Stranger Than Fiction

By Zach Helm
This is a story about a man named Harold Crick.
And his wristwatch.
Harold Crick was a man of infinite numbers...
... endless calculations
and remarkably few words.
And his wristwatch said even less.
Every weekday, for 12 years...
... Harold would brush
each of his 32 teeth 76 times.
Thirty-eight times back and forth.
Thirty-eight times up and down.
Every weekday, for 12 years...
... Harold would tie his tie in a single
Windsor knot instead of the double...
... thereby saving up to 43 seconds.
His wristwatch thought the single
Windsor made his neck look fat...
... but said nothing.
Every weekday, for 12 years...
... Harold would run at a rate of nearly
... barely catching

the 8:
His wristwatch would delight...
... in the feeling of the crisp wind rushing over its face.
And every weekday, for 12 years...
... Harold would review 7. 134
tax files...
... as a senior agent
for the Internal Revenue Service.
Regs section 1.469-2 (B) (i), Diane.
Thanks.
Good morning. IRS.
Harold, 89 times 1417?
That adds up.
Only taking a 45. 7-minute
lunch break...
... and a 4.3- Minute coffee break...
... timed precisely by his wristwatch.
Oh, great.
Yeah, we'll go to Mullen's or we'll... .
Beyond that, Harold lived a life of solitude. He would walk home alone. He would eat alone. And at precisely 11:13 every night...
... Harold would go to bed alone...
... placing his wristwatch to rest on the nightstand beside him. That was, of course, before Wednesday. On Wednesday, Harold's wristwatch changed everything. Oh, my God, you got it? I got it. I got it.
If one had asked Harold, he would have said...
... that this particular Wednesday was exactly like all the Wednesdays prior. And he began it the same way he—
And he began it the same way he always did. Hello?
He began it the same way he always did. When others' minds would—
Hello? Is someone there?
When others' minds would fantasize about their upcoming day...
... or even try to grip onto the final moments of their dreams...
... Harold just counted brushstrokes. All right, who just said, "Harold just counted brushstrokes"? And how do you know I'm counting brushstrokes?
Hello?
It was remarkable how the simple, modest—
It was remarkable h—
It was remarkable how the simple, modest elements of Harold's life...
... so often taken for granted...
... would become the catalyst
for an entirely new life.
Harold ran for the bus...
... his stiff leather shoes
making a terrible squeaking sound...
... as they flexed against the asphalt.
And though this was
an extraordinary day...
... a day to be remembered
for the rest of Harold's life...
... Harold just thought
it was a Wednesday.
I'm sorry, did you hear that?
The voice. Did you hear it?
"Harold thought it was a Wednesday"?
Don't worry, it is Wednesday.
No, no, did you hear it? "Harold
just thought it was a Wednesday"?
- Who's Harold?
- I'm Harold.
Harold, it's okay, it's Wednesday.
No, no, I... .
Never mind.
Harold couldn't concentrate
on his work.
Excuse me, Harold?
His thoughts were scattered.
His mind elsewhere.
Sorry.
Someone here should be able to fix--
Hold on a second.
Hey, Harold. What's 67 times 453?
When a coworker asked
the product of 67 and 453...
You know what?
I can't think while you're talking.
... he drew a blank.
- What?
- What?
- Harold quickly answered, "30,351."
- What? Oh, nothing. 30,351.
Despite the answer
really being 31,305.
Wait, wait, wait, 31,305. Sorry.
Dude, I just totally caught
some insurance adjuster...
...claiming his jet ski
as a work vehicle.
I'll tell you, it is a shame...
...that they don't give out
an auditor of the year award.
Dude?
You okay?
Dave, I'm being followed.
How are you being followed?
You're not moving.
- It's by a voice.
- What?
I'm being followed
by a woman's voice.
Okay.
What is she saying?
She's narrating.
Harold, you're staring at boxes,
what is she narrating?
No, no, no. I had to stop filing.
Watch. Watch. Listen. Listen.
The sound the paper made
against the folder...
... had the same tone
as a wave scraping against sand.
And when Harold thought about it...
... he listened to enough waves
every day...
... to constitute what he imagined
to be a deep and endless ocean.
Did you hear that?
You mean you filing?
No, no, no, the voice.
No.
Frightening part is sometimes I do
imagine a deep and endless ocean.
What ocean?
The one made by the sound--
Forget it.
New audits. Have a good day.
Thank you.
All right, we got a baker
and a securities trader.
Maybe you should take the baker.
- Okay?
- Okay.
Damn it! Damn it! Damn it!
- You miscreant.
- I understand.
Oh, get bent, taxman!
- Taxman!
- Taxman!
Taxman!
Go home!
Listen, is there somewhere else we could talk about this?
No. We're gonna talk about this right here.
Okay. It says, the file, that you only paid part of your taxes for last year.
- That's right.
- Looks like only 78 percent.
Yep.
So you did it on purpose?
Yep.
So you must have been expecting an audit?
I was expecting a fine...
...or a sharp reprimand.
A reprimand? This isn't boarding school, Ms. Pascal.
You stole from the government.
No, I didn't steal from the government.
I just didn't pay you entirely.
Ms. Pascal, you can't just not pay your taxes.
Yes, I can.
You can if you wanna get audited.
Only if I recognize your right to audit me, Mr. Crick.
Ms. Pascal, I'm right here auditing you.
Now I have to go over your past three years...
...to make sure that's all you haven't paid.
Fine.
Actually, you know, it's not fine. Listen, I'm a big supporter of fixing potholes... and erecting swing sets and building shelters. I am more than happy to pay those taxes. I'm just not such a big fan of the percentage... ...that the government uses for national defense... corporate bailouts and campaign discretionary funds. So I didn't pay those taxes. I think, actually... ...I sent a letter to that effect with my return. Would it be the letter that begins, "Dear Imperialist Swine"? Yes. Ms. Pascal, what you're describing is anarchy. Are you an anarchist? - You mean am I a member of--? - An anarchist group, yes. Anarchists have a group? I believe so. Sure. They assemble? I don't know. Wouldn't that completely defeat the purpose? It was difficult for Harold to imagine Ms. Pascal as a revolutionary. - Not now. - Her thin arms... - What? - ... hoisting protest signs. - Her long shapely legs... - Nothing. ...dashing from tear gas. Harold wasn't prone to fantasies... ...and so he tried his best to remain professional. But, of course, failed. He couldn't help but imagine
Ms. Pascal...
... stroking the side of his face
with the soft blade of her finger.
He couldn't help but imagine her
immersed in a tub...
... shaving her legs.
And he couldn't help
but imagine her naked...
- ... stretched across his bed.
- Mr. Crick?
