

HOW TO KILL A GENRE

Written by

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Even the Genres are sick of vampires.

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'There is good and mediocre writing within every genre.'  
- Margaret Atwood

'But in vampire literature, it's mostly mediocre.'  
- Margaret Atwood never said this.

But I like to think she would have.

FADE IN:

EXT. PUBLIC LIBRARY - NIGHT

The place looks more like a mausoleum. Some NIGHT OWLS stagger past.

They don't notice SOMEONE run past one of the windows.

INT. PUBLIC LIBRARY - NIGHT

The library is closed. Every book has a shiny, black cover.

There's footsteps approaching, growing louder.

SPINSTER, normally a nosy woman with a sharp tongue, runs around the library. She looks seventy-years old, and moves fast for her age.

Spinster runs to a shelf, scoops up a pile of books and runs off.

Spinster dumps the books on the floor and pours a can of lighter fluid on them. She lights a match, tosses it on the pile and the books burst into flames.

Spinster stops to catch her breath, then:

SPINSTER

Show yourself, you fiend! I know  
you've murdered a Genre! Who's  
next? Adventure? Comedy? Fantasy?  
Me? Not if I can help it!

She gets back to her task.

Another pile of books goes into the fire.

SPINSTER (CONT'D)

See? I'm burning your books! How do  
you like that?

The FIEND suddenly appears behind her, his yellow eyes glowing.

Spinster turns pale, gasps and collapses next to the burning books. The Fiend disappears.

One book hasn't yet caught on fire. The cover shows that it's a vampire book.

INT. ADVENTURE'S HOUSE / HALLWAY - DAY

ADVENTURE, a tense, twenty-four-year-old woman wearing military fatigues, surveys a long, wide hallway. At the end of it, a mysterious door awaits.

Adventure steps forward. Her boot hits an unobtrusive button on the floor.

A large, scythe-like pendulum swings from the ceiling, nearly cuts Adventure down.

She recovers, right before dodging spikes that shoot out from the walls.

As Adventure jumps over the spikes, an automated flamethrower emerges from the wall and blasts her with a stream of fire.

Adventure rolls on the floor, smothering the flames. Then whips off her still-smoking jacket.

Adventure looks at the flamethrower, which still spews fire. It stops, shoot fire, stops again.

Small doors in the walls open up and dozens of mechanical spiders, fangs dripping with acid, crawl out and head for Adventure.

Adventure stomps and kicks away spiders, skillfully avoiding their fangs. The ones she kicks smash into the wall.

She kicks a spider high up just as the flamethrower fires. The spider gets incinerated.

Adventure then kicks a spider at the flamethrower every time it turns on.

The remaining mechanical spiders retreat. The flamethrower, spikes and pendulum disappear, leaving Adventure alone.

The opposite wall slowly advances towards Adventure. Then, it takes off at break-neck speed! Adventure runs to the door, reaches it, but struggles to get it open.

Just as the wall is about to crush her, she wrenches the door open, stumbles through...

INT. ADVENTURE'S HOUSE / KITCHEN - DAY

...and lands on her kitchen floor.

Behind Adventure, the moving wall collides violently with the opposite wall, blocking the doorway. It looks like the wall's going to break, but then it slowly retreats.

Adventure takes out a stopwatch. 1:33.27. She sighs, and pockets it.

A window shows it's getting lighter outside.

EXT. ADVENTURE'S HOUSE - DAY

The house, in the middle of nowhere, looks like a fortress built for the zombie apocalypse.

INT. ADVENTURE'S HOUSE / KITCHEN - DAY

A clock on the wall reads 5.30am.

Adventure pours herself an energy drink.

She turns, and comes face to face with the GHOST OF CLASSIC VAMPIRE.

Adventure drops the glass, which smashes on the floor.

The Ghost, dressed like a classic film vampire, radiates aristocratic charm. (Note: every time the Ghost appears, he looks more solid than before.)

The two stare at each other. Adventure squints, barely able to see the Ghost.

ADVENTURE  
Classic Vampire?

The Ghost nods.

ADVENTURE (CONT'D)  
Who did this to you?

The Ghost goes to speak, but stops. From far off, a rooster crows, and he fades away.

ADVENTURE (CONT'D)  
Wait!

But the Ghost is already gone. Adventure looks out the window. A few rays of sunlight shine in.

Adventure, badly shaken, stares at the place the Ghost stood. A phone rings, and she picks it up.

INT. HOSPITAL / WARD - DAY

Adventure bursts into the room.

Spinster's lying in a bed, hooked up to life support.  
Adventure has tears threatening.

DR NADINE HAMILTON, twenty-four, a trustworthy friend, stands  
at Spinster's side. She motions Adventure over.

ADVENTURE

What happened?

NADINE

I was hoping you could tell me.  
They found her at the library,  
lying next to a pile of burning  
books. Spinster's lucky to be  
alive.

She looks around.

NADINE (CONT'D)

(whisper)

Adventure, what's going on with the  
Genres?

Adventure's thoughtful.

NADINE (CONT'D)

My sister, Sherri, works at a  
bookshop, and she said something  
weird's happening.

ADVENTURE

Nadine, I really don't wanna talk  
about it.

NADINE

C'mon, why not? Spinster's not the  
only one! Last week, we got  
Western, and Satire and Thriller  
the week before. It's...scary.

She looks at Adventure.

NADINE (CONT'D)

What should I give her?

Adventure gives her a copy of Agatha Christie's 'And Then  
There Were None.'

ADVENTURE

When you give Spinster the drip,  
give her some Agatha Christie.  
It'll keep her alive for now.

NADINE

What are you going to do?

ADVENTURE

I'm gonna go see History, see what  
he thinks.

Nadine looks at the book's cover.

NADINE

I always loved Spinster's stories.  
Who doesn't love books featuring  
little old ladies solving  
mysteries?

Adventure moves to Spinster.

ADVENTURE

(whisper)

I'm not good at solving crimes. Not  
like you. You were, no, you are the  
best. I promise, I'll find the  
bastard who did this.

INT. HOSPITAL / WARD - DAY

Adventure strides down the hallway, a murderous look in her  
eyes.

EXT. VAMPIRE'S CASTLE - NIGHT

A large, blindingly white Gothic castle sitting close to a  
cliff. Though magnificent, it has seen better days.

INT. VAMPIRE'S CASTLE / ROMANCE'S ROOM - NIGHT

ROMANCE looks at herself in the mirror. She's a glum, yet  
hopeful, twenty-year-old woman.

She looks at a necklace she's wearing.

Romance senses something, and looks behind her. The Ghost  
looks at her with disapproval and pity.

Romance doesn't see his reflection in the mirror.

She looks back at the Ghost, but he's gone. Romance is agitated.

EXT. ALLEYWAY - NIGHT

The Ghost appears in a seemingly deserted alleyway. A feral cat screeches and runs off.

He looks around, confused.

A SHADOW moves along the wall. Then detaches and solidifies into MYSTERY, a masked man wearing a fedora and trench coat.

MYSTERY

Who did it?

No answer.

MYSTERY (CONT'D)

It was Sparkles, wasn't it?

The Ghost tries to answer, but is already disappearing.

MYSTERY (CONT'D)

You're not going anywhere until...

He tries to grab the Ghost, but his hands pass through and the Ghost disappears completely.

MYSTERY (CONT'D)

Hmph.

He strolls off into the night, pondering what just happened.

EXT. EROTICA'S HOUSE - NIGHT

An open window next to a large tree. New Wave music can be heard.

INT. EROTICA'S HOUSE / KID-LIT'S ROOM - NIGHT

A book shelf packed with children's books like 'Alice's Adventures in Wonderland,' 'The Tale of Peter Rabbit,' 'The Wonderful Wizard of Oz' and 'Wikipedia Brown.'

CHILDREN'S LIT aka KID-LIT, a fun-loving thirteen-year-old girl, lies on a bed listening to Limahl's 'The NeverEnding Story.'

When the guitar solo kicks in, Kid-Lit jumps on her bed and rocks out on air guitar. Once it's over, she flops on the bed.

Outside, a tree branch snaps, and Kid-Lit turns the music off and goes to the window.

There's nobody there, but on the ground are unusually large paw prints.

Kid-Lit slams the window shut and locks it. She closes the curtains for good measure.

Kid-Lit climbs back into bed, and cries.

The Ghost places a reassuring hand on her shoulder. She sits up and dries her eyes.

KID-LIT

Didn't think I'd see you again!

The Ghost doesn't say anything.

KID-LIT (CONT'D)

Can't talk? That's okay, you don't have to say anything.

The Ghost smiles grimly, revealing pointed teeth, then looks at Kid-Lit with concern.

KID-LIT (CONT'D)

Werewolf's developed this really unhealthy obsession with me.

She shudders.

KID-LIT (CONT'D)

It's like, I've become the only person who matters to him, and he won't leave me alone!

She hears footsteps from outside the room.

EROTICA (O.S.)

Hey Little! What's going on in there?

KID-LIT

(To Ghost)

Do you want to say hi to Erotica?

But he's already gone.

KID-LIT (CONT'D)

Sure, leave without saying goodbye!

The door opens and a fierce thirty-something androgynous figure, EROTICA, barges in. She's wearing a robe over S&M gear and wields a cat o' nine tails.

Erotica is like Kid-Lit's concerned older sister.

EROTICA

Was it Werewolf? Did he sneak in again?

KID-LIT

No, it was Classic Vampire. His Ghost, I mean.

EROTICA

Did he say who killed him?

KID-LIT

No, I forgot to ask. Sorry.

Erotica pulls back the curtain and looks outside. She notices the lock.

EROTICA

Want me to keep you company for a bit?

KID-LIT

Yes please.

She turns her music back on, sits next to Erotica and they listen to the rest of the song.

EXT. DOWNTOWN - DAY

TWINS walk down the sidewalk. COMEDY, a carefree young man with long hair, struts his stuff.

TRAGEDY, a depressed young man dressed in black and wearing too much eye shadow, lags behind, lost in thought.

Comedy looks over his shoulder.

COMEDY

C'mon Tradge, keep up! Fantasy expected us there an hour ago!

Tragedy snaps out of it.

TRAGEDY

Dammit Comedy, it's Tragedy, I've told you a hundred times!

COMEDY

Geez, lighten up! It's just a nickname.

PEOPLE walking past stare at the unlikely pair and their eccentric outfits.

Tragedy's having a sulk.

COMEDY (CONT'D)

All right, fine. What can I call you?

He does some thinking.

COMEDY (CONT'D)

Tragdy?

TRAGEDY

Hell no.

COMEDY

You're right, it makes you sound like a moody drag queen.

He laughs. Tragedy pretends he doesn't know the guy.

COMEDY (CONT'D)

You haven't been this mopey since we saw that film version of 'Les Miserables.'

TRAGEDY

The camerawork was terrible! And Crowe can't sing!

They arrive at a bookshop called 'A Likely Story.'

COMEDY

Here it is.

INT. A LIKELY STORY - DAY

Comedy and Tragedy enter and stop in their tracks.

Huge shelves are devoted to vampire fiction, romance fiction and vampire-romance fiction .

There's also published fan-fiction.

Comedy and Tragedy stare, gobsmacked. SHERRI HAMILTON, a perky bookshop worker in her late-twenties, walks up to them.

SHERRI  
Can I help you?

COMEDY  
We're looking for books in the  
comedy and tragedy sections.

Sherri's momentarily confused, but then she brightens.

SHERRI  
They'll be under miscellaneous.  
(she points)  
At the back of the store.

Comedy and Tragedy cringe as they make their way to the back.

COMEDY  
(whisper)  
Holy shit!

TRAGEDY  
You said it.

There's only one shelf, packed with every other genre. A thin layer of dust covers all the books.

Tragedy chooses 'Hamlet' while Comedy picks 'Napalm & Silly Putty.' They blow dust off their books and cough.

Comedy and Tragedy open their books. The pages in both books glow.

Two flashes of light, and the twins disappear. Their books drop to the floor just as Sherri shows up.

SHERRI  
Did you guys find what you were...?

She notices 'Napalm & Silly Putty' and 'Hamlet' on the floor.

Sherri places them back on the shelf and walks away. The pages of the books still glow faintly.

INT. TUNNEL OF TEXT - DAY

Comedy flies through a white tunnel, words and sentences in various languages zooming past.

One sentence stops in front of him and turns gold. It reads: 'A pear is a failed apple.'

COMEDY

Bingo! Come to papa.

He reaches for it.

INT. SCI-FI'S HOUSE / KITCHEN - DAY

FANTASY, a twenty-nine-year-old magician with floppy hair, chuckles as he reads 'Napalm & Silly Putty.' Even when standing still, he's brimming with energy.

A running shower can be heard.

Fantasy flips to a page that glows. He instantly drops the book and backs away.

The light grows brighter and flashes. Comedy materialises in the kitchen, his hair wind-swept.

He sees Fantasy and grins.

COMEDY

Houdini!

FANTASY

Hey, Groucho!

Comedy holds up a finger mustache tattoo under his nose, which looks like Groucho Marx's mustache.

They shake hands. There's a loud buzzing and Fantasy yanks his hand away.

FANTASY (CONT'D)

Ow! That's real electricity!

He grimaces as Comedy reveals a joy buzzer.

FANTASY (CONT'D)

You'd think I'd learn by now.

COMEDY

What fun would that be?

He picks up 'Napalm & Silly Putty.'

COMEDY (CONT'D)

For a minute there, I thought I came out of the wrong book again.

FANTASY

(laughing)

That's the trouble with going  
through the Tunnels of Text,  
they're so unpredictable.

COMEDY

Even if it's your own genre.

Fantasy looks around the room expectantly.

FANTASY

Is Tragedy coming?

COMEDY

He left the same time I did.

FANTASY

Which book?

COMEDY

'Hamlet.'

Fantasy's suddenly worried.

COMEDY (CONT'D)

What's wrong? Don't you have it?

FANTASY

Yes, but lately, Sci-Fi's taken up  
reading books...

A loud scream from upstairs.

FANTASY (CONT'D)

...in the shower.

Comedy laughs.

COMEDY

She reads Shakespeare in the  
shower?

There are loud whacking noises from upstairs.

TRAGEDY (O.S.)

Ow! Wait, it's me! It's Tragedy!

SCI-FI (O.S.)

Tradge! What the hell are you doing  
in here?

TRAGEDY (O.S.)  
Comedy and I used the Tunnels of  
Text!

SCI-FI (O.S.)  
You could've told me, so I wouldn't  
be reading 'Hamlet' in the shower  
when you got here!

TRAGEDY (O.S.)  
You read Shakespeare in the shower?

Comedy and Fantasy share an amused look.

SCI-FI (O.S.)  
Hold it, why are you still here?  
Get out! Out!

TRAGEDY (O.S.)  
Okay! Okay! I'm going! I'm gone!

The bathroom door opens and Tragedy stumbles out, soaking wet  
and eye shadow smeared. He trips down the stairs.

TRAGEDY (CONT'D)  
(rubbing his head)  
That woman's lethal with a loofah.

FANTASY  
I know.

INT. SCI-FI'S HOUSE / KITCHEN - DAY

Fantasy reaches into his sleeve and pulls out a towel, which  
Tragedy gratefully accepts. He opens the fridge and throws a  
beer to Comedy, who catches it.

Fantasy quaffs a health potion. A '+1' appears above his head  
and dings.

FANTASY  
What brings you guys here?

He hands Tragedy a bottle of 'Liquid Prozac.'

COMEDY  
We need to talk about our favourite  
emo teen, Vamp.

FANTASY  
What about him?

COMEDY

Ever since vampire mania hit, he's become very popular and very powerful. Adventure thinks he's dangerous.

TRAGEDY

She's grim and depressing nowadays, but she might be onto something.

They don't see it, but Fantasy's eyes light up upon hearing her name.

FANTASY

Adventure's as paranoid as Mystery. But don't tell her that, she'll kick your ass. Something I learned the hard way.

He chuckles.

FANTASY (CONT'D)

Look, Vamp's sparkling and James Dean impersonation are pretty silly, but it's nothing to worry about.

COMEDY

It's not just that. We can't shake this feeling Vamp wants the other Genres out of the picture.

SCI-FI (O.S.)

He might.

SCI-FI, a determined woman in her mid-twenties, enters. She's garbed in stylish steampunk clothes, hair still damp from her shower.

Comedy and Tragedy stare at her get-up.

SCI-FI (CONT'D)

This is nothing, you should see my underwear.

COMEDY

Can I?

SCI-FI

If you play your cards right, darling.

She winks at Comedy.

TRAGEDY

Can we please focus? We can look at her underwear later!

