

Cyrano of Linden View

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Will Chandler  
received one of the five Academy Nicholl Fellowships awarded in 1996

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FADE IN

INT. LINDEN VIEW CLINIC, ADMISSIONS AREA - NIGHT

[\*Throughout sequence, P.O.V. remains that of an autistic six-year-old BOY. The HANDHELD CAMERA never focuses on any face or object for more than a few moments before moving on.]

[\*Dialog SOUNDS blurred and conveys impressions and feelings only - no words can be clearly distinguished.]

Institutional. Pine Sol and linoleum. A tearful MOTHER and judging FATHER lead their CHILD (CAMERA) to the admissions desk.

A NURSE fills out forms. The mother cries. The father is terse.

CHILD'S P.O.V. -

FEET walking by ...

A CLOCK ticking ...

An ELEVATOR opening/closing ...

WHITE-COATED clinicians ...

SHINY, aluminum clip boards.

The Nurse kneels by the Child. She reaches for something, revealing that the boy clutches a BOOK to his chest.

The boy won't let go of the book, runs away from her. But, caught by an ORDERLY, the BOOK is taken away.

As the ORDERLY leads him down the corridor, the boy looks behind to see his parents fading from view.

INT. ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Led into a dimly-lit room, the Orderly places the boy in the bed, trapping him behind the security railing, then exits.

The boy absorbs the cold setting. He focuses on the open doorway and the glow of light beyond.

Into the doorway steps MADELEINE, a beautiful, dark-haired, dark-eyed, six-year-old girl. She approaches holding the boy's gaze. Her presence calms him.

At the bedside, she reaches through the bars and places something into the boy's hand - the book. The boy clutches the book as he stares into Madeleine's eyes.

FADE TO BLACK

BLACK SCREEN

MAN'S VOICE (V.O.)

"Had I the heavens' embroidered cloths,  
Enwrought with golden and silver light,  
The blue and the dim and the dark cloths  
Of night and light and the half-light, I  
would spread the cloths under your feet:

But I, being poor, have only my dreams;  
I have spread my dreams under your feet;  
Tread softly because you tread on my  
dreams."

CUT TO:

EXT. STATE ROUTE ROAD - MORNING

SUPERIMPOSE: EIGHTEEN YEARS LATER

BEGIN CREDITS

A green Austin Mini rolls down the gently undulating road at the foot of New Hampshire's White Mountains, surrounded by the patchwork of autumn trees at their peak of brightness and color.

INT. AUSTIN MINI - SAME TIME

PAUL HERRICK (late 20's), gentle eyes behind his wire-rimmed spectacles, sets down his trusty map and jots something on his dashboard notepad. On the seat next to him, HOUDINI, a GUINEA PIG in a cage, chews bits of paper from previous notes.

EXT. STATE ROUTE ROAD - MORNING

The Austin Mini putts through the town of LINDEN VIEW (pop. 15,000), the quaint business district unchanged in sixty years. Victorian houses dot here and there.

EXT. SERVICE STATION - MORNING

A real SERVICE station. Paul, confused but concentrating, as a weathered MECHANIC gives him directions using odd gestures rather than street names. Paul stiffly imitates one of the gestures and gets it wrong. The Mechanic shows him the "correct" gesture. Paul tries again. It's hopeless.

EXT. TWO-LANE ROAD - MORNING

The Austin Mini eases past the gates onto the lush, well-kept grounds of the prestigious LINDEN VIEW CLINIC.

EXT. LINDEN VIEW CLINIC - LATE MORNING

The Austin Mini parks in front of the two-story main building. Beyond the building lies Squam Lake.

A moving van is being unloaded by CHESTER and BILLY, dyed-in-the-wool New Englanders.

END CREDITS

Paul climbs out of his car, stretches and straightens imaginary wrinkles in his clothes. He grabs his briefcase and tweed sportcoat. He sees CHESTER bobble a box - and rushes to catch it.

PAUL

Hey! ...Try reading.

He taps to the box's "Handle with Care" sticker. Chester holds his deadpan expression. Paul turns to slip on his jacket. A beat. Chester roughly hands the box to Billy.

Billy, equally deadpan, chucks the box on top of an overloaded dolly.

PAUL

(putting on jacket)

Nice little town you have here. Could use better signs. Missed the turn from the state road. A good ten minutes off my time. Still, scenery's nice.

Paul looks at them: "Shall we?" He strides ahead. Chester and Billy wheel after him.

CHESTER

New doctah, eh?

PAUL

Me? Not yet. Thesis study.

CHESTER

Oh.

As if that "says it all," Chester and Billy exchange a knowing look.

CUT TO:

INT. HALLWAY - LATE MORNING

Paul leads Chester and Billy like an officer with his troops.

Patients with varying types of mental handicaps, mill in the hall. DAISY, an elderly woman in a plastic daisy shower cap and a chartreuse velvet evening dress, shuffles by in her walker. She stares smiling at Paul. He's oblivious of her.

INT. STAIRWELL - CONTINUOUS

Paul marches up the open, curved stairwell to the second floor.

INT. UPSTAIRS HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER

Paul arrives at the Nurses' Station surprised to find Chester and Billy already there. Off his confused expression, Chester indicates the elevator only a few feet away - they found the easier way up.

Paul Dings! the counter bell with precision. He turns and is suddenly faced with a stern and surly NURSE.

PAUL

Paul Herrick. Autistics research.

He checks his filofax.

PAUL

... Beverly Andrews was told to provide rooms for me.

NURSE

You're early. You'll have to wait.

(and)

Keep these boxes out of my aisles. Lounge is downstairs. You'll be paged.

PAUL

Excuse me. Miss Andrews was told I'd be here on the tenth. That's today. Maybe I should speak with her.

NURSE

You are.

(and)

Welcome to Linden View, Mr. Herrick.

NURSE ANDREWS pulls a chart and exits. Chester and Billy are enjoying this but turn quickly deadpan when Paul looks at them.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Suddenly - a loud, yelling SOUND. Indistinct words and nonsense syllables. Nurse Andrews springs into action -

Two beefy ORDERLIES half-carry a squirming severely autistic patient: BERTRAND (24).

ORDERLY #1  
Somebody get Maddy up here now!

A NURSE grabs the intercom phone. The Orderlies force Bertrand into a room. Nurse Andrews oversees.

Paul is drawn to the open room door -

INT. BERTRAND'S ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Bertrand is strapped into bed. Paul steps into the room and is awed - old books are crammed on shelves. A few boxes still wait to be unpacked.

A flock of paper birds sway from the ceiling. Suddenly -

MADELEINE (O.S.)  
Excuse me ...

Paul turns, sees MADELEINE (24), a young nurse, squeezing past. Her prim uniform is made comfy by a sloppy, oversized man's cardigan sweater. She'd be breathtaking if she ever paid attention to it.

Bertrand heaves against his restraints. Madeleine kneels beside him, strokes his forehead.

MADELEINE  
It's okay. It's okay. I'm here, now.

The Orderlies exit. Bertrand focuses on her. She touches the restraints -

MADELEINE  
(to the Orderlies)  
You didn't need to do this!

But the Orderlies are long gone. Paul's eyes are glued to Bertrand.

NURSE ANDREWS  
(quietly, to Paul)  
He's a "severe." Been here since he was six. Can't speak a word.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MADELEINE  
(to Bertrand)  
What you need, huh?

Bertrand grunts, gurgles. Madeleine crosses to the shelves and picks a selection.

MADELEINE  
Yeats, Byron, Kerouac.

She unfastens a restraint, placing a book into his hand. He calms.

NURSE ANDREWS  
(to Paul)  
Don't know how she does it.

Madeleine pulls three peanuts from a bedside cannister, then opens the window wide enough to scoot them onto the outside sill.

MADELEINE  
I'm sure the birds will find you here,  
Bertrand.

Bertrand stares at the peanuts. Paul stares at Bertrand.

INT. HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

As soon as they're out the door, Madeleine spins on Paul.

MADELEINE  
This was your fault! You've taken over  
his room. You should know better than  
anyone how disruptions affect these  
people. They're not just case studies.  
They're somebody's children.

She storms off. Nurse Andrews stands behind him -

PAUL  
A progesterone imbalance, I'd say. She  
like this a lot?

NURSE ANDREWS  
She's my daughter.

She exits. He's really put his foot in it.

PAUL  
I see. Of course.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Paul glances at Chester and Billy - a bit too studied in their non-chalance. He looks back at Bertrand ...

...Who now stares at a blue jay that has come to eat the peanuts.

CUT TO:

INT. HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER

Paul saunters down the hall, nodding to various doctors and nurses they pass. Behind him, Chester and Billy, pushing the squeaky-wheeled dolly, check out the patients.

DR. LAWRENCE MUELLER (50's), chief administrator, ducks out of a doorway and buttonholes Paul, forcing him to pick up his pace -

MUELLER

Herrick, right on time, Walsh and Newmeyer spoke very highly of you, you know.

PAUL

Dr. Mueller. I was going to drop down once I got settled.

MUELLER

But I beat you to it, didn't I? First rule of a great researcher: always know what the other guy's doing, then do it first. I read your paper on facilitated communication, hell of a thing if it works.

PAUL

It works alright.

MUELLER

Experimental though.

PAUL

Everything was at first.

MUELLER

Yeah, but the AMA's a good ally to have and they're still giving it the hairy eyeball. Or didn't you read Dr. Fridell's article in JAMA?

(CONTINUED)



CONTINUED:

PAUL

I read it. But when an autistic communicates for the first time ...well, you'll see.

MUELLER

Good. Good. Tomorrow, then. John Lenox wants to see you.

PAUL

John Le-

MUELLER

Board president. Wants to get a sense of this thing before we get too far in, right? Great.

A DOCTOR flags Mueller down, he leaves Paul's head spinning.

MUELLER

Duty calls. Oh, and Herrick - Welcome to Linden View.

And he's gone. Paul has reached his office, wondering what just happened. Behind him, the squeaky dolly rolls in through the doorway.

CUT TO:

INT. PAUL'S OFFICE - EARLY EVENING

A bomb has hit this room. Boxes everywhere. Amid a pile of texts, Paul is absorbed by a file. A light rap at the door. He looks up.

MADELEINE

People tell me I flew off the handle a bit this morning. I'd apologize but then you'd probably expect me never to do it again and I come from a long line of handle-flier-offers. Old habits die hard.

PAUL

I didn't take it personally.

MADELEINE

You didn't? ...I must be losing my touch.

She smiles. Paul doesn't get it.

Madeleine takes a stained-glass decoration from its hook at the window.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MADELEINE

This got left behind in the confusion today. I'll bring it down to Bertrand.

(and)

Well, anyway ...I'm sure I'll see you around.

PAUL

Good night.

MADELEINE

(a beat)

That's a lot of boxes you have there. You need some help? Unpacking?

PAUL

I'd rather do it alone. Things need to be put in their place - and I want to be sure I know which place that is.

(re: her informal appearance)

I suspect our brains organize things a bit ...differently.

MADELEINE

(a beat)

What exactly is all this for?

PAUL

I appreciate you being hospitable, but the small talk isn't necessary - and it's distracting me from preparing for an important meeting tomorrow. I'm on a tight schedule.

MADELEINE

Got it. I'll bet your schedule isn't the only tight thing you've got.

She exits. Paul is stumped by her sudden turn.

INT. HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

As Madeleine strides from the door -

MADELEINE

(to herself)

Asshole.

CUT TO:

INT. HALLWAY - EVENING

Paul waits at the elevator. The SOUND of a quiet, repetitive yammering floats from Bertrand's room. Paul is drawn to it.

INT. BERTRAND'S ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Paul enters. The bed, empty. Bertrand nowhere in sight. The gentle yammering continues.

Between the bed and the wall, Bertrand rocks, holding a book. Paul is startled to see that he has built an odd construction from some of the volumes. He moves closer.

Bertrand doesn't look up as Paul squats next to him. Paul reaches forward, touching a book in the construction and Bertrand's yammering STOPS.

Paul moves his hand away and Bertrand's yammering RESUMES. Paul is fascinated. Bertrand still does not look up.

CUT TO:

INT. PIZZA JOINT - NIGHT

For Linden View, this place is hopping. That is to say, maybe a dozen patrons dot the booths. A jukebox drones Grateful Dead.

Paul works through a stack of papers.

CHARLIE MCNEIL (mid-20's), a short, portly, over-achiever, bounces to Paul's table.

CHARLIE

You're Paul Herrick.

PAUL

Excuse me?

CHARLIE

Saw you at the clinic this morning.  
Charlie McNeil. I work there, too.

PAUL

Does the entire staff always greet new arrivals?

Charlie is confused, but barrels ahead.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CHARLIE

I've been there since college - only a bachelor's degree - not like you. Maybe someday. Great kids, you know? Sad though, some of them. But this facilitated communication you're doing - it's incredible. I've been reading -

PAUL

How did you know I'm working with the children?

CHARLIE

I just heard, I guess.

PAUL

You "guess." ...How scientific.

He gathers his things.

PAUL

Excuse me.

(and)

Nice meeting you.

He exits.

CHARLIE

...yeah ...see ya'.

CUT TO:

INT. PAUL'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Sterile furniture. Unopened moving boxes.

A cardboard cutout of a cat stands on the couch (the lowest of low-maintenance pets). Paul sets down his things.

PAUL

(to the fake cat)

Down. Not on the furniture.

He puts the cat on the floor.

He sees a picture frame in a box, removes it: A wedding photo of Paul and a young woman.

He pulls it from the frame, tears it into thirds, then drops the pieces into Houdini's cage.

Paul crosses to the kitchen, pours a glass of wine.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Houdini, the guinea pig, chews the photo to shreds.

CUT TO:

EXT. LINDEN VIEW CLINIC - MORNING

Paul slips inside.

INT. HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER

A spring in his step, Paul passes Daisy, today wearing basic black, a long mink stole and the omnipresent shower cap. He rounds the corner into his office -

INT. PAUL'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

He stops dead - Mueller waits, Charlie nervously fidgets behind.

MUELLER

(to Paul)

I see you've made a home for yourself here. Good. Good. I wanted you to meet your assistant. Paul Herrick - Charlie McNeil.

Paul is not happy. Charlie is dying of embarrassment.