- Mr. Crick.
- Yes, what is it?
You're staring at my tits.
I wa--? I don't think I was.
I don't think I would do that.
If I was, I can assure you...
... it was only as a representative
of the United States government.
Sorry, I'm just having issues today.
So I'll be back on Tuesday.
Harold suddenly found himself
beleaguered and exasperated...
- ... outside the bakery...
- Shut up!
... cursing the heavens in futility.
No, I'm not, I'm cursing you,
you stupid voice!
So shut up and leave me alone!
Hey, watch it!
Excuse me.
Excuse me.
Are you Miss Eiffel?
- Yes.
- Excellent.
May I ask what you're doing?
Research.
- Oh, am I interrupting?
- Yes.
I'm sorry. I'm Penny Escher.
I'm the assistant
your publishers hired.
- The spy.
- The assistant.
I provide the same services
as a secretary.
I don't need a secretary.
Then I will have to find some other way of occupying my time.
Like watching me like a vulture...
...because the publishers think I have writer's block, right?
Do you have writer's block?
Are these pages?
They're letters. To me.
- Are you writing back?
- I don't respond to letters.
And I suppose you smoked all these cigarettes?
No, they came pre-smoked.
Yeah, they said you were funny.
What do you think about leaping off a building?
I don't think about leaping off buildings.
- Yes, you do.
- No. I try to think of nice things.
Everyone thinks about leaping off buildings.
Well, I certainly don't think about leaping off of a building.
They say--
I read this in this fantastically depressing book.
- That when you jump from a building...
...it's rarely the impact that actually kills you.
Well, I'm sure it doesn't help.
There's a photograph in the book called The Leaper.
It's old, but it's beautiful.
From above the corpse of a woman who'd just leapt to her death.
There's blood around her head, like a halo...
...and her leg's buckled underneath, her arm's snapped like a twig...
...but her face is so serene...
...so at peace.
And I think it's because
when she died...
...she could feel the wind
against her face.
I don't know how to kill Harold Crick.
That's why they sent you.
Yes, to help you.
How are you gonna help me?
You, who never thinks
of leaping off buildings?
What great inspiration
will you bestow on me?
I'll tell you, the quaint ideas
you've gathered...
...in your adorable career
as an "assistant"...
...are to no avail
when faced with killing a man.
I understand.
Do you? I can't just--
As much as I would like to...
...I cannot simply throw
Harold Crick off a building.
Miss Eiffel. Kay. I've been
an author's assistant for 11 years.
I've helped more than 20 authors
complete more than 35 books...
...and I've never missed the deadline.
And I have never gone back to the
publisher to ask for more time.
Now, I will be available to you
every minute of every day...
...until the final punctuation
is embedded on the very last page.
I do not like loud music.
I do not abide narcotics.
And I will gladly and quietly
help you kill Harold Crick.
I had a very interesting little convo
with someone in your section.
Yeah?
They said you were feeling
a little wibbly-wobbly.
Catch a little cubicle fever?
Oh, I don't know. I think I'm okay.
Harold, a tree doesn't think
it's a tree...
...it is a tree.
Why was Harold talking to this man?
This man was an idiot.
This man used words like
"wibbly-wobbly" and "convo."
And explained that trees were trees.
Of course trees were trees.
Harold knew trees were trees.
I am going to believe you, Harold.
What Harold didn't know
was why he couldn't shake...
... the smell of brownies
from his senses.
Why Ms. Pascal had made
his fingertips quiver and lips go numb.
Harold?
Yes? Sorry.
What's going on, Harold?
Well...
Nothing. Everything's fine.
Listen, according to your records...
...you haven't taken vacation
in a few years now.
Let's say you take a little break.
Use some of that vaca time.
Yeah. I'll think about it.
Harold.
I'm not really supposed to do this,
but...
Harold assumed his watch
was simply on the fritz...
... and never even considered that it
might be trying to tell him something.
In fact, Harold had never once
paid attention to his watch...
... other than to find out the time.
And, honestly,
it drove his watch crazy.
And so, on this particular
Wednesday evening...
... as Harold waited for the bus, his watch suddenly...
... stopped.
Sorry, does anyone have the time?

- Yeah, I got 6:
- Thanks.
Thus Harold's watch thrust him into the immitigable path of fate.
Little did he know that this simple, seemingly innocuous act...
... would result in his imminent death.
What? What?
Hey! Hello?
What?
Why?
Why my death?
Hello!
Excuse me!
When?
How imminent?
Okay, where are you?
"Harold would brush his 32 teeth
Why won't you say anything?
I heard you.
"That would result in his imminent death."
I heard you!
Come on, you stupid voice.
"Harold frantically grabbed his lamp.
Harold, incensed, shook the hell out of it for no apparent reason!
And smashed it on the ground, kicking it repeatedly!
Harold took his Kleenex box, threw it across the room...
...then stormed the closet!"
Come on. Say something.
Something. Say something!
Say something!
"Harold, distraught...."
I'm afraid what you're describing is schizophrenia.
No. No. It's not schizophrenia.
It's just a voice in my head.
I mean, the voice isn't telling me to do anything.
It's telling me what I've already done.
Accurately
and with a better vocabulary.
Mr. Crick, you have a voice speaking to you.
No, not to me, about me.
I'm somehow involved in some sort of story.
Like I'm a character in my own life.
But the problem is that the voice comes and goes.
Like there are other parts of the story not being told to me...
...and I need to find out what those other parts are before it's too late.
Before the story concludes with your death.
Yes.
Mr. Crick, I hate to sound like a broken record...
...but that's schizophrenia.
You don't sound like a broken record, but it's just not schizophrenia.
What if what I said was true?
Hypothetically speaking, if I was part of a story, a narrative...
...even if it was only in my mind...
...what would you suggest that I do?
I would suggest you take prescribed medication.
Other than that.
I don't know.
I suppose I would send you to see someone who knows about literature.
Okay.
Yeah. That's a good idea.
Thank you.
So you're the gentleman
who called me about the narrator.
- Yes.
- This narrator says you're gonna die.
Yes.
- How long has it given you to live?
- I don't know.
Dramatic irony.
It'll fuck you every time.
- So you crazy or what?
- Well--
Are you allowed to say that
to crazy people?
- I don't know.
- Oh, well. How many stairs...
...in the hallway out there?
- What?
You were counting them
as we walked, weren't you?
No.
Of course.
What bank do you work at?
No bank. IRS agent.
- Married?
- No.
Ever?
Engaged to an auditor.
She left me for an actuary.
- How heartbreaking. Live alone?
- Yes.
- Any pets?
- No.
- Friends?
- No. Well, Dave at work.
I see. The narrator,
exactly what does he sound like?
