

AUTHORS ANONYMOUS

Written by
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July 14 2012

REVISED

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FADE IN:

1 EXT. FITZGERALD/GRAHAM APARTMENT -- HOLLYWOOD - DAY

North Hayworth Avenue, off Sunset Boulevard. A quiet, tree-lined residential street. Note the small apartment complex set back from the curb.

CAPTION: HOLLYWOOD, CALIFORNIA

Our narrator is HENRY OBERT (O-BURT) (30).

HENRY (V.O.)

This is where where F. Scott
Fitzgerald died on December 21, 1940.

INSERT ARCHIVAL PHOTOS of Fitzgerald. His work. His life.

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

Fitzgerald was one of the truly great
American writers of the 20th century.
Tender is the Night. The Last Tycoon.
This Side of Paradise. And, of course,
my favorite, The Great Gatsby. But
Fitzgerald ended up out here. Writing
movies that never got made. Drinking
too much. Alienating people. Losing
his way.

2 EXT. FITZGERALD/GRAHAM APARTMENT -- SIDEWALK - DAY

Henry stands on the sidewalk. Full of promise and hope.

Wears a pizza delivery outfit as he stares at the apartment, more with reverence than curiosity.

CAPTION: HENRY OBERT

HENRY (V.O.)

I stop by here sometimes--out of respect. Fitzgerald had this amazing gift.

3 EXT. FITZGERALD/GRAHAM APARTMENT -- SIDEWALK - CONTINUOUS

Henry crosses the street--heading for his parked Honda. He unlocks the car. Swings open the back door.

HENRY (V.O.)

But he wasted it. He wasted his talent.

Henry yanks a MAGNETIC SIGN out of the back seat and slaps it on the outside of the driver's door: PIZZA STARZ. One last glance at the fabled apartment complex.

2.

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

When I sell my novel, I won't make his mistakes.

4 INT. ALAN AND COLETTE'S HOUSE -- LIVING ROOM - DAY

The man (40's) and woman (30's) sit on the couch in their tastefully-decorated San Fernando Valley home. Expensive taste in clothes. Her cleavage a bit too obvious. Both seem a little uncomfortable. Uncertain.

CAPTION: DR. ALAN & COLETTE MOONEY

They look off to the side, speaking to someone off-camera.

ALAN

We thought this was going to be a reality series.

COLETTE

You know, like the Kardashians.

They listen. Here comes the bad news.

ALAN

Oh. Really? A documentary? This is going to be a documentary about our writing group?

COLETTE

The whole group. Not just us, right?
Not that it should be just about
us...

Nervous laugh.

ALAN

No.

They look at each other: A documentary? They try to mask
their disappointment.

COLETTE

So this is going to be like--like
what I saw the other night on cable?
About bees mating.

ALAN

Or that, um, that one about the
Holocaust.

Colette nods, remembering.

ALAN (CONT'D)

Pretty...Pretty--

3.

COLETTE

--Powerful.

ALAN

Powerful. Yes. Powerful.

COLETTE

We love documentaries.

ALAN

We do.

They look at each other again: What have we gotten into?

COLETTE (V.O.)

Natasha, the Russian peasant, dressed
oh-so-slowly...

5 INT. ALAN AND COLETTE'S HOUSE -- DINING ROOM - EVENING

A POSTER BOARD SIGN--someone went to Kinko's--is posted
prominently reading: QUIET, PLEASE--WRITERS AT WORK.

COLETTE (V.O.)

(Reading)

...consumed totally, completely,
absolutely, by endless thoughts of
Yuri fondling her breast, his other
hand groping her womanhood, knowing...

They sit around the dining room table. Colette, convinced she's the next Amy Tan, reads aloud from her TYPED PAGES. The others all have copies in front of them. We recognize Henry, the frog waiting to become a prince, making copious notes and Alan, oh-so-proud, hanging on every word. Beaming.

Three others round out the group:

Younger MAN (early 30s). Unshaven. Always thinks he's the coolest guy in any room. Can't avoid glances at the camera.

CAPTION: WILLIAM BRUCE

The OLDEST MEMBER of the group (over 60) sits with his arms folded as he listens, shifting in his chair. Captain Grumpy.

CAPTION: JOHN K. BUTZIN

Finally, the young (mid-to-late 20s), angelic, WOMAN listening intently, the one who probably stopped to rescue a cat on her way here.

CAPTION: HANNAH RINALDI

4.

COLETTE (CONT'D)

...Any second that she might explode,
her chastity spraying across the
ceiling...Spraying across the ceiling
like passionate graffiti. Natasha
never thought such a moment possible.
"Have I satisfied you, Natasha?"
Yuri had inquired after their fourth
round of vodka-soaked lovemaking.
"Nyet, Not yet," Natasha stated,
exhausted, but grateful.

Awkward silence around the table as Colette removes her reading glasses and waits. Alan clears his throat, looking cheerful.

ALAN

Well? Comments?

6 INT. HENRY'S APARTMENT - DAY

6

Henry's sparse studio apartment. Minimal furniture. His laptop is set up on an old door, stretched across some blue plastic crates.

There are BOOKS piled everywhere. All sorts of books. And PAPER -- pieces of paper, including letters and cards and printed emails, dozens of them, are taped throughout the small apartment.

We are introduced to Henry the writer: pondering over his battered laptop, pacing up and down the floor, checking his nearly empty refrigerator, stretched out on his Goodwill couch, watching TV.

Finally, inspiration. Henry rushes to his desk and taps out a sentence or two on his computer, feeling proud for his accomplishment.

HENRY (V.O.)

I graduated from the University of Illinois. English major. Taught high school for a couple years, but hated it. Moved out here to be a writer.

7 EXT. HOUSE - DAY/NIGHT

7

As Henry's voice over continues, we see him in uniform with pizza in hand at the front door of a house. Rings doorbell.

HENRY (V.O.)

I work two jobs. Delivering pizzas and cleaning carpets. Good jobs for a writer.

5.

8 INT. HOUSE - DAY/NIGHT

8

Henry cleaning the carpets as the heavily-tattooed MOTORCYCLE DUDE points to a dirty spot: Over here.

HENRY (V.O.)

You meet lots of interesting people.

9 INT. HENRY'S APARTMENT - DAY

9

Henry points to the letters on the wall. C.U. picks up on phrases like "We regret to inform you," or "Sorry, but this story isn't right for us," or "The Baxter Agency currently isn't accepting new clients."

HENRY (V.O.)

I have two unpublished novels.
Working on my third, Pizza to Go.
These are my rejection letters.
Rejected by agents. Rejected by
publishers. When you think about
it, it's pretty amazing how many
ways people can reject you.

10 INT. ALAN AND COLETTE'S HOUSE -- DINING ROOM - NIGHT

10

Henry, John, Alan, Colette, Hannah, and William sit around the table. Impressive buffet of cold cuts, cheeses, and shrimp has been set out.

HENRY (V.O.)

Our writing group meets every Tuesday
night. Mostly at Alan and Colette's.
Sometimes we rotate.

John helps himself to some shrimp. Then helps himself to some more.

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

I love coming to the group. Everyone
always has such constructive feedback.
It's like we're all in this together.

HANNAH

I really like the way Yuri is
developing, Colette.

COLETTE

You do?

JOHN

Well, if you ask John K. Butzin...

Can't help looking at the camera. Making sure it's on him.

6.

JOHN (CONT'D)

You're still going to have to explain
why this Natasha dame goes AWOL on
her husband. Still kinda iffy to
me.

Another glance at the camera: Did you get that?

ALAN

I was bothered by that, too. Why would Natasha betray a reliable, dependable husband for a washed-up young punk?

All eyes on Colette. She shifts in her chair. Uncomfortable.

COLETTE

Oh. Well...um...um...

An uneasy silence. Colette is blocked--nowhere to go creatively. Her face tightens up. Bites her lip.

COLETTE (CONT'D)

Oh God. I've been rewriting and rewriting and rewriting and--

ALAN

Poodles. It's OK.

COLETTE

No. It's not OK. I still can't explain Natasha's motive. What's the use? I'm not a writer.

William to the rescue.

WILLIAM

Whoa. Whoa. Time out. The dude's good in bed. Trust me, that's all the motive she needs.

JOHN

Roger that. Torpedo Chapter Three. Blow it up. Get the focus back on this broad--Natasha.

HENRY

--Yes. I was thinking the same thing.

HANNAH

Make it clear that Natasha wants to be closer...

Colette makes notes furiously, nodding in agreement.

7.

HENRY (V.O.)

Writing can be such a solitary existence, so it's good to have this outlet where you can meet other writers and exchange ideas. Here it really is all for one and one for all.

11 INT. ALAN AND COLETTE'S HOUSE -- DINING ROOM - NIGHT
11

Later that evening. Meeting is over.

Alan, Colette, Hannah, Henry, William, and John are all standing up now. William stretches. John reaches for more shrimp. Friendly banter. Laughter.

COLETTE

Who wants coffee?

Everybody does. William taps Henry on the shoulder.

WILLIAM

Lend me ten bucks? I'm having cash flow issues.

HENRY

Sure.

WILLIAM

Thanks, bro'. You're the best.

12 INT. HENRY'S APARTMENT - DAY
12

Henry sits at his desk, staring at the blank computer. Lost in thought. Emphasis on lost.

HENRY (V.O.)

This new novel Pizza to Go is about Scott, a pizza delivery guy in LA. He comes across some interesting characters. I like what I have so far, but it's only a hundred pages and I'm stuck...

13 INT. HENRY'S APARTMENT - LATER - DAY
13

Henry stands in front of the mirror in his apartment, wearing the Pizza Starz hat and shirt. Ready for work.

HENRY (V.O.)

...Haven't written a word in the last two weeks. Not one. Hannah teases me about having writer's block.

8.

14 INT. ALAN AND COLETTE'S HOUSE -- DINING ROOM - NIGHT

14

FLASHBACK to the last group meeting. Focus on Hannah. Her smile. Her warmth. She listens and comments. Actively engaged in the conversation.

HENRY (V.O.)

...I keep thinking about her. She's all I think about. Really would like to ask her out.

15 INT. HANNAH'S APARTMENT - DAY

15

Hannah reaches for a pair of READING GLASSES and slips them on. Talks to someone O.S.

HANNAH

What do you think? On or off? Do they make me look smarter? I need a new pair.

She takes the glasses off. Puts them back on. Off again. Debating. Hannah prepares herself with a series of quick breaths and waves her hands in the air. Then she stares directly into the camera.

HANNAH (CONT'D)

Hi. I'm originally from Prescott, Arizona. Followed my mom out here about four years ago. That's her back there.

Camera picks up a wisp of a WOMAN (over 50) in the background, waving, with an equally pleasant smile.

CAPTION: MAUREEN RINALDI

HANNAH (CONT'D)

My parents are divorced. Not her fault.

16 INT. RESTAURANT #1 - DAY

16

William favors jeans and faded tweed jacket. Sits in the

corner of a Valley restaurant, nursing a cup of coffee and talks to the camera.

WILLIAM

What do you want to know about me?
I'm 27. Single. A virgin.

He flashes that wicked, seductive smile.

9.

WILLIAM (CONT'D)

Just kidding. I'm actually 28.
Hometown is Modesto, California, A
sprawling junk heap of a town without
a soul. Why did I come to LA? Um,
because I knew you were here and
that you'd loan me a hundred bucks
if I needed it. Right?

WAITRESS #1 refills his coffee cup. Her reward is that smile.

WILLIAM (CONT'D)

Thanks, babe.

She walks away. William admires the view.

WILLIAM (CONT'D)

I already got her number. Maybe I'll
text her. Maybe I won't.

Eyes back towards the camera.

WILLIAM (CONT'D)

So 'bout that hundred bucks? What
d'ya think?

A hint of desperation in his voice.

WILLIAM (CONT'D)

OK. What about fifty? C'mon, bro'.
Support the arts.

17 **INT. HANNAH'S APARTMENT -- DAY**

17

Hannah continues talking to the camera. Maureen still in
background.

HANNAH

I've always had this knack for telling
stories. Ever since I was a kid.

MAUREEN

She's a natural.

HANNAH

Moved here. Took a couple writing classes. Decided to go for it. 24/7. Total dedication to my craft. The writing always comes first. My latest effort is called Sleeping on the Moon. It's about rejection. And pain. Not really about the moon itself. More of a...

10.

She searches for the word that escapes her. Maureen to the rescue.

MAUREEN

Metaphor.

HANNAH

Right.

18 **INT. RESTAURANT #1 - DAY**
18

William continues talking to the camera.

WILLIAM

So. LA? I'm here because of Bukowski. Charles Bukowski. Greatest writer ever. Period.

INSERT ARCHIVAL PHOTOS of Charles Bukowski.

WILLIAM (CONT'D)

LA is his town, man. If I'm gonna be a writer, then I have to walk in Bukowski's shoes. Experience and capture the plight of the working class.

He waves to WAITRESS #1.

WILLIAM (CONT'D)

I like the people in the group. But they can't write worth shit. But, man, Hannah is something. She's the only reason I keep going. Not because I'm learning anything. Hell, no. I just think she's hot.

19 INT. HANNAH'S APARTMENT -- DAY
19

Hannah leans forward towards the camera, as if to hear better.

HANNAH

My favorite writer? Favorite writer.
Favorite writer...

Hannah goes blank. The smile disappears as her face goes into noticeable contortions. This is worse than Final Jeopardy. She turns quiet, squirming.

HANNAH (CONT'D)

Favorite. Wow. Hard to say. I've studied Composition more than actual Literature. Gee. I know Maureen enjoys Jane...

11.

Searching for a last name, Hannah looks back to Maureen for help.

MAUREEN

Jane Austen.

HANNAH

That's the one. I hear she's good.
But my favorite writer? Let me think about that a bit, OK?

Short beat. Hannah lowers her voice, almost a loud confessional whisper.

HANNAH (CONT'D)

I didn't go to college.

20 INT. JOHN'S MOBILE HOME - DAY
20

John is holding court at his mobile home, showcasing the finest in furniture from Sears. John stuffs his home with various MILITARY ARTIFACTS--photos, equipment, books. He's got it all. John talks to the camera.

JOHN

Everything John K. Butzin knows about writing comes down to two simple words: Tom Clancy. Yes, sir. Tom Clancy. The man's a genius. Does his research. All those nitty-gritty technical details. Now that's writing!

John K. Butzin has one agent very interested in Roaring Lion. And a publisher up in Oxnard is looking at it as we speak. Plus a certain cousin's best friend has a neighbor who has an in with Clint Eastwood, so Hollywood might be calling soon. Don't know how the other members of the writing group will handle all this success by one person. They better not be pussies.

21 INT. ALAN AND COLETTE'S HOUSE -- LIVING ROOM - DAY
21

Alan and Colette remain on the couch. Talking to the camera. All smiles. Much more comfortable with the camera.

ALAN

Well, I'm an optometrist in Glendale.

COLETTE

And I write full-time.

12.

ALAN

Our last name's Mooney. You could call us Mooneys. We get that joke all the time.

The couple giggle at the joke. Forced.

ALAN (CONT'D)

Which writer do I admire? Hmmmm. How about John Grisham? Look at all that money he's made! Just teasing, John. We know you deserved every dime, but, hey, John, could you spread it around a bit, pal?

COLETTE

Alan likes to tease.

She gives her husband an affectionate squeeze.

ALAN

Colette, here, is the real writer. I'm more of an idea guy. I come up with great ideas, but don't always follow through. I'll show you.

He picks up his mini-digital Olympus RECORDER off the coffee

table. Thinks for a second.