He realises what he said and facepalms.

TRAGEDY (CONT'D)

Anyway, you were saying?

SCI-FI

Vamp might want us out of the way.

COMEDY

You don't seem worried.

SCI-FI

Why would I be? He's going through a phase brought on by readers that really like wimpy vampires.

She thinks, then turns to Fantasy.

SCI-FI (CONT'D)

Didn't you go through something similar a few years ago? I think it was 2003.

FANTASY

(embarrassed)

I got a little full of myself...briefly.

SCI-FI

A little? Fantasy, you were an invincible sociopath riding around on a dragon! By the way, what happened to that dragon?

FANTASY

Not important!

TRAGEDY

(to Comedy)

You had a phase too. You were energetic and playful, but your jokes were awful. More so than usual.

COMEDY

You didn't like my cow jokes? Or...(the owl and the pussy cat?)

## FANTASY

(over)

They were more like hackneyed  
observations without punchlines  
than actual jokes.

## SCI-FI

But drunken frat boys loved you.

Comedy grins.

## SCI-FI (CONT'D)

Until they found out you stole  
jokes from better comedians.

## TRAGEDY

Oh yeah, I forgot! And do you  
remember that ridiculous hand  
gesture he tried to make popular?

Fantasy, Sci-Fi and even Tragedy laugh at Comedy's expense.

## COMEDY

C'mon, cut it out!

The laughter subsides.

## COMEDY (CONT'D)

(sulking)

Half of that stuff wasn't even my  
fault!

## FANTASY

We know. It was what people wanted  
at the time, and you changed to  
suit their tastes.

## SCI-FI

There you have it. Human desires  
can make us act weird, but it  
doesn't last forever.

## TRAGEDY

So, what? You think Vamp is just  
going through the motions? I don't  
think so.

## SCI-FI

Vampire mania will die down, and  
he'll be fine. Trust me.

Fantasy and Comedy mutter agreement. Tragedy's still  
unconvinced.

INT. ADVENTURE'S HOUSE / OFFICE - NIGHT

Adventure's in front of a desk covered with various knives and guns. She selects a kukri knife and a Bowie knife.

From a book shelf above the desk, she picks out a history textbook and opens it.

The book glows, and a bright light flashes.

EXT. UNIVERSITY - NIGHT

A distinguished-looking university. Newer buildings mingle with older Collegiate Gothic buildings.

INT. UNIVERSITY / LECTURE THEATRE - NIGHT

The place is half-full, the STUDENTS either falling or completely asleep.

HISTORY, an intensely intelligent fifty-five-year-old man, delivers a lecture. In his tweed jacket, he looks the part of a classic university professor.

HISTORY

The Roman Empire did not actually fall in 476. It continued on, not as a political entity, but a sociocultural and especially, an economic entity.

He holds an open textbook that he doesn't need to look at. It's the same one Adventure used for book travel.

But she doesn't emerge from it.

HISTORY (CONT'D)

It was not the collapse of the Empire in the west that ended it...

At the back of the theatre, ABBY THURSTON, a narcoleptic Student, nods off.

Her history textbook, open on her desk, glows.

There's a brief flash and Adventure's next to Abby, waking her. No one else notices.

Abby looks at Adventure in bewilderment, especially at the knives on her belt.

Adventure thinks fast, picks up the textbook.

ADVENTURE  
Can I share with you?

ABBY  
Um...sure.

The lecture wraps up with:

HISTORY  
That's all we have time for! I want  
those essay in next Friday at four  
o'clock. No earlier, no later.

Groggy Students file out. History looks at them with  
disappointment. Then he spots Adventure.

INT. UNIVERSITY / HISTORY'S OFFICE - NIGHT

History pours Adventure a glass of whiskey.

HISTORY  
You're sure it was Classic Vampire?

ADVENTURE  
Definitely.

History's behind his desk, Adventure sits across from him.

HISTORY  
You're absolutely sure?

ADVENTURE  
Yes!

HISTORY  
Just checking.

He pours himself a glass.

HISTORY (CONT'D)  
So, you think Vampire killed his  
own father, then went after  
Spinster?

ADVENTURE  
You have a better explanation?

History doesn't.

HISTORY

Why use the history textbook? You know it's risky going through the Tunnels of Text using a book that's not your genre.

ADVENTURE

I wasn't thinking clearly! Can we please get back to Vamp?

History nods.

HISTORY

Has the Ghost visited anyone else?

ADVENTURE

From what I know, Mystery, Erotica and Kid-Lit.

She takes a long swig.

ADVENTURE (CONT'D)

They all said the same thing. The Ghost appears, looks ominous, doesn't say a word. Then after a minute or two, he splits.

EXT. VAMPIRE'S CASTLE - NIGHT

Thunder rumbles ominously in the sky.

HISTORY (V.O.)

Maybe Horror knows something.

INT. VAMPIRE'S CASTLE / HALLWAY - NIGHT

HORROR, seemingly fearless, stands guard outside Romance's room, holding a machete. A scary mask covers his face.

A sparkling bat flies through the hallway. Horror yelps in fear and ducks.

ADVENTURE (V.O.)

He might, but he's still under Vamp's thumb.

HISTORY (V.O.)

What about Romance?

INT. VAMPIRE'S CASTLE / ROMANCE'S ROOM - NIGHT

Romance is sitting up in bed.

ADVENTURE (V.O.)  
Devoted to Vamp, as usual.

Romance gets up and quietly opens a window. She sees:

EXT. VAMPIRE'S CASTLE - NIGHT

A silver Volvo driving stupidly fast towards the castle.

INT. VAMPIRE'S CASTLE / ROMANCE'S ROOM - NIGHT

Romance closes the window and tries to lock it, but the locks have been removed.

INT. VAMPIRE'S CASTLE / HALLWAY - NIGHT

Horror's standing still again, like a Queen's guard.

A sinister SHADOW glides up the staircase, followed by its seemingly non-threatening owner:

VAMPIRE, an arrogant, twenty-five-year-old trying to pass as a teenager, approaches the door to Romance's room. He has creepy-looking yellow eyes.

Vampire looks at Horror with amusement. He waves his hand in front of Horror's face, makes faces and even mimes ripping Horror's arm off.

Horror remains motionless.

Vampire chuckles and claps him on the back.

VAMPIRE  
Take a break, friend. You've earned it.

Horror doesn't say a word, but relaxes somewhat. He walks away. Vampire takes out a key.

INT. VAMPIRE'S CASTLE / ROMANCE'S ROOM - NIGHT

Vampire enters to find Romance sitting in a chair facing the window. He looks very smug.

VAMPIRE

I'm back.

Romance doesn't look at him.

ROMANCE

You got rid of the locks on my window.

Vampire laughs it off.

VAMPIRE

Your window doesn't need locks. I'm the only one who can climb up and get in through it.

ROMANCE

Your buddy Werewolf could still sneak in through the window, and frankly, I don't like him.

VAMPIRE

He's not called that anymore, remember? Besides, he's interested in someone else.

ROMANCE

So I've heard.

Vampire is oblivious to her discomfort.

VAMPIRE

Once I convince Kid-Lit to return wolf boy's feelings, he'll finally get his happily ever after.

ROMANCE

I'm sure.

In the blink of an eye, Vampire is suddenly crouching next to Romance, gripping her wrist.

VAMPIRE

Care to repeat that?

There are tears of pain in Romance's eyes.

ROMANCE

I'm sure...they will be as happy as we are.

Vampire lets go. His grip has made a large bruise around her wrist.

VAMPIRE

Are we still frolicking in the meadow later?

ROMANCE

Yes.

VAMPIRE

See you then.

In a flash, he runs out the door.

Romance touches the bruise and winces. Then she touches something attached to her necklace.

INT. UNIVERSITY / HISTORY OFFICE - NIGHT

History paces in front of Adventure.

ADVENTURE

Who's left?

HISTORY

Hmm?

He stops pacing.

ADVENTURE

What Genres are still on our side?

HISTORY

Quite a few. There's Comedy, Tragedy, Fantasy, Sci-Fi, Kid-Lit and I think Mystery and Erotica.

ADVENTURE

What about Utopia and Dystopia?

HISTORY

They're in hospital too, I'm afraid.

Adventure nods.

ADVENTURE

Oscar Bait?

HISTORY

Campaigning. Harvey's got him working the whole year now.

ADVENTURE

Probably better that way. Oscar  
Bait hates Comedy.

She ponders something.

ADVENTURE (CONT'D)

Vamp has Romance, Horror, Werewolf,  
Melodrama and others benefitting  
from his popularity. Don't think  
Melodrama's a threat though.

History nods.

HISTORY

Suppose we kill Vamp. Who's going  
to replace him?

ADVENTURE

Let's cross that bridge when we  
come to it.

She takes out the Bowie knife and offers it to History.

HISTORY

My old Bowie knife!

ADVENTURE

Thought you might want it.

History clips the knife to his belt.

HISTORY

We still don't know Vamp killed  
Classic Vampire. Nor do we know if  
he plans to get rid of us.

ADVENTURE

We need to talk to the Ghost.

She stands.

ADVENTURE (CONT'D)

And I think I know where he's going  
to show up next.

INT. SCI-FI'S HOUSE / LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Comedy and Tragedy sit on comfy couches with Fantasy and Sci-  
Fi, snacking on cheese and crackers and drinking wine.

SCI-FI

Would you like anything else?

TRAGEDY  
No, this is lovely. Thank you.

COMEDY  
(stuffing his face)  
Yep. Lovely.

FANTASY  
By the way, I'm curious about those  
cow jokes.

Tragedy groans.

COMEDY  
Sure. What do you call a cow with  
no legs?

FANTASY  
I don't know.

COMEDY  
Ground beef!

Tragedy, Fantasy and Sci-Fi groan.

COMEDY (CONT'D)  
What do you call a cow with two  
legs?

SCI-FI  
Not a clue.

COMEDY  
Lean beef!

Louder groaning.

COMEDY (CONT'D)  
What do you call a cow that's had  
an abortion?  
(a beat)  
De-calf-einated!

Groaning and nervous laughter.

SCI-FI  
Those were so bad!

TRAGEDY  
I tried to warn you.  
(to Fantasy)  
By the way, why are you staying at  
Sci-Fi's house?

Fantasy puts his wine glass down.

FANTASY

We're working on a weapon that  
combines science with magic.

SCI-FI

It could be useful against Vamp.

COMEDY

I thought you said he'd go back to  
normal.

SCI-FI

DOesn't hurt to be prepared.

TRAGEDY

What do you call this weapon?

Three books fall off a shelf behind them. They each open and  
make a flash of light. Erotica, Kid-Lit and Mystery  
materialise in the room.

MYSTERY

Hello. Where's Adventure?

TRAGEDY

What's going on?

EROTICA

Adventure and History told us to  
meet them here.

KID-LIT

So where are they?

ADVENTURE (O.S.)

Here!

She and History run down the stairs. Adventure's about to  
speak, but gets distracted by Fantasy's clothes.

ADVENTURE (CONT'D)

What the hell are you supposed to  
be?

FANTASY

A stage magician. I thought the  
staff, the cloaks and three-part  
movies were getting kind of old.  
Say, what's that behind your ear?

He reaches behind Adventure's ear and pulls out...nothing.

ADVENTURE  
An invisible coin?

FANTASY  
No...

ADVENTURE  
Don't quit your day job.

FANTASY  
Hang on, I didn't do it right.

He looks inside his sleeves and pockets.

SCI-FI  
(to History)  
What were you doing upstairs?

HISTORY  
We showed up in your shower.

COMEDY  
Great. Now can you tell us what's  
going on?

The Ghost appears.

COMEDY (CONT'D)  
Ah...

The Ghost heads for a door.

FANTASY  
Oi! I don't care who you are, you  
stay out of there!

EROTICA  
Where's he going?

FANTASY  
The basement.

ADVENTURE  
What's down there?

SCI-FI  
A new thing Fantasy and I have been  
tinkering with. We call it the  
Spork.

HISTORY  
I'm sorry, the what?

The Ghost phases through the door.

## ADVENTURE

C'mon!

They follow. Comedy stuffs some crackers in his pockets.

INT. SCI-FI'S HOUSE / BASEMENT - NIGHT

Adventure leads the Genres down the stairs. There's one flickering overhead light. The glowing Ghost illuminates the rest of the basement.

The basement is filled with half-finished gadgets, including a backpack helicopter hanging on the wall.

The Ghost stands in front of a table with a long, red spork lying on it. He faces the Genres.

GHOST

Forgive my silence. I was still in shock from being deceased. It's new to me.

TRAGEDY

Who murdered you?

GHOST

You know the answer.

It was Vampire.

GHOST (CONT'D)

I told Vampire his popularity would make other Genres suffer. I begged him to relinquish some of his power. He refused.

Comedy munches crackers, which annoys the Ghost.

GHOST (CONT'D)

The next day, my son crept up behind me and drove a wooden stake through my heart. Now, I am doomed to wander the earth until my death is avenged.

Hearing this upsets Kid-Lit. Erotica comforts her.

KID-LIT

Poor ghost.

GHOST

Do not pity me. Vampire's becoming more powerful everyday, and this will cause Genres to die. But he can be stopped. He must be.

ADVENTURE

How do we stop him?

GHOST

How would I know? I'm just a ghost. Fare thee well.

ADVENTURE

Wait! Can't you help us?

The Ghost disappears.

ADVENTURE (CONT'D)

Sci-Fi, can I see the Spork?

Sci-Fi hands her the Spork.

ADVENTURE (CONT'D)

How does it work?

FANTASY

Point the Spork at a vampire book, and press the button. It highlights passages that show how stupid the books really are.

SCI-FI

Think of it as a Do-It-Yourself Rifftrax.

She opens a vampire book. Adventure points the Spork at it and presses the button.

The book glows blue, and the pages become covered in red markings.

Fantasy flips through the pages. Every page has red markings.

ADVENTURE

Brilliant.

SCI-FI

It's also strong, so it'd make a nifty weapon.

ADVENTURE

Sounds good.

## HISTORY

We should also consider attacking  
Vamp on other fronts.

## ADVENTURE

Like what?

## GHOST (V.O.)

Wait a minute!

The disembodied voice makes them jump.

## GHOST (V.O.)

One more thing: I need you all to  
swear.

## COMEDY/KID-LIT

Shit!

## GHOST (V.O.)

No! Swear you will stop my son.  
Swear it on the Spork.

Each Genre puts a hand on the Spork.

## ADVENTURE

Every remaining Genre will fight  
Vamp and stop him, no matter what.  
We swear it on this Spork.

## ALL GENRES

On this Spork.

Shrill alarms go off.

## EROTICA

What's that alarm mean?

## SCI-FI

Vamp's minions have found us!

Most of the Genres panic.

Sci-Fi gives Adventure a cloth, which she uses to wrap the  
Spork.

## HISTORY

We're not ready to fight!

## TRAGEDY

That's it then, we're doomed!

He ties a noose around his neck. Comedy takes it off.

COMEDY

Cut that out!

FANTASY

Everything's going to be fine!  
Don't panic!

ADVENTURE

Quiet! All of you!  
(a beat)  
A week from now, we'll meet at my  
house. Got it?

ALL GENRES

Got it!

Sci-Fi opens a hidden trapdoor, and they all jump in. The  
alarms keep blaring.

EXT. ADVENTURE'S HOUSE - DAY

A half-finished chainlink fence surrounds the place.

INT. ADVENTURE'S HOUSE / KITCHEN - DAY

History, Comedy, Tragedy, Fantasy, Sci-Fi, Mystery, Erotica  
and Kid-Lit wait. Adventure twirls the Spork in her fingers  
as she thinks.

Kid-Lit looks pale.

KID-LIT

Why are we in the kitchen?

COMEDY

It's where the food is.

KID-LIT

Then where's the food?

COMEDY

That, my young friend, is one of  
life's great mysteries.

Adventure stops twirling the Spork, and tucks it under her  
arm like a swagger stick.

ADVENTURE

Thanks to Sci-Fi and Fantasy, we've  
got a weapon to use against Vamp.

HISTORY

But we need to do more.

ADVENTURE

Agreed. It's too easy to blame him  
for all our troubles.

(sighing)

Let's be honest, we've all been  
slacking off.

SCI-FI

Yeah. Mystery's latest noir didn't  
even have a private eye monologue.

Mystery pulls his hat over his face.

MYSTERY

I forgot how to narrate.

SCI-FI

And Erotica...

EROTICA

Vampire was responsible for those  
shitty books! He encouraged that  
greedy bitch to publish her fan-  
fiction and use S&M to justify an  
abusive relationship!

The Genres are stunned by Erotica's outburst.

