

GREAT AMERICAN NOVEL

Written by

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FADE IN:

EXT. BACKYARD - MORNING

CHET MORROW walks through his nice backyard. He's heading to The Writer's Den to start his work day.

CHET
Hi, I'm Chet Morrow. You may know
me as the celebrated science
fiction writer Chet Morrow.

Chet arrives, opens the screen door then unlocks the main door keeping his dialog going.

CHET (CONT'D)
I wasn't always famous and I sure
as hell wasn't always a sci-fi
writer.

Chet enters the building.

INT. WRITERS DEN - CONTINUOUS

It's a fairly cluttered space. Nothing fancy. Two desks with desktop computers, Chet works on an older model, across from each other on the side walls.

A long table is next to the computer on the left. It's filled with his books, 8x10 glossies of Chet, a pile of envelopes, a multiline telephone and a coffee maker. There are boxes under the table.

The rest of the room contains three-drawer file cabinets, overflowing bookshelves, at the back is a couch next to a refrigerator with a barrel in the corner. There's a plastic sheet hanging on wall going into the barrel.

On top of the file cabinet next to the computer desk on the left is a television. The walls are bare.

CHET
When I first started writing, like
everyone else, I was going to make
a difference in the world. Let my
voice be heard.

INT. NEWSPAPER OFFICE - NIGHT

A younger Chet sitting at a desk. He's on the phone as many people bustle by.

CHET (V.O.)
But it turns out you've got to do a
ton of listening before that.

Younger Chet nods and speaks.

CHET
I understand. I understand.

Younger Chet drops his forehead into his palm.

CHET (CONT'D)
I see why you're concerned. I'll
get a photographer out there ASAP.
(pause)
No, I'm not lying this time. But,
like I said before, you should call
the power company to get your
street light repaired.

INT. WRITERS DEN - CONTINUOUS

Chet is making coffee.

CHET
And it turns out I'm not much of a
listener. So I decided to write the
great American novel. Get my words
out that way.

INT. STUDIO APARTMENT - DAY

Younger Chet, much more disheveled than when working for the newspaper, is staring at a blinking cursor. This is the computer on the right in the Writers Den. It's from the mid 1990's.

CHET (V.O.)
Turns out I didn't have much to
say.

INT. WRITERS DEN - CONTINUOUS

Chet is pouring himself a cup of coffee. He steps to the chair in front of the computer to the right and sits.

CHET
So I did what any young writer
would do to find stories. I went
out among the people to get a feel
for what they were doing.

INT. BAR - MORNING

Younger Chet sitting with battered old men and women at a dive bar.

CHET (V.O.)
Turns out they were drinking.

INT. WRITERS DEN - CONTINUOUS

Chet is sitting in front of the desk of books and photos signing some. He looks up into the camera for the first two words of the next dialog.

CHET
A lot. I had to get a second job
just to pay my bar tab which meant
I couldn't go out there and gather
dispatches from the trenches.

He stuffs a book into an envelope.

CHET (CONT'D)
It was quite disheartening.

He tears the strip off the envelope and secures it. He drops it in a box then reads the next note. Once he sees what he's supposed to sign he picks it off the desk and signs it.

CHET (CONT'D)
I knew I had a book in me, I think
everyone does. But I just couldn't
squeeze it out of me.

Chet drops the next envelope in the box and repeats.

CHET (CONT'D)
So I decided to take my time. Not
push it. So, wanting to stay true
to my calling, I took any writing
job I could get.

INT. OFFICE - DAY

It's always the same office but, with each new scene, there's a different person standing over his desk talking animatedly.

CHET (V.O.)
I edited instruction pamphlets for
a build it yourself furniture
company.

INT. OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

CHET (V.O.)
Wrote telephone scripts for a mass
marketing cold call center.

INT. OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

CHET (V.O.)
Reworded internal correspondence
between the main office in China
and the U.S. Headquarters.

INT. OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

CHET (V.O.)
Wrote a lovelorn column as Miss
Vicki for a penny saver.

INT. OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

CHET (V.O.)
Hell, I even went so low as to
write brochures for political
candidates.

INT. WRITERS DEN - CONTINUOUS

Chet is putting the last envelope in the box. He picks up
box, carries it to the door and puts it outside.

CHET
That was the toughest.

Chet shuts the door and walks to his chair.

CHET (CONT'D)
Those idiots change their mind
depending on who last donated to
them.

Chet sits down.

CHET (CONT'D)
All in all it wasn't fulfilling and
barely paid the bills. I had to
take a second job as a bartender.

INT. BAR - NIGHT

Chet leaning on a bar listening to some guy tell the same story for the umpteenth time.

CHET (V.O.)

I know what you're saying, that must have opened up a wealth of stories. And, sure, there were some. But after a while it was like being in Groundhog Day. The colorful stories faded in the retelling. The weird characters became normal. Even the drunken confessions were the same.

INT. WRITERS DEN - CONTINUOUS

Chet sitting at his computer.

CHET

And when some guy telling you about the intestinal parasite he got in the war night after night loses it's allure you know it's time to move on.

INT. STOREROOM - DAY

Chet wheeling a cart full of boxes through a box filled storeroom.

CHET (V.O.)

Figuring I had to leave it behind I took real jobs. Not having a useful college degree I wasn't qualified for much. I worked retail, was a mover for a year and a half, managed a fast food joint.

INT. FRONT OF STORE - CONTINUOUS

Chet wheels the cart into the front of the store revealing a bookstore.

CHET (V.O.)

Then I got a job in a bookstore when it dawned on me.

INT. WRITERS DEN - CONTINUOUS

Chet had his feet on his desk.

CHET

I should just read. I figured my problem was I didn't have any gas in the tank. I had to stop, fill up with some words and see if that inspired me.

INT. FRONT OF STORE - DAY

Chet is sitting on the floor with his back on his cart flipping through a book.

CHET (V.O.)

So I read anything. It's a good thing we got a good discount and publishers dropped off proofs or I'd have gone broke.

Chet looks around and quickly gets up and starts stocking the shelf.

CHET (V.O.)

And I'm not even going to dignify the question of how many accidentally left the store without being properly accounted for.

INT. WRITERS DEN - CONTINUOUS

Chet is still sitting, feet up with a broad smile.

CHET

But it was a lot. Trust me there.

Chet turns on his computer then gets up for more coffee.

CHET (CONT'D)

I must drink over a dozen cups of coffee a day. I swear I shit beans. It's a good thing one of my fans, Ken, sells coffee and sends it to me for free or I'd go broke.

Chet goes back and sits down.

CHET (CONT'D)

Where was I? Oh yeah, stealing.
Everyone justifies theft their own
way. Most employees think it's a
perk of a job. And it goes all the
way up the line. Why do you think
there were all those bailouts?
Honest people were at the top?

Chet scoffs at that idea.

CHET (CONT'D)

Please.

(pause)

So I kept reading. Every spare
minute was spent reading. But
inspiration wasn't coming from
those pages. I was about to pack it
in. Try to start some type of real
job.

INT. STOREROOM - DAY

Chet is sitting on boxes with two guys, TONY and STEVE.
They're holding up books and gesturing wildly. Chet isn't
buying it.

CHET (V.O.)

One day I'm on my break with Tony
and Steve, two sci-fi geeks. It's
all these guys read. They were
spewing all that garbage about how
sci-fi was the last bastion of
purity in the pantheon of puerile
publishing.

INT. WRITERS DEN - CONTINUOUS

Chet is sitting, coffee cup in his hand.

CHET

Finally I figured what the heck.
I'd read everything else. How bad
could it be?

Chet stands up to get another cup of coffee.

CHET (CONT'D)

Turns out very.

Chet pours a cup of coffee.

CHET (CONT'D)

Don't get me wrong, even a bad book
beats most other forms of
entertainment.

Chet walks over to the other computer and starts it.

CHET (CONT'D)

So I gave the genre a spin. I read
a dozen or more books and they were
so boring. They were little more
than Zane Grey with laser guns,
westerns with teleportation.

Chet logs on to check his email.

CHET (CONT'D)

That's when I said, 'Hell, I can do
this.' There couldn't be an easier
genre.

Chet checks his email while a disclaimer superimposes over
the scene.

**DISCLAIMER: The actor playing Chet wants people to know he
does not agree with the current direction of the dialogue.**

Chet turns to the camera and nods in agreement. The
disclaimer continues.

**As a matter of fact, the writer, producer, director and no
one else connected with this production agrees with this
direction.**

**The writer, who knows sci-fi is so difficult he himself could
never attempt it, is only going down this path for comedic
purposes.**

**So please, do not send hate mail, hack into twitter accounts,
or other wise wreak havoc with the life of anyone in the
production. Thank you for your understanding and awesome
sense of humor.**

SND FX: KNOCK ON DOOR

Chet gets up and walks to the door.

BOB, the UPS Man, is delivering a handtruck full of packages
and taking the box Chet left earlier.

CHET (CONT'D)

Morning, Bob.

BOB

Hey Chet. How's it going?

CHET

You know how it is, work, work, work.

Chet takes the tracker and signs his name.

BOB

Like yesterday when I came by and you were sleeping on the couch?

Chet hands the tracker back to Bob.

CHET

Not sleeping, Bob, we've gone over this. I was dreaming up future worlds.

BOB

Then my teenager must be dreaming up future worlds by the dozens.

CHET

Well wake that bastard up. I don't need the competition.

Bob laughs.

BOB

I don't think even you could come up with a weapon to do that. See you tomorrow.

CHET

Have a great day.

Bob exits and Chet begins taking his packages to the couch.

CHET (CONT'D)

Where was I? Oh yeah, sci-fi is easy as shit to write.

Chet looks into the camera and shakes his head no before continuing.

CHET (CONT'D)

So I wrote one. Well, tried. The problem inherent in any form of literary endeavor is you must have a vocabulary in the subject.

Chet sits on the couch and starts to open the boxes. He looks at the items as he speaks.

CHET (CONT'D)

So what I did was write a cowboy type story, without the hookers and hooch, in outer space.

Chet looks into the camera.

CHET (CONT'D)

And it was horrible. I was using phrases like Anti-Navigational Router and character names like Zego. Which were fine I guess but having to come up with thirty or forty names like that was a pain in the ass.

Chet opens a box and pulls out a drawing of one of his characters. He shows it to the camera.

CHET (CONT'D)

I must get four or five paintings of scenes from a book per week. And that's only a fraction of the number I get emailed to me.

Chet puts the drawing beside the couch on top of a stack of others.

CHET (CONT'D)

But I liked the idea. I just didn't have the knowledge to go with it. Then it dawned on me. I knew people who did.

INT. TONY AND STEVE'S APARTMENT - DAY

Chet is sitting on a chair excitedly telling Tony and Steve his idea. The room is cluttered with computers and memorabilia from various science fiction movies and television programs.