ALAN (CONT'D)

(To recorder)
Idea for romantic novel.

Alan catches himself.

ALAN (CONT'D)

No. Make that, idea for romantic
ebook.

He winks at the camera--showing he's hip to the jargon.

ALAN (CONT'D)

Possible movie option, too: Frovers.
They couldn't be friends. They
couldn't be lovers. So they became
Frovers.

Satisfied, Alan turns off the recorder.

22 EXT. COLETTE'S GARDEN - DAY
22

Colette opens the sliding glass door and steps out into a beautiful garden area. Quiet and private. Camera follows her over to a solitary BENCH.

13.

COLETTE

This is where I come for inspiration.
I believe a writer must have quiet
and solitude. I'll meditate. Write
in my journal. Set out my creative
path for the day. This is my Walden
Pond.

Colette sits down on the bench. Takes in the environment.

COLETTE (CONT'D)

Favorite author? I'd have to say
Joan Didion. Her writing sends
shivers down my spine. Though Joyce
Carol Oates has been known to bring
me to actual orgasm.

23 EXT. COLETTE'S GARDEN - DAY
23

Colette sits on her bench, reading a BOOK. C.U. reveals that it is a novel by Joyce Carol Oates. Colette appears to

be getting into the story just a bit too much.

24 EXT. COLETTE'S GARDEN - DAY
24

POOL GUY and GARDENER hear Colette's sensual cries drifting over the hedge. What the hell? They exchange puzzled looks.

25 EXT. COLETTE'S GARDEN - DAY
25

Back to the present. Camera picks up a FRAMED PHOTO OF OPRAH from a corner of the bench. Holds it up for camera.

COLETTE

Oh, this? I keep Oprah out here for luck. She's done so much to help writers. I know I'm going to be on her television show one day. I just know it.

Colette can already see the moment in her mind. Short beat. Then she looks off-camera--listening to someone.

COLETTE (CONT'D)

What? Oprah doesn't have a TV show anymore? Really? Since when?

Short beat as she hears the answer.

COLETTE (CONT'D)

Oh...

Short beat as she tries to cover.

14.

COLETTE (CONT'D)

I knew that. I did. I-I knew.

26 INT. HENRY'S APARTMENT - NIGHT
26

Henry stands in front of his mirror. Checks his appearance. Again. Talks to the camera.

HENRY

Tonight's the night. I'm going to ask Hannah out.

Henry becomes lost in thought. Regroups.

HENRY (CONT'D)

It's time. I like her. She likes me--
I think. I've got to take action.
Still stuck on Page 100. So I'm
asking Hannah out on a date tonight.
It'll be great. And I'll put this
writer's block behind me.

Checks his appearance one last time in the mirror.

HENRY (CONT'D)

Wish me luck.

27 **INT. ALAN AND COLETTE'S HOUSE -- LIVING ROOM - NIGHT**
27

Alan sits in his favorite chair, talking directly to the camera.

ALAN

I'm the group leader. After all,
getting together was my idea. They're
all my patients. That's how we met.
First one published gets a free eye
exam.

Alan cackles a bit too hard at that joke. He listens to a question being asked.

ALAN (CONT'D)

Why did I form the group? To help
Colette. Oh, I certainly enjoy the
creative process, but Colette?
Writing is her dream. I'd do anything
for her because...because she's my
dream. So there you have it.

Alan reaches for his tape recorder.

ALAN (CONT'D)

Possible names for future characters.
(MORE)

15.

ALAN (CONT'D)

Anthony Gilmore. No, wait. Make
that Anthony T. Gilmore. Much
better. Slate McCoy. Fletcher Peck.
Fiona Foxx. And...a man known simply
as Banjo.

Satisfied, Alan turns off the recorder.

28 INT. RESTAURANT #1 - NIGHT
28

Place is empty. Alan, Colette, William, John, and Henry gather around the center table.

The WRITERS AT WORK poster is propped up against a nearby empty chair. Hard not to notice the EMPTY CHAIR at the table. Hannah is missing.

Waitress #1 pours coffee all around. Henry fidgets in his chair, focused on the empty chair.

JOHN

(To William)

How come we never chow down at your place?

WILLIAM

This is my place. Close to the working people.

John rolls his eyes.

HENRY

Where's Hannah? Anyone know?

Nobody responds. Alan checks his watch.

ALAN

Time to get started.

HENRY

Shouldn't we wait for Hannah?

WILLIAM

Let's go, people. I'm ready to read.

ALAN

William's right. We'll start. She'll show up.

William starts passing out pages. Henry eyes the empty chair. Colette looks over William's pages. There are only three. She has a puzzled look.

16.

COLETTE

William, aren't these the same pages you read last time?

WILLIAM

Nope, they're different.

JOHN

They look the same.

WILLIAM

They're different. I changed a word.

HENRY

One word?

COLETTE

That's it?

WILLIAM

Writing is rewriting, Colette.
Bukowski said, "Write five words.
Rewrite seven."

HENRY

No. Dorothy Parker said that.

JOHN

One word? Jesus H. Christ.

WILLIAM

It's my creative vision, John.

ALAN

(Jumping in)
Which we are here to support. This
is William's decision.

WILLIAM

Let me just read. See if you can
pick out the word. Tell me if it's
better, or worse.

JOHN

(Muttering)
One goddamn word.

Henry continues staring at the empty chair.

29 INT. RESTAURANT #1 - NIGHT
29

The evening meeting is winding to an end. John stands up to stretch. Alan slides papers into his leather satchel.

HANNAH'S CHAIR remains empty. Henry remains concerned.

HENRY

I wonder what happened to Hannah.

ALAN

It's not like her to miss.

The mystery is quickly solved. Front door opens. In rushes Hannah, dashing directly towards the others, looking harried.

HANNAH

I'm so sorry. I'm so sorry for missing the meeting.

JOHN

What happened? Your car break down?

ALAN

You oversleep?

COLETTE

Maureen. Is Maureen OK?

WILLIAM

People. C'mon. Look at her. That glow. Hannah met a guy. She got laid.

Hannah gives William a playful smack on the back.

HANNAH

As a matter of fact, I did meet a guy.

WILLIAM

Told ya.

HANNAH

His name's Brian.

Check out Henry. He looks absolutely horrified. No!

Hannah takes a deep breath and flashes a smile the size of the Grand Canyon.

HANNAH (CONT'D)

He's my new agent!

She remembers the camera.

HANNAH (CONT'D)

(Directly to camera)
An agent. I've got an agent!

Surprise and silence. The writers look at each other and then back at Hannah. Not quite sure how to react.

18.

Stunned as Hannah turns her attention back to the group.

HANNAH (CONT'D)

That writing class I took? Well, for the final project, I turned in the first chapter of Sleeping on the Moon. I guess the teacher liked it. Then he gave it to his friend who's an agent. Brian. He called. Had to see me right away. Brian wants to sign me.

WILLIAM

Bet Brian wants more than that.

Playful smack from Colette to William on the shoulder: Behave.

COLETTE

That's so great, Hannah.

JOHN

I salute you, young lady.

And he does.

ALAN

Yes. Fantastic. Fanntasstic.

Henry takes it all in quietly, unable to speak.

Alan bounces up and gives Hannah a big hug as the others immediately start peppering her with questions.

30 **INT. RESTAURANT #1 - NIGHT**

30

Colette, Alan, John, William and Henry encircle a beaming Hannah as Waitress #1 snaps their PHOTO.

31 **INT. RESTAURANT #1 - NIGHT**

31

Alan pops the drugstore CHAMPAGNE and pours into the cheap plastic cups, as Colette passes them around to Hannah, Henry, John, and William.

ALAN

(Raising cup)
To Hannah!

Everyone clinks their cups together.

HANNAH

Thank you. But I just want to remind everyone that we're all in this together. I couldn't have come this far without the group.

19.

ALAN

(Smiling)
All for one

But our camera picks up on the individual writers and something is amiss. Everything seems a beat off. People appear happy, but a little subdued. The joy seems a bit too forced.

HANNAH

I'm merely the first one to get signed. But we're all going to have an agent soon.

JOHN

Well, as a matter of fact, there's an agent in Santa Monica very interested in John K. Butzin. He's reading the manuscript as we speak.

The others let John's remark pass without comment. William taps Henry on the shoulder.

WILLIAM

(Lower voice)
Hey, can you lend me ten bucks?

Henry is still a bit dazed by this unexpected turn of events.

HENRY

Sure.

WILLIAM

Thanks, bro'. You're the best.

Henry's eyes can't leave Hannah.

32 EXT. RESTAURANT #1 - NIGHT
32

The front door to the restaurant swings open and the writing group members tumble out into the evening. Alan carries his WRITERS AT WORK sign.

William makes a move towards Hannah, but the the ever-protective Henry grabs her gently by her elbow, cutting William off. They start walking in one direction. William and John head out in the other. Meanwhile, Alan and Colette wave enthusiastically to Hannah.

ALAN

Congratulations again, Hannah!

COLETTE

Yes, yes. Way to go, Hannah!

20.

HANNAH

(Calling back)

Thank you! 'Night.

Alan and Colette continue to smile and wave until Hannah is out of ear shot.

ALAN

Well, Hannah's got an agent.

Short beat.

COLETTE

She must have slept with him.

ALAN

Of course she did.

33 EXT. CITY STREET - NIGHT
33

Henry and Hannah arrive at her car. She unlocks the front door of her clunker-of-a-Ford as Henry waits.

HENRY

I'm so proud of you, Hannah.

HANNAH

Your turn will come, Henry. You're a better writer than I am. So much better. You went to college.

Hannah looks directly into the camera, pointing to Henry.

HANNAH (CONT'D)

He's a great writer. Henry Obert. I
knew him when.

Henry, clearly embarrassed, puts his hand up to block the
camera. Tries to change the subject.

HENRY

Listen. Maybe some afternoon we
could go for a drive. There are
some special places I'd like to show
you.

HANNAH

Sure. I can't believe I've lived out
here four years and haven't seen --

She stops in mid-sentence. A light goes on in her head.

HANNAH (CONT'D)

Oh, my.

21.

HENRY

What?

HANNAH

Four years. It's been four years
since I moved here. And now I have
an agent. It's the number four again.
My lucky number. I should have known
this was going to happen.

HENRY

There is no one more deserving.

Hannah rewards Henry's praise with a peck on the lips. And
a warm hug.

Hannah steps in her car, starts it up and rolls down the
window.

HANNAH

I'm going to dedicate my novel to
you.

A final wave and Henry watches as she disappears into the
night. He sighs.

34 INT. MONTAGE OF SHOTS - DAY
34

A series of shots featuring the writers writing--or, at least, trying: Alan pauses between eye appointments to record an idea.

William continues scribbling at the restaurant, this time eyeing WAITRESS #2.

Hannah, sitting cross-legged on her bed, types away on her laptop computer.

Colette sits on her private bench, seeking inspiration.

John sits at his keyboard. Vintage black-and-white war movie plays on the TV. John appears more interested in the movie.

Henry stares at his laptop. The screen is blank. Henry surrenders yet again and flips off the computer.

35 INT. HENRY'S APARTMENT - DAY
35

Henry, sitting in his studio apartment, wears his pizza delivery outfit. Ready for work. Talks to the camera.

HENRY

I'm happy for Hannah.

(MORE)

22.

HENRY (CONT'D)

Still, her getting an agent sort of ruins my plans, doesn't it? I mean, Hannah has an agent. I don't. That won't work for dating. I can't ask her out until I get an agent.

Henry gestures at a PHOTOGRAPH taped to the wall among his rejection letters.

HENRY (CONT'D)

That's Richard Benedict. He's written seven novels. Fantastic writer.

INSERT ARCHIVAL PHOTOS of Richard Benedict.

HENRY (CONT'D)

The Fitzgerald of his generation. Richard Benedict made me want to be a writer.

36 INT. ALAN AND COLETTE'S HOUSE -- LIVING ROOM - DAY
36

Colette dressed in a leotard, practices basic yoga on a mat in her living room. Chanting. Overly dramatic, as always.

Takes a break and talks to the camera.

COLETTE

My novel is called Nyet, Not Yet.
It's about a Russian woman who comes to this country in search of love. It was inspired by a story I heard from one of my massage clients, Yuri. Yes, it's true--I used to do massage. In fact, that's how I met Alan, though I certainly didn't give him the kind of massage he really wanted. At least not the first time.

Colette allows herself a slight smile at the memory.

COLETTE (CONT'D)

I will get an agent. It comes down to this: if Hannah can get an agent, I can get an agent. After all, I am a graduate of Mills College.

37 INT. HANNAH'S APARTMENT - DAY
37

Plopped down in her rocking chair, Hannah talks to someone O.S. Maureen goes about her day in the background.

23.

HANNAH

Have I thought of my favorite author yet? No. Not yet. There are so many, you know?

The deep breaths and waving of hands begin again. Here comes that smile as she looks directly into the camera.

HANNAH (CONT'D)

So. I am somewhat superstitious. Yes. Guilty. I'm drawn to the number 4. I was born at exactly 4:04 p.m. on April 4th. 4-4-4-4. That wasn't an accident. No way.

She's dead serious.

HANNAH (CONT'D)

Certain things I've learned to avoid.
Black cats. Cracked mirrors. Oh.
And the number 13 especially. I hate
the number 13. Hate it.

Conversation interrupted by RINGING DOORBELL. Hannah frowns at the interruption as Maureen scurries to the door and opens it, revealing Colette hiding behind a HUGE GIFT BASKET. She breezes in. Takes over. Over the top.

COLETTE

Hi...Hi...Hello everyone. I was
just in the neighborhood and--

Colette freezes when she notices the camera.

COLETTE (CONT'D)

Oh, Hannah. I'm so sorry. I didn't
know they'd be here--

Yeah, right. Hannah springs up. Follows Colette as she sets the basket down for all to admire.

HANNAH

Colette. What a lovely surprise!

Hugs all around between Hannah and Maureen and Colette. Hannah looks blown away by the gift basket.

HANNAH (CONT'D)

My, what's this?

COLETTE

Oh. It's nothing. I just had to
say "Congratulations" to my new
favorite author.

24.

Hannah is truly touched. Maureen notices a CARD attached to the basket.

MAUREEN

(Reading)

"For Poodles...Now may we have sex
again? Love, Alan."

What? Embarrassed, Colette snatches the card from Maureen. Hannah is more focused on the gift. Doesn't really hear.

HANNAH

So sweet of you, Colette.

COLETTE

My pleasure. Say, Hannah...about
your agent?

Hannah looks over at Colette: What?

COLETTE (CONT'D)

Is he--Is he taking on new clients?

HANNAH

Gee. I don't really know.

Colette blurts out without thinking.

COLETTE

Think you could ask?

Awkward situation for Hannah. How best to respond?

HANNAH

I guess so. Maybe.

COLETTE

Because if he is...

HANNAH

Let's talk about this at group
meeting, OK?

COLETTE

Oh. Of course. Of course.
Absolutely.

Long beat. Conversation over. The three women wait for one
another to speak. Colette checks her watch.

COLETTE (CONT'D)

Well...

A hug for both Maureen and Hannah.

25.

COLETTE (CONT'D)

I've got to go. Talk soon. By the
way, everything in the basket--gluten
free!

A final wave to the camera and Colette disappears.

MAUREEN

Colette Mooney. My, that woman is something else.

A light goes off in Hannah's head.

HANNAH

(To herself; counting
on her fingers)
Colette Mooney. C-o-l-e-t-t-e M-o-o-n-e...

She can't finish the count. The ugly truth is staring her in the face.

HANNAH (CONT'D)

13 letters. Oh, dear...

