

The Three Lives of Ignatius Clay

By

Greg Thomson

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INT. CHAPEL - DAY

The priest stands in front of an open coffin. The room is filled with sullen mourners.

PRIEST

We are gathered here today to celebrate the life of Philip Wilson, taken from us at such a tender age, now in the loving hands of our holy father, in heaven.

Sitting at the back pew, alone, is GREG THOMSON (25).

PRIEST

Philip was a bright boy, wise beyond his years. He is remembered by his friends and family as a warm, outgoing person. Always laughing, always speaking to people, eager to know how they were doing. He was active in the community, lending a hand to the local sports groups whenever he could. Philip had recently taken up writing and was pursuing it with the same dogged determination with which he approached every aspect of his life.

A few of the mourners are crying now.

PRIEST

Now, having come all the way from Johannesburg to be here, Philip's cousin and friend Martin Stokes would like to say a few words.

Martin solemnly makes his way up to the stage, head down in respect. He steadies himself.

MARTIN

Philip would be pleased to see all of us, family, in the same room together. He was always nagging us to make the effort to see each other more. That's because he understood the value of family.

Martin earnestly looks up to the heavens.

(CONTINUED)

MARTIN

Well, buddy, we're here at last.
And you brought us here. I only
wish it wasn't at the expense of
you being with us.

Genuine tears flow around the room, handkerchiefs out in abundance.

MARTIN

Before Phil was taken from us, we
worked on a writing project
together. It started last summer
when we came to visit. We had a
great time, camped up in his room
every day, banging away on the
typewriter. He would have made a
great writer, he was a natural.
Anyway, we never did finish the
script. But I've decided that Phil
deserves recognition, the world
deserves to know what Phil had to
say. So I have pledged to finish
the script, in accordance with
Phil's vision, and let Phil's work
be known to the world.

Adoring applause from the mourners. Everyone except Greg Thomson.

Martin gives another nod to the heavens then sits down.

PRIEST

Thank you Martin. Sagacious words
from young Martin there. And now,
with something of his own to say in
Phil's memory, close friend, Greg
Thomson.

The crowd turns to see the CLATTER made by Thomson as he makes a drama of getting out of his seat.

He swaggers up to the front of the congregation, unshaven, shaggy hair, black leather jacket.

He walks over to the open coffin, rests his hands on the edge of the casket and shares a private moment with his old friend.

Then he walks over to the microphone. He stands for a second, and takes in the crowd in front of him, making a point of glaring straight at Martin Stokes.

(CONTINUED)

GREG

Well, I'd like to say how saddened I am by Philip's passing. My heart goes out to his mother and father, and his sister Rachel.

Some eye-contact between Greg and Rachel.

GREG(CONT'D)

...And maybe, seeing you all make the effort here today would have helped ease my pain...

Greg takes a moment, then starts to shake his head...

GREG(CONT'D)

...If it wasn't for the fact that you are all so full of fucking bullshit!

The mourners gasp in horror, mouths agape.

GREG(CONT'D)

Community minded? He hated your fucking little cesspit tribal gatherings. Family values? The man was a fucking logician - he couldn't have given a fuck about fat fucking aunt Bertha in Oldham. Or for that matter any APARTHEID CUNT in South Africa.

He fixes his flaring, steely gaze on Martin.

GREG(CONT'D)

You! You fucking hack! Phil never wrote fuck all with you. Not a fucking page.

At this point the priest approaches Greg from behind and tries to man-handle him off the stage.

GREG

Don't you fucking touch me you dirty old bastard.

Greg tries to pull himself out of the priest's grip and in doing so sends the priest flying off the stage, landing in a crumpled heap on the floor.

Greg gets back on the mic.

(CONTINUED)

GREG

I'm not going to let you steal that script Martin, you fucking Stephen King fanboy prick! This is just the beginning! This is just the beginning for all of you miserable, lifeless cunts!

The men in the congregation swarm the stage in an effort to put an end to this madness.

Greg manages to evade them and runs out the chapel, laughing and shouting vulgarities.

EXT. WEST END - DUSK

Greg climbs through a hole in a steel-mesh fence, stepping over a dead cat as he does so.

Past an open window with football blaring on the tv. Up the steps of the fire escape and onto the roof.

He enters through the ajar fire exit door and makes his way down the stairs.

INT. HALLWAY

Just as he puts the key in the door, MRS CALDWELL (50s) appears from nowhere.

MRS CALDWELL

You can climb in the roof all you want but you're not going to avoid me and you still owe me three months rent.