ADVENTURE

My point is, we can't be careless  
anymore.

The Others are chastened.

ADVENTURE (CONT'D)

Still, Spinster had the right idea,  
burning vampire books. Anything  
else we can do?

FANTASY

We could form book clubs. That  
would reinvigorate interest in us.

SCI-FI

And organise creative writing  
workshops to find some fresh  
talent.

COMEDY

Tragedy and I can get on that book  
burning business.

Tragedy nods. Mystery clears his throat.

COMEDY (CONT'D)

Slight amendment. Tragedy, Mystery and I can get on that book burning business.

MYSTERY

That's better.

ADVENTURE

Fantasy, your dragon can help them burn books.

FANTASY

(uneasy)

Yeah, about that. The thing is...

ADVENTURE

What?

FANTASY

She may have gone rogue and tried to eat some people, okay?

ADVENTURE

Like the Renaissance faire?

FANTASY

Like the Renaissance faire.

An awkward silence.

ADVENTURE

Right, what else can we do?

EROTICA

Kid-Lit and I'll give away our books for free.

TRAGEDY

Who'd buy children's literature and erotica from the same people?

EROTICA

Fine, we'll compromise and give away sex-ed books instead.

KID-LIT

Okay.

ADVENTURE

History and I will spork Vamp's books to show his fans how horrible the books are. Sound good?

Yes, it does.

ADVENTURE (CONT'D)

Let's get started.

EXT. BOOKSHOP - DAY

Comedy walks out with an armful of vampire books and heads down an alleyway.

EXT. ALLEYWAY - DAY

Tragedy and Mystery stand next to a garbage can filled with vampire books. Some are scattered on the ground.

Comedy approaches them.

MYSTERY

Were you followed?

COMEDY

No, but I read that the government's been reading our minds. We should make tinfoil hats to keep them out.

MYSTERY

That's actually not a bad idea.

Tragedy points to the books.

TRAGEDY

Bet those cost you a pretty penny.

COMEDY

Nah, I used your credit card.

He dumps the books into the garbage can.

TRAGEDY

What?

Mystery pours lighter fluid. Comedy lights a match and throws it in. The books flare up into a bonfire.

EXT. MEADOW - DAY

Romance and Vampire look ridiculous as they frolic in the meadow. Vampire's skin sparkles in the sunlight. Romance looks happier.

They jump over a stream. Vampire lands and doubles over in pain.

ROMANCE

What is it? What's wrong?

Vampire shoves her aside.

VAMPIRE

I'm fine!

ROMANCE

No, you're not! Someone's burning your books again, aren't they?

VAMPIRE

I will deal with them later.

EXT. ALLEYWAY - DAY

Tragedy's staring at the burning books.

TRAGEDY

I know we have to do this, but it still makes me uncomfortable.

COMEDY

Why's that?

TRAGEDY

How many book burnings weren't done by religious extremists? None. What does that make us?

MYSTERY

(laughing)  
Avant-garde.

Comedy takes out a large bag of marshmallows. Mystery hands out wooden sticks.

COMEDY

Thank you, Misty.

MYSTERY

Don't call me that!

Tragedy looks at the bag.

TRAGEDY

Did you buy that with my credit  
card too?

COMEDY

Yep. Want some?

Comedy and Mystery spear marshmallows on their sticks.  
Tragedy, reluctantly, does the same. They hold their  
marshmallows over the fire.

MYSTERY

Anyone got chocolate and graham  
crackers? We could make s'mores.

He tries to eat his marshmallow, but his mask gets in the  
way.

INT. SCHOOL / HALLWAY - DAY

There's a crudely-written sign taped to a door that says:  
'Free Beer!'

INT. CLASSROOM - DAY

Fantasy and Sci-Fi, wearing what they think are regular  
clothes, stand in a room packed with sober STUDENTS. The  
Students' desks have been arranged in a horseshoe pattern.

A whiteboard has a model of the three-act structure, the  
steps of the Hero's Journey and the word 'CHOICES.'

FANTASY

Welcome to the first meeting of the  
Inklings. I'm Alex Herrmann, and  
I'll be conducting this workshop  
with Harley Ellison.

He gestures to Sci-Fi.

FANTASY (CONT'D)

We're here to...put the magic back  
into writing.

He throws a pellet on the floor that makes a puff of smoke.  
When the smoke clears away, Fantasy's still standing in the  
same spot.

FANTASY (CONT'D)

Whoops.

A Student at the back puts his hands up.

FANTASY (CONT'D)  
 For the last time, no, there isn't  
 any free beer, I drank it all.  
 Sorry about that.

A few other students leave. Fantasy, flustered, rushes over to Sci-Fi.

FANTASY (CONT'D)  
 (whisper)  
 We're losing them! What do we do?

SCI-FI  
 Give them a show.

Fantasy grins. He takes out a black wand with white tips and addresses the class.

FANTASY  
 Harley and I need two people to  
 participate in our duel.  
 Volunteers?

The Students hesitate, but then half raise their hands. Sci-Fi points to DARLENE, a quiet, seventeen-year-old girl.

SCI-FI  
 How about you and...

She points at BEN, an absent-minded eighteen-year-old guy.

SCI-FI (CONT'D)  
 ...you? What are your names?

DARLENE  
 I'm Darlene. He's Ben.

Sci-Fi gives Fantasy two pieces of paper, which he taps with his wand. Fantasy hands one to Darlene and the other to Ben.

SCI-FI  
 Fantasy, I mean, Alex and I are  
 going to have a duel. However, it  
 will be Ben and Darlene who  
 determine how we fight.

This confuses the Students more than algebra.

FANTASY  
 Darlene will write spells, and I'll  
 cast them. Ben will write stuff  
 that Harley will shoot at me. Okay?

Darlene and Ben nod.

SCI-FI  
Alex and I don't feel like dying  
today, so keep things non-lethal,  
okay?

She and Fantasy position themselves fifteen feet apart.

They rip off the regular clothes to reveal their magician and steampunk outfits. This impresses the Students.

Fantasy holds out his wand. Sci-Fi pulls out a laser gun and points it at him.

FANTASY  
Darlene, what do I do first?

Darlene picks up a pencil.

DARLENE  
You...  
(she writes)  
'Cast...an...attack spell.'

FANTASY  
What kind? C'mon, don't be stingy  
with the details!

Darlene crosses it out.

DARLENE  
'Fire a bolt of lightning at  
Harley.'

Fantasy shoots lightning at Sci-Fi.

BEN  
'Absorb the lightning and throw it  
back.'

Sci-Fi uses her gun to absorb the lightning and fires back at Fantasy, who dodges it.

The lightning blasts a giant, smoking hole in the wall.  
Fantasy looks at the damage.

FANTASY  
It's pretty crowded in here. Let's  
take the fight somewhere else.  
Where to? Sky's the limit.

This time, every Students raises their hand. Fantasy points to Abby, whom Adventure met last week.

FANTASY (CONT'D)  
Where are we going? Your choice!

EXT. ABANDONED THEME PARK / BLEACHERS - DAY

Fantasy has transported Sci-Fi, Darlene, Ben, Abby and the rest to a desolate theme park.

The Genres and Students look around, amazed.

There's a rusty, white ferris wheel. Its centre has a black oval, eight black poles attached to it. Together, they form a giant spider.

Animatronic dinosaurs crawl out of a nearby lake. Their artificial skin rotting away, revealing mechanical innards.

In a graveyard are headstones with silly names like 'Izzy Dead,' 'Ted N Buried' and 'Archie Leach.' Some are empty, awaiting a coffin.

Somewhere, a haunting calliope can be heard.

FANTASY  
(to Abby)  
You imagined this whole thing?

ABBY  
Apparently.

Sci-Fi waves to get the Students' attention.

SCI-FI  
While Alex and I fight, you can watch from the bleachers.

The Students move to the bleachers.

SCI-FI (CONT'D)  
Darlene, Ben, where are you? Still got your pieces of paper?

Darlene and Ben wave their papers and pens in the air.

SCI-FI (CONT'D)  
Good! Begin!

Darlene and Ben scribble more furiously than before.

EXT. ABANDONED THEME PARK / GRAVEYARD - DAY

Fantasy and Sci-Fi throw spells and open fire on each other, jumping from headstone to headstone as they fight.

Fantasy levitates headstones and launches them towards Sci-Fi. She shoots each one to smithereens.

Sci-Fi hides behind a tomb to avoid the debris. She pulls out a miniature periscope.

Through it, she can see Fantasy trying to sneak up on her.

Grinning wickedly, she pulls out a grenade and lobs it at Fantasy.

Fantasy trips backwards and shields himself with his arms. The grenade lands near him, but doesn't explode.

Fantasy gets up and dusts off his cloak.

FANTASY

Very funny!

The grenade explodes, sending Fantasy flying. Sci-Fi runs after him.

EXT. ABANDONED THEME PARK / BLEACHERS - DAY

The Students watch Fantasy sail through the air.

FANTASY

We said non-lethal!

There's a loud splash.

EXT. ABANDONED THEME PARK / DINOSAUR LAKE - DAY

Sci-Fi stops at the lake, the water still rippling.

The water becomes calm, then bubbles. Fantasy breaks through the surface, riding a...

...mechanical Maiasaura. Fantasy tries to get the duck-billed dinosaur to run, as if riding a horse.

FANTASY

C'mon, giddy up! Yah! Yah!

But the maiasaura doesn't comprehend. Sci-Fi laughs and walks away.

A mechanical Tyrannosaurus Rex tries to take a bite out of the herbivore's hindquarters.

The Maiasaura sees the Tyrannosaur and panics. It runs as fast as it can. Fantasy holds on for dear life.

Sci-Fi sees Fantasy, the Maiasaura and Tyrannosaur coming toward her.

SCI-FI  
Exit, pursued by dinosaurs!

She runs for her life.

Sci-Fi heads for the white ferris wheel. The mechanical Maiasaura is catching up and about to trample her when Fantasy holds out a hand.

Sci-Fi takes Fantasy's hand and pulls her onto the Maiasaura. It suddenly stops and swings its head, sending Fantasy and Sci-Fi flying.

The Tyrannosaur runs right into the Maiasaura. Both crash to the ground, catch fire and explode.

EXT. ABANDONED THEME PARK / BLEACHERS - DAY

The Students shield their eyes from the blast. Darlene and Ben keep scribbling.

EXT. ABANDONED THEME PARK / FERRIS WHEEL - DAY

Fantasy and Sci-Fi smack right into the ferris wheel and immediately get stuck. The ride is literally a giant web.

FANTASY  
We should wrap this up!

SCI-FI  
Are you kidding? It's just getting good!

They climb, going slow. Then the ferris wheel speeds up, gradually getting faster and faster.

SCI-FI (CONT'D)  
You were right! Let's end it!

FANTASY  
Beam battle?

SCI-FI  
Beam battle!

Fantasy and Sci-Fi climb until they are each on opposite sides of the ferris wheel. Both fight motion sickness.

They point their weapons at each other and fire. Their beams collide, form a giant ball of energy which explodes.

The ferris wheel collapses. Fantasy and Sci-Fi fall...

INT. SCHOOL / CLASSROOM - DAY

...and land on the floor. They stand, groaning. Fantasy cracks his neck.

Every Student stares at the Genres with wide eyes. Darlene, Ben and Abby are exhausted but exhilarated.

FANTASY  
What did we think of that?

The Students clearly enjoyed it.

FANTASY (CONT'D)  
Now that your imaginations are  
fired up, let's do it again!

Abby, Darlene and Ben groan.

INT. BIG BOOK STORE / LOWER LEVEL - DAY

Adventure and History come in. Adventure's holding the Spork.

All sections are dedicated to vampire fiction. Two escalators lead up to a second story.

PEOPLE sit in groups, reading books with black covers.

Adventure puts on a pair of sunglasses.

She and History approach ALICIA, a vampire fangirl who works at the store. She stares at the Spork, which looks dangerous.

ALICIA  
Is there anything I can help you  
with?

Adventure holds the Spork like a white cane and taps it on the floor. She grabs History's arm.

HISTORY

My daughter and I are looking to buy the latest vampire book. Can you tell us where the Braille section is?

Alicia looks relieved. She points to one of the escalators.

ALICIA

Take the escalator, then go left. You can't miss it.

HISTORY

Much obliged.

He leads Adventure onto the escalator.

ADVENTURE

'My daughter?' You look old enough to be my granddad.

HISTORY

That's no way to talk to your father, young lady.

INT. BIG BOOK STORE / UPPER LEVEL - DAY

Adventure looks around before taking her sunglasses.

History picks up 'Wuthering Heights' by Emily Bronte. The cover has a white flower against a black background.

HISTORY

They still have the classics. But only if they look like something vampire fans would want to read.

ADVENTURE

Sounds like something Vamp would do.

History flips the pages.

HISTORY

At least they're not changing the words.

ADVENTURE

For now. I wonder...

She holds out a hand and History gives her the book.

Adventure puts the book on the floor and points the Spork at it. She presses the button, the Spork hums and the book glows.

The glow fades and the cover of 'Wuthering Heights' is normal again.

Adventure and History are impressed.

ADVENTURE (CONT'D)

Not bad.

She places the book back on the shelf.

ADVENTURE (CONT'D)

Let's see what else this Spork can do.

They see three Readers, LAUREN, JESSICA and TYLER, sharing a book. Adventure approaches them, brandishing the Spork. History puts a restraining hand on her shoulder.

ADVENTURE (CONT'D)

What?

HISTORY

You can't just walk up to a group of people and point scary red cutlery at them!

ADVENTURE

They won't even notice me. Just keep a lookout, okay?

History hides behind a bookshelf. Adventure goes over to lauren, Jessica and Tyler, jabs their book and keeps walking past them.

The Readers remain engrossed in their book.

Lauren gets a funny look on her face. The pages of the book are now covered in red markings. She reads the highlighted passages more carefully.

LAUREN

Did Hairy Stu just fall in love with an infant?

JESSICA

What?

LAUREN

Hairy Stu, the hot werewolf, just fell in love with Mary Sue's baby!

(MORE)

LAUREN (CONT'D)

And Mary Sue and Gary Stu are okay  
with it!

TYLER

Oh my God, that's disgusting! Wait  
a minute...

He grabs the book.

TYLER (CONT'D)

...didn't he also force himself on  
Mary Sue twice?

JESSICA

And the author's telling us he's  
this great guy? What's wrong with  
her?

LAUREN

Don't forget about the editor. Does  
he even care?

To Adventure's delight, they throw the book in the trash and  
leave.

History, also delighted, watches them go.

ADVENTURE

I gotta say, that was pretty  
fantastic.

HISTORY

Here, let me try, let me try!

ADVENTURE

Be my guest.

START MUSIC OVER MONTAGE

- Adventure and History go around the book store, taking turn  
to Spork the books being read.

- The Readers put their books back on the shelf, or throw  
them in the garbage in disgust.

- Whenever History takes a turn with Spork, he twirls it like  
a baton, which annoys Adventure.

END MUSIC UNDER MONTAGE

INT. BIG BOOK STORE / LOWER LEVEL - DAY

Adventure and History approach MIKE, ERIC and ANGELA, another group of readers. History's holding the Spork.

HISTORY

I'd love to see the look on Vamp's face right now.

ADVENTURE

Same.

She chuckles, glances at the wall and her face falls.

There's an old poster of 'The Three Musketeers' hanging on the wall. One corner's curling up. Adventure smooths it out.

Without knowing it, she holds the Spork like a rapier. For a moment, Adventure can see imagine herself as one of the musketeers. For a moment, she can see her old self.

With the Spork, Adventure salutes the poster.

HISTORY

Adventure?

She snaps out of it, and the poster goes back to normal.

ADVENTURE

It's nothing. Go do your thing.

History walks up to Mike, Eric and Angela. He's about to jab Angela's book when she looks up and screams bloody murder.

EXT. BIG BOOK STORE - DAY

BRAD, a security officer, throws Adventure and History out. Then tosses the Spork out.

BRAD

If I catch you freaks pointing scary red cutlery at people again, I'm calling the cops!

He slams the door.

History picks up the Spork, and he and Adventure walk away.

ADVENTURE

Nice work.

HISTORY

Like you could've done better.

EXT. DOWNTOWN - DAY

Adventure and History appear from around a corner.

HISTORY

It mostly worked. Until we got caught.

ADVENTURE

You got caught. But yes, the Spork worked. Even if you were having way too much fun using it.

History looks chagrined.

HISTORY

Why don't we just call it a day and try again tomorrow?

Adventure stops.

ADVENTURE

No. The Spork isn't going to be enough. We need to do something else. Something big!