MUELLER

Don't thank me, it's the least I could do.

PAUL

I don't really need an assistant.

MUELLER

I know, you're used to working solo. But that was grad school. This is the world of research. Everyone needs an assistant, at least one.

Mueller walks Paul to the door.

PAUL

(sotto)

My agreement was that I would not be forced to share credit on this project.

MUELLER

(sotto)

And you won't. Trust me. ...His dad's a trustee. Have him make coffee or something. An assistant job like this

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MUELLER (cont'd)  
 buys a lot of goodwill. For this clinic -  
 and for your program. You'll see.  
 (and)  
 Don't forget about lunch. Come hungry,  
 Lenox is picking up the bill.

Mueller exits. Paul turns.

CHARLIE  
 Hi.

Paul sighs, crosses to his desk. Charlie, the puppy dog,  
 bounces over.

CHARLIE  
 I was going to tell you myself. About  
 this. No hard feelings?

Paul ignores Charlie as he sits.

CHARLIE  
 I hope you don't mind I organized this  
 morning. There's a contact sheet of who  
 does what around here. It's on your desk.  
 (and)  
 I'll stay out of your way, if you want.

Paul lays out his work materials with precision.

CHARLIE  
 I think I'd do a good job, though. ...I  
 really do care about these kids.

A beat. Charlie turns toward his own desk.

Paul opens his drawer. Charlie has perfectly organized the  
 pens, etc. Paul looks up. The room looks good. The coffee pot  
 is full and fresh. A beat. As he looks through his papers -

PAUL  
 (giving in)  
 Have you seen the day patients list? I  
 seem to have misplaced it.

Charlie smiles - buoyant again -

CHARLIE  
 I've got one right here.

He digs for it. Paul stares out the window.

PAUL'S P.O.V. -

Below, Madeleine and Bertrand walk in the garden.

BACK TO SCENE -

Charlie stands behind Paul, startling him from his reverie. He hands over the list.

CHARLIE

That's one guy I'd like to know what he's thinking.

PAUL

What's his story?

CHARLIE

Parents dumped him here. Maddy was just six when he was admitted. They have the same birthday. Same year, even.

(and)

She's the only one he relates to. Wild, huh?

PAUL'S P.O.V.

Madeleine picks up a flower, holding it for Bertrand to smell.

BACK TO SCENE -

PAUL

(absorbed)

Yeah. Wild.

EXT. GARDEN - SAME TIME

Madeline muses on the flower.

MADELEINE

"Your voiceless lips, O, flower, are living preachers - each cup a pulpit, and each leaf a book."

Bertrand GAZES at Madeleine as the petals tickle her nose, making her smile. Her hair falls across her face and she gracefully tucks it behind her ear.

She takes his arm. He leans into her. They walk beneath a thick CANOPY OF TREES.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MADELEINE

Wait.

Madeleine stops. She closes her eyes.

MADELEINE

My father used to have me close my eyes  
and count to three. When I opened them  
I'd have to say the first thing that I  
saw.

She opens her eyes.

WHAT MADELEINE SEES:

The trees part ahead, the shade broken by the warm and gentle  
sunlight.

MADELEINE

It's a gateway ...isn't it?

It does, indeed, look like a gateway. But Bertrand isn't  
looking at it. He is looking at Madeleine, memorizing her.

MADELEINE

C'mon.

They walk toward the "gateway."

INT. PAUL'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Paul still watches Madeleine and Bertrand as Charlie works in  
the background.

CUT TO:

EXT. VICTORIAN MANSION - MID-DAY

Gracious living. Groundskeepers swarm over the extensive  
estate.

INT. MANSION DRAWING ROOM - SAME TIME

Decorated with the "Y" chromosome in mind. Paul and Mueller  
are mid-meeting with JOHN LENOX, President of the clinic's  
Board of Directors.

LENOX

So your theory hinges on autism not being  
a mental illness at all?

(CONTINUED)



CONTINUED:

PAUL

It's like the Tower of Babel, with everyone speaking a different language except that it's the hand that doesn't understand what the arm is doing or the mouth that can't hear what the brain says.

Pause.

LENOX

I looked over your notes. This started with a few cerebral palsy patients Down Under? What makes you think it'll apply here?

PAUL

Have you ever lived with an autistic?  
(and)  
They try to get through. They never stop trying. We owe it to them to try just as hard.

Lenox lets this sink in, then leans back, satisfied.

LENOX

I can hardly wait until next week's demonstration.

PAUL

Demonstration?

MUELLER

(jumping in)  
Demonstration may be too strong a word  
...more like an informal look-see.

Paul is perplexed. Lenox rises, opens a nearby cupboard.

LENOX

I appreciate your squeezing it in before Barbara and I leave for Corfu. Tea time?

MUELLER

You know I like milk and sugar, John.

Paul sees the cupboard is a full bar - not a teapot in sight. Lenox adds soda and ice as he pours long drinks of Kentucky bourbon into a pair of tumblers.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LENOX

Paul?

Not wanting to rock any boats ...

PAUL

Milk and sugar's fine.

Lenox notes Paul's answer: "one of the boys." He glances at Mueller, they chuckle as he pours.

CUT TO:

INT. FILE ROOM - DAY

Maddy strains to reach a file on a top shelf. DR. TED DAVIS (30's) walks past the aisle, doubletakes, then approaches and gets the file for her. In the process, his hand seductively rests on the small of her back.

Ted wears a wedding ring.

TED

There's supposed to be a step-stool here somewhere.

MADELEINE

Thanks.

TED

That it? Cause it's no problem to get Knox, Kozlowski, Kolfax and Kramer while I'm here.

MADELEINE

That won't be necessary, doctor.

TED

Then maybe I can get you something else.

He pulls her close. They kiss. As they come up for air -

Paul appears at the end of the aisle, looking for a file. He sees Ted's hand on Madeleine's back and quietly clears his throat.

Ted releases Madeleine, but keeps one hand stroking her back. She squirms, flushed.

MADELEINE

Mr. Herrick, this is Dr. Davis.

(sarcastic)

Mr. Herrick is performing experiments on our autistic patients.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The men size each other up.

PAUL  
(shaking hands)  
It's Paul, and I prefer to think of it as  
"therapy."

TED  
I bet you do.  
(a beat; to Madeleine)  
You really should use the step-stool next  
time.  
(to Paul)  
Can't have our nurses pulling their  
backs out of alignment, can we?

Ted exits. Madeleine looks away, trying to regain composure.

CUT TO:

INT. PAUL'S OFFICE - DAY

Bertrand wanders into the vacant office. Standing perfectly still for a moment, he absorbs his surroundings, the new decor, the light, the sounds.

He moves to the chair by the window and sits.

Paul and Charlie enter.

CHARLIE  
What's HE doing -

Paul signals Charlie to leave Bertrand alone. Paul kneels by Bertrand, sees peanuts clutched in his hand.

PAUL  
(to Bertrand)  
Come to feed a friend?

Paul opens the window just enough to slip the peanuts onto the outside sill. He stands next to Bertrand a beat, then sits at his desk. Charlie works in the background.

Bertrand stares out the window.

Paul shuffles papers.

Bertrand WATCHES him.

Paul SENSES it & looks up -

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Bertrand's eyes DART back out the window.

Paul clears his throat, DIGS for something in a bottom drawer.

Bertrand WATCHES him again.

Paul SENSES it. Raises his head -

Bertrand LOOKS AWAY just in time.

A beat.

Paul scratches notes onto a worksheet.

BERTRAND'S P.O.V. -

He stares out the window, then slowly across the wall, carefully looking toward -

PAUL, who now STARES him directly in the eye. GOTCHA.

Paul BLINKS one eye, the other eye.

Bertrand WHIPS his gaze back out the window.

PAUL

Charlie, how many kids we have on our list, so far?

CHARLIE

(checking)

Ten.

PAUL

Make it eleven.

Charlie looks up, realizes that Paul intends to add Bertrand.

CHARLIE

It's not gonna go over too big, you know.

PAUL

With who?

CHARLIE

"Iron Fist."

Paul is confused. Charlie explains ...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CHARLIE  
Nurse Andrews. He's on her ward.

PAUL  
I can deal with her.

CHARLIE  
What about Maddy?

Paul, unconcerned, looks away, watching Bertrand, who stares out the window. Charlie sighs, puts Bertrand's name on the list.

MADELEINE (O.S.)  
Why have you put Bertrand's name on here?

INT. HALLWAY - DAY

Madeleine has caught up to Paul. She carries a copy of Paul's list. As they walk -

PAUL  
He's a good candidate for this therapy.  
He's very special.

MADELEINE  
And that's exactly why you can't do this to him. He's been poked, prodded, tested, examined all of his life by better doctors than you. He's had enough.

PAUL  
This might be his best chance at real communication.

MADELEINE  
You've got your group. He's not even in your target age.

PAUL  
So he won't be a part of the study.  
(and)  
What are you afraid of? What he might say? Or just that he might not need you anymore?

She'd like to slug him. They've reached Paul's destination. She blocks his way.

MADELEINE  
You're not getting him.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PAUL

I already have him. Check with Mueller.

Paul enters the room. The door closes. In frustration:

MADELEINE

Rrrrrrrrrrr.

INT. TESTING ROOM - DAY

Paul enters to find Charlie struggling in vain to get MICHELLE NEWBERRY (8), severely autistic, to pay attention to the letter board he holds.

Paul moves in, Charlie hands him the board. Paul sizes up Michelle, decides on another approach and puts the letter board aside.

PAUL

(re: the letter board)

Not very interesting, is it, Michelle?

(and)

What would YOU like to do?

Michelle stares at a toy fishing rod. Paul sees, picks it up.

PAUL

Ah. One of my favorite childhood memories. My Dad and me. On those cool summer mornings we'd get up before dawn. Before the birds even woke up. We'd cook a little bacon and eggs, get our rods and reels, then sit, relax ...

(and)

... and watch "Bassmasters" on the living room couch.

He casts the oversized plastic hook, snagging Charlie's knapsack in the corner. Paul pretends to be reeling in a big one as he pulls the knapsack across the floor. As he does, Michelle begins to smile. He HAS her.

PAUL

Hold it, something big's got ahold of the line, stretching it to the limit, snap that rod right in two, hold off, play it out, play it out, let him run a little, tire himself, easy, easy ...Ho-ly cow, look at that baby, gotta be a twenty pounder, get the net ...

He pretends to get a net to haul the knapsack "aboard."

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PAUL

Let's see what we got.

He digs into the bag, pulling out Charlie's sandwich.

PAUL

Looks like peanut butter and jellyfish.  
Want some?

He hands her half the sandwich. She smiles.

PAUL

Isn't fishing great?

(and)

Do you want to learn how to spell it?

As Michelle eats, Paul holds up the letter board, points to the letters.

PAUL

F-I-S-H. Fish. Do you want to try?

Michelle nods. Paul glances at Charlie, winks.

CUT TO:

INT. NATATORIUM - DAY

Bertrand sits on the steps in the shallow end of the indoor pool. Madeleine dives in the deep end and swims to him.

Bertrand watches her as, wet and glistening, she approaches, then eases him off the steps and into deeper water for his hydrotherapy exercises. They begin.

MADELEINE

(re: exercises)

Start with the left, that's it.

(pause)

That new guy, Mr. Congeniality says he  
can help you communicate ...to share  
what you're feeling.

Bertrand hesitates an instant then begins working his right side.

MADELEINE

Would you tell what it's like being  
locked in a place where you can't break  
free? ...Or how tired you are of everyone  
else's rules ...

(and)

Maybe you'd tell us all to go to hell.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Is she talking about Bertrand or herself?

A door opens. Ted enters. Madeleine climbs out of the pool & grabs a towel. He takes the towel and blots her dry.

TED

No luck. The guy's Mueller's favorite son right now, you know how that goes. Carte blanche with the patients.

MADELEINE

He'll just upset him.

TED

Or worse. It's horseshit, voodoo medicine but Mueller's eating it up. God knows why. Another crusader with a theory about a condition that he has no first hand knowledge of. Probably working the talk show angle already.

Madeleine is disappointed. Ted gets an idea.

TED

(sexy)

I'm not due back for another hour.

MADELEINE

I can't.

He indicates Bertrand, who's still exercising.

TED

Trust me, he won't say anything.

(and)

I'll keep an eye on him. We doctors are good at doing two things at once.

MADELEINE

How romantic.

He tugs her toward a lounge chair.

Suddenly: Bertrand thrashes in the water! He's panicking! Madeleine drops her towel ...

MADELEINE

Bertrand -

...and dives in!

Bertrand goes under. Madeleine pulls him up, then eases him into shallow water. Bertrand heaves as he continues to flail.

(CONTINUED)



CONTINUED:

Ted runs along the side of the pool, not wanting to get wet.

Madeleine pulls Bertrand up the steps and seats him on the pool's edge.

TED  
Jesus. What got into him?

MADELEINE  
He's autistic, remember?

TED  
Yeah, but -

He holds her towel. She grabs it and wraps Bertrand protectively.

MADELEINE  
Why don't you go?

Ted backs off. Madeleine rubs Bertrand's back. Ted exits.

Bertrand stares at the exit door, suddenly breathing normally.

PAUL (O.S.)  
We can't think for them. We can't make them do something that they don't want to do.

CUT TO:

INT. OBSERVATION ROOM - MORNING

The audience: Mueller, Lenox and MR. and MRS. NEWBERRY (early 40's) - Michelle's parents. A two-way mirror divides this room from the Testing Room.

Paul stands in the Testing Room, speaking to the mirror. He holds the letter board.

Madeleine sneaks into the room.

PAUL  
All we do is steady their hand just enough to help them "speak." In time, coordination should improve. In many cases, all a subject eventually needs is a supportive hand on the shoulder. A friend.

(re: the letterboard)  
Today we'll use this. Once Michelle

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PAUL (cont'd)  
masters the letterboard, we'll move her  
to a computer. That's when things really  
start to take off.

Paul backs away from the mirror as Charlie leads Michelle  
into the room, to the table.

PAUL  
Good morning, Michelle. You look so  
pretty. Where did that dress come from?

Paul facilitates Michelle (he gently steadies her hand with  
his as she points to letters). Charlie takes notes. When  
they're finished, he reads aloud:

CHARLIE  
"rum." Her room.