GREG

Next week, Mrs Caldwell. I told you, I've got something big coming up.

MRS CALDWELL

A job?

GREG

No, I'm going to sell a piece of writing. I'm just waiting on my agent getting back to me, hah, the buggers always take their time, don't they? I'm always telling him that if he'd just -

(CONTINUED)

MRS CALDWELL

What a load of shit. Look, if you don't have my money by the end of the month, you're out.

INT. GREG'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

He throws his keys on the table, takes off his clothes, throws on a house-coat and lights up the joint sitting in the ash-tray.

On the table lays a stack of screenplay pages. The title page reads: "**The Three Lives of Ignatius Clay**" - by Philip Wilson and Greg Thomson.

Greg grabs a cold container of Chinese food, still on the table from last night, and starts to eat while pouring over the swathes of notes and scenes.

INT. GREG'S APARTMENT - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

Greg and PHIL (23), sit on the couch, mass of paper and pages in front of them.

Greg blows smoke from his joint into Phil's face.

GREG

What's the best thing you've never seen?

PHIL

(without looking up)

I've never seen a man eat his own face. I've never seen you do an honest day's work.

GREG

I take exception to that remark.

PHIL

You're more than entitled to.

GREG

Your cousin's a fuckwit.

Phil looks through the pages, stopping on one in particular.

PHIL

As he is more than entitled to be.

(CONTINUED)

GREG

An entitlement which he exercises regularly.

Phil holds up the page.

PHIL

So who is Ignatius Clay?

GREG

Fucked if I know.

EXT. WILSON HOUSE - DAY

Greg, dressed smarter than usual, rings the doorbell.

RACHEL (28), Phil's sister, answers the door.

GREG

Rachel, Hi.

Rachel looks him up and down.

RACHEL

I remember you.

GREG

I often have that effect on people.

RACHEL

I meant from the funeral.

GREG

Ah, that. Well I'll be the first to admit that I overreacted. But emotions were running high. Phil meant a lot to me, a whole lot. And I couldn't stand to see people sully his memory like that.

RACHEL

What do you want?

GREG

I left a few things, when I was last here. I was hoping I could pick them up. Sentimental value.

Rachel doesn't look sure about letting him in.

(CONTINUED)

GREG

I'm not here to cause trouble,
Rachel.

INT. PHIL'S ROOM - DAY

Rachel shows Greg into the room.

RACHEL

I'll give you a few minutes.

GREG

Thank you, Rachel.

Rachel leaves and Greg starts to mosey around the room.

He looks at the framed picture on the desk - Phil and Greg,
arm in arm, real smiles on their faces.

He goes over to the bed and kneels down and sticks his hand
under.

He pulls out an ornate wooden box. Written on it in pen are
the words: 'Phil's Writings'.

Greg opens it up to see that - it's empty.

GREG

Thieving bastard!

INT. HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Greg makes his way down the hall.

GREG

Rachel?

No reply.

He sees a door slightly ajar and walks over to it.

Peeking in, he sees -

- Rachel, slipping her top off. Bra-less. Her breasts bounce
and jiggle side to side for a moment.

- She undoes the buttons of tight jeans and starts to slip
them off.

At which point Greg swings open the door.

(CONTINUED)

GREG
Hello, Rachel.

Rachel's SCREAM echoes through the whole house.

RACHEL
Get out of here you creep!

Greg runs as fast as he can, stumbling and bumping into walls and furniture on the way out.

INT. GREG'S APARTMENT - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

Phil sits at the window staring at nothing in particular.

Greg paces the room, talking to no one in particular.

GREG
And then I threw my number down on her table on the way out, and I swear to god - before the piece of paper even hit the table, she was already looking at me like I'd just shat in her coffee.

Phil says nothing, not even hearing it.

GREG
The walk out of that coffee shop was the longest walk of my life. I haven't been back since.

PHIL
What are we doing?

GREG
Fuck knows. I thought we could go to the park and look interesting.

PHIL
I mean what are we doing with our lives? In the time we've sat in here I could have learned five languages. I could have traveled the world twice over... I could have been in London, working in Fleet Street.

Greg pauses at this last statement.

(CONTINUED)

GREG

You could learn a language.

Phil looks at Greg accusingly.

GREG

We could travel. My cousin's got a caravan in Guernsey. We could maybe even go over to France for the day?

PHIL

I'd need a job for that.

GREG

We've got jobs. We're writers!

Phil gets up and trods over to the kitchen.

PHIL

That's what I mean, we haven't made a penny from writing. We've done nothing. I spent four years in journalism school to end up sitting in a run-down shack every day with a fucking suicide-case.