INT. EROTICA'S HOUSE / KID-LIT'S ROOM - NIGHT

Kid-Lit's sitting up in bed while Erotica tugs uncomfortably at her clothes. Erotica's wearing normal clothes instead of her usual bondage gear.

The bedroom window is open.

KID-LIT

I think the book thing went very well. Don't you?

EROTICA

I could've given away more books if I was wearing my everyday outfit. Please turn around.

Kid-Lit does so.

Erotica strips off the regular clothes, revealing bondage gear underneath. She sighs in relief.

EROTICA (CONT'D)

I'm gonna take a shower, unless you want it first.

KID-LIT

All yours.

Erotica leaves and closes the door. Kid-Lit lies in bed and snuggles with TOLLERS, a stuffed animal dog dressed in a tweed jacket.

Kid-Lit hears a branch snap and startles.

A shirtless PAEDOWOLF, a keen and perverse eighteen-year-old guy, jumps in through the window.

PAEDOWOLF

Hey.

KID-LIT

Still have that weird obsession with me, Werewolf? Or should I call you Paedowolf now?

PAEDOWOLF

There's nothing weird about it. And my bond with you is not an obsession either.

Kid-Lit slowly backs away.

PAEDOWOLF (CONT'D)

At first, I'll be an older brother or father figure to you. Then, once you're old enough, something more.

KID-LIT

But I never age, I'm the embodiment of children's literature. That's sort of why I'm called Kid-Lit.

PAEDOWOLF

Vamp told me he found a way to make it happen.

KID-LIT

Even if I were older, how do you know I'd be interested in you?

PAEDOWOLF

With the bond we have, why would you say no?

Kid-Lit picks up Tollers.

KID-LIT

Tollers already made me a better offer.

Paedowolf smiles, humouring her.

PAEDOWOLF  
Can I see?

She hands the stuffed dog over.

PAEDOWOLF (CONT'D)  
I'm sure Tollers wouldn't mind  
sharing...

Tollers suddenly morphs into a real Doberman, and goes to town on Paedowolf! Paedowolf tries to fend him off.

PAEDOWOLF (CONT'D)  
Ow! Ow! Oh God! Oh God! Call him  
off! Call him off!

KID-LIT  
No!

Erotica runs in, soaking wet, wrapped in a towel and wielding a whip.

EROTICA  
What the hell's going on?

Paedowolf throws Tollers off. He tries to hit the Doberman, but Erotica's whip snaps around his wrist.

Paedowolf yanks the whip out of Erotica's hand and leaps out the window.

EXT. EROTICA'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Paedowolf crashes to the ground. He transforms into a werewolf and runs off.

INT. EROTICA'S HOUSE / KID-LIT'S ROOM - NIGHT

Tollers barks at the window.

KID-LIT  
Tollers, it's okay! He's gone!

Tollers stops barking and becomes docile.

KID-LIT (CONT'D)  
C'mere, boy.

She picks him up and turns him back into a stuffed animal. Kid-Lit lovingly strokes the stuffed Tollers.

KID-LIT (CONT'D)

I really need to keep that window closed.

EROTICA

Mmmhmm.

KID-LIT

I'm glad you got me Tollers for Christmas.

Erotica's still shaken.

EROTICA

Me too. Me too.

A cell phone rings. Erotica answers it.

INT. VAMPIRE'S CASTLE / ROMANCE'S ROOM - NIGHT

Romance, sleeping peacefully, opens her eyes.

She sees Vampire, sitting in the corner staring at her, and screams.

VAMPIRE

Would you relax? It's just me.

Romance still looks tense.

ROMANCE

It's been a while since you've done that. Guess I'm not used to it.

VAMPIRE

Fair enough.

He stands.

VAMPIRE (CONT'D)

Did you know I was watching you sleep before we got together?

ROMANCE

You might've mentioned it once or twice.

VAMPIRE

I haven't done it lately, but not because I'm tired of you. I've just been...distracted is all.

They hear someone howl, open the front door and slam it.

VAMPIRE (CONT'D)  
That'll be Paedowolf. Be right  
back.

He leaves.

A cellphone rings. Romance checks the screen.

ROMANCE  
(to phone)  
Hello?

INT. ADVENTURE'S HOUSE / HALLWAY - NIGHT

ADVENTURE  
(to phone)  
The war council's tonight. You in?

INT. VAMPIRE'S CASTLE / ROMANCE'S ROOM - NIGHT

Romance sits up.

ROMANCE  
(to phone)  
War council? Against Vamp?

INTERCUT AT DIRECTOR'S DISCRETION.

ADVENTURE  
I know you hate Vamp as much as I  
do. And I know how much he's hurt  
you. Will you come?

Romance thinks about it.

ROMANCE  
I will.

ADVENTURE  
Good. What book do you want to use?

Romance reaches under her pillow and takes out a book.

ROMANCE  
You got 'Pride and Prejudice'?

Adventure picks up her copy.

ADVENTURE  
Yep.

ROMANCE  
I'll be right over.

INT. VAMPIRE'S CASTLE / ROMANCE'S ROOM - NIGHT

Romance opens 'Pride and Prejudice' and is gone in a flash.

INT. VAMPIRE'S CASTLE / LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Two small tables near the front door. Each has a glass vase filled with marbles on it.

A fireplace with a mantelpiece with a few books on it. One book falls off and opens.

Light flashes and Romance stands next to it. She looks around, confused.

Vampire and Paedowolf, who were just talking, look at Romance in surprise. Paedowolf's covered in scratches and bite marks.

VAMPIRE  
What were you doing?

ROMANCE  
Going to see Adventure, but I wound up in here.

VAMPIRE  
I fiddled with every book in the castle. If you enter the Tunnels of Text, you can't go anywhere.

ROMANCE  
But why?

VAMPIRE  
If we captured one of our enemies and they tried to escape, they'd end up back in here.

ROMANCE  
I don't see why I have to be locked up too.

Vampire chuckles.

VAMPIRE  
For your protection, of course.

ROMANCE

Seems like everything you do is for my 'protection.' Well bud, you can take that protection and shove it! And you...!

She points at Paedowolf.

ROMANCE (CONT'D)

You ought to be ashamed of yourself!

She marches towards the front door.

VAMPIRE

Where are you going?

ROMANCE

Adventure's house! That a problem?

VAMPIRE

A huge problem.

He walks towards Romance. She picks up a vase and throws it. Vampire ducks, and the vase smashes into Paedowolf's face. Marbles fly everywhere!

VAMPIRE (CONT'D)

Dammit!

He sits and counts the marbles.

VAMPIRE (CONT'D)

One, two, three, four, five, six...

Romance opens the door. Paedowolf tries to stop her, but he's still reeling from taking a vase to the face.

Romance slams the door. Hard.

Paedowolf picks shards of glass from his face. The cuts heal quickly. He looks at Vampire like he's lost his marbles.

PAEDOWOLF

What are you doing? You just let her go!

Vampire's very calm as he counts each marble.

VAMPIRE

Can't talk now, counting. Besides, she'll come back. She always comes back. Twenty-one, twenty-two, twenty-three...

EXT. DOWNTOWN - NIGHT

Romance walks down the sidewalk.

PEOPLE can't stop staring at her . Some walk into doors, trip over themselves or drop fragile objects.

Mystery also walks past Romance. They either don't notice or just ignore each other.

Romance sees a taxi-cab, holds up a hand.

ROMANCE

Taxi!

The taxi screeches to a stop, and Romance gets in. The taxi speeds off.

EXT. ADVENTURE'S HOUSE - NIGHT

There's now a large, chainlink fence surrounding the house, with barbed wire on top. Searchlights survey the territory.

INT. ADVENTURE'S HOUSE / HALLWAY - NIGHT

Adventure stands at the door to the meeting room, waiting. She's holding a copy of 'Pride and Prejudice.'

Comedy, Tragedy and Kid-Lit stroll past her. Kid-Lit's carrying a white box. They enter the room, which filled with Genres chatting.

Fantasy pops his head out of the room.

FANTASY

Are we starting soon?

ADVENTURE

Waiting for Mystery.

Fantasy sees the book.

FANTASY

And Romance?

Adventure nods.

ADVENTURE

I really thought she'd be here.

Fantasy moves to give Adventure a hug, but she's turned away. He gives her a friendly clap on the shoulder instead.

## FANTASY

You've done all you can. Romance  
has to do the rest on her own.

He goes back in.

Adventure looks at 'Pride and Prejudice,' sighs and lets it  
drop. She's about to enter the meeting room when she sees  
lights outside.

## EXT. ADVENTURE'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Adventure comes out the front door and stops.

On the other side of the gate, Romance gets out of the taxi.

She pays the DRIVER, who can't stop staring at her. The  
Driver snaps out of it, and drives away.

Romance cups her hands over her mouth.

## ROMANCE

Can I come in?

Adventure's grinning from ear to ear.

## ADVENTURE

Hold on!

She presses a button on a remote control. The gate opens  
enough for someone to enter and Romance comes in. The gate  
closes.

## ADVENTURE (CONT'D)

You're late.

## ROMANCE

Vamp tried to stop me. But he can't  
do that anymore.

## ADVENTURE

You left him? About time.

Romance laughs, but looks melancholy.

## ADVENTURE (CONT'D)

You all right?

## ROMANCE

Yeah. I think I'm gonna be okay.

She looks at the house.

ROMANCE (CONT'D)  
Has the meeting kicked off?

ADVENTURE  
Just about to. Go in, I'll catch  
up.

Romance goes in, a spring in her step. Adventure looks  
around.

ADVENTURE (CONT'D)  
C'mon Mystery, where are you?

EXT. DOWNTOWN - NIGHT

Mystery's walking down the sidewalk, keeping his face hidden.  
He adjusts his fedora, a new one made of tinfoil.

He arrives at 'A Likely Story.'

INT. A LIKELY STORY - NIGHT

Mystery enters, walks up to Sherri and taps her on the  
shoulder.

MYSTERY  
Excuse me.

Sherri jumps out of her skin.

SHERRI  
I was framed!  
(recovering)  
I mean, can I help you with  
something?

MYSTERY  
Do you have 'The Hound of the  
Baskervilles'?

SHERRI  
Back of the store.

Mystery tips his hat. Sherri watches him go.

Mystery takes the book off the shelf, wipes dust off. He  
opens it and the pages glow. Then he's gone.

Sherri picks up the book. She takes off its 'The Hound of the  
Baskerville' cover, revealing a vampire book.

INT. TUNNEL OF TEXT - NIGHT

Mystery flies through, hanging onto his hat. In here, the tunnel is dark, and the words and sentences are purple.

MYSTERY

This is disturbing.

A sentence stops and turns gold. It reads: 'A perfect statue, carved in some unknown stone, smooth like marble, glittering like crystal.'

Mystery hesitates, then grabs it.

INT. VAMPIRE'S CASTLE / LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

A book falls off the mantelpiece, opens and light flashes. Mystery crouches in front of the fireplace.

Vampire, Paedowolf and Horror stare at him.

VAMPIRE

Welcome, dear Mystery, to my humble abode.

Mystery stands.

MYSTERY

If it isn't the Three Stooges: Sparkles, Lapdog and Pervert. But no doormat. Did she finally get sick of you guys?

Paedowolf growls, and takes a run at Mystery. Vampire stops him.

VAMPIRE

Not now!

PAEDOWOLF

He called me a pervert!

VAMP

You can have your fun later! How about you go upstairs and get a room ready for our guest?

Paedowolf nods. He leaves the room, muttering to himself.

PAEDOWOLF

I'm not a pervert!

Vampire turns back to Mystery.

VAMPIRE

I imagine you're wondering how you got here.

MYSTERY

It crossed my mind.

VAMPIRE

I convinced that girl Sherri from the bookshop to give you a vampire book.

MYSTERY

There was purple prose in the Tunnel of Text. I should've known! What are you giving Sherri? Money? Fame?

VAMPIRE

She wants to be a vampire. Can't be done though, so I'll have to think of some other way to repay Sherri.

He approaches Mystery menacingly.

VAMPIRE (CONT'D)

But first, I need to deal with you.

MYSTERY

Catch me if you can!

He sprints to a wall, turns into his shadow self and makes to escape.

The wall suddenly gives Mystery an electric shock. He becomes solid and falls, smoke coming off his body.

Vampire knocks on the wall.

VAMPIRE

Enchanted walls. Just got them. Can't escape to the shadows in here.

Mystery manages to prop himself up with one arm.

MYSTERY

Bite me, foot face!

Vampire kicks him in the head hard, knocking him out. Vampire motions Horror over. Horror looks at Mystery's body with what could be regret.

VAMPIRE

Lock him up!

Horror bows, grabs Mystery's limp body and drags him away.

INT. ADVENTURE'S HOUSE / MEETING ROOM - NIGHT

Adventure walks in.

History, Comedy, Tragedy, Fantasy, Sci-Fi, Erotica, Kid-Lit and Romance sit at a large, circular table. Romance fiddles with her necklace.

Kid-Lit looks paler. Erotica taps her on the shoulder.

EROTICA

You okay, kiddo?

Kid-Lit nods, but nearly nods off.

History, cane in hand, approaches Adventure.

HISTORY

Is Mystery here?

ADVENTURE

No, but we can't wait. It's time to start.

She takes out the remote control, and presses a different button.

EXT. ADVENTURE'S HOUSE

Each of the movable walls close, sealing the place up completely. The house looks like a giant cement block.

INT. ADVENTURE'S HOUSE / MEETING ROOM - NIGHT

Adventure and History take their seats.

Kid-Lit opens the white box to reveal chocolate cheese cake. She and Comedy take out plastic forks and dig in.

Adventure stands. The Genres go quiet.

ADVENTURE

I'd like to thank you all for coming. I assume you know why we're here.

They nod.

ADVENTURE (CONT'D)

We have to deal with Vamp before he takes us all out! I know many of us considered him a friend, but he's become too powerful.

Romance looks weepy. Erotica gives her a comforting pat on the back, then moves lower to fondle Romance's bottom. Erotica's hand gets smacked.

ADVENTURE (CONT'D)

Vamp sees himself as the only Genre worth reading. He could strike any day now. I open the floor to any suggestions.

SCI-FI

Let me put on my thinking hat.

She pulls out a brain-in-a-jar top hat. History eyes it warily.

HISTORY

That isn't your brain, is it?

SCI-FI

Of course not, don't be silly!

HISTORY

Whose is it?

SCI-FI

I dunno.

She puts the hat on, thinks, then Sci-Fi snaps her fingers.

SCI-FI (CONT'D)

Got it! We use crucifixes, silver bullets and garlic bread against him!

She pulls crucifixes, silver bullets and garlic bread out of her pockets.

ADVENTURE

They don't affect him anymore.

SCI-FI

Oh.

Comedy eats the garlic bread.

HISTORY  
Stake through the heart?

ADVENTURE  
It'd break against him.

TRAGEDY  
Decapitation?

ADVENTURE  
Maybe.

FANTASY  
Sunlight?

ADVENTURE  
Sunlight still affects Vamp, but  
instead of bursting into flames, he  
becomes a raver.

COMEDY  
And an easier target.

He laughs. Romance stands up angrily.

ROMANCE  
For once in your life, could you  
stop cracking bad jokes?

ADVENTURE  
Romance! Please sit down.

ROMANCE  
Don't boss me around!

TRAGEDY  
You're right, how dare anyone but  
Vamp order you around!

Comedy gives him a well-deserved fist-bump.

Romance glares at them, then sits. It's clear she regrets coming.

INT. VAMPIRE'S CASTLE / ROMANCE'S ROOM - NIGHT

Mystery's pacing. He tries the door. Locked. He tries the window. The locks have been removed.

Mystery looks out the window. It's a long way down.

He looks at the bedsheets, then at the ground below. He shrugs. Worth a try.

EXT. VAMPIRE'S CASTLE - NIGHT

Mystery tosses tied bedsheets out the window. He climbs out, scaling the wall very carefully.

He's half-way down.

INT. VAMPIRE'S CASTLE / ROMANCE'S ROOM - NIGHT

The bedsheets are coming apart.

EXT. VAMPIRE'S CASTLE - NIGHT

Mystery feels it happening. He climbs down faster.

INT. VAMPIRE'S CASTLE / ROMANCE'S ROOM

The sheets give way.

EXT. VAMPIRE'S CASTLE - NIGHT

Mystery falls.

His shoulder hits first, cracks. Mystery lays still.

Horror appears, grabs Mystery and lifts him up. Mystery tries to fight back.

MYSTERY

Get your mitts off me, you  
sonnuva...

Horror pushes on his dislocated shoulder. Mystery yells in pain. He looks at his arm, moves it around.

