

# PAGE TURNER

By

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INT. ABANDONED WAREHOUSE BACK ROOM - NIGHT

A MALE VICTIM - bound and bloodied - lies on his knees.

A HOODED FIGURE - male, forties - holds a knife to him.

MALE VICTIM

Please. D... d... don't...

Cops surround the warehouse.

EXT. ABANDONED WAREHOUSE - NIGHT

A SWAT OFFICER holds up a megaphone.

SWAT OFFICER (O.S. ON MEGAPHONE)

(filtered)

*Simon Harmon Kraus - put the knife  
down and come out with your hands on  
your head.*

The SWAT CHIEF - grizzled, fifties - pushes the megaphone away from the officer's mouth.

SWAT CHIEF

That bastard had his chance.

He turns to the rest of the SWAT team and gives them the "go ahead" signal.

INT. ABANDONED WAREHOUSE ENTRANCEWAY - NIGHT

In surgical SWAT fashion, officers burst through the door and sweep the room.

SWAT OFFICER

Go, go, go.

They approach a cast iron door. The scout places a snake cam under the door.

SNAKE CAM POV: We see the hooded figure standing at the end of the hallway on the other side of the door.

INT. ABANDONED WAREHOUSE BACK ROOM - CONTINUOUS

The officers burst into the back room, guns trained on the hooded figure.

SWAT OFFICER  
 (yelling)  
 Simon Kraus - put your hands in the  
 air - NOW!

The hooded figure is on his knees with his hands ominously behind his back. He doesn't budge an inch.

SWAT OFFICER (CONT'D)  
 I said drop your knife and put your  
 hands up!

The officers start to advance. They are nervous of this man.

SWAT OFFICER #2  
 Where's Mr. Begley?

SWAT OFFICER  
 (yelling)  
 Do you hear me? Stand up and put them  
 up NOW!

The hooded figure twitches. It looks like he might pounce. The officers grip their triggers.

SWAT OFFICER (CONT'D)  
 Simon Kraus do you want to  
 get shot?

SWAT OFFICER #2  
 What did you do with him?  
 Where's Mr. Begley?

REVEAL: We see what the officers cannot - the hooded figure on the ground is the bloodied male victim - the hooded sweatshirt slung on to him to fool the officers.

MALE VICTIM (DRESSED AS HOODED FIGURE)  
 Mmmmm.... MMMMMMMM!!!!

The male victim cannot talk. His mouth is gagged. He struggles with his restraints, breaks free, reaches out -

BANG! BANG! BANG!

SWAT OFFICER  
 Got 'em.

SWAT OFFICER #2  
 Oh God. Oh God...

The officers pull back the hood to see they've been fooled.

SWAT OFFICER #2 (CONT'D)  
 ... It's not him. It's Mr. Begley...

They all turn, ready their guns -

SWAT OFFICER  
... He's still here...

CUT TO: A Channel 11 logo and the title "HE WALKS AMONG US."

ANNOUNCER (V.O.)  
Our Edmond Grary marathon will  
continue with the midnight showing of  
"He Walks Among Us" right after these  
messages.

THE CAMERA PULLS BACK TO REVEAL:

INT. EDMOND GRARY'S STUDY - NIGHT

The glass of a television screen in an immaculately done up  
study. The preceding events were in fact - a TV MOVIE.

We hear the clacking of a typewriter. The study is lined with  
framed book covers of macabre horror novels with titles like  
"THE CREEPER" and "HITCHHIKERS." There are framed newspaper  
clippings with headlines like "EDMOND GRARY, AMERICA'S MASTER  
OF HORROR" and a host of plaques and literary laurels.

We stop on EDMOND GRARY as he types. Compact, fragile, in his  
late thirties, he is more reminiscent of the nerdy guy you  
may have teased than a master of horror.

Edmond pulls the paper out of the typewriter. He reaches for  
a neatly placed CUBAN CIGAR and CIGAR CUTTER, cuts off the  
tip, and lights up.

After a few proud puffs, he picks up a blackberry.

EDMOND (ON BLACKBERRY)  
(typing)  
[Finished.]

INT. BOOKSTORE - MORNING

A throng of people are lined up at a table where Edmond sits  
signing books. An OVERWEIGHT FAN is having his book signed.

OVERWEIGHT FAN  
Is it true? Are you writing again?

EDMOND  
(smiles slyly, signing)  
"... To Roger Terwilliger..."

OVERWEIGHT FAN

Aw, c'mon! I've already waited three years!

Next up: a COSTUMED FAN - done up in a bloody shirt and mask.

COSTUMED FAN

Guess.

Edmond has to try very hard not to roll his eyes.

EDMOND

It's just how I imagined him.

Approaching next is the #1 FAN - adorned in a T-shirt that says as much. In his late 20's/early 30's, he is composed, handsome, and intense to the point he is out of place despite the fanboy shirt.

EDMOND (CONT'D)

Who should I make this out to?

#1 FAN

How do you do it?

EDMOND

(busy writing)

Hmm?

#1 FAN

How do you come up with such macabre and fantastic ways for people to die?

EDMOND

Oh. You know. I just look, at people. What scares them. Chills them to the bone. And that's what I go with.

#1 FAN

Huh. That's a really good answer.

(pauses, looking down)

It's pretty pat, though, isn't it?

Edmond looks up.

#1 FAN (CONT'D)

I bet you give it to everybody.

What's with this guy?

#1 FAN (CONT'D)

I would just think somebody who writes so much about so much blood, so much murder - I can't help but think of the part past the quiet joy you must get, scaring your audience, playing them like a trombone - to that part you don't discuss with your pat answers to fanboy questions. That part that drives you to your subject again and again, that part you are expressing... Even if you don't talk about.

The chatter of the fans persists, but Edmond is now deadily silent. He stares into the eyes of the #1 Fan.

#1 FAN (CONT'D)

That part you wouldn't quite find by looking out.

You could hear a pin drop.

#1 FAN (CONT'D)

(smiling)

But why worry about such things when you've got so many books to sign. You can make that out to your number one fan.

Edmond stares at the smiling #1 Fan as he exits.

NEXT FAN

Gimme a hint - do you have something new?

EXT. HOBOKEN CONDO - MORNING

Edmond pulls up outside an expensive-looking Hoboken condo.

A NEIGHBOR posts a flyer to the telephone pole with a mugshot and a message: "LANGDON ACKLER: RAPIST. PEDOPHILE. HE'S IN YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD."

NEIGHBOR

They say he can live in our neighborhood.

EDMOND

I'm sure he's a nice guy once you get to know him.

The neighbor shakes his head disapprovingly.

At the door, Edmond is greeted by KRISSY - 15, bright and pretty young girl - who jumps into his arms.

KRISSY

Daddy!

EDMOND

If it isn't the reason I wake up in the morning.

INT. HELEN'S CONDO KITCHEN - MORNING

Edmond pulls out a newspaper clipping.

EDMOND

I've got a good one.

(reading from clipping)

"Elderly woman killed by love of own money. Cause of death - lead poisoning from fourteen dollars and fifty-five cents found in her stomach - apparently ingested for reasons unknown."

Krissy has a clipping of her own.

KRISSY

I got you beat.

(reading from clipping)

"Woman's suicide goes terribly wrong. Depressed teen sits in front of oncoming train and closes eyes. Wakes up to find she is still alive, but both arms and both legs on other side of track."

EDMOND

Positively grotesque. That's my girl.

KRISSY

I'm telling you. That would make a great story.

HELEN (O.S.)

Don't go giving her more ideas.

Helen enters - late thirties, power suit, a knockout - it is obvious from the look between them that Helen and Edmond share a long and probably sordid history.

HELEN (CONT'D)

Krissy, why don't you go and get your books. Before you're late.

Edmond looks around the kitchen, as if searching for someone.

EDMOND

Where's Brian? I haven't seen him  
around lately.

Helen gives Edmond a look. Chooses to ignore going down this path.

HELEN

Krissy misses you...

A spider starts to crawl across the counter. Edmond stares at it - he is petrified.

Helen notices, bundles up paper towel.

HELEN (CONT'D)

(squishing spider)

... She thinks you're the world. If  
only she knew her big, horror maestro  
father were scared of an itty, bitty  
spider.

EDMOND

Sensitive writer. It's part of the charm.  
At least someone used to think so.

Helen tries her best to suppress a knowing smile.

EDMOND (CONT'D)

(charmingly)

... Didn't they?

HELEN

Who is this with their eyebrow raised  
like they actually had an ounce of  
their own natural charm?

EDMOND

... Didn't they?

HELEN

Hmmmm. Maybe someone might have. Maybe  
they even thought you rehabilitated.  
Until they walked in on this pleasant  
little scene for the second time in a  
week.

The gloves have just - very obviously - been taken off.

EDMOND

Oh come on, Helen, I was just -

HELEN

No, we're at a German restaurant, enjoying some sausage, and she launches into a five-minute diatribe about how exactly to disembowel a man's intestines. Thank God you're back on the signing circuit - maybe you can buy her another three years of therapy.

EDMOND

Well maybe I wouldn't have to if you hadn't -

HELEN

If I hadn't...

They both stop. They're back at the same old impasse. Helen looks down. Shakes her head.

HELEN (CONT'D)

I thought the whole reason you stopped writing is because you didn't want to be that kind of person anymore.

EDMOND

I'm not that kind of person anymore.

HELEN

Right. Of course.

(holds up newspaper clippings)  
And all of this? Old habits, right?

INT. CAR - MORNING

Edmond drives Krissy toward a school.

KRISSY

He was perfect, and she still didn't stay with him. Come on - she's totally still into you.

EDMOND

I wouldn't be too sure, sweetie.

KRISSY

You fucked up. It's been three years. You've been perfect ever since.

Edmond motions to a manuscript on the dashboard.

EDMOND

Does she know...?

KRISSY  
 (picks up manuscript)  
 You finished!  
 (reading cover)  
 "The Life and Times of Edmond Grary."

EDMOND  
 I know. It's not the usual horror  
 mumbo jumbo everybody's so used to.

KRISSY  
 (reading cover)  
 "The true story of the two most  
 important women in my life. And the  
 horror of changing a diaper."  
 (laughs)  
 You are so gonna win her back.

He pulls up outside a school and they kiss goodbye.

EDMOND  
 See you after practice.

EXT. SCHOOL - CONTINUOUS

Krissy stops by a flyer of the "RAPIST PEDOPHILE."

KRISSY  
 Ughhh.

She takes out a marker and draws a PIG SNOUT on his face.

INT. MANHATTAN BROWNSTONE LIBRARY - EVENING

Edmond now stands amidst the vast collection of an expensive library.

He looks at one of the display cases. There is a framed wedding photo of Edmond and Helen. They look much younger - and much happier. Standing with his arm around Edmond is an older man.

Edmond turns to see this same man enter - MR. KLEIN - 50's, in an impeccably polished suit you couldn't afford.

MR. KLEIN  
 Edmond!  
 (hugs Edmond)  
 So... "Finished"?

INT. MANHATTAN BROWNSTONE DINING ROOM - DAY

Edmond and Mr. Klein sit over finished lunch plates. Klein points his finger to a copy of Edmond's manuscript.

MR. KLEIN

This isn't you. It's cute and all. But everyone and their mother's got a memoir. How about a follow-up to "The Creeper"? Or "Hitchhikers"? Something to get your audience jazzed?

EDMOND

That's just not where I am in my life right now.

MR. KLEIN

I remember when I found you, writing for that 'zine at UMaine. What was it you wrote under?

EDMOND

(laughs)

John Phobos. "The Greek God of Fear." Nobody remembers that.

MR. KLEIN

A short little story about the monster under the bed. Enough to get up all the little hairs on the back of my neck. And I knew. You were a natural. That manuscript, three years ago - that could've been your masterpiece.

Mr. Klein takes off his glasses and looks at Edmond, dead serious.

MR. KLEIN (CONT'D)

Why did you stop?

EDMOND

Oh, you know, what happened - with Helen -

Mr. Klein cuts him off, not buying that at all -

MR. KLEIN

Why did you really stop?

Edmond looks down. He might not be able to avoid this subject any longer.

EDMOND

It's silly. It's stupid. You know. You get caught up in a moment, wondering how it would work - if you used it, in a novel. Sometimes, you can't even enjoy it while it's happening.

(leans forward)

It was like that, except... I sat down, to write the moments. And they were gruesome. Visceral. On a whole other level. Even for me. Only, this time, when I looked back out, all I could see was...

Edmond shakes his head.

EDMOND (CONT'D)

I can't write those books anymore. I don't have it in me. Or, maybe I did... for longer than I should.

Mr. Klein tries not to, but can't help chuckling at this.

MR. KLEIN

Edmond... The only thing you've got inside you is a gift. And the only thing you've been doing longer than you should have is shelving it.

Mr. Klein puts his hand on his shoulder.

MR. KLEIN (CONT'D)

I'll tell you what. You come to me with your next one, and I'll put this out too.

INT. PATH TRAIN CAR - NIGHT

Edmond sits, depressed, in a PATH train car.

Just as the doors close, a man grabs them open and enters. It's the #1 Fan. He is no longer wearing the T-shirt. He sits across from Edmond. Edmond pretends not to notice.

After several stops, the #1 Fan sees him. He lights up.

#1 FAN

Oh my God! Edmond Grary!

He moves over to Edmond, shakes his hand, sits next to him.

#1 FAN (CONT'D)

Twice in one day. I don't want you to think I'm stalking you or something. With the kind of fans you get...

EDMOND

Yes. Quite.

#1 FAN

Really. What are the odds? I didn't mean for you to get the wrong idea before. It's just... How many times do you get to speak to Edmond Grary?

Edmond looks at the nothing out the subway window. The #1 Fan doesn't get the hint.

#1 FAN (CONT'D)

Why are you even here? You don't need to hobnob with us proles to get around.

Edmond astutely studies the subway advertisements. The #1 Fan still doesn't get the hint.

#1 FAN (CONT'D)

I get it. This is part of how you write. How you get your stories. You're down here people-watching.

Edmond's face reddens, almost as if he's been found out.

#1 FAN (CONT'D)

Oh my God you are, you dirty old coot!

He looks at the #1 Fan and can't help a smile. Maybe this guy isn't so bad.