Greg looks hurt.

Phil reappears from the kitchen.

PHIL

I didn't mean that.

Phil sits down on the couch. Greg joins him.

PHIL

What are we doing?

GREG

I don't know.

PHIL

What about this screenplay?

GREG

Fuck knows.

PHIL

We need to stop choosing the titles first.

Phil looks at the title page of "**The Three Lives of Ignatius Clay**".

EXT. BUS STOP - DAY

Greg sits at the bus-stop opposite the university. Buses come and go and he doesn't move.

One student in particular walks out the university and makes his way up the street. This is MIKEY (23), hirsute, portly.

Greg follows him.

EXT. PARK LANE - CONTINUOUS

Mikey walks up a quiet lane, Greg silently follows behind.

Greg quickens the pace and runs up behind Mikey.

- He GRABS him by the collar and SLAMS him up against the fence.

GREG

Nice to see you again, Mikey.
Didn't notice you at your friend's
funeral last week. Stomach trouble,
was it?

MIKEY

What?

Greg gives him one in the stomach.

GREG

Remember now? Or maybe you had
reason not to show your face. After
all, he was the co-owner of your
little music website, and with him
out the picture that leaves you as
the sole benefactor.

Still wheezing from the punch.

MIKEY

Greg, what have you been taking?
What are you doing, man?

GREG

I'm giving you a chance, Michael my
son. Give me the phone number of
Martin, Phil's cousin. Now, I know
you two were chummy at one point.
Don't play dumb, big man! Give me
the number and I don't say a peep
about the case of the devious
bastard music journalist.

(CONTINUED)

MIKEY

I'll give you the number. I'll give you it.

Greg lets him go and Mikey takes out his phone and scrolls to the number.

MIKEY

Jesus. Right, you ready?

GREG

Wait.

Greg fumbles in his pockets and finds a pen and pad.

GREG

Right, go.

MIKEY

Right. Oh seven seven nine nine.

GREG

Oh seven seven nine nine, right.

MIKEY

Three five two four.

GREG

Wait, three five two...

MIKEY

Four...

GREG

Right...

MIKEY

Three Eight.

GREG

Three Eight. So that's oh seven seven nine nine three five two four three eight?

MIKEY

That's it.

Greg puts his pad in his pocket and saunters away down the lane.

GREG

Thank you, Michael. Don't worry, I won't tell anyone about this. You behave yourself now.

(CONTINUED)

As Greg is walking away...

MIKEY
(shouting)
You could have just asked.

INT. GREG'S APARTMENT - DAY

Lying sprawled out on the couch, Greg dials a number in his phone.

A person answers the phone on the other end:

MARTIN (PHONE)
Hello?

Greg says nothing.

MARTIN (PHONE)
Hello? Hello?

Martin hangs up. Greg dials again.

Martin answers. Greg says nothing.

Martin hangs up. Greg dials again.

Martin answers...

INT. GREG'S APARTMENT - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

GREG
I think a man only needs one
friend.

Phil types away on an antique type-writer. Stopping occasionally to un-jam the keys.

PHIL
Somebody with only one friend would
say that.

Phil allows himself a smile at his jibe.

GREG
Rare begets rare, and rare is only
too common these days. You can use
that if you want.

(CONTINUED)

PHIL
(dry)
I will, thanks.

Greg gets off the couch and goes and looks in the mirror.

GREG
Look at that. Just look at that.
They say no man is an island, but
you never see more than one face in
the mirror, do you?

PHIL
I can't say I've noticed. I'll keep
an eye out from now on.

Greg scoffs at Philip's facetiousness.

GREG
What are you writing anyway?

PHIL
The same thing I was writing
yesterday?

GREG
Well what were you writing
yesterday?

PHIL
I told you yesterday.

GREG
Oh. That explains it then.

Phil finishes typing a sentence and turns round to face
Greg.

PHIL
It's about these two -

GREG
(singing)
" Pleeeeease releeeeeeease me, let me
goooo...Because I don't love you
anymore..."

Greg continues to sing in a booming voice.

INT. GREG'S APARTMENT - LATER (FLASHBACK)

Greg lies sleeping on the couch.

Phil hits the keys of the typewriter for the last time and lets out a yawn.

He goes over to the couch where Greg sleeps.

He picks up a nearby blanket and starts to throw it over his sleeping friend - but stops...

He puts down the blanket, steps a bit closer and -

- SLAPS Greg hard in the face.

He runs out the room before Greg fully comes to consciousness.