MYSTERY (CONT'D)

Thanks.

Horror shrugs. No problem.

MYSTERY (CONT'D)

Gonna lock me up again?

Horror shakes his head, and points at statues on the castle grounds.

There are vampires, werewolves that looks like hyenas, zombies, goblins, mummies and bedsheets ghosts.

Horror throws his machete at a werewolf statue. It slices off the wolf's head and returns to Horror like a boomerang. Mystery whistle, impressed.

MYSTERY (CONT'D)  
Paedewolf creeps you out too, huh?

Horror nods.

MYSTERY (CONT'D)  
We gotta get out of here, but the books are rigged. Any ideas?

Horror points to a huge Hummer parked in the driveway.

MYSTERY (CONT'D)  
I like the way you think.

INT. HUMMER - NIGHT

Mystery and Horror open the doors. Mystery tries to hotwire the car.

MYSTERY  
C'mon, c'mon!

Horror dangles the keys next to his face.

MYSTERY (CONT'D)  
Oh. Thanks.

He tries to rev the hummer up, but can't get it started. He tries it again and again but nothing happens.

Mystery looks at Horror, who shrugs.

EXT. VAMPIRE'S CASTLE - NIGHT

Mystery and Horror get out, and the hummer takes off without them! They give chase.

INT. ADVENTURE'S HOUSE / MEETING ROOM - NIGHT

Adventure pinches the bridge of her nose.

ADVENTURE  
Look, Kid-Lit, I'm sure throwing Vamp into a volcano would do the trick. I just don't think we can do it.

KID-LIT

But we won't know for sure until we try it.

Comedy suddenly places a hand on his forehead, looking faint.

TRAGEDY

Are you all right? What's wrong?

COMEDY

I sensed something extraordinarily funny just happened, and I wasn't there to see it.

ROMANCE

Our hearts bleed for you.

Tragedy glares at her.

SCI-FI

(to Adventure)

What you're saying is, Vamp has all his traditional powers, but none of his weaknesses?

ADVENTURE

Correct.

Erotica strikes a suggestive pose.

EROTICA

I could screw him to death. That way, at least he'd die happy.

KID-LIT

Why is that your solution to every problem?

EROTICA

Because it works. I kill the enemy, and I'm no longer horny. Win-win.

ADVENTURE

Any other ideas?

She sees Comedy and Sci-Fi muttering to each other.

ADVENTURE (CONT'D)

Comedy? Sci-Fi? Thoughts?

SCI-FI

We were thinking of sending an army of mechanical spiders that spew acid, slice of your genitals...

COMEDY

...and insult your mother.

ADVENTURE

Do you have this spider army?

SCI-FI

Not right now. What about the ones  
I gave you?

Adventure looks sheepish.

ADVENTURE

I smashed them all.

COMEDY

Whoops.

ADVENTURE

Yeah. My bad.

She collapses in her chair, defeated. The other Genres are  
silent.

Adventure suddenly springs up.

ADVENTURE (CONT'D)

I've got it! Remember the  
intervention we held for Vamp a few  
months ago?

EROTICA

Where he trashed my house, nearly  
killed us all and acted like a  
little bitch? Not really.

ADVENTURE

While he was ranting, he said he  
wouldn't change like the rest of  
us.

HISTORY

But we all change. People's ideas  
about us change, and we transform  
to suit them.

ADVENTURE

Vamp doesn't like that though. He  
wants to be the creepy, teenage  
heartthrob forever. We could use  
this against him.

FANTASY

How?

Romance stands.

ROMANCE

Vampire found a way to stop  
changing.

The others turn to her.

ROMANCE (CONT'D)

Around the time his popularity  
skyrocketed, we went on vacation in  
Paris. He had someone paint a  
picture of him. Vampire said he  
wanted the portrait to change  
instead of him.

ADVENTURE

And somehow, his wish was granted.

HISTORY

Like 'The Picture of Dorian Gray.'

ROMANCE

Right. The painting also changed  
after each of Vampire's heinous  
acts. It looks hideous.

COMEDY

So, we find the portrait, stab it  
and we'll beat Vamp?

He makes a stabbing motion.

ROMANCE

Exactly.

KID-LIT

I like it.

SCI-FI

(to Romance)

Where does he keep the portrait?

ROMANCE

In a secret room behind a locked  
door. He has guards stationed in  
front of it 24/7.

The Genres look defeated, until Romance takes off her  
necklace, revealing a key that catches the light.

ROMANCE (CONT'D)

Here's the key.

COMEDY

How come he trusted you with it?

ROMANCE

Because he loves me in his sick,  
twisted way and assumed I'd never  
betray him.

ADVENTURE

What about those guards?

ROMANCE

They'll be tricky to get past, but  
they're not as powerful as Vamp.

ADVENTURE

Then that settles it. We'll sneak  
into the castle, destroy the  
painting and put an end to Vamp.  
Any questions?

EXT. ADVENTURE'S HOUSE - NIGHT

The Hummer zooms towards Adventure's house at breakneck  
speed.

INT. HUMMER - NIGHT

Mystery drives with determination. His driving makes Horror  
freak out.

EXT. ADVENTURE'S HOUSE - NIGHT

The Hummer crashes into the gate and knocks it down.

INT. ADVENTURE'S HOUSE / MEETING ROOM - NIGHT

The Genres turn towards the noise.

ADVENTURE

What the hell was that?

TRAGEDY

Vamp's found us! We're doomed!

He tries to slit his wrists, but Comedy stops him.

KID-LIT

Should we panic?

ADVENTURE

No! We should fight!

She ducks under the table and pulls out the Spork.

FANTASY

Wait! I almost forgot...

He reaches into his cloak and takes out a thick, blue vest.

FANTASY (CONT'D)

Who wants to wear this? It's as strong as dragon scales.

Comedy steps forward. Sci-Fi helps him put it on.

COMEDY

And light as a feather?

He drops like a stone.

COMEDY (CONT'D)

Nope.

FANTASY

Anyone else?

No takers.

FANTASY (CONT'D)

I'll give it to Adventure then.

Adventure puts on the blue vest and tries not to fall over.

ADVENTURE

This is bloody heavy. What's it made out of?

FANTASY

Dragon scales.

Everyone now knows what happened to Fantasy's dragon.

ADVENTURE

Your dragon?

FANTASY

Yep.

The Genres arm themselves: History wields a cane-sword; Comedy a swordfish head; Tragedy a war scythe; Fantasy his wand; Sci-Fi her laser gun; Erotica a whip; Kid-Lit's giant hammer; and Romance has nothing.

## ROMANCE

Hey! What about me?

Adventure and History toss her their kukri and Bowie knives, which she barely catches.

## ROMANCE (CONT'D)

Thanks, I think.

The Genres hear footsteps running down the hallway. They stop, the door handle turns.

The door opens. The Genres move to attack, but stop when Mystery enters.

## ADVENTURE

You took your sweet time.

## MYSTERY

Got sidetracked. Wound up in Vamp's castle.

He opens the door wider, revealing Horror. The Genres raise their weapons again. Horror recoils.

## MYSTERY (CONT'D)

He followed me home. Can I keep him?

## SCI-FI

Can we trust him?

## EROTICA

No one trusts Horror. Or Mystery. Or me. But we're all here anyway.

## ADVENTURE

Good enough.

Comedy pretends to perform a magic trick.

## COMEDY

And for my next trick, I shall make a couple of assholes appear!

There's a deafening smash. The Genres raise their weapons and whirl around as one.

A giant hole has been blasted in the wall. Vampire and Paedewolf stand in the ruins.

Vampire puts his hands over his head. Paedewolf reluctantly does the same.

## VAMPIRE

We just came to talk.

## COMEDY

Is smashing a wall the way you start a conversation? Maybe if you're the Kool-Aid Man, but frankly, you're not cool enough to be him. But God knows your fans have drunken the Kool-Aid.

The Genres laugh at Vampire, including Paedowolf. Comedy notices this.

## COMEDY (CONT'D)

And Paedowolf, didn't you read the sign out front? It clearly says, 'No shirt, no shoes, no paedophile werewolves.'

Louder laughter, and scattered applause.

## VAMPIRE

Shut up! All of you, shut up!

Nobody does. The laughter eventually dies down.

## VAMPIRE (CONT'D)

If you promise not to use your swords and guns...

He sees the Spork.

## VAMPIRE (CONT'D)

...and whatever that thing is, I promise not to use my super-speed, super-strength, mind-reading or my ability to dazzle you.

Adventure slowly puts down her weapon. The others follow suit, except Romance.

## PAEDOWOLF

Want to put those down? You're gonna hurt yourself.

## ROMANCE

Come near me, and I'll use these to neuter you!

Paedowolf snarls.

ADVENTURE  
 (to Vampire)  
 What do you want?

VAMPIRE  
 I want Romance to come home.

Romance points the knives at him.

ROMANCE  
 Not gonna happen.

Vampire looks at her seductively.

VAMPIRE  
 Leave your friends and come with  
 me. My arms are hungry for you,  
 darling. You know you can't fight  
 your feelings.

Romance's face softens. Vampire's voice is so diabolically  
 sweet, it puts all the Genres in a trance.

Romance smiles, drops the knives and opens her arms wide.  
 Vampire leaps toward Romance.

Adventure snaps out of it. She springs forward and holds 'The  
 Three Musketeers' in front of Vampire. He reacts like a  
 classic vampire to a crucifix, hissing and recoiling.

Vampire scrambles toward the hole in the wall. Adventure  
 advances, still holding up the book.

VAMPIRE (CONT'D)  
 You will all pay for turning on me!  
 My rule has just begun! You shall  
 all become my minions, and do my  
 bidding!

He slaps the book out of Adventure's hand. She doesn't  
 flinch.

The Ghost suddenly appears. By this point, he looks solid  
 enough to be alive.

Vampire suddenly looks very guilty.

VAMPIRE (CONT'D)  
 Father! What are you doing here?

GHOST  
 I am here to help you, Vampire.

VAMPIRE

I don't want your help! You got in the way of my success!

GHOST

Vamp, you will come to a bad end. Look at your life. Your 'soul mate' hates your guts, and your friend is a paedophile! Is that your idea of success?

Vampire considers it, but quickly shrugs it off.

VAMPIRE

I'll never give up my power! I won't age, I won't change, I'll stay the way I am! Forever!

GHOST

You're hopeless.

He disappears.

VAMPIRE

(to Paedowolf)

We're leaving! Grab her!

Paedowolf runs at the Genres, knocking them down like bowling pins. He reaches for Kid-Lit.

FANTASY

Hold it!

He points his wand at Paedowolf, who snatches it away, breaks it and pushes Fantasy down.

Paedowolf picks up Kid-Lit.

KID-LIT

Hey! Put me down!

Vampire and Paedowolf run away at super-speed. Adventure watches them helplessly.

Fantasy props himself up holds out a hand.

FANTASY

I said, hold it!

EXT. FOREST - NIGHT

Vampire and Paedowolf run. Kid-Lit's struggling to escape. They all jerk to a stop.

Then, they all float six feet off the ground.

PAEDOWOLF  
What's happening?

They zoom backwards, back to Adventure's house.

INT. ADVENTURE'S HOUSE / MEETING ROOM - NIGHT

Fantasy magically reels in his catch. Vampire and Paedowolf, still holding Kid-Lit, fly back in.

FANTASY  
Let her go, Paedowolf!

Paedowolf drops Kid-Lit. Comedy catches her and Erotica hugs her.

PAEDOWOLF  
I snapped your wand!

FANTASY  
The wand's only for show, asshole!

An electrical hum fills the room. Soft, then grows louder. Fantasy's eyes glow blue.

FANTASY (CONT'D)  
I've had enough of you two.

Adventure's hair stands on end. She looks at the other Genres and they're the same, barring Mystery and Horror, who have none.

The hum is now deafening. Fantasy snaps his fingers.

Bang! Bang! Two flashes of blue light, a bloodcurdling scream and Vampire and Paedowolf drop. Their bodies sizzle like meat on a BBQ.

KID-LIT  
Thank you.

FANTASY  
No problem.

Vampire gets up, completely unscathed, dusts himself off.

HISTORY  
It's not possible!

VAMPIRE  
It is if you've got 'Plot Armour.'

TRAGEDY

What?

VAMPIRE

Tell them, History.

History clears his throat.

HISTORY

Plot Armour refers to an invisible force that keeps fictional characters from being killed or seriously wounded.

ADVENTURE

You mean...

HISTORY

Yes. It seems Vamp has found a way to give himself this protection.

Vampire smirks.

VAMPIRE

That's right. It's been fun, but I've got places to be. Later, baby.

He runs off, Sci-Fi fires at him.

COMEDY

What else could go wrong?

TRAGEDY

Are you trying to tempt fate?

COMEDY

I might be.

TRAGEDY

Stop it!

Kid-Lit falls to the floor.

EROTICA

Kid-Lit!

They, Adventure and Romance and kneel beside her.

ROMANCE

C'mon, stay with us!

Adventure points to Comedy.

## ADVENTURE

Fairy floss! Now!

Comedy puts a fairy floss stick in his pocket. He spins it quickly, and when he takes it out, it's covered in fluffy fairy floss.

Comedy hands the stick to Adventure. She rips off a chunk and gives it to Kid-Lit.

## ADVENTURE (CONT'D)

This'll help.

Kid-Lit feebly chews it, but it's having no effect. They're losing her.

## ROMANCE

It isn't working!

She grabs Comedy by the lapels.

## ROMANCE (CONT'D)

How come it's not working?

## COMEDY

I don't know!

## ROMANCE

You made the stuff!

Sci-Fi and Fantasy try to calm her, but she's not having any of it.

Erotica's about to lose it.

## EROTICA

What do we do? What do we do?

## ADVENTURE

Call an ambulance!

EXT. DOWNTOWN - NIGHT

An ambulance races down the road, lights flashing and sirens wailing.

INT. AMBULANCE - NIGHT

There's an array of medical equipment, including cardiac monitors, oxygen tanks and IV equipment.

Kid-Lit, strapped to a stretcher, takes labourious breaths. Adventure and Erotica are worried sick.

LANCE, one of the EMTs, checks Kid-Lit's vitals, and frowns.

ADVENTURE

What is it?

LANCE

I don't get it. She's completely healthy, but we're losing her. What happened?

EROTICA

It's hard to explain.

LANCE

Is it because of Vamp?

The Genres look at him, shocked.

LANCE (CONT'D)

Everyone at the hospital knows. Spinster got worse, so Nadine told everyone and got them to buy more mystery books.

Adventure and Erotica process this. The cat's out of the bag.

EROTICA

Guess people were bound to find out about us eventually, eh?

ADVENTURE

None of it matters anymore. Vamp's gonna kill the Genres and take over everything.

The ambulance slows to a stop.

EROTICA

Why are we stopping?

Lance knocks on the front wall.

LANCE

Hey Gary! What's going on?

GARY, the driver, sounds bewildered when he answers.

GARY (O.S.)

Sorry, but there's people everywhere down this street! Something's going on!

LANCE

What?

GARY (O.S.)

I think it's a book launch!

Kid-Lit suddenly becomes conscious and alert.

KID-LIT

Who's buying the books?

LANCE

Gary! The little girl wants to know who's buying books!

GARY (O.S.)

Mostly kids!

Kid-Lit's now squirming against her strappings.

KID-LIT

Can someone loosen these?

LANCE

Listen, we gotta get you to the hospital...

EROTICA

Just do what the kid says!

LANCE

All right! All right!

He loosens the straps and Kid-Lit sits up, looking much healthier.

EXT. DOWNTOWN - NIGHT

The ambulance doors open and Adventure, Erotica and Kid-Lit jump out. Lance looks at Kid-Lit with wonder.

A huge CROWD gathered outside a bookshop called 'Chapter One.' They're all chatting and reading the same book.

Some READERS do a double-take at Erotica's bondage gear.

Adventure looks at one of the Readers. It's Abby.

ADVENTURE

Hello again.

Abby looks up from her book.

ABBY

Hey, I remember you! You were at that history lecture, right? You were there to talk to another Genre. History right?

Adventure isn't shocked she knows this.

ADVENTURE

Yep.

ABBY

You're Adventure...Kid-Lit...and Erotica?

She points to each of them in turn.

EROTICA

Seriously, how many people know about us?

ABBY

When they were teaching creative writing, Fantasy and Sci-Fi told us who they were and explained their situation.

EROTICA

I swear I'm gonna gag those two...

ABBY

(to Adventure)

A few of us wrote our own books to help out the Genres.

ADVENTURE

How did you get it published so quickly?

ABBY

Publishers will print just about anything these days?

She holds up the book.