#1 FAN (CONT'D)

So how do you do it?

EDMOND

It's nothing.

#1 FAN

C'mon - I've read your books. I bet it's something else!

Edmond pauses for a moment, unsure.

He then nods. Seems like he's being genuine enough.

EDMOND

Well take this guy over there. Bobbing his head. Not a care in the world. And why should he? He's 6 foot 4. 220.

CLOSE ON: The JOCKISH YOUTH that Edmond is describing with his story. He has on a hoodie and skully cap, taps his fingers rhythmically on his knees.

EDMOND (O.S.) (CONT'D)

He's never been mugged a day in his life. Who would? But on this night, he gets off at Highland. Walks down Smith, when a guy comes at him from behind. "Give me your money." Nothing. "Give me your money or I'll shoot." He just keeps walking. And he would turn, he would give his money - of course - only underneath his hoodie... he's too busy with his Ipod. And unfortunately this night, he'll be hearing his spanking new download of his "Tainted Love" remix - in one or two more fateful steps - the last time.

The #1 Fan claps his hands delightedly.

#1 FAN

That's great. Wow. That's great. How do you do that?

EDMOND

You just find someone and... go with it.

#1 FAN

Right. Right. Okay. Her.

The #1 Fan points to an ELDERLY LADY - late 70's.

#1 FAN (CONT'D)

Right. All alone. She hasn't left her apartment in like... 10 years. Only now her sister - her beloved sister - is dying, so she has to bring herself to face the world. Down the steps onto the subway one more time. And she does, she makes it to her sister's stop, only when she gets out, on her way out the door, she falls, right onto the track. And wammo. Run over by the very thing she just conquered.

EDMOND  
(shakes his head)  
I don't know. Run over, by the train...

CLOSE ON: The elderly lady as Edmond tells his story.

EDMOND (O.S.) (CONT'D)  
Try this. She's on her way to see her sister despite the lung condition that has ailed her since she was a girl. Few stops later - what do you know - she's down on the floor. Can't breathe. Only fortunately for her, six seats down, sits Michael Winterbaum, who - in one of life's little coincidences - happened to finish his official CPR certification course just last night. Only - unfortunately for her - Michael Winterbaum also happened to have just gotten off. Two stops before.

Edmond smiles. The #1 Fan can't help but laugh.

EDMOND (CONT'D)  
Gets the irony with a bit more of a smile.

#1 FAN  
You're a very talented man.

Edmond nods graciously.

#1 FAN (CONT'D)  
So what if I told you that I plan on killing someone on this subway right now and I want you to tell me how.

EDMOND  
Well that's your problem right there. You shouldn't have gotten on the subway. You stand on the platform, grab whoever looks like they're actually enjoying life - there's usually only one - and give a good shove.

#1 FAN  
Ha. That' funny. But say I was serious - that I really wanted to?

EDMOND

(smiles)

Why don't you use a submachine gun?  
Get the whole lot of them.

#1 FAN

No. Say I wanted to murder one of  
these people. Say I wanted you to tell  
me how to do it.

Edmond looks at the man incredulously.

EDMOND

Are you kidding? How about a bomb.  
Boom.

#1 FAN

What if I told you I was absolutely  
serious?

EDMOND

Come on. You're going to kill  
somebody? Right now? And I'm going to  
have "something" to do with it?

#1 FAN

Yes.

There is something disconcerting about the answer.

#1 FAN (CONT'D)

What if I told you I didn't get on  
this train by accident. That I've been  
following you. Ever since this  
morning. Ever since you waved goodbye  
to your little blond wife and your  
pretty little daughter.

A wave comes over Edmond. As if he's been smacked.

EDMOND

Who are you?

#1 FAN

What do you think?  
(points to a passenger)  
Should it be her?  
(points to another passenger)  
Or how about him?

EDMOND

I'm sorry. This is my stop.

Edmond moves to leave.

#1 FAN  
You love your daughter and wife?

Edmond stops.

#1 FAN (CONT'D)  
I thought so.

Edmond sits back down, extremely uneasy.

EDMOND  
If you've done anything to them, I swear -

#1 FAN  
It's 9:15. Helen's at the salon, and Krissy is most likely watching the brand new episode of "The Hills." Of course if you go anywhere, look the wrong way, say the wrong thing - they won't be okay by the time anybody gets there.

EDMOND  
This is absurd. What do you want?

#1 FAN  
I want you to pick out who I should kill.

EDMOND  
Screw you. I'm not picking out "who you should kill." Get the hell away from me.

The #1 Fan just maintains a pleasant smile.

EDMOND (CONT'D)  
Say you did - come on. There's passengers everywhere.

The #1 Fan simply continues to smile.

EDMOND (CONT'D)  
Okay. Sure. Right. Take him and impale him through the stomach with a samurai sword.

The #1 Fan raises an eyebrow.

#1 FAN  
Do I look like I have a samurai sword?

EDMOND

I know - why don't you take your pixie dust and turn them all into newts?

The #1 Fan stares, doesn't react to this.

EDMOND (CONT'D)

Or how about you take a razor and -  
 (motions to random passenger)  
 - Slash him across the throat right in front of the whole damned train.

#1 FAN

Okay.

IN A FLASH: the #1 Fan pulls out a blade and slices the man Edmond motioned to across the throat.

Blood spurts EVERYWHERE.

Edmond's jaw drops.

Holy shit. Did he just do that?

He did. He really did.

PASSENGER #1

Oh my God, Oh my God...

SCREAMS start. Pandemonium everywhere. The sliced passenger grabs at his throat, sprays blood, falls to the floor.

Dead.

PASSENGER #2

GOD! GOD! It was him!

The passenger points. People run to the doors. The car is moving. They can't get off.

The subway stops at the station. The passengers claw out, toppling over each other.

INT. PATH STATION - CONTINUOUS

The #1 Fan grabs Edmond's arm tightly, and walks him through the screaming crowd.

#1 FAN

(completely calm)

I see why Helen moved to Grand Street.  
 It really is a step up.

EXT. PARKING LOT - NIGHT

With a huge commotion behind them at the station, the #1 Fan ushers Edmond toward an old Chevy.

He opens the door and pushes Edmond.

EDMOND

No -

Edmond struggles, breaks free, runs around the next car -

The #1 Fan grabs him, pulls out a knife, and holds it to his jugular.

#1 FAN

I didn't intend this so much as a choice.

With one hand holding the knife to Edmond's neck, he pulls out restraints and fastens Edmond's hands behind his back. The knife points into his neck so hard, blood starts to drip.

The #1 Fan throws Edmond into the passenger seat, gets in.

INT. CAR - CONTINUOUS

They drive through the screaming station crowd.

Edmond notices the people. It's his chance to call for help!

#1 FAN

Now, now. Edmond Grary!

Edmond looks down. The #1 Fan's knife is pointed at his gut.

They drive past the fracas. He puts the knife away.

#1 FAN (CONT'D)

You're probably wondering why you're here.

Edmond gives him a look. Among other things.

#1 FAN (CONT'D)

Take my word. I have no intention of hurting you. Or your family. You shouldn't worry.

Edmond looks at the blood dripping from his neck. Right.

#1 FAN (CONT'D)  
I have something I want to do. It's never been done.

The #1 Fan looks at Edmond.

#1 FAN (CONT'D)  
It's the kind of thing that comes along once in a lifetime. If you're lucky. Something everyone will remember. Something special.

Edmond looks out the window, wanting none of this.

#1 FAN (CONT'D)  
And I can't do it without you.

No response.

#1 FAN (CONT'D)  
I know what you're thinking. These aren't the best circumstances, but what I've got here - and to do it with you - this is really amazing.

Still no response.

#1 FAN (CONT'D)  
Right. After that. But it's not what you think.  
(pauses)  
You're going to write how people die.  
(pauses)  
Really die.

Edmond has nothing to say to this.

#1 FAN (CONT'D)  
You're going to devise whole last moments of lives. And I'm going to help you.

Still nothing.

#1 FAN (CONT'D)  
Think.  
(smiles as if imagining)  
Edmond Grary. One of the great novelists. You write these stories that tap into something - that cut across - if you weren't bound by the page...

EDMOND  
I write books.

#1 FAN

You write death. You have, your whole life.

EDMOND

Those are books.

#1 FAN

I know. You've got a gift. And what we can create... Together...

EDMOND

I'm not creating anything.

#1 FAN

But we already started. Back on the subway. You were fantastic.

EDMOND

You slashed that man across the throat. I had nothing to do with it.

#1 FAN

(laughs)

Of course you didn't.

EDMOND

I'm not going to have anything to do with any of this.

Edmond tries to hide his panic. This man is 100% serious. 100% has some plan. And some percent out of his mind.

He looks out the window, thinking. Turns to the #1 Fan.

EDMOND (CONT'D)

I won't do it. I won't give you anything. You'll just have to kill me before you get anything.

#1 FAN

Edmond. I wouldn't kill... you.

The response implies a lot. Edmond looks out the window.

#1 FAN (CONT'D)

You're my new partner. I don't know if you agree with me, but I was thinking our next one should be a girl.

EDMOND

Wait. Wait, wait, wait, wait, wait. We need to go back to my apartment. Get some things. If I'm going to do this.

#1 FAN  
We don't have time.

EDMOND  
At least pull over. Let me catch my  
breath.

EXT. WOODED EMBANKMENT - NIGHT

The #1 Fan pulls the car into the bushes out of view. Edmond struggles out, gasping for air as the #1 Fan stands over him.

#1 FAN  
This is a lot to take in. Take a  
second.

EDMOND  
Listen to me. I know a better way.

The #1 Fan bends over to Edmond.

EDMOND (CONT'D)  
We can... go somewhere... quiet, sit  
down, talk about what we're doing  
here, come up with something...  
better.

#1 FAN  
(laughs out loud)  
Edmond Grary, you're a writer. You can  
do better than that. Now what did you  
think? A female?

THERE IS A SUDDEN THUD. From the trunk of the car.

EDMOND  
What was that?

#1 FAN  
We already did a male, and to have it  
pigeonholed -

There is another thud from the trunk. And a voice -

VOICE (O.S.)  
(from trunk)  
MMMMHHhhhhhhhh!

EDMOND  
What's that in the trunk?

The #1 Fan smiles as he opens the trunk. Lying there - bound, gagged, and beaten - is a FEMALE VICTIM (20's, pretty, and scared out of her mind).

EDMOND (CONT'D)  
Oh my God. My God -

Edmond falls to his knees, holds back the sick.

#1 FAN  
I thought you'd agree.

He lifts her out and dumps her on the ground. She is too bound to move.

FEMALE VICTIM  
(gagged)  
MmmmmhhhhH!

#1 FAN  
How should we do it?

She sees Edmond - that he is also bound but not in as bad a state. Her eyes widen, as if for help -

FEMALE VICTIM  
(gagged)  
MMMMMMMMMMMMM!

EDMOND  
(almost crying)  
What are you doing?

#1 FAN  
I have a knife, a razor, a saw, and some rope.

He brandishes a saw from inside the trunk, testing the blade.

EDMOND  
Please. Let's just talk about this.

FEMALE VICTIM  
(gagged)  
MMMMMMMMMMHHHHHHMMMMMMMMMM!

#1 FAN  
(to female victim)  
What? You have a suggestion?

The #1 Fan tears the gag off her.

FEMALE VICTIM  
 (screaming)  
 HEEEEEEEEEEEELLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLP!!!!!!!!!!!!

The #1 Fan quickly plugs her back up with the gag. She looks at Edmond imploringly.

#1 FAN  
 He is going help you. He's going to figure out how you die.

FEMALE VICTIM  
 (gagged)  
 MMM! MMM! MMM!

EDMOND  
 (breaking down)  
 I can't. You can't ask me to do this.

The #1 Fan puts the saw to her kneecap.

#1 FAN  
 If you can't, I'm sure I can figure something out myself. It might be a little messy -

EDMOND  
 (interrupting)  
 - Wait. Wait!

The #1 Fan bends down to Edmond.

#1 FAN  
 I'm listening.

EDMOND  
 You can't... You can't kill her with one of those. It's garden variety, lacks any grace...  
 (pauses)  
 ... You need a vice, something unique. Like they used to -

The female victim moans even louder, hearing all this.

EDMOND (CONT'D)  
 We can... go back to a garage, find better equipment, do this the right way.

The #1 Fan bends closer to Edmond.

#1 FAN

(in a low voice)

Stockholm - it takes several days to set in. If I didn't know any better, I'd say in the impossible situation you find yourself now, you'd say anything to save yourself and save her - including a long scenic trip to some garage somewhere that could, en route or once there, involve so many scenarios, but would, more than any of those, involve not having to do this right here and now.

He turns and points a knife at the victim.

#1 FAN (CONT'D)

So what will it be?

EDMOND

NO! Listen. I get it, okay? Listen.

(rises, looks at #1 Fan)

It doesn't make sense. You go through all the trouble to bring me here to cut... some girl in the woods. You're smarter than that.

The #1 Fan slams the woman against a tree and raises the knife to her neck.

#1 FAN

Come on!

FEMALE VICTIM

(gagged)

Mmmhmm.

EDMOND

No! I don't buy it - that this is what you had in mind. You didn't pick me to bring to life some simple slasher scene that's been done before countless times in my work and others. To be just like everybody else.

The #1 Fan lowers the knife ever-so-slightly.

EDMOND (CONT'D)

I know - you want more than that. You want to take what I know, take it off the page, into something bold and new that shows everybody what it is to read one of my books as if it were the very first time, to be scared and fear again, as they once had, but this time not be able to close it up and put it away.

The #1 Fan turns to Edmond, receptive now.

#1 FAN

I'm listening.

EDMOND

I agree. You should take that knife and make a cut. But you should cut a lot lower than that.

The female victim's eyes go wild.

FEMALE VICTIM

(gagged)

MMMHOOO!

EDMOND

No. Lower.

He lowers it more. She screams, beside herself.

EDMOND (CONT'D)

You're not catching my meaning. Even lower.

CLOSE ON: The knife as it moves toward the thighs -

VICTIM (O.S.)

AAAAAAAAAAAAHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHH!