INT. GREG'S APARTMENT - DAY

Greg sits down at his desk, typewriter in front of him. In the grip of the typewriter is page 18 of "**The Three Lives of Ignatius Clay**".

The page is half filled with words, and Greg poises himself to add to it.

He stares at the page.

He cracks his fingers.

He straightens up in the chair. He puts his fingers on the keys.

Nothing.

He gets up and paces the room.

A boisterous laugh from outside grabs his attention. He storms to the window and pulls it open:

GREG

Shut your trap, you bloody ape.
People are working here!

He slams the window shut before he can hear his aggravator's reply.

Greg goes and flops down at the desk. He eyes the phone.

Before long he picks it up and dials a number.

(CONTINUED)

GREG
(on phone)
Martin, Martin, Martin,
House-Martin, common as the fucking
flu, or should it be Magpie?... ..
Oh I think you know... ..I think
you do... ..Apartheid cunt ring
any bells?... ..You got that
quick, have I been on your mind?...
...Hello?...

GREG
Bastard.

Greg redials.

GREG
(on phone)
Listen you snake-bastard, you stole
Phil's copy of our script - ...Our
script! You never put a fucking
comma to it!... ..You could never
finish that script, the depth of
that script is beyond your fucking
abilities. I'm going to finish that
script! I'll have it in production
by the end of the fucking year!...
...Oh, and by the way, Phil showed
me your pitiful attempt at a novel.
I think you might have a good shot
with self-publishing. Bye now.

Greg hangs up.

He looks at the imposing figure of the typewriter.

INT. PUB - DAY (FLASHBACK)

Phil and Greg sit across from each other in a busy pub.

Waitresses serve food and customers guzzle it down.

PHIL
I don't think we can finish this
thing. We started all wrong and
it's too late now.

GREG
Give it time. It'll turn itself
round.

The waitress serves Greg fish and chips. She begrudgingly
serves Phil a glass of water.

(CONTINUED)

GREG

Things work themselves out.

PHIL

That's a bit optimistic for you?

Greg munches down on his food.

GREG

It's not optimism. Conflict doesn't exist really, we create it ourselves. So I've embarked on a crusade of acceptance.

(raises his fork in salute)

It'll work itself out.

At this point, a MAN and his WIFE shuffle over to the table.

MAN

Excuse me. You're going to hate me for asking, but -

GREG

I already hate you.

MAN

(laughing it off)

Ha, very good. But see we've been waiting -

GREG

No, genuinely. Now shuffle off while we partake of our nutrition, as was rightly served us when we entered this establishment.

WIFE

What did he say?

GREG

The private contract between customer and publican, dearie. We will take as long as we bloody want to finish this grub as it is our every right to do.

MAN

What did you just say to my wife? Are you trying to get cheeky, mate?

Phil tries to quell the situation.

(CONTINUED)

PHIL
Greg, stop it, just say sorry.

GREG
For what?

PHIL
Just leave it. I'm enjoying my water.

WIFE
(to Phil)
Here, what are you saying?

PHIL
I'm telling him to shut up and say sorry.

MAN
Or else what?

PHIL
What?

MAN
I'll give you sorry...

The man punches Phil on the jaw, knocking him out of his chair. He knocks his water over too.

Greg watches as the man and wife walk away, and waitresses come to Phil's aid.

He lifts the fork to his mouth and continues eating.

EXT. HOSPITAL DOOR - DAY (FLASHBACK CONT'D)

Greg stands outside the entrance to the hospital, smoking a cigarette.

A man passes him on his way in and shakes his head.

Greg takes a long, glorious puff in riposte.

A moment later an old woman in patient-clothes shuffles up to Greg -

OLD WOMAN
You couldn't spare one of those,
could you son?

(CONTINUED)

GREG

Aren't you a bit young for that?

He extends the open packet.

OLD WOMAN

Oh, you're a saint, young man.

He lights her cigarette for her.

GREG

So what are you in for, Granny?
Just squeezed out another bairn,
have you?

OLD WOMAN

No, no. I dried up years ago.

GREG

An engine can't run without
lubrication.

OLD WOMAN

Oh it can still run.

GREG

Oh?

OLD WOMAN

Just a bit bumpy on the road.

GREG

Oh.

They both enjoy their cigarettes.

OLD WOMAN

No... I had a child once. Leslie.
He's dead now.

GREG

What got him?

OLD WOMAN

Cancer.

Greg coughs and splutters, smoke coming out of nose and mouth.

OLD WOMAN

What are you in for?

GREG
Broken jaw, I think.

OLD WOMAN
You don't look like anything's
wrong with you?