It's a woman.
A woman.
- Is it a familiar woman?
- No.
Someone you know?
No.
Did you have enough time
to count the tiles in the bathroom?
I wasn't counting the tiles.
Coffee?
- No, thank you.
- Sure?
- Yes.
So this woman, the voice,
told you you're gonna die?
She didn't tell me.
She doesn't know I can hear her.
- But she said it.
- Yes.
And you believed her.
She's been right
about a few other things.
- Such as?
- How I felt about work.
- You dislike your work?
- Yes.
Well, not the most insightful voice
in the world, is it?
First thing on a list
of what Americans hate: Work.
Second, traffic. Third, missing socks.
See what I'm saying?
Sort of.
I told you you were gonna die,
you believe me?
- No.
- Why?
I don't know you.
- But you don't know this narrator.
- Well...
- Okay, Mr. Crick, I can't help you.
- Why?
Well, I'm not an expert in crazy,
I'm an expert in literature theory.
And I gotta tell you, thus far...
...there doesn't seem to be a single
literary thing about you.
I don't doubt you hear a voice,
but it couldn't possibly be a narrator...
...because, frankly, there doesn't seem
to be much to narrate.
Beside that, this semester
I'm teaching five courses.
I'm mentoring
two doctoral candidates...
...and I'm the faculty lifeguard
at the pool.
- I just thought you could possibly--
- Perhaps you should keep a journal.
Write down what she said
or something.
That's all I can suggest.
I can barely remember it all.

I just remember:
"Little did he know that this simple,
seemingly innocuous act...
...would lead to his imminent death."
- What?
- "Little did he know that this--"
- Did you say, "little did he know"?
- Yes.
I've written papers
on "little did he know."
I used to teach a class
based on "little did he know."
I mean, I once gave an entire seminar
on "little did he know."
Son of a bitch, Harold.
"Little did he know" means there's
something he doesn't know...
...that means there's something
you don't know. Did you know that?
- I want you to come back Friday.
- Okay.
No, "imminent,"
you could be dead by Friday.
Come back tomorrow at 9:45.
Ten seconds ago
you said you wouldn't help me.
It's been a very revealing 10 seconds,
Harold.
Harold was deep in thought.
For a few, brief moments, from
Born Boulevard to Euclid Avenue...
... all the calculations
and all the rules...
... and all the precision of Harold's life just faded away. How perfect then that in this space... ... Ana Pascal would appear. Ms. Pascal. Ms. Pascal, it's Harold Crick from the IRS. Excuse me.
- Hi.
- Hi.
- Would you like a seat?
- Nope.
There's 11 open ones. I don't care. Sorry about that. How are you? I'm lousy. I'm being audited. Of course. By a real creep too. I think I owe you an apology. - Really?
- IRS agents... ...we're given rigorous aptitude tests before we can work. Unfortunately for you, we aren't tested on tact or good manners... ...so I apologize. I ogled you. Sorry. Okay, apology accepted. But only because you stammered. So you're a frequenter of the metropolitan transit authority too? No. I'm just late. Big flag-burning to get to? Actually... ...it's my weekly evil-conspiracy and needlepoint group. You wanna come? I left my thimbles and socialist reading material at home. So.... Harold nervously made small talk.
You have very straight teeth.
Very small talk.
Thanks. They're real.
Harold quickly calculated the odds
of making an ass of himself...
... in ratio to the amount of time
he stayed to chat.
This is my stop. I should go.
- He was elated and surprised...
- See you soon.
... by his somewhat flirtatious
encounter with Ms. Pascal.
So elated that he exited
the Transit Authority bus...
... a good 27 blocks too early
and would now have to walk.
- "You ain't down yet."
- That's right.
Tell us, what is You Ain't Got
Nothin' On Me about, Emmett Cole?
What does this mean?
Well, it's about being around
in the world, doing different things...
- ... doing what you wanna do....
- Come in.
Mr. Crick. Come in, come in. Please.
How are you?
I'm fine, actually.
You can turn that off.
Looks like our narrator
hasn't killed you quite yet.
- No, not yet.
- Good, great. Have a seat.
- Count the stairs outside?
- No.
Course not. I've devised a test--
How exciting is that?
- Of 23 questions...
...which I think might help uncover
more truths about this narrator.
- Now, Howard... .
- Harold.
Harold. These may seem silly,
but your candor is paramount.
Okay.
So.
We know it's a woman's voice,
the story involves your death...
...it's modern, it's in English.
I'm assuming the author
has a cursory knowledge of the city.
- Sure.
- Okay, good.

**Question one:**
"Has anyone recently left
any gifts outside your home?"
Anything? Gum? Money?
- A large wooden horse?
- I'm sorry?
- Just answer the question.
- No.
"Do you find yourself inclined
to solve murder mysteries...
...in large, luxurious homes
to which--?" Let me finish.
"To which you may or may not
have been invited?"
No. No, no, no.
All right. On a scale of one to 10...
...what would you consider the
likelihood you might be assassinated?
Assassinated?
One being very unlikely, 10 being
expecting it around every corner.
- I have no idea--
- Okay. Let me rephrase.
Are you the king of anything?
- Like what?
- Anything.
King of the lanes
at the local bowling alley.
"King of the lanes"?
- King of the lanes. King of the trolls.
- "King of the trolls"?
Yes. A clandestine land
found underneath your floorboards.
- Anything.
- No.
No. That's ridiculous.
Agreed. But let's start with ridiculous and move backwards.
Now, was any part of you at one time part of something else?
Like do I have someone else's arms?
Well, is it possible at one time that you were made of stone...
...wood, lye, varied corpse parts...
...or earth made holy by rabbinical elders?
No. Look... I'm sorry. What do these questions have to do with anything?
The only way to find out what story you're in...
...is to determine what stories you're not in.
Odd as it may seem, I've just ruled out half of Greek literature...
...seven fairy tales,
...and determined conclusively that you are not King Hamlet...
...Scout Finch, Miss Marple...
...Frankenstein's monster,
or a golem.
Aren't you relieved to know you're not a golem?
Yes, I am relieved to know that I am not a golem.
Good.
Do you have magical powers?
May I ask what we're doing out here?
- We're imagining car wrecks.
- I see.
And we can't imagine car wrecks inside?
No.
Did you know that 41 percent of accidents...
...occur in times of inclement weather?
So do 90 percent of pneumonia cases.
Really? Pneumonia.
That's an interesting way to die.
But how would Harold
catch pneumonia?
Have you written
anything new today?
No.
Did you read the poems I suggested,
or make a list of words...
...buy new typing paper, anything?
No, none of it.
Sitting in the rain won't write books.
Well, that illustrates exactly how much
you know about writing books.
