiosity gets the best of Rob, and he moves over to the second manuscript, quietly lifting the MAGAZINE off. It's a BIG BOOK, easily over 700 pages.

The TITLE PAGE reads: "*VALERIE ON THE STAIRS by Bruce Sweetlend, Everett Neely, and Patricia Dunbar*".

Bruce is still at the fridge, his back to Rob. Rob REACTS, looks up at Bruce's back. What the fuck?

BRUCE (CONT'D)

You okay with Light?

ROB

Fine...

He lifts the top page. The DEDICATION PAGE reads: "*To Highberger, who knew all the Secret Places.*" Holy shit.

He slides another PAGE away, and he's at Chapter One. The first sentence: "*Valerie had a body made for love.*"

Suddenly and shockingly, Bruce is on him, his mellow demeanor given way to a completely unexpected raging FURY.

BRUCE

What the fuck are you doing?

The BEER BOTTLE in hand, he SLAMS his FIST into Rob's STOMACH, then SLAMS him in the CHIN as he DOUBLES UP. Rob staggers into the VALERIE MANUSCRIPT, which topples and scatters, its pages falling everywhere.

Bruce HITS him again, his face a mask of fury, and Rob goes down, BLOOD flowing from his NOSE and MOUTH.

EXTREME CLOSE-UPS:

A SERIES of BLOOD DROPS landing on the MANUSCRIPT PAGES; each one lands by the word "VALERIE", and some sexual reference:

"... the Beast plunged his reptilian staff into Valerie's virgin maidenhead..."

"... Valerie screamed as she was dragged away into the darkness..."

(CONTINUED)

"... Valerie had thought she could sink no lower than she had already. But she was wrong..."

As Bruce comes at Rob again, Rob KICKS him in the BALLS and RUNS toward the DOOR. Bruce grabs up his ancient TYPEWRITER over his head, and goes after Rob.

He TRIPS Rob, who falls against the door, and SLAMS down the TYPEWRITER; a lethal blow, had Rob not rolled out of the way just in time.

The TYPEWRITER smashes into pieces. Rob jerks the door open and jolts out into the hallway.

20A INT. HIGHBERGER HALLWAY - MAIN FLOOR - NIGHT 20A

ROB
What the fuck!

The noise echoes about the house, bringing the curious writers to their doors and landings: Neely, Patricia, Nancy and others. Bruce looks around; he sees how this looks, him standing over Rob and the smashed typewriter.

BRUCE
He was looking at my work behind my back.
(to Neely and Patricia)
He was looking at my secret book.

We can see the cogs turning in their heads... as if something momentous is happening.

NEELY
You shouldn't have done that, Mr. Hanisey. That's not the way a *real* writer would behave.

Rob gets furiously to his feet.

ROB
What the fuck do you know about what real writers do? You're kidding yourselves. This place is a fucking asylum, and you're all a bunch of fucking lunatics. And before you say a thing, Ms. Bloom, don't worry. I'm packing up and getting out of the Highberger freak show as fast as I can.

(CONTINUED)

They all stare at him, inscrutably SILENT, haunting. He confronts them head on:

ROB (CONT'D)

Who the fuck is Valerie? Tell me!

Silence as Rob stares them down.

NEELY

(gently)

A product of your wild imagination,
young man.

ROB

Bullshit! Did she die here? Did
you kill her?

The writers look at one another.

PATRICIA

Now you're just being silly.

Rob glares at her, then storms up the stairs to his room, wiping BLOOD from his FACE. The Writers watch him go, and they look at one another, FEAR spreading across their faces.

21 INT. ROB'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

21

Rob sits shirtless in front of the COMPUTER, his FACE bruised. He stares at his battered face in the MIRROR before him.

Angrily, he starts to write: *"His face pulsed with pain, every throb a reminder of his humiliation."*

His speed ramps up, and he types away effortlessly, for the first time writing like a writer, set free, inspired. We PULL UP and AWAY as he writes like a maniac.

22 INT. SWEETLEND'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

22

Bruce, his face illuminated by a swelling MADNESS, is PACING his little apartment, gathering up the SCATTERED PAGES of his masterpiece, MUTTERING to himself.

BRUCE

...get your fucking blood on our
masterpiece...

(CONTINUED)

He snatches up the pages and shuffles them into order. He STOPS. HEARS something. The LAMP on his DESK FLICKERS, then goes OUT.

He slowly rises, TERROR building within. SOUNDS develop; a low, rolling RUMBLE, distant echoing WHISPERS within the walls.