CHET (V.O.)

So I told Tony and Steve what I was doing and asked if they'd be my sort of technical advisors. You know, come up with names and places and all that stuff I couldn't.

INT. WRITERS DEN - CONTINUOUS

Chet is on the couch going through boxes.

CHET

Turns out they were thrilled with the idea. They'd been making up names for things since they were kids. Tony even had notebooks filled with drawings he said I could use for inspiration.

INT. TONY AND STEVE'S APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

Chet is not sitting still in the chair while Tony and Steve excitedly gesture while Tony thrusts notebooks at Chet.

CHET

Turns out they'd been wishing that one day someone asked their opinion. It's why they started working in the bookstore. They figured. . .

INT. WRITERS DEN - CONTINUOUS

Chet is separating the days books and drawings and letters he received earlier into piles on the table.

CHET

. . .correctly as it turned out, they'd run into at least one writer who could use their expertise.

Chet walks over to a file cabinet and opens it.

CHET (CONT'D)

I asked them why they didn't just write the stories.

Chet takes a notebook out of a drawer and shows a drawing of an intricate battle scene.

CHET (CONT'D)

They said they couldn't get it to gel in their minds. They could come up with ideas for characters and what they should be like but then they hit the wall.

Chet tosses the notebook back into the file cabinet.

CHET (CONT'D)

They went to some graphic novel publishers with the art, figuring someone else would write it, but they were told the drawings. . .

Chet slides the file drawer shut and walks back to the couch.

CHET (CONT'D)

. . .weren't good enough.

Chet plops down on the couch and stretches out.

CHET (CONT'D)

So they'd have endless discussions with people about the way a battle would go or if Quinacuc could survive a Megaphotonariffic blast from. . .

Chet sits up.

CHET (CONT'D)

. . .I have no fucking idea. I gotta tell ya, they lost me at phaser.

Chet lies back down.

CHET (CONT'D)

And why's everything 'mega' with these guys? It's always megablast this and megastrobe that.

Chet cocks his head quizzically.

CHET (CONT'D)

I wonder if it's a penis thing?

Chet shrugs his shoulders.

CHET (CONT'D)

All I know is they're very willing to share and I'm very willing to, ah, collaborate.

Chet sits up.

CHET (CONT'D)

And it's awesome. All I had to do is thank them in the book and give them some copies.

Chet becomes a little pensive.

CHET (CONT'D)

But then they started talking on the internet about how much they helped me. I couldn't deny it but as long as they signed off as holding no rights my publisher was fine. So we started to do appearances together.

INT. AUTOTORIUM - DAY

Tony and Steve are sitting on stage screaming. After a beat they jump up and run off a stage toward another screaming GUY. Chet leans back in his chair and throws his hands up.

CHET (V.O.)

And that could get weird.

INT. WRITERS DEN - CONTINUOUS

Chet sitting on the couch.

CHET

Watching grown ass men argue about made up characters in a totally fantastical book was strange. But, to tell you the truth, if they weren't there I'd be lost.

Chet stands up and walks toward the computer.

CHET (CONT'D)

Those geeks ask some intricate questions.

Chet sits at the computer.

CHET (CONT'D)

Truth is, I don't actually write the books. I mean, I do, I did. The first one. It took forever and all I'm doing is ripping off Louis L'Amour with gobbledegook in place of names and locations.

INT. PUBLISHERS OFFICE - DAY

Chet is sitting on the receiving side of an ornate desk. Behind the desk is a serious looking man, SCOTT RANDOLPH. He's holding a manuscript and gesturing with it. Scott seems very excited and happy.

CHET (V.O.)
So I was thrilled when a publisher
was interested in releasing it.
Then when he slipped me the
contract. . .

Scott slides a contract across the desk. Chet leans over and
takes a look at it.

CHET (V.O.)
. . .I sort of shit myself.

Chet picks up the contract and sits back.

CHET (V.O.)
I figured they'd buy this book,
give me money and we'd go our
separate ways.

INT. WRITERS DEN - CONTINUOUS

Chet opens a drawer on the computer desk and takes out the
contract.

CHET
I'd have the money to get serious,
write the great American novel, get
my real words out.

Chet tosses the contract on the desk.

CHET (CONT'D)
But that's not what happened. They
wanted a dozen books. Two books a
year.

Chet leans back in the chair.

CHET (CONT'D)
There's no way in hell I could do
that. The one I wrote took a year.
So I did what any normal writer
would do.

INT. PUBLISHERS OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Scott comes around the desk to shake hands with Chet.

CHET (V.O.)
I took the deal.

INT. WRITERS DEN - CONTINUOUS

Chet's still sitting in the chair.

CHET

I may have ruined my life but no
writer is going to turn down a book
deal.

INT. STUDIO APARTMENT - NIGHT

A slightly younger Chet is staring at a blinking cursor. The only thing on the page was the header: Attack Of King Zzxjo and to the far right the number 1.

CHET

So I got to work. Sort of. I'd sit
there hour after hour, old cowboy
movies playing all the time.

INT. WRITERS DEN - CONTINUOUS

Chet is standing pointing to a frame.

CHET

Just when I thought I'd have to
give the advance money back and be
found out as a total fraud, an
amazing thing happened.

Dolly shot to frame. It's the cover of a magazine, Science Fiction Fiction, The Monthly Review Of Sci-Fi Publications. The cover is of Chet's first book, Raid On Meral's Mine, with the headline, Is This The Future Of Sci-Fi?

CHET (CONT'D)

I got a call from my publisher, the
fucking thing was a hit. He told me
to stop working on the follow up
because I was going on tour.

INT. TELEVISION STUDIO - DAY

Chet is on a set being interviewed by DARREN TATE for the show, This Week In Sci-Fi.

CHET (V.O.)

I did television.

INT. BOOKSTORE - DAY

Chet is seated at a table with a long line of eager and excited people waiting. He chats with the people as he signs his book.

CHET (V.O.)
Countless book signings.

INT. CONVENTION HALL - DAY

Chet is seated behind a full merchandise table with a long line of people waiting.

CHET (V.O.)
A slew of sci-fi, comic book,
fantasy, horror, whatever
conventions.

INT. WRITERS DEN - CONTINUOUS

Chet is seated at a computer looking at his fantasy curling league standings.

CHET
I've got to upgrade my skip.

Chet stands up, goes to the couch and lies down.

CHET (CONT'D)
I went anywhere and talked to
anyone who would have me. I'd have
stayed on the road forever but my
publisher started asking. . .

INT. PUBLISHERS OFFICE - DAY

Scott is sitting behind his desk with a big smile. His lips move but we hear Chet's voice.

CHET (V.O.)
. . .so, when are we going to get
the next blockbuster?

INT. WRITERS DEN - CONTINUOUS

Chet sits up on the couch.

CHET

It was starting to get to me, let me tell you. I didn't want to be the Harper Lee of sci-fi. I was desperate. So I told him. . .

INT. PUBLISHERS OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Sitting in front of Scott's desk Chet silently mouths, "By the end of the month."

CHET (V.O.)

I have no fucking idea.

INT. WRITERS DEN - CONTINUOUS

Chet is sitting on the couch.

CHET

That's what I wanted to say but it turns out I told him he'd have it by the end of the month.

Chet shakes his head amazed.

CHET (CONT'D)

I was a cocky prick back then.

Chet stands up and walks to the computer and sits down.

CHET (CONT'D)

But then I really had to come up with something. So, in a moment of insanity, desperation or genius I came up with a solution.

Chet looks directly into the camera.

CHET (CONT'D)

Global search and replace.

Chet turns to the computer and opens a word processing file. He clicks on file then replace. While talking he types Urient into the find and Tidian into the replace the clicks on replace all.

CHET (CONT'D)

All I had to do was change the names of the characters, places to new places, and I had a new book.

Chet turns toward the camera.

CHET (CONT'D)

Of course it wasn't that easy. I had to go in and change attributes, the language they spoke, days to night, lizard face people to weasel face people, types of vehicles.

Chet smiles and shrugs.

CHET (CONT'D)

What was I going to do? I had nothing to give them so I figured it was worth a shot.

Chet leans way back.

CHET (CONT'D)

And that shit worked! I've got to tell you no one was more shocked than me. I was sure I'd be found out and made to give back the money. I was sure the movie deal would fall through. I'd be ruined.

ROBIN (O.C.)

Mail!

Chet snaps up and out of the chair. He walks out the door.

CHET

Someone would see the word counts were suspiciously close.

EXT. BACKYARD - CONTINUOUS

Chet slowly walks through the backyard.

CHET

The action was eerily similar. Someone was bound to find something.

Chet stops at a round glass table and picks up a large pile of mail.

CHET (CONT'D)

But if they did no one ever said anything. No one. Readers, critics, bloggers. And fucking critics and bloggers live to shred people.

Chet flips through the many envelopes.

CHET (CONT'D)
But nothing other than praise.
Well, there was one production dork
on the third book who asked why my
file had the same created and
modified date.

Chet begins walking from the table and chuckles.

CHET (CONT'D)
I told him I always copied and
pasted the completed work into a
new document. Kind of a
superstition.

Chet stops at the door of the Writers Den.

CHET (CONT'D)
And they bought it. The hardest
thing was remembering to do it. But
it did teach me to leave the file
open all day for a couple of weeks.
Just in case someone asked to see
the original.

Chet enters the Writers Den.

INT. WRITERS DEN - CONTINUOUS

Chet sits at the computer.

CHET
It's not that I'm a bad guy, people
enjoy the books.

Chet waves the envelopes.

CHET (CONT'D)
I get about this much fan mail
daily. People enjoy the movies.

Chet leans over and drops the pile of mail on the table.

CHET (CONT'D)
Not that I have anything to do with
them.

INT. MOVIE PREMIER - DAY

Chet and his wife, ROBIN, are standing on a red carpet with
video and still cameras surrounding them.

CHET

I get a pile of money and they make movies. I support them and do whatever they ask.

INT. WRITERS DEN - CONTINUOUS

Chet is sitting at the computer.

CHET

Not that they ask for much. Movie people don't have much respect for writers.

Chet leans back in the chair and grins.

CHET (CONT'D)

Don't think the irony of what I just said is lost on me. Sometimes I might get a twinge of guilt but then I'll run into someone who gushes about the books or movies.

Chet stands up and goes to the refrigerator.

CHET (CONT'D)

I figure most writing is trickery, a con, anyway. The structure is pretty straightforward, set-up, conflict, resolution.

Chet opens the refrigerator and takes out a beer.

CHET (CONT'D)

So I can convince myself all I really did is streamline the structure.

Chet opens the beer and takes a sip. He walks toward the couch.

CHET (CONT'D)

Streamlined the shit outta that bitch.