Hannah and Maureen exchange concerned looks.

38 INT. ALAN'S OFFICE DAY
38

Hannah and Henry sit together in the reception area. Alan breezes in, ever-smiling, greeting both enthusiastically.

39 INT. ALAN'S OFFICE - DAY
39

Rows of EYE GLASSES on display as Alan guides Hannah over to the fitting table. Henry tags along.

HANNAH

Thanks for seeing me today, Alan.

ALAN

No problemo. Let's get you some new eye wear.

HANNAH

Something that makes me look smart.

HENRY

You're already smart, Hannah.

Hannah gives Henry's hand a playful squeeze: Thank you. Alan and Hannah sit down opposite from each other. Henry pulls up a chair to the side. Alan selects a pair. Puts them on Hannah.

26.

ALAN

How about...

Hannah shrugs her blase reaction.

HANNAH

Mmmmmmm.

Alan removes the brown-colored frames. Studies them for a second. Then -- inspiration arrives.

ALAN

Excuse me. One sec.

He reaches inside his coat pocket for his RECORDER. Speaks into it.

ALAN (CONT'D)

Ah. Name for character. Alexander Brown. Wears brown-colored glasses.

HANNAH

Of course he would.

Henry nods, agreeing. Satisfied, Alan puts the recorder away and reaches for another pair of glasses.

ALAN

You know this great idea for a novel hit me this morning. It's called Unleashed.

Alan tries the second pair on Hannah. She checks herself in the mirror. Then she shows Henry. They both shake their head: No. It is a funny moment between friends. They laugh as Alan reaches for pair #3.

ALAN (CONT'D)

It's about a dog who becomes human for 24 hours in order to rescue his kidnapped owner. I love this idea, Hannah.

HANNAH

Could be a winner.

Alan puts the third pair of glasses on Hannah. She checks herself in the mirror, finally liking what she sees. She looks over towards Henry.

HANNAH (CONT'D)

What do you think?

Poor Henry. She does look good. He's falling even harder for

her by the moment.

27.

HENRY

You look great, Hannah.

Hannah can't decide. She studies herself in the mirror as Henry studies her. Henry reaches for his ANDROID and snaps a photo of her. Alan brings them back to real time.

ALAN

Question: You think your agent might be interested in this idea? Does he have a dog?

HANNAH

(Evading)
Oh. I don't know--

ALAN

How about a cat? It could be a cat.

HANNAH

Um. Sure. Probably could be.

ALAN

Think about mentioning it to your agent, OK? Unleashed. Dog -- or cat -- becomes human.

Alan beams with pride at his imagination on display. Hannah fidgets. Avoids Alan. Henry jumps in to save the moment.

HENRY

I'll help you develop the idea, Alan.

Alan looks pleased. Hannah looks grateful.

40 INT. RESTAURANT #1 - DAY

40

The TWO MIDDLE-AGED WOMEN (CUSTOMER #1 AND CUSTOMER #2) sit across from each other in the nearly-deserted restaurant.

Body language suggests an intense, passionate, personal chat.

WILLIAM (V.O.)

A writer has to hear everything. On the streets. In the restaurants.

But something's amiss. Customer #1 stops abruptly, glancing at the table next to them: William has suddenly materialized.

Sitting with a cup of coffee and a legal pad, scribbling.

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

My dialogue has to be real so I'm everywhere. Standing behind you at the checkout stand.

28.

Customer #1 resumes conversation, but looks sharply back at William. His head is tilted towards them. Listening.

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

Peeing next to you at the urinal. I watch. I listen.

Customer #1 says something to Customer #2. Looks back at William. His head is still cocked as he makes notes.

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

Writing down scraps of conversation.

Customer #1 grows more agitated. Customer #2 tries to calm her down. Finally, Customer #1 shoots up and marches over to William, her finger jabbing in the air towards the notebook. William shrugs, playing dumb.

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

That's right. I eavesdrop.

Customer #1 reaches down and grabs the notebook from William. He tries to stop her, but too late.

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

How else do you accurately capture the misery of the human condition?

She reads the page and shows it to Customer #2 who reads the notes and is equally shocked.

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

Now Bukowski says "An intellectual says a simple thing in a hard way."

The two women start yelling at William. He keeps shaking his head. Customer #1 tears the page into shreds.

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

"An artist says a hard thing in a simple way."

Waitress #2 comes over. The women talk to her and she starts yelling at William. Customer #1 poking her finger in his

chest. Escalates to a push. The COOK comes out and starts yelling at William.

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

Gotta love it. That's me. Simple.
Real.

Surrounded by yelling people, William breaks through the circle and moves towards the door. The BUS BOY yells, too.

29.

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

Powerful. An artist.

41 EXT. JOHN'S MOBILE HOME - DAY

41

John grins for the camera. The reason why sits next to him in the matching LAWN CHAIRS.

The WOMAN is clearly younger than John. Plainly dressed in a faded sweat shirt. Little makeup. Nervous in front of the camera, but she looks more at us than she does at John. He can't keep his eyes off her.

CAPTION: SIGRID HAGENGUTH

JOHN

Meet someone very s-p-e-c-i-e-l.
Here with us today all the way from...

Coaxing Sigrid to finish the thought.

SIGRID

Germany.

JOHN

Oh! That accent! Found her working
at the hardware store. Went in for a
drill bit. Came out with a prime
candidate for Mrs. John K. Butzin.

42 INT. HARDWARE STORE - DAY

42

Watch Sigrid work. Hard. Uber hard. Stocking shelves. Running cash register. Consulting HER BOSS -- an older man. Assisting customers. Moving boxes. Always wearing a red employee vest. She does speak with a thick accent. Sincere, if naive.

SIGRID

(Starts speaking
German. Stops. In
English)

Apologies. American only. I come
from Dusseldorf, yes? Came to this
great country 90 years ago -- no, 90
days ago. Apologies. Took job in
store as cleaning lady. Promoted to
cashier. Now assistant, assistant
manager.

43 INT. JOHN'S MOBILE HOME - DAY
43

Sigrid stands next to a wall display. Everything and anything
to do with the U.S. is hanging on this wall: Magazine covers
of Obama. A U.S. flag. Burger King logo. Photo of Jay Leno.

30.

N.Y. Yankees pennant. Whatever comes to mind for the U.S.
seems to be taped, tacked, glued or whatever to that wall.

SIGRID

This my 'Wall of America' tribute,
yes? To my new country. And in the
center, of course, the three men I
admire most in America.

First we see the FRAMED PHOTO of a certain business mogul.

SIGRID (CONT'D)

Herr Trump. Very rich. Very famous.
Very sexy.

Then we move on to the second PHOTO of a certain TV celebrity.

SIGRID (CONT'D)

Herr Simon Cowell. Very rich. Very
famous. Very sexy.

Move on to the third PHOTO. Hey, we know this person:

SIGRID (CONT'D)

Ja. My special guy. Herr Bootzin.
About to become very rich. Very
famous. Already very sexy.

(Beat)

Then maybe Sigrid Hagenguth becomes
Mrs. John K. Bootzin, ja?

44 EXT. COLETTE'S GARDEN - DAY
44

Colette sits. Focused on the WHITE ENVELOPE in one hand. Alan sits next to her, squeezing her other hand. Photo of Oprah on the other side.

COLETTE

I know this is a rejection letter.
I can't open this. I can't be
rejected today. I take rejection so
personally.

ALAN

I bet it's good news.

She opens the envelope. Peeks inside. No letter. Just the SMALLEST POST-IT NOTE flutters out on to the ground. Colette picks it up.

COLETTE

"Sorry. Not interested." I knew it.
How can such a big rejection come
from such a small piece of paper?

31.

Colette folds the Post-It Note in half--and then in quarters. Holding it in her hand, she begins to chant. Alan holds on to her hand and pats her on the back. Good husband.

45 INT. HANNAH'S APARTMENT - DAY

45

Hannah and Maureen watch with interest and obvious appreciation as Henry, dutifully wearing his uniform, cleans their living room carpet.

Open PIZZA STARZ ÍBOX on the breakfast bar. Looks like Henry has brought dinner, as well. Hannah's iPhone goes off. As a courtesy, Henry stops the machine.

HANNAH

(On phone)
Hello? Yes. Oh, hi, Brian.
(LISTENING) Really? (LISTENING) Oh
my god! Oh my god! Oh my god!

Hannah starts jumping up and down like a little girl while Maureen and Henry look on in bewildered anticipation.

HANNAH (CONT'D)

(On phone)
Oh my god!

MAUREEN

What's he saying?

HANNAH

He sold my novel.

HENRY

What?

HANNAH

(Nodding excitedly)

Brian sold *Sleeping on the Moon*!

Now Maureen starts jumping up and down. Henry can't hide his surprise.

MAUREEN

Oh my god! Oh my god!

HANNAH

(On telephone)

Yes, Brian. I will. Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you. I will.

Promise. Thank you!

Hannah turns off her iPhone. Mother and daughter can't believe the news. Jumping up and down. Warm embrace.

32.

In turn, they both embrace Henry, who also shares the genuine, sincere moment.

HENRY

You did it, Hannah! You did it!

MAUREEN

I'm so proud of you, dear!

HANNAH

Thank you.

Another embrace between mother and daughter. This could go on all night.

HENRY

We need to tell the group!

The smile disappears from Hannah's face.

HANNAH

The group. Oh, dear. The group. No, no, I can't tell them about this.

HENRY

Why not?

HANNAH

Oh.

She looks to Maureen for support.

HANNAH (CONT'D)

It will seem like I'm bragging or something. I mean I'm the one with an agent. Now this. It could be too much, too soon, don't you think?

Henry understands. He wants to help.

HENRY

Suppose I tell them? They could hear the news from me.

Hannah lights up at the suggestion. She goes to Henry and gives him a tight hug. So very tight. Blesses him with another friendly peck on the lips.

HANNAH

Thank you, my friend. I can always depend on you, can't I?

46 INT. JOHN'S MOBILE HOME - DAY

46

John talks to the camera.

33.

JOHN

That's great for Hannah, her little book deal, and all. But John K. Butzin has some news to announce, as well.

John holds up a BROCHURE.

JOHN (CONT'D)

I've just inked a deal with U R the Publisher, a reputable company based in New Delhi. They publish 5000 titles internationally every year. Paying 'em two hundred dollars and they're going to format and publish my novel Roaring Lion. I've waited for this moment forever. Finally, a Butzin

is going to be a published author.

A voice drifts in from another room.

SIGRID (O.S.)

Yoo-hoo. Mr. Published-Author-to-Be.
Sigrid would like you to come in for
personal, private autograph. Please.
Please.

John gulps. Then he remembers the camera. Makes a "cut"
motion with his finger across the neck.

47 INT. HENRY'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

47

Henry's turn to host the group meeting. Alan, William,
Colette, and John share the lumpy couch and the folding metal
chairs. Open PIZZA STARZ BOXES in the background.

Everyone is enjoying a single slice of pizza off a paper
plate--except for John, who is inhaling two pieces at once.
The mood is somber. Quiet.

WILLIAM

Hannah's just lucky. That's all.

John tries to agree, but his mouth is too stuffed with pizza.
Cheap FLOWERS from Ralph's and BALLOONS in full display on
the coffee table. Henry stands--listening--by the front
door.

HENRY

Here she comes!

Henry opens the door. Hannah floats in.

The serious expressions suddenly, magically, turn to broad
smiles. Henry is the first to offer a hug.

34.

Alan, William, Colette, John give her a standing ovation.
Hannah notices the balloons and flowers.

HANNAH

Ohhhhhh. For me? You shouldn't have.

WILLIAM

Way to go, Ms. Published Author!

Everyone gets a hug from Hannah. William gives Hannah an
extra long hug.

ALAN

We're all jealous, Hannah. Just teasing.

COLETTE

No. Seriously. We're all jealous.

Nervous laughter around the room.

HANNAH

You're all making too much of a spectacle here.

HENRY

When will your book come out, Hannah?

HANNAH

A year. Takes about a year.

WILLIAM

So how much did you get?

ALAN

Don't ask her that.

WILLIAM

(Shrugging)

Why not? How much did you get?

HANNAH

I did OK. Leave it at that. What's important is that I owe this success to all of you. I would be lost without this writing group.

JOHN

(Louder than normal)

I don't know if anyone heard.

All eyes turn to John, still inhaling pizza.

35.

JOHN (CONT'D)

But U.R. the Publisher has agreed to publish Roaring Lion by John K. Butzin.

Puzzled looks are the reaction.

ALAN

U.R. the Publisher?

HENRY

They self-publish. E-books. Print on Demand.

JOHN

That's right, Obert. But I'll have my book in two weeks. None of this B.S. waiting around. John K. Butzin will be a published author. And be published first.

HANNAH

(Ever-diplomatic)
Well, John. Congratulations.

She leans over and gives him the briefest of hugs. There are other congratulatory murmurs coming from the group.

ALAN

My, two published authors in the group. The rest of us are going to have to catch up.

48 INT. HENRY'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

48

The meeting gets down to business. Alan, Colette, Henry, William and Hannah, wearing her new glasses, listen as John reads from Roaring Lion.

JOHN

(Reading)
Gunner stared out over the bleak horizon, seeing one dead Viet Cong after another lay scattered on the bloody hillside. He had won this time, but Gunner knew Charlie would be back in the morning. By god, he would be ready. So would his M60 General Purpose Machine Gun and Mark 2 Fragmentation/Hand Rifle Grenade.

John finishes and sits back in his chair, quite pleased with himself.

36.

ALAN

OK, John. Nicely done. Let's get some feedback.

Henry, as always, has been making notes.

HENRY

Well. In terms of the characters--

JOHN

(Jumping in)

--Hold on, Obert. I wanna hear from her.

John points towards Hannah.

ALAN

We'll hear from everybody.

JOHN

I don't want to hear from everybody. She has a book coming out. John K. Butzin has a book coming out. I want to hear from Hannah, author to author.

WILLIAM

Oh, screw you.

ALAN

This is really going against the spirit of the group, John. Everyone's opinion is valid.

JOHN

Hers is more valid. What'd you think, Hannah? Tell me.

Hannah struggles to speak. Clearly uncomfortable.

HANNAH

I-I . . .

The words freeze in her mouth. Awkward silence. Finally.

WILLIAM

(Standing up)

Going outside for a smoke.

William thunders away from the group. Colette watches him go.

COLETTE

I'll go talk to him.

Colette follows, calling after William.

ALAN

Let's take a fifteen minute break,
shall we?

Embarrassed, Hannah excuses herself. Henry trails along after her, leaving a muttering John and calm Alan alone. Alan reaches for his recorder. Talks into it.

ALAN (CONT'D)

Ahhh, idea for Michael Crichton-type novel. Members of Antarctic research station attacked by mutant penguins.

Satisfied, Alan turns off the recorder while John reaches for more pizza.

49 EXT. COLETTE'S GARDEN - DAY

49

Colette is back on her bench. Standing behind her is a mysterious MAN (Over 40) who favors black clothes and dark shades.

CAPTION: DR. XIROMAN

COLETTE

I want you to meet someone special.
This is my spiritual adviser. Doctor Xiroman has taken a vow of silence for one full year to protest climate change. What an amazing man. Dr. Xiroman is going to cleanse the air of all this rejection.

Camera goes to Dr. Xiroman. Somber, expressionless. Does he even have a pulse?

Dr. Xiroman walks over to small fire pit and meditates as he places his hands over the rising flames. Colette begins a New Age chant for added support.