A LIGHT SOURCE GLOWS into existence, and Valerie is there in the room, silhouetted by it. Her HAIR rises as her own WIND kicks up, and she looks like a beautiful SORCERESS.

Entranced, a puppet, she raises her HAND to point at Bruce. A LIGHT comes up, illuminating Bruce in the darkness. Bruce takes a step back from her, his face filling with WONDER... and HORROR.

BRUCE (CONT'D)

Valerie, it's you! You've come!

There is a low, guttural SOUND from the SHADOWS behind Valerie, who has TEARS in her EYES.

VALERIE

Take him. Put an end to this.

BRUCE

Who are you talking to?

The Beast steps out of the DARKNESS, still dressed in its SHADOWS, and suddenly LOOMS UP over Bruce, who stares up at the Fiend in wide-eyed TERROR. He cowers before the Beast, gibbering, tears running from his eyes, snot from his nose.

The Beast is only ever seen in SHADOW and SILHOUETTE, as if he is made out of the DARKNESS itself.

BRUCE (CONT'D)

Oh, God, no! No no no no!

VALERIE

You've only yourself to blame.

The Beast GRABS Bruce by the HAIR and yanks his head back, covering his MOUTH with a MASSIVE HAND as Bruce SCREAMS.

BEAST

Quiet, you spineless little man.

As Valerie looks away, the Beast SMILES, forcing its horrible CLAW into Bruce's MOUTH, stretching it like a BOA CONSTRICTOR'S, and shoving it down Bruce's THROAT. Bruce, unable to breathe, squirms and fights, choking on the massive, gleaming ARM.

The Beast, in a vicious display, literally PULLS the SPINE out of him, and THROWS the bloody thing against the WALL.

The Beast turns to Valerie, his HANDS covered with BLOOD.

BEAST (CONT'D)

For you...

Valerie stands before the Beast, spattered with Sweetlend's BLOOD. She looks down at Bruce's bloody remains on the floor at her feet, shaking her head.

VALERIE

Is all this death the price of freedom?

BEAST

It is all for you.

VALERIE

No. Not for me. It's your hunger, not mine.

Valerie turns away as the Beast KNEELS before her and LICKS Sweetlend's BLOOD from her perfect skin. She lets him.

BEAST

I am so sorry.

VALERIE

I thought you loved me.

BEAST

I adore you! I worship you! I wash you with my tongue!

She closes her eyes and her head falls back, weakness overtaking her.

The Monster RISES, and we see how HUGE he is. His dark FLESH glistens. He gently TOUCHES her with his HAND, stares into her face, aroused. He brings his FACE to HERS. She looks up and their EYES LOCK.

(CONTINUED)

The Beast LIFTS her up, its HANDS behind her KNEES, shoving up the length of her TATTERED DRESS, and slowly LOWERS her down onto him.

(CONTINUED)

22 CONTINUED: (4) 22

She GASPS as she takes him into her, inch by inch by endless inch. She CLOSES her EYES, giving in to the agonizing BLISS. Her SCREAM echoes...

23 INT. HALLWAY OUTSIDE NEELY'S APARTMENT - THE NEXT DAY 23

Rob knocks on Everett Neely's DOOR, and Neely opens it a crack, peering out with a single BLOODSHOT EYE.

ROB

Mr. Neely. Can we talk?

24 INT. NEELY'S APARTMENT - DAY 24

The room is CHAOS when they enter, the room of a compulsive HOARDER who has kept every page he's ever written on, collected every NEWSPAPER he's ever read. Neely clears a spot on the SOFA.

NEELY

Sit, sit. Let me give you some advice, and you can take it or leave it. Get out of this place. You're a young man, you can do anything you want. Fuck writing. Nobody reads anymore anyway.

There is a FRAMED ONE-SHEET for a 1970s grade-Z MONSTER MOVIE on the wall: "THE BEAST FROM BENEATH". In it, a beautiful GIRL SCREAMS as horrid, BESTIAL HANDS reach out for her from the darkness. We've seen these hands before: on the BEAST. In the background, the huge, familiar TORSO looms in SILHOUETTE.

ROB

This poster...

NEELY

A piece of my past...

ROB

I've seen that creature before.

NEELY

I knew *someone* had to have seen that piece of shit movie.

(CONTINUED)

ROB

"Adapted from the novel by Neal Everest." Neal Everest, Everett Neely. Not exactly subtle.

NEELY

Ah, my guilty little secret is out. Yes, I wrote a very bad horror novel in my youth, and they made it into an even worse hunk of celluloid. My one little claim to fame, staring at me from the wall. Pathetic, isn't it? I'm telling you, get out, son, and never look back.

ROB

That monster... the creature...