PULL BACK TO REVEAL: We are now in -

INT. BASEMENT - NIGHT

A dank basement. And the thigh and the voice of that last scream do not belong to the female victim, but in fact to:

LANGDON ACKLER - whose face is immediately recognizable as the rapist/pedophile from the flyers and mugshots we've seen.

LANGDON ACKLER

Fuck you, you piece of shit.

Edmond and the female victim lay - bound - on the floor. The #1 Fan holds the knife to Langdon's thighs - this being the "lower" portion Edmond had mentioned.

#1 FAN

That was just a little love tap. I'm sure you know all about that.

LANGDON ACKLER

I don't know what it is you think I did, but -

#1 FAN

(interrupting)

- I swear it wasn't me it was another guy I didn't touch her she said she was 18 how was I to know she hit me first I smoked but didn't inhale my dog ate my homework don't you believe the last four times were just a coincidence.

Langdon Ackler spits on the #1 Fan's face.

LANGDON ACKLER

Fuck you. You some family? Boyfriend?

The #1 Fan ignores this and moves the knife to his crotch.

Langdon looks at Edmond and the female victim.

LANGDON ACKLER (CONT'D)

What then? Some sick fucker?

#1 FAN

We're telling a story. About a very bad man. And what happened to him one not very happy night.

The #1 Fan tips the knife into his leg, as if practicing.

LANGDON ACKLER

AHHH! What the hell are you talking about?

The #1 Fan looks at Edmond, as if to confirm he is cutting in the right place.

#1 FAN

(asking Edmond)

Here?

LANGDON ACKLER  
 (to Edmond)  
 Who the hell are you?

EDMOND  
 I'm no one.

LANGDON ACKLER  
 (to Edmond)  
 Why is he looking at you?

EDMOND  
 I have nothing to do with this.

LANGDON ACKLER  
 (to Edmond)  
 Why don't you say something? Tell him  
 to stop?

Edmond looks away, unable to answer.

LANGDON ACKLER (CONT'D)  
 (to Edmond)  
 Fuck you.

#1 FAN  
 (asking Edmond)  
 Now?

LANGDON ACKLER  
 (noticing look)  
 Why does he keep asking you?

Edmond looks away, shakes his head, pained.

#1 FAN  
 (motioning to Langdon's  
 crotch with his knife)  
 I think several underage girls can  
 attest to the fact you haven't put  
 this to the best use. Maybe someone  
 else can.

He starts to cut.

LANGDON ACKLER  
 (screaming)  
GAHHH!  
 (to Edmond)  
 Do something!

The female victim starts to moan, horrified.

FEMALE VICTIM  
 (gagged)  
 MMMhhhh.

Edmond crawls over to her.

EDMOND  
 (whispering)  
*Don't look, honey. Close your eyes.*

More cutting noises.

LANGDON ACKLER  
 (screaming)  
Don't look away! Do something!

EDMOND  
 I can't!

LANGDON ACKLER  
 (crying from the pain)  
DO SOMETHING!

EXT. SCHOOL - NIGHT

Krissy stands outside her school, in a volleyball uniform. It seems everyone else has already been picked up by now.

She eyes her cell phone. Dials a number.

EDMOND (O.S., VOICEMAIL MESSAGE)  
 (filtered)  
 Edmond. Leave a message.

KRISSY (ON CELL PHONE)  
 Dad. It's me. I'm at school.

She hangs up.

Shakes her head.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Langdon Ackler's dead body is now tied to a post in an otherwise serene living room.

The #1 Fan picks up the female victim and moves to leave.

EDMOND  
 Wait. It's missing something.

The #1 Fan stops. Looks at Edmond.

EDMOND (CONT'D)  
We need to leave a message.

The #1 Fan ignores this, opens the door.

EDMOND (CONT'D)  
(calling out)  
This won't work. They won't get it!

#1 FAN  
Let me pretend I didn't - for one second - think you wanted to leave some sort of message that could lead someone not toward me, but somehow, more likely - exactly to you - pretending I ignored that, how could anybody possibly miss this message?

EDMOND  
You want to tell a story. Here -  
(motions to the grisly scene)  
We did. You know that. I know that.  
But how will anybody else?

The #1 Fan isn't buying. He turns to leave again.

EDMOND (CONT'D)  
(calling out)  
You actually are scared. I knew there was an emotion there somewhere.

The #1 Fan stops. He does not like this.

EDMOND (CONT'D)  
You must have known, when you thought about all this, you would have to communicate in some way - so what is it - are you scared you might get caught, or are you scared you might not catch me?

The #1 Fan gets menacingly close to Edmond's face. Edmond doesn't back down.

EDMOND (CONT'D)  
We write the story. Of what we've done. My work, left here - with the life you've given it.

The #1 Fan squints at Edmond as if assessing his motives.

EDMOND (CONT'D)  
No prints, no identifying anything.  
Just... our story.

The #1 Fan looks down. Several moments pass.

#1 FAN  
I knew I picked you for a reason.

He's buying it.

EDMOND  
Of course it would have to be  
typewritten.

#1 FAN  
(suspicious)  
And we'd have to go back to your  
apartment to pick one up.

EDMOND  
Well there is something else...

INT. EDMOND GRARY'S STUDY - NIGHT

Edmond - bound with his wrists in front - stands in his study next to the #1 Fan. He looks out the window to the trunk of the #1 Fan's car, checking in on the female victim.

He then motions to his Cuban cigars.

#1 FAN  
Oh my God! This is them! You light one  
up -

EDMOND  
- Every time I finish a novel -

#1 FAN  
- And even let your daughter take a  
puff after "The Creeper" -

EDMOND  
- Even though my wife wouldn't talk to  
me for a week after.

Edmond offers one to the #1 Fan with his bound hands.

#1 FAN  
Really?

The #1 Fan snips two cigars and they both begin to smoke. The #1 Fan looks at all the pictures and memorabilia.

IN ONE PICTURE: A younger Edmond has his arms around a younger Krissy -

#1 FAN (CONT'D)  
 (looking at picture)  
 You two look so... happy.

Edmond senses something in the #1 Fan's voice. A hint of jealousy.

#1 FAN (CONT'D)  
 (looking at picture)  
 Your own father died when you were 19,  
 didn't he?

Edmond's silence says "yes".

#1 FAN (CONT'D)  
 Your publisher...

EDMOND  
 Mr. Klein. We became close after that.

#1 FAN  
 It must have been nice. To have  
 something like that.

EDMOND  
 Your parents...?

The #1 Fan looks down, says nothing. Several moments pass.

#1 FAN  
 I'll get the typewriter.

Edmond sees the opportunity -

EDMOND  
 I'll get the cigars.

The #1 Fan looks at Edmond knowingly.

#1 FAN  
 Edmond: just the cigars.

SUDDENLY, there is a THUD from the trunk of the car O.S.

The #1 Fan moves to the window to look -

Edmond inches to his blackberry, fingers it into his back pocket -

#1 FAN (CONT'D)  
 (looking out window)  
 She certainly is tenacious, isn't she?

The #1 Fan starts to turn around -

Edmond grabs onto his cell phone and shoves it in his front pocket -

Success! He hasn't been noticed.

The #1 Fan picks up the typewriter and moves to the door. He stops, turns to Edmond -

#1 FAN (CONT'D)  
Now, now. Edmond!

Edmond looks down, as if caught with his hand in the cookie jar. He hands the cell phone to the #1 Fan.

#1 FAN (CONT'D)  
If I recall - the Times had a lot of disparaging things to say about your abilities. Don't go proving them right on me.

He pulls out the battery and drops it on the floor. They exit.

CLOSE ON: The bulge of the blackberry, successfully hidden in Edmond's back pocket.

EXT. SCHOOL - NIGHT

A car arrives for Krissy. It's Helen - with an obvious look of disapproval as to Edmond's parenting.

HELEN  
Come on, honey.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

The #1 Fan stands next to the still-dead Langdon Ackler. He looks over a stack of typewritten papers.

#1 FAN  
(looking at typed story)  
Kane...?  
(motions to Langdon Ackler)  
Why call him Kane?

Edmond hides his panic.

EDMOND  
I...  
(looks down)  
... Liked the ring.

The #1 Fan looks at Edmond. For any tells.

Several moments pass.

Satisfied, he places down the story at Langdon's feet.

EXT. WOODED EMBANKMENT - NIGHT

The #1 Fan packs the typewriter into the trunk. The female victim lies there, still bound and fraught.

#1 FAN  
You did a good job. Our friend would  
be so proud, wouldn't she?

FEMALE VICTIM  
(gagged)  
... Mmmhmmm...

While the #1 Fan is preoccupied, Edmond bends to her.

EDMOND  
(whispering)  
*Calm down. It's okay, alright.*

He gives her a look that says "trust me." She quiets.

#1 FAN  
One last thing -

IN A FLASH: The #1 Fan pulls out a gun and shoots the female victim in the head.

Dead.

EDMOND  
NOOOO! NO!

Edmond falls to the ground.

EDMOND (CONT'D)  
(crying out)  
Why? Why'd you have to do that? She  
wasn't part of it!

#1 FAN  
Have her go to the cops? A witness to  
everything?

The #1 Fan - emotionless - drags Edmond back to the car.

EDMOND  
That wasn't part of it...!

EXT. NEIGHBORHOOD STREET - MORNING

A crime scene. A bustle of officers and cop cars.

Two detectives cross through. DETECTIVE LAGUARDA - 30's, average, moderately pudgy.

And DETECTIVE ANDERSON - mid-40's, African-American, a kindly look to him.

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

Officers and photographers are at work. The body of Langdon Ackler is tied to the post.

DETECTIVE LAGUARDA  
Revenge. Vigilante. Somebody didn't  
want him in the neighborhood.

Laguarda motions to specks of blood on the ground.

DETECTIVE LAGUARDA (CONT'D)  
Spatter's in the basement. He was  
placed here.

Anderson bends down to - typewritten pages, which have been left at Ackler's feet.

DETECTIVE ANDERSON  
Did you see this?

He looks over the pages. Shows them to Laguarda.

INT. HELEN'S CONDO KITCHEN - MORNING

Helen is preparing what looks like Krissy's school lunch. Krissy enters, and by her look we can tell that this is not typical.

KRISSY  
Where's Dad?

HELEN  
I'm sure he's out being your Dad. Get  
your things. I'll take you myself.

KRISSY  
Maybe we should check. Make sure he's  
okay.

Helen rolls her eyes. Krissy does not understand much about the way Edmond can be.

HELEN  
You're going to be late.

Krissy looks at her own cell phone. No messages, or anything.

INT. DETECTIVE OFFICE CUBICLES - DAY

Detective Anderson sits at his desk, looking over the story that had been recovered at the crime scene.

We see a picture on his desk which shows him with a wife and daughter - much the same age as Edmond's.

DETECTIVE ANDERSON  
It's some kind of... story. Our victim  
- he's called Kane - gets what's  
coming to him.

A young officer approaches Anderson and Laguarda.

YOUNG POLICE OFFICER  
Detective Anderson?  
(holds up walkie talkie)  
It's Raddison.

EXT. WOODED EMBANKMENT - DAY

Anderson and Laguarda now stand with Detective Raddison at another crime scene. That of the Female Victim.

DETECTIVE RADDISON  
Looks like it was a .44. One shot to  
the skull.

Her body has been propped up - very theatrically - against a tree.

Laguarda points to a line of blood drops. Much like at the earlier crime scene.

DETECTIVE LAGUARDA  
Blood trail.

DETECTIVE RADDISON  
Right. But I thought the part you'd  
find interesting...

Raddison hands Detective Anderson -

Another typewritten story.

INT. DARKENED ROOM - DAY

Edmond sits alone, his hands bound behind his back.

The coast is clear - he reaches into his back pocket, tries to take out the blackberry. It's too awkward, he can't get it -

- The door opens -

The #1 Fan enters with a tray of food for Edmond. Edmond looks away - angry, depressed - not wanting any of it.

#1 FAN  
You have to eat.

Edmond says nothing. The #1 Fan redoes Edmond's restraints around the front.

#1 FAN (CONT'D)  
You need to eat something.

Edmond glances at his repositioned hands, careful not to tip off his thinking.

#1 FAN (CONT'D)  
Here.

The #1 Fan pulls out a packet of polaroids. Edmond perks up: they're of Krissy and Helen.

#1 FAN (CONT'D)  
That's Krissy. Just this morning. And Helen.

In the photographs: they are going about their business in the neighborhood, unharmed and alright.

#1 FAN (CONT'D)  
They left together. They looked good.  
(pauses)  
You've been good to them. I respect that.

Edmond wants none of this bonding.

#1 FAN (CONT'D)  
She should of stayed with you.

EDMOND  
Have.

#1 FAN  
What?

EDMOND

She should have stayed with me. "Of" is an incorrect use of the necessary verb.

The #1 Fan does not like this. His tone changes -

#1 FAN

I was wondering what exactly you had in mind for our follow-up. Have you -

EDMOND

(interrupting)

- You know maybe I would like something. Something soft, like soup if you have it.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

The #1 Fan opens a can of soup.

INT. DARKENED ROOM - DAY

- Edmond fumbles out his blackberry, drops it -

INT. KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

- The #1 Fan stops and looks in the direction of the noise -

INT. DARKENED ROOM - CONTINUOUS

- Edmond picks it up and types:

EDMOND (ON BLACKBERRY)

(typing)

[i need your help right -]

- Footsteps head toward the door -

- Edmond clicks send, contorts, shoves it in his back pocket -

#1 FAN

(entering)

Chicken noodle soup. White bread.

Edmond looks off as if still angry.

#1 FAN (CONT'D)

(examining room)

I thought I heard something.

EDMOND  
I tried to chip a hole in the wall  
with a small nail file.

INT. BUSINESS OFFICE - DAY

Helen stands - in her power suit - making a presentation to a group of businessmen.

HELEN  
... It's brewed at a tiny little shop  
in Brussels, and no one here has it  
yet, which is why I think it would  
make a perfect addition -

Helen's blackberry BEEPS. She glances at it.

HELEN (CONT'D)  
Marcus - why don't you show them the  
shipping targets. I'll be right back.

INT. HALLWAY - DAY

Helen types on her blackberry:

HELEN (ON BLACKBERRY)  
(typing)  
[What the hell kind of joke is this?]

INT. DARKENED ROOM - DAY

The blackberry starts to VIBRATE.

Crap!