Chet sits on the couch. His expression slowly drifts to one of utter seriousness.

CHET (CONT'D)

But that's all behind me. I turned in my last book, Invasion On Piternal's Tomb, a year ago and have been taking it easy.

Chet stands, takes another sip of beer and walks to the computer.

CHET (CONT'D)

But now it's time to get back to work. Real work. True work.

Chet sits down.

CHET (CONT'D)

The great American novel. I have the time, the resources, and the motivation.

ROBIN (O.S.)

Lunch.

Robin enters the Writers Den. Robin puts his tray of food on one computer desk and hers on the other. She leans over and kisses Chet. He returns the kiss.

ROBIN (CONT'D)

Honey, can we talk about something I really, really want to do?

Robin sits at the computer and begins eating.

CHET

Right after lunch, honey.

Chet pulls up to the desk and lifts up his soup spoon. He takes a small, tentative sip before turning and looking into the camera.

CHET (CONT'D)

Which will bring us to the conflict section of our story.

Chet begins eating his soup. The camera lingers on him for a few seconds before rapidly, but not dizzyingly, dollying out of the Writers Den, through the backyard, through the house, out the front door, off the property to the street where it spins around and slowly dollies onto the property, through the house, through the backyard, up to the Writers Den where it stops at the Writers Den door.

Chet is sitting at the computer looking at Robin standing between Chet and the door.

ROBIN

I've been thinking about it for a long, long time and I think I can do it.

Chet is rocking in his seat.

CHET

All right, okay, fine, that's good.

It's obvious Chet is taken aback by this conversation. He wasn't expecting this.

ROBIN

It doesn't seem as if you're fine with this.

CHET

No, no, yes, no, I'm perfectly fine with it. I'm just, ah, you know, not quite understanding how we're going to work this out.

ROBIN

It's obvious, isn't it?

CHET

If it was obvious I'm sure we wouldn't be having this part of the conversation.

Robin reaches out and grabs the other chair at the computer desk. She slides it to her, sits on it and goes to the desk.

ROBIN

I'll use this computer.

Still leaning back Chet steps his chair backwards toward the back of the Writers Den. Without taking his eyes off Robin he gets to the refrigerator, reaches back, opens the door, pulls a beer out, opens it, and drinks it all while never taking his eyes off Robin.

When the beer is gone he steps the chair over to the barrel and drops the can into it. Like a gangly crab he steps the chair back to his desk.

ROBIN (CONT'D)

You don't seem supportive.

CHET

Well, no, it's not that. I always told you I'd support you with whatever you wanted to do.

INT. PAINTING ROOM - DAY

A PAINTING INSTRUCTOR is teaching Robin how to paint.

CHET (V.O.)
You helped me after the book took
off and things got crazy.

INT. TENNIS COURT - DAY

A TENNIS INSTRUCTOR is teaching Robin how to play.

CHET (V.O.)
I doubt I would have got through
all the shit without you.

INT. KNITTING STORE - DAY

A KNITTING INSTRUCTOR is teaching Robin how to knit.

CHET (V.O.)
So once the madness died down it
was only fair to support you.

INT. COMEDY CLUB - DAY

A STAND-UP COMEDY INSTRUCTOR is teaching Robin how to comic.

CHET (V.O.)
And give you every opportunity to
express yourself.

INT. WRITERS DEN - CONTINUOUS

We are inside the Writers Den between Chet and Robin.

CHET
And I think I've done that.

ROBIN
Without question. But this time I
really think I'm on to something.

INT. SPA - DAY

Robin is standing over a WOMAN at her crotch with a bowl full
of hot wax. An INSTRUCTOR is standing next to her instructing
her in the proper method to apply the wax.

CHET
You said the same thing when you
went to Brazilian waxing school.

Robin shakes her head strenuously no, hands the bowl to the instructor and quickly walks out of the room.

INT. WRITERS DEN - CONTINUOUS

Robin is shaking her head just as strenuously.

ROBIN

I was wrong. There's no way I could do that. After it was done they all looked like Homer Simpson's mouth.

CHET

I can see that.

ROBIN

But I'm not wrong about this.

CHET

Okay.

Chet sits back in thought. He knows she's going to do it so he's resigned himself to that fact. Now it's just figuring out how.

CHET (CONT'D)

Do you have an idea?

ROBIN

I have a few.

CHET

Okay, do you want to go to school?

ROBIN

No, I think I'm good.

Chet chuckles.

CHET

It's not as easy as it looks.

ROBIN

Says the guy who's written exactly one book.

CHET

Point taken.

Robin was the only other person who knew what Chet did.

CHET (CONT'D)

But it's not as if I went into it blind. I worked in newspapers, went to college, studied. I sat there for hours, days, honing my craft.

ROBIN

What's the big deal? Everyone writes.

That hypothesis has always bothered Chet and his displeasure is evident.

CHET

I'll give you that. Everyone writes. Notes to the family. Shopping lists. Maybe a year end catch up newsletter to all the people you haven't seen in a decade.

Chet stands up and starts pacing.

CHET (CONT'D)

But to sit there day after day pounding out hundreds of thousands of words in hopes of finding that perfect combination, that perfect pacing. The right characters in the right voices.

Chet stops and drops his head suddenly tired.

CHET (CONT'D)

I'm sick of having this discussion with people.

Chet looks up at Robin.

CHET (CONT'D)

I understand it. I do. People don't paint generally, don't sculpt. Hell, people don't even whittle. But everyone takes pen to paper, bangs on a keyboard, almost every day. They type words which form phrases which creates concepts to communicate with others.

Chet walks to his chair and sits down.

CHET (CONT'D)

But that's like saying I should be able to operate on someone's leg because I cut my steak and carve up a turkey.

ROBIN

I know how you feel when people say that but don't you think I can do it?

Chet leans back in his chair.

ROBIN (CONT'D)

You don't, do you?

CHET

It's not that exactly.

ROBIN

Then what it is *exactly*?

Chet knows this is a losing battle. He begins to plan his exit strategy.

CHET

Just the logistic, how we're going to do this.

ROBIN

What's that supposed to mean?

CHET

Well, we'll have to find a space for you to write. Maybe call Doug to build the space.

ROBIN

Why would we have to do that?

CHET

To give you a place to write.

Robin looks around with a furrowed brow. She gestures around the Writers Den.

ROBIN

I have a place to write.

Chet is stricken by this. It's his worst case scenario.

CHET

But. . .are. . .do. . .

ROBIN

It is called the Writers Den,
plural, right?

Chet is in the middle of the internal deduction every man has when having a discussion with their wife or girlfriend. How can I get out of this without it getting truly ugly? Sometimes you can, other times you're not so lucky.

CHET

It is that but, um, you know how it is.

ROBIN

No, I'm not a writer, as far as you're concerned, so how would I know how it is?

Chet knows this is the breaking point. At this sensitive and critical juncture the wrong word, a mere word, can create a major conflagration.

CHET

It's usually a very solitary event.

ROBIN

Usually. Didn't you say there were always people running around at the newspaper office? That you were in a big room with a bunch of other people?

Damn they're good, Chet thinks.

CHET

Which side do you want?

Robin stands up and rushes over to Chet and hugs him.

ROBIN

You'll see, this'll be great.

Robin stands up smiling.

ROBIN (CONT'D)

You'll be able to help me. I'll be able to help you. We can brainstorm. Spitball, I think they say.

Robin bounds out of the Writers Den.

ROBIN (CONT'D)

I can't wait to get started. I'll go get a few things. I have so many ideas.

CHEET

Things? Ideas?

Chet drops his head between his knees.

Slowly, Chet raises his head then walks to the refrigerator, opens it, gets a beer, then goes to the couch. When he sits down and opens the can the camera slowly zooms out to reveal the entire Writers Den. Chet sips the beer through this entire sequence.

We see blurs in front of him as the camera zooms out people become recognizable as the zoom continues. We see Robin directing various men working in the Writers Den only on her side of the room.

A COMPUTER GUY takes out the old computer.

Two MOVERS take out the old computer desk and chair.

A CARPENTER puts in a window.

The Movers bring in a new desk and chair.

The Computer Guy brings in a new computer set-up.

Robin puts the finishing touches, pictures on the wall, vases of flowers on her desk, etc.

The blurs cease as we see Robin standing in the middle of the room proudly checking out her side.

Chet finishes his beer, gets up, walks toward the refrigerator, tosses the can into the barrel, opens the refrigerator, gets a beer, closes the door, walks back to the couch, sits, opens the beer and begins drinking.

ROBIN

What do you think? Isn't this great? Doesn't that window make the room much brighter? Look at this monitor!

CHEET

If you like it. If you think so. Yes, sadly. Nice.

Chet sips his beer watching his giddy wife. She senses that Chet may not be fully behind this. She turns and walks toward Chet.

ROBIN

What? Don't you like the improvements?

Chet slowly stands up and walks to his side of the room.

CHET

No, you did a great job.

Chet looks at his computer monitor, he looks at the window, then back to the monitor. He sits down and moves his head side to side.

CHET (CONT'D)

But the window puts a glare directly onto my monitor.

Robin turns and looks at Chet's monitor. She turns it almost facing totally toward the back of the room.

ROBIN

Don't be a baby. See? You can get the glare off it.

Chet puts his hands on the keyboard and leans way over to face the monitor.

CHET

Perfect.

ROBIN

Do you always have to be such a baby? All we'll have to do is move your desk a little.

Chet spins around in his chair to face Robin. He squints in the light.

CHET

Can I ask you why we needed a window?

Robin waves expansively.

ROBIN

To let in light.

CHET

That's one of the reasons we put electric in here.

ROBIN

You don't have to be a wise ass.
What if I want to look out the
window?

CHET

Yeah, you see, that's why I didn't
put windows in. Distractions are a
bad thing when you're writing.
Think about it. You're working then
all of a sudden you see a red
breasted robin nursing her chicks.

ROBIN

Robin's don't nurse.

CHET

That's beside the point. My point
is it's hard enough to write
without distractions.

ROBIN

What if I want to look out into the
world for inspiration?

Chet leans over Robin's computer desk and looks out the
window. The camera follows him to his view out the window.
It's a bare backyard to the fence then a house.

CHET

What inspiration are you going to
get from this? To tell me it's time
to mow the lawn?

ROBIN

I'm just trying to make this more
livable.

Chet turns and is toe to toe with Robin. It's not
confrontational, it's more claustrophobic.

CHET

But it's a writing room. It's not
supposed to be livable.

ROBIN

I should be comfortable.

CHET

Not really. You should be a little
uncomfortable when you're writing.

ROBIN

That's ridiculous.

CHET

Is it? Have you ever heard of a writers spa? No. Heard of a writers garret? A hovel? Damn straight.

ROBIN

This isn't the eighteen hundreds. But I get you. I understand. It's a workplace.