NEELY

You want the poster? It's yours. Just don't tell that Bloom bitch I'm a published author or I'm out on my ass.

He reaches out to TOUCH the BEAST HANDS in the poster.

ROB

I want to know about Valerie. The girl in the book. The girl on the stairs.

Neely peers at Rob for a long BEAT. Then:

NEELY

There is no Valerie.

ROB

Bullshit. I've seen her. I've *touched* her!

NEELY

Touched her? That's not possible. There is no Valerie. She isn't alive. Valerie doesn't exist.

ROB

She does. And she's in Highberger House.

(CONTINUED)

NEELY

Highberger House is filled with the
failed dreams of rotted
imagination.

ROB

Like your monster?

NEELY

For example...

ROB

What is he called?

NEELY

Othakeye, the Blood-Fiend from
Hell. That was the title of the
novel. My great contribution to
culture.

ROB

Your monster, your Blood-Fiend from
Hell... it's here, too. In the
walls. I saw him.

Neely reacts. Fear prickles up and down his spine.

NEELY

That's not possible. He's a
pituitary case in a shitty rubber
suit in a shitty old monster movie.

ROB

He's got Valerie.

NEELY

I said he doesn't exist!

ROB

How did she die? I need to know
how she died!

NEELY

She never died! She never *lived!*
She isn't real!

ROB

She is, goddamn it! I've seen her
ghost!

NEELY

This is not a fucking ghost story!

(CONTINUED)

ROB

Then who is she?

NEELY

That's enough! Get out!

In pain and fear, he opens the door and shoves Rob through it.

ROB

Jesus! Everybody in this place is fucking crazy!

NEELY

Including you, young man. We're writers.

Neely slams the door, and Rob is left out in the HALLWAY. He LISTENS, and we HEAR TYPING, SCRIBBLING, a poorly-played VIOLIN behind the doors. But nothing supernatural or horrific.

25 INT. ROB'S APARTMENT - DAY

25

Rob is madly shoving his STUFF into his CASES. He's got to get out of here. And then, it is interrupted by a SCREAM.

He rushes to his door, yanks it open,...

25Apt.1 INT. ROB'S HALLWAY/LANDING - DAY - SAME

25Apt.1

and looks down over the landing.

25Apt.2 Nancy Bloom stands at the open door to Bruce Sweetlend's room, horrified. Rob rushes down to her.

25Apt.2

25Apt.1

ROB

What happened?

25Apt.1

26 OMIT

26

27 INT. SWEETLEND'S APARTMENT - DAY 27

Rob charges up to the room, where a horrified Nancy Bloom is standing in shock in the open doorway. Rob pushes past her and ENTERS. The ROOM is a BLOOD-DRENCHED SLAUGHTERHOUSE, Bruce's REMAINS scattered horribly about, POOLS of sticky, drying BLOOD everywhere.

Rob steps into the carnage. He looks down to see BLOODY FOOTPRINTS on the FLOORBOARDS: the BEAST'S... and the PETITE BARE PRINTS of a YOUNG WOMAN.

He FOLLOWS the PRINTS to the WALL, where they disappear... as if THROUGH it. No sign of a door. He puts his EAR to the WALL and LISTENS. A LONG SILENCE...

Then, *BANG!* Something SLAMS against the WALL from the other side. He stumbles back, and the noise comes again, and again: a furious tattoo from inside the walls.

The TENANTS hear it too, all over Highberger House. Rob turns to Nancy:

ROB
Nothing behind the walls, huh?
Just my imagination?

NANCY BLOOM
Some things are just better left
alone--

ROB
I don't think this has anything to
do with *my* imagination--

He goes to the DESK, finds the SECRET MANUSCRIPT, and starts to LEAF through it.

NANCY BLOOM
Don't touch anything! I'm going to
call the police--

27A INT. SWEETLEND'S APARTMENT - HALLWAY - DAY - SAME 27A

She scurries down the hallway,...

27B INT. SWEETLEND'S APARTMENT - DAY - SAME 27B

...leaving Rob alone in the room.

(CONTINUED)

27B CONTINUED:

27B

ROB
Fuck the police.

27C INT. SWEETLEND'S APARTMENT - HALLWAY - DAY - SAME

27C

He brings the MANUSCRIPT out into the HALLWAY, where there is more light. Patricia is peering out from her room next door. Neely is peering out from his room as well. Others watch from a distance, as Nancy goes down to her office.

ROB
(holding up the manuscript)
Valerie on the Stairs. It took three writers to construct it. Bruce... Neely...
(turning to Patricia)
And you. I've seen the monster, Patricia: Neely's beast, his great creation. What about you? What did you contribute?