Edmond covers his pocket with his hands. When the noise stops, he pulls it out and starts to type again -

- Footsteps approach the door -

EDMOND (ON BLACKBERRY)  
(typing)  
[no joke need help been kid -]

- The door is opening -

- He clicks send, cups it in his hand -

The #1 Fan enters with the tray.

#1 FAN

Here you go.

He examines the room suspiciously.

EDMOND

This isn't rural, is it? You've got car alarms going off. We're in a neighborhood, aren't we?

#1 FAN

(notices Edmond's cupped hands)

Aren't you going to eat your soup?

EDMOND

I would, but -

(pauses)

You forgot a spoon.

#1 FAN

Silly me.

Edmond shoves away the blackberry just as the #1 Fan reappears with the spoon.

The #1 Fan sits down and opens up a NEWSPAPER.

#1 FAN (CONT'D)

Anything good today?

Edmond looks at him quizzically.

#1 FAN (CONT'D)

This is how you do it, right?

EDMOND

(reads from newspaper)

"Suspected Drug Pusher Beats Charges, Walks Free."

#1 FAN

Interesting. Anything else?

EDMOND

(read from newspaper)

"Blaze Kills Homeless Man, Serial Arsonist Being Sought."

#1 FAN

How about this one.

(reads from newspaper)

"After Four Long Years, Kidnapped Teen Reunited With Family."

Edmond looks at him.

EDMOND  
But that doesn't...

#1 FAN  
Or this.  
(reads from newspaper)  
"Rags to Riches Man Promoted to Head  
of Corporation."

EDMOND  
A man, lights people on fire, dies in  
a blaze of his own - there's a poetic  
justice to it.

#1 FAN  
A man, poor his entire life, finally  
gets his big break, and dies the very  
next day. A kidnapped teen finally  
escapes, only to be: kidnapped again.  
There's even more to that. An irony.  
The kind you might clip out of a  
paper.

Edmond's eyes widen.

#1 FAN (CONT'D)  
You didn't think we were here to  
pacify you're inner sense of moral  
crisis by cleaning up the dregs of  
society, did you?

VIBRATE.

The blackberry goes off.

#1 FAN (CONT'D)  
What was that?

EDMOND  
The car. Outside. I swear I heard it  
before.

The #1 Fan struggles with Edmond, pulls out the blackberry.

INT. BASEMENT - DAY

The #1 Fan throws Edmond's bound arms over a hook.

#1 FAN  
What are the essential things an  
author needs? His creativity.  
(MORE)

#1 FAN (CONT'D)

(pats Edmond on the head)

There's not much I can do about that.  
His voice. What can I do to that? Give  
you laryngitis?

(laughs)

And then I thought: his vision - his  
ability to see the world around him in  
ways that others can't. But if I go  
gouging out your eyes, the next thing  
you know we'll need a certified RN  
tagging along.

EDMOND

Please - whatever it is your thinking -

#1 FAN

(interrupting)

A partnership calls for a level of  
trust. And I don't believe we've  
achieved that level of trust yet. So I  
thought to myself - what else is it an  
author needs? Every time he types a  
story? What is something I could take  
that he would remember every time? And  
then I thought about "Mayhaven  
Gardens." Do you remember that story?

EDMOND

God. God. NO!

#1 FAN

A short story in your 1993 "Darkened  
Season." A tobacco executive who hides  
research, thereby pushing the button  
on thousands of deaths. Do you  
remember what happened to the finger  
that pushed that button?

EDMOND

Listen to me, you don't have to do  
this!

The #1 Fan pulls out Edmond's cigar cutter, grabs out his  
finger, slides it in.

#1 FAN

And I thought - how amazing would that  
be?

(motions to cigar cutter)

I bet this was even the one you looked  
at when you wrote that.

EDMOND

Stop! DON'T! STOP!

#1 FAN  
 What happens to the finger that pushes  
 the buttons.

SNIP! The finger crunches off.

EDMOND  
 (screaming)  
 AAAAAAAAAAAAAHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHH!

#1 FAN  
 So tell me: who?

The #1 Fan shows Edmond the newspaper clippings of the  
 kidnapped boy and the newly rich businessman.

EDMOND  
 (crying)  
 I can't do this. I can't help you!

He slides another finger into the cigar cutter.

#1 FAN  
 I'm only going to ask you nine more  
 times. Who?

Edmond points, bloodied, to the clipping: "RAGS TO RICHES  
 MAN PROMOTED TO HEAD OF CORPORATION."

EDMOND  
 Him.

#1 FAN  
 How?

EDMOND  
 ... How...?

#1 FAN  
 (tightens cutter)  
 HOW?

EDMOND  
 I don't know. With a knife.

SNIP! Edmond screams. Another finger off.

#1 FAN  
 Eight. What SCARES people? What MAKES  
THEM AFRAID?

He slides in another finger.

EDMOND  
Okay. Alright. I know.

The #1 Fan stops. Looks at Edmond.

#1 FAN  
... What...?

INT. EDMOND GRARY'S APARTMENT - DAY

Krissy slowly enters Edmond's apartment.

KRISSY  
Dad?

INT. EDMOND GRARY'S STUDY - DAY

She enters the study.

KRISSY  
... Dad...?

She sees the cell phone and the battery, which have been suspiciously dropped on the floor.

She then sees the outline of dust on Edmond's desk - her father's typewriter is missing.

She takes out her phone. Dials 911.

INT. DETECTIVE OFFICE CUBICLES - DAY

Detective Laguarda looks through a stack of missing persons reports while Anderson goes over the story from the latest crime scene.

DETECTIVE ANDERSON  
A young woman - our victim - he calls her Nancy. In this, she's an addict. She double crosses her dealer, so one night he takes her out to the woods...

DETECTIVE LAGUARDA  
It's all a little literate - for something like this.

Anderson looks down a moment. Something clicks.

DETECTIVE ANDERSON  
Edmond Grary - he's that author guy, right?

DETECTIVE LAGUARDA

I think.

Anderson reaches for the stack of missing persons reports.  
Pulls one out.

DETECTIVE ANDERSON

Call just came in an hour ago.

INT. HELEN'S CONDO - DAY

Anderson and Laguarda now sit across from Helen and Krissy.

KRISSY

I got there - his phone was on the  
floor. And his typewriter was gone.

Helen's blackberry, with the message "NEED HELP, BEEN -" is  
on the table.

HELEN

I would say he was letting off steam  
at some hotel room in Vegas. Or  
working out some newfangled book idea.  
But there's something about the way he  
wrote it. Like something else was  
going on.

Anderson and Laguarda exchange a glance. Krissy notices.

DETECTIVE LAGUARDA

You said that he'd been going through a  
rough patch. He hadn't been writing. Is  
there anything else you can tell us?

KRISSY

Is there anything you should tell us?

EXT. HOBOKEN CONDO - DAY

Anderson and Laguarda are leaving the condo.

KRISSY (O.S.)

He wouldn't just leave. Not like that.

Anderson turns to Krissy, who has followed out behind them.

He looks at Krissy. The look in her eyes. He reaches into his  
pocket. Hands her his card.

## DETECTIVE ANDERSON

If you or your Mom hear anything. Or need anything. I wouldn't worry. If anything's happened at all: I'm the guy in charge.

He smiles at Krissy. There is a kindness to it. It seems to reassure her.

INT. CAR - DAY

Anderson and LaGuarda drive in the car.

## DETECTIVE LAGUARDA

A horror novelist. Wife leaves. Can't write anything for three years. So he finally starts writing again, only this time, he starts taking it a bit too literal.

Anderson looks off. He doesn't seem so convinced.

INT. UPSCALE BEDROOM - EVENING

A man - 30's - packs a suitcase while on his cell phone. He is the NEXT VICTIM.

## NEXT VICTIM (ON CELL PHONE)

I wish I could be here tonight. If it wasn't for this meeting.

(pauses, listening)

Oh honey. It's only for a few days.

And if this goes well...

(pauses, listening)

Ha - I can buy you more than that.

There is a RUSTLE.

## NEXT VICTIM (ON CELL PHONE) (CONT'D)

Hold on a second. I thought I heard something.

The next victim looks out the window. Nothing there. He moves back to the bed and resumes packing.

TILT DOWN: The #1 Fan is under the bed.

Waiting. As the next victim packs.

## NEXT VICTIM (ON CELL PHONE) (CONT'D)

No. It was nothing.

(pauses, listening)

(MORE)

NEXT VICTIM (ON CELL PHONE) (CONT'D)

Well it was your idea to move all the way out to the boondocks.

(pauses, listening)

You'll be fine. You've got Cujo to protect you.

There is a fluffy cat on the bed.

NEXT VICTIM (CONT'D)

(petting cat)

Doesn't she, Cujo?

(pauses, listening)

I love you too.

He hangs up. Opens the closet to get some clothes -

NEXT VICTIM (CONT'D)

What the...?

He looks down to see: a small stack of typewritten pages.

He does not see: behind him - the #1 Fan.

He bends down, picks up the pages.

NEXT VICTIM (CONT'D)

(reading to himself)

"... Tries to scream... rolling in coffin..."

Behind him: the #1 Fan approaches, reaches out -

- Grabs the next victim.

They struggle, the #1 Fan injects something into his neck.

INT. UPSCALE BEDROOM - LATER

#1 FAN

Wake up.

The next victim stirs. He tries to move - his hands are handcuffed behind his back.

NEXT VICTIM

Who are you?

#1 FAN

(to Edmond)

Did you see his face?

Edmond is standing now - no longer gagged - his hands bound in front. There is a bandage where the two fingers are missing.

NEXT VICTIM

(to Edmond)

Who the hell are you?

#1 FAN

We've got a great story. And you're going to help us tell it.

NEXT VICTIM

I've got money. If you want money, I'll get it.

#1 FAN

It's about a businessman, right on the cusp of his big promotion. Kind of like you. And his not-so-lucky night. Right before he gets it.

NEXT VICTIM

Please! Whatever you -

#1 FAN

(interrupting)

Here. Let me help you with that.

The #1 Fan shoves foam egg crate into the next victim's mouth.

#1 FAN (CONT'D)

Now scream.

The next victim looks at the #1 Fan.

#1 FAN (CONT'D)

Scream.

He looks at Edmond, even more scared. The #1 Fan brings a knife to his throat.

#1 FAN (CONT'D)

I said scream.

NEXT VICTIM

(gagged)

Maahhhh!

#1 FAN

Hmmmm...

The #1 Fan shoves more foam into his mouth.

#1 FAN (CONT'D)  
Scream again.

NEXT VICTIM  
(gagged, more muted)  
Maahhhh!

#1 FAN  
That's pretty good.

The #1 Fan adds another layer of foam, more tape.

#1 FAN (CONT'D)  
Would you mind trying now? I promise,  
we're almost there.

NEXT VICTIM  
Mahhhh! Mahhhh! Mahhhh!

#1 FAN  
I can still hear him.  
(to Next Victim)  
Do you know how the larynx works?

EDMOND  
You don't need to do that. Another  
layer should be fine.

The #1 Fan doesn't like something about this comment. He moves to Edmond, brings his knife menacingly to where the fingers are missing -

#1 FAN  
Edmond... I thought we had an  
understanding.

He takes Edmond's hands and binds them behind his back. He moves back to the next victim.

#1 FAN (CONT'D)  
When air passes through vocal chords,  
this type of tissue they call the  
arytenoid cartilage snaps together.  
And when it does, bam, you've got a  
sound. But did you know, that if the  
vocal chords are held apart - if they  
don't snap together - a human being  
can produce no sound at all?

NEXT VICTIM  
MMMMMMHHHHHHHHHH!

The #1 Fan brings the knife tip to the next victim's throat.

#1 FAN  
 Bear with me. I've never done this  
 before.

There is cutting, gurgling -

NEXT VICTIM  
 MMHHH! MMMMHHHH!!!!  
 (gurgles)  
 MMMHHH -

And suddenly: SILENCE.

#1 FAN  
 Go ahead. Scream.

The next victim's eyes widen. He tries to produce sound,  
 can't.

#1 FAN (CONT'D)  
 Here. Let me patch that up.

He bandages the wounded neck.

#1 FAN (CONT'D)  
 Don't be concerned. What I'm going to  
 do is make two small incisions - one  
 on each wrist. It might hurt a little,  
 but you will be okay.

He makes the two incisions.

#1 FAN (CONT'D)  
 This is going to bleed, but very, very  
 slowly. It will take 12 hours before  
 you have to worry.

The #1 Fan lifts the next victim and places him in a coffin-  
 like wooden box.

#1 FAN (CONT'D)  
 (to Edmond)  
 What do you think?

EDMOND  
 Good. But it has to be rope. Not  
 handcuffs.

#1 FAN  
 Why is that?

EDMOND  
 (holds up typewritten pages)  
 It's by the book.

The #1 Fan pauses a moment, not quite sure, then takes off the cuffs and begins to bind the next victim's hands with rope -

- As he does, Edmond moves toward a dresser -

- A pair of nail clippers, with a tiny NAIL FILE -

- He scoops them up, unnoticed -

The #1 Fan starts to push the makeshift coffin under the bed.

#1 FAN

I bet your wife gets in around...  
7:30. She'll probably slip into bed around 9. Turn on Grey's Anatomy. Think to herself, "I bet my husband's somewhere over Kansas or Missouri right now." And you'll scream. You'll struggle as much as you can. As she turns off the lights for a nice, quiet night of sleep. For dreams of her beloved husband. And in the morning she'll wake up. Stand up, her bare feet right over here. She'll cook some sausage and eggs, wonder, "I wonder if his promotion went as planned?"

It looks like the next victim is SCREAMING. But he can't.

#1 FAN (CONT'D)

And you've got to wonder - I know I'm wondering - do you think she'll be doing exactly the same thing the next night? Do you think she'll still be going about her business? Blissfully unaware?

The #1 Fan starts to cover the makeshift coffin with a board.

EDMOND

You need more rope.

The #1 Fan stops. Turns to Edmond.

EDMOND (CONT'D)

His feet.

The #1 Fan narrows his eyes at Edmond. Why is he being so helpful?

EDMOND (CONT'D)

This story's not going to play out if he kicks around all night.

There is a moment. The #1 Fan turns, exits.

Edmond rushes to the next victim.