CHET

Right.

ROBIN

That's why I didn't do the other improvements.

CHET

Other improvements?

Robin steps back and begins pointing around the room.

ROBIN

I was going to put a small kitchenette over there and a tiny bathroom there.

Chet looks around slack jawed.

CHET

You actually had plans to do that?

Robin smiles and reaches to her desk.

ROBIN

Yes, do you want to see the drawings?

CHET

No.

Robin turns back to Chet.

ROBIN

But I didn't do it. And do you want to know why?

CHET

Because we have both those things a hundred yards away?

ROBIN

No. I didn't because I didn't want it to be too comfortable.

CHET
Comfortable?

Chet's incredulous. He grabs the back of her new chair pulling it toward him.

CHET (CONT'D)
This chair is more comfortable than
the first eight beds I had.

Chet pushes on the seat.

CHET (CONT'D)
Isn't this made with some biometric
padding that forms to your ass
cheeks while also giving deep
tissue massage to your prostate?

Robin pulls the chair toward her.

ROBIN
It's just a chair.

CHET
Then why didn't I get one?

ROBIN
You didn't ask for one.

CHET
I didn't ask for a window either.

Chet gestures at the window.

Robin stares at Chet with her hands on her hips.

ROBIN
I'll get you a fucking chair.

CHET
That's not the point.

ROBIN
Then what is your point?

CHET
This is a workspace. A place to
think. To have any thought you
want.

ROBIN
And what? You can't do that now
because of a window?

Chet knows he's in another of the endless arguments he'll not only never win but truly doesn't understand.

CHET

You've done it. It's done. We have a window.

Chet grabs his much smaller, much less elaborate chair and sits on it.

CHET (CONT'D)

Now can we get some work done?

Chet turns to his computer. He stares at it with his elbows on the arm rests. Robin watches him for a moment before sitting at her desk. She begins tidying up the already impeccable desk.

Chet looks at his monitor then holds his hands up in front of it. He turns half way toward the window. He turns back slumping his shoulders and dropping his arms.

Chet leans back. His head bumps into Robin's chair. He nods his head no while slowly leaning forward. He stands up, his chair rolls into Robin's.

ROBIN

Can you be a little more careful?

Chet tenses before slowly standing up, carefully moving his chair out of the way, then surveys his side of the room. He looks at the window, back to his side, looks left, looks right, then sighs.

Chet moves the table on the left away from the wall and toward the couch.

ROBIN (CONT'D)

What are you doing?

CHET

Rearranging.

ROBIN

Can you do it quieter?

Chet stops moving the table.

CHET

Probably not.

ROBIN

Well. . .

Robin stands up.

ROBIN (CONT'D)

. . .then I guess I'll call it a day.

Robin starts walking toward the door.

ROBIN (CONT'D)

Good thing I have a celebratory lunch with the girls planned because who can work in an environment like this?

Robin exits and Chet watches the door shut behind her. After a beat he hoists himself onto the table.

CHET

Who indeed.

INT. WRITERS DEN - DAY

Chet is under the computer desk adjusting the last piece of equipment. The computer desk is where the table was and the table is where the computer desk was. Chet crawls out from under the desk, stands and turns on his computer.

Robin opens the Writers Den door and the wind causes all the papers on the table to fly around the room. Chet wildly tries to grab them in midair.

Robin leans over and picks a few off the floor. She puts them on the table and continues to her desk. She places the bag she was carrying on her desk and starts going through it.

ROBIN

We'll have to do something about that.

Chet nods at her while picking up paper. The papers on the table flutter in the breeze. Chet puts books and other items on the fluttering papers. He walks toward the door.

ROBIN (CONT'D)

Where are you going?

CHET

I'll be right back.

Chet exits. Robin pays him no attention. She's busy taking items out of the bag.

Pens of different colors, types and quality, a pen holder, paper clips, stapler, brads, paper, index cards, file folders, labels, notebooks of many sizes, a large dictionary and an even larger thesaurus. A store full of office supplies.

Chet enters the Writers Den with his arms filled with trophies and plaques. They're awards he's received for his books. He dumps them on the table and starts putting them on top of the papers.

ROBIN

Now what are we going to put on the mantel?

Chet puts a plaque on the last pile of free papers.

CHET

I'm sure you'll figure something out.

ROBIN

What's that supposed to mean?

Chet looks at Robin quizzically.

CHET

Just that you're good at, ah, you know, decorating and shit.

Chet can feel he's one wrong breath away from an argument. He truly didn't mean anything by it but he knows he has to change the subject fast.

CHET (CONT'D)

Did you leave anything for anyone else at the stationary store?

Robin looks at him askew.

ROBIN

Are you going to criticize everything I do before I even get started?

Chet holds up both hands walking towards the desk.

CHET

Whoa! Nothing of the sort. I'm jealous. I love office products.

Chet picks up the thesaurus and dictionary. Turning it around as if it's a foreign artifact.

CHET (CONT'D)

Wow, I haven't touched a thesaurus since I don't know when.

Chet looks around the room.

CHET (CONT'D)

I'm pretty sure there is one in here.

Chet flips through the thesaurus.

CHET (CONT'D)

I remember when I'd use each of these every day.

ROBIN

Shouldn't all writers have one of each?

Chet puts the books back on the desk. Robin protectively pulls them close.

CHET

At least. I probably have half a dozen of each somewhere. But there's little need now.

Robin looks at Chet as if he's the cockiest bastard in the world.

ROBIN

Oh, because you're such an accomplished writer?

Chet chuckles.

CHET

Far from it.

He points at Robin's computer.

CHET (CONT'D)

The internet. I don't even need 'The Superior Persons Book Of Words' any longer. I just type in something like hairless and up pops glabrous.

Robin grabs the dictionary.

ROBIN

That's not a word.

Robin flips through the dictionary while Chet grins.

ROBIN (CONT'D)

And why would you need another word
for hairless?

CHET

I used it to describe a character.
I said something like he resembled
a glabrous hamster.

Robin looks up at Chet and cocks her head. She closes the
dictionary with a pop.

ROBIN

Fucking hairless.

Robin puts the dictionary gently on the desk.

ROBIN (CONT'D)

You're weird.

CHET

What can I say? I know my audience.

Suddenly Chet's easy demeanor vanishes.

CHET (CONT'D)

Shit!

ROBIN

What? You scared the shit out of
me.

Chet points to his computer.

CHET

That one doesn't have the internet.

Robin laughs patting her books.

ROBIN

That's why it's always a good thing
to have an old school back-up.

Chet walks to his desk and sits down.

CHET

Touche.

Chet looks at his computer.

CHET (CONT'D)
This hasn't been on line since
Netscape was the browser of choice.

Chet stands up and moves his computer to look behind it.

CHET (CONT'D)
I don't even know if this could be
hooked up today.

ROBIN
What's the big deal? This one has
it.

Although Chet knows it sounds workable he has his doubts.

ROBIN (CONT'D)
When you need to search for
something or check your email I'll
let you use it.

Chet's not convinced.

ROBIN (CONT'D)
Or you could get rid of that
dinosaur.

CHET
I know. But it's not that easy.

INT. STUDIO APARTMENT - DAY

Younger Chet is staring at a blinking cursor on a blank page.

CHET (V.O.)
It's the first computer I owned.
I've typed every word I've written
on it.

INT. WRITERS DEN - CONTINUOUS

Chet and Robin are sitting face to face, knee to knee.

ROBIN
A little superstitious, I see.

CHET
I don't know if it's that as much
as I started working on my first
novel with it and sort of wanted to
finish it there.

ROBIN

Whatever you want to call it,
that's fine but it smells like
superstition to me.

They both laugh but Chet has his doubts about this
arraignment.

Chet smiles, nods and spins his chair around facing his
computer. A beat later Robin slowly positions her chair at
the desk.

The both start clicking their respective mice. Chet clicks
open a file and, while waiting for it to open, leans back and
bumps into Robin's chair. The moment the chair touch a loud
introduction of an online cooking show blasts.

CHET

Sorry.

Chet leans forward checking the relative distance between the
chair. Not much.

ROBIN

Be careful.

CHET

I said sorry. I'm not used to. . .

Chet holds his hands out aimlessly gesturing.

ROBIN

. . .I know it'll take a little
getting used to but it's not as if
we're not close every day.

Chet drops his arms to the armrest and opens and closes his
fists.

CHET

Nope, I understand, no, it won't be
an issue.

Chet squints at her monitor.

CHET (CONT'D)

What's that?

ROBIN

It's a cooking program.

CHET

Are you thinking about writing a
cookbook?

ROBIN

I actually don't know what I'm going to write. It could be a cookbook. I don't know. I'm just looking around. Trying to get some ideas. I'm sure you understand.

CHET

Without question. But if you're not sure what you're going to write and we have four or five computers in the house. . .

Robin spins her chair around. She is bearing down on him in the no nonsense manner he's seen before and is not a big fan of.

ROBIN

Listen, if you want me gone just tell me.

Chet stammers but he's not going to stop her.

ROBIN (CONT'D)

If you feel this is going to stifle your creativity or hinder your process then. . .

Chet jumps up waving his hands, palms out, in front of his chest.

CHET

. . .No, no, no. No. It's okay. It's just an adjustment.

Chet grabs his chair and begins to sit.

CHET (CONT'D)

We just have to get used to it.

Robin slowly turns back to her computer.

ROBIN

We? I seem to be adjusting just fine.

Chet stares at the back of her chair for a beat. He's well aware it can't linger like this.

CHET

So, have you narrowed down your field of focus? Cooking, you have an interest in that. Anything else?

Robin spins around and begins speaking excitedly.

ROBIN

Well, there was this article I read about this guy from the nineteen thirties. He was grifter who got out of jail went to this town. He figured he ply his trade, see if he still had the goods to pull off cons.

CHET

He's gotta start someplace I guess.

ROBIN

But the townsfolk think he's the sheriff they sent for. Back then there weren't face to face interviews for things like this. So no one knew what the guy looked like.

CHET

Banshee.

ROBIN

What?

CHET

It's a little like the plot from Banshee. The show on TV.

ROBIN

Are you sure?

CHET

It's not exactly but it's close.

Robin gets a look in her eyes that oozes hatred.

ROBIN

Well if you're going to shoot down every idea I have. . .

Chet starts waving the surrender flag again.

CHET

. . .not at all. I'm just saying, it's similar.

ROBIN

Are you saying I stole it?

CHET

Not at all. I'm just saying. . .

Chet is struggling to keep this from blowing up.

CHET (CONT'D)

. . .I know your story is from the thirties, he's a con man, he's probably not chasing an old girlfriend and diamonds. . .

ROBIN

. . .so it's totally different.

CHET

In theory. But it's derivative. Bad guy tricks people into thinking he's a cop. Regardless of how awesome your story is the first thing people are going to compare it to is Banshee.