PATRICIA
Don't blame *me* for this.

The frightful POUNDING on the WALLS of Bruce's apartment continues.

NEELY
What's that hammering?

ROB
It's your Fiend. Othakeye. Your monster from Hell is fed up with living inside the walls. It killed Bruce. And it wants out.

NEELY
Nonsense.

PATRICIA
We call it bullshit on my farm.

ROB
I think that between all three of you working on your secret masterpiece, you brought it to life.

PATRICIA
Ridiculous.

(CONTINUED)

ROB

Is it? Think of all the lost dreams that have been dreamed in this place; think of the energy that must be stored here. Bruce's famous creative juices, never released, the imagination trapped in Highberger House. All it needed was a focus. And the three of you gave it one: Valerie and the Fiend, Beauty and the Beast. The house finally had somewhere to put all those frustrations. It made your words flesh. Your imagination brought to life.

PATRICIA

You're so full of shit your eyes are brown. I'm getting out of this fucking madhouse.

She pulls into her apartment and slams the door in her wake.

ROB

I need to see Valerie again.

NEELY

She doesn't exist. She isn't real. Go write your own dream girl.

Rob GRABS Neely.

ROB

Where is she?

NEELY

You can't have her. She belongs to the Beast.

ROB

Why?

NEELY

Because we wrote her that way...

28 INT. PATRICIA'S APARTMENT - DAY

28

The gloomy apartment is filled with SHADOWS. Patricia is gathering her PILES of YELLOW LEGAL PADS and packing them up. We can HEAR Rob's and Neely's MUFFLED VOICES beyond the door.

(CONTINUED)

She FREEZES; there is a SOUND from the shadows in the corner. She LOOKS UP, her face filling with AWE.

PATRICIA

Oh, Jesus, it's true. Valerie.
You live. You've come.

Valerie emerges from the darkness, beautiful, unadorned, shameless.

VALERIE

One kiss before you go.

Patricia takes her in, agape. She TREMBLES in the beautiful young woman's presence, filled with desire.

PATRICIA

I was the one who made you
beautiful...

VALERIE

I know.

PATRICIA

You're the only woman who can't
say no to me.

VALERIE

A kiss.

She opens out her arms to Patricia. This is her dream-woman, the woman she could never have, now offering herself up to her. Patricia allows herself to be wrapped in Valerie's arms. Valerie KISSES her gently on the forehead.

PATRICIA

Oh my sweet Valerie. The times
I've imagined this...

VALERIE

(stroking her face)
So why did you let me be punished,
over and over and over? Me and all
the others?

Patricia's EYES fill with unspilled TEARS, looking down.

PATRICIA

Because I was a sad, lonely, angry
bitch. He's right; I poured all my
rage into that damned book.

(looking up at her)

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

PATRICIA (CONT'D)

And all my love. I'm so sorry,
Valerie... I never thought you
could be touched. That you could
be hurt.

Valerie strokes her HAIR, and KISSES Patricia on the MOUTH.

PATRICIA (CONT'D)

Valerie. My sweet, lovely Valerie.

VALERIE

No. Not yours.

PATRICIA

What do you mean? Of course you're
mine. I made you...

Valerie backs away into the darkened corner of the room, as
SHADOWS ROIL in the GLOOM.

VALERIE

No...

PATRICIA

Please, Valerie, don't go! I... I
love you.

Valerie sorrowfully shakes her head as the BEAST steps out of
the shadows, behind the oblivious Patricia. It looms up over
her, a ferocious GRIN on its face.

The BEAST suddenly SWIPES at Patricia with its RAZOR-SHARP
CLAWS, SLICING through her, leaving GASHES that GOUT BLOOD
that SPATTERS against Valerie. Patricia SCREAMS, and the
Beast GRABS her HEAD and TWISTS, SNAPPING her NECK and
cutting off her SCREAM.

Rob reacts to the SCREAM. He rushes to Patricia's DOOR,
tries it, but it is LOCKED. He SLAMS his BODY against the
DOOR and it BREAKS OPEN.

30 INT. PATRICIA'S APARTMENT - DAY

30

Rob crashes through the door. The room is DARK and SILENT, the only light coming from the open DOOR. HEAVY CURTAINS are drawn across the windows. There is a low RUMBLING SOUND from within the walls. Patricia's BLOOD is everywhere: a ROSE for Valerie.

Neely enters from behind Rob, a PISTOL in hand. Suddenly Patricia's mangled body springs up into view, grasping onto Rob, sliding off his body as she dies in a pool of blood. Neely is wide-eyed in terror.