GREG
No, but I'm bruised on the inside.

OLD WOMAN
Oh.

INT. GREG'S APARTMENT - NIGHT (FLASHBACK CONT'D)

Phil lies on the couch, jaw swollen and bandaged.

Greg enters with a cup of tea.

GREG
Don't get up, I've got you.

He puts the tea next to Phil.

GREG
Oh, biscuits.

Greg goes back to the kitchen, returning with plain
digestives.

Phil lifts the cup to his mouth, but can't open his mouth
far enough to take a drink.

GREG
Oh!

Greg runs back to the kitchen and returns with a straw.

He pops it in Phil's tea.

GREG
There we go.

INT. GREG'S APARTMENT - DAY

Greg opens the fridge. Takes out the milk carton - empty.

Opens the biscuit tin - empty.

Phil's cup sits in the sink, teaspoons and other cutlery sit
inside it.

EXT. GRAVEYARD - DAY

Phil's grave is still adorned with flowers and message cards.

Greg sits cross-legged at the foot of the grave, gazing longingly at the gravestone.

He reaches into his bag and brings out a flask with two cups. He pours two cups of tea.

GREG

Cheers.

Greg takes a sip. He looks at Phil's cup of tea, then picks it up and pours it on the grave.

GREG

You always were a messy drinker.
Should have brought your straw.

Continues to drink his tea.

GREG

Sorry, there were no biscuits left.
Can't afford them now that we're
only living on one benefit cheque.
I didn't even have any tea, had to
get Mrs Caldwell to fill the flask
for us.

(pause)

She's a decent old bat... We could
be living rent free right now if
you'd just rubbed her feet when she
asked you to.

The breeze whistles in between the graves.

GREG

Well your cousin showed his true
colours at last. Stole your copy of
the script. Says he's going to
finish it, 'in accordance with your
wishes'. Course, you would have
heard that at the funeral. Did you
see me there? What did you think of
my little performance? Well, it's a
matter of principle, isn't it?

(pause)

Oh, and it finally happened. Like I
always said it would. Me and your
sister. Signed, sealed, stamped and
dated. No return address.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

GREG (cont'd)

Unbelievable! How you could grow up beside that without going mental is beyond me.

A van full of council maintenance workers pulls into the graveyard.

GREG

I've not written anything for weeks now. I'm blocked. I don't know why we aimed so high with Ignatius Clay. Even the name, what kind of name is that? Why didn't we just do something real? Something we knew. Since you're not here to defend yourself I'll lay the blame firmly at your door.

The council workers get their tools out and start making their way over to where Greg is.

GREG

Well, I'd best be off. Let these poor buggers get on with earning their crust. I'll come back. Once I get some milk.

Greg packs up the flask and the cups and trods off down the pathway.

The workers talk and laugh amongst themselves.

As they pass Phil's plot one of them nonchalantly spits right on top of the grave.

INT. JOB CENTRE - DAY

Greg sits at the desk across from SUE (40).

SUE

So what kind of work are you looking for?

GREG

Screenwriting.

SUE

Screenwriting?

(CONTINUED)

GREG

Yes. I'm a screenwriter.

SUE

Ok... I'll run a search for it in our system.

Sue hits a few keys on her computer.

SUE

Screenwriter, screenwriter... Nope. We've got screen-washer, windscreen repair, corporate underwriter...any of those sound attractive to you?

GREG

I wouldn't have thought so.

SUE

Ok. So tell me some of your skills. What do you know?

GREG

What do I know? Oh, nothing of any great value, Sue. I've only mastered the art of exposition. I've only weaved narratives that would make your brain collapse. Characterisation, plot, subplot, symbolism, theme, turning a dream into reality. That's all I know.

SUE

Ok. Have you had any experience in hospitality?

GREG

I've never experienced hospitality from anybody, and only one person has ever experienced it from me.

SUE

What about retail?

GREG

I don't see how a self-confessed communist could be expected to serve in one of materialism's workshops.

SUE

Construction?

Greg stares her right in the eye.

(CONTINUED)

GREG
I construct dreams.

SUE
Maybe you could construct...

Sue checks the info on the screen -

SUE (CONT'D)
...roads?

GREG
I'm not a navy.

SUE
No. Of course not. Have you had any
kind of job?... Ever?

Greg makes to leave.

GREG
Sue, my dear, it appears there is
no use for me out there. Your world
isn't compatible with me, nor I
with it. I will continue to live on
nothing more than my wits. Until
next week, Sue.

Greg walks proudly out of the job centre.