Chet pauses. He and Robin look at each other. It's a tad tense in here.

CHET (CONT'D)

Don't you want your first piece to be stunningly original? Something no one in the world other than you could think of?

Chet and Robin sit silent for a few beats.

ROBIN

I know you're handing me a line of bullshit. . .

Chet begins to object but is quickly quieted.

ROBIN (CONT'D)

. . .but it's a valid line of bullshit.

Another couple of beats pass as Chet and Robin look at each other.

ROBIN (CONT'D)

I'm not bummed. I have plenty of ideas.

(pause)

Like this one about four hip, hot, happening women. . .

Chet starts to say something but Robin uses the 'one second' finger to shush him. Chet leans back, folds his arms across his chest and waits for the inevitable.

ROBIN (CONT'D)

. . .wait, it's not exactly similar to that. Yes, they go to all the fabulous parties, they get laid all the time but here's the kicker, they're in LA!

Chet drops his head into his hands.

ROBIN (CONT'D)

What? I suppose that's derivative too?

Chet sits totally still as the scene fades out.

INT. WRITERS DEN - DAY

The room is void of humans. First we hear then see the door open. Chet quickly moves in and turns on the lights. He goes to the computers and turns them on. He's starting his work day.

He takes some notes off his desk, sits on his chair then slides it to the other one. He opens a web browser and starts rapidly typing in notes he's made. When he gets his information he writes it down on the paper and repeats the action.

The camera moves over his shoulder and we see him type:

Average size of a .45 bullet hole in a human

A list of answers pops up and he clicks on the first one. He gets some information, jots it down when he hears the door swing open.

NOTE: Periodically throughout the next two scenes the telephone rings. Not too often. It shouldn't draw attention totally away from the action. Just a quick ring or two. But it always draws a look from Chet.

CHET

Shit.

Chet says softly shutting down that search information.

ROBIN

Oh hi, honey.

Robin says entering the room.

ROBIN (CONT'D)
Don't rush, I can wait.

Robin pulls her seat over and sits right next to him. Very close.

ROBIN (CONT'D)
What are you searching for? Do you have your idea? Are you checking email? Have you heard from Scott? Has he made you a counteroffer? Have you checked your email recently to see if any conventions want to book you?

Chet is staring at the computer. His fingers tapping on the arms of his chair.

ROBIN (CONT'D)
Are these your notes?

Robin leans over to check out the notes. Chet quickly grabs them and slides away from the computer.

CHET
Yeah, notes. Preliminary. They wouldn't make sense to you.

Robin looks at Chet as if he's hiding something or has a screw loose. Or both.

ROBIN
Well, you don't have to be rude about it.

CHET
No, I just. . .I'm not. . .it's just that it doesn't make sense to me yet so I can't really answer any questions about it.

Robin watches Chet as he positions himself at his desk.

ROBIN
Maybe I could make sense of it.

CHET
I doubt it. If it's a jumbled mess in my head it'd be more than meaningless to you.

Robin sits there watching Chet fidget for a few beats.

ROBIN

If you really need this computer to research and make things less jumbled in your head I can go to the house and get something to eat.

CHET

Nope, thanks. I have enough right now. I appreciate the offer.

Chet's madly getting his work underway.

ROBIN

Okay then, I guess I'll play my game for a while before I get started.

Chet sits up bolt straight then becomes stock-still. He can't believe she'd interrupt him to play a game. Chet waits a beat before slowly turning around just enough to see her monitor.

Yep, she's playing an online game.

Chet's blinking this into comprehension makes it look like he's sending Morse Code. Slowly he stops blinking as much but continues staring.

Just as slowly he turns back, picking up his notes along the way, then faces the computer holding the notes to his face. Chet slumps in his chair while tossing his notes on the desk.

Chet gets up and heads to the coffee maker in the back. He pours himself one.

CHET

Would you like some coffee?

ROBIN

No thank you. I had Deena run out to get me a cappuccino.

Chet nods as he finishes pouring his coffee.

ROBIN (CONT'D)

Would you like me to call her? I'm sure she's not there yet. Get you a scone or something.

Chet sips his coffee then sits on the couch. He shakes his head no.

CHET

No, thank you. I'm fine.

Chet sits on the couch sipping coffee not looking all that fine.

INT. WRITERS DEN - LATER

Robin is at her computer, cappuccino to her left, playing her game. Chet is a foot behind her staring morosely at his keyboard.

Quickly he stands up. If he knows where he's going there is no evidence of it.

ROBIN

Are you going to the house?

CHET

Ah, no, but, I can.

ROBIN

No, if you're not going I don't want you to make a special trip.

CHET

It's no big deal. I'm just sitting here anyway. I should get some exercise anyway. You know what I always say, get in two hundred walking yards a day or die trying.

Chet has a big smile and really sells his stupid joke.

ROBIN

Why do you always have to be so silly?

Chet's shoulders slump.

CHET

Says the person playing a game.

ROBIN

It's at a very intense part of the game, I'll have you know.

Chet looks over her shoulder and nods.

CHET

Yeah, I can see that. You'd better click that mouse again before something really goes wrong.

ROBIN

Why do you have to be such a wise
ass?

CHET

A second ago I was silly.

ROBIN

See?

Chet really doesn't but gives in because it's easier.

CHET

I've decided to go to the house. Do
you want something?

ROBIN

Only if you're going there.

CHET

What difference does it make? I'm
up. I can see where I'm going from
here. I offered.

ROBIN

I just don't want you to go out of
your way.

CHET

Mozambique is out of my way. So if
you ask me to go there, no. It's
out of my way, sorry. But to go to
a place I can see, not out of my
way.

ROBIN

Why do you have to get so pissy
about everything?

Chet's blinking begins again. He tries to use his big boy
words but only guttural sounds come out.

CHET

Hu. . .Dit. . .Arr. . .

Chet throws his hands up.

CHET (CONT'D)

Do you want something or not?

ROBIN

If it's not too much bother. . .

Chet's entire body visibly tenses.

ROBIN (CONT'D)
. . .I'd like some fruit.

Chet nods. Happy to have his marching orders he turns to exit the room.

CHET
Fruit. Got it.

Chet stops one step into his trek. He has his back to Robin for the remainder of the scene.

ROBIN
Make sure to get the fresh bowl.
Don't get the one next to the
microwave. Deena's going to use
those to make smoothies later. Get
the one on the kitchen table.

Robin stops talking. Chet nods and takes a step.

CHET
Fruit bowl. Kitchen table. Check.

ROBIN
Can you make sure there's a kiwi in
there? I might feel like having a
kiwi. If not now than maybe later.

CHET
That it?

ROBIN
Yes, thanks.

Chet starts to exit the room.

ROBIN (CONT'D)
Be careful. Don't drop anything.
And don't forget the kiwi.

Chet finally reaches the door.

ROBIN (CONT'D)
Remember, the bowl on the table.

Chet exits. Through the screen we see him inhale and exhale big before walking out of view.

INT. WRITERS DEN - DAY

Chet is sitting on the couch. He has a clipboard with some papers on them. He's going over the papers while sipping a beer.

SND FX: PHONE RINGS FOUR TIMES

Chet looks at the phone confused. After the third ring he gets up and answers it.

CHET

Hello?

Chet listens for a few beats.

CHET (CONT'D)

Not interested.

Chet hangs up the phone and turns to go to the couch. He doesn't get a step when it rings again. This time he answers with a bite in his voice.

CHET (CONT'D)

HELLO?

Chet immediately reacts as if he's made a mistake. Which he has.

CHET (CONT'D)

Oh, sorry, yeah, sorry, Beth.

Chet pauses, rolls his eyes and shakes his head.

CHET (CONT'D)

Yeah, obviously that wasn't meant for you. I didn't know it was you.

Chet puts his face in his palms.

CHET (CONT'D)

This phone doesn't have caller ID so, no, I didn't do it on purpose.

Chet hangs his head.

Robin enters with lunch and puts them on each computer desk.

ROBIN

Lunch is served.

Chet holds out the phone. You can faintly hear Beth's voice.

CHET
It's your mother.

Robin takes the phone.

ROBIN
Hi Mom.

Chet goes back to the couch while Robin pauses and listens.

ROBIN (CONT'D)
No, Mother, he didn't do it on
purpose. He didn't know it was you.
(pause)
No, he wasn't lying. There is no
called ID on this phone.
(pause)
He didn't mean anything by it. He's
just a little stressed because his
book isn't going well.

Chet snaps his head up.

CHET
Don't tell her that!

Robin waves him off then turns her back to him. He shakes his
head, finishes off his beer then gets up to get another.

CHET (CONT'D)
Just what she needs to hear.

Chet tosses the empty can in the barrel while opening the
refrigerator and pulling out another.

CHET (CONT'D)
That her lazy, good for nothing son
in law can't even do the simple job
he has.

Chet opens the beer and sits down on the couch. He sips the
beer while picking his clipboard back up.

The phone starts ringing on another line. Chet looks deeply
annoyed.

ROBIN
I've got to go, Mom.
(pause)
No, Chet's not making me get off
the phone.

Robin looks at Chet and they both roll their eyes.

ROBIN (CONT'D)
The other line is ringing.
(pause)
Yes, I'll bring the kids over this weekend.

Robin smiles.

ROBIN (CONT'D)
I don't know if Chet can make it.

Chet shakes his head no while waving the beer and clipboard back and forth. Robin tries not to laugh.

ROBIN (CONT'D)
I think I can convince him.

Chet stops nodding and waving and glares at her. After a beat they both start laughing.

ROBIN (CONT'D)
I've got to go, Mom. That other line is still ringing.

Robin pushes the other line on the telephone.

ROBIN (CONT'D)
Hello?
(pause)
No, I'm not interested in lowering my phone bill. I'm interested in having you fuckers stop calling though. Can you help me with that?

Robin pauses pulling the phone from her ear. She looks at it then at Chet.

ROBIN (CONT'D)
Bastard hung up on me.

Robin hangs up the phone.

CHET
There's something I've been meaning to ask.

ROBIN
Are you going to eat?

CHET
After the phoner.

ROBIN
You're doing radio today?

CHET

Yes.

Robin answers a step too frantic.

ROBIN

When?

CHET

Ten minutes or so.

This answer seems like of the utmost tragedy to Robin.

ROBIN

Oh no.

Chet sits there sipping his beer wondering what's going on.

ROBIN (CONT'D)

Where are you doing it?

CHET

Here. Like always.

Robin sighs.

ROBIN

Is there anyway you can. . .

Robin trails off hoping not to have to finish her thought. Although Chet's sure it's something he's not one hundred percent sure but he can guess. But he's not going to. He sits and sips. Robin finally gives in and continues.

ROBIN (CONT'D)

. . .do it someplace else?