Rob watches her then goes to the DESK, where a TALL copy of the *Valerie on the Stairs* MANUSCRIPT has COLLAPSED in battle: HAND-WRITTEN YELLOW PAGES interspersed with TYPED SHEETS.

He picks up the BLOOD-SPATTERED PAGES. In Patricia's neat hand: "*Valerie screamed...*", "*Valerie felt the hot blood splash her naked body...*", etc.

Rob puts the pieces together.

ROB

You should go. Give me the gun.

(CONTINUED)

NEELY

No. I need to see it. I need to see my Beast, my creation. Not some guy in a rubber suit. The real Othakeye.

ROB

It's killed Sweetlend and Patricia. You're next.

NEELY

But why?

ROB

It wants to be free. I think they both do. They don't want you to write their ending. They want to live it for themselves.

There is a POUNDING within the WALLS, getting distant.

ROB (CONT'D)

They've become real to end it, haven't they?

NEELY

(beat; he nods)

They are my children. Let me help you destroy them.

Rob looks at Neely, and the MADNESS that is growing behind his eyes.

ROB

Fine.

They go to the FAR WALL where the SOUND comes from. Rob picks up a CHAIR, and furiously POUNDS it against the wall with all his might, over and over.

The WALL CRACKS OPEN, and the FISSURES seep BLOOD and FLUID like WOUNDS.

The two of them pound away, opening up a HOLE large enough to step through. Behind a CURTAIN of ELECTRICAL WIRING and PLUMBING PIPES, there is a narrow STAIRWAY that leads DOWN into a BASEMENT CHAMBER, emitting dim FIRELIGHT.

ROB (CONT'D)

What's down there?

Neely cannot answer; he looks into the stairwell with terror.

(CONTINUED)

ROB (CONT'D)

Come on, you wrote it! *What's down there?*

NEELY

The Hell-Hole. The Fiend's private torture chamber.

ROB

You sick fucks.

NEELY

The torture stuff was Sweetlend. He was a big fan of de Sade.

ROB

Why didn't you just finish your fucking book and try to find a publisher? Why did you keep it going, year after year?

NEELY

It was an addiction. Every night, picking up where Bruce or Patricia had left off, running on, leading it on to a darker and darker place, the body-count rising... We couldn't stop.

ROB

What body-count? I thought there was only Valerie.

NEELY

She's the only one alive. But there were others. Sweetlend would pick them up: runaways, prostitutes past their sell-date, girls who'd never be missed. The Lonely Ones.

He shrinks down as he tells it, overwhelmed by guilt.

ROB

And you fed them to your monster?

NEELY

Oh, God, no! Bruce would get them high, get them to tell him their hard-luck stories, and he'd fall asleep. When he woke up, they were gone. Like smoke. Not a trace.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

NEELY (CONT'D)

We never saw it. We never knew what was really happening...

ROB

Why not Valerie? Why didn't he kill her?

NEELY

(looking up at him)
If you could create Valerie, would you kill her?

ROB

And all of it is in your book.

NEELY

Of course.
(pointing to his temple)
The power of imagination...

ROB

You're a despicable piece of work, Neely.

Neely's EYES fill with TEARS.

NEELY

I am. Of course I am. But I didn't know it would come alive! None of us did. It was a *story*: my last chance to make something that would last.

ROB

Valerie on the Stairs.

NEELY

That was my idea...

ROB

And you're *proud* of it?

NEELY

It's not like they were murdered in front of me. It's not like I truly *knew*...

ROB

Are you telling me you don't know the difference between something you imagine and something that's real?

(CONTINUED)

NEELY

Do you? Is there any difference,
really? They're all in my head:
the life I lived yesterday and the
dreams I dreamed last night and the
words I put to paper. All in here,
mixed up together.

ROB

You're out of your fucking mind.

NEELY

And you're not? You love her,
don't you? The girl we made up,
the girl we wrote. You want to be
her hero.

ROB

I'm going to finish your fucking
story for you.

NEELY

(revelation)

Of course you are! That's why
you're here! To bring it all to a
close, to end it! I never saw
Bruce's final pages; maybe he wrote
you, Mr. Hanisey! Did you think of
that? Yes, maybe if you survive
this and you try to leave
Highberger House, you won't be able
to!

ROB

Bullshit. I had a life before I
came here, and I'll have a life
after it's all over.

NEELY

Will you?

ROB

You need a shrink.

NEELY

No, I need a best-seller. Give me
my ending and we'll all be happy.

Rob stares at him for a moment, then REACTS to the CRIES from
way down below. He STEPS through the HOLE in the WALL, and
Neely FOLLOWS him.