50 INT. RESTAURANT #2 - DAY

50

THREE YOUNG MEN in the corner booth. Jeans and baseball caps. Very animated conversation. Loud, punctuated by laughter. They think they're the only people in the joint. The WAITRESS-- EUDORA (20's)--with the purple streaks in her hair and matching purple glasses, refills their cups.

William sits alone at the counter, impossible to hide his disdain. He talks to the camera with the three men in the

background.

WILLIAM

See those jokers back there?

(MORE)

38.

WILLIAM (CONT'D)

They "write" for TV. Town's full of them. Creative vultures. Anything for a paycheck. Fade in. Fade out. C.S.I. 24. Who Wants to Suck My --

William scoffs as the disdain drips from his mouth.

WILLIAM (CONT'D)

Gimme a break. Television. Telecrap. They've sold their souls to the devil. For what? A house in Malibu? A tennis court?

William glances over his shoulder, shaking his head in disgust. Another table catches his eye. TWO ATTRACTIVE WOMEN engage in friendly banter over coffee. William stares them down, making friendly eye contact.

The woman facing him returns eye contact. She smiles. William smiles, watching them as he continues.

WILLIAM (CONT'D)

That will never be me. I will never compromise my vision for financial gain. I'd rather borrow money from friends than sell out for a quick dollar.

The two women stand up. William is stoked. This is too easy. But the women instead go to the three TV writers. Immediately invited to sit down with them.

William can't believe it. What the...

HENRY (V.O.)

"...Gatsby had an extraordinary gift for hope, a romantic readiness...

51 INT. HENRY'S APARTMENT - DAY

51

Henry reads from The Great Gatsby.

HENRY

"...such as I have never found in any other person and which it is not likely I shall ever find again..."

Henry is always moved whenever he reads Fitzgerald. Putting down the book, he talks to the camera.

HENRY (CONT'D)

You know, the year before he died, F.

(MORE)

39.

HENRY (CONT'D)

Scott Fitzgerald made a grand total of \$13.13 in royalties from his writing. I guess Hannah's right about 13 being unlucky.

A question is asked O.S. Henry listens.

HENRY (CONT'D)

Sure. Sure. I know that. Gatsby does end tragically. But that's fiction. Hannah...She's real. Our story will have a happy ending.

Pause. Henry rethinks.

HENRY (CONT'D)

Maybe. Maybe a happy ending.

His confidence flies out the door.

HENRY (CONT'D)

Hope. Hope we have a happy ending. Fingers crossed.

52 **INT. ALAN & COLETTE'S HOUSE -- LIVING ROOM - DAY**

52

Alan and Colette hold court on their living room couch, talking to the camera.

ALAN

There's been one rule in this house. Whatever Colette wants, Colette gets.

COLETTE

Thank you, Alan.

They look at each other adoringly. Real or fake?

ALAN

She wants a Mercedes? No problem.
Credit cards? How many? Her own
business? Done. An agent?

Colette eats it up.

ALAN (CONT'D)

Call it karma or serendipity or
kismet. Whatever. But it just so
happens that very well-known literary
agent David Keller--

COLETTE

(Interrupting)

--Very well-known. He's so known.

40.

ALAN

Exactly. Well, guess who is coming
in tomorrow to see Dr. Alan Mooney
for an eye examination and new
glasses?

Colette starts squealing in anticipation. Alan nods with
confidence and flashes a "thumbs up."

COLETTE

I love you, Poodles.

ALAN

Love you more, Poodles.

53 **INT. ALAN'S OFFICE - DAY**

53

The casually dressed MAN (40's) sits in the waiting area for
Alan Mooney, spending time on his iPhone, conducting business
as he waits.

CAPTION: DAVID KELLER

He doesn't have to wait long. Alan personally comes out
into the waiting area to fetch him. Big grin. Hand extended.

ALAN

Dr. Alan Mooney.

David, caught off guard by the doctor's sudden appearance,
winds up his phone conversation.

DAVID

(on phone)
Let me call you back.

David stands up.

DAVID (CONT'D)

David Keller.

They shake hands.

ALAN

I know. Big fan. Big fan.

David can't help but notice the camera.

ALAN (CONT'D)

Oh, that. They're doing a little
documentary about my writing group.

DAVID

Really?

41.

ALAN

Just act natural.

Lowering his voice.

ALAN (CONT'D)

It was supposed to be a reality
series.

54 **INT. ALAN'S OFFICE -- EXAMINATION ROOM - DAY**
54

Standard examination room. Alan guides David into the chair.

ALAN

Great. Let's start out with a basic
eye examination.

Alan flips a couple SWITCHES. Eye reading CHART appears on
the wall. Alan turns off the lights.

ALAN (CONT'D)

OK, David. See if you can read that
first line for me, please.

DAVID

(Reading)
X7K6AC

ALAN

Very good, David. Would you like to try for what's behind Door Number Three? Try this one, please.

Alan brings up a different line on the screen.

DAVID

(Reading)

E2PH8S

ALAN

20/25. Looking good, David. But anyone can identify simple letters and numbers. Let's see how you do reading a more challenging text.

Alan brings up a different page. Several paragraphs on a printed page.

ALAN (CONT'D)

See that?

DAVID

Yes.

42.

ALAN

Good. Read me the first paragraph, please.

DAVID

(Reading; monotone)

Natasha, the Russian peasant, dressed oh-so-slowly, consumed totally, completely, absolutely, by endless thoughts of Yuri.

ALAN

Oh. Very nice. Very nice. Now the next paragraph, please.

David looks rather puzzled, but complies.

DAVID

(Reading; monotone)

"I never, ever thought I could feel this way," Natasha said excitedly. "Nor could I," Yuri said happily, his body dripping with enormous beads of sweat.

ALAN

Man. Wow. Gee. Isn't that great writing? My wife Colette wrote that. The patients just love reading her stuff. It's from her new novel, Nyet, Not Yet.

A loud KNOCK on the examination room door. David is saved by the bell.

ALAN (CONT'D)

My, I wonder who that could be.

He walks over to the door, opens it and feigns surprise to see Colette. She moves right in.

COLETTE

Hi, honey. So sorry to intrude.

ALAN

Colette? Gee, this is an incredible coincidence. We were just talking about you. And here you are!

Colette is locked like a laser beam on David Keller.

COLETTE

(Gushing)
Hello.

43.

ALAN

Oh, where are my manners? Colette, this is David Keller. David, this is my wife, Colette Mooney. The writer.

DAVID

Hi.

COLETTE

Pleasure to meet you, David.

ALAN

Actually, Colette wrote this beautiful prose you've been reading, David. Honey, I can't believe this coincidence.

COLETTE

Well, I was just dropping off--

ALAN

(Overlapping)
Oh, of course. Thanks for bringing it by. Say, honey, David's been reading that first page of yours. You don't happen to have any more of that opening chapter, do you?

Colette thinks for a second.

COLETTE

As a matter of fact, I think I do. I think I do.

Colette searches her large PURSE and produces a manila folder.

ALAN

Say, how about that?

Colette hands the manila folder to David, who accepts it reluctantly. He's been had.

DAVID

How about that?

55 **INT. ALAN'S OFFICE -- EXAMINATION ROOM - DAY**
55

Colette sits in the chair, Alan stands behind her, massaging her shoulders. Both share that smirk of satisfaction.

COLETTE

That went very well.

ALAN

Oh, yes, Poodles. Very.

44.

COLETTE

Though David Keller did seem in a hurry to leave.

ALAN

The sooner he can begin reading.

Colette buys that. Of course.

COLETTE

I bet he calls tomorrow with an offer.

ALAN

I bet he calls tonight.

Alan's left hand starts to slide down towards Colette's chest. She doesn't notice--her mind is elsewhere.

56 **EXT. OUTSIDE ALAN'S OFFICE - DAY**
56

DAVID takes Colette's pages and tosses them in city TRASH CAN, muttering to himself as he walks away.

COLETTE (V.O.)

(Overlapping Alan)
I did it.

ALAN (V.O.)

(Overlapping Colette)
We did it.

57 **INT. HANNAH'S APARTMENT - DAY**
57

Hannah sits cross-legged on her living room floor, wearing her new glasses, reading typed pages. Henry sits close to her. Not too close. Waiting. Hannah finishes. Impressed.

HANNAH

Henry. This is good. So good.

HENRY

Really?

Hannah nods. Really.

HENRY (CONT'D)

But I've only got 100 pages. Can't seem to move forward.

HANNAH

I'm dying to know more about Scott and Christy. What great characters.

45.

HENRY

Yeah. Sure wish I knew what was going to happen with them.

Hannah gives Henry a friendly tap on the knee for encouragement.

HANNAH

You'll figure it out, Henry. It'll pass. Focus on your writing. No

distractions. The writing comes first.

Henry lets it sink in. Changes the subject.

HENRY

Say, um, remember I offered to drive you around and show you a couple special places?

58 EXT. RICHARD BENEDICT HOME - DAY

58

The imposing house screams success. Henry and Hannah sit in Henry's parked car, taking it in.

HANNAH

Who lives here?

HENRY

Richard Benedict.

HANNAH

Oh. That writer you like?

HENRY

Like? No. It's much more than that. Wow. He...He...

Henry struggles to put it into words.

HENRY (CONT'D)

...Reading Richard Benedict...made me want to be a better writer. He's that good, Hannah.

HANNAH

Can't say I've read his stuff. Nice house, though.

59 EXT. FITZGERALD/GRAHAM HOME - DAY

59

Henry and Hannah stand on the sidewalk in front of the North Hayworth home. Henry seems barely able to contain his excitement.

46.

HENRY

Here we are.

Hannah stares blankly at the house.

HENRY (CONT'D)

North Hayworth Avenue. Hollywood,
California.

Hannah smiles politely, but it's clear she doesn't recognize the house.

HENRY (CONT'D)

Big clue time. Sheila Graham.

Still nothing registers with Hannah.

HENRY (CONT'D)

OK. Give up? Writer Sheila Graham lived here. Fitzgerald was her lover. This is where he died on December **21, 1940.**

Hannah lets it all sink in.

HANNAH

Fitzgerald? He's the one who shot himself, right?

HENRY

No. Fitzgerald. F. Scott Fitzgerald. He wrote The Great Gatsby.

The name doesn't register with Hannah.

HENRY (CONT'D)

(Reciting from heart)

Gatsby believed in the green light, the orgiastic future that year by year recedes before us. It eluded us then, but that's--

HANNAH

(Interjecting)

I've never read it.

Henry can't hide his surprise.

HENRY

What?

Hannah stops, cognizant of the ever-present camera.

47.

HANNAH

(To camera)

Could you turn that off for a few

minutes, please?

HENRY

You know they can't. What's wrong?

Hannah hesitates. Counts to three. Lowers her voice.

HANNAH

I've never read The Great Gatsby.

HENRY

You're kidding.

HANNAH

Henry. I never went to college. I've heard of Hemingway. A little. Fitzgerald. Somewhere. But I don't have your education. Your smarts. I haven't read all these great novels. My stories come from my heart.

Henry lets it all sink in. Hannah looks at the house.

HANNAH (CONT'D)

Tell me about the book.

HENRY

Gatsby is about social position and the American Dream and . . .

Henry stops. Rethinks his explanation.

HENRY (CONT'D)

Actually, it's quite simple. Boy meets girl. Boy loses girl. Boy moves heaven and earth to win the girl back.

HANNAH

And it's your favorite?

Henry nods with his heart.

HANNAH (CONT'D)

So how does it end? Does boy get the girl?

Long beat. Then Henry reaches into the back seat of his car for his KNAPSACK. Puts it on his lap, unzips it. Pulls out his personal copy of Gatsby.

HENRY

Here. Take my copy.

He hands the well-read book to Hannah.

HENRY (CONT'D)

Now you can find out for yourself.

60 **INT. JOHN'S MOBILE HOME - DAY**
60

John is on the telephone, clutching a copy of Roaring Lion. He does not look happy.

JOHN

(On telephone)

Yes. I'm still holding. Where are you again? New Dehli? Oh.

John stares at his book, shaking his head. Waits for a few seconds.

Sigrid is in the background, doing light housekeeping, trying not to listen, but obviously can't avoid it.

JOHN (CONT'D)

(On telephone)

Butzin. John K. Butzin. Right. That's me. Roaring Lion. Yes. Well, I have a copy of my book you sent, but there must be some mistake...Well, you put a dog on the cover. Not a lion like we agreed.

John holds the book up for the camera to catch the unmistakable dog barking on the front cover.

JOHN (CONT'D)

(On telephone)

Plus the back cover is written in Chinese. Chinese...Yes, I know Chinese when I see it. One of those Chinese assault rifles almost cost me an eye at Hamburger Hill...

John listens--trying to remain calm.

JOHN (CONT'D)

I seem to be missing pages 1-0-7 to 1-1-2...Yes, I'm sure. And what in blazes is this Chapter Eight?

Sigrid keeps cleaning. Stoic expression.

49.

JOHN (CONT'D)

(On telephone)

This Chapter Eight isn't mine. It's about hormone replacement for women. Do you think John K. Butzin would write that? Must be from another goddamn book. So what the hell you going to do about this? You, sir, are dealing with a decorated veteran-- a combat veteran--of the United States Army.

John waits for an explanation.

JOHN (CONT'D)

Yes. I'll hold.

John looks again at his book in disbelief. Then he remembers the camera. Forces a faint smile.

JOHN (CONT'D)

(To camera)

Minor details. That's all. All that truly matters is that John K. Butzin is finally a published author.

But catch Sigrid's expression. She is quiet. More than a little concerned at what she is hearing.

61 **INT. RESTAURANT #2 - DAY**

61

Henry and Hannah at a table, sharing coffee. Eudora the waitress swings by with a refill, hair purple as ever. Hannah thumbs through her copy of Gatsby, looking interested. And pleased. Eudora notices the book.

EUDORA

Great book. Classic.

Henry nods in agreement. Eudora moves on.

HANNAH

Oh, I needed this break. Thank you, Henry.

HENRY

You're welcome.

HANNAH

It's just that I'm starting to feel the pressure, you know? There is so much riding on this first book.

50.

HENRY

Don't be silly. Sleeping on the Moon will hit the bestseller list. You'll be the toast of the literary world. And I'll come over to Beverly Hills and deliver a pizza to you.

HANNAH

Beverly Hills, ah...

HENRY

Definitely.

62 **EXT. HANNAH'S APARTMENT / CITY STREET - DAY**
62

Parked on the street in front of Hannah's apartment. Henry and Hannah, this mutual admiration society, stand by the car. Hannah still has her copy of Gatsby. Short beat.

HANNAH

What a dear, sweet friend you are.

Hannah graces Henry with another hug. Another quick peck on the lips. But wait--Henry wants more. He kisses her back. More than a peck. Too much more. Hannah, surprised, pulls back--her hand on his chest: Stop.

HANNAH (CONT'D)

(Gently)
No distractions. The writing comes first, 'kay?

Henry nods reluctantly: Understood. One last hug from Hannah before she heads for her front door, smiling back over her shoulder at Henry. Henry watches her leave, knowing that this was absolutely, positively, the best day of his life.

63 **INT. HANNAH'S APARTMENT -- LIVING ROOM - NIGHT**
63

The writing group meets. Hannah, Henry, John, William, Alan and Colette sit around the living room, pages in front of them.

WRITERS AT WORK sign on display.

Maureen, trying not to be in the way, goes from writer to writer, carrying a large TRAY OF VEGGIES.

ALAN

Alright. Whose turn is it to read?
Henry?

All eyes on Henry. He shifts uncomfortably in his chair.

51.

HENRY

Oh. Um. Someone else go. I don't
have anything new ready tonight.

Concerned looks all around.

COLETTE

It's been weeks, Henry.