Chet knows he can, it won't be too big a problem. But he thinks it's an odd situation.

CHET

Yeah, that shouldn't be a problem.
But can you answer a question?

ROBIN

I'm skyping with a friend who plays
my game.

CHET

That's not the question.
(pause)
What's up with the phone?

ROBIN
What do you mean?

CHET
How come it's ringing here?

ROBIN
Because I'm here.

Chet feels this is taking longer than it should. Chet stares at Robin.

ROBIN (CONT'D)
And I have to answer it.
(pause)
When Deena's busy or something.

Robin expects that to be the answer. Sadly for her, Chet doesn't.

CHET
Can we take it back into the house?

ROBIN
But how am I going to answer it?

CHET
How often do you actually answer the phone?

ROBIN
I don't think I like what you're implying.

CHET
I'm not implying shit. Most calls that get forwarded here are done by Deena.

ROBIN
I answer the phone.

CHET
Right, mostly calls to you, right?

Robin sits up straight and crosses her arms.

ROBIN
Is there a point?

CHET
Not a point, really, just a desire to make it go back to the way it was.

SND FX: SKYPE INCOMING SOUND

Robin's head spins toward the computer. She slides toward the computer.

CHET (CONT'D)
We're not done here.

Chet throws Robin's rule back at her. The rule is resolve one issue before tackling another one. Robin is not happy with this. The Skype sound continues.

ROBIN
Fine.

Robin starts working on the computer. Chet gets up, walks to the refrigerator, gets a beer, dumps the empty one then heads to the phone.

CHET
And I'll even take care of it.

Chet puts down the beer and clipboard, picks up the phone and turns off the ringers.

ROBIN
Can you hurry up?

Robin impatiently waits to connect the call. Chet smiles. Puts the phone down, picks up the beer and clipboard. He turns to Robin, bows and exits.

EXT. BACKYARD - CONTINUOUS

Chet exits the room but stops right outside the door. He furrows his brow and slowly looks back into the room. Robin's sitting at the computer. Chet turns back around.

CHET
What just happened?

Chet shrugs his shoulders and walks through the backyard.

CHET (CONT'D)
Did I just get booted from my
office?

Chet walks through the backyard toward the house. He reaches the stairs.

CHET (CONT'D)
Hey, Deena! Are you having a
problem answering the phone?

INT. WRITERS DEN - DAY

NOTE: Before Chet touches the keyboard this scene takes a minimum of one minute.

Robin is at her computer. She's delightfully clicking her mouse, reading the pages. She's not too active but relaxed and enjoying herself.

Chet, at his computer, doesn't seem to be enjoying himself. He's alternately staring off into the distance, around the room, at the monitor. He's obviously deep in thought. Trying to conjure up another line or two.

Every now and then he reaches for the keyboard but stops before touching the keys thinking better of it. He sits back rocks looking high onto the wall.

Finally, Chet finds that line, the perfect line for this section so he reaches for his keyboard and the moment he touches it:

ROBIN

I found a very nice pair of sneakers. They're white. I'm thinking of going back to get them later.

At Robin's first sound Chet's head snaps back, his hands jump from the keyboard. He exhales and slowly closes his eyes. He clinches his fists slowly once.

When she stops talking he waits. He doesn't move. Ten, fifteen seconds of waiting goes by. He looks left then right as if making sure the coast is clear. He slowly reaches toward the keyboard, he touches the keys when:

ROBIN (CONT'D)

OH MY GOD!

Chet jumps back and spins the chair around.

CHET

What?

Chet is sitting next to Robin wondering what startled her.

ROBIN

I was just reading this article about a son who was chasing his mother around their yard with a Saxons blade, whatever that is.

Robin keeps speaking as Chet, to the best of his ability, rolls his entire body from the head down. He starts sliding the chair back to his desk.

ROBIN (CONT'D)

She kept ducking around cars and trees but what kept him away was, every time she could see him, she'd shoot him with a pellet gun.

CHET

Good to have hobbies.

ROBIN

The fight ended before the cops got there when the father came out of the house with a shotgun and blasted the car they were fighting about. It says they all are going to face charges.

CHET

All's well that ends well.

Chet sits still looking at his keyboard. He hears Robin's keyboard clicking. After a few more seconds he slumps over. As we fade out of the scene Robin is laughing at something in the comments.

ROBIN

Oh, you should hear what this guy wrote in the comment section. He said. . .

INT. WRITERS DEN - NIGHT

Chet is at Robin's computer. The television airing curling is the only illumination. He's using a search engine to gather facts. He has to hand write the notes because his computer doesn't have a USB or CD and Robin's doesn't have a disk drive.

He's taking notes, checking out the curling, doing some research, drinking beer. He finishes off another one and turns to toss it toward the barrel. He frowns. The plastic sheet isn't behind the barrel any longer. Robin made him take it down. He gets up and walks to the barrel. He starts to open the refrigerator when Robin enters the room.

ROBIN

What are you doing?

Chet gets a beer, swings the refrigerator door closed and opens it on his way back to the desk.

CHET
Just doing a little research,
watching a little curling, and

Chet holds up the beer without breaking dialog.

CHET (CONT'D)
having a few beers.

Robin's tone is mocking and disgusted.

ROBIN
More than a few I'd say.

Robin walks past him to the barrel. Chet sits and spins to look at her. She looks in and scoffs.

ROBIN (CONT'D)
When are you going to knock that
shit off? You know I don't mind
drinking but you over do it.

They've had this discussion before. Chet's had all the wise ass and smart ass and plain ass comments a man can make. He doesn't bother any longer.

ROBIN (CONT'D)
That's right, you never have
anything to say on matters of
importance.

Robin walks over and stands over him. The light from the television gives her a much deeper blue hue than Chet.

ROBIN (CONT'D)
Why do you have to come out here to
use the internet? Are you. . .

Chet holds up his hand.

CHET
. . .please, don't even say porn.

Chet looks up and points to the window.

CHET (CONT'D)
Ever since you put the window in I
keep thinking the neighbors can see
me.

Chet squints looking out the window.

CHET (CONT'D)

I wouldn't doubt he'd have a big
ass lens or a telescope.

ROBIN

Yeah, like he'd want to see your
little dick.

She looks around the room imagining all the disgusting things
that could have happened to these walls.

ROBIN (CONT'D)

Just thinking about all the things
you could have done in here makes
me ill.

CHET

Like work? All I've ever done in
here is work. Not send cock snot
soaring. Never once put my pee pee
through it's paces. At no time. . .

Robin throws her hands up.

ROBIN

. . .enough. Stop being gross.

CHET

Fine. Stop going through insane
mental gymnastics of things that
have never happened. All I've ever
done in here is work, watch TV and
drink beer.

ROBIN

That's part of the problem. You
drink way too much. You start early
in the day. Then you sneak in here
and think I don't know. . .

Chet throws up his hands.

CHET

. . .enough.

Chet looks up at Robin hoping he can make her understand.

CHET (CONT'D)

Listen, I know you don't think much
of what I do.

Robin begins to protest but he stops her. They both know
that's true.

CHET (CONT'D)

Not a fan. I totally get it. But,
even when I was pulling a scam I
put the time in to make it a killer
scam.

Chet starts shutting down the computer, collects his notes
then turns off the television. The ambient outdoor light
fills the room. He gets up, picks up his beer and puts the
notes on his desk.

CHET (CONT'D)

But sometimes I need time just to
do this by myself. No
interruptions.

ROBIN

Are you saying. . .

CHET

. . .come on. I don't know any
writers who don't need alone time.
I don't care if I get to sit here
chilling and thinking. I just get
to live in my head.

Chet points Robin to the door.

CHET (CONT'D)

It has nothing to do with you. I
just need to not be concerned with
anything other than the
uninterrupted thoughts in my head.

Chet and Robin reach the door. He opens it. She walks out. He
finishes the beer, turns and tosses it into the barrel with a
clang. Robin spins around to face him.

ROBIN

You know I told you not to do that.

Chet turns back and starts moving her out of the room.

CHET

I know.

Chet closes the door. They fill the window as they head
toward the house.

ROBIN

You know you're cleaning that up in
the morning.

CHET

I know.

ROBIN

You know I'm not going to sit in
that stink all day.

CHET

I know.

ROBIN

You know.

CHET

I know.

They exit the framing of the window and the scene ends.

INT. WRITERS DEN - DAY

Chet is sitting at his computer typing sporadically. Robin is getting herself a fruit plate from the refrigerator. Chet scrunches his face in thought and lolls his head back. He gets out of his seat and looks for a place to start pacing. He can't go left, Robin's ambling down mixing her fruit salad. So he turns right and walks the short distance to the door.

He looks out the screen. The shot frames him through the screen as we see past him Robin looking at Chet's monitor.

ROBIN

So how's it going?

Chet spins around almost at exorcist speed horrified.

CHET

What are you doing?

Chet immediately races toward the computer. He arrives at the computer and minimizes the page.

CHET (CONT'D)

Don't look at that.

Robin leans back shocked. Still mixing her fruit salad.

ROBIN

What's the big deal?

CHET

I don't want anyone to read that
yet.

ROBIN

I still don't get what the big deal is.

CHET

It's not ready. Would you like it if I stuck my head in the oven when you were making your pasta sauce?

ROBIN

It's called gravy and it doesn't go in the oven it goes on the. . .

CHET

. . .whatever, I'm just. . .

ROBIN

. . .as far as the part where you stick your head in the oven.

Robin grins always mixing her fruit salad.

CHET

Cute. But do you get it?

ROBIN

No. Not really.

Chet looks at her and sighs.

CHET

It's not ready. It's still too raw to be seen. Besides, you're far from the best person to judge my work.

Robin begins to object but Chet doesn't give her the space.

CHET (CONT'D)

Only because you're not a fan. You don't like it. You don't like anything I write.

ROBIN

I wouldn't say anything.

CHET

Okay, we'll leave it at not the best person to be the first to read my stuff.

ROBIN

I don't buy that.

Chet's done with tis line of questioning. He sits.

CHET

Okay, I don't want you to read it.
You're overly critical for no
reason. You make snap judgements
and assumptions without reading it
through.

Robin has slowed the fruit salad mixing down considerably.
She steps over to her chair. With care she places the bowl
down.

ROBIN

So don't ask me to read it.

Chet, glad this is over, wants it buried.

CHET

You weren't on the list.

Chet and Robin angrily concern themselves with the tasks on
their desks. Robin stabs at her fruit salad. Chet sits at his
desk seething.

After a few beats Chet exhales and leans into his keyboard.
He's not typing, just touching it. Robin eases up on trying
to murder the fruit salad.

ROBIN

Will you at least tell me what it's
about?

Chet's head drops slightly and he clinches his fists. He
takes a deep breath, sits up, and slowly slides his chair
backwards. When he arrives at Robin's desk he swivels his
chair slightly to face her.