INT. OBSERVATION ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Mrs. Sheldon sits forward, intent. Mr. Sheldon leans away -  
skeptical?

PAUL  
Room? Did someone help you pick it out?

More facilitation.

CHARLIE  
"Momi." Mommy.

Mrs. Sheldon covers her mouth.

PAUL  
And do you love your Mommy?

INT. TESTING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

THE LETTER BOARD -

Michelle's hand points at letters.

INT. OBSERVATION ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Mrs. Sheldon hangs on every letter struck.

CHARLIE (O.S.)  
"I lub momi." I love Mommy.

Mrs. Sheldon gasps quietly, commanding unwilling, but joyful,  
tears to stop. Mr. Sheldon holds her.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Madeleine is moved. Lenox nods. Mueller smiles, self-satisfied.

INT. TESTING ROOM - LATER

Paul and Charlie finish straightening up. Mueller bursts in. Madeleine follows.

MUELLER

Fan-freaking-tastic! The most amazing thing I've ever seen.

He gives Paul a back slap.

PAUL

It's just other people's work so far. I haven't even begun my study, yet -

MUELLER

(stopping him)

One of the secrets of being a great researcher: "Always take the credit." It's not just a motto, it's a creed.

MADELEINE

You should listen to him. He's made a career out of that.

MUELLER

Oh, now Maddy. You are just ...  
(he wants to say "annoying")  
...incurable.

MADELEINE

You mean "annoying," don't you?

MUELLER

(to Paul, re: Madeleine)

Sharp as a tack, this one. Watch out for her.

Madeleine rolls her eyes.

MUELLER

Include as many kids as you can on this. Charlie'll help you out. Hell, get another couple of our folks on board.

PAUL

My grant isn't for teaching therapists how to facilitate. It's for -

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MUELLER

Forget the grant. Produce like this and the board'll throw more money at you than you can spend. Think big.

He nudges Paul's shoulder, exits. Paul has been run over by a Mack truck.

MADELEINE

"Hurricane Larry."

(and)

I still think you're wrong about Bertrand, but ...this was ... impressive.

Paul realizes, although grudging, SHE is sincere. She turns to leave.

PAUL

Madeleine.

(off her look)

Tonight I was, we were, we plan to work with Bertrand. See if he can grasp this.

(and)

I think it would mean a lot to him if you would join us.

Madeleine realizes, although grudging, HE is sincere. Pause.

MADELEINE

What time?

Paul and Charlie smile.

CUT TO:

INT. BOATHOUSE - LATE AFTERNOON

Dinghies hang overhead. A twenty-footer sits in the water. Madeleine and Bertrand sit in a small sailboat that's been dry-docked for a new paint job.

She's just finished reading to him. She closes her book. Bertrand drinks her with his eyes. She checks her watch.

MADELEINE

I'm spoiled, you know. I've had you all to myself. I don't want to share.

Bertrand looks away.

EXT. BOATHOUSE - LATE AFTERNOON

Madeleine leads Bertrand from the clinic's boathouse and up the path to the main building.

CUT TO:

INT. TESTING ROOM - EVENING

Paul and Charlie finish readying the room. Madeleine and Bertrand enter. Paul turns:

PAUL

Here they are.

(quietly, to Madeleine)

Thanks.

(to Bertrand)

Your friend the blue jay came by today.  
Knocked on the window demanding a  
handout.

He seats Bertrand at the table and positions the letter board. Madeleine's apprehension is palpable.

PAUL

This is simple, Bertrand, you just point  
to a letter, Charlie'll note it. I'll  
hold your hand steady. Ready?

Paul places his hand on Bertrand's, pointing his finger for him.

PAUL

Maybe you'd like to start with a few  
words to Madeleine?

Bertrand's hand lies limp as Paul guides it to the letter board.

No response.

PAUL

I'm sure there must be something.

Still no response.

You could hear a pin drop.

PAUL

Okay ...we can do that later. ...What did  
you have for lunch today?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Nothing.

Paul shifts in his seat. Madeleine wants to protect Bertrand, but stays still.

PAUL

Why don't we start with your name. I'll point to the letters first, then we'll do it together.

(and)

B-E-R-T-R-A-N-D.

(and)

Ready? How do you spell your name?

Not even a flicker. Bertrand stares ahead, in another world.

Madeleine moves forward, takes Bertrand's hand.

MADELEINE

Maybe this isn't a good night after all.

CUT TO:

EXT. LINDEN VIEW CLINIC - LATER

Paul walks Madeleine down the stairs. She wears his coat around her shoulders. He is defeated.

MADELEINE

Doctors mis-diagnose all the time, especially with autistics. You could write books about it.

PAUL

(self-deprecating)

Now there's a career move.

MADELEINE

I didn't mean it that way. I work with these patients every day. They're unique. You get a feel for what they'll respond to. It takes time to gain their trust. And I work closely with the doctors.

PAUL

I was so sure.

(and)

Walk you home?

Her smile says "yes."

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. WALKWAY - MINUTES LATER

Paul and Madeleine pass a sign reading: "Staff Housing." They near a row of faceless, bland-looking apartments near the lake.

MADELEINE

...so right before I graduated, I took a piece of paper, drew a line down the middle, put all the reasons to stay on one side and all the reasons to go on the other. Then added them up.

(and)

Here I am.

PAUL

For me, it was the opposite.

(matter-of-fact)

My brother was autistic. He died four years ago.

(before she can speak)

His name was Ben. Our lives sort of revolved around him and then he was - gone.

(and)

So after that happened, my Dad never seemed to give it a thought and my Mom never said a word about it. And then there was me. And I couldn't figure out why we were all pretending that he'd never lived.

Madeleine senses his vulnerability. A beat.

PAUL

After a couple months of that, my dad told me to either get a job or go back to school.

He holds out his hands as if weighing the alternatives.

PAUL

Job. School. Job. School.

(School "wins")

Secret's out. I'm not Albert Schweitzer.

MADELEINE

You care, though. You can't fool kids about that.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Paul shrugs, suddenly uncomfortable with her attention.

MADELEINE  
Well, here we are.

PAUL  
Goodnight.

MADELEINE  
(holds her hand out)  
Goodnight.  
(and)  
Nice "meeting" you. I think that's the  
most you've ever talked.

He takes her hand. They smile.

Madeleine's door opens. Ted appears, sees that Madeleine is not alone and ducks back inside.

Madeleine is embarrassed: caught. Paul reacts.

PAUL  
I guess it's one of those nights you're  
working "closely" ... I bet Mrs. Davis  
appreciates your "dedication."

Before she can respond, he turns & exits.

A beat as her embarrassment turns to anger and -

She tears his coat from her shoulders and hurls it at him as he walks away ...missing him completely and sending it into the lake - Splash. Oops.

Paul doesn't see a thing as he disappears into the darkness.

CUT TO:

EXT. LAWN - NIGHT

Paul walks across the lawn.

PULL BACK to reveal CAMERA looks through Paul's Office window. Bertrand watches Paul.

EXT. PARKING LOT - SAME TIME

As Paul reaches his car, he SENSES something.

He looks up - Bertrand stares at him from the window. A beat. Their eyes lock. They connect.

(CONTINUED)



CONTINUED:

PAUL (O.S.)  
Where is it? I know it's here somewhere.

INT. PAUL'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Paul rifles through stacks of files. Bertrand sits quietly next to the desk.

PAUL  
Aha.

Paul pulls out a small letter board. He excitedly shoves it in front of Bertrand. He takes hold of Bertrand's hand, bringing it close to the board.

PAUL  
Here, I'll take your hand and help -

But Bertrand is already curling his fingers under and pointing with his rigid index finger. Paul is astonished -

PAUL  
- point your ...fingers ...for you  
(and)  
Okay, let's start by spelling your name.

THE LETTER BOARD -

Bertrand strikes the letter "I."

BACK TO SCENE -

Paul sighs.

PAUL  
No, Bertrand. Try again. What letter does your name begin with?

THE LETTER BOARD -

Again, Bertrand strikes the letter "I" but before Paul can stop him, he points to the letter "M" then the "Space" bar.

PAUL  
Hold it. Slow down.

Paul grabs a pencil in his other hand and writes down what Bertrand "dictates."

BERTRAND'S EYES -

He focuses.

BERTRAND'S OUTSTRETCHED FINGER -

As Paul steadies Bertrand's hand.

THE NOTE PAD -

As Paul writes.

THE "D" BOX ON THE LETTER BOARD -

As Bertrand's finger strikes it.

A beat.

PAUL  
(reading)  
"I'm autistic, not stupid."

Astounded, Paul looks Bertrand in the eye. A long beat.

CUT TO:

COMPUTER SCREEN -

The cursor blinks in the upper left corner.

PAUL (O.S.)  
But why NOT tell Maddy?

Typing: S-E-C-R-E-T

PAUL (O.S.)  
But that's ridiculous, she cares about  
you. She should know this.

Typing again: S-E-C-R-E-T

Then: P-R-O-M-I-S-E

BACK TO SCENE -

Paul facilitates Bertrand at the computer.

PAUL  
Alright, I promise.

Bertrand gives him a sideways glance.

PAUL  
I Do. Cross my heart and everything.

Bertrand starts making involuntary movements. He struggles to fight against the limitations of his own body.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Paul watches the struggle. A beat.

PAUL  
Tell me. I need to know. The autism. What  
is it like?

Bertrand holds his hand out for Paul to take, they type.

THE COMPUTER SCREEN -

It reads: PROMETHEUS.

BACK TO SCENE -

Paul searches Bertrand's eyes.

He understands.

PAUL  
Chained to a rock by the gods? Is that  
it?  
(and)  
But you can't cry out.

Bertrand types again.

When he's done, Paul reads:

PAUL  
"I cry out every day."

Paul is deeply moved.

PAUL  
We just don't know how to listen.

Bertrand's look sadly says: "No. You don't."

CUT TO:

INT. TESTING ROOM - DAY

A sleepy Paul oversees the facilitation training of a half dozen therapists who practice on each other. As he circulates, he stops to correct PEGGY who role-plays with CHARLIE, who pretends to be autistic.

PAUL  
Make sure you're letting him lead.  
Remember, steady his hand, don't guide  
it.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Mueller enters. Paul crosses to him.

MUELLER

(quietly)

Now this is what I like to see - activity. How's my favorite project coming along?

PAUL

If by "your" project you mean the facilitation training, it's moving forward. But all this "activity" is slowing down my research.

MUELLER

Fine, fine. You'll have my people up and running in, say, how long?

PAUL

It depends. Some of them, possibly as little as a few weeks.

MUELLER

Great, great. That would put us into let's see, November. Perfect.

Mueller pulls a piece of paper from a trainee's pad and pulls out a pen to jot himself a note.

MUELLER

One of the secrets of running a successful clinic: Never let a press opportunity go unexploited. Always keep 'em talking about you.

PAUL

You're bringing the press?

MUELLER

Of course, what did you think, you were toiling away in an ivory tower? You seen the price of ivory lately?

PAUL

Dr. Mueller, we have indications that the children aren't able to facilitate if they're scrutinized, tested. It breaks the bond of trust and they retreat. Inviting the press -

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MUELLER

You let me worry about the press.

Mueller looks around again.

MUELLER

This looks great, just great.

Mueller exits. Paul has a bad feeling about this.

CUT TO:

EXT. GARDEN - DAY

Madeleine and Bertrand walk toward a bench that overlooks the lake. The sky is as grey as slate.

MADELEINE

I knew it wasn't a good idea. Ted said we should make him a "World's Most Arrogant Grad Student" trophy.

(and)

I'm just glad he didn't upset you.

(and)

He can be such an asshole.

(she looks around her)

Winter, soon.

Madeleine sits on the bench. She brushes off the seat next to her, removing a book from her pocket.

MADELEINE

C'mon. I'll read to you.

But Bertrand begins to walk toward the wooden fence at the lake's edge.

Madeleine watches, joins him.

Bertrand absorbs his surroundings. The sound of lapping water. The sight of birds flying south overhead. The smell of burning leaves.

A few hungry ducks swim closer, hoping for a handout.

MADELEINE

(to the ducks)

You better fly south now.

Bertrand pulls a heel of bread from his pocket and is about to drop it to the ducks -

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MADELEINE

Here, let me break that up for you.

She reaches for it but he keeps it from her. It falls -

And the ducks attack it - and each other - as they vie for the crusty heel.

MADELEINE

Now look, they're hurting each other. And it's all over a dumb piece of stale bread.

Bertrand looks at Madeleine a beat, then walks back toward the building.

Madeleine looks at Bertrand, then at the ducks who have torn the bread to pieces.

CUT TO:

INT. PAUL'S OFFICE - AFTERNOON

Paul enters. Mr. Newberry, Michelle's step-father, sits by the door.

PAUL

Mr. Newberry, good to see you.

Mr. Newberry rises, edgy.

MR. NEWBERRY

Thank you for making the time.

PAUL

Pardon me for not sitting, I'm running behind. What can I help you with?

Paul removes a series of files from various drawers. Mr. Newberry remains in place.

MR. NEWBERRY

I'm worried about Michelle. I'm not so sure this is the right kind of program for her.

PAUL

Excuse me?

MR. NEWBERRY

You know, experimental and all. She'll be nine soon. We learned about the autism six years ago and have tried everything since. Well, I'm sure you know.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PAUL

Your wife suggested Michelle for this program.

MR. NEWBERRY

Alison gets her hopes so high. When things don't work out, I pick up what's left.

(and)

Michelle is my step-daughter - Alison's too afraid to have more - so, she's the only child I'll ever have. I want her home. With us.

Paul stops pulling files, drawer half-open.

PAUL

What about when you're not around? When she's on her own. She'll need to be able to communicate.

(and)

If you want to withdraw Michelle from the program, only Mrs. Newberry can sign the release.

MR. NEWBERRY

I was hoping we wouldn't need that formality. That maybe you'd just ...let her go. Replace her.

Pause.

PAUL

I don't think that's in her best interest. I doubt your wife would.

(and)

Why don't you give it a little longer. Who knows what we'll learn from Michelle?

Paul slides the drawer shut with a WHOOMP.

Defeated, Mr. Newberry nods.