What's this?
It's literature on the nicotine patch.
I don't need a nicotine patch, Penny.
I smoke cigarettes.
Well, it may help.
May help? Help what?
Help what, Penny?
Help write a novel?
May help save your life.
I'm not in the business of saving lives.
In fact, just the opposite.
- "What's your favorite word?"
  - Integer.
Good, good, good.
"Do you aspire to anything?"
  - No.
- Conquer Russia?
- Win a whistling contest?
  - No.
Harold, you must
have some ambition.
  - I don't think so.
  - Some underlying dream. Think.
Well...
...I've always wanted my life
to be more musical.
- Like West Side Story?
  - No.
- Like... .
- What?
Well, I've always wanted to learn to play the guitar.
Okay.
The last thing to determine conclusively...
...is whether you're in a comedy or a tragedy.
To quote Italo Calvino:
"The ultimate meaning to which all stories refer has two faces:
The continuity of life, the inevitability of death."
Tragedy, you die.
Comedy, you get hitched.
Most comic heroes fall in love with people...
...introduced after the story has begun.
Usually people who hate the hero initially.
Although I can't imagine anyone hating you, Harold.
Professor Hilbert, I'm an IRS agent.
Everyone hates me.
Right, right. Good.
Have you met anyone recently who might loathe the very core of you?
I just started auditing a woman who told me to get bent.
Well, that sounds like a comedy.
Try to develop that.
Four of these?
You know, I didn't get my honey, honey.
Lulu, can you refill the honey for Larry? Quarters also?
That's my good boy.
I'm adding some acorns.
Mr. Crick.
You're here early.
Must have a lot of people to extort.
No. No, just you.
- Twig tea and banana bread.
- Yes, ma'am.
Actually, it should only take the day to
make sure 22 percent is all you owe.
Well, I won't be paying no matter
the percentage, Mr. Crick.
No, I know. But the percent
determines how big your cell is.
You know, you can call me Harold.
Yeah, I know. But I don't want to.
This is for Ramona, honey.
- Oh, thank you.
- You're very welcome.
What is that?
What are you marking?
Oh, this is nothing.
Why don't we start
with your backup documents...
...and the receipts
for the past three years.
Sure.
What's this?
- My files.
- What?
My tax files.
You keep your files like this?
No, actually I'm quite fastidious.
I put them in this box
just to screw with you.
- Hi.
- Hi. How are you?
So how was it? Aruba.
Ms. Pascal? Can I just ask you
a question about this receipt?
- It was fantastic.
- Just wondering if this nine is a seven.
- And what did you do?
- I got a beautiful tan.
- I'm just gonna guess it's a seven.
- I mean, I feel stress-free.
Do you need help with that?
- Walk to heaven. I see the president.
- It's the taxman. Hello, Mr. Taxman.
- Yeah.
- You can call me Harold.
- Okay.
- How the numbers going?
- Pretty good.
- Gonna find that 22 percent?
- 22 percent?
Twenty-two, 11 times 2.
It's prime numbers.
- You gonna tax the bathroom?
- No, I'm not gonna tax the bathroom.
- Could I use the bathroom, then?
- Go for it.
Okay. I wanna use the bathroom.
Bye now.
Bye-bye.
Well, good night.
You want a cookie?
Oh, no.
Come on. They're warm and gooey.
They're fresh out of the oven.
No, I don't like cookies.
You don't like cookies?
- What's wrong with you?
- I don't know.
- Everybody likes cookies.
- No, I know.
I mean, after a really awful, no-good day...
...didn't your mama ever make you milk and cookies?
No. My mother didn't bake.
The only cookies I ever had were store-bought.
Okay. Sit down.
- No, I'm--
- No.
Sit down.
Now...
...eat a cookie.
I really can't.
Mr. Crick, it was a really awful day.
I know, I made sure of it.
So pick up the cookie...
...dip it in the milk...
...and eat it.
That's a really, really good cookie.
So when did you decide to become a baker?
- In college.
- Oh, like a cooking college?
I went to Harvard Law actually.
- Oh, I'm sorry, I just assumed it was--
- No. No, it's fine. I didn't finish.
- Did something happen?
- No.
I was barely accepted.
I mean, really barely.
The only reason they let me come was because of my essay.
How I was gonna make the world a better place with my degree.
Anyway, we would have to participate in these study sessions...
...my classmates and I, sometimes all night long.
And so I'd bake so no one would go hungry while we worked.
Sometimes I would bake all afternoon in the kitchen in the dorm...
...and then I'd bring my little treats to the study groups...
...and people loved them.
Eat.
I made oatmeal cookies, peanut-butter bars...
...dark-chocolate macadamia-nut wedges.
And everyone would eat and stay happy...
...and study harder and do better on the tests.
More and more people started coming to the study groups...
...and I'd bring more snacks.
I was always looking for better and better recipes...
...until soon it was ricotta cheese and apricot croissants...
...and mocha bars with an almond glaze...
...and lemon chiffon cake
with zesty peach icing.
And at the end of the semester
I had 27 study partners...
...eight Mead journals
filled with recipes...
...and a D average.
So I dropped out.
I figured if I was gonna
make the world a better place...
...I would do it with cookies.
You like them?
I do.
I'm glad.
Thank you for forcing me
to eat them.
You're welcome.
I should go. Oh, thank you.
For the cookies, I mean.
- Why don't you take them home?
- Oh, no.
- Oh, come on.
- No, really, please.
- No, really, please.
- No, no, no. Really, please.
I would like to, but I can't.
- You can't?
- No, no, I mean--
Because, see, it constitutes a gift.
Actually I shouldn't have even had
those other ones, so... .
Okay. Well, I'm not
gonna tell anyone.
- No. I know, but if you did... .
- Well, I'm not going to.
I know, but if you did--
- What, you think I'm gonna call the--?
- No, no. I'll purchase them.
I'm happy to purchase them.
How's that?
And then there are no issues.
- What?
- No.
- Please.
- Just...
- Why don't I just--?
- Go home.
Really, it's not a big deal.
Go home.
Okay.
Did you...?
You baked those cookies for me,
didn't you?
You were just trying to be nice
and I totally blew it.
This may sound like gibberish
to you...
...but I think I'm in a tragedy.
Professor Hilbert, I've totally failed
at the comedy-tragedy thing.
In fact, I think she likes me even less.
- I know, it's great.
- What do you mean?
You've proved something else
entirely.
The voice seems to be dependent
on actions you take.
You reset your watch,
it says you reset your watch.
You ride a bus,
it says you ride the bus.
You brush your teeth,
it says you brush your teeth.
It may be that you yourself
are perpetuating the story.