ABBY (CONT'D)

Here's one of them.

The book is titled 'The Tale of Peter Rabbi.' There's a picture of PETER RABBI, a mischievous rabbit wearing a rabbi hat. Peter's in a garden, sitting next to a sign that says: 'Mein Kabbages.'

The Genres laugh.

ADVENTURE

Fantastic! This might sound stupid,  
but what's it about?

Abby turns the book over.

ABBY

'Naughty Peter Rabbi disobeys his  
mother and sneaks into Mr Hitler's  
garden.'

KID-LIT

I like it.

EROTICA

(laughing)  
'Mein Kabbages.'

ADVENTURE

I want to meet the author.

Abby smiles.

ABBY

You're looking at her.

HISTORY (O.S.)

Then I believe that warm  
congratulations are in order.

They all turn, and see History coming towards them.

Romance, Comedy, Tragedy, Sci-Fi, Fantasy, Mystery and Horror  
are there too, still carrying their weapons. Abby looks at  
them warily.

History holds his hand out.

HISTORY (CONT'D)

Good work, Abby.

Abby shakes it.

ABBY

Thank you, professor.

Fantasy gives Adventure the Spork.

ADVENTURE

Nice work back there, saving Kid-  
Lit and all that.

FANTASY

Thanks. Nice work saving Romance.

They look at each other for too long, realise it and stop.

KID-LIT

Abby, can I see the book?

Abby hands her 'The Tale of Peter Rabbi.'

Kid-Lit flips through pages. With every page turn, her body gives off golden light that grows brighter.

Abby and the Genres shield their eyes.

ROMANCE

What's happening?

ADVENTURE

Something that hasn't happened in a long time.

She addresses the crowd.

ADVENTURE (CONT'D)

All of you, get down!

The Readers duck down. Tragedy does it too, but Comedy pulls him up.

Kid-Lit's body grows bright as the Aurora. It keeps glowing until it explodes from her body.

The golden light sets off car alarms, makes street lamps explode and shatters windows. It has no visible effect on the Genres.

The light fades.

Kid-Lit's still glowing. She looks more healthy and more alive than ever before.

It's the same with the other Genres. They stare at each other, marveling.

MYSTERY

What the hell was that?

Adventure's still reeling.

ADVENTURE

Our new friend, Abby, has written a really good book.

She sees the Readers pointing at them and whispering. One of them talks rapidly on a cellphone.

ADVENTURE (CONT'D)  
Into the book store!

Most Genres dash inside 'Chapter One.' Kid-Lit doesn't.

KID-LIT  
Can't Abby come?

Police sirens get louder.

ADVENTURE  
There's no time. We have to leave,  
now!

KID-LIT  
But she could still help us!

As they talk, multiple flashes can be seen from inside the book store.

ADVENTURE  
Kid-Lit...(I really don't think...)

KID-LIT  
(over)  
Abby wrote 'The Tale of Peter  
Rabbi.' Vamp's going to hear about  
it, and he'll target her next! We  
have to take her with us!

Adventure makes up her mind.

ADVENTURE  
All right.  
(to Abby)  
Abby, we're gonna take you back to  
my house.

ABBY  
Where are you parked?

ADVENTURE  
We're not driving.

She drags Kid-Lit and Abby into 'Chapter One.' Two more lights flash from inside.

EXT. ADVENTURE'S HOUSE - NIGHT

There's still a giant hole in the wall. But the rubble's been cleared away.

INT. ADVENTURE'S HOUSE / MEETING ROOM - NIGHT

The Genres sit the table again. Kid-Lit's enjoying some fairy floss.

Abby is with them, looking queasy.

HISTORY

Are you okay?

Abby nods.

HISTORY (CONT'D)

Do you need anything? Perhaps some ginger ale?

Abby shakes her head.

ADVENTURE

I'm sorry about putting you through that.

ABBY

It's fine. I never travelled through the...what do you call it?

TRAGEDY

The Tunnels of Text.

ABBY

Yeah. I can't say I ever went through a book before.

ADVENTURE

Few humans have.

ABBY

I wish we could, it's really convenient.

The Genres murmur agreement.

HISTORY

(to Abby)

Do you need anything? Perhaps some ginger ale?

ABBY

No...

ADVENTURE

You'll have to excuse History, he has a tendency to repeat himself.

HISTORY

I do not!  
(sotto)  
I do not.

Mystery clears his throat.

MYSTERY

Why are we still here?

ADVENTURE

I'm thinking.

She ponders a moment.

ADVENTURE (CONT'D)

Abby, you said your friends had  
written their own books, right?

ABBY

Yep.

ADVENTURE

Could you contact them, and ask  
them to meet us at Vamp's castle?

ABBY

Sure.

She takes out a phone and leaves the room through the hole.

TRAGEDY

I'm not comfortable with putting  
the new writers in harm's way.

ADVENTURE

They won't be.

HISTORY

May I remind you that we don't have  
weapons to use against Vamp and his  
minions?

ADVENTURE

We have this.

She picks up the Spork.

ADVENTURE (CONT'D)

The Spork is big enough. We'll weld  
some of its metal on all our  
weapons. That way, everyone will  
stand a chance against Vamp.

She gives the Spork to Fantasy and Sci-Fi.

ADVENTURE (CONT'D)  
Do you think that's doable?

SCI-FI  
I'd say so. Five minutes, give or take.

ADVENTURE  
There's equipment in the basement.

FANTASY  
We'll get on it.

ADVENTURE  
One more thing.

She hands Fantasy a piece of paper.

ADVENTURE (CONT'D)  
Could you make a few adjustments to the Spork?

FANTASY  
For you my dear, anything.

ADVENTURE  
Thank you.

She addresses the Genres.

ADVENTURE (CONT'D)  
Everyone give your weapons to Fantasy and Sci-Fi so they can enhance them!

They throw their weapons at Fantasy, who somehow catches each one. He and Sci-Fi leave the room. Again, Adventure finds herself staring at Fantasy.

Romance approaches Adventure.

ROMANCE  
I need to tell you something about Vamp. He has this little-known weakness where he...

Someone clears their throat. Adventure and Romance see Abby standing outside.

ABBY  
Sorry, just letting you know I called them. They'll be there.

She looks unsure.

ROMANCE

What's wrong?

ABBY

There's someone out here who says  
she knows you.

She steps aside to reveal Spinster, who walks in through the hole. Everyone goes silent.

Spinster now looks like her usual self: a nosy old woman with a sharp tongue.

SPINSTER

Don't look so surprised! Vamp  
couldn't get rid of me that easily.

Mystery slowly walks up to her, then gives her a hug.

SPINSTER (CONT'D)

That's sweet, Misty, but I can't  
breathe.

MYSTERY

Sorry.

He lets go.

SPINSTER

(to Adventure)

You should keep your ringer on.

Adventure takes out her cellphone. Sure enough, there's a missed call from Nadine.

ADVENTURE

My bad.

SPINSTER

Don't worry about it.

Fantasy and Sci-Fi come back in, carrying weapons now made of red metal.

FANTASY

Here we go! By the way Adventure,  
you might want to do something  
about the smell down there, it's  
really...

He sees Spinster, and drops a few weapons.

SPINSTER  
Are we going to war?

SCI-FI  
Something like that. Do you need a  
weapon?

SPINSTER  
Already got one.

She pulls out a knight's lance. Abby and the Genres back  
away.

Spinster picks up Tragedy's war scythe, looking closely at  
the red blade.

SPINSTER (CONT'D)  
What's this red stuff?

SCI-FI  
Spork metal. It's strong.

SPINSTER  
Strong enough to put a dent in  
Vamp?

SCI-FI  
Strong enough to put several dents  
in Vamp. Gimme a few minutes, and  
I'll add it to your lance.

Spinster hands her the lance, and Sci-Fi exits.

SPINSTER  
Such a nice girl.

ADVENTURE  
She is.  
(to Genres)  
We're leaving to storm the castle  
in ten minutes!

The Genres raise their weapons and cheer. While they're  
cheering, Romance whispers to Adventure, who nods.

INT. VAMPIRE'S CASTLE / LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Vampire's playing a crappy pop song on a grand piano. He  
stops and writes a few notes on some sheet music.

Vampire hears approaching vehicles outside, runs to the  
window and looks out.

EXT. VAMPIRE'S CASTLE - NIGHT

There's the Hummer, a Mini Cooper, Sci-Fi's flying a backpack helicopter and Erotica and Kid-Lit are on a motorcycle.

INT. HUMMER - NIGHT

Adventure, Romance, Comedy and Tragedy are in the Hummer, with Romance behind the wheel.

ADVENTURE

Almost there.

Romance nods, pushes on the accelerator.

TRAGEDY

You know you're going faster, right?

ROMANCE

Uh-huh.

COMEDY

We're heading right towards that Volvo!

ROMANCE

That's the idea.

ADVENTURE

Slow down!

They brace themselves.

EXT. VAMPIRE'S CASTLE - NIGHT

Romance crashes right into Vampire's silver Volvo. She totals both cars.

INT. VAMPIRE'S CASTLE / LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Vampire sees the collision, lets out a blood-curdling scream.

EXT. VAMPIRE'S CASTLE - NIGHT

Adventure, Comedy and Tragedy stumble out of the car. Romance gets out like nothing happened.

Adventure has what looks like a red rapier attached to her belt.

The other cars park, and History, Spinster, Fantasy, Sci-Fi, horror, Mystery, Erotica and Kid-Lit alight. Kid-Lit carries Tollers, and he turns into a real dog.

Comedy looks at the damaged Volvo.

COMEDY

That'll buff out.

ADVENTURE

(to Romance)

Can I ask what you were thinking?

ROMANCE

I've always hated that Volvo. Plus, listen...

From inside the castle, Vampire screams in anguish again.

ADVENTURE

Okay, you're right, that was worth it.

Comedy wipes tears from his eyes.

COMEDY

That was...beautiful. Thank you.

He blows his nose into a handkerchief and gives it to Tragedy, who holds it distastefully.

The Genres stare at the statues of vampires, werewolves, zombies, goblins, mummies and bedsheet ghosts.

KID-LIT

What are these?

ROMANCE

Classic horror movie monsters. Vampire's planning his own cinematic universe.

ADVENTURE

Not if we can help it.

She puts on the blue dragon-scale vest, which makes her stomach bulky.

ADVENTURE (CONT'D)

Do I really need to say anything at this point?

The Genres shake their heads.

## ADVENTURE (CONT'D)

Then let's kill a Genre!

They cheer and draw their weapons. Adventure unsheathes her red rapier, a slender version of the Spork.

As they start to the front door, it opens and Vampire fills the doorway.

He snaps his fingers, and every statue on the castle grounds come to life. The horrifying creatures charge.

The fight begins.

Spinster shish kababs goblins with her lance.

Werewolves attack Kid-Lit and Tollers. She hits their heads, and Tollers rips out their throats.

Fantasy casts spells and Sci-Fi fires her laser gun left, right and centre.

Vampire joins the fray. Fantasy and Sci-Fi shoot at him, but he dodges their blasts.

Adventure and History take on vampires, who bare their fangs and hiss.

## ADVENTURE (CONT'D)

Have at thee, varlets!

She shanks each one in the chest, History cuts off their heads with his cane sword. The vampires turn to dust.

A horde of goblins approaches. Adventure laughs with exhilaration as she fights. History stares at her in wonder.

Mystery single-handedly deals with a crowd of mummies in hand-to-hand combat. He lifts one up and throws it at Horror, who cuts the mummy in half.

He throws another mummy toward Fantasy and Sci-Fi, who fire at it. The mummy bursts into flames.

Romance holds out the knives, but none of the monsters attack her.

## EROTICA

Why aren't they attacking you?

A thought occurs to Romance.

ROMANCE

They still think I'm on Vampire's side!

EROTICA

Then use that!

ROMANCE

How? Walk up to a group of vampires and kill them?

EROTICA

Exactly! Can't wait for the fight to come to you, darling!

She immediately takes out nine zombies, using a long version of the cat o' nine tails. Each whip comes to life and throttles zombies, like the tentacles of a giant squid.

Inspired, Romance strolls up to vampires who take no notice of her. They still don't notice when she stabs one in the heart and beheads another.

The vampires crumble to dust. Romance keeps going until there aren't any left. She looks at the piles of ashes.

ROMANCE

Too easy.

A goblin almost takes her head off, but she jabs it in the eye and slits its throat before running off to join another fight.

Sci-Fi's laser gun jams.

FANTASY

What's wrong?

SCI-FI

I'm out of ammo!

FANTASY

How does a laser gun run out of ammo?

SCI-FI

I don't know the science!

She chucks the gun away, pulls out a shower loofah and uses it against some werewolves to deadly effect.

Comedy and Tragedy become surrounded by ghosts. Comedy swings his swordfish head while Tragedy swings his scythe, but their weapons have no effect.

The ghosts swarm them.

Comedy takes out a vacuum, and sucks up each ghost. He finishes and tosses the vacuum away.

TRAGEDY

Nice work.

COMEDY

And you complain I never do any vacuuming.

He looks off to the side, and his eyes widen.

COMEDY (CONT'D)

Watch out!

The vacuum returns, now with glowing red eyes. Possessed by the ghosts, it chases Comedy and Tragedy.

A mummy tries to strangle Spinster with with one of its bandages. Vampire comes to the rescue, and snaps the mummy's neck.

Spinster takes a deep breath.

SPINSTER

What did you do that for? He was on your side!

VAMPIRE

To keep things interesting!

He's about to grab Spinster when Horror tackles him. Vampire throws him off.

Horror swings his machete at Vampire, but Vampire's too quick.

Finally, he swings and cuts off Vampire's arm. Surprisingly, he doesn't bleed. Vampire stares at the stump in shock.

Horror grabs the severed arm, and beats Vampire over the head with it.

Horror stops swinging, and the arm punches him in the face. He drops the arm and machete and falls, unconscious.

Vampire smirks.

VAMPIRE (CONT'D)

Idiot.

He grabs his arm and licks the end of it. Vampire sticks the arm back on and moves it around. Good as new.

Vampire picks up the machete, lifts Horror and swings at his neck. Adventure blocks it with her rapier Spork.

ADVENTURE

Put him down! Now!

VAMPIRE

Gladly.

He throws Horror at Adventure. She pushes Horror off and jumps up.

VAMPIRE (CONT'D)

Why don't you just surrender? It'll be easier for both of us.

Adventure, pointing the Spork at Vamp, looks calm and confident.

ADVENTURE

You want a piece of me, dickhead?  
I'll Spork your ass!

This distracts Vampire long enough for Adventure to jab him in the shoulder. Vampire yelps.

VAMPIRE

You stabbed me in the shoulder!

He swings. Adventure blocks it.

ADVENTURE

I know, it's not even close to your ass.

She jabs him in the ass! Vampire yelps again.

ADVENTURE (CONT'D)

There we go!

They duel.

Adventure moves fast with the Spork, thrusting for Vampire's heart.

Vampire's faster and stronger, but wields the machete clumsily. He tries hacking at Adventure, but she uses the prongs on the Spork to block the machete.

Vampire strikes Adventure in the stomach, but the dragon scales protect her. Vampire looks perplexed.

ADVENTURE (CONT'D)

Dragon scales. These puppies are  
tougher than your skin, marble  
face!

VAMPIRE

They are not!

ADVENTURE

Then I'll make a bullet-proof vest  
out of you!

They continue fighting. Neither can gain the upper hand.  
Adventure forces Vampire back inside the castle.

INT. VAMPIRE'S CASTLE / LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Adventure and Vampire continue fighting.

ADVENTURE

Here's a riddle: what do you and a  
Christmas tree have in common?

Vampire's losing his temper.

VAMPIRE

We both hate you with a burning  
passion?

ADVENTURE

Your glittering balls are for  
decoration only!

She laughs, carefree, having the time of your life.

Vampire screams. He's had enough. He swings harder, but his  
anger makes him even more clumsy. Adventure easily blocks  
Vampire's attacks.

Vampire runs through a door, Adventure follows.

INT. VAMPIRE'S CASTLE / MAUSOLEUM - NIGHT

They move past a number of crypts. A flight of stairs leads  
up to a balcony.

At the front is one, great marble tomb. The name engraved on  
it reads: 'VAMPIRE LITERATURE.'

A strange look appears in Adventure's eyes.

INT. OPULENT PALACE (FLASHBACK) - DAY

A large room with fancy tables and chairs, huge windows with curtains to match and a flight of stairs that lead up to a balcony.

PAST ADVENTURE, looking younger and dressed like a musketeer, wields a rapier. She fights a BAD GUY, whose face is unseen, and gains the upper hand.