EDMOND (CONT'D)  
 (whispering)  
 Here - take this -  
 (puts nail file in his hand)  
 Don't move, don't do anything till  
 we're gone, then cut your way out -

- The #1 Fan reappears with a brick -

- Edmond has already backed away -

The #1 Fan hammers shut the coffin and places the typewritten story on top of it.

INT. UPSCALE HOUSE - NIGHT

The NEXT VICTIM'S WIFE arrives home, takes off her coat.

INT. MAKESHIFT COFFIN

The next victim desperately cuts at the rope with the nail file. He is making progress when -

SUDDENLY HE DROPS IT.

He tries to pick it back up but bats it away further.

He contorts, tries to reach it -

Bats it away even further.

INT. UPSCALE BEDROOM - NIGHT

The next victim's wife, now in her nightgown, slips into bed. Snuggles. Turns on the television.

INT. MAKESHIFT COFFIN

The next victim tries to scream. Tries to move. Desperately.

Blood trickles out.

INT. UPSCALE BEDROOM - NIGHT

The next victim's wife, now sleeping, turns over and smiles. She is probably having a nice dream.

INT. MAKESHIFT COFFIN

The next victim can't get the file. Has obviously lost a lot of blood. Can barely move...

CUT TO:

INT. UPSCALE BEDROOM - MORNING

The next victim's wife wakes up. Yawns. Stretches her arms.

She picks up her cell phone. No messages. That's odd.

She sleepily sits up. Swings her feet over the bed and stretches her toes. She then steps down -

- Slips a little, there's something wet on the floor -

- Looks at her foot... it's red -

- Looks at the floor... a puddle of bed -

She bends down, peers under the bed...

EXT. UPSCALE HOUSE - MORNING

The house looks so serene and calm from the outside.

NEXT VICTIM'S WIFE

(screaming)

AA  
HH!

INT. DETECTIVE OFFICE CUBICLES - MORNING

ON TELEVISION: The scene from "HE WALKS AMONG US" plays.

SWAT OFFICER #2 (ON TELEVISION)

Oh God. Oh God...

ON TELEVISION: The officers pull back the hood to see they've been fooled.

SWAT OFFICER #2 (ON TELEVISION) (CONT'D)

... It's not him. It's Mr. Begley.

ON TELEVISION: They all turn, ready their guns -

SWAT OFFICER (ON TELEVISION)  
... He's still here...

AS THE MOVIE PLAYS: Detective Anderson sits reading "The Creeper" by Edmond Grary.

DETECTIVE ANDERSON  
This isn't my kind of stuff but this  
guy's pretty good.

DETECTIVE LAGUARDA  
Apparently, really good -

Laguarda holds up a newspaper, with a mug shot of Langdon Ackler. And the headline: "PERVERT GETS POETIC JUSTICE."

An officer approaches them.

POLICE OFFICER  
(entering)  
Anderson. Laguarda.

INT. UPSCALE BEDROOM - DAY

Flash bulbs and forensics specialists swarm.

Laguarda looks over the coffin.

DETECTIVE LAGUARDA  
He's getting more elaborate.

Anderson shows the typewritten story to Laguarda.

DETECTIVE ANDERSON  
There's this whole story about it, but  
nowhere does it mention anything...

He holds up the nail clippers which had been found in the coffin -

DETECTIVE ANDERSON (CONT'D)  
... About these...

EXT. UPSCALE HOUSE - DAY

Anderson and Laguarda leave the crime scene.

FROM A DISTANCE: the #1 Fan and Edmond sit in the station wagon, observing.

## #1 FAN

Looks like we have some new fans.

INT. MANHATTAN BROWNSTONE LIBRARY - DAY

Anderson and Laguarda now stand across from Mr. Klein, who looks over the typewritten stories gathered from the crime scenes.

MR. KLEIN

A copycat. A deranged fan. It could be anything.

Laguarda isn't convinced.

DETECTIVE LAGUARDA

You've worked with him for years.

Mr. Klein looks back at the stories. Doesn't want to say it - This really could be Edmond's work.

MR. KLEIN

He'd been in a bit of a rough patch. Especially since the break-up. I know what somebody might think, if they read his work, but Edmond...

(shakes his head)

... He wouldn't harm a fly.

DETECTIVE ANDERSON

Operating under the assumption that he wouldn't. Operating under the assumption that he left these stories - in his style - precisely because it would link us to him. That he's trying to tell us something...

Laguarda gives Anderson a skeptical look. This line of reasoning is news to him.

DETECTIVE ANDERSON (CONT'D)

... What would that be?

MR. KLEIN

(shakes his head)

... I don't know...

Mr. Klein looks back over the stories.

MR. KLEIN (CONT'D)

The names. In the stories. I could be wrong, but...

He turns to a bookshelf and thumbs through some books.

MR. KLEIN (CONT'D)  
 ... Nancy. Jonathan. Kane. All of  
 them. They're all from...

He takes one of the books and places it on the desk:

"HITCHHIKERS."

INT. DETECTIVE OFFICE CUBICLES - DAY

Anderson now sits, looking through "HITCHHIKERS."

DETECTIVE ANDERSON  
 This man gets in the car with the  
 wrong guy. Winds up getting taken  
 along for a ride on a string of  
 killings.

DETECTIVE LAGUARDA  
 Say all this had anything to do with  
 that - what's he trying to say?

Anderson points to the book.

DETECTIVE ANDERSON  
 They're riding in this Chevy, and this  
 guy is forced - basically - to do all  
 these things against his will. Maybe  
 that's it.

Laguarda shakes his head. He's not buying the connection.

DETECTIVE LAGUARDA  
 Why go through all that trouble just  
 to tell us that?

INT. DARKENED ROOM - DAY

Edmond Grary sits, bound, on the floor. A copy of one of his  
 typewritten stories is on the ground, by his feet.

He awkwardly pulls it closer. Starts to read it.

The #1 Fan enters carrying a newspaper.

#1 FAN  
 What?

Edmond stares. What do you mean, "what"?

#1 FAN (CONT'D)  
You were smiling.

Edmond shakes his head. He couldn't have been smiling.

The #1 Fan looks at the story. Then at Edmond.

#1 FAN (CONT'D)  
Enough to give someone chills, wasn't it?

EDMOND  
Excuse me?

#1 FAN  
Oh. It's just an observation.

Edmond couldn't possibly know what he's talking about.

#1 FAN (CONT'D)  
What we did. That's what you were thinking about. Wasn't it?

The #1 Fan holds up the newspaper: "PERVERT GETS POETIC JUSTICE."

#1 FAN (CONT'D)  
It was really something, wasn't it?

Edmond looks down, as if overcome by a sickening reality.

#1 FAN (CONT'D)  
I wanted to thank you. This has meant so much to me. I couldn't have done it without you.

Edmond Grary swallows.

#1 FAN (CONT'D)  
I know, this might sound silly... But you've been like a father to me.

Edmond can't bear to even make eye contact.

#1 FAN (CONT'D)  
... He was...

The #1 Fan looks off, as if pained by a memory...

EDMOND  
He must have been a real piece of shit.

A moment. The #1 Fan turns back to Edmond.

#1 FAN  
What makes you say that?

Edmond looks the #1 Fan disgustedly in the eyes.

EDMOND  
Observation.

The #1 Fan rises, paces, as if trying to suppress an anger.

EDMOND (CONT'D)  
I'm sorry. Was it something I said?

#1 FAN  
What we've done has been fantastically macabre. But it lacks a certain level of... tragedy. And if we want to be remembered... all great works have tragedy.

EDMOND  
Did you finally pick up a copy of "Poetics" for yourself?

The #1 Fan throws down a PHOTOGRAPH of a family. Husband, wife, a young son and daughter.

#1 FAN  
That would be tragic, wouldn't it?

EDMOND  
(aghast)  
No...

#1 FAN  
Family of four, slain to death one night while sound asleep.

EDMOND  
It's already been done. By a thousand people before us.

#1 FAN  
A kidnapped family man, forced to kill a family himself. Not like that.

EDMOND  
That's not a tragedy, you moron, that's a senseless massacre!

The #1 Fan throws Edmond to the floor, brings a knife to him.

#1 FAN

You think I can't do this? Because it certainly sounds tragic to me.

EDMOND

Do you want a meaningless bloodbath, or do you want a tragedy? A real tragedy.

#1 FAN

One which just happens to leave every single one of them alive?

The #1 Fan presses the knife.

#1 FAN (CONT'D)

Right?

EDMOND

One which happens to be a tragedy.

EXT. HIGH RISE - NIGHT

Edmond and the #1 Fan pull up outside a high rise. The #1 Fan examines it.

#1 FAN

Should be perfect.

EDMOND

Slain.

#1 FAN

What?

EDMOND

You said "slain to death." Once you're slain, you're already dead. You can't be "slain" to "death."

INT. HIGH RISE LOBBY - NIGHT

The #1 Fan and Edmond approach a SECURITY GUARD (30's, a football and beer kind of guy).

#1 FAN

Hi. We're here for the Archers. 23rd floor.

The security guard looks at his watch. It's late.

SECURITY GUARD  
They didn't mention any visitors.

The security guard looks at Edmond, who stands with an almost... forced expression. The #1 Fan assesses the guard -

#1 FAN  
I'm Margaret's brother, Steve. And  
this is my partner. Phil.

The security guard - uncomfortable - studies Edmond.

EDMOND  
(smiles, nodding)  
Hey there.

#1 FAN  
I'm pretty sure she's expecting us.

SECURITY GUARD  
(looks down at binder)  
Rrrright.

The security guard looks back up. Edmond smiles, but while he does, mouths, ever-so-subtly -

EDMOND  
(mouthing)  
[Help me.]

The guard looks at Edmond quizzically.

Back at the #1 Fan. He hasn't noticed.

#1 FAN  
She said to drop by when we got in.  
Maybe you should call up first.

SECURITY GUARD  
That's fine. You'll want to head up to  
23J. It's the last one on the left.

The security guard looks back at Edmond. What's going on?

EDMOND  
(mouthing)  
[Help. Me.]

#1 FAN  
Thanks.

SECURITY GUARD  
(smiling)  
Right. Of course. Here you go.

The security guard doesn't react. He moves to the buzzer as nonchalantly as possible.

Reaches down to the ALARM BUTTON under the desk -

He looks down... Didn't even see it coming - THE #1 FAN'S KNIFE BURIED IN HIS CHEST.

EDMOND

NOOO -

The #1 Fan covers Edmond's mouth. The guard convulses, dies.

#1 FAN

Shhh.

The #1 Fan squeezes where Edmond's fingers are missing.

EDMOND

(muffled under #1 Fan's hand)

MAHNHHHHH!

#1 FAN

Want to improvise a little more?

(squeezes)

Include anyone else?

He heaves the security guard's body toward the elevator with one hand while dragging Edmond with the other. Edmond looks back out. It's not all lost.

There was a security camera.

The #1 Fan stops. What was Edmond looking at? He sees the camera. Moves to the desk, rips out the security tape.

INT. HIGH RISE CONDO PARENT'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

A MOTHER and FATHER - early thirties - lie asleep in bed. Their DAUGHTER enters.

DAUGHTER

Daddy - there's a monster under my bed.

The mother and father look at each other.

FATHER

You want to take this one?

INT. HIGH RISE CONDO DAUGHTER'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

The mother deposits the daughter on the bed.

MOTHER

Okay, sweetheart, let's take care of  
the monster under your bed.

She bends down and pulls up the bed skirt.

MOTHER (CONT'D)

Hello? Monster? It's time to come out.  
(she looks)  
OH! No monster there.

The daughter does not seem placated.

DAUGHTER

I think it went in the closet.

The mother moves to the closet and swings open the door.

MOTHER

(looking at Daughter, not  
inside closet)  
Okay, monster, we have had just about  
enough.  
(still not looking)  
See, honey, there's no monster in  
there.

DAUGHTER

(frightened)  
... You didn't look...

The mother turns her head...

MOTHER'S POV: There is nothing in the closet but clothes.

Regardless, the daughter is still frightened.

MOTHER

Alright, baby. Maybe you need to sleep  
with us tonight.

The mother scoops her up and walks -

INT. HIGH RISE CONDO HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Through the hallway, into -

INT. HIGH RISE CONDO PARENT'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

The father is lying - bound - on the ground.

MOTHER

Stewart -

The #1 Fan jumps out from behind, grabs her down -

DAUGHTER

AAAAAAHHHHH!

He wrestles the mother, binds and gags her -

- Runs after the daughter, does the same -

- Places them both next to the SON - who is already restrained.

He then puts his knife to the father's neck.

#1 FAN

Don't scream.

He pulls off the father's gag.

FATHER

Please, please - what are you doing?

#1 FAN

(to Edmond)

Edmond... Care to tell him what we're doing?

Edmond says nothing. The #1 Fan places the daughter on his lap, brings his knife to her neck -

DAUGHTER

(gagged)

MMMMMMMMHHHHHHHHHHH!

MOTHER

(gagged)

NDHFMMMMMMMMMMMMHMMM!

FATHER

Please! Don't hurt her!

#1 FAN

(to Edmond)

What do you think, Edmond? Should we hurt them?

Edmond says nothing. The #1 Fan runs the knife along the mother's face.

FATHER

Please! PLEASE!

#1 FAN  
We're not going to do anything. I  
promise. But you are.

FATHER  
What?

#1 FAN  
Care to tell him what he's going to  
do, Edmond?

FATHER  
What is he talking about?

Edmond shakes his head. Doesn't want to be part of this...

EDMOND  
We have a... story. About a man. Who  
loves his family...

The #1 Fan takes the typewritten story. Places it at the  
father's feet.

FATHER  
What the hell is this...?

EDMOND  
... A man who would do whatever he had  
to do to save them.

FATHER  
What the hell are you talking about?

The father looks even more confused and distraught.

Edmond shakes his head. He doesn't want to say it...

EDMOND  
About a man who kills himself.

FATHER  
... What...?

EDMOND  
Who walks over to that balcony - here,  
now - of his own volition, throws  
himself over. Takes his own life with  
his own hands.  
(turns to the #1 Fan)  
Please!

#1 FAN  
Go on.

EDMOND

(swallows)

... While his wife, his son... his daughter...