- So I suggest we try something else.
- Like what?
- Try nothing. Nothing.
- What about Ms. Pascal?
- Forget her.
- Forget her?
Other than numbers,
she's all I think about.
Harold, if you wanna stay alive,
you'll try something else.
- That something being nothing?
- Nothing, exactly.
- Nothing?
- Let me explain this again.
Some plots are moved forward
by external events and crises.
Others are moved forward
by the characters themselves.
If I go through that door,
the plot continues.
The story of me through the door.
If I stay here...
...the plot can't move forward,
the story ends.
Also if I stay here, I'm late.
- Don't do anything tomorrow.
- Nothing?
Stay home. Don't answer the phone,
open the door, brush your teeth.
- What about work?
- Call them.
- Tell them you're not coming.
- Don't go to work?
Don't do anything that may
move the plot forward.
Instead, let's see if the plot finds you.
Marshall, you're not kicking.
- certain that these geese have never
known any home but this one:
A small lake in Eastern Poland.
Pollution from a nearby factory
is slowly killing...
... the small fish and insects
on which these creatures feed.
All attempts to move the birds to
similar bodies of water have failed.
Perhaps it is the familiarity alone
that keeps them here.
Or perhaps it's an unwillingness
to lose the collective memory...
... of the once-beautiful hills
that surround the lake.
And it takes only seconds
for the fiddler crabs to realize...
... that the wader
they might once have feared...
... has now become their prey.
The wounded bird knows its fate. Its desperate attempts to escape... only underscore the hopelessness of its plight. The primates' sad, soulful eyes will be the first to be plucked out... then sold to cosmetic companies around the world... for use in the testing of mascara and artificial tears. Next, the monkeys' fur will be stripped away from their limp corpses... and sewn together to form pillows and comforters. Mr. Zebra thought he was gonna take a nice drink. But you never know who's gonna eat... ... when you're dining at Mother Nature's restaurant. That's gotta hurt. What does this bald eagle wanna serve... ... with some kidney beans and a fine Chianti? It's an eel. And again: Looks like old Mr. Crocodile wanted some antelope... ... to clear that salty zebra from his palate. Here's a struggle betting gentlemen have been known to put money on. When a mongoose encounters a cobra it's hard to know who's gonna win. But this time it looks like it's... the cobra... ... who's putting the squeeze on the mongoose! But don't cash in your chips just yet, gentlemen... ... because now it's the mongoose who holds the winning card! Hey! Hey! Hey, hey, hey! What are you doing?! - Holy crapping hell.
- What the hell is that?
- Stop the crane. Stop it.
- Stop the crane!
- Hey.
- Hey, what are you doing? Us? What are you doing?
I was watching TV.
- Well, we're demolishing this place.
- Are you nuts? I live here!
- Is that a TV?
- Yes, that's a TV! It's my TV!
- Well, what's your TV doing in there?
- I said I live here, stupid!
It's where I keep my stuff!
My name's on the goddamn buzzer!
Harold Crick.
Apartment 2-B, 1893 McCarthy!
- Did you say 1893?
- Yes!
I'm not exactly sure it was plot.
I was hoping you'd say it was
just a really bad coincidence.
Meeting an insurance agent the day
your policy runs out is coincidence.
Getting a letter from the emperor
saying that he's visiting is plot.
Having your apartment eaten
by a wrecking ball...
...is something else entirely.
Harold, you don't control your fate.
- I know.
- You do?
Okay. Come with me.
Hey, Tom, can you leave that
till tomorrow?
You were right.
This narrator might very well kill you...
...so I humbly suggest that you just
forget all this and go live your life.
Go live my life? I am living my life.
I'd like to continue to live my life.
I know. Of course. I mean all of it.
However long you have left.
You know, I mean, Howard,
you could use it to have an adventure. You know, invent something, or just finish reading Crime and Punishment. Hell, Harold, you could just eat nothing but pancakes if you wanted. What's wrong with you? Hey. I don't wanna eat nothing but pancakes. I wanna live. Who in their right mind in a choice between pancakes and living... ...chooses pancakes? Harold, if you'd pause to think I believe you'd realize... ...that that answer's inextricably contingent... ...upon the type of life being led... ...and, of course, the quality of the pancakes. You don't understand what I'm saying. Yes, I do. But you have to understand that this isn't a philosophy or a literary theory... ...or a story to me. It's my life. Absolutely. So just go make it the one you've always wanted. I never expected that they would have--
- Do you want one, two?
- I want one.
- One?
- I want two.
All right, so here's your room. Or as I like to call it, Sleep Pod Two. Thanks, Dave. No problem, dude. It'll be nice having you around. - How long you planning on staying? - I'm not sure. Dave, can I pose a somewhat abstract, purely hypothetical question? Sure. If you knew you were gonna die... ...possibly soon...
what would you do?
Wow, I don't know.
Am I the richest man in the world?
No, you're you.
Do I have a superpower?
No, you're you.
I know I'm me,
but do I have a superpower?
No, why would you
have a superpower?
I don't know,
you said it was hypothetical.
Fine. Yes. You're really good at math.
That's not a power, that's a skill.
Okay, you're good at math
and you're invisible.
- And you know you're gonna die.
- Okay, okay.
That's easy, I'd go to space camp.
Space camp?
Yeah, it's in Alabama. It's where kids
go to learn how to become astronauts.
I've always wanted to go
since I was 9.
You're invisible
and you'd go to space camp?
I didn't pick invisible,
you picked invisible.
Aren't you too old
to go to space camp?
You're never too old
to go to space camp, dude.
Space camp.
One hundred and twenty-two
guitars.
Seven hundred and thirty-two
strings.
Two hundred and fifty-seven
pickups.
One hundred and eighty-nine
volume knobs.
Here Harold stood, face to face
with his oldest desire.
And stand is almost all Harold did.
It wasn't just about finding a guitar. It was about finding a guitar that said something about Harold. Unfortunately, this guitar said: "When I get back to Georgia, that woman gonna feel my pain." This one said something along the lines of: "Why, yes, these pants are Lycra." These said, "I'm very sensitive, very caring... ... and I have absolutely no idea how to play the guitar." "I'm compensating for something. Guess what." And then Harold saw it. A damaged and terribly mistreated sea-foam-green Fender... ... staring back at him. Despite its obvious maladies... ... the guitar spoke with conviction and swagger. In fact, it looked Harold directly in the eye and very plainly stated: "I rock."

Just breathe. Watch it! We've got a 21-year-old male with a gunshot wound to the chest. There you go. Shot in a gang fight? Harold's not in a gang. Man in tweed? There's nothing wrong with him, he just likes looking at sick people. Oddly spoken with disdain. This isn't working. Well-- I don't even know why we're here. I don't think we're supposed to be here. - You said I needed visual stimuli. - I meant a museum. I don't need a goddamn museum.