HENRY

I know. Still can't focus.

JOHN

Don't be a pussy, Obert. Get writing.
Complete the mission.

HANNAH

Writer's block can be very serious,
John.

John scoffs in disbelief. Maureen offers William some veggies. He helps himself and checks out Maureen as she moves on to Alan.

WILLIAM

What's so hard, bro'? I mean, you've
got Scott and Christy. Two friends.
Tell their story.

HENRY

That's the problem. I think the
story's changing.

ALAN

Changing? How so?

HENRY

Lately I'm feeling something much
deeper, much richer. Scott and
Christy, um, growing closer.

The other group members appear puzzled.

COLETTE

Christy's a beautiful, wealthy author in Beverly Hills. How close can they get?

HENRY

Follow me. Something happens. Christy has an epiphany. She-She realizes her feelings run much deeper now for Scott.

52.

Henry does everything he can not to look at Hannah. Short beat.

WILLIAM

Nah. Don't buy it.

JOHN

They're friends. Why muck it up? Don't put 'em in the same foxhole.

COLETTE

Is this Scott wanting to go beyond the friendship? There's no way Christy would suggest it. What do you think, Hannah?

ALAN

Yes. Hannah, what do you think?

All eyes go back to Hannah. She does not want to answer.

HANNAH

Gee, I-I guess...I really never thought of them that way.

HENRY

Never?

Hannah shakes her head. Chooses her words carefully.

HANNAH

No. It's always been a friendship.

Henry takes a moment. Thinking.

HENRY

You don't see anything possibly

happening between them?

HANNAH

No. Friends. Nothing more.

WILLIAM

Exactly.

HANNAH

I'd be uncomfortable with any changes
in the relationship.

Message received. All eyes on Henry. Defeated.

HENRY

OK. Thanks, everyone. I'll try to
have something on paper next time.

53.

JOHN

Remember, Obert. Complete the mission.

64 **INT. HANNAH'S APARTMENT -- LIVING ROOM - NIGHT**
64

Meeting over. Writing group starts breaking up. William
leans in close by Hannah.

WILLIAM

(Lowered voice)

Got a sec?

William motions Hannah over to the corner of the living room,
away from the others. She follows, looking puzzled. Henry
watches with curiosity. William starts speaking to Hannah in
hushed tones, trying not to let anyone else overhear the
conversation.

HANNAH

How much?

More hushed tones from William. Hannah shakes her head.

HANNAH (CONT'D)

But if I loaned you money, then I
wouldn't have it.

WILLIAM

Hey, I just figured, you know. You
got that big advance. Help out a
fellow writer. I'm good for it,
Hannah.

HANNAH

Sorry. It's bad luck to loan money.

WILLIAM

OK, then, just give it to me.

Henry makes a point of moving in and standing directly by Hannah, staring William down. Henry and Hannah make eye contact. Henry looks to her: Are we OK? Hannah looks away.

Colette comes up next to William.

COLETTE

How much do you need?

William looks surprised.

65 INT. JOHN'S MOBILE HOME - DAY

65

John sits in his comfortable chair. Sigrid is nearby, at the computer. John talks to the camera.

54.

JOHN

This is a big moment. Roaring Lion has been posted on Amazon.com. Now all books. Your fiction. Your nonfiction. They're ranked on Amazon by sales. Obviously everyone wants to be number one. They say a book is selling well on Amazon if it's in the top 5000. Time to run it up the flag pole. Sigrid?

Nervous, Sigrid takes a deep breath and taps away on the computer keys. She waits, focused intently on the screen.

SIGRID

(Reading slowly aloud)

2,472,899 . . .

Silence. Long silence as it all sinks in. John seems suddenly uncomfortable. Sigrid types away on the computer keys again. Reads off the screen.

SIGRID (CONT'D)

Tom Clancy. 32.

John discovers a new interest in the ceiling.

66 INT. HANNAH'S APARTMENT - DAY
66

Hannah plops in her chair, upscale SHOPPING BAGS at her feet. Maureen hovers in the background.

HANNAH

How am I doing? OK. Sort of. Brian called. Looks like there's real interest in movie rights for Sleeping on the Moon. Yeah, thanks.

Heavy sigh. Not excited in the least. Matter-of-fact.

HANNAH (CONT'D)

But I don't dare say anything to the group. They find out I've got a movie deal--I don't know. I'm sensing enough jealousy as it is, you know? Could be awkward if they found out. It's a real--what's that word?

MAUREEN

Conundrum.

HANNAH

That's it. I'm in one.

55.

67 EXT. JOHN'S MOBILE HOME - NIGHT
67

WRITERS AT WORK poster taped to the front door.

68 INT. JOHN'S MOBILE HOME - NIGHT
68

Full meeting of the writing group, all crammed around the dining table. Henry and Hannah sit apart.

A single BOWL OF PRETZELS has been placed before them. Hannah reads from her typed pages. Alan, William, Colette, and Henry hang on her every word.

John is half-listening at best, more interested in the MAGAZINE he's thumbing through.

William REACHES UNDER THE TABLE and gently squeezes Colette's hand. Surprised, she pulls her hand away.

HANNAH

(Reading; with feeling)

"Please come home, Michael." "Why would you want to marry me, Kyra? I barely graduated high school."

"Michael, I don't care about some silly college degree. You're the most intelligent person I've ever known. You are my shining star."

Then Colette puts it back and squeezes William's hand. It's his turn to be surprised.

Hannah slides off her new reading glasses, waiting for someone to react. The room falls silent. Alan steps in.

ALAN

OK. Comments. Anyone?

No response. Group members look at the pages. At each other.
No one steps forward.

HANNAH

I value your feedback. We're all in
this together, right?

Nobody bites.

HANNAH (CONT'D)

Colette--Did the new scene work for
you?

Colette seems thrown by the direct question.

56.

COLETTE

Oh...Gee...Hannah. What? I mean,
you're being published. This is
being published.

HANNAH

But my editor wants rewrites. Am I
on track?

Colette punts. Alan jumps in to save his wife.

ALAN

Of course you are, Hannah.

WILLIAM

You got the deal. You got the check.
First one to be published.

John CLEARS HIS THROAT rather loudly: What about me, butthead?

William ignores him.

ALAN

I think what I'm hearing from the group is...is...you're fine. We all love it. Nothing here to critique. You don't need us--well, it's not that you don't need us, but, you know...

Alan's voice trails off before he can dig himself any deeper. More silence as Hannah wrestles with this unexpected reaction. Finally looks to Henry for help.

HANNAH

What do you think, Henry?

All eyes on Henry. He hesitates. Then --

HENRY

Yes. Actually, it is really good, but there are a couple things--little things--I'd point out. For example--

JOHN

Holy Douglas MacArthur --

All eyes on John. Finally holds up magazine to reveal that he's been reading VARIETY.

JOHN (CONT'D)

(Reading)

"Hollywood decides to go sleeping on the moon.

(MORE)

57.

JOHN (CONT'D)

First-time scribe Hannah Rinaldi, repped by Brian Barkley of SoHo, scores six-figure movie deal. Ink is still fresh, but Barkley boasts keen interest by..."

John keeps reading. Various reactions, mostly muted, around the table. Can Hannah's face turn any redder?

69 INT. MONTAGE OF SHOTS - NIGHT

69

Members of the writing group struggle to deal with Hannah's latest success:

Alan and Colette sit on their living room couch together, wearing matching pajamas, staring straight ahead like zombies. His tape recorder sits on the coffee table. Alan reaches for it. She grabs it from his hand and throws it.

William sits at the counter of Restaurant #2, drumming his fingers on the legal pad, half-heartedly trying to write. WAITRESS #3 pours him some more coffee, trying to make eye contact with him. William ignores her.

John sits in front of his computer screen, but he can't concentrate. Gives up. Shuts down computer. Flips on TV. Another war movie.

Henry stares absent-mindedly at his wall of rejection letters.

Hannah sits at her computer--the only one actually working at the moment--but she stops long enough to take a deep, deep sigh. A lot weighs on her mind.

70 **EXT. ALAN AND COLETTE'S HOUSE -- DRIVEWAY - DAY**

70

Alan arrives home. Steps out of his Lexus. Whistling. Happy-go-lucky. Pauses in the driveway to record another idea.

ALAN

Idea for novel. Perhaps screenplay.
The Amazing Doctor Eckleburg. An eye
doctor turned crime fighter. Ladies
man.

71 **INT. ALAN AND COLETTE'S HOUSE -- LIVING ROOM - DAY**

71

Alan sails through the front door. His smile disappears. William is plopped on the living room couch. Shirt half unbuttoned. Smoking. He freezes mid-puff.

ALAN

William?

58.

WILLIAM

Hey. Alan.

SOUND OF SHOWER AND COLETTE SINGING OFF-KEY echoes throughout the house. Alan turns quiet as he makes the connection.

WILLIAM (CONT'D)

Just, um. Just stopped by to...read

some pages for Colette. Yeah.

There are no pages on the coffee table in front of William.

72 **EXT. COLETTE'S GARDEN - MOMENTS LATER**
72

Alan steps outside. Somber. Focused. Acts like the Terminator in his scanning of the area. Man on a mission. What is he looking for? He finds it almost immediately, zeroing in on Colette's bench. Alan marches over and grabs Colette's prized framed photo of Oprah. Clutching it in his hand, Alan looks at Oprah's smiling face, then back towards the house. Then he takes the frame and smashes it down on the ground as hard as he can. Next he jumps up and down on the smashed frame multiple times. Not satisfied, Alan bends down, picks up the photo and rips it to shreds with his hands. There. That felt good.

Pool Guy and Gardener have witnessed the whole scene. What the hell? They exchange puzzled looks.

73 **INT. HENRY'S APARTMENT - DAY**
73

Henry talks to the camera.

HENRY

Hannah's avoiding me. She doesn't respond to emails or voice messages. She's "busy." Always an excuse.

74 **INT. HENRY'S APARTMENT - DAY**
74

Henry talks to the camera--his concern unmistakable.

HENRY

Things have definitely changed between us. I did get to go to her place for dinner last night.

75 **INT. HANNAH'S APARTMENT - EVENING**
75

A spruced-up Henry sits down for dinner. All smiles.

HENRY (V.O.)

Hannah wasn't there. She was in New York with her publisher. But Maureen and I had a lovely time.

Maureen passes Henry more vegetables.

76 **EXT. COLETTE'S GARDEN - DAY**
76

Colette sits on her private bench. Note the NEW PHOTO OF OPRAH in a new frame. Colette talks to the camera.

COLETTE

Yes. You noticed. I replaced the photo. I may be replacing other things around here soon...I was just using William...for research.

She holds up THREE MORE LETTERS.

COLETTE (CONT'D)

Speaking of rejection...three more letters saying Nyet, including one from David Keller. I should have offered him a massage. How much more rejection can I take?

Colette stares at the letters, focusing on remaining strong.

COLETTE (CONT'D)

(Reciting)

"We keep going back, stronger, not weaker, because we will not allow--

Her voice cracks. She stops. Fighting for composure

COLETTE (CONT'D)

--Rejection to beat us down--

Colette's frustration is boiling into anger as she struggles to keep it under control.

COLETTE (CONT'D)

--It will only strengthen our resolve. To be successful there is no other way." Mr. Henry D. Thoreau.

Short beat.

COLETTE (CONT'D)

Rejection sucks.

77 **EXT. COLETTE'S GARDEN - DAY**
77

Smoke rises from the fire pit, burning what's left of the letters. Colette sits cross-legged, devoting her full energy to chanting and beating her hands on a small DRUM.

It isn't enough today. Watch as Colette's solemn chant dissolves into tears of frustration.

60.

Dr. Xiroman places a comforting hand on her shoulder, trying to calm Colette down.

78 **EXT. JOHN'S MOBILE HOME - DAY**

78

Sitting outside in the cheap lawn chairs with Sigrid, John addresses the camera. He cleans up pretty good.

JOHN

This is going to be a great day for John K. Butzin. Yes, sir. First official book signing.

Sigrid holds up a copy of Roaring Lion. The dog on the cover has had an image of a lion slapped over it. Sigrid beams with pride.

JOHN (CONT'D)

Ready and raring to go. Of course, it would have been better to do this in an actual bookstore, but, hell, they're dropping faster than Charlie at Dak To. Not to worry. Since Sigrid works at the hardware store, they're going to let her favorite author sign a few books there.

SIGRID

More than a few books. Many, many books, Ja?

JOHN

Ja, my Strudel. Many books.

79 **EXT. HARDWARE STORE - DAY**

79

SIGNS in front window announcing hammers, ladders, paint on sale. Also a handwritten PIECE OF PAPER taped to the window with masking tape, announcing AUTHOR SIGNING.

80 **INT. HARDWARE STORE - DAY**

80

John sits at his card table in the corner. Alone. A stack of books sit piled in front of him. CUSTOMERS walk all around, ignoring John completely. John tries to stay relaxed, smiling and nodding at people, not being too forceful.

Sigrid, wearing her little red work vest and glasses, stands off to the side, beaming with pride. She hurries over to a cash register, takes the telephone out of her surprised boss' hand, and jumps on the store's PA SYSTEM, blasting throughout the store.

61.

SIGRID

(On PA system)

Attention shoppers. Famous author, Mr. John K. Bootzin, signing new best seller. Up front of store. John K. Bootzin. Also, special today in plumbing department. Ballcocks. Two for one. All customers guaranteed will be satisfied. Ja.

81 INT. HARDWARE STORE -- DAY

81

The PILE OF BOOKS seems untouched.

82 INT. HARDWARE STORE - DAY

82

Still no takers. Sigrid comes over to console him.

JOHN

Sorry, Strudel. Seem to be shooting blanks today.

John looks past Sigrid. His face brightens. A smiling Alan has arrived, flanked by Colette, Henry and Hannah. Hannah holds a cupcake. Alan has a bottle of champagne and some plastic cups. But there is no touching, no direct interaction, between Colette and Alan.

ALAN

Author! Author!

John stands up. Clearly touched.

JOHN

Hey-Hey. The cavalry's arrived. Look who's here.

SIGRID

Hello, everyone!

HANNAH

Wouldn't miss your signing, John.

Hannah presents John with the cupcake and leans in for a friendly peck on the cheek. Colette aims her cell phone camera at John.

COLETTE

Smile, John!

John half-smiles in response. Henry reaches over and shakes his hand.

62.

HENRY

Congratulations, John.

JOHN

Thanks, Obert. Where's the Bukowski wannabe?

Awkward silence as the group members exchange puzzled looks.

HANNAH

William said he'd meet us here.

JOHN

What a turd. Never liked that punk anyway.

ALAN

Maybe he's still at our house.

COLETTE

Maybe he is. Maybe I should go see.

ALAN

Maybe you should.

What's that about? Henry studies John's book. Flips to the back cover. Surprised.

HENRY

This is in Chinese.

All eyes on John. Squirming, he looks over to Sigrid: Help me. She thinks for a second.

SIGRID

International edition!

John nods convincingly in agreement.

ALL

(Except John and Sigrid)

Oh...

83 INT. JOHN'S MOBILE HOME - DAY

83

Sigrid sits alone on the couch as John floats in and out of camera, humming to himself, dancing like Fred Astaire. John is happy. Sigrid seems more subdued. Marked contrast. John addresses the camera.

JOHN

Know what the hardware store manager said? He said today was their most successful book signing. Ever.

63.

A question is asked. John listens.

JOHN (CONT'D)

This was their first book signing?
Oh.

Think, John. Think.

JOHN (CONT'D)

Well, John K. Butzin set the bar pretty high for the next writer, let me tell ya. That's right: 1-2-3-4-5-6-7-8-9-10-11. Eleven books sold.