INT. VAMPIRE'S CASTLE / MAUSOLEUM - NIGHT

Adventure's gaining the upper hand.

INTERCUT AT DIRECTOR'S DISCRETION

Past and present Adventure thrust, parry and twirl to block and dodge their attackers. The two are the dictionary definition of swashbucklers.

Both Adventures duel Bad Guy and Vampire going up stairs. They reach a balcony. Each Adventure grabs their opponent and throws them over the edge.

Bad Guy and Vampire perform somersaults and land perfectly. They taunt the Adventures.

The Adventures jump onto the chandelier and cut it. They swing at their enemies, kicking them in the chest. Bad Guy crashes through a window...

INT. VAMPIRE'S CASTLE / MAUSOLEUM - NIGHT

...and Vampire crashes into his tomb, destroying it. He looks up, dazed and confused. Adventure's still swinging from the chandelier.

VAMPIRE

I don't even have a chandelier...

The tomb breaks, and huge chunks of marble bury him.

Adventure lets go of the chandelier, lands on the broken tomb and slides down it.

History, Comedy, Tragedy and Kid-Lit enter the mausoleum, exhausted but triumphant.

COMEDY

What'd we miss?

ADVENTURE  
Kicked Vamp's ass.

COMEDY  
Is it on YouTube?

ADVENTURE  
No.

KID-LIT  
Then it didn't happen.

Adventure chuckles.

ADVENTURE  
How'd it go with you?

TRAGEDY  
Good.

EXT. VAMPIRE'S CASTLE - NIGHT

Sci-Fi, Fantasy, Romance, Erotica and Spinster rest, while  
Mystery and Horror clear away the bodies of vampires,  
werewolves, zombies, goblins and mummies.

TRAGEDY (V.O.)  
Horror and Mystery are cleaning up  
while the rest of us take a  
breather.

INT. VAMPIRE'S CASTLE / MAUSOLEUM - NIGHT

Vampire crawls out of the rubble. Adventure points the Spork  
at his throat.

ADVENTURE  
Why don't you just surrender? It'll  
be easier for both of us.

Vampire stands up slowly.

VAMPIRE  
That was some damn fine  
swashbuckling. I'm glad someone  
beat me in a larger than life  
style. Well done, Adventure.

He says it with curtesy that seems so real.

VAMPIRE (CONT'D)

You can put your weapon away, I'll come quietly.

KID-LIT

What?

Adventure lowers the Spork as a show of good will.

ADVENTURE

You're taking this well.

VAMPIRE

I think it was Shakespeare who said...

He grimaces.

ADVENTURE

What is it?

VAMPIRE

Toothache. Like Kid-Lit, I've got something of a sweet tooth.

KID-LIT

You should go to a dentist.

VAMP

No need.

He opens his mouth, and retractable fangs come out. They're so huge, it's a wonder they could fit in his mouth.

Vampire grabs a fang, and pulls it out.

HISTORY/TRAGEDY

No, no, no, no, no, no, no...

COMEDY

Whoa! Whoa!

KID-LIT

That's really gross!

History and Tragedy are appalled, Comedy and Kid-Lit wince, and even Adventure looks sick.

Vampire yanks the fang out completely. Then takes out a lighter and ignites it.

VAMPIRE

Fun fact: vampire venom is highly flammable.

He throws the fang.

COMEDY

Hit the deck!

He, Adventure, History, Tragedy and Kid-Lit throw themselves to the floor. The fang explodes like a grenade!

EXT. VAMPIRE'S CASTLE - NIGHT

When they hear the explosion, the Genres run inside.

INT. VAMPIRE'S CASTLE / MAUSOLEUM - NIGHT

Debris everywhere. Adventure gets up, sees History, Comedy, Tragedy and Kid-lit still on the floor.

ADVENTURE

Everyone okay?

HISTORY

I think so.

They slowly get up, helping each other and dusting themselves off.

Adventure quickly realises Vampire's nowhere to be seen.

ADVENTURE

I hate it when this happens.  
Where's...

She comes face to face with Vampire. He pulls out the other fang, and plunges it into Adventure's chest.

HISTORY

No!

KID-LIT

Adventure!

The others run in, Fantasy in the lead.

FANTASY

What happened?

He sees Adventure.

FANTASY (CONT'D)

Adventure!

Adventure falls and Fantasy catches her. The Genres gather around, distraught.

Kid-Lit and Tragedy sob. Romance, Erotica and Comedy comfort them and try to keep it together. Spinster, Sci-Fi, Mystery and Horror are in shock.

History attacks Fantasy with a fury none of them has ever seen.

HISTORY

Those dragon scales were supposed to protect her!

FANTASY

I know that! You think I wanted Vamp to kill her?

HISTORY

Do you know what she was up against? Did you think you'd just wave your wand and everything would be all right?

FANTASY

No!  
(breaking down)  
No...

He cradles Adventure's dying body, tears streaming down his cheeks.

Vampire, the psychopath, is unmoved.

VAMPIRE

Another fun fact: dragons are weaker in the chest area. I figured one scale would be the weak one, so it was just a matter of finding it.

Fantasy looks at Vampire, rage in his eyes. Unarmed, he yells and lunges. It's suicide, but Fantasy doesn't care anymore.

ROMANCE

Stop!

Fantasy stops and looks at Romance, incredulous.

ROMANCE (CONT'D)

That's not going to help Adventure!  
Let me see her.

She crouches next to Adventure's body.

ROMANCE (CONT'D)

Fun fact...

She pulls the fang out and the dragon scales bleed rice.

ROMANCE (CONT'D)

...vampires are obsessed with counting.

Adventure sits up. The Genres gasp.

Adventure whips off the blue vest, revealing a large bag of rice strapped to her chest. Rice spills from the hole made by the fang.

Vampire looks at the spilled rice with fear.

VAMPIRE

No. No, this isn't fair!

Romance helps Adventure up.

ROMANCE

Before becoming popular, Vampire got rid of the classic vampire traits he considered unsexy. This made him appealing to a new generation.

ADVENTURE

But he forgot to get rid of one trait: counting. The easiest way to defeat a vampire.

Against his will, Vampire sits and counts each grain of rice.

VAMPIRE

One, two, three, four, five, six...

He continues counting. The Genres can't believe it.

COMEDY

So, he's basically the Count from 'Sesame Street'?

TRAGEDY

Don't insult Count von Count, he's awesome!

ROMANCE

(to Comedy)

Actually, when you think about, the Count must have gotten his counting addiction from Vamp.

HISTORY

But why hasn't this weakness been mentioned in more vampire stories?

ADVENTURE

Probably because nobody wants to see Van Helsing take out Dracula using a bag of seeds.

Vampire talks, but doesn't look up.

VAMPIRE

Doesn't matter. Once I count these, you're all dead meat! Sixty-one, sixty-two, sixty-three...

ADVENTURE

I don't think so.

She puts her fingers in her mouth and whistles.

The crypts open. Abby, Ben, Darlene and the other Students from the writing class come out. Nadine and Sherri are also there.

Sherri yawns.

SHERRI

I'm tired.

NADINE

You should've taken a nap. We were in there long enough.

The Students, Nadine and Sherri gather around Vampire. They're amused at seeing him counting rice. Ben takes pictures using his phone.

Vampire finishes counting and stands.

VAMPIRE

I suppose you're all here to stop me, right?

They nod. Vampire sees Sherri in the crowd.

VAMPIRE (CONT'D)

Why, Sherri? I promised I'd turn you into a vampire!

This is news to Nadine.

NADINE

Sherri?

Sherri steps forward.

SHERRI

It's true, Nadine. But I didn't  
know working for Vamp would hurt  
the other Genres.

(to Vamp)

If I did, I wouldn't have gone near  
you!

She quickly steps back.

ADVENTURE

(to Students)

Why don't you all show Vamp the  
stories you've been working on?

Abby shows Vampire a copy of 'The Tale of Peter Rabbi.' He  
cringes, and falls to the floor.

ADVENTURE (CONT'D)

Darlene?

Darlene produces a book called 'Fifty Shades of Dorian Grey.'  
Vampire winces.

ADVENTURE (CONT'D)

(to Vampire)

You don't like that one? I'm  
surprised.

DARLENE

It's better-written than the title  
suggests.

ADVENTURE

Good stuff.

Ben presents a stage play: 'Killing Vampire Lit: The Stage  
Play.' Mystery approves.

ADVENTURE (CONT'D)

(to Ben)

Your title needs work, but well  
done.

Abby takes out another story, a short story called 'The  
Untold Story of Ernest Frankenstein.' Vampire screams in  
agony.

The rest of the Students take turns showing Vampire their  
work. Each time, he reacts like someone's stabbing his head  
with ice picks.

Very weakly, Vampire moves towards Adventure and History.

ADVENTURE (CONT'D)

Romance? Still have that key?

ROMANCE

Yes.

ADVENTURE

I'll trade you the Spork for the knives.

ROMANCE

Sure.

HISTORY

Good luck.

Adventure gives Romance the Spork, and she hands them the knives before leaving.

History takes his Bowie knife while Adventure twirls the kukri knife.

HISTORY (CONT'D)

Ready when you are!

He stabs Vampire in the heart and Adventure cuts his head off! The head rolls away. The Students gasp and wince.

BEN

Cool.

The head's still talking.

VAMPIRE'S HEAD

I'm not dead yet!

ROMANCE

Yes, you are!

She stands in the doorway, holding the painting of Vampire. In the painting, he's unrecognisable, looking aged, withered and horrible.

Romance raises the Spork up high.

VAMPIRE'S HEAD

No! Don't!

Romance stabs the painting. A gaping hole suddenly appears in Vampire's chest. He cries out.

The Genres and Students look away, but they can't block out that ear-splitting scream.

The scream stops. Everyone stares at the body.

Vampire's body's is now aged, withered and horrible, while his painted self looks handsome.

Everyone gasps when the body explodes into a cloud of black dust.

They stare, trying to wrap their heads around what just happened.

KID-LIT

Holy shit!

COMEDY

You said it.

The tension is broken by some laughter.

Some Students show their stories to each other and talk excitedly about them.

EROTICA

I can't believe it.

KID-LIT

Neither can I.

She hugs Erotica, and in a moment, Kid-Lit is fast asleep.

FANTASY

We did it. We actually beat him.

SPINSTER

I know, I was there.

Mystery and Horror skulk around in the background.

Comedy claps Tragedy on the back.

COMEDY

It was a helluva night.

TRAGEDY

It was.

COMEDY

What do you think happened to those ghosts?

TRAGEDY

Beats me.

The possessed vacuum suddenly appears and charges at them. A laser blasts it into oblivion.

Comedy and Tragedy turn to see Sci-Fi pointing her laser gun where the vacuum was.

SCI-FI

Huh. I guess I did have some ammo left.

She walks away.

TRAGEDY

Too bad the vacuum was possessed. We could've used it to clean up this mess.

COMEDY

You're something else, Tragdy.

He takes out a gun and puts it in his mouth. Tragedy freaks out.

TRAGEDY

What are you doing?

Comedy bites down on the gun and chews off a piece; it's made of licorice.

COMEDY

(mouthful)

Licorice. If there's anything I'm a sucker for, it's licorice.

This gets a genuine laugh from Tragedy.

TRAGEDY

You're something else, Commie.

He hugs his brother.

Romance approaches Adventure and History, carrying the Spork. She hands it to Adventure.

ROMANCE

I believe this is yours.

ADVENTURE

Thank you.

She gives her kukri knife to Romance.

ADVENTURE (CONT'D)

I want you to have this.

ROMANCE

Are you sure?

ADVENTURE

Absolutely.

History gives Romance his Bowie knife.

HISTORY

I want you to have mine too, seeing  
how well you took out those  
vampires with it.

ROMANCE

Thank you.

She straps the knives to her belt.

ADVENTURE

How'd you kill those vampires  
without any training?

ROMANCE

I was too fast for them.

History's impressed. Adventure's not buying it, but she  
doesn't mind.

ADVENTURE

I'm sure you were.

Romance smiles. She looks over Adventure's shoulder, sees  
Fantasy coming.

Romance drags History away. Adventure's confused until she  
sees Fantasy.

FANTASY

Hello, Adventure.

ADVENTURE

Hi.

Fantasy rocks back and forth.

FANTASY

You all right?

ADVENTURE

Why wouldn't I be?

FANTASY

I know you had the bag of rice, but  
when I saw that tooth sticking out  
of your chest...

He sighs.

FANTASY (CONT'D)

...it looked like it really hurt.

ADVENTURE

I'm fine. Really.

FANTASY

Good.

He looks a little better.

ADVENTURE

Why'd you give me those dragon  
scales?

FANTASY

So you'd have a better chance  
against Vamp.

ADVENTURE

Is that it?

FANTASY

Well...

The pile of dust that used to be Vamp's body moves around. It  
gathers itself into a pile, then morphs into black sludge.

Black sludge that resembles a bat.

It moves around on the floor, past their feet. No one  
notices.

The black sludge searches until it spots Sherri.

SHERRI

What if this castle collapses?

NADINE

Why would that happen?

SHERRI

Sometimes, the bad guy's lair  
destroys itself once the bad guy  
has been defeated.

The sludge moves towards them.

SHERRI (CONT'D)

It happened in the 'Castlevania'  
video games.

NADINE

I don't think that's going to  
happen here, Sherri.

SHERRI

But seeing that Genres walk among  
us, it's not too far-fetched, is  
it?

The black sludge attacks her. Nadine screams.

Adventure and Fantasy turn to see what's happening. They run  
towards Nadine and Sherri.

Nadine's crouching next to Sherri, shaking her. Sherri's  
covered from head to toe in the sludge, and isn't breathing.

Everyone gathers around Sherri.

ADVENTURE

Back away! Give us room!

The mob moves back.

Adventure grabs Nadine by the shoulders.

ADVENTURE (CONT'D)

We're going to fix this, okay?  
Sherri will be all right. Don't  
worry.

Nadine nods, unconvinced.

Adventure and Fantasy give Sherri's body a look over. History  
joins them.

ADVENTURE (CONT'D)

Do you know what's happening?

HISTORY

I'm afraid so.

He sighs.

NADINE

Tell me! Now!

HISTORY

We just killed Vampire, the anthropomorphic personification of vampire fiction everywhere.

NADINE

So?

HISTORY

If you know how to kill a Genre, it's possible to do it. But the essence of that Genre will live on in a different form.

NADINE

Adventure, what's he saying?

ADVENTURE

Vamp's not the first Genre to die. The original Horror was killed, and replaced by the Horror you see today.

Nadine looks at Horror.

NADINE

Nobody replaced Classic Vampire when he was killed!

HISTORY

It doesn't always happen with archaic Genres. But, it's happening now to your sister.

Nadine gets it.

NADINE

Sherri...

ADVENTURE

Sherri is about to become the new Vampire.

NADINE

No! I won't let it happen!

The black sludge disappears, and Sherri looks exactly the same. Nadine breathes a sigh of relief.

HISTORY

Maybe her body rejected the change. Maybe...

Sherri's body gives off a blinding white light.

HISTORY (CONT'D)

Nope, I was mistaken!

He and Adventure pull Nadine away from Sherri. The Genres and Students also back away.

Comedy, Tragedy, Fantasy, Sci-Fi, Spinster, Mystery, Erotica and Kid-Lit stare at Sherri, looking nervous.

Abby, Ben, Darlene and the rest of the Students are even more confused than before.

Through the light, Sherri's body changes. Her skin becomes more pale, her hair darker and even her clothes morph into something more gothic.

Adventure tries to comfort Nadine.

NADINE

When she's changed...when she's become the new Vampire...will she be better than the original?

ADVENTURE

I hope so, Nadine.

Nadine finally breaks down and cries.

The light around Sherri's body becomes excruciatingly bright, then...

FADE OUT.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF SCRIPT READ-THROUGHS;  
OR, AN EXEGESIS FOR A MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY

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*'So to edit your work, you go back and thrum [like you would a stringed instrument] to it. And you go thrum, thrum, thrum, twang! And when you go 'twang!' as a reader, mark that passage.'*

– Robert Olen Butler, in 'From Where You Dream,' as quoted by Jim Harrington in 'Why You Should Read Your Work Out Loud' (2010).

## **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

When I started researching this project, I originally planned to just focus on screenplay read-throughs, (the main reason I am doing the research in the first place is because I am planning a read-through of my first screenplay, *'How To Kill A Genre'*). However, while undertaking my literature review, I discovered there was another area closely related to read-throughs: prose writers who read their material out loud.