I need the infirm.
You are the infirm.
You're right. The problem is
these people aren't dead...
...they're just severely injured.
Excuse me,
where are the dying people?
Most of these people
are sick or injured--
Which is great, don't get me wrong.
- But they're gonna get better,
which doesn't really help me.
Is there any way to see the people
who aren't going to get better?
Excuse me?
I'd like to see, if at all possible,
the ones who aren't gonna make it.
You know, the dead-for-sure ones.
I'm sorry,
are you suffering from anything?
Just writer's block.
With every awkward strum...
... Harold Crick became stronger
in who he was...
... what he wanted,
and why he was alive.
Harold no longer ate alone.
He no longer counted brushstrokes.
- Harold, I'll see you.
- He no longer wore neckties.
Bye, Dave.
And, therefore, no longer worried
about the time it took to put them on.
He no longer counted his steps
to the bus stop.
Instead, Harold did that
which had terrified him before.
That which had eluded him
Monday through Friday...
... for so many years.
That which the unrelenting lyrics...
... of numerous punk-rock songs

told him to do:
Harold Crick lived his life.
But despite resuscitating his life...
... reviving his hope, and instilling
a few wicked calluses...
... Harold's journey
was still incomplete.
And Harold's wristwatch wasn't about
to let him miss another opportunity.
Ms. Pascal?
- Ms. Pascal?
- Mr. Crick.
- Hi.
- Hi.
- Hi.
- I'm glad I caught you.
Oh, yeah? Why?
Because I wanted
to bring these to you.
- Really?
- Yeah.
So you can't accept gifts,
but you can give them?
- Listen--
- I don't know.
That seems a little inconsistent,
doesn't it, Mr. Crick?
Very inconsistent, yes.
I'll tell you what.
I'll purchase them.
- No.
- No, no, no, really...
... I'd like to purchase them.
What are they?
Flours.
- What?
- I brought you flours.
And you carried them
all the way here?
Ms. Pascal, I've been odd
and I know that I've been odd.
And I want you.
- What?
- There's so many reasons.
There's so many influences in my life that are telling me...
...at times quite literally...
...that I should come here and bring you these...
...but I'm doing this because I want you.
You want me?
In no uncertain terms.
Isn't there some very clear and established...
...rule about fraternization?
- Auditor-auditee protocol?
- Yeah.
Yeah, but I don't care.
- Why?
- Because I want you.
Well...
...do you mind carrying those a little bit further?
Okay.
Okay.
Did you make a key?
No, I just committed it to memory.
- The blue, that's barley flour.
- What's that one?
- The orange?
- Yeah.
I forget.
Right here.
Do you wanna come up?
- To your place?
- Yeah.
I guess I could.
Wasn't that the idea with the flours and everything?
Honestly, I only figured it out up to "I want you."
Listen, Mr. Crick...
...I think I like you.
And before I do anything rash,
I'd like to make sure.
I'd like you to come up.
I'd be honored.
Great.
Yeah, he was nuts though.
He got caught when he tried
to get the contract notarized.
No. No.
Was it good?
Thank you.
- You're welcome.
- Can I help you?
No, no, I'm gonna put them in the sink.
Go sit down on the couch.
So do you play the guitar?
- What?
- Do you play the guitar?
Terribly. Someone traded me that
for a wedding cake.
Does that mean I have to claim it
on my taxes now?
- No. I'll leave it out of my final report.
- Oh, thanks.
Do you play?
Not really. I only know one song.
Oh, play it.
No, I don't know it that well, actually.
No, come on. I promise I'm not gonna
laugh at you. Play it.
No, no, no. Maybe some other time.
All right.
Ms. Pascal?
- I...
- I know.
I want you too.
Harold's life was filled with moments
both significant and mundane.
But to Harold, those moments
remained entirely indistinguishable...
... except for this.
As Ana let out a soft sigh and
repositioned herself against him...
... Harold knew
somewhere in his heart...
... that this was one
of the significant moments.
He knew she was
falling in love with him.
Professor Hilbert. It's a comedy.
- What?
- A comedy.
The woman. The one who hates me.
Ana Pascal?
- Last night... .
- Yeah?
She's falling in love with me.
- She is?
- It's like a miracle.
The voice confirmed it
in the middle of the night.
Well, that's wonderful, Harold.
I mean, it completely nullifies my list,
but that's fantastic.
What list?
These are seven living authors
whose prior work...
...would seem to make them
candidates to write your story...
...based on the criteria you and I
previously determined.
If your narrator is alive,
she's on this list.
But it appears the list
is of little use to you now.
Now that you're gonna live
happily ever after.
Oh, goodie. This woman, Karen Eiffel,
she's one of my favorite authors.
- Hi.
- Hi.
Beautiful tragedies. Just beautiful.
Anyway...
...let me quickly copy this list for you,
just in case.
Sociopathic author.
- I just wanted to thank you.
- Of course.
Listen, please, you must tell me if you
hear the voice of the narrator again...
...just for my own edification.
I will.
Well, it's called Death and Taxes.
Wow. You know, I'm from Texas.
Death and Taxes.
Death and Taxes.
Taxes.
Like the Benjamin Franklin quote.
Precisely so.
This lady's a package,
I'm telling you.
Tell us, what is this next book
going to be about?
It's about interconnectivity.
The looming certainty of death.
Men's fashion accessories.
- Oh, my God, that's her.
- What?
- That's the voice. She's the narrator.
- No, that can't be right.
No, I'm positive.
Harold, this interview's a decade old.
I didn't think anyone actually
wore cuff links anymore.
That's her.
- She's British?
- She's her.
- Karen Eiffel?
- Professor Hilbert, I know that voice.
Crap.
- What's wrong?
- First of all, she wasn't on my list.
I figured you would have mentioned
the accent and she doesn't... .
She kills people.
- What?
- In every book she--
The books are all about--
They die. She kills them.
- Kills who?
- The heroes.
Four Black Veils. What is that?
It's about a girl who loses
several members of her family...
... in quick succession.
Where is she?
She's untraceable. Believe me,
I used to teach a class on her.
I've written her letters. I mean,
she's a hermit, she's a recluse.
Here. Here's the last book she wrote.
Look at the copyright. She hasn't
published anything in 10 years.
She had knowledge of the city.
Does she live here?
She used to, yes, but I mean--
Banneker Press. 2267 Wallace Street.
Is that her publisher?
You're not listening. I said even
if you find her she's not gonna--
Thank you for your help.
She only writes tragedies!
I don't believe in God.
Okay, he's bringing her flours.