31 INT. BEHIND THE WALL - DAY

31

They step into the dark, dank STAIRWELL, a claustrophobic NIGHTMARE. WIRES and COBWEBS clot the CRAWLSPACE.

Though there is AMBER FIRELIGHT below, there is very little light on the way down. Lots of darkness and shadow. We HEAR the RUMBLING ROAR of the Pit below, as well as Valerie's familiar CRIES. They begin their descent into HELL down the rickety WOODEN STEPS.

ROB

Is this place your creation, too?

NEELY

No, this was mostly Sweetlend's.
He specialized in the outre--

A FEMALE CORPSE suddenly DROPS in front of them, hanging in TATTERS from CHAINS bound around her lifeless body, interrupting Neely and scaring the shit out of them.

ROB

Jesus!

He looks at the CORPSE, and it stares blankly back at him. Neely looks at Rob with wide eyes, as the CRIES echo out from below.

ROB (CONT'D)

Come on.

They head down the narrow STAIRWAY, and see that there are several other CORPSES of YOUNG WOMEN dangling on CHAINS in their path. They look like they've been DEAD for a long time, going to PUTRESCENCE.

ROB (CONT'D)

(calling out)

Valerie!

He HEARS her DISTANT CRIES below... and continues down the creaky steps to Hell, between the moist, glistening WALLS.

They make their way through the hanging CORPSES in the tight passageway, unable to avoid rubbing up against the DECAYING BODIES, which hang, staring at them through LIFELESS EYES. It chills them to the bone; they are writers, not heroes.

(CONTINUED)

31 CONTINUED:

31

The low, fiery, ominous SOUNDS increase as they get closer to the PIT; Valerie's CRIES rend the air.

As they are about to pass what appears to be the LAST of the HANGING CORPSES, Rob STOPS, face-to-face with the DEAD BODY. The COLOR drains from his face in horror, and we recognize the CADAVER'S FACE from Rob's DREAMS: his DEAD GIRLFRIEND.

ROB (CONT'D)

Anna?

31A FLASH CUTS

31A

Just a few silent FRAMES of each: the LOVING, the FIGHTING, the DRIVING, the BLEEDING, the DEATH.

31B INT. RESUME STAIRWELL - DAY - SAME

31B

Rob chokes back TEARS and EMOTION, as Neely steps back. Rob's FACE is just inches away from DEAD ANNA'S. Neely moves in closer for a good look, grabbing Rob by the arm. The HEAD lifts to face Rob, and its MOUTH OPENS, and starts to SPEAK.

ANNA

You killed me...

Suddenly she SCREAMS, and her HANGING CORPSE begins to JERK horribly. The SPASMS build, and it starts to wildly SHIFT and VIBRATE, jerking and distorting at 2 frames per second.

The CORPSE suddenly goes STILL, staring at them. Then, its MOUTH SNAPS OPEN, and BITES a CHUNK out of Neely's NECK!

BLOOD SPURTS copiously, and Neely falls to the stairs, his hands at his spurting neck, DYING, as Anna's corpse returns to its slack DEATH at the end of the CHAIN.

Rob, horrified, looks from his dead girlfriend to Neely, his back against the fetid, wet wall of the stairwell.

Neely grips Rob by the pantleg, DYING in a POOL of BLOOD at his FEET. With his last ounce of strength, he manages ONE LAST LINE:

NEELY

You're... supposed to... save her...

(CONTINUED)

31B CONTINUED:

31B

Then Neely is wide-eyed DEAD, and EXPIRES on the FLOOR in a pool of his own BLOOD.

Rob girds himself, and heads all the way down the rickety STAIRWELL to the OPENING that leads into:

32 INT. OTHAKEYE'S BASEMENT DUNGEON - DAY

32

Leading with the GUN, Rob finally ENTERS.

It is a FOUL and ANCIENT place: the WALLS are WET, glistening with a disgusting SHEEN. The air is fetid, the SHADOWS creeping constantly.

It is littered with CHAINS and BONES and SKULLS and BLADES and BODY PARTS and TRASH and nasty-looking GARBAGE, all covered with layers of disgusting GRIME and MOLD.

In the far corner, a RAGING WALK-IN STONE FIREPLACE. And between the FIRE and Rob, the silhouetted Beast suddenly stands from behind PILES of BONES and BODIES and DETRITUS and REVEALS himself, tall and triumphant.

Rob STOPS as the Beast stands before him.

ROB

I'm here--

BEAST

For Valerie. Of course you are.
And I'm here to stop you. They're
dead, now. All of them. And we're
free to write our own lives.