INT. TV STUDIO

It's 'The Late Show with Jonathan Ross'.

JONATHAN sits behind his desk, in front of the studio
audience.

JONATHAN
Now, ladies and gentlemen, my next
guest is a young screenwriter who's
burst onto the scene in the last
year with his Oscar nominated film:
The Three Lives of Ignatius Clay.
He is now in talks with Stephen
Spielberg's production company to
write the planned remake of
Casablanca, with Nicolas Cage set
to star. He is red hot in hollywood
right now, please put your hands
together for Greg Thomson.

The crowd applaud and cheer. Some women in the crowd whistle
and scream ecstatically, because...

(CONTINUED)

On walks Greg Thomson, waving politely, head bowed self-deprecatingly, soaking up the adulation.

He heads over to the couch where Jonathan stands with open arms.

They embrace, exchange a few private words and share a laugh.

JONATHAN

Sit down, sit down. It's great to see you.

Greg takes a seat and gets comfy.

GREG

Oh, thank you. It's great to be here.

The applause dies down.

JONATHAN

So, first things first, Ignatius Clay - what in the bloody hell kinda name is that for a film?

Crowd laughs.

GREG

It's symbolic, Jonathan. Metaphorical and all that. Don't worry yourself with it.

Crowd giggle.

JONATHAN

Well it clearly isn't a problem anyway because you've just been nominated for an oscar, haven't you? And can I just say, I've seen the film, and I was blown away by it -

Crowd start to cheer.

JONATHAN

- Just blown away.

Greg accepts the applause graciously.

GREG

Thank you.

JONATHAN

Now, a little bird tells me that, ah, while you've been over there in Hollywood, you've been getting up to, shall we say - some extra curricular activities with a certain very beautiful movie star?

GREG

(playfully)

Right...?

Crowd giggle.

JONATHAN

Well...what was it like? I mean if I had known she was single I might have thrown my hat in myself.

Crowd laugh.

GREG

Well I can only say how glad I am that you didn't Jonathan, or I would be out of luck, wouldn't I?

Laugh.

JONATHAN

That is very diplomatic of you.

Laugh.

GREG

No seriously, you're a good looking guy.

PHIL suddenly appears on the couch next to Greg.

PHIL

Just get under the table and suck his dick.

INT. GREG'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Greg and Phil both sit on the couch.

Greg has oiled and combed his hair and is clean shaven. Lit joint in his hand.

(CONTINUED)

GREG
You don't like to fantasize, do
you?

INT. TV STUDIO

Back with Jonathan now, Greg still has the joint in his
hand.

JONATHAN
Greg, is it fair to say that you're
a bit of a bad boy? A bit of a
rebel?

Greg takes a long puff of the joint.

GREG
You could say that Jonathan. I
wouldn't. I'd just say I'm real.

Phil appears next to Greg again -

PHIL
Real? What part of this is real?

GREG
Fuck off.

Crowd laugh.

INT. GREG'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Phil chuckles.

PHIL
Who are those people in the crowd?
Why do you want them to love you so
much?

INT. TV STUDIO

The clutter from Greg's living room now lies strewn around
the tv studio.

Greg takes a look at the people in the crowd of the studio
audience.

Anyone he looks at straight on seems to have no facial
features - Those in his peripheral vision seems like real
people, but when he tries to focus on them they just become
nobody.

INT. GREG'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

GREG

I don't know. It doesn't matter. I don't need to know them, they just need to know me.

PHIL

And who are you?

INT. TV STUDIO

GREG

I'm a writer.

The crowd of faceless people applaud and cheer lovingly.

Jonathan sits back and nods admiringly.

PHIL (O.S)

CUT!

INT. GREG'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

PHIL

No, you're a fantasist. Writers actually write stuff. This adulation that you crave, that can only come after you've done the writing part.

GREG

Writing takes place in the mind. I'm thinking about things all day while you're out dancing. Or wherever it is you disappear to.

PHIL

Thinking! Not writing. Thinking will only get you so far -

GREG

You're certainly evidence of that.

PHIL

- Eventually you'll need to get over your fear of failure and just take the plunge.

(CONTINUED)

GREG
I'm not afraid. I'm just blocked.

PHIL
And have been for the last two
years.

Greg's body language suddenly becomes defensive, he curls himself up on the couch, facing away from Phil.

GREG
I've got problems, haven't I?

Phil backs off a bit, sensing vulnerability.

PHIL
Jonathan Ross can't solve them.

INT. LIBRARY - DAY

Greg sits at a computer. On the screen is the official ITV web page for the Jonathan Ross Show.