Kay, where you been?
I went out to buy cigarettes...
...and I figured out
how to kill Harold Crick.
Buying cigarettes?
As I was--
When I came out of the store...
...it came to me.
How?
Well, Penny,
like anything worth writing...
...it came inexplicably
and without method.
I see. Then what happens?
It's perfect, actually. I can't believe
I didn't think of it earlier.
It's simple, ironic...
...possibly heartbreaking.
Is that it?
Yes.
- You wrote it on legal sheets?
- On the bus.
Well, then.
So I'll finish it today.
I'll let the publishers know.
I'll begin packing my things.
I appreciate it.
- Hi. Hello. Hi.
- May I help you?
I need to speak to Karen Eiffel.
- I'm sorry?
- Karen Eiffel.
She's one of your authors.
I need to talk to her.
Well, sir, she's not here.
No. No, I know. I need to find her.
I need to know where she is.
We're just the publishers.
Right. Of course. But there must be a way that I can contact her.
We have the address where her fan mail is sent.
No, I can't send mail. It's urgent.
How do you know her?
- I'm her brother.
- Her brother?
- Her brother-in-law.
- She has a sister?
No, I'm married to her brother.
Not in this state, the one over.
Sir, I'm gonna have to ask you to leave.
No. Okay. Listen.
I'm one of her characters. I'm new.
I'm in her new book.
And she's going to kill me.
But I think it'll actually kill me so I just need to talk to her...
...and ask her to stop.
Hi, Harold. Nice sweater.
Hi, Harold. Phones are out.
Hey, Harold, 19 percent of 4632...?
Hey, Harold. Back from your vaca?
Hey. Looking good.
- He looks terrible.
- Yeah, banged up.
Wherever he went,
I do not want to go.
Book me not there.
He's totally ignoring me.
Here, look at this now.
There he goes.
It was good having you.
- Oh, dude, the phones are out.
- Can I borrow your cell phone?
- The signal's down.
- Damn it.
- You all right?
- Dave, I need a favor.
- Sure, what is it?
- Can I have some change?
Within moments, Harold found himself
running across the plaza...
... heading for the nearest
pay phone.
At last, he spotted it.
But as Harold neared the phone,
he saw it was occupied...
... by an octogenarian determined
to reach his daughter in Denver...
... no matter how many quarters
it took.
Fortunately, Harold remembered
a bank of phones...
... in the Sixth Street subway tunnel.
The baby's name isn't Mrs. Epstein.
My daughter's name is Mrs. Epstein.
The first phone
failed to give a dial tone.
And the second
seemed to be splattered...
... with a fresh batch of mucus.
Harold dialed the third phone...
... fervently making sure to give each
number key a specific forceful push.
Don't answer that!
Didn't you say this phone never r--?
- Hello?
- Is this Karen Eiffel?
- Yes.
- My name is Harold Crick.
I believe you're writing a story
about me.
- I'm sorry?
- My name is Harold Crick.
- Is this a joke?
- No.

No, I work for the IRS. My name, Miss Eiffel, is Harold Crick. When I go through the files at work I hear a deep and endless ocean.
- Oh, G--!
- Miss Eiffel?
  Hello?
  Miss Eiffel? Hello?
  Let him in.
  Hello.
  Hello.

I'm Penny. I'm Kay's assistant.
Oh, I'm Harold. Her main character.
Oh, my God.
Oh, my God.
Oh, my God.
Miss Eiffel?
Your hair. Your eyes.
Your fingers.
Your shoes.
Hello.
I'm Harold Crick.
I know.
How did you find me?
We audited you
a little more than 10 years ago...
...and your number was in the file.
I'm sorry, but this is incredibly strange.
You're telling me.
Didn't you think you were crazy?
Sort of.
But then you were right about everything. Like, everything.
And then you said, "Little did he know."
- "Little did he know"?
- Yeah. It's third-person omniscient.
 Jesus.
Which meant it was, well, you know, someone other than me. At least that's what Professor Hilbert said.

Professor Hilbert?
- Professor Jules Hilbert?
- Yeah.
Yeah, he loves your books.
I love his letters. I don't--
So you understand why I had to find you...
...and ask you not to kill me.
- What?
I mean, obviously you haven't written the end.
Harold...
I mean, now since we've met and you can see that I exist...
...you're not gonna kill me, right?
Have you written it?
I can-- No.
- Have you written it?
- An outline.
Okay. But it's just an outline, right?
- Yeah, sort of.
- "Sort of"?
- It's just not typed.
- "Not typed"?!
- Maybe that's okay.
- What does that mean?
- I'm sorry, I'm trying to write a book.
- What do you mean it's "okay"?
- What do you mean you're sorry?
- Kay.
Let him read it.
Let him read it.
- Did you find her?
- Yeah.
- And?
- I may already be dead...
...just not typed.
Is that it?
Did you read it?
I tried, but I couldn't.
You have to read it.
You have to tell me
what to do or what not to do.
If I can avoid it... .
If I have a chance... .
Please.
Okay.
Okay.
And here's your uniform.
It's a go. Banetta's outside,
she'll assign you your locker.
- And you roll.
- I'm ready.
Professor Hilbert?
- Hi, Harold.
- Hi.
You look tired.
No, no, just calm.
Harold, I'm sorry.
You have to die.
What?
It's her masterpiece.
It's possibly the most important novel
in her already stunning career...
...and it's absolutely no good
unless you die at the end.
I've been over it again and again...
...and I know how hard this is
for you to hear.
You're asking me
to knowingly face my death?
Yes.
Really?
Yes.
I thought you'd... .
I thought you'd find something.
I'm sorry, Harold.
Can't we just try and just see
if she can change it?
- No.
- No?
Harold...
...in the grand scheme
it wouldn't matter.
- Yes, it would.
- No.
I could change.
I could quit my job.
I could go away with Ana.
I could be someone else.
Harold, listen to me.
I can't die right now.
It's just really bad timing.
No one wants to die, Harold,
but unfortunately we do.
Harold... .
Harold, listen to me.
Harold, you will die someday,
sometime.
Heart failure at the bank.
Choke on a mint.
Some long, drawn-out disease
you contracted on vacation.
You will die. You will absolutely die.
Even if you avoid this death,
another will find you.
And I guarantee that it won't be nearly
as poetic or meaningful...
...as what she's written.
I'm sorry...
...but it's the nature of all tragedies,
Harold.
The hero dies,
but the story lives on forever.
- There's an empty seat right there.
- No, I wanna sit down over here.
Kay?
Kay?
How many people
do you think I've killed?
- Kay.
- How many?
- I don't know.
- Eight.
- Kay--
- I've killed eight people. I counted.