CHET

Okay, if you promise just to
listen.

Robin nods chewing on a piece of fruit. Chet's expression
tells that he's been down this road before and it's going to
be bumpy. But, he has no other road to travel.

CHET (CONT'D)

Okay, it's about a boy with a
screwed up family.

ROBIN

Is there child abuse?

Chet throws his head back and hands out pleadingly.

CHET

No! Please? At least let me get a paragraph in before inter. . . asking questions.

Robin gives a noncommittal shrug/nod with her shoulders.

ROBIN

Talk fast.

CHET

A boy, fucked up family, so finds solace in baseball.

ROBIN

Does he play tennis too?

Chet squeezes his eyes so shut you'd think they'd pop out his ears.

CHET

No! What the? Come on!

ROBIN

You played tennis.

CHET

The character isn't me.

ROBIN

You had a fucked up family.

CHET

Oh, and yours was the face of normality.

ROBIN

We're not talking about my family.

Chet is totally exasperated.

CHET

And we're not talking about mine. It's a fucking made up character.

Robin waves him down.

ROBIN

Calm down. You get so excited about nothing.

CHET

Nothing? You have a character you know nothing about playing tennis.

ROBIN
I'm just asking.

CHET
You want to ask? Ask?

Chet leans back.

CHET (CONT'D)
Ask any fucking question you want
about a character you know two
things about.

Chet opens his arms.

CHET (CONT'D)
Ask away.

Robin waves at him as if he's being foolish.

ROBIN
Save the dramatics for the page.

She turns waving him off.

ROBIN (CONT'D)
If you can't talk about it civilly
I don't want to talk about it at
all. Go away.

Robin stares intently at the monitor ignoring Chet. Chet sits there for a beat, one of his legs dancing up and down. Elbows on armrest, hands intertwined at his waist. He knows unless he gets this to a communally agreed upon conclusion this will linger in the air for days.

CHET
The boy loves baseball.

ROBIN
What's his name?

Robin asks not taking her eyes from the monitor. Earl sucks this up and answers.

CHET
Trevor.

ROBIN
Trevor?

CHET
The names not important right now.

ROBIN

It is if you name him Trevor.

CHET

What would you name him?

ROBIN

Chet.

CHET

You can't name a character after yourself.

ROBIN

Why?

CHET

You just can't. It's stupid.

There's a slight heavy pause in the air.

ROBIN

How about Mike.

CHET

Mike it is. Fine. Mike.

Chet has lost his train of thought.

CHET (CONT'D)

Now what was I saying?

ROBIN

Mike's loves football and lives down south.

CHET

What? I never said either of those things.

ROBIN

Yes, you did.

CHET

No, I didn't. I'm pretty fucking sure those words didn't come out of my mouth.

Robin looks at him thinking she's right. But waves him to continue.

ROBIN

Go on.

Chet's struggling but continues.

CHET

Mike's a baseball player who
doesn't play football. . .

ROBIN

. . .does he have a sister?

CHET

Who doesn't have a sister who only
feels safe on the baseball field.

ROBIN

Why didn't he go to the police or
tell a teacher? You know, they're
mandatory reporters and they have
to. . .

CHET

. . .it was back in the sixties.
Things like this were normal in his
neighborhood back then.

ROBIN

No, someone would have done
something.

Chet puts his face in his hands.

CHET

Please, please. Please.

Chet looks at Robin.

CHET (CONT'D)

Can you not make writing this more
difficult than it is?

ROBIN

I'm just saying, it's not very
realistic.

CHET

Have you lived every child's life?

ROBIN

What does that have to do with it?
I just think your premise is hokey.

CHET

But have you lived every child's
life?

Robin shakes her head staring at Chet as if he were shit on a spatula.

CHET (CONT'D)

Okay. So, having not lived every child's life you must agree that some of them have been abused.

ROBIN

I'm not saying there isn't abu. . .

CHET

. . .and that, even today, there is a percentage of abuse that goes unreported.

ROBIN

I don't think so. Kids are taught to tell at an early age now.

CHET

But if I had access to the internet do you think I could find a report that said there is some abuse. . .

ROBIN

. . .a tiny percentage.

CHET

A tiny percentage, that goes unreported?

Robin nods yes in short bursts.

CHET (CONT'D)

That agreed upon, can we also agree that the percentage was larger years ago?

ROBIN

What's your point?

CHET

At this juncture I have no fucking idea.

ROBIN

Then why are we having this conversation?

CHET

I've been asking myself that since I said, 'it's about a boy'.

Chet slowly stands up and walks to the refrigerator to get a beer. When he opens it Robin huffs in a 'he's getting a beer' fashion. Chet ignores the sound as he sits on the couch spent.

The scene fades out with Chet not moving and Robin blissfully clicking around the internet.

INT. WRITERS DEN - DAY

Chet is typing like a madman. Whatever inspired him seems relentless. He's intense but far from unhappy. Robin is also typing. Could it be that we have two writer writing while cohabiting in the same dwelling?

Chet stops typing, he's deep in thought. His hands are moving slowly as if he's having a meaningful conversation. Chet stands up. His chair brushes into Robin's. She's annoyed.

ROBIN

Ugh.

Chet doesn't seem to hear her as he paces around the room.

ROBIN (CONT'D)

Why do you have to keep getting up?

Chet looks at her as he nears with a distracted look in his eyes.

CHET

What are you talking about?

ROBIN

You're up and down like a jack in the box every five minutes.

This information is not being processed by Chet.

CHET

What?

ROBIN

Up and down, up and down. Every five minutes you stop typing, jump up and walk around. If you want exercise go outside.

Slowly, Chet starts to leave the world he was in and be slammed back to earth.

CHET

Exercise?

(pause)

I pace when I write. I've always done that.

ROBIN

I've never seen it.

CHET

Because you've never been here every day before.

Chet starts marching up and down the office. When he passes his desk he types on his keyboard.

CHET (CONT'D)

I walk up and down, think of shit, then I stop, type something and then I do it all over again.

Chet rushes to the couch and throws himself on it.

CHET (CONT'D)

Sometimes I sit here.

Chet gets up and stands at a file cabinet.

CHET (CONT'D)

Sometimes I stand here.

Chet runs out of the room. We follow him through the screen door as he runs through the yard. Faintly we hear him.

CHET (CONT'D)

There're even times I come out here.

Chet runs back into the room up to Robin. He's a little winded.

CHET (CONT'D)

I pace.

(pause)

Sometimes a lot.

Chet leans on the back of Robin's chair while he reaches his own and sits.

CHET (CONT'D)

It clears my head.

(pause)

Helps me think.

Chet sits down.

CHET (CONT'D)
Sometimes shows me I need more
exercise.

ROBIN
Just like I said.

Chet holds up his hand. He leans over slightly finally
catching his breath.

CHET
Let's stick to one subject, shall
we?

Chet takes in a deep breath. He's back to normal.

CHET (CONT'D)
Pacing helps me. So I do it. Sorry
you don't like it.

Chet stands up. Robin sighs. Chet walks to the refrigerator.
Robin makes a guttural sound. Chet throws his head back,
opens the refrigerator, gets a beer, turns and walks out of
the room.

We watch him through the screen once again. By his movements
we can tell he opened the beer. He walks to the round glass
table, puts the can down, sits down, puts his elbows on the
table and his face in his hands.

After a few beats Robin slides back into the shot. She looks
out the screen door. A few beats later she slides out of the
shot. A few beats after that she speaks.

ROBIN (O.C.)
Almost.

INT. WRITERS DEN - DAY

Chet's side of the room is buzzing with activity. His old,
trusty computer has been replaced by the hottest laptop a
money can buy and the largest monitor that could fit on the
desk.

Suddenly, from under the desk pops MIKE. Mike's a cable
installer. He's thrilled to be working for Chet. He's
brushing his clothes after standing up fully.

MIKE
That should just about do it.

Mike leans in to configure Chet's computer.

MIKE (CONT'D)
Once I configure a few things
you'll have the fastest connection
in the state.

CHET
My wife too, right?

Mike looks over his shoulder.

MIKE
Of course.

Mike smiles at Chet.

MIKE (CONT'D)
If I didn't she'd be using yours
all the time, am I right?

Chet smiles and nods. He's seen that look before. Mike turns to concentrate on the computer.

Robin enters the room and notices Mike and all the new gear.

ROBIN
What's going on here?

CHET
I figured it was time. You were
right. I should upgrade. Get into
the two thousands.

Robin looks over all the new gear.

ROBIN
I see you spared no cost.

CHET
Are you mad?

Robin smiles and pats Chet on the shoulder.

ROBIN
Not at all. My old thing is good
enough for me.

Robin sits at her desk.

ROBIN (CONT'D)
For now.

Chet forces a smile. Mike turns and looks at Robin's set up. He nods appreciatively.

MIKE

And you should be. That's a killer rig. That's an Intel third generation core with a three point four. . .

ROBIN

. . .and who is this knowledgeable person?

CHET

This is Mike, like the character in the book. He's putting in our new internet set ups. Mine and yours.

Mike leans over smiling to shake Robin's hand. She smiles back.

ROBIN

Good. I'm glad you'll be able to stop bothering me.

Robin clicks the mouse a few times before nodding satisfied.

ROBIN (CONT'D)

It does appear faster.

MIKE

About three times faster than before I upgraded it. You now have a. . .

ROBIN

. . .thank you, Mike. I don't need the numbers I only need the speed.

Mike nods. He's not bothered by it. He's used to it. He knows he gets a bit high techie in his conversations.

MIKE

Well, it looks like we're done here.

Mike pulls out a barcode scanner and enters a few clicks.

MIKE (CONT'D)

We've put in a new line, gave everyone, including in the house, more speed but I haven't configured in the house. If you want. . .

ROBIN

. . .it's fine. Thank you, Mike.

Mike nods then jots some information on a piece of paper on Chet's desk.

MIKE

Okay. I'll write the optimal settings here and you can do it.

Mike continues writing while speaking.

MIKE (CONT'D)

And I've also upgraded your cable package in here and the house.

Robin's head turns to Chet. Chet waves his hands in the time honored 'no way did I order that' method. Mike sees that as he stands up.

MIKE (CONT'D)

Oh, no, he didn't order it.

Chet and Robin look at a smiling Mike.

MIKE (CONT'D)

That was a gift from me.

Mike gets a little shy.

MIKE (CONT'D)

I'm just a big fan and to be here and do this was an honor.

Robin rolls her eyes and goes back to her computer.

CHET

Wow, Mike, I really appreciate that.

Chet reaches into his pocket and takes out some money. He starts taking some bill out when Mike waves him off.

MIKE

Oh no, no, I couldn't take money from you.

Chet smiles and puts the money away.