Greg clicks to the contact section, the page reads: **All appearance enquiries to be handled through an agency.**

He lets out a stifled moan, then slumps back in his chair despondent.

After a short time he slowly straightens up, and approaches the mouse and keyboard tentatively.

He goes to google, and types in **Martin Stokes**. The search results include Martin's...

Facebook profile, formspring, tumblr, okcupid... Greg opens them all up.

The intro to Martin's Tumblr reads: ***Aspiring writer fighting the Bukowski-esque tendency to piss it all away.***

Greg guffaws loudly upon reading it. He gets some dirty looks from the little old ladies in the library.

He scrolls down to the links to Martin's writing and opens up the first one:

Youth is Wasted on the Old - By Martin Stokes

Greg leans back in his chair and reads it with a smarmy grin on his face, smirking and sniggering until...

He stops.

(CONTINUED)

- He straightens up in his chair, never taking his eyes off the page.

Greg isn't smirking anymore. He is hooked by whatever it is he is reading on the screen.

His initial shock and wonder gives way to something a lot like envy.

INT. GREG'S APARTMENT - DAY

Greg sits back at his desk, staring at the typewriter.

His fingers gingerly approach the keys...

He types a title:

The Summer of our Discontent

He looks at it for a moment then rips the page out of the machine and puts in another one.

He types another title:

Hope Springs Eternal

He looks at it. Rips it out. Fresh piece of paper.

He considers this one for a moment...

...then types another title:

Extreme Velocity

...He considers it for a moment...

...then adds the subtitle:

:Intense Momentum

He rips the page out once more.

INT. GREG'S APARTMENT - LATER

Greg dials a number in his phone.

GREG (ON PHONE)

Martin. How's it going?... ...No, don't hang up, it's not like that. I've calmed down.... ...I promise you. And I'm sorry. I know how I

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

GREG (ON PHONE) (cont'd)
must seem to people at times, and
it's something I'm working on. But
I'm a writer, aren't I? You can
understand where I'm coming from,
people like us aren't like other
people.... ...Writers, of course.
Look, something stupid happened, I
barely even remember what it was. I
called you a thief, you called me a
motherfucker.... ...Ok, but all
I'm saying is that we should keep
the past in the past and
concentrate on our future.

Greg hunches forward like a salesman trying to close a deal.

GREG (ON PHONE)
Well, that's up to us, isn't it?
All I know is that we've both got
half a screenplay that needs
finishing. As accomplished as we
both clearly are, the old maxim of
two heads being better than one
might still be worth something,
don't you think?

Greg listens close and nods along, agreeing with whatever is
being said.

He suddenly stops nodding and any hope in his eyes now turns
to anger. A cold, intense anger.

GREG (ON PHONE)
(seething)
You dirty little deceitful,
theiving, vile fucking rat! You're
a fucking hack! You'll make a
fucking copywriter at best! I read
your latest effort, Youth is Wasted
on the Old? Pish! You pretentious
fucking cunt! Hello? Hello?

Greg throws the phone to the ground and the pieces shatter
and fly everywhere.

GREG
(shouting)
You don't hang up on me! You don't
hang up on me!

Within seconds the upstairs neighbour bangs on the floor.

Greg starts to scream back in response, but stifles it and collapses into the couch cushions.

INT. WRITING GROUP - NIGHT

The group sits in a circle. The group leader, ANNE (50s), holds a screenplay in her hands and reads from its pages.

ANNE

"...I know we've only been friends for a couple of years, and I know you're really upset about your cousin dying, but I'm just trying to help...(switches character)HELEN:... Help? How can you help? You're not the one who lost your cousin - blown to bits by a suicide bomber in Iraq. I am. And I'm upset..."

The group is made up of the young and the old. Mostly the old.

ANNE

Well, that's Norman's contribution for this week. Does anyone have anything they'd like to say about it?

NORMAN (50s), looks proud as punch.

A middle-aged lady, EILEEN, starts to speak:

EILEEN

I thought it was good, but I didn't like the bit about the suicide bomber in Iraq. It was quite graphic and I don't know if it really serves a purpose other than titillation.

Greg scoffs, making himself heard for the first time:

GREG

Exposition.

ANNE

Sorry, Greg?

GREG

It was bad exposition, not titillation.

(CONTINUED)

None of the group seem to register what Greg says, nor care for the way he says it.

ANNE

Ok...Does anyone else have anything they'd like to add?

A younger guy, EUAN (30s), bum-fluff beard and a Batman tattoo:

EUAN

I can see what you were going for with the, sort of, you know, sense of impending doom concerning the funeral. But I thought the characters could have been better rendered -

GREG

Rendered?..