They're fictional. Get up.
Harold Crick isn't fictional.
I don't--
He isn't fictional, Penny.
Every book I've ever written ends with someone dying. Every one.
Really nice people too.
The book about Helen the schoolteacher.
I killed her the day before summer vacation.
How cruel is that?
And the civil engineer, Edward.
The one I trapped...
...with a heart attack in rush hour.
I killed him.
I killed...
Penny, I killed them all.
Miss Eiffel? Miss Eiffel?
- Harold.
- Hi.
- I just finished it.
- You just... .
Yeah, I read it all in one read on the bus.
It's lovely.
I like the part about the guitars.
Well, thanks, thanks. Goo--
Well, listen, I'm--
No, I read it and I loved it.
And there's only one way it can end.
I mean, I don't have much background in literary anything...
...but this seems simple enough.
I love your book.
And I think you should finish it.
The night before his death...
... Harold unsuspectingly went about some usual business.
He finished his outstanding audits.
He made a few phone calls he had been putting off.
Listen, does your program have an age limit?
And he traveled to Ms. Pascal's...
... where she made him meat loaf
and chocolate pudding...
... and the two watched old movies.
It was a nice enough evening.
And in any other circumstance
it would've seemed commonplace.
In fact, the only thing
that made this night significant...
... was the morning it preceded.
I have to tell you something.
You do?
I do.
- Is it a secret?
- Sort of.
Tell me.
I adore you.
I adore you too.
- That it?
- No.
I have to tell you this.
I just want you to listen carefully.
Okay.
You can deduct the value
of all the food you give away...
... as a charitable contribution.
- Harold.
No, no, no. In fact it amounts to more
than what you're currently withholding.
And it doesn't break any tax laws.
Harold, the point
is to break the tax laws.
I wanna make the world
a better place too, Ana.
I think that means
keeping you out of jail.
Okay.
Okay?
- Yeah.
- Okay.
If you come over here...
... and talk a little more tax talk
in my ear.
Because I like it so much.
Much had changed for Harold
over the past few weeks:
His attitude towards work.
His habitual counting.
His love life.
But of all the transmutations Harold Crick had undergone...
... perhaps the most significant was that today on his return to work...
... he was not late

for the 8:
What Harold had not understood...
... about that Wednesday four weeks prior...
... was that the time he received from his fellow commuter...
... was, in fact, three full minutes later than the actual time...
... and, therefore, three full minutes later...
... than the time to which his watch and life had been previously set.
Not the worst of errors.
But if Harold had not set his watch to the incorrect time...
... Harold would have again barely caught the 8:17 Kronecker bus.
And he would not be approaching the bus stop...
... precisely at 8:14 this particular Friday.
Excuse me.
Harold?
An otherwise ignorable fact...
... until the unthinkable occurred.
Oh, my God. Oh, my God.
I need for everyone to just stay seated.
Come on, son.
- What happened? I didn't see him.
- It was not your fault.
He was trying to help the boy.
Get your supervisor.
I don't believe this.
- It was all my fault, though.
- No, it wasn't.
  Is he okay?
- It looks likes he's breathing.
- I don't think he's breathing.
Oh, my God.
Come in.
Excuse me.
Are you Professor Hilbert?
Yes.
Hi. I'm Karen Eiffel.
I believe we have
a mutual acquaintance.
Please, sit down.
No, I just came by to...
Here.
- Is that it?
- Yes.
Have you read it?
Is that all right?
Yes.
I think, perhaps, you may be
interested in the new ending.
Good afternoon.
Oh, hi.
It's a pretty brave thing you did.
Stepping in front of that bus
was pretty brave.
Kind of stupid, but pretty brave.
Oh, yeah.
Is that boy okay?
He's just fine. Scratched up is all.
Oh, good.
Am I okay?
Well, you're not dead.
On the other hand, it looks like
you cracked your head...
...you broke three bones
in your leg and foot...
...you suffered four broken ribs,
fractured your left arm...
...and severed an artery in your right,
which should've killed you in minutes.
But amazingly...
...a shard of metal from your watch
obstructed the artery...
...keeping the blood loss
low enough to keep you alive...
...which is pretty cool.
Yeah.
So with some physical therapy...
...a few months of rest,
you should be fine.
Well, sort of. We weren't able
to remove the shard of watch...
...from your arm without risking
severe arterial damage.
You'll be okay.
You'll just have a piece of watch...
...embedded in your arm
the rest of your life.
You're very lucky to be alive,
Mr. Crick.
Yeah.
- Dr. Mercator, Mr. Crick has a visitor.
- Sure.
- My God, Harold.
- Hey.
- I'm okay. It's all right.
- Harold.
I'm fine.
Harold, you're not fine.
Look at you. You're severely injured.
- No, I'm fine.
- What--? What happened?
I stepped in front of a bus.
What? Why?
There was a boy.
I had to push him out of the way.
What?
I had to keep this boy from getting hit.
You stepped in front of a bus
to save a little boy?
I didn't have a choice.
I had to.
It's... . It's okay.
- It's not great.
- No.
It's okay. It's not bad.
It's not the most amazing piece of English literature in several years...
...but it's okay.
You know...
...I think I'm fine with "okay."
It doesn't make sense with the rest of the book though.
No, not yet. I'll rewrite the rest.
My assistant said she'd go back to the publisher...
...and request more time.
- Why?
Don't know. It's awfully sweet though.
No, why did you change the book?
Lots of reasons.
I realized I just couldn't do it.
Because he's real?
Because it's a book about a man...
...who doesn't know he's about to die and then dies.
But if the man does know he's going to die and dies anyway...
...dies willingly,
knowing he could stop it, then...
I mean, isn't that the type of man you want to keep alive?
As Harold took a bite of Bavarian sugar cookie...
... he finally felt as if everything was going to be okay.
Sometimes, when we lose ourselves in fear and despair...
... in routine and constancy...
... in hopelessness and tragedy...
... we can thank God for Bavarian sugar cookies.
And fortunately, when there aren't any cookies...
... we can still find reassurance in a familiar hand on our skin...
... or a kind and loving gesture...
... or a subtle encouragement...
... or a loving embrace...
... or an offer of comfort.
Not to mention hospital gurneys...
... and nose plugs...
... and uneaten Danish...
... and soft-spoken secrets...
... and Fender Stratocasters...
... and maybe the occasional piece of fiction.
And we must remember that all these things...
... the nuances, the anomalies, the subtleties...
... which we assume only accessorize our days...
... are, in fact, here for a much larger and nobler cause:
They are here to save our lives.
I know the idea seems strange.
But I also know that it just so happens to be true.

And so it was:
A wristwatch saved Harold Crick.