ROB

(aiming the gun)
Or deaths.

The Beast just LAUGHS, low and resonant.

(CONTINUED)

BEAST

Let's just see; after all, it's the victor who writes history...

Rob FIRES into his CHEST, opening a BLOODLESS HOLE.

The Beast SMILES and PULLS the BULLET out of his CHEST. He SHAKES his HEAD and settles into a sort of massive THRONE, sitting like a potentate.

The THRONE is made up of TYPEWRITERS, KEYBOARDS, BONES, DEAD ANIMALS and other GARBAGE.

BEAST (CONT'D)

Just you and me now. The Hero and the Beast. A tale often told.

He calls out, without turning.

BEAST (CONT'D)

Valerie...

From behind the makeshift THRONE, Valerie emerges, a CHAIN around her waist, and comes up to kneel at the Beast's FEET. Its TAIL wraps lovingly around her. She is barely draped in the SHREDDED REMAINS of a DIAPHANOUS DRESS.

Rob lowers the gun, transfixed by the beautiful, vulnerable Valerie. She looks FRIGHTENED, needy.

VALERIE

Help me...

BEAST

We both knew where this would end up: you and I fighting to the death over my beautiful Valerie. You *do* want her, don't you?

VALERIE

Please, help me...

ROB

Leave her alone...

The Beast SMILES mockingly and lays its HANDS gently on her bare SHOULDERS. She GASPS with unexpected pleasure, her EYES rolling back under fluttering lids.

(CONTINUED)

Rob finds it painful to watch as Valerie SHUDDERS with uncontrollable pleasure under the Beast's touch. It WRAPS its TAIL around her body in a surprisingly gentle, erotic caress.

BEAST

You like that?

VALERIE

Oh, yes...

The Beast GRIPS the CHAIN that binds her, drawing her to him, and wrapping her in his caress.

Rob hefts the GUN and FIRES at the Fiend. The BULLET blows off an EAR, and the Beast SHRIEKS in anger.

ROB

Valerie, run!

Valerie TAKES OFF, but doesn't get far before reaching the END of her CHAIN and CRASHES painfully to the FLOOR. The Beast ROARS in fury and pain, as BLOOD flows from its new WOUNDS.

Rob FIRES again, HITTING the Beast and throwing him BACK. Rob GRABS the CHAIN and YANKS it out of the Beast's CLAWS to free Valerie.

ROB (CONT'D)

Go! Hurry!

Valerie, glistening with BLOOD and SWEAT, tries to get to her feet around the piles of hideousness surrounding her.

BEAST

No!!!

The Fiend GRABS the CHAIN back, and YANKS it hard, throwing Rob across the ROOM and against the slimy stone WALL. *WHAM!*

The weakened Beast stands up and moves closer as he PULLS the CHAIN again, knocking Valerie to the floor. The dazed Rob slides down the wall.

32A OMITTED 32A *

32B INT. RESUME OTHAKEYE'S BASEMENT DUNGEON - DAY - SAME 32B *

Rob clambers to his feet, chasing after Valerie. He GRABS onto her and YANKS the CHAIN from the Beast with all his remaining strength.

It isn't enough. The Beast PULLS BACK, and both Rob and Valerie SPIN across the FLOOR and come CRASHING to the Monster's FEET. Rob is BETWEEN Valerie and the Beast in front of the giant, ROARING FIREPLACE.

Rob wraps both hands around the GUN, and RAISES it up to the Beast's FACE. The wounded, bleeding Beast merely SMILES.

BEAST

Go ahead. Shoot. And I'll spit
the bullet right back at you.

Rob wraps a protective ARM around Valerie... then suddenly, in a swift and shocking turnaround, he SHOVES the BARREL of the GUN under the terrified woman's JAW. She SCREAMS, and the Beast ROARS.

ROB

Fine. Then I'll spend the bullet
where it counts: in this little
prick-teaser. Then you rip me up
and send me to hell. I'll die
happy once this bitch is dead!

VALERIE

No!

ROB

(to Valerie)
You killed the others with him.
Now you want me dead, too!

VALERIE

No, I swear, I just want you!

(CONTINUED)

BEAST

No...

ROB

You'll find another woman, what's the big deal? Look at the harem you've got hanging here! I'll kill her and you can do whatever you want with me.

He seems ready to shoot, MADNESS blooming on his face.

VALERIE

Rob, please, don't...

BEAST

Don't dare hurt her...

ROB

What's it matter to you? She's just another flesh garden.

BEAST

No. Not Valerie...

The Beast reaches out its CLAW to stroke her face, and she pulls away.