CHET

I appreciate that, Mike, but is there anything I can do for you? I mean, you've gone above and beyond here.

Mike is the epitome of shy and excited.

MIKE

Well, I, I mean, I hate to ask.

ROBIN

Oh just sign a fucking book for him
and put him out of his misery, will
you?

CHET

Would you like a book or two
signed?

Mike is nodding excitedly. Chet steps to the table beckoning
Mike over.

CHET (CONT'D)

What would you like?

Mike looks over the table.

MIKE

Well, if I'm going to be honest, I
have all your books. I don't have
any signed so any one signed would
be awesome.

CHET

Pick a couple then and pick a
couple more.

Chet nudges Mike.

CHET (CONT'D)

That way you can sell some online
and make a little something. If
they're even still worth anything.

MIKE

Oh, they are.

Suddenly Mike get nervous. He's worried Chet thinks he's
trying to profit on him.

MIKE (CONT'D)

Not that I'd. . .

Chet waves him off.

CHET

. . .don't give it a second
thought.

Chet leans in to Mike conspiratorially and whispers.

CHET (CONT'D)
I sign a couple dozen for her
mother every time we go over.

Chet stands up.

CHET (CONT'D)
Keeps her from calling every week
for money.

ROBIN
I heard that.

CHET
Do you want me to stop so she calls
all the time?

ROBIN
Stop being stupid.

Chet laughs and Mike joins in.

CHET
So take as many as you'd like. And
here. . .

Chet opens his desk drawer, takes out a business card and
hands it to Mike.

CHET (CONT'D)
. . .call me if you ever need more
or anything else.

MIKE
Wow, Chet, that's so nice of you.

CHET
Don't give it a second thought,
kid.

Chet leans over the table and signs one of every book, a few
glossies, a couple of posters and hands them to Mike.

MIKE
This is too much.

CHET
You can't turn it down now, Mike,
I've already signed them.

Chet looks at Mike and smiles. He's truly happy making Mike
so excited and happy.

Chet looks back at the table with one last thought. He reaches over and pulls a plaque off the table and hands it to Mike.

CHET (CONT'D)
Here ya go.

Mike is stunned.

CHET (CONT'D)
But you've got to make me a promise.

MIKE
Anything.

CHET
Just don't sell that.

Mike is shaking his head no so fast the things in his arms almost fly out.

MIKE
I don't know what to say.

Chet heads to the door and opens it.

CHET
Just don't forget us when internet speeds increase.

Mike gets to the door arms laden with goods.

MIKE
You'll be my first stop.

Mike hesitantly exits.

CHET
And call anytime if you need anything.

Chet stands at the door for a couple of beats before turning into the room. He has a big smile.

CHET (CONT'D)
That felt good.

ROBIN
Glad to hear.

Chet walks over to his table then squats down. He pulls out an over flowing mail tote. He picks it up and puts it on the table.

CHET

Maybe you were right.

Chet says taking out a few envelopes.

CHET (CONT'D)

Maybe I should think about taking the contract Scott offered.

ROBIN

It was for a good amount.

CHET

And my royalty rate was awesome.

Robin turns her chair around to face Chet. She has a serious yet caring expression.

ROBIN

We have discussed it and decided it's totally your decision.

CHET

But it's not, don't you see? What I do effects you and the kids and, yes, even your mother.

Robin has a joking tone.

ROBIN

Keep my mother out of this!

Chet and Robin laugh.

CHET

But seriously, we both know the truth.

Chet leans forward. Robin doesn't move from her original position.

CHET (CONT'D)

The novel wasn't going all that well. I don't know why. Maybe I haven't fleshed out the idea fully. Maybe I've been too distracted.

Chet leans back.

CHET (CONT'D)

Hell, maybe it was just a shitty idea.

Chet pauses sort of expecting Robin to interject but she doesn't.

CHET (CONT'D)
Whatever reason, it just wasn't
flowing.

Chet turns, opens his drawer and pulls out a contract. He looks at it for a beat before turning back around.

CHET (CONT'D)
I guess it's sort of like what I
said before all this started, I may
ruin my life but no writer is going
to turn down a book deal.

Chet gets up and goes to the phone. He pushes one button while pulling his chair over.

CHET (CONT'D)
Hi, Scott? It's Chet.

Chet pauses while getting himself comfortably in his seat.

CHET (CONT'D)
No, well, it's, ah, not quite done.
(pause)
No, well, I have no idea when you'd
even be able to see the roughs.
(pause)
Truth is, Scott, I think it's a
piece of shit.
(pause)
No, I'm not being too hard on
myself I just don't think my heart
was in it.

Chet looks over at Robin and winks.

CHET (CONT'D)
I think my heart is with my old
stuff.
(pause)
That's right, new old stuff.

Chet shrugs his shoulders and turns to the table to talk seriously. After a few beats Robin slides into the shot and addresses the camera.

ROBIN
I know what you're thinking. I'm a
bitch. I stopped a man from living
his dream.

Robin stands up.

ROBIN (CONT'D)
I did everything in my power
outside of stomping on his fingers
to get him to stop writing that
book.

Robin turn to start exiting the room.

ROBIN (CONT'D)
And you have a point.

Robin turns back.

ROBIN (CONT'D)
To a point.

Robin turns back and walks to Chet, leans over, kisses his head, then with hand movements tells him she'll be outside. Chet nods and continues his call to Scott.

EXT. BACKYARD - CONTINUOUS

Robin exits the Writers Den. She puts a finger to her lips to shush as she walks past the camera. The camera turns and follows her.

Robin walks until she takes a seat on a lounge chair with a cooler beside it. She looks into the camera and smiles.

ROBIN
Hi. Damn! I've been waiting a long
time to talk to you.

Robin leans over, opens the cooler and takes out a bottle of beer. She takes a long sip from it.

ROBIN (CONT'D)
I know you've been questioning my
motives. Maybe you thought I was
greedy, wanting him to stay with
the cash cow.

Robin stands and starts walking through the backyard. She sips the beer now and then while walking.

ROBIN (CONT'D)
And that's somewhat true. It's like
Bernadette Peters said in The Jerk,
'I don't care about losing all the
money, it's losing all the stuff!'

Robin leads us through the backyard.

ROBIN (CONT'D)
Yeah, the royalties kept coming in but they were dwindling. We weren't in danger or anything but it's much nicer to go from having shit to having nice things than the other way around.

Robin walks to the pool, leans over and pulls a flotation toy out of it. She gestures with it on the last three words of her next set of dialogue.

ROBIN (CONT'D)
And I got used to all the stuff.

Robin stands and tosses the toy aside.

ROBIN (CONT'D)
But that wasn't the only reason.

Robin looks directly into the camera.

ROBIN (CONT'D)
I'm not that shallow.

Robin pauses and cocks her head.

ROBIN (CONT'D)
Really! I'm not.

Robin walks past the camera. When the camera turns she's not there. After a beat she stands up and has a basket in her hand along with her beer. She takes a sip.

ROBIN (CONT'D)
I love old what's his name. When I first met him it was at a bookstore right after the first book came out.

INT. BOOKSTORE - DAY

Chet is behind a table at a book signing smiling at anyone who passes. No one is in line.

ROBIN (V.O.)
No one came.

EXT. BACKYARD - CONTINUOUS

Robin is picking up toys and things from around the backyard and tossing them in the basket.

ROBIN

I felt bad for him. But he stayed the entire time. I think two managers felt bad for him so kept getting in line.

Robin drops the basket, finishes her beer and goes to get another one.

ROBIN (CONT'D)

I thought he was cute and funny. So at closing time I asked if he'd like to get a beer.

INT. BAR - NIGHT

Robin and Chet are sitting at a bar drinking. Chet's a little dejected but he's smiling. Robin's enjoying herself as she calls for another round.

ROBIN

I wouldn't say it was love at first sight but we liked each other.

EXT. BACKYARD - CONTINUOUS

Robin is sitting on the lounge wholding the beer.

ROBIN

We got serious pretty quick but it was difficult because he was struggling with the second book. It really sucked to watch that.

Robin stands and walks through the backyard.

ROBIN (CONT'D)

And then the damndest thing happened.

Robin stops and looks straight into the camera.

ROBIN (CONT'D)

The fucker became a hit.

Robin shakes her head unbelievably before continuing to walk.

ROBIN (CONT'D)

He was on the road for less than a month before he called and asked if I'd quit my job and tour with him as his assistant slash concubine.

Robin grins at the idea.

ROBIN (CONT'D)

Of course we left that last part out of the employment contract.

(pause)

He asked if I'd quit my job and meet him on the road.

INT. BOOKSTORE - DAY

Robin standing in front of the Information Stand where the MANAGER is standing. She's dancing in front of him giving him the finger.

ROBIN (V.O.)

I said I'd see if that was possible.

EXT. BACKYARD - CONTINUOUS

Robin is picking up toys from pool side.

ROBIN

And the rest you know.

Robin sits on a chair placing the basket beside her. She puts the beer bottle on a table between two chairs and picks up sunglasses.

ROBIN (CONT'D)

We have two great kids, a great house, a great life. But I knew if he tried to write another book he'd spiral out of control.

Robin puts on the sunglasses.

ROBIN (CONT'D)

He just can't handle it. Every word is a struggle, every page a war. It makes him manic.

Robin grabs the beer and takes a big sip of beer.

ROBIN (CONT'D)

It was horrible before he
discovered the "search and replace"
method. He'd forget to shower.
Stare straight ahead for hours. And
those goddamn cowboy movies playing
all the time.

Robin sits up.

ROBIN (CONT'D)

This time I couldn't do that. Not
with kids in the house. So I
figured I'd derail him, he'd start
reminiscing about the fame. . .

Robin lifts up the sunglasses and looks into the camera.

ROBIN (CONT'D)

. . .and don't let him bullshit
you, he loved the fame.

Robin drops the glasses back down.

ROBIN (CONT'D)

And he'd sign the friggin' contract
then things would go back to
normal.

CHEET (O.C.)

Honey! It's a go.

Chet enters the scene, leans over, kisses Robin and exits.

CHEET (CONT'D)

I've got to call Tony and Steve and
set up a meeting.

Robin sits for a beat after he's gone. She reaches over and
gently places the bottle back on the table then lies back
down.

ROBIN

And that, ladies and gentlemen,
concludes this story's resolution.

Robin lays still for a few beats before sitting up and
lifting her sunglasses.

ROBIN (CONT'D)

Except for the epilogue. A story
like this needs an epilogue.

Robin gets up and heads to the house. We follow her until she walks into the house and closes the door.

The epilogue rolls over her exit.

Chet went on to 'write' another twenty acclaimed books. He became less reliant on Tony and Steve at public events as time went on because he actually sat down and read his books.

Robin never went to work in the Writers Den again.

FADE TO BLACK.