(swallows)

... While they sit here and watch.

FATHER

Are you CRAZY?

EDMOND

He kills himself, because if he does, the two attackers, who broke in late that night... they walk out the door. Leave. The wife, his son, his family - alive.

FATHER

Margaret - don't listen to a word they say!

(to Edmond and #1 Fan)

Are you insane? I'm not going to kill myself!

#1 FAN

Edmond - why don't you explain to him why he is.

EDMOND

Why don't you explain to him.

The #1 Fan brings the knife back to the mother's neck, as if to threaten both of them.

#1 FAN

This was your idea.

Edmond looks down, despondently...

EDMOND

I'm sorry. I'm so sorry. You are going to kill yourself.

FATHER

You get the hell out of my house you sick sons of bitches!

#1 FAN

(starts to cut Mother)

I told you.

MOTHER

(gagged)

MGSHPGFHFHHH!

EDMOND

Please... Stewart... Please listen to me...

Edmond looks at him imploringly. He looks at his family, the impossible situation. Quiets.

EDMOND (CONT'D)

... Have you ever heard of the Milgram Experiment...?

The father doesn't know what to make of any of this.

EDMOND (CONT'D)

In July of 1961, a psychologist named Stanley Milgram began a series of trials at Yale University. Today they call it the Milgram Experiment. There was one regular joe - right off the street - another guy - made to look like a joe - he wasn't - and a third man - he was the scientist. The regular joe is sit down and told to administer electric shocks to this other guy every time he gets a question wrong. These shocks, they start at a 45 volts - nothing but a pin prick, but they go up every time the guy gets a wrong answer. What the average joe doesn't know is: this other guy he's giving the shocks to, he's really an actor. He's trying to get the wrong answers. He's not even really being shocked.

The children and wife are all panicked. The father is befuddled by this story.

EDMOND (CONT'D)

So average joe asks the first question, the guy gets it wrong. Shock. He asks again. Wrong again. A little higher. And this keeps going until now it's 150 volts. The actor starts to bang on the wall and complain he has a heart condition. At this point, with most of the hundreds of subjects this exact same experiment was tried with, the average joe turns around and looks at the scientist. Should he keep going? Should he have a hand in hurting this man? The scientist nods. Tells him he should. And so he does. Wrong again.

(MORE)

EDMOND (CONT'D)

Shock again. At this point the actor begins to scream, in sheer agony. The joe turns to the scientist and questions, "Why am I doing this?" The scientist says, "You have no choice. You must go on." But this man has a choice. He doesn't have to go on. He's just been told to. But do you know what happened? He did. Of the hundreds of people that underwent the Milgram Experiment in 1961, 65% were willing to go all the way - however much they questioned - and administer to this screaming man 450 volts of electricity - enough electricity to have - had it been real - potentially have killed him. Why? Because the scientist - because the authority figure - told them to.

Edmond looks at the father. At his family. Starts to tear up.

EDMOND (CONT'D)

So yes. You are going to go to the railing, take a step over. You are going to... kill yourself. Because that's what we're telling you to do. Because that's what people do, in situations such as this.

(starts to tear up)

... Because you love your family, very much. Your wife, your son... Your daughter... And you would do anything to save them... And this, right here and now... This is what you have to do.

The mother and children are crying hysterically. Tears streak down the father's face.

FATHER

How do I know - if I do this - how do I know they'll be okay?

MOTHER

(wild)

MHGHHN! MHETHNN!

EDMOND

You don't. You only have my word, and that's all I can give you.

The father stands, nodding. He moves to his family.

FATHER  
 (to #1 Fan)  
 Please... Let me...

The #1 Fan nods.

FATHER (CONT'D)  
 (to Daughter)  
 Sweetie. Your Daddy loves you very much. Now you close your eyes. And you know that song Mommy and Daddy taught you? "There was green alligators and long-necked geese, Some humpty backed camels and some chimpanzees..." You sing that in your head, alright?  
 (to Son)  
 Henry - you sing it with your sister, alright? And you be strong - you be so strong - for your Mommy.  
 (to Mother)  
 Margaret...  
 (breaks down, crying hysterically)  
 Margaret...

#1 FAN  
 Okay. That's enough.

FATHER  
 (sobbing, as he moves to terrace)  
 You let them be, you hear me.

#1 FAN  
 I promise.

Edmond is aghast. The family is beyond hysterical.

MOTHER  
 (gagged)  
 HDSGHHHHHHHHHHHHH!

EXT. HIGH RISE TERRACE - CONTINUOUS

The father backs up to the railing, steps over -

FATHER  
 I love you.

- AND JUMPS.

The family is beyond themselves.

#1 FAN

... Wow...

There is horror on Edmond's face. But there is something else.

He moves to the railing, looks over.

The #1 Fan studies Edmond's face.

#1 FAN (CONT'D)

It's something, isn't it?

Edmond looks at the body on the pavement, fascinated.  
Almost... in awe.

INT. CAR - NIGHT

The #1 Fan now drives, with Edmond bound in the passenger seat.

#1 FAN

We really have something, don't we?

Edmond looks at him. Not sure what he means.

#1 FAN (CONT'D)

I saw your face. It's the same as before. That look you get, when you create something. Write something... new. You had it at the house. You've had it since. You don't want to say - how you really feel...

Edmond looks away.

#1 FAN (CONT'D)

... About what you can see. What you can make. You're transfixed. Lost in the moment.

Edmond eyes widen. This couldn't possibly be true.

#1 FAN (CONT'D)

You're yourself.

(Intimately)

I know. I feel the same way.

Edmond turns, as far as he can - not wanting the #1 Fan to see the tears now forming in his eyes.

INT. HELEN'S CONDO KITCHEN - MORNING

Helen enters the kitchen, bag in hand.

HELEN  
 (to Krissy)  
 Krissy - we're going to be late.

Krissy is just standing there. Something is wrong.

HELEN (CONT'D)  
 Krissy?

Krissy doesn't respond. Helen approaches and sees that her eyes are wet.

She looks down and sees the cause on the counter. A newspaper - the headline -

"MASTER OF HORROR'S NEW WORK: HACK JOB."

Helen looks at it. Her eyes go wide.

INT. CAR - MORNING

The #1 Fan drives with Edmond. He points to the same newspaper, upset.

#1 FAN  
 None of this would have happened if it hadn't been for me. If I hadn't seen what could be. You've been wonderful - I don't mean to belittle what you've done - but this is as much my vision as yours.

They pull up a few blocks away from the high-rise Hoboken condo. Police are swarming.

The #1 Fan observes intently.

INT. HIGH RISE CONDO PARENT'S BEDROOM - MORNING

Anderson and Laguarda are at the crime scene.

POLICE OFFICER  
 Family's over with the psychologist. Apparently traumatized or something.

DETECTIVE LAGUARDA  
 Maybe that was the point. The security guard?

DETECTIVE ANDERSON  
 He wasn't part of the plan. Something happened. They had to rush.

DETECTIVE LAGUARDA  
Fraying at the edges?

Anderson picks up the typewritten story and looks through it.

DETECTIVE ANDERSON  
... "Terrence"... Another name from  
"Hitchhikers."

Anderson looks down, thinks a moment. He then moves to the balcony. Looks around...

DETECTIVE ANDERSON (CONT'D)  
(quietly)  
In the story, they drive around in a  
'73 Chevy.

Laguarda approaches the window and sees:

A Chevrolet - across the street. He can't tell if it's a '73,  
but it's old.

It could be them.

Anderson motions as subtly as he can for them to continue  
doing what they're doing.

He approaches two PLAINCLOTHES OFFICERS in the room -

INT. HIGH RISE ENTRANCEWAY - MORNING

- Down in the lobby, The two plainclothes officers wander  
nonchalantly by the windows.

INT. CAR - MORNING

The #1 Fan squints at the two men by the window.

#1 FAN  
Get down.

He pushes Edmond down.

INT. HIGH RISE ENTRANCEWAY - MORNING

The officers look at the car.

PLAINCLOTHES OFFICER #2  
He's looking right at us -

INT. CAR - MORNING

The #1 Fan sees that he is being stared at.

#1 FAN

Shit.

He pulls into drive.

INT. HIGH RISE ENTRANCEWAY - MORNING

They see him drive off, squint at the license plate.

PLAINCLOTHES OFFICER #1

I think that's a '78.

PLAINCLOTHES OFFICER #2

I didn't get it.

INT. DETECTIVE OFFICE CUBICLES - DAY

A police officer approaches Anderson and Laguarda, hands them a list.

POLICE OFFICER

We've got nine of the '78 registered in the area

DETECTIVE LAGUARDA

These aren't even the same year as the one in the book.

DETECTIVE ANDERSON

Close.

(grabs the file and his coat)

Looks like we're going door to door.

The more skeptical Laguarda grudgingly gets his own coat.

KRISSY (O.S.)

Detective Anderson!

Anderson turns to see Krissy. Her eyes are wet with tears. She holds up the newspaper as if to explain herself.

KRISSY (CONT'D)

You have to believe me. My Dad - it was fun. It was a game. He wouldn't do those things. He wouldn't ever.

Anderson looks at her solemnly.

DETECTIVE ANDERSON

I know.

She looks at Anderson -

He's being honest. And it means a lot.

KRISSY

Is he going to be okay?

DETECTIVE ANDERSON

You listen to me, okay. I'm going to find your Father. I'm not going to sleep until I do. I'm going to get him back to you, and your Mother.

Krissy gives Anderson a huge hug. Anderson motions over to a female officer.

DETECTIVE ANDERSON (CONT'D)

Here. Lorna can see you out.

As Krissy is escorted out, Laguarda crosses over.

DETECTIVE LAGUARDA

You really believe that? That this other guy is making all this happen?

Anderson looks down at the picture of his own daughter.

DETECTIVE ANDERSON

He's a father. A family man.

He turns to Laguarda. We can see that all the years of reality have definitely not been lost on him.

DETECTIVE ANDERSON (CONT'D)

I have to believe there's certain things most people don't have inside them.

EXT. HOUSE - DAY - SEQUENCE

Anderson and Laguarda knock on the door of a house.

We see the resident answer.

EXT. APARTMENT BUILDING - DAY - SEQUENCE

Anderson and Laguarda are waiting at another door.

DETECTIVE LAGUARDA  
 (sarcastically)  
 Want me to knock it down? Or you?

EXT. BROWNSTONE - DAY - SEQUENCE

Anderson and Laguarda ringing at yet another door. It opens.

DETECTIVE ANDERSON  
 Hi. We're looking for Mr. and Mrs.  
 Vincent.

MAN (O.S.)  
 Oh. You mean Mom and Dad. They're on  
 Holiday right now. Is there something  
 I can help you with?

DETECTIVE LAGUARDA  
 We're here about their car - 1978 Chevrolet.  
 We believe it may have some connection to a  
 case we're investigating.

MAN (O.S.)  
 Ah. Well. I'm sorry to disappoint you -  
 they took it with them. Five days ago.

Anderson looks at the closed garage attached to the  
 brownstone.

DETECTIVE ANDERSON  
 You don't mind if we come in for a  
 minute? Ask a few questions?

REVEAL: The man answering the door is the #1 Fan.

He smiles. Graciously.

#1 FAN  
 Of course not. Here.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

As the #1 Fan brews a cup of coffee, Anderson looks around  
 the room. It's all very put together. Almost posh. He stops  
 at one of the pictures - a pair of doctors, smiling happily.

DETECTIVE ANDERSON  
 Mom and Dad are doctors? Sloan-  
 Kettering? Impressive.

The #1 Fan gives a small smiles.

DETECTIVE ANDERSON (CONT'D)  
How about you? Following in their  
footsteps?

#1 FAN  
I'm still trying to find my niche.

DETECTIVE LAGUARDA  
So what's a family like yours doing  
with a busted up old Chevy?

#1 FAN  
I guess you could say we're something  
of a bit of collectors.

INT. DARKENED ROOM - DAY

In the darkened room, Edmond strains his ear to the vent.

#1 FAN (O.S.)  
(muffled through vent)  
... We're something of a bit of  
collectors... So, Detective Anderson  
and Detective Laguarda, right? Why so  
much interest in a broke-down old car?

This is his chance!

Edmond starts to bash against the floor.

EDMOND  
(calling out)  
Help! Up here! HELP!

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

The conversation is interrupted by the noise from upstairs.

DETECTIVE ANDERSON  
What was that?

#1 FAN  
You'll have to excuse me for just one  
second.

INT. DARKENED ROOM - DAY

The #1 Fan enters into the darkened room, grabs Edmond,  
fastens him to a pole.

#1 FAN

Now, now, Edmond, you're being impolite.

The #1 Fan gags him, then turns, thinking -

He turns on the TELEVISION. Finds an action movie. Turns up the VOLUME.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

The #1 Fan enters back into the kitchen.

#1 FAN

My brother. Big "Die Hard" buff. When you first got here, I thought the neighbors had complained again.

(calls out)

I TOLD YOU TO TURN IT DOWN!

(turns to detectives)

So... Mom and Dad's car...?

DETECTIVE LAGUARDA

We believe we may have spotted the exact make and model at the scene of a crime.

#1 FAN

Wait... This doesn't have anything to do with those killings on the news, does it? That author guy?

Laguarda looks down, not at liberty to say.

DETECTIVE ANDERSON

Maybe. Maybe not.

#1 FAN

I heard about that! What's the story with that? Did he snap or something? Is he working alone?

Laguarda points to a door.

DETECTIVE LAGUARDA

That lead to the garage?

The #1 Fan smiles, opens the door to the garage -

#1 FAN

They took it with them...

WE CAN SEE: In the shadows - the shape of the Chevy, it's in the garage.

#1 FAN (CONT'D)  
 ... But feel free to take a look if  
 you need to.

WE ALSO SEE: The #1 Fan reaching behind the door. His  
 fingers finding a tire iron.

Laguarda shakes his head, satisfied. This is a dead end.

DETECTIVE LAGUARDA  
 That's fine.

They both move to leave. Anderson stops. Sees: a box of Cuban  
 cigars.

DETECTIVE ANDERSON  
 (motioning to cigars)  
 These certainly are hard to come by.

#1 FAN  
 You noticed! My father's pride and  
 joy. Want one? You're not going to  
 arrest me or anything?