ANNE

Greg, if you could refrain from butting in when people are speaking -

GREG

..The best rendering you've ever seen is on the cement in your father's garden wall.

ANNE

Greg! I think you need to show a little bit more respect to the members of this group.

EUAN

Yeah, you don't even have a script to show for yourself.

Greg looks Euan cold in the eye. He manages to stifle his anger.

GREG

I'm sorry, Anne. I'm sorry everyone. Please continue.

ANNE

Good. Now, any more comments on Norman's script? No? Ok. The next one is by Euan...

Greg smiles wryly in anticipation of what's to come.

ANNE (CONTD)

...and it is the last three pages
of his latest feature, titled:
INCENDIARY.

Anne composes herself -

ANNE (CONTD)

"The profuse rain stopped for a
moment and the clouds parted. The
sun breaks through and illuminates
the carnage that has just befallen
this place. Riker McCloud looked
down at his bloodied torso. Two
bullet holes in his leather jacket,
and a whole lot of spent shells
round about him. He's had some
rough scrapes, but nothing like
this...

...MCCLLOUD: *They don't make jackets
like they used to.*

...From out of the glaring
reflection of the sunlight hitting
wet asphalt, walks GINGER
RAWLSON...

...GINGER: *You still alive,
cowboy?*

...MCCLLOUD: *Probably not.*

...GINGER: *Well I ain't never seen
nothing keep ol' Riker down. And I
don't think I ever will. Remember
that time down in Juarez?*

...MCCLLOUD: *Remember it? I'm, still
trying to forget it -"*

Greg butts in -

GREG

Wait, he's dying here? Yes?

Euan nods -

EUAN

Yes.

(CONTINUED)

GREG

Fine. Just checking.

Anne continues -

ANNE

"Ginger picks Riker up and throws him over her shoulder. She carries him over to her harley davidson and throws him on the back seat...

...GINGER: *Riker McCloud on the back seat. Folks'll think you've gone soft...*

...MCCLLOUD: *Maybe I have. Maybe this whole thing has taught me that it's time to slow down... Maybe I should take a back seat...*

...GINGER (under her breath): *I heard that before...*

...MCCLLOUD: *What?*

...GINGER: *Nothin' Riker. Nothin'. Let's get you cleaned up.*

They roar off in the harley davidson, and disappear into the morning horizon. Roll credits."

Before Anne can even call for questions, Greg claps his hands together in a sarcastic manner -

GREG

Bravo. Bravo Euan. Seriously mate. You did well. Your first paragraph had about half a dozen switches between present and past tense. You did go straight for the jugular as far as outright cliché goes when you used the word: Asphalt. You had characters reminisce about a trip to Mexico while one of them was pissing blood, and you went for the good old, tried and tested, hero rides off into the sunset ending. No, seriously mate, that's good stuff. Must have taken you all of five minutes, in between doing a shit and wiping your arse.

The group gasp in shock at Greg's diatribe.

(CONTINUED)

ANNE

Greg!! Ok, that's it. You have to leave. I'm not having this.

Poor Anne looks visibly shaken.

GREG

I'll leave. I don't want to spend another minute in the company of you old bastards. It seems that banality is catching round here.

Greg swaggers towards the door.

GREG (SHOUTING BACK)

Greg walked off into the sunset with his dignity intact.

INT. GREG'S APARTMENT - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

Phil lies on the couch, writing with pen and pad. Greg lies on the other couch, watching Phil.

GREG

You don't even like coffee.

Phil says nothing.

GREG

You've never made a cup of coffee in your life. And how are you going to manage facing all those customers all day? You know the type that sit in coffee shops.

Nothing from Phil.

GREG

You'll have to wear a fake smile all day long, you'll need to listen to their boring stories, you'll need to go to staff nights out, you'll need to have -

PHIL

- Human interaction. You should try it sometime.

GREG

I'm enjoying some right this minute.

(CONTINUED)

PHIL
I'm glad somebody is.

Greg absorbs the remark.

GREG
Well, I just hope it works out for you. I'm going to be writing all day, while you're out working.

PHIL
Got something on the go, have you?

GREG
Yes, actually. I'm going to finish my hitman idea.

PHIL
I see. Was that the one where the hitman was a cold, emotionless contract killer who lives by simple but strict rules? And during the course of the film he becomes less cold, more emotional and has to break some of his rules?

GREG
Yes.

PHIL
Good. I just hope it works out for you.

Greg studies Phil suspiciously.