Charlie pokes his head in, points to his watch.

CHARLIE

Paul. Time.

Paul is about to exit, when he remembers something:

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PAUL  
Oh! Wait, wait, wait.

Paul rushes to his desk, picks up another file, glances out the window - HE SEES: Madeleine standing alone at the lake's edge. The sight of her makes him stop for a moment.

CHARLIE  
C'mon.

Paul snaps out of it, rushes away.

CUT TO:

INT. CLINIC CAFETERIA - DAY

Paul slides his tray as he picks his lunch.

MADELEINE (O.S.)  
Jerry, the greens are looking brown you  
want to get some fresh out there?

Paul turns, sees Madeleine. She looks away, still angry with him.

PAUL  
Quality control duty today?

MADELEINE  
Just trying to avoid food poisoning.

They slide their trays forward.

PAUL  
About the other night. I owe you an  
explanation.

MADELEINE  
Let's drop it, okay?

She reaches for a pre-made sandwich. He leans in to help.

PAUL  
I'll get that for you.

MADELEINE  
(re: the sandwich)  
The other one.

Paul hands her the sandwich. They slide forward, picking up food as they go.

(CONTINUED)



CONTINUED:

PAUL

What you do in your personal life is your business.

MADELEINE

Thanks for the permission.

PAUL

I'm sorry, that's not - let me start over.

(and)

It's just that my wife cheated on me. It's a terrible thing to go through. It was selfish, cruel of her. I reacted to that.

MADELEINE

So now I'm selfish and cruel?

They've reached the cashier.

PAUL

That wasn't -

CASHIER

That's six-sixty five.

As Paul digs in his pocket, he doesn't see that Madeleine has handed her exact change to the cashier and left.

PAUL

I just didn't want us to get off on the wrong foot. I meant to say .."I'm sorry."

Paul hands over his money, noticing Madeleine is gone. The Cashier thinks Paul is talking to him -

CASHIER

It's okay ...really. I forgive you, pal.

Paul sees Madeleine eating alone, unapproachable.

CUT TO:

INT. PAUL'S OFFICE - NIGHT

THE COMPUTER SCREEN -

It reads: ARROGANT SHITHEAD

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PAUL  
I'M an "arrogant shithead?" What about  
HER? She's the one with this wall that no  
one can penetrate.

BACK TO SCENE -

Paul and Bertrand sit at the computer.

PAUL  
She really said I was "arrogant"?

Paul facilitates Bertrand.

PAUL  
(reading)  
"What about your wall?"  
(and)  
What are you talking about?

Paul facilitates again.

THE COMPUTER SCREEN -

It reads: R-E-S-I-S-T-E-N-C-E

PAUL (O.S.)  
You lost me.

More typing: L-E-T G-O

BACK TO SCENE -

Paul gives Bertrand a sidelong glance:

PAUL  
You are DEFINITELY on drugs.

Bertrand is clear and patient. He signals that he wants to  
write more. Paul facilitates.

THE COMPUTER SCREEN -

More typing: L-E-T G-O!!

BACK TO SCENE -

Paul sits back. A beat. Agitated, he stands and begins to  
pace.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PAUL

What are you talking about, "let go." To let go would presume that I was holding onto something. And what would I be holding onto?

Paul looks at Bertrand, whose look says "you know." A thought occurs to Paul:

PAUL

You think I like her, don't you? Well, put that thought to rest right now. There's no way I'd ever be attracted to her. She's insensitive and argues with everything I say. Not interested.

Bertrand looks away from Paul and faces the computer. Paul crosses to facilitate him.

THE COMPUTER SCREEN -

It reads: "l-e-t g-o."

BACK TO SCENE -

Paul reads it. Bertrand knows him better than he knows himself. A beat. Paul slumps into his chair, defenseless.

PAUL

I tried the relationship thing. I even tried the commitment thing.

(and)

Forget it. It's just not something I'm good at.

Bertrand signals again. Paul facilitates.

THE COMPUTER SCREEN -

It reads: E-X-C-U-S-E-S

BACK TO SCENE -

Bertrand has worn Paul down.

PAUL

Women want to talk ...about feelings ...all the time. It's biological. You have that gene or you don't. I don't.

Bertrand absorbs what Paul has said. He begins to write (Paul facilitates).

BERTRAND'S FINGER -

Pow! - As it strikes the letter "W".

BERTRAND'S EYES -

As he fully focuses.

PAUL'S HAND ON BERTRAND'S WRIST -

A single unit moving in perfect unison.

PAUL'S FACE -

As he concentrates on Bertrand.

BERTRAND'S FINGER ON A KEY -

Bertrand lifts his finger to reveal the letter "E".

THE COMPUTER SCREEN -

It reads: WRITE TO HER.

BACK TO SCENE -

Paul stares at the screen. A beat. It sinks in. Then -

PAUL  
"Write"? What should I write?

HOLD on Bertrand as ...

CUT TO:

INT. CLINIC MAIN OFFICE - MORNING

Madeleine arrives at her desk to find a single rosebud in a glass of water and an envelope. She opens it, reads:

PAUL (V.O.)  
When I awoke I saw an empty room. "Could  
use a sweeping now," I thought inside.  
And I remembered then what I had said.  
  
Too late to take it back or use a broom.  
Dry bristles scratch'd my face revealing  
pride,  
brackish, stagnant words best left  
unsaid.

INT. HALLWAY - MORNING

Madeleine at Paul's door. He pores over his work. She watches.

PAUL (V.O.)

But much too late for me to use a broom.  
How best to make it up I must decide.  
And if forgiveness can be truly pled,

the broom would sweep the words beneath  
the bed.

Paul senses her watching him. He looks up. She enters.

INT. PAUL'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

She holds the poem.

MADELEINE

This was from you?

PAUL

Yeah.

MADELEINE

I've never had anyone write me a poem  
before.

Paul shrugs.

MADELEINE

I like it.  
(and)  
I'd like to see more.

PAUL

Sure.

MADELEINE

(pleased)  
Good.

PAUL

Good.

MADELEINE

PAUL

Later, then - ?

See ya' around - ?

They stop so as not to interrupt the other. A beat. She smiles. He smiles. She waves a little wave, exits. He leans back in his chair - "yesss."

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Then it hits him -

PAUL  
 (mocking his own answer)  
 "Sure." ...  
 (then, skeptically)  
 Sure.

Uh-oh. What has he done to himself?!

CUT TO:

INT. BOOKSTORE/CAFE - EVENING

Most of the floorspace is bookshelves. A coffee bar stands in the corner. A few tables are scattered throughout.

BOOKSHELF -

The poetry section. A HAND skims the bindings. It rests on the book UNDERSTANDING VERSE and pulls it from the shelf.  
 PULL BACK: It's Paul.

LATER -

Paul at a table, surrounded by enough books for a crash course in poetry writing. He reads, then scrawls onto a pad. Crumpled scraps lie around him.

THE PAD -

Paul is attempting to write poetry and not having much luck. Another one bites the dust. He scribbles over it.

BACK TO SCENE -

Tired, Paul rubs his eyes. When he opens them he sees -

Madeleine and Ted looking at books across the room. A casual observer might think them only friends. But there is a subtle familiarity. A smile held a beat too long. A fleeting touch that betrays their intimacy.

Paul feels angry, hurt, confused and ashamed that he's reacting at all. This shouldn't be bothering him. But it is.

Madeleine and Ted walk away.

Paul looks at his books. Why bother? He throws his trash in a wastebasket, then walks toward the exit.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CLERK  
Hey there. Sir.

Paul stops. The Clerk is talking to HIM.

CLERK  
(points to the books)  
You going to buy those? This is a  
bookstore - not a library.

PAUL  
(covering)  
Oh, right, of course. I was - throwing  
away my trash. I was just coming back for  
them.

Paul picks up his books under the Clerk's wary eye. As he  
turns around -

BAM. Madeleine stands in his way. With Ted (who is grudgingly  
on his best behavior).

MADELEINE  
Hi Paul.

PAUL  
Maddy. Hi.

Pause.

MADELEINE  
Buying books?

Paul tries acting casual.

PAUL  
A few.  
(he nods to Ted)  
Dr. Davis.

Ted nods his "hello" back.

MADELEINE  
(eyeing the titles)  
More poetry.

PAUL  
Gifts.

MADELEINE  
(to Ted)  
Paul writes the sweetest poems.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

TED  
 (deadpan)  
 You don't say.  
 (and)  
 I wrote a poem once. The teacher made me  
 paint over it. You use a good semi-gloss  
 on those bathroom stalls and it'll cover  
 in one coat.

Madeleine gives Ted a dirty look, then moves along ...

MADELEINE  
 Well, goodnight.

PAUL  
 Goodnight.

They walk off, Ted shoots Paul a derisive glance over his  
 shoulder.

CUT TO:

EXT. BOOKSTORE/CAFE STREET - NIGHT

A chilly autumn night. Stars pierce the ebony sky. Paul  
 passes a Halloween display in a store window. He looks ahead,  
 sees two lovers kissing - Ted and Madeleine? ...No. But it  
 still makes him feel lonesome.

He turns up his collar to the night air and buttons his top  
 button.

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

Madeleine and Ted discreetly hold hands as they walk.

A WOMAN exits a store - it is AMANDA DAVIS (30's), Ted's  
 wife.

Ted's hand releases Madeleine's as if on fire.

TED  
 Amanda. Honey, what brings you here?

AMANDA  
 Light bulbs. That old front hall lamp  
 went out and there were none left in the  
 closet.

Amanda notices Madeleine and stops speaking. A beat. Ted,  
 uncomfortable, realizes:

(CONTINUED)



CONTINUED:

TED

You remember Madeleine Andrews from last year's Christmas party. Beverly's daughter. She's been assigned to the physical therapy department.

MADELEINE

Hi.

AMANDA

(nods at Madeleine)

I called the clinic they didn't know WHERE you were.

A long, uncomfortable silence -

PAUL (O.S.)

Maddy, there you are.

Paul appears.

PAUL

(to Madeleine, re: his books)

The clerk was learning that cash register, one of those computerized things. Why they had to replace the old ones, I'll never know.

(to Mrs. Davis)

Hello, Paul Herrick, you must be Mrs. Davis. Ted's told me so much about you. Nice to finally meet.

They shake hands. Ted and Madeleine resume breathing.

PAUL

(to Madeleine)

We better move if we're going to catch that movie.

(and)

See you at the salt mine. Nice meeting you.

Paul steers Madeleine away from Amanda and a very relieved Ted.

As they walk along:

MADELEINE

You didn't have to do that.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PAUL  
You're welcome.

MADELEINE  
I can take care of myself.

PAUL  
I never said you couldn't.

They've reached his car.

She looks across the street, were Ted helps Amanda into her car then climbs in his own. They drive home together.

PAUL  
Need a ride?

MADELEINE  
(shaking her head)  
I'm okay.

No she's not. But it would be an intrusion for Paul to insist.

MADELEINE  
See ya.

He smiles. She walks away. Alone.

A beat. Paul forces himself to climb into his car and drive away.

CUT TO:

INT. PAUL'S OFFICE - EVENING

Paul pulls a lone page from his printer. Bertrand sits at the computer, having just written another poem.

Paul kneels at Bertrand's side, looking him eye-to-eye -

PAUL  
(re: the page)  
You're sure about this?

Bertrand holds his gaze. He's sure.

Paul affectionately squeezes Bertrand's shoulder.

PAUL  
I owe you.

(CONTINUED)

l on Bertrand.

CUT TO:

PAUL'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Ma Paul returns home. Finds that an envelope has been  
left at her door. She picks it up, reads.

MADELEINE (O.S.)

(reading)

Her wings sleep,  
oiled and wet,  
against her body.

EXT. GARDEN - MORNING

Madeleine and Bertrand sit on their bench, overlooking the  
lake. She is reading aloud.

MADELEINE

Dark and almost  
forgotten, hidden  
beneath her ebony cloak.

Bertrand is haunted as his own words are read back to him. He  
drinks her.

MADELEINE

Afraid of walking  
but more afraid  
of flying into the sun.

Madeleine knows that she is reading about herself. She  
wonders how Paul could know her so completely.

MADELEINE

Wings that were meant  
to stretch in the light,  
to ride the air, endlessly.

But, ignored and waiting,  
they shrink as she  
insists on walking,

persists in doubting  
that the gods  
intended her to fly.

She re-folds the page.

Silence. Then, Madeleine rises, looks out.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The last of the Canadian Geese fly over the stripped trees.  
The wind chops the water on the lake.

Bertrand watches Madeleine, who turns away from him. She wrestles with unexpected feelings.

She turns. Tears stain her face.

She kneels, lays her head in Bertrand's lap.

MADELEINE  
(ironic smile)  
He doesn't know me at all.

If only Bertrand was a "normal" man. He'd take her in his arms this moment and ...but he can't. He can't ever do that. She rests on him. It is enough.

CUT TO:

INT. TESTING ROOM - MORNING

HALLOWEEN decorations hang from the ceiling. Peggy, dressed like a pilgrim, facilitates Michelle, who wears an angel costume. They sit at the computer.

PEGGY  
(reading)  
"I like the candy but the boys across the street just like playing tricks."  
(chuckles, and)  
Believe me, some things don't change when you get older.  
(and)  
Which candy do you like the best?

Peggy facilitates Michelle.

PEGGY  
(reading)  
"That's easy. Candy Apples."  
(and)  
Candy Apples? No. That was my favorite when I was your age. I'll tell you a secret. I make them every year for the kids, but I always save one ...just for me.

Peggy's rapport with Michelle is light and easy. Michelle blossoms.

INT. OBSERVATION ROOM - SAME TIME

Mrs. Newberry, glowing with happiness, watches Peggy with Michelle.

Mueller enters with DR. KYLE CHARVAT (60's), a distinguished researcher who exudes warmth and confidence. Mueller plays tour guide.

MUELLER

...and here's where we keep an eye on the proceedings. Ah, Mrs. Newberry, sorry to interrupt, just giving a quick tour. This is Dr. Charvat.

(and, to Charvat)

Alison Newberry is the mother of one of our day children.

MRS. NEWBERRY

Dr. Mueller. I can't tell you what this means to our family. You're a godsend. ...You gave me my daughter.