Rob pulls her back, digging the GUN deeper into her JAW. Valerie is in TEARS, quaking in terror.

VALERIE

Please... don't kill me...

BEAST

All that blood was shed for her. And she loves me for it. She's mine.

ROB

No. She's mine.

BEAST

(passionate)
My Valerie...

Rob PULLS BACK the HAMMER and the Beast takes a step back.

BEAST (CONT'D)

Don't!

(CONTINUED)

Rob suddenly CHARGES the Beast with all his STRENGTH,
knocking the Beast into the giant FIREPLACE!

(CONTINUED)

There is an explosive ROAR as the Beast IGNITES in a kaleidoscopic BLAZE of FLAME and COLOR and SMOKE. The SCREAMS of the world's DEAD and DYING erupt.

Rob quickly pulls the gun away and releases Valerie from her CHAINS.

ROB

Go! Go!

And he shoves her out of the DUNGEON and up the STAIRWELL.

33 INT. STAIRWELL BEHIND THE WALLS - DAY

33

Rob and Valerie come CHARGING gracelessly up the STAIRWELL, the FIRE roaring in the Dungeon beneath them. They make their way through the HANGING CORPSES, weak, wounded and bloodied, the ROAR of the dying Beast behind them.

There is no way for Rob and Valerie to go but UP. There is no sign of a way out, no hole in a wall, just the STAIRS reaching UPWARD.

ROB

Go, Valerie!

Finally, they reach the END of the STAIRS: a DEAD END. There is a TRAP DOOR above them, and they come to a HALT.

VALERIE

Where are you taking me?

ROB

I'm taking you out of here. I'm not going to lose you.

VALERIE

You don't understand. I can't leave here.

ROB

Yes you can. It's over. You're free.

VALERIE

It's not your choice. We're not free, don't you understand? They finished it!

(CONTINUED)

ROB

No. We finished it, Valerie.
You're free. You're real. And
you're with me.

She looks at him with terror, tempered by hopeful doubt.
There is a SOUND from below: a low, building RUMBLING. And
it seems to be coming after them...

ROB (CONT'D)

We've got to go!

He GRABS her arm and she RESISTS, terrified. He pulls her up
the final STEPS to the DOOR above them and HEAVES it OPEN.

VALERIE

No! I can't go out there!

He climbs out into the bright DAYLIGHT of the real world.

Rob emerges into the DAY, pulling the SCREAMING Valerie
behind him.

VALERIE

No, Rob, no!

As he PULLS her out onto the ROOF, screaming and fighting
him, her BODY suddenly LOSES its SHAPE, DISINTEGRATING and
SCATTERING to the BREEZE, leaving a horrified, mystified Rob
Hanisey in its wake.

ROB

Valerie!

But she is GONE. Her final chapter written. He watches her
MIST disappear into the cold, hard DAYLIGHT.

As he stands atop Highberger House, alone, a VOICE CRIES OUT
from below:

VOICE (O.S.)

Hanisse! Stay where you are!

He goes to the edge and looks down. On the GROUND below are
POLICE CARS, an AMBULANCE. A COP has a BULLHORN, and shouts
up at him. Others are CLIMBING LADDERS up the sides of the
building.

COP

Throw down the gun and put your
hands up! We don't want anybody
else to be hurt.

Rob stares down, deflated and depleted, and, like a robot,
tosses Neely's GUN over the side of the roof, and it lands in
the garden below.

As he starts to RAISE his HANDS, he sees and feels something
STRANGE about them. He brings his hand to his face, and we
see with him:

There are scraps of TEXT on his HAND, as though he's made up
of a COLLAGE of PAGES, like BOOK EXCERPTS. The OTHER HAND is
the SAME. His NAME is part of all the TEXTS. He looks more
closely:

"Rob Hanisey was a late arrival at the house...", *"Rob sat
down to stare at the empty screen..."*, *"Rob had failed..."*
The final *"failed"* fills the screen.

He takes off his shirt, and his skin everywhere is the color
of PAPER and filled with TEXT. He is his own novel. The
WIND GUSTS, and it starts to PEEL PAGES of his MANUSCRIPT off
of his BODY.

He begins to DISINTEGRATE as the PAGES of his LIFE are PEELED
AWAY and carried aloft by the wind. And the last remains of
Rob Hanisey DISAPPEAR...

(CONTINUED)

Papers flutter gently across the rooftop, covered with the text of Rob Hanisey's life.

Camera looks up into the sky as a sheet of text hovers and drifts towards us. It flies close enough to us to read it: *"And so it came to be that Rob Hanisey never did become a published author..."*

The sheet drifts away and is replaced by another.

"THE END"