Anderson sort of half smiles.

He picks up, next to the box of cigars: the cigar cutter -

DETECTIVE ANDERSON  
 A 1909 sterling silver cigar cutter.  
 Even harder.

The #1 Fan starts to move toward the counter -

#1 FAN  
 Like I said. We're collectors.

DETECTIVE ANDERSON  
 Did you know... I think our author  
 used one just like this in one of his  
 stories...

Anderson flips it... notices specks of dried blood...

He turns to Laguarda, gives him a nod -

- They both reach for their guns -

#1 FAN  
 (moves toward counter)  
 "Mayhaven Gardens," right? From the  
 "Darkened Season" anthology?

IN A FLASH: The #1 Fan grabs a rolling pin, smacks Laguarda across the head -

- Anderson pulls out his gun -

DETECTIVE ANDERSON  
FREEZE!

He jumps at Anderson, knocks his head into a cabinet -

FADE TO BLACK.

FADE IN:

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Anderson stirs from unconsciousness. He checks Laguarda - still out cold.

DETECTIVE ANDERSON  
(into Walkie Talkie)  
This is Detective Anderson - I'm out at that lead on Crescent. We've got an officer down. I need everything you've got out here RIGHT NOW!

There is a THUD. From downstairs.

INT. BASEMENT - DAY

Anderson throws open the door.

DETECTIVE ANDERSON  
(calling out)  
Come out with your hands up!

He walks down the stairs, gun out -

INT. BASEMENT HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

A dark basement hallway.

There is a hooded figure at the end of the hallway.

DETECTIVE ANDERSON  
Put your hands in the air, NOW!

The hooded figure is on his knees with his hands ominously behind his back. He doesn't budge an inch.

DETECTIVE ANDERSON (CONT'D)  
 (yelling)  
 If you do not comply, I WILL shoot you!

Anderson starts to advance.

DETECTIVE ANDERSON (CONT'D)  
 I know you abducted Edmond Grary. I  
 know you forced him to do these things  
 against his will.

The hooded figure starts to twitch. Anderson grips his  
 trigger.

DETECTIVE ANDERSON (CONT'D)  
 (yelling)  
 DON'T MOVE! WHERE IS EDMOND GRARY?

The hooded figure still says nothing. It looks like he will  
 pounce.

DETECTIVE ANDERSON (CONT'D)  
 Alright... Three...  
 (grips trigger, moving  
 closer)  
 ... Two...

He is about to shoot, right next to the hooded figure now -

DETECTIVE ANDERSON (CONT'D)  
 (bends down to figure,  
 whispering)  
*Edmond Grary, I know it's you. "He  
 Walks Among Us." Don't move.*  
 (turns 180 degrees,  
 pointing gun)  
 ONE!

It looks like Anderson's guessed right! There is a figure  
 behind him, back by the staircase!

DETECTIVE ANDERSON (CONT'D)  
 (yelling)  
 Don't move you piece of shit. There's  
 nowhere to go.

Anderson moves toward this figure, gun out.

DETECTIVE ANDERSON (CONT'D)  
 I saw the movie. The police will be  
 here any second -

WHAT ANDERSON DOESN'T SEE: The hooded figure, behind him now  
 - the one he thought was Edmond - is in fact the #1 Fan!

The #1 Fan rises up -

- Anderson has his back turned -

- GOUGES A KNIFE INTO ANDERSON'S NECK!

EDMOND  
(gagged)  
NMDHDHMMM!

Anderson falls to the floor, flounders.

The #1 Fan rips off Edmond's gag.

EDMOND (CONT'D)  
You son of a bitch!

#1 FAN  
Here - would you mind holding this for  
a second? Try not to stab me.

DETECTIVE LAGUARDA (O.S.)  
EDMOND GRARY! FREEZE!

Detective Laguarda enters, seeing Edmond with the knife.

EDMOND  
Wait! No!

DETECTIVE LAGUARDA  
(grips trigger, angry)  
You sick sons of bitches!

EDMOND  
It wasn't me!

The #1 Fan runs away.

DETECTIVE LAGUARDA  
FREEZE!

EDMOND  
Help me, please!

Laguarda shoots, hits Edmond in the leg.

EDMOND (CONT'D)  
GAHHHH!

Laguarda looks at Anderson's body, fuming.

DETECTIVE LAGUARDA  
You think this is all a game?

He shoots again. Edmond realizes - he has to run.  
 Laguarda pursues. Stops at Anderson. Bends down to him.  
He's still alive!

DETECTIVE LAGUARDA (CONT'D)  
 (to Anderson)  
 Hang on.

EXT. BROWNSTONE - DAY

Edmond hobbles out of the house. The #1 Fan is waiting. Grabs him.

INT. CAR - DAY

A harried Edmond applies pressure to his gun wound as they drive.

EDMOND  
 He saw me with the knife. That should help you get the credit you deserve.

#1 FAN  
 I'm driving around an old Chevrolet. Any ideas how they picked up on that?

He glares at Edmond.

#1 FAN (CONT'D)  
 I'm not a moron.  
 (pauses)  
 You know what true tragedy is? I was on the wrong track. True tragedy is personal.

Edmond's eyes widen... Helen. Krissy.

#1 FAN (CONT'D)  
 True tragedy is destroying the very things that matter most to you in life, by nobody's hands but your own.

EDMOND  
 I wouldn't touch them. Not in a million years.

#1 FAN

There's an almost poetic nature to it. No matter how much you struggle, being left empty by the wheels you set in motion. And that's what's going to make us remembered. More than anything we've done.

(smiles)

I'm learning, aren't I?

EDMOND

You know I'd have to be dead and buried before I had ANY part in it.

#1 FAN

Say we didn't. Say we left them alive. Who else could we choose, who could leave you with an emptiness akin to theirs? Perhaps your mother?

Edmond looks down a moment, thinking.

EDMOND

Not my mother.

(pauses)

... Not Robert...

(pauses again)

... There's got to be someone else...

#1 FAN

(laughs)

Of course. Robert Klein. The man who discovered you. The man who became like a father to you when you lost your own. What bigger tragedy than that?

EXT. HOBOKEN CONDO - CONTINUOUS

They pull up outside Helen's condo.

EDMOND

Wait... You said you wouldn't!

INT. HELEN'S CONDO - NIGHT

Helen prepare dinner as Krissy sets the table. There is a KNOCK.

KRISSEY

I'll get it.

She opens the door -

KRISSY (CONT'D)  
DAD!

EDMOND  
Honey -

The #1 Fan bursts through the door, knocks Krissy down.

Helen runs - he grabs her, ties her down -

Binds Helen and Krissy -

EDMOND (CONT'D)  
If you hurt them, I swear to God -

KRISSY  
Daddy! What's going on?

#1 FAN  
I'm showing your Daddy what tragedy  
looks like!

IN A FLASH, the #1 Fan takes the knife and brings it to  
Krissy's throat -

EDMOND  
NOOOOOOO!

The #1 Fan stops. Laughs. To him, that must have been just a  
little in-joke.

#1 FAN  
(shakes his head)  
Edmond... Really?

EXT. BROWNSTONE - NIGHT

Police swarm around the #1 Fan's brownstone. Anderson -  
holding a bandage to his neck - barks out orders as he pushes  
through the crowd.

DETECTIVE ANDERSON  
(to officer)  
... Those other units, keep them where  
they are. I want two cars on my tail.

Laguarda catches up to Anderson - notices the blood seeping  
through the bandage on his neck.

DETECTIVE LAGUARDA  
Jesus. Are you -

Anderson throws open the door, no time for any of this.

DETECTIVE ANDERSON  
Grand Street. Get in.  
(motions for Laguarda to  
drive)  
We need to get his family.

INT. CAR - NIGHT

Helen and Krissy are bound and gagged in the back of the car.

Edmond rides - bound - in the front. He holds a batch of  
typewritten pages. The #1 Fan is excited.

#1 FAN  
Your Dad - he's been a naughty,  
naughty man. Have you heard? Me and  
your Daddy - we've been killing  
people.

KRISSY  
(glowers at #1 Fan)  
My Dad writes books. I know he kills  
people.

#1 FAN  
Oh no. He talked this nice, thirty-  
year-old man into jumping off a  
railing and killing himself. Right in  
front of his wife, his son... and his  
daughter.

KRISSY  
... Dad...?

Edmond looks down.

EDMOND  
Don't listen. Not a word.

The #1 Fan rises, paces, almost gleeful.

#1 FAN  
Your Daddy - he loves you very much.  
You too, Helen. He's been trying to  
win you back for years. He couldn't  
even write without you. Do you know  
what his last book was?

Helen looks questioningly.

#1 FAN (CONT'D)

You want to tell her, Edmond?

(Edmond refuses to respond)

He wrote the first non-fiction book in his entire life. He wrote a memoir. About you. About growing up, with you and Krissy. He wrote it to show how much he loved you. He wrote it to win you back.

Helen looks to Edmond.

HELEN

... Edmond...?

Edmond nods. It's the truth.

#1 FAN

I know what the most tragic thing would be. For you to see - truly see - what has driven your husband - your father - all these years.

(to Krissy)

Do you know Mr. Klein? Edmond's going to kill him. Tonight.

The #1 Fan takes his knife. Plays with it across the dashboard as he speaks.

#1 FAN (CONT'D)

With his own hands. And you're going to get to watch.

KRISSY

My Dad wouldn't do that.

#1 FAN

But he would. He would tear Mr. Klein's flesh. All by himself. He'd do it for you. Because he loves you. Both. Very much.

Krissy and Helen look to Edmond for his response. He doesn't say he won't do it.

KRISSY

(very scared now)

... Daddy...?

#1 FAN

He'll do it, and then I'll fade into the sunset. You'll never see me again. My word. You'll all get to live together. He'll win you back.

(MORE)

#1 FAN (CONT'D)

You'll get to live together, the rest of your lives. One big, happy family - just as you imagined, Edmond. Having shared this experience between you. Together.

HELEN

No, Edmond. He's lying.

Edmond still says nothing.

#1 FAN

Because that's what people do. In situations such as this. Isn't that right, Edmond?

Edmond breaks down, his eyes watering up.

EDMOND

Yes.

KRISSY

Dad?

HELEN SENDLE

... Edmond?

EDMOND (CONT'D)

Yes. I'll give you your ending. You just leave them alone. Leave them alone, you hear me?

INT. CAR - NIGHT

Anderson and Laguarda speed along in their car.

DETECTIVE LAGUARDA

Any ideas where they've gone?

DETECTIVE ANDERSON

To get his ending.

EXT. MANHATTAN BROWNSTONE - NIGHT

Edmond rings the DOORBELL. The #1 Fan holds a knife to him.

EDMOND

(into intercom)

Robert - it's me. Edmond.

MR. KLEIN (O.S. ON INTERCOM)

(filtered)

Edmond? What the hell is going on? The news -

EDMOND  
 (into intercom)  
 I really need to talk to you. Is Marcy  
 around?

MR. KLEIN (O.S. ON INTERCOM)  
 No, she -  
 (pauses)  
 I'll be right down.

Several moments pass. The door opens.

MR. KLEIN (CONT'D)  
 Edmond... Edmond... I saw what they  
 said. I didn't believe a word of it,  
 for a second -

The #1 Fan attacks -

INT. MANHATTAN BROWNSTONE - CONTINUOUS

The #1 Fan get him down, slings him to a chair.

#1 FAN  
 The viewing party.

The #1 Fan exits.

MR. KLEIN  
 Edmond - what happened -

EDMOND  
 Listen - I need you to listen -

MR. KLEIN  
 - Who is that?

EDMOND  
 We don't have time force this. Listen -  
 when he gets back in here, whatever -

#1 FAN (O.S.)  
 Boys! Don't start without us.

The #1 Fan drags in the bound and gagged Helen and Krissy.

MR. KLEIN  
 Jesus. Jesus fucking Christ!

The #1 Fan unfurls a bag of SURGICAL TOOLS on the table.

#1 FAN  
 (to Edmond)  
 Take what you need. I'm just going to  
 sit over here with Helen and Krissy.

The #1 Fan straddles Krissy from behind, his knife to her  
 jugular.

#1 FAN (CONT'D)  
 Didn't he mention, Mr. Klein? You've  
 been like a father to him. And now  
 he's going to kill you.

MR. KLEIN  
 Edmond? What is he talking about?

#1 FAN  
 (motions to typewritten pages)  
 He wrote the ending. To our  
 masterwork. There. And it's you.

Edmond looks over the surgical tools.

MR. KLEIN  
 Edmond?

#1 FAN  
 What's it going to be, Edmond? Nerve  
 hooks? Dissecting knife?

EDMOND  
 I'm sorry, Robert.

Edmond picks out a BONE CUTTER.

MR. KLEIN  
 Edmond, please!

Edmond brings the bone cutter toward Mr. Klein.

EDMOND  
 If I didn't have to, I wouldn't. I  
 love you.

MR. KLEIN  
 Edmond!

Mr. Klein squirms as Edmond brings the bone cutter to his  
 skin, gets ready for the cut.

EDMOND  
 (turns to Krissy)  
 Krissy - look away. Don't listen.  
 (turns to Helen)  
 (MORE)

EDMOND (CONT'D)

Helen...

(tears up)

... I never could help dragging you  
into my work...

He lets out something resembling a laugh even as he tears up. There is a moment between them. Why does he have that faux charm of his - now, of all times?

- The #1 Fan doesn't like this, digs his knife into Krissy -

#1 FAN

... Edmond...

Edmond turns back to Mr. Klein, his eyes wet.

EDMOND

(crying)

I'm sorry, Robert.

(leans in, whispering)

... Krissy. The STAIRS...

Mr. Klein's eyes narrow, ever-so-slightly.

Edmond raises the saw, about to cut -

He turns to Helen -

EDMOND (CONT'D)

I guess I could only ever do my best  
work when you were there to help.

His eyebrow is raised ever-so-slightly. He has that hint of charm - he's communicating! Helen gives a look - what "help"?

As subtly as he can, Edmond motions to the #1 Fan with his eyes. She gets it. Readies herself.