Sigrid clears her throat and flashes ten fingers in the air.

JOHN (CONT'D)

Oh, that's right, Strudel. You borrowed one at the store to help prop open the side door. I forgot.

SIGRID

Ja...

JOHN

Ten books. But there are now at least ten homes in California where folks have books by Melville. Hemingway. Clancy. And now Butzin.

It's a humbling thought.

John goes back to his routine. Sigrid offers up a supportive smile, but she doesn't seem quite as impressed.

84 INT. ALAN AND COLETTE'S HOUSE -- DINING ROOM - NIGHT

84

Alan sits at the writers' table. Alone. Talks to the camera in whispered tones.

ALAN

I've made an important decision as group leader. I've decided to ask William to leave the group. Now it has absolutely nothing to do with that incident at our house. It has nothing to do with the fact that I'm now sleeping in the guest room. But let's face it--the kid's a slacker. No contribution to the group. Zero. Zip. Nada. I'm sure he'll be fine with it.

64.

85 INT. ALAN AND COLETTE'S HOUSE -- DINING ROOM - NIGHT

85

William kicks his CHAIR over. Alan, Colette, John, Henry and Hannah sit calmly around the table. Henry and Hannah apart.

ALAN

There's no need to get so upset.

WILLIAM

Fine. I was going to quit anyway. Leave this bunch of losers.

William makes eye contact with Colette: You too? She looks away: Sorry. Only fuels William more. He points to Alan.

WILLIAM (CONT'D)

Christ. You and your stupid recorder. And your stupid ideas. And your stupid character names.

William clenches his fist and pretends it's a microphone.

WILLIAM (CONT'D)

Name for character. Bobby Blow Me. Gimme a break.

Alan sits stone-faced. William turns to John.

WILLIAM (CONT'D)

And G.I. Joe over here with that
piece-of-crap, self-published tripe.
Who are you kidding?

Flustered, John starts to stand up. Alan grabs John's arm,
pulls him back down.

ALAN

Just ignore him.

William continues on his rant with Colette.

WILLIAM

Colette, Colette, my pet. News Flash
for you: Oprah's not calling--unless
she needs a massage. Get real!

JOHN

Oprah? She's not on TV anymore.

COLETTE

I know that.

William turns his attention to Henry.

65.

WILLIAM

The great Henry O. Man, you got the
gift, bro'. But your head is up
your ass over poor, sweet, successful
Hannah here.

Hannah and Henry avoid looking at each other as William smiles
at Hannah.

WILLIAM (CONT'D)

Hannah. Hannah. Hannah. We could
have been so hot together. I'm just
as good a writer as you are, but you
sure look better in a skirt --

HENRY

(Voice rising)
That's enough.

WILLIAM

I don't need any of you. I don't
need any of your pointless, pedestrian
feedback. I'm a writer.

JOHN

You've got goddamn three pages.

WILLIAM

They're a great three pages! You just don't appreciate my dedication.

HANNAH

You're a pretend writer, William.

Silence. William is surprised that Hannah speaks out.

HENRY

She's right. You act the part. You like the lifestyle. You hit on women. You quote Bukowski. But Bukowski did the work. Each and every day he wrote. That's your problem, William. You don't do the work.

WILLIAM

I don't do the work? Man, that sounds frickin' hilarious coming from you. When's the last time you wrote anything?

That hits a nerve. William and Henry stare each other down. Enough. William flips off the group with his middle finger. Mumbling, grumbling under his breath, he starts to leave. Pauses at the WRITERS AT WORK sign. Picks it up.

66.

ALAN

Not the sign!

Too late. William RIPS it in two. And a second time for good measure. Throwing the pieces on the ground. Stomps out of the house, slamming the front door.

The group turns quiet for a long beat. Everyone calming down.

Alan takes control again -- eyes still darting over to what's left of his beloved sign.

ALAN (CONT'D)

Let's move on. Next item. Richard Benedict is going to be doing a signing at Wordsmith next week.

Alan looks directly at Henry.

ALAN (CONT'D)

Who wants to go?

86 INT. BOOKSTORE - DAY
86

Large bookstore. Long line. Why? Because Richard Benedict is in the building, doing a signing of his new novel The Pineapple Man.

Hannah, Henry, Alan, and Colette stand in line together, waiting. Colette is holding one copy of the BOOK. Hannah has one. Henry has one.

Alan reaches inside his coat pocket for his RECORDER. Snaps it on.

ALAN

Idea for novel. Jealous husband murders his tramp-of-a-wife and buries her chopped-up body in the back yard.

Colette pretends not to hear. Line inches forward. Alan cranes his neck to see what's happening.

HENRY

(To himself)

Mr. Benedict, I just want to thank you. No. You've inspired my writing-- No. Hi. I'm Henry. I just think you're the greatest...

Colette puts a friendly hand on Henry's shoulder.

COLETTE

Let me tell you something, Henry.

67.

Henry looks to her, expecting words of comfort.

COLETTE (CONT'D)

One day, I'll have a signing like this.

Colette looks around, already imagining the event.

87 INT. JOHN'S MOBILE HOME - DAY
87

John is bent over his PRINTER, jiggling the front end, trying to open it. Tapping it on the side. No luck.

JOHN

Nope. Not going to see Richard whatever-his-name-is. John K. Butzin, author, doesn't need to stand in line anymore. No, sir. This soon-to-be best-selling writer is spending every minute, every dollar, on promoting Roaring Lion.

Try as he might, John can't open up his printer. Sigrid appears. Leans in. Effortlessly opens up the printer. Takes the cartridge from John. Snaps it in. Shuts the lid. Done. John grunts his thanks.

JOHN (CONT'D)

Strudel, check my sales ranking again.

Sigrid steps to the computer and taps a couple keys. Stares at the screen.

SIGRID

(Reading out loud)

1,644,973 . . .

Not quite the hoped-for response. Turns quiet inside the mobile home. John clears his throat.

JOHN

Wow. Look how far I've moved up already.

Sigrid types again. Reads off the screen.

SIGRID

John Grisham. 12.

Forget about John for the moment. Watch Sigrid as her eyes dart around--from the screen, to John in the chair, out the window. Back again. This is the moment. Sigrid gets it now: John K. Butzin is not the author he pretends to be. Very quiet in the mobile home.

68.

88 INT. BOOKSTORE - DAY
88

The AUTHOR (50's) sits at the signing table, obliging, but not outgoing, grunting hello to people and smiling (somewhat) for photos as he signs BOOKS. He is not here by choice today.

CAPTION: RICHARD BENEDICT

The young CLERK hovers nearby, assisting with books and trying to keep the line moving.

Henry is first, followed by Alan and Colette, then Hannah. Henry clutches his copy. Good luck trying to rip it from his hands. The four get nearer to Benedict.

ALAN

He's older than I thought.

HANNAH

I've never seen him before.

HENRY

(To himself)

Pleasure to meet you. No. Honor to meet you. He She They is my favorite novel.

Closer...Closer...Closer they get to the table. Richard signs away. Henry seems transfixed by him. Now it's his turn to have his book signed.

CLERK

Next, please.

The moment has arrived. Henry stands directly in front of Richard Benedict. Henry seems nervous. Too nervous to speak. Richard looks up and for the slightest, milli-second their eyes meet.

At that exact moment, RICHARD'S CELL PHONE GOES OFF. He answers.

RICHARD

(On phone)

What?!

Henry stands there, unable to move, staring at Richard while he speaks on the phone.

CLERK

(To Henry)

Sir?

No response. Alan nudges Henry. No good.

69.

CLERK (CONT'D)

Sir? We need to keep the line moving.
Sir?

Alan intervenes. He takes Henry's copy of the novel and slides it over to Benedict. Benedict scribbles his name quickly and slides it back with no eye contact, yelling on the phone.

RICHARD

(On phone)

Absolutely not! I'll sue that bastard first...

Alan grabs the book and gives it back to Henry, nudging him again.

ALAN

We need to move, Henry.

Alan and Colette slide their book over to Richard.

COLETTE

Hi there.

Richard looks up at her for a split second and decides to ignore her. Another scribbled signature as he remains on the phone.

Colette takes the book, trying not to look hurt. Alan grabs Henry and they leave the area. Hannah is next up. She puts her book down on the table.

RICHARD

(On phone)

Damn it! That simply won't--

Richard glances up. Sees Hannah standing there. He stops in mid-sentence. Smiles.

RICHARD (CONT'D)

Hi.

HANNAH

Hello.

Richard hangs up the phone.

The two start chatting. Camera goes over to the shell-shocked Henry, still clutching his book, watching as Hannah and Richard carry on. Henry is so disconcerted by what he sees that he fails to notice Eudora, still with purple hair and matching glasses, the very next person in line behind Hannah, waving at him.

89 EXT. BOOKSTORE - DAY
89

Outside bookstore. After the signing. Alan and Colette walk ahead. Henry and Hannah follow. Colette, Henry and Hannah each carry book bags.

HENRY

So what did he say?

HANNAH

Who?

HENRY

Who!?!? Richard Benedict. You know, the guy who just held up the line for five minutes talking to you?

ALAN

(Over his shoulder)
Ten. It was closer to ten minutes.

HANNAH

I don't know. We just talked.

HENRY

He sure liked you.

HANNAH

We just talked, Henry. I mentioned my book. He started asking about it. Writer to writer. No big deal.

HENRY

No big deal? Talking to Richard Benedict. No big deal!

Colette keeps walking. Biting her lip. Very quiet.

ALAN

You gave him your phone number.

HANNAH

Look, a guy like that reads more books in a week than I ever have. Why would he bother call--

Just then, Hannah's iPhone goes off. She answers. The other three stop in their tracks.

HANNAH (CONT'D)

(On telephone)

Hello? Who? Richard? Oh. Richard.
Hi.

71.

COLETTE

Unbelievable.

Henry inches closer to Hannah, forcing Hannah to move back, creating an uneasy dance between the two. She turns her back on Henry.

HANNAH

(On telephone)

Coffee? Oh, God. I don't know,
Richard. I really appreciate the
invitation, but--

She listens. Her face is anguished. Finally --

HANNAH (CONT'D)

This isn't a good time. Call me later.
Yes. I'll think about it. Yes. Bye.

Hannah turns off her phone. Alan, Colette, Henry stand there, gaping jaws wide open.

ALAN

Amazing.

COLETTE

This isn't fair. This just isn't
fair.

HANNAH

What?

COLETTE

First, you get an agent. Then you
sell your book. Then the big movie
deal.

ALAN

Please don't.

COLETTE

No. This isn't fair. And now Richard
Benedict wants to have coffee with
you? All this is happening to you.
And only you. Isn't there anything --
I don't know--some kind of cosmic
creative crumb for the rest of us to
nibble on?

HANNAH

I don't like what you're suggesting, Colette. You know how hard I work. How devoted I am. And I have been totally supportive of your writing. I've encouraged you all along.

72.

COLETTE

You wouldn't introduce me to your agent.

HANNAH

Brian didn't want to meet you. I asked.

ALAN

Hannah has earned her success.

COLETTE

Butt out Mr. Idea Man.

ALAN

Hannah is a writer. She devotes herself one hundred percent to writing. Not one hundred percent to sleeping with writers.

Henry steps in. Finally.

HENRY

Why don't you two just go on ahead?

COLETTE

It's not fair that she be the only one.

HENRY

Go.

ALAN

C'mon. Let's go.

Colette marches off in a huff; Alan in pursuit. She looks over her shoulder, shouting back at Hannah.

COLETTE

13! 13! 13! 13!

Henry and Hannah sit on opposite ends of the bench. Hannah looks distraught, lost in thought, simmering.

Henry knows to keep his distance. Waits.

91 EXT. COLETTE'S GARDEN - DAY
91

Colette looks frazzled. Pondering. Plotting. She finally notices the camera.

73.

COLETTE

I know. I'm a shit for exploding at Hannah, aren't I?

Runs her hands through her hair.

COLETTE (CONT'D)

Poor, sweet, superstitious, everybody-
loves-Hannah.

Starts massaging forehead--trying to reduce stress.

COLETTE (CONT'D)

If she can succeed, so can I. "We
were born to succeed, not to fail."

Hears a question O.S.

COLETTE (CONT'D)

Who said that? I don't know.
Somebody famous. Somebody with an
agent.

Now come the deep breaths. More stress control.

COLETTE (CONT'D)

I can't accomplish anything without
an agent. They won't come to me.
Fine. I'll go to them. I'll make it
happen.

92 EXT. CITY BENCH - DAY
92

Hannah and Henry remain on the bench. Hannah takes a breath
and finally breaks her silence.

HANNAH

Your writer's block?

HENRY

Yeah.

HANNAH

It's because your focus is always on everything else. Gatsby. Fitzgerald. Me.

Whoa. Henry isn't about to argue.

HANNAH (CONT'D)

Listen to me, Henry Obert. Your writing must come first. Take this passion you have. Put it on the page. Forget everything else. All you're doing is wasting...

74.

Hannah continues the lecture, speaking from the heart.

HENRY (V.O.)

She's right. But I know what's really happening here. Hannah's telling me she has every intention of talking to Richard Benedict. She has every intention of seeing him.

93 INT. HARDWARE STORE - DAY

93

There. On the discount table up by the cash register lies a pile of Roaring Lion books under another handmade SIGN: 50% OFF! Sigrid stares at the pile of unwanted books in quiet contemplation. Heavy sigh.

Sigrid glances up. Her boss watches her from the cash register with a certain longing. He smiles. Sigrid returns the smile.

Back to business. Sigrid pulls a wad of DOLLAR BILLS from her hip pocket. Counts quickly. Then picks up John's books, one by one.

94 INT. JOHN'S MOBILE HOME - DAY

94

John looks like the proverbial kid in a candy store. In total shock as he clutches a handful of TWENTIES.

JOHN

Wow! All the books sold at the

hardware store?

SIGRID

Ja. Every one.

John claps his hands together. There is a certain spring in his feet.

JOHN

Didn't I tell you, Strudel? Write it and they will read.

John can't contain his enthusiasm as he paces the mobile home, his mind racing. Sigrid is more composed.

JOHN (CONT'D)

Get some more copies down there. Maybe do another signing. Yeah. No. Time for a real tour. Fresno. Bakersfield. Stockton. Call a few bookstores. Let 'em know John K. Butzin is coming. Lock and load.

75.

And he's off, leaving the frame, already planning his big adventure, leaving Sigrid alone.

Facing the camera, she nods slightly. Then offers us a small wave.

SIGRID

Bye. Bye.

95 INT. LOIS PIPER AGENCY - DAY
95

The small reception area for The Lois Piper Agency. Tastefully decorated. PHONES constantly chirping.

The young MALE ASSISTANT behind the counter, obviously paid to be patient, points to the framed sign on the counter, in large letters: NO UNSOLICITED MANUSCRIPTS WILL BE ACCEPTED.

Colette and Dr. Xiroman will not be deterred. She holds a thick MANILA ENVELOPE.

COLETTE

I have to see Ms. Piper. We just need five minutes. 1-2-3-4-5 minutes of her time.

The assistant points back to the sign.

COLETTE (CONT'D)

Can you just please stick your head in her office, tell her that Colette Mooney is here. I know she's busy, but she'll certainly want to see my manuscript.

The assistant ignores her.

COLETTE (CONT'D)

(Flustered)

I'm a graduate of Mills College.

Behind them, coming from the inner office, we hear LOIS PIPER **YELLING**.

LOIS (O.S.)

If I have to read one more vampire story, I swear I'll drive a stake through my own goddamn heart.