Mueller basks in the compliment as Charvat casts him an appreciative look.

INT. PAUL'S OFFICE - DAY

HALLOWEEN decorations hang from the ceiling. Charlie is dressed as a pirate - a pudgy pirate. Complete with eyepatch, which he wears flipped up on his forehead so that he can see.

He empties a bagful of sugarless gum into the plastic jack-o-lantern on his desk.

Paul enters, dressed in a moth-eaten lion suit, complete with limp tail that he catches in everything.

PAUL

'Morning.

Charlie flips down the eyepatch, salutes and imitates a limp.

CHARLIE

Mornin' Cap'n. Rais'd the tops'ls an' lowered the boom. Still no sign of land. Arrrr.

PAUL

(in his best Bert Lahr)

And in the face of the fiercest storm, what do you need?

(and)

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PAUL (cont'd)  
"Courage."

Paul strikes a pose of "Courage."

The SOUND of stifled laughter.

Paul turns to see Madeleine at the door, dressed like a fairie.

MADELEINE  
Cute. But even more than courage, it  
looks like you could use a good  
seamstress.

Paul follows her gaze, finding a hole in the suit's backside.  
He grabs it.

MADELEINE  
I've got a zoological question for you.

PAUL  
What's that?

MADELEINE  
What do lions eat?

PAUL  
Anything carnivorous. Gazelle, antelope,  
zebra.

MADELEINE  
And what time do they like to eat dinner?

Paul realizes she's talking about HIM: a dinner invitation.  
Charlie finds a folder to bury his face in.

PAUL  
Seven? Seven-thirty?

MADELEINE  
Bring red.

PAUL  
Red.

And she's gone. Smiling, Paul glides to the doorway, still  
holding the hole closed in the seat of his costume.

Charlie peeks out from behind his folder.

INT. HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Paul sees Madeleine disappear around the corner.

As Paul turns, he sees Mueller leading a distinguished-looking man through the hall. Paul ducks out of sight as he eavesdrops.

MUELLER

...so I told him "I think you've got something here, let me look over your methodology and if it checks out - you're in business. I refine it, works the bugs out for him and sure enough, the program holds water. You saw the preliminary results. It's a gold mine, I tell you.

Mueller and his guest, DR. KYLE CHARVAT, a legendary researcher, appear in Paul's doorway.

MUELLER

Here he is. Paul, I've got someone here you should meet. Paul Herrick, this is Dr. Kyle Charvat, one of the most distinguished mental health researchers in the U.S.

(to Charvat)

Paul was a protege of Ralph Walsh up at Dartmouth. Good kid. Hard worker.

Charvat, the gentleman, offers his hand. Paul takes it.

PAUL

I read your indictment of NIMH policies in the Times. Brilliant. Really.

CHARVAT

This facilitation. It's no fluke, then.

PAUL

Not according to what I've observed so far, sir.

A moment as Charvat eyes Paul and appreciates the scientific objectivity of his answer.

CHARVAT

The only thing these families have left is hope. Take it seriously. And handle it carefully.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PAUL  
Yes, sir.

CHARVAT  
(re: the costume)  
The Wizard of Oz is a favorite of mine.  
(to Mueller)  
Keep me informed.

MUELLER  
I'm on top of it.

Mueller steers Charvat out of the room. Paul begins to follow, but Mueller signals him to stay put.

MUELLER  
(to Charvat)  
How about a tour of my testing room? It's right down the hall, here. The rest of my staff are just getting up to speed. In a few weeks, I take it wide exposure all the way.

Mueller is taking over Paul's program! Paul looks at Charlie.

PAUL  
He's taking all the credit, isn't he?

Charlie shrugs.

A beat. Paul SLAMS his hand against the wall, exits.

INT. HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER

Paul reaches the elevator in time to see the doors close with Mueller and Charvat on board.

He marches to the stairs.

INT. DOWNSTAIRS HALL - MOMENTS LATER

Paul runs down the stairs, then marches down the hall - still wearing the ratty-looking lion suit.

He passes Daisy, who is dressed as a Kansas farm girl - with the omnipresent shower cap. She gives him an appreciative look.

INT. TESTING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Paul BURSTS in. Spots Mueller, but no Charvat.

(CONTINUED)



CONTINUED:

PAUL  
Dr. Mueller -

MUELLER  
What can I do for you, Paul?

PAUL  
Where's Charvat?

MUELLER  
Couldn't stay for the fifty-cent tour.  
What's up?

PAUL  
Upstairs ...you ...you ...

Paul tries to calm himself down, collect his thoughts.

PAUL  
Well, you appeared, you MADE it appear  
...it SOUNDED as though you ...You made  
it look like this was all your idea.

MUELLER  
Did I make it look that way? Really? Now  
how could I do that? We all know who  
brought this program here. We all know  
who put his ass on the line to front the  
grant money. We all know who's put the  
full resources of this facility behind  
this project. Now how could I possibly  
make it look like anything other than  
what it is?! You want to tell me that?

Paul is speechless.

MUELLER  
Get back to work, Snagglepuss. Don't piss  
me off.

Mueller turns his back to him. Paul is silenced.

INT. HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Paul, upset, trudges back the way he came. He sees Nurse  
Andrews trying to force Bertrand to do things HER way.

NURSE ANDREWS  
No, we are not going up the stairs we are  
going in the elevator. No. Come here.

Bertrand wants to go his own way. She treats him like a bad  
dog. For Paul, it's the last straw.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

NURSE ANDREWS

No. the last time you dropped in a heap on the landing and I threw my back out trying to move you, so forget about it right now. It's not going to happen.

Paul approaches.

PAUL

Nurse Andrews, you know I respect you and all you do around here. I'm sure the reason this place runs as well as it does is due to the sheer force of your will.

(and)

However, treating Bertrand as if he was an errant pet is not going to persuade him to do things your way when his is just as good. He's not stupid. He's not an "imbecile." Did it ever occur to you that he might have a brilliant mind trapped in a body that won't work? Did you ever think that maybe he can understand you completely - and it's you who refuse to understand him? Isn't it possible that he has read every single word in every single book on his shelves and remembered them all? What would that make him? I think that makes him pretty extraordinary, and much better read than you ...or me ... or anyone in this building.

Paul stops. Everyone is staring at them. He gathers all the dignity one can while wearing a lion suit, and crosses to Bertrand, taking his arm.

They walk to the staircase.

Bertrand is enjoying this. As they climb the stairs -

PAUL

(sotto, to Bertrand)

Don't even THINK about dropping in a heap on the landing.

As they climb the stairs, Bertrand glances over his shoulder at Nurse Andrews, a mischievous glint in his eye.

CUT TO:

INT. PAUL'S OFFICE - MOMENTS LATER

Bertrand stares out the window. Paul has just told a disbelieving Charlie what happened.

CHARLIE

Now see, I always thought you'd turn into a pillar of salt if you did that. Iron Fist herself. You don't mess around, do you?

PAUL

When I'm determined to throw away my career, I know just who to insult. Her eyes sort of bugged out as she turned about six shades of green ... no more head nurse, more like a ... "creature."

Paul mimics what "the creature" looked like. Charlie laughs with him a moment, then stops.

Paul notices Charlie, suddenly serious, looking past his shoulder, he turns: it's Nurse Andrews. Gulp.

She motions Paul to join her in the hall.

INT. HALL - CONTINUOUS

PAUL

About earlier -

NURSE ANDREWS

An articulate display, Mr. Herrick. But you misunderstand the way things are run.

(and)

You see, you are what we call a "floater." You floated in and after you finish your little experiment, you'll float right out.

(and)

I am not a "floater." Nor are any of my staff. We have seen your kind come and go, each with a new way to "cure" our patients. We live with the consequences of your agitating children and families.

PAUL

I don't think that -

NURSE ANDREWS

(softly, thru clenched teeth)

I may not have the softest bedside manner, but I am effective at my work.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

NURSE ANDREWS (cont'd)

You, however, are a danger. You give them hope that things will change.

PAUL

What's wrong with hope?

NURSE ANDREWS

A little hope is a dangerous thing.

Paul watches as she crosses to Bertrand, easing him out of his chair.

CUT TO:

INT. PAUL'S APARTMENT, LIVING ROOM - TWILIGHT

Neat, but lived in. Paul's housecleaning looks less compulsive than it was earlier.

Paul walks back and forth from the bedroom to the bath as he finishes dressing. It feels like prom night jitters in here.

HOUDINI, the guinea pig, sits on the winged chair, watching TV.

Paul, dressed nice-but-casual, picks up Houdini and puts him into his cage.

PAUL

(to Houdini)

You hold down the fort.

He grabs the wine bottle, exits.

INT. MADELEINE'S DINING ROOM - NIGHT

Homey. Warm. On a budget. Lots of candles. Conversation is all fits and starts.

Paul and Madeleine have finished their main course.

Pregnant pause. They sip wine to cover it.

MADELEINE

I heard about you and Mom.

PAUL

We didn't see eye to eye on something.

MADELEINE

You know they call her "Iron Fist"?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PAUL  
(feigns ignorance)  
No. Really?

Pause.

MADELEINE  
She and Dr. Davis thinks your work is  
smoke and mirrors

PAUL  
What do YOU think?

MADELEINE  
I don't know. I think it works sometimes.  
And sometimes it doesn't. I think what we  
call "autism" is just a catch-all term to  
explain a bunch of different kinds of  
problems that we don't understand.

Madeleine is suddenly self-conscious that she's given her  
"untrained" medical opinion.

MADELEINE  
...not that I'd know, of course. I'm no  
doctor.

PAUL  
But you're smarter than most. You're very  
intuitive.

The way he says it is NOT condescending, simply honest.

PAUL  
Why are you with him?

A beat. A sip of wine.

MADELEINE  
He can be very nice. And funny. And my  
mother would definitely not approve.

PAUL  
Is that important?

MADELEINE  
Growing up, everything had to be HER way.  
I guess that's what happens when your  
husband lets you support him through med  
school and his residency and then when it  
comes time to live the good life of a  
doctor's wife, he leaves you, moves  
across country and marries some blonde. I

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MADELEINE (cont'd)  
 guess you do what you have to to keep  
 some control in your life.

(and)

But you know what I remember about him?  
 His smile. And this quiet confidence he  
 had. And his gentleness.

PAUL

And Ted reminds you of your father?

MADELEINE

No, you do.

She looks away.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. SIDEWALK - NIGHT

Paul and Madeleine are bundled against the chill as they  
 stroll.

The full moon's glow bounces off the rippling lake.

The White Mountains stand silhouetted against the deep indigo  
 sky.

Tufts of white clouds drift overhead.

Somewhere in the distance, a Halloween party is underway.

MADELEINE

You're very talented. You have a poet's  
 soul.

PAUL

I don't know about that.

MADELEINE

Trust me.

A beat.

PAUL

You and Bertrand. There's a bond there.  
 How did that happen?

MADELEINE

I just always knew. The night his  
 parents left him here. All anyone saw was  
 this autistic kid, throwing a tantrum.  
 But I could see something in him.  
 Something deep. No one else sees it.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Paul does. But he says nothing.

PAUL

When you were a girl, did you think about what it would be like if he got cured?

MADELEINE

We were going to get married, I'd always say. We'd be millionaires and travel the world together.

(and)

The usual little girl dreams, you know. Big and impossible.

Madeleine spots something, makes an impulsive decision.

MADELEINE

Come on.

Madeleine takes his hand, leading him across the grass.

INT. BOATHOUSE - NIGHT

The door opens. Madeleine enters, finds a lantern, lights it. She leads Paul onto the twenty-footer. They sit.

The light is warm. It caresses their faces.

MADELEINE

You know when you're not obnoxious, you can be really nice.

He lets the playful compliment lie there.

Paul spots a poetry book on deck. He picks it up. He wants to say something. Finally -

PAUL

My brother loved books.

MADELEINE

Did he?

PAUL

From the time he was a toddler, he slept with them. ...He was supposed to be the doctor. Then he got diagnosed. So my parents had me. ...I took care of him. Probably 'cause I was the only one who could look at him without feeling guilty. But then I went off to college.

(and)

One day, I get a call from my Dad, saying "Ben's dead, you better come home."

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PAUL (cont'd)

(and)

Mom had this garden in back and she'd put in this little goldfish pond. Not very deep. Deep enough.

(and)

She was clipping her roses when the phone rang. She went inside to answer it. When she came out, Ben was face down in the water.

(and)

I got home to find his room empty. Completely empty. My Dad had taken everything that reminded him that Ben ever lived and gave it away. But in the yard, that little pond was still there. He left it for her. To remind her.

(and)

I felt like I never should have left. Later, I knew I could never stay.

Paul looks tired.

Madeleine reaches her hand out, touches his face.

He touches her hand. She takes his hand in both of hers and kisses his fingertips.

With his other hand, he strokes her hair. They move closer.

Closer.

They kiss. Tenderly. Carefully. Deeply. Passionately.

The lantern spits as it runs out of fuel. Dim. Dimmer. Out.

CUT TO:

INT. BOAT CABIN - MORNING

Paul wakes up below deck. Madeleine is gone.

He leans back, smiles.

MUELLER (O.S.)

It has come to my attention that there is antagonism brewing between the new autistic program workers and our regular staff.

CUT TO:



INT. CLINIC CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

Mueller heads a table around which sit Madeleine, Ted, Charlie, a few staffers and Paul, who has just seated himself.

Nurse Andrews sits, arms sternly folded.

Madeleine jots a note on her pad, folds it and writes "Paul" on the outside.

MUELLER

Let me clarify something. I will not tolerate any fucking dissension among my troops. We work together as a team. We're just running at that goal line from different ends of the field ...

Mueller pauses as he realizes that his sports analogy doesn't fit. Madeleine slides her note to a staffer, who slides it to Charlie who slides it to Paul, who unfolds it.

It reads:

"Roses are red  
And clover is green.  
Now I know  
What's in your jeans."

He blushes. Ted notices something's up. So does Mueller -

MUELLER

(to Paul)

What you got there?

PAUL

Me ...this ...it's ...um ...a list ...of patient ...uh ... availabilities.

Mueller thinks about it, "buys" it.

MUELLER

This is what I'm talking about.  
Cooperation. Teamwork. We all should be following Madeleine and Paul's example.