He raises the saw and -

SLASH - brings the cutter down on Klein's rope -

Before the #1 Fan can react, Helen bashes into him -

Edmond cuts, struggles, finally get through the rope -

Mr. Klein dashes over to Krissy, grabs her up -

The #1 Fan knocks Helen into the floor, reaches into his pocket, pulls out his gun -

#1 FAN

(points gun at Mr. Klein  
and Krissy)  
(MORE)

#1 FAN (CONT'D)  
Robert! Krissy! Where do you think  
you're going?

INT. CAR - NIGHT

Anderson and Laguarda speed out of the tunnel. Anderson is on the police phone.

DETECTIVE ANDERSON (ON POLICE PHONE)  
You're going to need SWAT. Special  
units. Redirect everything you've got.

DETECTIVE LAGUARDA  
How long?

DETECTIVE ANDERSON  
Minutes.

INT. MANHATTAN BROWNSTONE - NIGHT

Mr. Klein and Krissy are stopped, right at the top of the stairs. The #1 Fan trains his gun on them.

Edmond approaches, a furious look in his eyes. The #1 Fan turns the gun to him, as if warning him to back off.

EDMOND  
(to Mr. Klein)  
GO!

With that, Edmond knocks into the #1 Fan, knocks him down.

The staircase is free. Mr. Klein takes Krissy, herds her out -

The #1 Fan points the gun at Mr. Klein. Edmond pulls furiously, tries to get it down -

Mr. Klein moves back, grabs Helen, starts to help her up -

The #1 Fan knocks Edmond down, turns to Mr. Klein and Helen -

Mr. Klein starts to pull shut the door to the top of the stairs -

The #1 Fan advances, he's almost on them, when -

BAM - the door closes shut.

#1 FAN  
(pounding on the door)  
What do you think you're doing,  
Robert?

The #1 Fan pounds on the door. Pulls at it -  
He can't get it open.

EDMOND  
They're calling the cops. Right now.

The #1 Fan ignores this, pounds even harder.

#1 FAN  
(yelling)  
You're making a mistake, Robert...  
Helen...

EDMOND  
They're coming here. Now.

The #1 Fan pounds the wall in frustration.

He looks down, thinking. And then -

#1 FAN  
It'll take what? Five minutes? More?  
... Should be all the time we need...

The #1 Fan unfurls some rope. Advances on Edmond -

INT. CAR - NIGHT

Anderson and Laguarda speed down the street.

DETECTIVE LAGUARDA  
There. Down the block.

DETECTIVE ANDERSON  
Come on!

INT. MANHATTAN BROWNSTONE STAIRCASE - NIGHT

A panicked Krissy looks pleadingly at Helen.

KRISSY  
He's in there! Mom!

Mr. Klein is on the phone.

MR. KLEIN  
(covers receiver, to Helen)  
They're on their way.

Helen looks at the door to Edmond, as if unsure what to do,  
when -

#1 FAN (O.S.)  
 (calling out)  
 We've got our ending - our new one.  
 Sure you don't want to watch?

Krissy moves to open the door. Mr. Klein holds her back.

KRISSY

MOM!

Krissy breaks free and pulls at the door, only to find -

It won't open.

Helen sees this. Moves to it, tries to open it -

It's been secured shut from the other side.

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

Anderson and Laguarda run out of their car, guns out, toward a building -

INT. MANHATTAN BROWNSTONE - NIGHT

We see that the #1 Fan has tied the door shut. He watches as Krissy and Helen struggle to open it.

#1 FAN  
 (calling out toward door)  
 Listen, at least. You're gonna love it!

HELEN (O.S.)  
 (yelling)  
 We called the police, you son of a bitch! They're going to be here any second!

The #1 Fan doesn't listen. Pulls out his knife. Bends down to Edmond.

INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT

A force of officers is gathered at a doorway.

Anderson gives them the nod -

They burst through the door, and into -

INT. HELEN'S CONDO - CONTINUOUS

- Helen's condo. Which is now, unlike earlier, completely empty.

They search around, look through doors.

Nothing.

POLICE OFFICER #2

It was broken into. They were here.

Detective Anderson searches around, furiously.

Shakes his head. They missed them...

Laguarda finds a typewritten page. Hands it to Anderson.

He reads it. Realizes where they've gone.

DETECTIVE ANDERSON

... His publisher...

INT. MANHATTAN BROWNSTONE - NIGHT

The #1 Fan looks at his knife, at Edmond. Smiles.

#1 FAN

There really is a symmetry. A budding artist, given everything he needs, finally ready, branches out on his own.

Edmond looks down, thinking.

EDMOND

And that's your ending? She's right. They'll be here. Five minutes, jail, chair. All you have to show is this meddling, piddling homicide.

The #1 Fan presses the knife. Starts to draw blood.

EDMOND (CONT'D)

You can do that.

(pauses)

Or you can go with my ending. An ending that can give you everything you wanted.

#1 FAN

(presses harder)

You're playing for time.

EDMOND

In my ending, you get infamy. In your ending, you get a tiny little cell and a tiny little execution with all the other tiny little losers.

(holds up papers)

Want to know my ending? My real ending? What it is?

(crumples papers)

You take your own life. And you do it now.

The #1 Fan looks at Edmond disbelievingly. He couldn't possibly be serious.

EDMOND (CONT'D)

Your own hands. Before they get here.

The #1 Fan starts to laugh.

#1 FAN

(laughing)

That's clever, Edmond. Very clever.

EDMOND

One of us is going to die. You. Or me. Which one's it going to be?

#1 FAN

You're something else.

EDMOND

Don't you want to know why? I'm why.

#1 FAN

You really are a trip -

He digs in his knife, this is most probably over -

EDMOND

That's why! You kill me, now, like this - it smacks of so much desperation, everyone will know - I came up with everything. How could you have? You think you'll be remembered for this?

The #1 Fan pauses a moment -

EDMOND (CONT'D)

You do want to be remembered don't you?

The #1 Fan lowers his knife a little at this.

EDMOND (CONT'D)

Then you prove it, by your actions. You are the killer. Make a statement they'll ponder for years. My contributions shoved aside. Your act - the story it culminated in - all anybody recalls.

#1 FAN

Do you honestly believe that I would, for one second, kill myself?

EDMOND

My version of you - the second rate hack. The best ending you can come up with - offing all that's left. Your version of you - the vision to have seen this all. Capping your creation with a poetic, twisted death that renders your vision undeniable. You're running out of options. Which one will it be?

#1 FAN

I think someone doesn't want to die.

EDMOND

I think someone doesn't want to admit the real reason they had to freelance out to a has-been horror novelist. The truth behind that cracked out fantasy version of events of theirs - that they came up with even one, single, solitary thing.

The #1 Fan's knuckles start to whiten around the knife.

EDMOND (CONT'D)

What? Is there some other version? Some fantasy in your head? That you had the vision to see any of this?

#1 FAN

Stop -

EDMOND

That you were making some bold statement to the world? Bullshit! Kill me! Slit my throat, you garden variety thug! It's the only thing you can do without me!

#1 FAN

STOP!

He slashes at Edmond's throat. Edmond gurgles. Blood spits out.

EDMOND

(gurgling)

Thh... That's a surface wound. You need my help with that too? Need me to change your diaper?

#1 FAN

STOP IT!

INT. MANHATTAN BROWNSTONE STAIRCASE - CONTINUOUS

Helen and Krissy pound on the door, can't get it open.

KRISSY

HELEN

Nooooo!

Stop!

INT. MANHATTAN BROWNSTONE - CONTINUOUS

Edmond spits up blood -

EDMOND

You're trying to please me? Keep it up. One more good killing, you might just prove yourself worthy and somehow, someday alleviate your surrogate "he never loved me, I could never please him, oh woe-is-misbegotten-poor-upper-middle-class-me brat boy" Daddy issues.

#1 FAN

You shut the hell up. Shut the hell up about my Father.

EDMOND

I bet you wish he touched you, abused you, gave you some big, juicy scars to drive and validate it. I heard. When the detectives came. Your big, bad, Daddy is a doctor at a Cancer Ward in the Upper East Side. I bet the worst way he ever touched you is when he tucked you into bed!

#1 FAN

You don't know ANYTHING!

EDMOND

I'm right. Haha. I'm right, aren't I?  
 You're not a serial killer. You're not  
 a sociopath. You're nothing but a  
 little FUCKING BRAT! Who the most real  
 thing that's ever happened in your  
 entire spoiled generation is some  
 national disaster you "experienced" on  
 TV, who has to kidnap me because they  
 can't even manage to do that most  
 basic, human, primal instinct of "kill"  
 by themselves. Because that space  
 inside me where I have that flame, that  
 inspiration, that whatever the hell you  
 want to call it - because in that space  
 in you there's NOTHING THERE!

The #1 Fan grabs Edmond's hair, raises the knife -

#1 FAN

NOOOOOOOOO!

EDMOND

DO IT! BUT DON'T FUCKING FORGET -

The #1 Fan holds, just about to slice -

EDMOND (CONT'D)

IT'S "SLAIN." NOT "SLAIN TO DEATH."

Edmond, of all things, starts to laugh.

The #1 Fan, of all things, starts to laugh too.

Both of them. Together. Sharing. A moment.

EDMOND (CONT'D)

Which version's it going to be? Yours?

(quietly, almost mournfully)

Or mine?

The #1 Fan looks at his knife. Back at Edmond. A moment...

#1 FAN

They'll remember?

Edmond looks down. Is he actually considering it?

EDMOND

Everyone will.

The #1 Fan motions to the door. A look on his face. Fear.

#1 FAN

What if I run? Before they get here?

Edmond swallows. He could just tell him to go.

He shakes his head. No. He can't.

EDMOND

They'll know.

The #1 Fan's eyes widen. Scared.

#1 FAN

I'll go. Stay gone. I promise. You'll never see me again.

Edmond shakes his head.

EDMOND

It's the only way.

The #1 Fan looks at Edmond, almost despondent now -

#1 FAN

If I do... They'll see?

EDMOND

Everyone.

The #1 Fan slowly brings the knife to his own arm and cuts, draws blood.

#1 FAN

Like this?

Edmond's eyes are wide - he's actually going to do it -

EDMOND

(swallows)

... Deep. Hard. You... only have one chance...

The #1 Fan brings the knife to his own neck, presses it in deep, draws blood. Ready to slice -

#1 FAN

Like this?

Edmond nods. He can barely believe it.

EDMOND

... Like that...

INT. MANHATTAN BROWNSTONE STAIRCASE - CONTINUOUS

Helen - listening - brings her hand to her mouth, aghast.

HELEN

Jesus...

INT. MANHATTAN BROWNSTONE - CONTINUOUS

Suddenly, the Police burst through the door -

DETECTIVE ANDERSON (O.S.)

(screaming)

DROP THE KNIFE!

They surround Edmond and the #1 Fan. The #1 Fan remains there, knife to throat, as if he doesn't even notice them.

He looks at Edmond, teary-eyed, pleadingly.

#1 FAN

It's the only way?

Edmond looks at the police. Looks at the #1 Fan. Several moments pass. Finally -

EDMOND

(nodding)

It's the only way.

The #1 Fan nods -

Looks at Edmond -

Looks at the door, the police, AND -

DETECTIVE ANDERSON

(screaming)

NOOOOOOO!

GOUGES THE KNIFE INTO HIS OWN THROAT.

CUT TO BLACK:

INT. BOOKSTORE - DAY

A crowd of fans and media have gathered for a book signing. A POSTER reads: "THE DARK."

YOUNGER FAN

In the book - all the ways people die -  
I know you started it three years ago  
and stuff, but...

(pauses, a moment)

... Did it have anything to do with...

Edmond looks down. Away from the fan. Signs the book.

YOUNGER FAN (CONT'D)

... Do you think, maybe... you'll ever  
write about that?

Edmond doesn't respond to this. He looks out the window.

CLOSE ON: Detective Anderson, who sits in the park across  
the street, staring directly at Edmond.

As if casing him.

BALDING FAN

I know it's not in the book, but when  
you were taken, by that guy, what was  
it like? On that train? After that? It  
must've been even scarier than this.

Edmond just signs. Doesn't answer.

An excited Mr. Klein approaches on his cell phone.

MR. KLEIN (ON CELL PHONE)

(covers receiver, whispers)

Edmond! It's the board! From Columbia.  
They read it!

Edmond barely acknowledges this. Not really in the room, he  
looks off. Sees:

EDMOND'S POV: Krissy, standing outside the bookstore,  
looking in through the window.

Edmond raises his hand, half waves. Krissy half smiles back.  
An uneasy look passes between them.

IN THE BOOKSTORE: An elderly fan approaches.

ELDERLY FAN

The one thing I don't understand is:  
how?

Edmond looks at her, questioningly.

## ELDERLY FAN (CONT'D)

I know, that's not really why we're here, but what happened... Awful. Terrible. How were you able to do what you did?

Edmond looks down. Something about her makes him want to answer.

## EDMOND

(swallows)

Oh... You know... I just did... what any person would do... in a situation like that... Where you don't have a choice.

EDMOND'S POV: Outside, Helen pulls up in her car.

## HELEN (O.S. IN THE DISTANCE)

I told you not to come here. Get in.

Helen and Edmond's eyes meet. It is obvious by the look between them that the happy ending has not gone as planned.

Helen drives off.

Edmond's eyes move back to Detective Anderson. Who still sits there.

Staring at him. Knowingly.

## MOTHER (O.S.)

It's funny, the things that can be rationalized, when you say you don't have a choice.

Edmond looks back. His eyes widen: it is the mother - the wife of the man he had talked into jumping off the ledge.

Edmond shakes his head -

SMASH CUT TO:

It is the mother. How can this be her?

## MOTHER (CONT'D)

Why don't you tell her how you really did it. That part you are expressing, even if you don't talk about. That part you wouldn't quite find by looking out.

She hands Edmond her book.

MOTHER (CONT'D)

You can make that out to my husband.

Edmond is beside himself. Starts to panic -

SMASH CUT TO:

It's not really her. It's just some random fan.

RANDOM FAN

Hello? I said you can make that out to  
my husband.

He had only seen the mother in his imagination. This isn't  
really her. Mr. Klein hangs up the phone, oblivious.

MR. KLEIN

They're recommending it for  
nomination! I knew you had this inside  
you!

Edmond stares at the woman, unable to sign her book.

MR. KLEIN (CONT'D)

All you had to do was look.

BLACK.