MANUSCRIPT comes flying out of her office. Loose pages splatter everywhere in the main office. Lois Piper quickly follows. Older. Tired. Needs a drink. Now.

CAPTION: LOIS PIPER

76.

LOIS (CONT'D)

Vampires! Zombies! Harry Potter knock-offs! People writing about their dogs! Just shoot me now!

It is at that moment when Lois first notices the camera. Caught off-guard. What the hell??? Colette cranes her neck over the assistant.

COLETTE

Ms. Piper? Ms. Piper?

Lois turns her attention to Colette. Who are you? Then--magically--Lois changes. A big smile replaces the scowl. She marches towards Colette, who is clearly not expecting a warm reception.

Lois walks right past Colette and instead warmly shakes hands with Dr. Xiroman.

LOIS

Dr. Xiroman. I can't believe you're here. How lovely to see you again.

Dr. Xiroman nods his head in greeting.

LOIS (CONT'D)

Just in the neighborhood? Please
come in for a minute.

Another glance at the camera. Then, taking Dr. Xiroman by the elbow, Lois guides him back towards her office, completely snubbing a bewildered Colette.

LOIS (CONT'D)

My family talks about you all the
time. You were so helpful to my
sister. She's doing much better.

Colette stands there helplessly, watching her future walk away. The assistant points in their direction: Get in there!

96 INT. PIPER OFFICE - DAY
96

Lois plops down behind her desk. Stacks of MANUSCRIPTS cover her desk. Dr. Xiroman sits quietly in one chair. Colette sits next to him.

LOIS

(Sighing; Distraught)
Look at my desk, Dr. Xiroman. Look
at all this. Do you know what it is?
Crap. It's all crap. Crap. Crap.
Crap. I hate my job. I hate my life.

77.

Dr. Xiroman nods: I understand.

LOIS (CONT'D)

Know what I feel like doing?

She looks at the camera.

LOIS (CONT'D)

Come in closer. I want you to get
this. Closer. C'mon. More. Closer.

Satisfied, Lois takes her free hand and SHOVES ALL THE
MANUSCRIPTS off her desk, sending them flying on the floor.

LOIS (CONT'D)

Whreeeeee!

Colette looks aghast. Lois seems free at last.

LOIS (CONT'D)

That was so...liberating. I haven't felt this good since that night in Paris with Salman Rushdie.

Lois growls like a tiger at the memory.

LOIS (CONT'D)

I envy you, Dr. Xiroman. Know that? Look at your life. Your work. You helped my sister. You've helped so many people. You have such a positive message to share.

The camera picks up on Lois as the light goes on, the wheels start turning in her head.

LOIS (CONT'D)

Wait a minute. Wait a minute. Wait a minute. A positive message to share. Helping people. That's it!

COLETTE

(Confused)

What?

LOIS

Of course. Dr. Xiroman, you should write a book. This could be a whole series.

COLETTE

But--

78.

LOIS

--It's perfect! Television. Your own blog. Personal appearances.

COLETTE

But--

Dr. Xiroman has no reaction. Colette can't believe what she is hearing.

LOIS

Getting from Xiro to One by Doctor Xiroman. Oh, I like that.

COLETTE

But--

LOIS

--In fact, as long as you're here today, why don't we just get you under contract? I know just who to call in New York.

COLETTE

But--But. What about me?

Lois shoots her a look: What about you? Colette backs down-- not wanting to spoil the moment. Lois yells for her assistant. Finally a slight smile crosses Dr. Xiroman's face.

97 INT. PIPER OFFICE - DAY

97

Dr. Xiroman beams as he signs the standard agency contract so quickly drawn up for him. Lois and her Assistant appear equally excited.

COLETTE fidgets off to the side. Then Lois hands her the pen and points her towards the contract.

COLETTE (V.O.)

Co-Authors. Actually I'll be listed as junior author. It's not exactly what I wanted, but at least now I finally have an agent. And a book deal.

98 INT. PIPER OFFICE - DAY

98

Lois and the Assistant wave goodbye as Colette and Dr. Xiroman leave.

COLETTE (V.O.)

My novel will have to wait a while longer. Nyet, Colette. Not Yet. But soon.

79.

99 EXT. RESIDENTIAL STREET - NIGHT

99

Henry delivers another pizza. Pockets the money as he walks back to his car, whistling. Checks his delivery list. Stares at the next address in sudden disbelief.

HENRY

Shit!

100 EXT. RICHARD BENEDICT'S HOUSE - NIGHT
100

Henry stands in the doorway, glumly clutching the PIZZA BOX. Hesitates. Finally rings doorbell. Pause. Followed by LOUD LAUGHTER. Door swings open. Richard stands there, wearing only his jeans. His hair is a mess.

RICHARD

You're late, Pizza Boy.

Richard finally notices the camera.

RICHARD (CONT'D)

What the --

HENRY

(Overlapping)

They're with me. Your total comes to nineteen dollars and sixty-five cents.

Richard pulls a crumpled twenty from his jean pocket. He hands it to Henry. Then reconsiders, calling inside.

RICHARD

Babe, I need a single.

No response.

RICHARD (CONT'D)

C'mon, babe. Got a dollar for Pizza Boy?

WOMAN'S VOICE

Coming!

Richard gives a last glance to the camera. He's got better things to do. Off he goes.

Short beat. Hannah comes to the door wearing Richard's shirt and little else, carrying a single dollar bill.

HANNAH

Here you--

Her words freeze up as she recognizes Henry. Henry and Hannah lock eyes for a long beat. Poor kid. This is the moment.

80.

Reality smacks him in the face. Hard.

Hannah starts to hand Henry the money. He puts his hands up: No thanks. Hannah doesn't press. Henry can't hold back any longer.

HENRY

No distractions. The writing comes first.

HANNAH

He's making me a better writer.

HENRY

Yeah. I bet he is.

Quietly seething, Henry nods towards the camera.

HENRY (CONT'D)

How much better are you, Hannah? Show us. Who wrote Slaughterhouse Five? D'ya know?

HANNAH

Henry. Don't.

HENRY

No, No. This could be quite educational. How about Native Son? Catch-22?

HANNAH

Why isn't it enough that I'm your friend?

HENRY

Lord of the Flies? Portnoy's Complaint? Do you know any author? Harry Potter--You must know Harry Potter.

HANNAH

Why isn't it enough that I believe in your writing?

HENRY

--Sophie's Choice? Anything published in the English language.

HANNAH

--That I believe in you?

HENRY

You didn't read Gatsby, did you?

Never even opened it, I bet.

81.

Enough.

HANNAH

I'm not--

She hesitates. Not for long.

HANNAH (CONT'D)

I'm not the one delivering pizzas
for a living.

Score one for Hannah.

HANNAH (CONT'D)

I'm not the one wasting my talent.
You've read all those books, sure,
but my book is being published. Is
yours?

Henry has no comeback. Hannah stares him down. The dollar bill drops from her hand on to the ground. She retreats back inside the house, firmly closing the front door, leaving Henry alone.

Only then do we notice the number of the house: 4441.

101 INT. HENRY'S APARTMENT - NIGHT
101

We've never seen Henry like this. He rips down all his Richard Benedict photos from the wall. Collects all his Benedict books. Stuffs everything in a CARDBOARD BOX. Next he turns his attention to all the rejection letters on the wall. Lot of rejection. Gives them a long look. Then he snaps up the photo of Hannah from near his computer. He takes the photo and tacks it dead center in the middle of all his rejection letters.

Henry stares at the photo, oblivious to the camera, consumed by Hannah's radiant smile. His latest, and most painful, rejection. It's over.

Henry understands what must be done. He goes over to his desk. Sits down at his laptop. One last glance over at Hannah's photo as he turns the computer on.

He contemplates for a second. Then begins typing.

102 INT. JOHN'S MOBILE HOME - DAY
102

Sigrid's Wall of America has been taken down. A few nail holes and tape marks are all that remain--except for the single PHOTO of John still hanging in the center.

82.

103 EXT. JOHN'S MOBILE HOME - DAY
103

Back to the two lawn chairs--with one prime difference. Sigrid's chair is empty. John sits by himself. This is a softer, more reflective, John talking to the camera.

JOHN

Well, Strudel shipped out.

A side glance to the empty chair.

JOHN (CONT'D)

Oh, she wanted to stay, but... I didn't have time for a relationship. Not with my book selling like it is. She, well, she became collateral damage. Hated to end it. What a dame. I mean...Sigrid. She had the smarts of my first wife. The body of my second wife. Thank god she wasn't anything like my third wife. I did the right thing. Yes, sir.

Good acting, John. He looks back to the empty chair. Can't avoid reaching over and giving the arm rest a little love tap.

104 INT. JOHN'S MOBILE HOME - DAY
104

John packs COPIES OF HIS BOOK ever-so-carefully into an old standard issue military DUFFEL BAG.

JOHN (V.O.)

What matters now is that the Roaring Lion book tour is about to begin. Can't wait to hit the road and meet the good people of this nation. Good American people.

John gazes over at his photo on the wall. Salutes himself.

105 INT. ALAN AND COLETTE'S HOUSE -- DINING ROOM - NIGHT
105

Meeting of the writing group. Not yet started. John, Alan, and Hannah sit around the table. No refreshments being served. No small talk. Everyone is quiet.

Hannah looks fantastic. More makeup. Nicer clothes. Fidgets in her chair. Seems anxious. Stares at her new KINDLE.

FRONT DOOR opens and closes. FOOTSTEPS approaching. It's Henry. Looks determined. Man on a mission. Carries a satchel.

HENRY

Sorry I'm late.

83.

John grunts something. Hannah remains quiet. Avoids eye contact with Henry. Henry reaches into his satchel and pulls out stapled, typed pages. Multiple copies. Hands one to each of the three group members. Puts another down where Colette will sit.

JOHN

Wutch you got here, Obert?

HENRY

New pages. I'm ready to read.

ALAN

Way to go, Henry.

Even Hannah looks surprised. She and Alan thumb through their copies. John sniffs at the front page. Henry slides in across from Hannah. Looks satisfied. FRONT DOOR opens again. MORE FOOTSTEPS. Colette arrives with Dr. Xiroman in tow. Xiroman? The others exchange puzzled glances.

JOHN

Christ. What's he doing here?

COLETTE

I've invited Doctor Xiroman to join our writing group.

ALAN

You must be joking, Colette.

COLETTE

I am not joking. And, as a matter of fact, I'll have all of you know that the doctor and I are soon to be

published authors. We've signed with
The Lois Piper Agency.

Colette stands there, waiting for the applause and
congratulations, but all she receives is stunned silence.

HENRY

You can't do this.

COLETTE

Why not? With William gone, we have
an opening.

ALAN

Henry's right. We all have to agree
on new members.

COLETTE

I don't care about your silly rules.

84.

ALAN

I am the leader of the group--

COLETTE

--Oh, please. Alan.

ALAN

(Voice rising)

I am the leader of the group.

COLETTE

And Dr. Xiroman is my co-author and
he is joining "the group."

ALAN

He is not.

COLETTE

He is.

ALAN

Is not.

COLETTE

Is.

ALAN

Is n--

Hannah can't take it any longer. She throws up her hands.

HANNAH

(Yelling)

STOP!

The room turns quiet. All eyes on Hannah. She composes herself.

HANNAH (CONT'D)

I'm leaving.

Surprise all around. Hannah avoids looking at Henry.

HANNAH (CONT'D)

It's time. Richard is going to mentor me. Today's the 22nd. Two plus two equals four and we all know four's...

Her voice trails off. Why bother explaining. Just do it.

HANNAH (CONT'D)

Anyway, I'm quitting.

There. She said it. Hannah looks so relieved. She's done. Indignant, Colette stares her up and down.

85.

Points to Dr. Xiroman.

COLETTE

Well, in this case one plus one equals one very successful writing team. I can't believe you, Hannah. You're doing this just to upstage our news about landing an agent.

ALAN

Stop it...

COLETTE

No, this is what it's all about. The spotlight always has to be on Little Miss Sunshine. Her agent. Her book deal. Her movie deal.

John shoots to his feet.

JOHN

News flash for you all. John K. Butzin is also saying Sayonara. Heading off on my international book tour.

HENRY

International?

JOHN

Damn straight. Tijuana.

(Beat)

I'm done with you pussies.

John snatches up his folder and marches out of the house. Silence. Colette starts to sit down at the table--motions for Xiroman to join her. Final straw for Alan. Stares directly at Colette.

ALAN

Get out. Now.

Colette can't believe what she's hearing.

ALAN (CONT'D)

As the leader of this writing group, I've determined your actions are contrary to our stated purpose. Get out.

COLETTE

You can't kick me out. I live here.

She's right. Alan considers his options.

86.

ALAN

Fine. Then go to your room.

Points to Xiroman.

ALAN (CONT'D)

And take him with you. Won't be the first guy.

Alan means business. Colette stands up straight. Gathers up her materials.

COLETTE

We'll certainly have plenty to discuss in therapy.

ALAN

Go by yourself. I'm done.

COLETTE

Oh. Just like always--Alan finishes first.

She grabs Dr. Xiroman's arm.

COLETTE (CONT'D)

Come, Dr. Xiroman. I'm looking forward to working with a real doctor. On our new book.

Colette and Dr. Xiroman disappear. Frustrated, Alan takes a deep breath. Reaches inside his coat pocket for his recorder. Turns it on.

ALAN

Idea for novel.

Alan hesitates. Thinks for a second. Turns off the recorder. Slides it across the table to Henry.

ALAN (CONT'D)

Here. Take it. Maybe you can use some of my ideas in your novel.

Alan flashes a "thumbs up" sign to Henry and to Hannah. He starts to leave, but remembers the camera.

ALAN (CONT'D)

(To camera)

This was supposed to be a reality series.

That's off his chest. Alan leaves Henry and Hannah alone at the table. Awkward silence.

87.

He stands up. Calmly puts his typed pages back in his satchel. Leaves Alan's recorder on the table, walks away without looking back.

HANNAH

Henry . . .

Don't waste your breath. He's gone.

106 **INT. BOOKSTORE - DAY**
106

Hannah's book release party. Great turnout. Her professional PHOTO adorns a POSTER announcing the publication of Sleeping on the Moon. Boy, Hannah looks terrific in that photo. Richard hovers around the makeshift bar, drink in hand. Maureen, looking radiant, accepts the congratulations of well-wishers. TABLE prominently centered has piles of Hannah's

novel, waiting to be signed.

Hannah talks to the camera, looking especially radiant. This is her day and she is more than ready for her close-up. Totally different in wardrobe and appearance.

HANNAH

Exciting, isn't it? I'm so nervous.
I don't know half these people. Most
of them are Richard's friends.

Hannah waves to Richard. He waves back. Hannah glances around the room, as if looking for someone in particular.

HANNAH (CONT'D)

Nobody's showed up from my old writing
group. Not one. Probably shouldn't
be surprised. Haven't really heard
from anyone in months.

She is asked a question.

HANNAH (CONT'D)

Favorite writer? You keep asking me
that. Too funny. Sorry. Still can't
think of one.

107 INT. BOOKSTORE - DAY
107

Hannah sits behind the table, signing books. Maureen stands behind her helping to orchestrate the line of people.

Hannah acts very gracious. Signing a book, smiling and chatting up the guests. She seems at ease. Everything is going her way. She looks past the line. Her eyes light up and she jumps to her feet.

88.

HANNAH

Oh my God!

Hannah bolts from the table, cuts through the line and finds Henry standing alone.

HENRY

Hi, Hannah.

HANNAH

Henry. Ohhhhh. Thank you. Thank
you. Thank you so much for coming.