(to Madeleine)

Right?

MADELEINE

Oh, yes ...right.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MUELLER

Alright then. Work it out. Okay. Great.  
Meeting's over. Get to work.

All rise. As they exit, Ted keeps his eyes on Paul.

CUT TO:

INT. HALLWAY - DAY

A hallway of room doors. Each with a narrow observation window.

Paul looks in the window of a therapy room for a moment, then moves to the next door and does the same. Then the next.

He stops, opens it.

INT. THERAPY ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Paul enters. Bertrand is ignoring LIZA, a therapist, who tries in vain to get him to do a spatial relationship exercise.

Bertrand picks up her clipboard. She takes it from him.

LIZA

Not my clipboard, either.

She puts the clipboard onto a pile of pens, notebooks, magazines, chalk erasers, etc.

As she tries to get his attention again, Paul moves in to replace her.

PAUL

I'll take care of him.

Liza is happy to step aside. Her look says: "Good Luck."

She exits.

Paul puts the odds and ends Liza took from Bertrand back in their places around the room.

PAUL

It was wonderful. She's wonderful.  
Everything's wonderful. She listens to me. I mean, she thinks I'm this poet, this thinker and when I'm with her, I am. I become it. I've never felt like this. She makes me think more. Different. Better. I don't know. It's crazy. I can't explain it.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The last object is put away. Paul kneels by Bertrand, who fights his own conflicting emotions. Paul, still floating, doesn't pick up on Bertrand.

PAUL

Do you think you could help me again?  
With another poem. ...I mean until I get  
better at it on my own, of course. See, I  
just don't know how to express myself  
like you do.

Bertrand forces his emotions to obey him as he regains composure, then looks at Paul: "Of course, I'll help you."

Paul smiles.

DISSOLVE TO:

MONTAGE, SHOWING PASSAGE OF A FEW WEEKS -

1. CLINIC MAIN OFFICE - DAY

Madeleine at her desk, reading a poem. A single rosebud in a glass of water. She finishes, touched by it. She folds the page and places it into her drawer - next to the first two poems.

2. PAUL'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Paul and Bertrand at his computer. Paul facilitates as Bertrand writes (by this time, Bertrand has hand control and only needs his forearm steadied).

3. FILE ROOM - DAY

Madeleine reaches for a file. Ted enters, moves close to her. She stiffens.

He hands her the file with a rakish smile. She folds her arms, her body language clear: "Forget it."

As she speaks to him, Ted's smile fades as the realization sinks in. It's over.

Madeleine exits. Ted is left standing alone.

4. PAUL'S APARTMENT FRONT STOOP - DAY

The trees are stripped for the winter.

Paul and Madeleine kiss on his doorstep. He opens the door and backs inside, leaving her on the step. A beat, then Paul's arm reaches out and pulls her inside. She laughs.

## 5. LAKESIDE - DAY

Madeleine reads a poem aloud to Bertrand, who watches the winter sky close in.

## 6. HALLWAY - DAY

Paul consumes a progress report as he strides down the hall. He waves to Daisy, dressed as a Pilgrim. She smiles, nods.

He spots Madeleine and signals her to follow him outside.

## 7. LAKESIDE - DAY

Madeleine joins Paul at lakeside. She playfully checks his pockets for the latest poem. She finally spots it stuck between the pages of his progress report. She takes it, giving him a quick kiss.

## 8. PAUL'S OFFICE - SAME TIME

Bertrand watches Paul and Madeleine at lakeside as she reads the latest poem. She finishes, then embraces Paul.

Bertrand's face shows the heartbreak he feels.

END MONTAGE -

DISSOLVE TO:

## EXT. LINDEN VIEW CLINIC - DAY

Pouring rain.

Soggy Christmas ornaments sag from a water-logged pine tree at the door.

Paul climbs out of his car. Hell - he forgot his umbrella. He tightens his collar and makes a dash for it.

Charlie, upset, rushes toward him, umbrella in hand.

CHARLIE  
We got a problem.

PAUL  
What kind?

CHARLIE  
A BIG problem.

CUT TO:

INT. THERAPY ROOM - DAY

Christmas and Hanukkah banners sling from the ceiling.  
Holiday cards are taped to the wall.

Paul and Charlie watch a videotape of Peggy, a facilitation therapist, facilitating Michelle.

PEGGY (on TV)  
Your Daddy made you touch him? Touch him  
where?

Peggy facilitates.

PEGGY (on TV)  
"On his penis."  
(and)  
And how did that make you feel?

Peggy facilitates as Paul's face begins to drain.

PEGGY (on TV)  
"Scared."  
(and)  
I know. Scared is a bad feeling, isn't  
it? Did he do anything else to you?

Peggy facilitates.

PEGGY (on TV)  
"He put it inside me."

On TV, Peggy shudders, suppressing a sob.

PEGGY (on TV)  
I'm so sorry. You didn't like that, did  
you?

More facilitation.

PEGGY (on TV)  
"I cried."  
(and)  
I know, I know ...

Charlie stops the tape.

CHARLIE  
I tested her right after and got the same  
thing. She's being molested.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PAUL  
(stunned)  
Does Mueller know?

Charlie shakes his head: "No."

PAUL  
We'd better show him. The press is  
coming this afternoon. The last thing we  
need is them getting ahold of this.

CUT TO:

INT. MUELLER'S OFFICE - DAY

Paul, Mueller and Charlie watch the videotape.

PEGGY (on TV)  
"I cried."  
(and)  
I know, I know ...

Mueller stops the tape, fixing his stare on Paul.

MUELLER  
That's one hell of a tape you got.  
Happened this morning?

PAUL  
(nods)  
First Peggy, then Charlie.

MUELLER  
Had a funny feeling about that guy.

PAUL  
He came to me, asking to drop Michelle  
from the program.

MUELLER  
He had a hell of a reason. Where's the  
girl now?

PAUL  
In the day room. Of course, I pulled her  
from this afternoon's presentation.

Mueller's inner machinery whirrs.

MUELLER  
Of course.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PAUL

I called Dr. Walsh at Dartmouth. He'll suggest an outside therapist for an impartial confirmation before we act on anything.

(and)

I think we should have Nurse Andrews arrange for a physical exam for signs of trauma.

MUELLER

I'll talk to her.

Paul rises.

PAUL

For now, I'll go through it again with Michelle. More documentation.

Mueller absently nods; his thoughts, a million miles away.

Paul exits. Charlie grabs the tape.

MUELLER

Leave it. I need to look at it again.

Charlie obeys, exits.

HOLD on Mueller, thinking.

INT. HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER

Paul and Charlie near the Day Room.

CHARLIE

Don't you think we should have called the police by now?

PAUL

In a minute. I need to check this myself.

INT. DAY ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Paul and Charlie enter the vast, glassed-in playroom and approach the VOLUNTEER WORKER.

PAUL

Michelle Newberry?

VOLUNTEER WORKER

(oblivious)

Just missed them. Christmas shopping today. For her mother. Step-father picked her up.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Paul and Charlie burst from the room.

INT. HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Paul and Charlie weave through the crowded hall.

Paul hurdles a mop bucket, surprising the Custodian.

Charlie nearly bumps into Nurse Andrews as she exits a room. Her glares slows him down.

INT. CLINIC ENTRYWAY - SAME TIME

Paul barrels through the doors into the rain.

EXT. CLINIC ENTRANCE - CONTINUOUS

Paul, out of breath, scans the parking lot. Charlie, close on his heels, exits and sees -

The Sheldons' car is driving away.

CHARLIE

Dammit!

PAUL

Tomorrow. We'll get her tomorrow.

They're getting soaked by the rain as -

MUELLER (O.S.)

I'm glad you could all make it here today. While this therapy is still considered experimental, we at Linden View Clinic believe it to be cutting edge.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. OBSERVATION ROOM - LATE AFTERNOON

Mueller is mid-performance in front of gathered press. Some are eager; some, skeptical.

THRU THE ONE-WAY MIRROR: In the Testing Room, Paul supervises CATHERINE, a facilitation therapist, as she plays with seven-year-old DAVID.

David's hands seem to have minds of their own as they "look" around the room and "talk" to each other, movements typical of some autistic children.

(CONTINUED)



CONTINUED:

MUELLER

This clinic has long sought a treatment for autism and while this is not a cure, it is a way for us to reach past the psychological and physiological barriers into the world of these children. Children the rest of the world has given up on.

(and)

So, if you're ready ...

Mueller waits a beat, then presses a button.

INT. TESTING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

A red light cuts "off" and a green light glows "on."

Paul nods to Catherine, who facilitates David's responses.

CATHERINE

David, was that fun, playing just now?

Facilitation.

INT. OBSERVATION ROOM - SAME TIME

A computer monitor is set up so the press can read David's responses.

It reads: "I like playing ball best."

INT. TESTING ROOM - SAME TIME

CATHERINE

Me too.

(and)

Do you know why we have to use the computer to talk to each other?

Facilitation.

CATHERINE

(reading)

Because you're autistic, that's right.

(and)

Can you tell me what it's like being autistic?

INT. OBSERVATION ROOM - SAME TIME

The screen reads: "Like being in a room with no doors. And no one hears you when you cry."

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Even jaundiced reporters are moved by the imagery.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. TESTING ROOM - DAY

Demonstration over, Paul straightens up. Charlie bursts in -

CHARLIE  
Come quick.

PAUL  
What?

CHARLIE  
Mueller.

Uh-oh.

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM - SAME TIME

Mueller presses the "Stop." button on his VCR.

MUELLER  
A helpless girl at the mercy of her step-  
father. Only as a result of this therapy  
will she finally be rescued from that  
horror. That's why what we're doing here  
is so important. These children, trapped  
in silence for so long, finally have a  
voice. And that voice cries out ...for  
Justice.

CUT TO:

INT. HALLWAY - SAME TIME

Paul and Charlie round a corner - the press is dispersing.

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Furious, Paul rushes in. Mueller sees him, smiles.

MUELLER  
Paul! Great job in there. I'd say we're a  
success, wouldn't you?

Paul grabs Mueller, shoving him against the wall!

PAUL  
What did you do?!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CHARLIE

Paul!

MUELLER

Do you want to get your fucking hands the fuck off me this fucking minute or do I have security zip you into a rubber room?

Paul releases him.

PAUL

A girl may have been molested and you're selling tickets.

MUELLER

What do you know about turning a two-bit nuthouse into a top notch research facility? When you've been and done one-tenth of what I've done with my little finger, then MAYBE I'll listen.

PAUL

Nothing's been verified.

MUELLER

Your handpicked trainee and your personal associate got identical results from her. You trained them. You only now telling me you have less than complete confidence in them?

PAUL

With this kind of charge, we could destroy lives. It's like a lightning rod. People will be looking at raw data before case histories are complete.

(and)

At least you should have let Dr. Walsh double check this.

MUELLER

You think I'm going to let someone through these doors and steal our thunder?

CHARLIE

But it's irresponsible!

MUELLER

Don't you ever use that word around me you little pipsqueak! You're hanging by a thread here. Don't think I won't just reach out and snip it off.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PAUL

We need to be certain.

MUELLER

You having doubts about your work?

PAUL

No, but -

MUELLER

I was a doctor long before I took over this place. I know how to read research data, how to evaluate a program. You think I don't absolutely believe these findings?

(and)

Of course I do. You've done a hell of a job here. I'm telling that to Dr. Walsh.

(and)

Let's just forget this little "incident" and get back to work. Okay? Great.

He exits. Hold on Paul.

CUT TO:

INT. PAUL'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Paul and Madeleine lie in bed. Her head on his chest. He can't sleep.

A restless moon blares through the window.

MADELEINE

Close your eyes.

He does.

MADELEINE

When I tell you, open them and say the first thing you see.

(and)

Open.

He does.

MADELEINE

Well?

PAUL

A wall.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MADELEINE  
What about the wall?

A beat.

PAUL  
Could use spackle and paint.

A moment; then, she giggles. He smiles. The tension is broken.

MADELEINE  
That's not what I meant.  
(and)  
Your poem this morning. It was lovely.  
(and)  
The first time I saw you, I thought:  
"another floater" just like the rest. But  
then I found this other side to you. A  
side you never show. A gentle side.  
Sensitive. Knowing. It's in your poems. I  
feel like you've known me all my life.  
(Paul tenses)  
I want to hold your soul. Keep it close  
and safe.

PAUL  
(with irony)  
My "poet's soul"?

Madeleine draws patterns with her finger on his chest.

PAUL  
What if it turns out I'm not everything  
you think I am?

A beat.

MADELEINE  
I believe in you. Your research is good.  
It'll all work out.

He wasn't talking about his research. He takes her hand,  
stares out the window. No sleep tonight.

CUT TO:

INT. PAUL'S OFFICE - EARLY MORNING

Paul and Bertrand are alone in the quiet before the daily  
rush.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Paul reads Bertrand's latest poem.

PAUL  
It's beautiful.  
(and)  
I can't give it to her.

Bertrand is startled: "Why not?"

Paul paces, no sleep, jangled.

PAUL  
She's fallen in love with me.  
(and)  
She hasn't fallen in love with me. She's  
fallen in love with who she thinks I am.

Bertrand's face say: "So?"

Paul looks at him.

PAUL  
What if Madeleine doesn't love me at all?  
What if she loves the man who wrote those  
poems.

He's unable to look Bertrand in the eye. Bertrand tenses.

PAUL  
Your poems are so real, so right from the  
heart. You can't fake that.  
(he looks at Bertrand)  
Can you?

Bertrand rises, trying to escape this conversation.

He stands at the window. Snow blankets the ground.

The lake has begun to freeze for the winter.

PAUL  
You love her.

The words slice right through Bertrand. He tries to shake  
"no" but can't control himself. Paul holds him.

Bertrand holds in his tears.

PAUL  
Why wouldn't you? She's everything I've  
ever looked for. And run from. You - love  
- her.  
(and)

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PAUL (cont'd)  
Bertrand. She loves you, too.

Bertrand quiets. Paul releases him.

Bertrand goes to the computer.

Paul facilitates him (by this time, Bertrand only needs to have his arm steadied at the elbow).

PAUL  
(reading)  
"What could I give her?"  
(and)  
What you've been giving her ever since  
you met.

Facilitation.

PAUL  
(reading)  
"She was meant to fly."  
(and)  
So were you.

Facilitation.

PAUL  
(reading)  
"But I'm trapped. In here."  
(and)  
And THIS -  
(indicates facilitation)  
can free you.  
(and)  
She needs to know.

Bertrand chokes down a rush of emotion.

BERTRAND'S HAND -

Shakily moving toward the keyboard as Paul facilitates.

PAUL -

Filled with conflicted feelings but doing his job.

THE KEYBOARD -

Bertrand's finger moves off the "D" key.

THE COMPUTER SCREEN -

It reads: "YOU PROMISED"

BACK TO SCENE -

PAUL

But it's a promise that hurts all of us.  
You can't keep hiding behind me. And I  
...I can't live like this.

(and)

I'm living underground, like a mole or  
something. It's safe down there. But it's  
dark. And it's lonely. And there's all  
this light and fresh air that I don't  
even know about because I'm too scared to  
come out of my hole.

(and)

I'm sorry, Bertrand. I can't keep that  
promise.

HOLD on Bertrand.

CUT TO:

EXT. LINDEN VIEW CLINIC - MORNING

A light rain falls.

INT. FRONT HALL - SAME TIME

Mueller commiserates with Nurse Andrews. BARBARA, a Social  
Worker, and AMY, her assistant, chat with two POLICE  
OFFICERS.

Paul looks wrung out.

Charlie looks into the parking lot.

CHARLIE

They're coming.

Mueller approaches Barbara.

MUELLER

It's just so tragic.

BARBARA

(ignores him; to Amy)  
I think we're ready.

The Officers stand ready.

(CONTINUED)



CONTINUED:

The door opens. The Newberrys enter.

OFFICER #1  
Clarence Newberry?

MR. NEWBERRY  
Yes.

OFFICER #1  
May I talk with you a moment?

MR. NEWBERRY  
What's this about?

OFFICER #1  
If you could just step over here.

Officer #1 guides Mr. Newberry away. Mrs. Newberry is confused. Officer #2 and Nurse Andrews stand next to her. Barbara kneels in front of Michelle.

BARBARA  
Michelle, we're going to take you to a safe place now, okay? A place where no one can hurt you.

MRS. NEWBERRY  
What are you doing with my daughter?

Officer #2 holds her back.

OFFICER #2  
The child is now in protective custody. A judge will determine your parental rights after there's been an examination.

Barbara and Amy rush Michelle out the door.

OFFICER #1  
(to Mr. Newberry)  
You are under arrest.

MRS. NEWBERRY  
What?!

MR. NEWBERRY  
What are you talking about?

OFFICER #1  
Would you please place your hands against the counter?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

He does. Officer #1 frisks him.

MR. NEWBERRY  
What is this?

OFFICER #1  
You are charged with child molestation,  
sodomy and oral copulation.

Mrs. Newberry's knees buckle. Nurse Andrews steadies her.

Mueller is officious. Paul can barely watch.

As the handcuffed Mr. Newberry is led out the door, he looks  
Paul dead in the eye -

MR. NEWBERRY  
You! What have you done to my little  
girl?! What have you got her saying? Why  
are you doing this?!!

The door shut behind him.

Paul is deeply shaken.

As Nurse Andrews walks Mrs. Newberry down the hall, she  
glares at Paul:

NURSE ANDREWS  
(quiet, disgusted)  
"Floater."

They exit.

Paul looks at Mueller with contempt.

MUELLER  
(to Paul)  
You wanted more tests, didn't you? You  
can collect data from now 'til doomsday.  
What separates good researchers from  
great ones? At some point, you've got to  
go with your instinct.

PAUL  
It's a circus.

Mueller freezes a smile.

MUELLER  
You're wound a little tight. Take the day  
to relax. Reflect on what's really  
important.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PAUL

Holding another press conference? Want to make sure I don't muck up your story?

MUELLER

(cold)

That was an order.

Mueller exits.

CHARLIE

I'll, you know, keep an eye on things.

(a beat)

This will make you famous.

PAUL

I didn't want to be famous. I wanted to do the work.

HOLD on Paul.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. LINDEN VIEW CLINIC - MID-DAY

The rain has stopped.

News vans swarm. Reporters hover. Mueller emerges.

MUELLER

As you read in this morning's Globe, a young, helpless, autistic girl has been subjected to years of sexual abuse by a family member. A terrible situation that never would have been uncovered had it not been for the ground-breaking therapy here at Linden View Clinic which I have been supervising for the past few months...

INT. FRONT HALLWAY - SAME TIME

Madeleine and Nurse Andrews watch Mueller from behind.

NURSE ANDREWS

If that young man of yours is wrong, we'll be cleaning the shit off our shoes for months.

MADELEINE

I believe in him.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Nurse Andrews makes a dismissive face.

MADELEINE

You don't know him. He's ...honest.

NURSE ANDREWS

(sarcastic)

So you found the world's only honest man.

MADELEINE

Maybe I have.

HOLD on Madeleine.

CUT TO:

INT. PAUL'S OFFICE - DAY

Paul blankly stares out the window at the crowd of reporters.

Madeleine enters.

MADELEINE

I heard Mueller gave you the day off.

PAUL

It's not my program anymore. It's Mueller's "show." It's not science, it's theater.

MADELEINE

(tenderly)

Is that self-pity?

PAUL

(shakes his head "no")

Frustration.

(and)

New therapies need to be tested and retested. This is like sending your child into the world when he's barely out of kindergarten.

(and)

This could have been something important, not just a press release.

MADELEINE

It still can be.

(re: Mueller)

You don't have to like how he handles things but the truth is, he's made this place grow.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Below, the press disperses.

PAUL  
I need air.

CUT TO:

EXT. LAKESIDE - DAY

An icy New England day. The lake has begun to freeze for the season.

Paul, Madeleine and Bertrand walk along the lakeside fence.

MADELEINE  
You rushed out this morning.

PAUL  
There was a lot to do.

MADELEINE  
Does that mean no poem today?

Paul and Bertrand exchange a look.

PAUL  
Why do you love me?

MADELEINE  
Excuse me?

PAUL  
I know you love me, but why?

MADELEINE  
Where did this come from?

Pause. Paul suddenly climbs over the fence and begins to walk onto the new ice.

MADELEINE  
Paul! What are you doing?

PAUL  
I want to know.

MADELEINE  
This is crazy!

He ventures further onto the ice. It crackles under his feet.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PAUL

Tell me why. I know it's not because I'll be a doctor, you've been with doctors. And I know it's not my looks, you've been with guys better looking than me. And I know it's not my money, 'cause I don't have any. So, why?

MADELEINE

I'm not talking about this until you get back here.

Paul stops, waits. The ice cracks around him.

MADELEINE

I love YOU. WHO you are.

PAUL

So if this ice broke and I fell in and almost drowned?

MADELEINE

I'd feel the same.

PAUL

And if I was paralyzed and couldn't move?

MADELEINE

Will you stop?

PAUL

And if I couldn't speak? What then? What if the only way I could express myself was through my poems. Would you still love me then?

MADELEINE

Yes. Yes. Now will you get back here?

Paul locks eyes with Bertrand. A beat.

He slowly walks back to the fence. Madeleine anxiously watches.

He climbs over.

MADELEINE

What was that about?

PAUL

I had to know.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Madeleine looks at Paul. Paul looks at Bertrand. Bertrand looks at Madeleine.

CUT TO:

INT. MUELLER'S OFFICE - LATER

Mueller steams. Charlie hovers.

Paul rushes in.

PAUL  
What happened?

Charlie gives Paul the "shush" signal too late.

Mueller pours himself a scotch.

MUELLER  
Newberry made bail in five minutes. He walked across the street to his lawyer's office - and filed a suit against us for fraud, slander, character assassination, et cetera.

He pats a thick folder on his desk.

MUELLER  
Lawyers sure can write fast when they smell a paycheck.

PAUL  
(pissed)  
Dammit. This wouldn't have happened if -

MUELLER  
Woulda, coulda, shoulda ...

CHARLIE  
It's probably just a legal maneuver.

MUELLER  
And Judge Tucker suspended all charges after the physical exam came back with no signs of sexual abuse and Newberry was alibied for the times the girl said things had happened. And since she's never shown other signs of trauma or avoided contact with her step-father, that leaves the girl's facilitated messages as the only evidence against him.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PAUL

What are they going to do?

Mueller takes a pull of scotch.

MUELLER

The D.A. has a face full of egg and has decided that the only way to avoid a false arrest suit is to send in a group of "impartial" therapists, headed by none other than our mutual "friend" and general pain in the ass - Dr. John Fridell.

PAUL

They can't do that. Fridell is a hatchet man, a complete skeptic, he'll put the children on the defensive and they'll withdraw. That's no way to verify anything. Tell them we'll give them all the clinical results we have and give them even more as we accumulate it. You can't test an experimental therapy by conventional standards, we're creating a new standard. We need time.

(and)

These aren't impartial therapists - they're a hit squad.

MUELLER

It's not open to negotiation. And besides - it's out of my hands.

Mueller takes another pull. Paul looks stricken.

CUT TO:

INT. PAUL'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Houdini pushes open the lid to his cage and escapes.

It's late.

Paul slouches on the sofa, drink in hand. He's been at it awhile.

Madeleine appears in the bedroom doorway.

MADELEINE

Plan on sleeping tonight?

Paul looks at her, looks away, takes another swallow.

(CONTINUED)



CONTINUED:

PAUL

You ever read the story of Faust?

(and)

Faust sells his soul to the devil and gets shown all these things in the world. And just when it looks like he made a pretty good deal, Faust gets the check. The devil wants payment.

MADELEINE

What HAVE you been drinking?

PAUL

No wait, no wait a minnit. ...I'm Faust. Get it?

Madeleine takes his drink.

MADELEINE

I think you've had enough for tonight.

(and)

Tomorrow will turn out fine.

PAUL

I'm not talking about tomorrow. I lost my program as soon as I let Mueller give me that grant money.

(and)

I'm talking about us.

Madeleine is brought up short.

MADELEINE

Maybe I should have some of this.

She takes a pull of Paul's drink.

PAUL

You think you know who I am but I'm not. I never was. I'm a liar. See, I AM that boring, stuck up "floater" you always thought I was. THAT's me. The real me.

MADELEINE

You've been under a lot of pressure. First the thesis, then the program deadline, now this testing thing.

She tries to massage his tight shoulders but he rises, gets himself a fresh glass and a fresh drink.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PAUL

Why don't we talk about my poems.  
 (sarcastic)  
 My wonderful poems.

MADELEINE

I love your poems.

PAUL

I know. That's the point. And the  
 problem.

MADELEINE

What are you talking about?

PAUL

I never wrote a thing.

MADELEINE

(tensing)  
 I don't understand.

PAUL

Let me spell it out, then. I can't write  
 a shopping list. Someone else wrote the  
 poems, every one of them.

MADELEINE

I think you've said enough for tonight.

PAUL

No, I haven't. Not nearly enough. You  
 deserve to see the real me. Here I am.  
 Take a look. It's me, Paul. I'm the one  
 who's talking now.

She tries to leave the room. He stops her.

PAUL

You said yourself how much those poems  
 made you love me and how they made you  
 feel like I was the one who understood  
 you so well. It was my "Poet's Soul" you  
 fell in love with. But it's not my soul.  
 It's someone else's. It's all a lie.

(and)

It was a deal I made because he was too  
 afraid to tell you himself. But the  
 check's here now and I have to pay up.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MADELEINE

So who is it?

Paul returns to the sofa, collapses.

PAUL

Tell you what. My program works, I know that much.

(and, with meaning)

Just ask Bertrand.

Madeleine is stunned. She knows he's telling the truth.

In a daze, she disappears into the bedroom.

Paul watches the blackened doorway, looks away when she emerges, dressed and carrying her things.

He says nothing as she passes, exits.

The front door clicks shut.

Paul sees Houdini chewing on a piece of paper. He takes it from him. It's an old note.

It reads: "Dearest Paul, I love you so much. Love, Maddy"

Paul's eyes well up. He blinks back his tears.

CUT TO:

INT. NURSE ANDREWS' APARTMENT - LATE NIGHT

A KNOCK at the door. A light goes on. Nurse Andrews opens her front door. It's Madeleine. She's been crying.

Her face says: "Momma, you were right."

INT. NURSE ANDREWS' LIVING ROOM - LATE NIGHT

On the sofa, Nurse Andrews comforts her crying daughter.

MADELEINE

But how? How could he?

NURSE ANDREWS

Shhh. Quiet now, you're okay, you're okay.

MADELEINE

Could I really be in love with Bertrand?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

NURSE ANDREWS

Oh, honey, you've always been in love with Bertrand ...sweet, quiet Bertrand. He can never say an unkind thing. And he can never leave you.

Madeleine is a million miles away, letters crumpled to her chest.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. CLINIC FRONT HALL - MORNING

Cold morning light pours through the front doors.

Silence.

Then - BAM! - the front door fly open, revealing:

THE MID-SECTION OF AN ADULT MALE -

Dressed in crisp shirt and lab coat, carrying a thick manila folder and followed by an entourage of assistants.

INT. TESTING ROOM - MORNING

THE SAME MID-SECTION OF AN ADULT MALE -

As he pulls a pen out of his pocket, making notes on a clipboard.

PULL BACK to reveal DR. JOHN FRIDELL, the no-nonsense, court-appointed examiner.

Fridell's entourage have set up the room for the tests.

Peggy, the facilitation therapist, nervously waits.

FRIDELL

So, Peggy Hollander ...Relax, Peggy, you have the easy job. All you have to do is exactly what you've been doing - steadying the subject's hand without guiding it ...isn't that right?

A bully's smile. He turns to his ASSISTANT.

FRIDELL

Bring in the first child.

CUT TO:

INT. BERTRAND'S ROOM - MORNING

Bertrand has built a tower of books in the corner.

Madeleine enters, carrying a small box.

Bertrand watches as she empties the box onto his bed - it's every poem he has written to her. He's suddenly wary.

She stares at him.

MADELEINE

How long were you going to let it go on?  
A year? Two? The rest of our lives?

He avoids her gaze.