Hannah throws her arms around Henry, giving him a long heartfelt hug, almost smothering the poor guy--not that he complains. She lets go and gives Henry a friendly once-over.

HANNAH (CONT'D)

You're the only one from the group who showed up.

Still awkward for them to be around each other.

HANNAH (CONT'D)

I can't believe you remembered my signing.

HENRY

Well, pretty hard to miss that article about you in People magazine. Just wanted to say hi. And congratulations.

Maureen comes up behind Hannah. Beams at Henry, and waves.

MAUREEN

Hello, Henry.
(To Hannah)
Hannah, come back. Your public awaits.

HENRY

Go on. They need you.

HANNAH

Please stay.

HENRY

Can't. Sorry.

HANNAH

Oh.

HENRY

Yeah. Hot date. You know. Can't keep her waiting. A flight attendant.

89.

HANNAH

(Buying the obvious lie)
A flight attendant?

Henry nods.

HANNAH (CONT'D)

Well, then. Guess you can't stay.

HENRY

Sorry.

HANNAH

One sec. Wait here.

Hannah runs back to the signing table, pulls out a book and scribbles something inside. She brings the book back over to Henry.

HANNAH (CONT'D)

This is for you.

HENRY

(Protesting)

Hannah . . .

HANNAH

Take it.

Henry accepts the book. Hannah gives him another long hug.

HANNAH (CONT'D)

Do you want to say hello to Richard?

HENRY

No. No, thanks.

HANNAH

C'mon. It will take just a minute.

HENRY

I can't. Really.

MAUREEN

Dear, sweet Hannah. Please!

HANNAH

Just say hi.

Henry tries to back away. Hannah leans forward, grabs his hand and tugs him in the other direction.

HENRY

I've really got to --

90.

HANNAH

Oh, c'mon. You'll --

Then -- BAM, Henry, not looking where he's going, slams into

Richard accidentally, spilling Richard's drink all over the author. Horrified looks all around.

108 **EXT. OUTSIDE BOOKSTORE - DAY**
108

Outside the bookstore, Henry stands on the sidewalk, talking to the camera as he clutches Hannah's book.

HENRY

Well, I did it. I showed up to Hannah's signing. I congratulated her. I supported her, writer to writer. And I finally got introduced to Richard Benedict--formally. Sort of.

Henry opens up his copy of Hannah's novel. He turns quiet, obviously moved. He holds the book up for the camera to see.

HENRY (CONT'D)

Look. Hannah dedicated her novel to me. Just like she promised.

Right beneath the printed dedication For Henry Obert, Hannah has written, For Henry, My Forever Friend xoxoxo Hannah.

Henry studies the book for a second. Snaps it shut.

109 **INT. KELLER OFFICE - DAY**
109

Literary agent David Keller being interviewed for the camera in his office. Stacks of MANUSCRIPTS on his desk. David pulls one out.

DAVID

This is why I love LA. True story. This guy delivers a pizza to my house one night. Then the very next week, my wife has someone come in and clean the carpets. Guess what? Same guy. Small world, isn't it? So we get talking. He tells me his name's Henry. He's a writer. He's just finished a manuscript. Offers us a discount on the carpets if I'll read ten pages. I like that thinking. So I read ten pages. Wow. I want to read ten more. Before I know it, I've read the entire book.

(MORE)

91.

DAVID (CONT'D)

Just loved it. Fresh voice.
Interesting characters. And that
ending.

David thumbs through the manuscript.

DAVID (CONT'D)

The washed-up, impotent novelist
getting gunned down by Scott, the
jealous, underemployed, pizza delivery
man. This kid nailed it. It's on the
page, know what I mean? So I intend
to sign Mr. Henry Obert and get Pizza
to Go out there. I predict a best
seller. Probably a movie, too.
I'll call him with the good news. Or
maybe I'll just order a pizza.

110 **INT. HENRY'S APARTMENT - DAY**
110

Henry taking down the rejection letters from his walls and
packing them in a cardboard BOX.

HENRY (V.O.)

David Keller did call me. One week
later, he sold Pizza to Go to a New
York publisher. They decided to
rename it A Slice of LA. I did it.
I sold my novel.

Henry puts the last of the rejection letters away. Finally,
he picks up a FRAMED PHOTO. INSERT shows the six members of
the writing group from happier times--the photo snapped in
the restaurant. Full of hope and promise.

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

I miss the Tuesday night group.
They made me a better writer. They
taught me how to handle rejection.

Henry lingers on the photo before packing it away, as well.

111 **INT. RESTAURANT #2 - DAY**
111

Mostly empty. Henry sits at a booth, alone, a new copy of
Gatsby in his hands. He talks to the camera. CUP OF COFFEE

in front of him.

HENRY

Hannah was right. The writing must always come first. Everything else waits. Everything. That's what I did finally. Finished my novel.

(MORE)

92.

HENRY (CONT'D)

Sold it. Now? Now I'm open. Ready for whatever--

WAITRESS stops by the table, refilling Henry's cup. Then setting the pot on the table, she reaches over and snatches the copy of Gatsby.

Surprised, Henry glances up.

HENRY (CONT'D)

--happens next...

It's her again. That young waitress with purple streaks in her hair and matching purple glasses thumbs through the book. Henry finally checks out her name tag: Eudora.

Clutching the book, Eudora recites from memory:

EUDORA

Gatsby believed in the green light, the orgiastic future that year by year recedes before us. It eluded us then, but that's no matter--

HENRY

(Surprised)

--Tomorrow we will run faster, stretch out our arms further...

Eudora nods. Henry is amazed.

HENRY (CONT'D)

You know Fitzgerald?

EUDORA

Not intimately. He died here, you know.

HENRY

December 21, 1940.

EUDORA

I go by there sometimes.

HENRY

The place on Hayworth.

EUDORA

Is that weird. That I do that?

HENRY

No. No. Not at all.

Eudora smiles, glad for the positive reinforcement.

93.

EUDORA

OK. Good. Because, you know, I don't want people to think I'm weird.

HENRY

Of course not. Do you write?

EUDORA

Kinda, sort of. But I'm thinking of joining a writing group.

Henry bites his tongue. Eudora nods towards the camera.

EUDORA (CONT'D)

So what's this? Some kind of reality show, or something?

Henry smiles. The two continue their idle chatter.

CARD: EPILOGUE

112 **EXT. MOBILE HOME PARK, PHOENIX -- DAY**

112

Caption reads: PHOENIX, ARIZONA.

JOHN (V.O.)

After a very successful book tour,
John K. Butzin heard the Grand Canyon
State calling. This is home now.

113 **EXT. MOBILE HOME PARK (ARIZONA) -- DAY**

113

John's trailer. COSTUMED CHILDREN knock on the door while holding their trick or treat bags.

JOHN (V.O.)

Real God-fearing Americans live here.
Good people. Not those La La pussies.

John opens the front door.

CHILDREN

Trick or Treat!

John responds by dropping a BOOK in the first bag.

JOHN

Look at this treat you get. A copy
of Roaring Lion by John K. Butzin.
Happy Halloween.

The children are dumbfounded. John moves on to the next child.

94.

114 INT. RESTAURANT #2 - DAY

114

William is back at the counter, looking as scruffy as ever.
Off to the side stands a GEEKY KID, gripping a FLIP PHONE
aimed directly at William. William talks to our camera.

WILLIAM

C'mon. Admit it. You missed me.
It wasn't as interesting once I left,
right?

He winks. The Kid doesn't move.

WILLIAM (CONT'D)

I knew the group wouldn't last without
me. No way. Losers.

He nods towards his companion.

WILLIAM (CONT'D)

Him? Oh. It's my new project. A
reality TV show based on my life.
You know...women I meet...thoughts
that pop into my head. Kid follows
me all around. 24/7. Actually I got
the idea from you guys. Same concept--
just better characters.

A question is asked.

WILLIAM (CONT'D)

Which network? Um, well...it's

a...it's P-P-A...Pasadena Public
Access. Oh, people watch. Yeah.
We're on right after that pet psychic.

A waitress's HAND reaches in and refills William's coffee
cup. He likes what he sees.

WILLIAM (CONT'D)

Thanks, babe.

He looks over to Geeky Kid.

WILLIAM (CONT'D)

Get a close-up on her. Nice and
tight.

William will never change.

WILLIAM (CONT'D)

And, hey, Kid. Lend me five bucks.
I want to leave an extra special
tip.

95.

115 **INT. SCHOOL HALLWAY (LOS ANGELES) -- DAY**
115

TWO POSTERS ON EASEL in the hallway. First poster announcing:

ALAN (V.O.)

After I sent Colette packing, I was
ready for a new chapter in my life...

SATURDAY'S ADULT EDUCATION CLASSES.

PUPPET MAKING meets in Room 22, and QUILTING is in Room 24.
WRITING 20/20 is in Room 26.

And DOG OBEDIENCE is out in the courtyard, but we already
know that--the loud sound of BARKING DOGS and PEOPLE YELLING
"SIT" is heard in the background.

Second poster is a new version of QUIET, PLEASE--WRITERS AT
WORK.

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

I found it teaching Adult Ed. "Writing
20/20" is the class. Helping writers
to see. Inspired by my new self-
published e-book of the same title.

116 INT. SCHOOL CLASSROOM - DAY
116

STUDENTS scattered around the classroom. All adult. Ethnic and demographic mix. Listening attentively. Taking notes. The DOGS continue barking outside.

Alan stands in front of the class. Beaming. Excited, He CLAPS his hands once.

ALAN

OK. You've got ten seconds. Write down the name of your character. First name that pops into mind. C'mon. Tell me your character.

Students think for a second. Start scribbling a name.

ALAN (CONT'D)

1-2-3-4-5-6-7-8-9-9.5-9.75-10 seconds. OK. Pass your names up front here. Let's see what you came up with.

Students hand their papers forward. Alan starts collecting them.

ALAN (CONT'D)

The right name is so important for your character. OK. What do we have?

96.

He looks at the first piece of paper.

ALAN (CONT'D)

Here's one I haven't heard. Heywood Ja-Jabloom???

That's not it. Alan tries again.

ALAN (CONT'D)

Or is it Jablom? Maybe Jablowme. Heywood Jablowme?

Laughter and guffaws from the students. Alan looks puzzled.

ALAN (CONT'D)

What's so funny? Heywood Jablowme? Am I missing something? Heywood Jablowme?

The students continue to laugh. Poor Alan.

117 **EXT. ALAN AND COLETTE'S HOUSE - DAY**
117

Catch the FOR SALE sign posted on the front lawn.

118 **EXT. COLETTE'S GARDEN - DAY**
118

Colette engages in intense meditation on her bench. The garden around her is now dead.

COLETTE (V.O.)

Dr. Xiroman and I wrote our book. It actually did fairly well.

INSERT BOOK. Title in large letters: Getting from Xiro to One by Dr. Xiroman in equally large letters. At the bottom of the book, in very tiny letters, reads With Colette Mooney.

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

Dr. Phil turned us down. But we had a lovely time on Anderson.

INSERT PHOTO of smiling Anderson Cooper.

COLETTE (CONT'D)

Anderson actually wanted us back, but Dr. Xiroman and Lois Piper started dating. They eloped to Vegas last month. Off on a world cruise.

INSERT PHOTO of Dr. Xiroman and Lois being married in Vegas by ELVIS.

97.

COLETTE (CONT'D)

So in less than a year, I've lost my husband, my co-author, and my agent. But I still have Nyet, Not Yet. And I will find an agent to sell my novel. Look. I bought an ad in the trades.

Colette reaches for her reading glasses and shares the ad copy with us, reading aloud:

COLETTE (CONT'D)

"The magic fingers that just typed the publishing world's next best selling novel are now waiting to provide free massage to interested literary agents. Experienced. Sensitive. Discreet. Memorable. No

Junior Agents, please."

Looking quite pleased with herself, Colette lets the copy fall away.

COLETTE (CONT'D)

It's how I met my last husband. I think it can work again. No worries. After all, I am a graduate of --

Her iPhone starts playing music, signaling a phone call. Colette smiles in knowing satisfaction--publication is just a touch away

119 EXT. MOVIE SET -- DAY

119

The MOVIE CREW, on location, scurries about, trying to line up their next shot.

HANNAH (V.O.)

Welcome to Sleeping on the Moon: The Movie! It's so exciting!

120 EXT. MOVIE SET -- DAY

120

Hannah, looking good, sits in a chair, a BOOK on her lap. She is talking to the camera. CREW in the background.

HANNAH

Let's see. My book ended up on the best sellers list. Stopping at Number 13.

She crinkles her nose in obvious disappointment.

HANNAH (CONT'D)

Then Richard left me.

(MORE)

98.

HANNAH (CONT'D)

I'm sure the two were connected. No loss. Such an ego. But guess what? I've gone back to school!

To underscore the point, she holds up a the book--it's The Great Gatsby.

HANNAH (CONT'D)

Look what I'm reading for class.

Isn't that pretty, you know, what do they call it? What's that word?

She hears an answer.

HANNAH (CONT'D)

Ironic. That's it. Pretty ironic. But I'm going to get my degree. Then I'll be smart. Really smart.

Short beat

HANNAH (CONT'D)

You know how you kept asking me that question. Who's my favorite writer?

Short beat.

HANNAH (CONT'D)

Turns out I do have one. Mr. Henry Obert. He's become a great writer. A published author.

She smiles.

HANNAH (CONT'D)

I knew him when.

She likes her answer. But then hesitates.

HANNAH (CONT'D)

Probably shouldn't tell him I said that, 'kay?

She winks.

HANNAH (CONT'D)

Keep it between us.

Goodbye Hannah. Good luck.

99.

121 EXT. FITZGERALD/GRAHAM HOME -- HOLLYWOOD - DAY
121

HENRY (V.O.)

Well, my novel finally came out. Seems to be doing OK.

122 EXT. FITZGERALD/GRAHAM HOME/SIDEWALK -- DAY
122

Henry looks more confident. More poised. Better clothes.
The frog has become the prince.

He glances back at the building.

HENRY

You know Fitzgerald said that all
good writing is swimming under water
and holding your breath. He was right.
But after all I've been through, I
think I'm finally ready to exhale.

He looks at his watch.

HENRY (CONT'D)

Oops. I'm late. Gotta go.

123 EXT. BOOKSTORE -- DAY
123

SHOPPERS coming in and out of the store. POSTER in front
window announces book signing for Henry Obert, author of
Slice of LA.

Right next to BANNER announcing GOING OUT OF BUSINESS. And
next to the banner--a YOUNG MAN leans up against the wall,
waiting, passing time reading his KINDLE.

124 INT. BOOKSTORE - DAY
124

We jump to the woman clutching FOUR COPIES of Henry's novel.
Wait a minute--we recognize those trendy glasses. It's Eudora,
a rather pregnant Eudora.

EUDORA

(Laughing)

Yes, I'm totally busted. I'm buying
four copies of A Slice of LA. One
for each member of my writing group.
Also because I think Henry Wayne
Obert is the greatest new writer of
the decade! Sexiest, too!

Eudora is having way too much fun.

EUDORA (CONT'D)

OK. So he's my husband. I'm biased.
But I still think the kid can write.

125 INT. BOOKSTORE - DAY
125

Henry sits at the table in the bookstore, graciously and happily signing copies of his book for the SHORT LINE OF PEOPLE waiting.

This is his moment, the one that brought him all the way from Illinois. He has arrived. As a person. As a writer.

Henry looks up. Eudora is nestled comfortably in a nearby leather chair, reading away. She looks up.

They make eye contact. Her smile is all the encouragement Henry needs. All that he will ever need.

He reaches for the next book to sign.