MADELEINE

Were you going to pretend you couldn't  
communicate forever? Refuse to share your  
abilities, feelings?  
(and)  
Why didn't you tell me?

He turns away from her.

She moves close to him. She takes his hand in hers and places it on her cheek.

MADELEINE

(quietly)  
Why didn't you tell ME?

She forces him to look at her. But now his eyes are flat, empty.

CUT TO:

INT. TESTING ROOM - AFTERNOON

Tensions are very high.

Fridell holds a manila folder in his hand.

Catherine, another facilitator, and David are in the hot seat.

FRIDELL

Now this is all it is. Peggy raced right through this, so it'll be no problem for you.

(and)

In here, I have a photo. I show it to

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

FRIDELL (cont'd)  
both of you and we ask him to write what  
he sees. Got it?

THE MANILA FOLDER -

Fridell opens it for Catherine.

Taped inside is a photo of a CAR.

Follow the FOLDER as Fridell pulls it away from Catherine  
and, pretending to get a better grip on it ...

He holds it UPRIGHT - causing the photo of the CAR to FLIP  
DOWN, revealing a SECOND photo TAPED TO THE BACK of the  
FIRST.

It is a photo of a CLOCK.

He shows THIS photo to David (Catherine cannot see it).

Catherine facilitates David's response.

David's finger finds the letter "C".

THE COMPUTER SCREEN -

As it types: "C-A-R"

BACK TO SCENE -

Fridell glances at the screen. His poker face betrays  
nothing.

CUT TO:

PHOTO OF A BUILDING -

THE COMPUTER SCREEN -

As it types: "T-R-E-E"

CUT TO:

PHOTO OF A FAMILY -

THE COMPUTER SCREEN -

As it types: "W-A-L-R-U-S"

PULL BACK to reveal a sweating Charlie sitting next to a  
child at the computer.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The test is over.

CHARLIE  
How'd we do?

FRIDELL  
It was a perfect score.

Charlie looks relieved.

CUT TO:

INT. CLINIC MAIN OFFICE - DAY

Madeleine sits at her desk.

Ted enters.

TED  
Hi.

MADELEINE  
(cool)  
Hi.

TED  
I thought you should know. The tests came back. It doesn't look good for your friend.

MADELEINE  
What do you mean?

TED  
The facilitation. It didn't work.

MADELEINE  
(perplexed)  
How bad?

TED  
Not one right answer.

MADELEINE  
I don't understand.

TED  
All I'm telling you is what I know.

MADELEINE  
What about Bertrand? Paul said he facilitated him, too.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

TED  
(surprised)  
I hadn't heard that ...but it's pretty  
clear that none of the kids passed ...

She's lost in thought. He's about to leave -

TED  
I'm sorry.

Madeleine nods. He's gone.

She dials her phone. It rings and rings.

INT. PAUL'S APARTMENT - SAME TIME

The phone rings endlessly. No one is home.

INT. CLINIC MAIN OFFICE - SAME TIME

Madeleine spots something out her window, hangs up.

THRU MADELEINE'S WINDOW -

Paul's car sits in the parking lot.

INT. PAUL'S OFFICE - MINUTES LATER

Madeleine races in - but no Paul.

At his desk, she looks out the window toward the Boathouse.

CUT TO:

INT. BOATHOUSE - DAY

Paul sits on the twenty-footer where he and Madeleine shared  
the night.

Madeleine enters.

MADELEINE  
You heard?

PAUL  
Yep.

MADELEINE  
Well?

(CONTINUED)



CONTINUED:

PAUL

"Well" what? Fridell sank it. It's over.

MADELEINE

Just like that?

PAUL

There's no way the Clinic's going to touch this therapy after this. They'll be too busy scrambling to keep from getting sued. And forget anyone else approving my grant proposal now, not after this fiasco.

(and)

Maybe Fridell's right.

MADELEINE

You don't believe that.

PAUL

Don't I?

MADELEINE

What about Bertrand?

Paul thinks about this. A beat.

MADELEINE

Either your research is good and he can prove it ...or your research was bad ...and you ARE a poet.

Paul chews on this.

MADELEINE

You said this has been your dream all your life, to break through to them. To prove that they can communicate. Unless you want to live in that shadow for the rest of your life, you better get Bertrand over there before Fridell leaves.

PAUL

But what if I didn't facilitate Bertrand? What if I made that up?

MADELEINE

Then maybe you've been running after the wrong dream. ...or maybe it's not a dream. ...Maybe it's penance.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HOLD on Paul.

FRIDELL (O.S.)  
This is pretty pointless, we already  
have all we need.

PAUL (O.S.)  
Indulge me.

CUT TO:

INT. TESTING ROOM - LATE AFTERNOON

Paul sits with Bertrand.

Bertrand looks somehow more clear and resolute than ever.

Fridell gathers his folders.

Paul holds Bertrand's elbow to facilitate him.

PAUL  
We're ready.

Fridell shows a photo to Paul, then flips the photo for  
Bertrand, as before.

Nothing. No movement.

Paul looks at Bertrand.

PAUL  
Perhaps he needs me to move up his arm  
today. The circumstances are a bit  
different than he's used to.

Paul moves his hand up to Bertrand's forearm.

PAUL  
I'm sorry. Could you show him again?

Fridell shows the photo again.

Again, nothing.

Paul squirms, clears his throat.

PAUL  
A moment?

Fridell backs off. Paul turns to Bertrand.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PAUL

(sotto, to Bertrand)

I know you wanted to keep this secret,  
but if you're ever going to come up from  
underground, this is the time. You've got  
to start living. You taught me that.

Paul takes Bertrand's hand, pointing his finger for him.

He nods to Fridell.

Fridell shows the photo one more time.

Suddenly, Bertrand starts typing quickly.

PAUL'S HAND ON BERTRAND'S -

As he steadies it.

BERTRAND'S FINGER -

It strikes the keyboard.

THE KEYBOARD -

As Bertrand hammers the letter "Q".

PAUL'S FACE -

He concentrates on Bertrand.

BERTRAND -

He stares ahead.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. OBSERVATION ROOM - LATER

Fridell finishes up in the Testing Room.

Madeleine watches through the one-way mirror.

FRIDELL

I think we've seen enough.

Paul releases Bertrand's hand, relaxes, rubs his eyes.

INT. TESTING ROOM - SAME TIME

Fridell grabs the printout from his Assistant, reads it.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

FRIDELL

I think we can safely say you didn't cheat on this one.

(and)

But ...you want to tell me what a "quarpnap" is? ...or a "fleedswad"?

Paul rises, takes the printout -

THE PRINTOUT -

Every word is nonsense.

INT. OBSERVATION ROOM - SAME TIME

Madeleine, anxious, leans close to the mirror.

Paul kneels to look at Bertrand, who for the first time, appears to be lost inside a deeply autistic world.

FRIDELL

Don't take it too hard.

(and)

I've worked with autistics for twenty years. I know what you're going through. You know something's going on in there and you wish like hell you could get through to them ...and have them get through to you. Then a miracle drops in your lap and you think you unlocked a door. And you have - but it's not in him ...it's in you.

INT. TESTING ROOM - SAME TIME

Bertrand, still locked in an autistic world, rises and crosses to the mirror.

FRIDELL

You ever play with a Ouija board when you were a kid? Everyone puts a finger on the pointer and "spirits" guide it around, spelling out messages from beyond.

(and)

When you're a kid you'd swear it works. But later, you know that the only thing moving it was you. You wanted to reach that other side so badly you didn't even know you were doing it.

(and)

Funny how the messages always seemed to be stuff you already knew, but were afraid to say.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Bertrand stares vacantly at the mirror, deeply withdrawn.  
Paul moves next to him.

FRIDELL

Peggy Hollander was molested as a child,  
I looked it up. It was her biggest fear  
that these kids would be victims and not  
be able to speak up. She projected that  
fear onto Michelle. That doesn't make  
her a bad person. Just human.

INT. OBSERVATION ROOM - SAME TIME

Madeleine holds back tears as she watches Paul and Bertrand,  
who looks beyond any form of communication.

FRIDELL (O.S.)

You said he wrote poems with you? Look at  
him, does he look like he could write his  
name?

(and)

You wrote them, Paul. You wrote them all.  
The thoughts. The words. And it came from  
a deep part of yourself that you never  
knew you had.

Bertrand begins making a spasmodic tic ...a tic that looks a  
bit like he's waving goodbye.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. MUELLER'S OFFICE - MORNING

Mueller looks out his window at the gathering press below.  
Paul faces the music.

MUELLER

Paul, I'm about to give you a final piece  
of advice. One last secret to being a  
great researcher: When everything turns  
to shit - never take the fall.

Mueller slides Paul's dismissal letter across the desk.

MUELLER

Your grant is revoked.

PAUL

Dr. Mueller. I'd like to thank you.

Mueller is confused.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PAUL

When I walked in here, I thought the point of research was to explore, refine, create better ways. I thought researchers found answers, built bridges. You've shown me how naive I was.

(and)

You've shown me that there's another whole side to it: How to take credit for someone else's work, how to make the raciest spin, the biggest splash.

MUELLER

Not "naive" ... "amateur."

PAUL

I wrote a poem this morning that I'd like to share with you:  
 Though you're two-faced & smarmy & crass  
 & your moral's more fragile than glass  
 I'll bid fare-thee-well  
 Take your letter and tell  
 You to stick the thing right up your ass.

Paul exits. Mueller looks at the untouched dismissal letter.

INT. HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Paul exits Mueller's office. Charlie waits on a bench in the hall.

Daisy, dressed in a long, green dress with red polka-dots and white faux fur trim - and shower cap, shuffles by in her walker.

PAUL

(to Daisy)

Daisy.

She stops.

PAUL

(re: Charlie)

You take good care of him.

Daisy smiles warmly & nods her head.

Paul and Charlie shake hands.

PAUL

Fight the good fight.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CHARLIE  
Aye-aye, Cap'n.

Charlie watches Paul walk off.

CUT TO:

INT. BERTRAND'S ROOM - MORNING

Bertrand stares out the window, eyes dead and flat.

Madeleine tries to "reach" him. She slides three peanuts onto the outside sill. Bertrand doesn't react.

She watches him, thrown by his complete lack of response.

MADELEINE  
I keep thinking you'll nod or wink or something - to tell me my life here with you wasn't just a dream.

No response.

She touches his cheek, but this time, he doesn't lean into it. Did he ever react to her touch, or was it all in her head?

MADELEINE  
I'm going away, Bertrand. Paul's going back up to Dartmouth for now, but we'll be travelling in the spring and I'll write. Charlie promised to read to you and Mom, well you know she'll keep a close watch.

She leans close to his ear, whispers:

MADELEINE  
I'll think of you.

Paul quietly enters. She looks up.

PAUL  
Ready?

MADELEINE  
Just saying ...you know ...

She rises. At the door -

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MADELEINE  
I'll get my things.

She exits.

Paul crosses to Bertrand.

The Blue Jay eats a peanut.

PAUL  
You're friend's back.  
(and)  
"Iron Fist" will have you in your old  
room as soon as it's cleared out.

Paul kneels by Bertrand, who remains motionless.

PAUL  
Bertrand ...thank you. If you wrote them,  
even if you didn't. Just, thank you  
...for everything.

Paul puts his arms around Bertrand, who still does not react.

CUT TO:

EXT. CLINIC - DAY

Paul and Madeleine exit.

A crisp, clear New England winter's day.

MADELEINE  
Okay, close your eyes.

He does. A beat.

MADELEINE  
Okay, open.  
(and)  
What do you see.

Paul looks at the breathtaking scenery before him, then he  
looks deeply at Madeleine -

PAUL  
The future.

They walk down the steps.



INT. BERTRAND'S ROOM - SAME TIME

Bertrand stands at his window, expressionless as Paul and Madeleine climb into his car and pull away.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT

Nurse Andrews pokes her head into Bertrand's room.

INT. BERTRAND'S ROOM - CONTINUOUS

No Bertrand. Nurse Andrews sighs, exits.

INT. HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER

Nurse Andrews hears a CLICKING SOUND floating from Paul's ex-office.

INT. PAUL'S OFFICE - SAME TIME

Packed boxes everywhere. Bertrand is at Paul's desk.

Nurse Andrews enters.

NURSE ANDREWS

Here you are! What do you think you're doing? Get back to bed pronto - and don't pretend you don't know what I'm saying, I'm onto you.

Bertrand rises, exits.

Nurse Andrews notices that Paul's computer is turned on. As she shuts it off, she sees a single page feeding out of the laser printer.

She reads the page.

BERTRAND (V.O.)

Wet and shivering,  
the hatchling burrows  
into her mother.  
Until turned from  
the nest into  
the unkind world,  
harsh and cold.

[Bertrand's Voice is the SAME as the "MAN'S VOICE" on p.2]

INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT

Nurse Andrews, confused, sees Bertrand turn the corner at the end of the hall.

BERTRAND (V.O.)  
 The light too much  
 for new eyes to bear.  
 Searching for  
 the safety of darkness,  
 she comes to me  
 where I live  
 beneath the earth.

INT. BERTRAND'S ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Bertrand enters.

A paper bird has fallen from the ceiling. He places it on the window sill, looking out.

BERTRAND (V.O.)  
 I will love you  
 with all that I have  
 And give to you  
 all that I am.  
 My water and mud  
 and worms.  
 The sun's rays  
 never penetrate  
 my world.

Bertrand stares out his window.

BERTRAND (V.O.)  
 I know my darkness.  
 For I have always  
 been within it.  
 It is my home.  
 My moist, earthen  
 blanket,  
 that holds me, still.

Bertrand picks a book from a nearby shelf - it is the book he arrived here carrying as a child.

BERTRAND (V.O.)  
 But the darkness  
 will never warm  
 the hatchling's feathers.  
 The earth cannot  
 challenge her wings.  
 I am a mole.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BERTRAND (cont'd)  
I dwell in the earth.

BERTRAND'S P.O.V. -

An apparition of Madeleine dances in the garden.

BERTRAND (V.O.)  
And I know,  
resolute  
but with sorrow,  
that my hatchling  
must look up.  
She must look out  
for the  
unavoidable day

When she inherits the sky

EXT. CLINIC - NIGHT

Bertrand's silhouette stares out the window into the vacant  
garden below.

FADE TO BLACK