I conducted a considerable amount of research on writers who read their work out loud. I am aware that screenwriters generally will not read their work out loud at any point during filmmaking (unless they are playing a character in the film). However, during the writing process, there are merits to reading the whole script out loud. Not just the dialogue, the action too. By doing this, the screenwriter will get a better understanding of their characters, find mistakes, which they can remove when they next revise their work.

## **1.1 WHAT IS A READ-THROUGH?**

The script read-through, also called a table read, is the part of film and television production process where the actors with speaking roles come together to read the screenplay out loud. Studio executives, producers, heads of department, writers and the director will also attend the script read-through. One of the actors, who is not actually involved in the project, will read the scene headings and action. They will skim the written action to keep the pace up (description in a screenplay is already sparse, but it can still take a while to read the entire script in one sitting.)

This read-through will be the first time that everyone involved has met, so it is tradition to go around the table and introduce themselves by name and job. Then the director might make a speech telling them what their goals are with this film, the vision they have and what they hope to accomplish.

The fact the read-through is happening at all means all the elements, the cast, finance and heads of department, are ready to go and pre-production is winding down. The script will have a life beyond the written word and reading it will give insight into how the actors might approach their characters. In addition, a read-through is a great way to identify problems in the screenplay that might not seem obvious during the writing, editing and re-writing stages: wooden dialogue, unbelievable situations or boring parts.

It is normal for actors to treat the read-through as a cold reading, sometimes known as a sight-reading. Since the actors have had little to no time to rehearse, they are not expected to give an actual performance; they just have to read lines.

The read-through of a screenplay can be nerve-wracking for the producers, director, writer(s) and executives, who are on the look-out for casting or script problems: a lack of chemistry between the main actors, a key player who has no charisma, a script with logic problems and so on. Having said that, it can also be exciting to finally see a film begin coming to life.

Before the read-through, when the writer is putting the script together, some writers describe writing using only the voice in their head. The characters speak with the writer's own speech patterns, accent, pitch and rhythm. Although, other writers often say that at some point the characters being taking on a life of their own.

Actors might be called in to help the writer flesh out something unclear, or as a favour to a casting director or producer. However, the actor being called in for a read-through should remember this is not a booking. They are not being cast, nor are they guaranteed to get the part. Even so, they still meet several key production team members who might keep them in mind for this or future projects.

In film and television, the read-through might happen before there is even a finished screenplay and before the cast has auditioned. Once the script is approved and the cast finalised, a read-through is the first part of production to be undertaken. It might happen on the first day of pre-production, or even before then.

However, an actor who has already been cast can still get fired during the read-through. Read-through etiquette is essential: be nice, be quiet, be helpful and don't be brash. Actors should treat every cast member with respect and not do anything different from their audition. (Unless they have been directed to do so.) They could get fired at any point during the production, but the read-through is an especially dangerous time.

## **1.2 REFLECTION**

I first wrote *'How To Kill A Genre'* as a short story during my second year at Western University in Canada. I wrote it for a course called, 'To Make A Long Story Short,' taught by Professor Greene. Before we were allowed to write our first stories, Professor Greene had the students read 'Flash Fiction Forward,' a collection of eighty short stories edited by James Thomas and Robert Shapard. After reading the entire book, we were told to pick our favourite story and write a story similar to it in style or subject matter.

*'The Death of the Short Story'* by J. David Stevens (Thomas & Shapard, 2006, pg. 226) was one of my favourite short stories. In it, the Short Story became personified, along with Memoir, the Prose Poem, the Novel and the Autobiography family. Like a lot of celebrities, the Short Story dies young, catching everyone off guard. The story describes grief-stricken fans leaving flowers and stuffed animals outside libraries, along with rumours the Short Story's brain has been cryogenically frozen, echoing similar rumours about Walt Disney after his death.

Inspired by *'The Death of the Short Story,'* I soon thought up my own short story where genres are personified as human beings. I imagined Adventure, a man at this point, as the main character but it did not feel right. (Up to that point, every protagonist in my stories had been male, so I thought it was time to do something different.) After making Adventure a young woman instead, the rest of the story came easily, (I imagined Adventure sharing some qualities with Ellen Ripley from *'Alien'*). Adventure was waiting for the other genres, including Comedy, Tragedy, Fantasy and Sci-Fi, in a meeting room. It did not take long to figure out what their meeting was going to be about:

Killing Vampire Literature.

Like *'The Church of Cullen,'* an earlier piece I wrote about *'Twilight'*, this new story was also a comic take on the *'Twilight'* phenomenon. This time, while I still made fun of *'Twilight,'* I did not refer to it by name. I believe the result was a much more subtle and engaging piece that mocked vampire mania. I have seen many parodies and spoofs of *'Twilight,'* but they were disappointing because they were shallow and unfunny.

I wrote my short story, called *'Killing Vampire Lit'* (one student pointed out this was not a great title), and had workshopped it with the class. I renamed the story *'How To Kill A Genre'* and incorporated some of the class's suggestions, such as turning *'Erotic'* into *'Erotica,'* adding

more detail on how to kill Vampire Lit and giving the Genres traits related to their respective genre. I submitted a reworked draft of *'How To Kill A Genre,'* and was pleased when it got an 84% mark from my professor. I was thrilled when it was published in the first issue of Western University's *'Occasus Literary Journal'* in Spring 2012.

Writing *'How To Kill A Genre'* was a rewarding experience, but I knew I was not yet done with it.

Before moving to Australia in 2012, I had the idea to adapt *'How To Kill A Genre'* into a feature-length script, because it seemed like a visual story that would work better as a movie. I kept notes for all of my ideas, including Vampire killing his father, Classic Vampire, and the idea to arm Fantasy with a large, red Spork, (I will provide more detail on this later). I even wrote a detailed synopsis to flesh out the story.

Then, I began to have doubts. First of all, I had no experience writing stories longer than 3,000 words; secondly, *'How To Kill A Genre'* was a very short story. I had seen what happened when stories like *'How The Grinch Stole Christmas'* and *'The Cat in the Hat'* were adapted into feature films; they became overblown and overstuffed with details and lost their original form, (I am sad to say the same thing is currently happening to *'The Hobbit'* trilogy). Those stories worked brilliantly when they were short, so I decided my short story was fine the way it was.

With this in mind, I decided to adapt *'How To Kill A Genre'* into a short screenplay; I also adapted another short story I wrote, *'The Legend of Insomnia Gallow,'* a modern retelling of *'The Legend of Sleepy Hollow,'* into a short script. I had the idea that if these screenplays were made into short films, I could use them as calling cards for future work. I do not think these screenplays will get made because I decided I am not interested in being a film director, but they did help me understand screenwriting process.

The *'How To Kill A Genre'* short script was initially a word-for-word adaptation of the short story. I soon realised this was an opportunity to include new ideas, (I have not altered the original short story at all because, in my mind, it is done). The screenplay includes details to show how powerful Vampire Lit has become, like mentioning how the other genres' books are kept in dusty corners in bookshops. *'Fifty Shades of Grey'* (2012) had also come out at that point, so I referenced the disturbing trend of publishing fan-fiction, (since *'Fifty Shades of Grey'* was originally *'Twilight'* fan-fiction, I decided Vampire was also responsible for it.)

The biggest change of *'How To Kill A Genre'* going from prose to script was the addition of Paedewolf, who would have a large role in the feature-length screenplay. While Vamp-Lit and Romance were based on Edward Cullen and Bella Swan from *'Twilight,'* Paedewolf was based on werewolf Jacob Black. The name 'Paedewolf' is a tweaked version of 'Paedobear,' an Internet meme used to mock paedophiles or people who are interested in minors. In the final *'Twilight'* book *'Breaking Dawn'* (2008), Bella gives birth to a human/vampire baby named Renesmee, and Jacob 'imprints' on her. In these books, imprinting is love at first sight for werewolves, and its main purpose is reproduction. The women who get imprinted also have no say in the matter.

This is already disturbing, but Jacob imprints on Bella's newborn baby. The books try to justify it, saying that he will only be an older brother or father figure to Renesmee while she is underage. Then, when she is older, the imprinting will change the nature of their relationship. This is the dictionary definition of child grooming, where an adult forms a trusting relationship with a child with the intent of having sex with the child when they are older. *'Twilight'* fans excused this, claiming imprinting to be love at first sight. This is not too surprising when you consider the way they glorify Edward and Bella's abusive relationship.

Paedowolf being creepy towards Kid-Lit was my answer to this concept of imprinting. Every time I wrote a scene in the feature-length screenplay involving him, I felt the need to take several hot showers. The scene where Fantasy fries Paedowolf to a crisp was satisfying to write.

*'How To Kill A Genre'* is not only a humorous take on the *'Twilight'* phenomena, but also a salute to Internet sporkers. Apart from being a word for a cross between a spoon and a fork, the word 'spork' also describes, according to Television Tropes and Idioms, a type of satire performed by adding humorous running commentary on top of another work.

Here is an example from the prologue of Vivisector's Writ humorous recap of *'Eragon'* (2003) by Christopher Paolini:

*'Then the red fire smote her and she collapsed.'*

I may not be an expert but yes, people who are smote are not going to remain standing. That would run counter to the whole smiting concept. In fact, if someone remained standing after an attempted smiting that would be terrible for your reputation. Imagine if Zeus threw a bolt down and whoever he hit just kind of scratched their head and walked away (Vivisector's Writ, 2011).

This is why I armed Fantasy with a giant, red Spork: so he could show Vamp's fans how bad his books really are.

## **2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW: READING OUT LOUD**

Even though speech predates literacy, it is the written word that gets the most attention. Before the printing press, stories were passed down generation to generation in the oral tradition. Then

books came along and we never looked back. Still, there remains some magic in the spoken word.

Today's writers are aware of the power of the spoken word. David Sedaris, American humourist and author of 'Naked' and 'When You Are Engulfed In Flames,' is one of them. Before publishing a new book, humourist Sedaris likes to test out his material in front of a live audience. He has read to audiences across the country, at Carnegie Hall and on the Late Show with David Letterman; and reading works in progress live has become an essential part of his writing process.:

'It sounds really 'Kumbaya,' but you can feel people drifting away from you,' he says. 'There could be silence or even like medium laughter, but you can still feel people slipping away. I love to go off topic, but you can't do it for so long that people forget what the story is about, or that they lose faith that anyone is driving the story, or you can feel them thinking 'Oh my God, we could be here for days.' Sometimes the first time you read a story, you think, 'Oh, shit, I'm in Death Valley,' Sedaris says. 'I mean you hadn't realized it on the page but it's really clear reading it out loud on tour. I'm grateful because I have a chance to fix it. It's not like the story's in print and I'm reading it aloud and realising I'm in Death Valley.' (Hohendal, 2013)

A large audience is not necessary for reading out loud. Many people have a memory of a parent, sibling or babysitter reading a story to them before bed. Those in writing groups either love or hate reading new material out loud in front of friends. Plus, screenwriters know they should try out dialogue and see how it sounds. However, there is one question all of these writers

should be asking themselves: how can you get someone else interested in your stories if you don't sound interested? Columnist for LitReactor Ben Umstead writes in 'Speak up: The Importance of Reading Out Loud':

Our scene is any bookstore or cafe, museum or some such institution. The event, why, it is a reading. There is our writer dolling out a sample of their latest work and, well...it sounds rather dull, doesn't it? There's nothing that draws us in. Their voice is flat like a step, monotone...more monotone than Steven Wright. There's no color. There's no inflection. Now I am not asking for melodrama here, or over enunciation, but I am asking for some sense of passion, even if it is deadpan. (Umstead, 2013).

Stage fright is not an easy thing to get over. It has often been said people fear public speaking more than they fear death, but at least with public speaking, we can practice and get better at it.

What are some other ways to improve public speaking skills? In 'How To Give A Public Reading,' LA writer Domey Malasarn has some good advice:

Practice a lot. Read your piece over and over several times so that you have it nearly memorized. Understand the landscape of the piece: slow down and speed up according to the story's dramatic points. Practice using highs and lows in your voice to emphasize key points, multiple characters, and so that you don't sound like a robot. You don't need to do anything fancy

like using accents--in fact, a lot of people are annoyed by that (Malasarn, 2009).

Another trick Malasarn recommends is reading with a wine cork clenched between your teeth (this one is a personal favourite of mine). It will sound and feel horrible, but doing it will work the weakest mouth muscles. After reading with a cork, the writer will pronounce everything much more clearly.

Does any of this still apply to writers who have no intention of reading their work out loud? Yes, it does. It is still valuable to hear how one's writing sounds.

Finishing a novel is a huge accomplishment for any writer, whether it is their first book or not. The novel has been revised, revamped, given the best feedback and it has been edited to death. 'May I suggest one more step before you go out looking for an agent or a market? Read the whole book...out loud. You're probably thinking 'That will take forever.' It will, and that's the point.' (Sambuchino, 2011).

It is easy to become numb to the prose when the writer knows the story so well. Reading out loud will make the prose seem as if someone else wrote it. Awkward wording, run-on sentences and repetition of the same word will jump out when read out loud. In Chuck Sambuchino's case, he found that in the first draft of his novel, he kept using the word 'surprise' over and over again.

However, as Jane Friedman writes in 'Why Take The Time to Read Your Work Out Loud?' (2011), most articles on reading out loud talk about getting rid of words and boring description. What they do not go into is how reading aloud:

...helps develop perspective and voice. Listening to yourself—whether in the moment or recorded—more closely identifies the writing to YOU, and you start to think more carefully about whether the events, details, and intricacies of the story reflect YOUR perspective. (Sometimes we write in an “objective” mind, or with a stale and soulless approach.) Reading aloud helps you think more about how this is YOUR story, and that it’s YOU who uniquely decides what story you want to tell (Friedman, 2011).

There is another reason to read out loud: all the characters sound the same. ‘It’s one of the biggest problems plaguing fiction — and it seems to hit genre fiction especially hard sometimes: the characters who all sound exactly alike. ‘How do you keep your characters from all having the same voice?’ (Anders, 2009).

One way to fix this is listening to people talk. Not in films or on television, actual people. Go out to a café or park and listen to people’s conversations. (Note: wear a pair of headphones without listening to any music. You will be surprised at what people will say when they think you are not listening.)

Scott Myers, founder of Go Into The Story, suggests another way to work on character voices: read the entire screenplay as one character: As he writes in ‘The Benefits of Reading Your Script Aloud’:

Here you are focusing on the flow and feel of that individual’s sides. You’re looking to see if there are any verbal habits unique to that character. Do they tend to end their sentences with a question? Do they use a lot slang? Are they prone to interrupt other characters or themselves, stop-

starting topics? Do they swear a lot? And so on. Read aloud one character's sides, all the way through the script. Then pick another character and do the same thing. Do this with every character. It's a great way to look for distinctive verbal traits. And if you're not finding them, that is every character sounds the same, then you will want to spend more time with each character – their background, family, work, education – how collectively those might be reflected in the way they talk, then go through their sides, massaging their lines to reflect their distinctive personality (Myers, 2015).

Charlie J. Anders believes writers have three or four character voices in their head, and that they should refine those voices. For example, Joss Whedon's shows, '*Buffy the Vampire Slayer*' (1997), '*Dollhouse*' (2009), '*Firefly*' (2002), have the stiff British character (Giles/Wesley/Adelle), the goofy nerd (Xander/Topher) and the crazy girl (River/Echo/Fred). While he uses these character types over and over, every one of those characters is unique. Whedon succeeded because he found ways to make them different, and has refined each of those character voices.

Probably the most important reason for reading out loud, according to Travel Media Ninja's Josh Washington in 'How To Read Your Writing Out Loud,' is this:

...most of the time your writing will be digested silently, by an internal narrator sitting in the easy chair of your readers brain. When that reader is you, the soundless inflections and pacing you give the text will match the remembered event you have written about. But when you open your mouth to read your story out loud your nervous voice can stall and

cripple the text into a pile of tangled paragraphs  
(Washington, 2010).

If a writer can become comfortable with reading out loud, they can bring awareness to their tone, pacing and word choices. Pausing at commas and paragraphs, intoning dialogue, and building tension will make the story stronger.

### **3.0 LITERATURE REVIEW: SCRIPT READ-THROUGHS**

‘There is no greater sense of accomplishment for a screenwriter than, after months or perhaps even years of toiling over your script, you get to type those magical words: ‘FADE OUT.’”  
(Thomas Jr., 2011).

However, more work needs to be done. The screenwriter needs to hear their words spoken by actors. Once this happens, they might discover the characters have said more than is necessary, the dialogue could be dull and every character potentially sounds the same.

In ‘8 Different Tips for Screenwriters,’ emerging writer, director and producer Scott Westby presents us with ‘some things [he’s] learned that AREN’T those same old boring (but of course important!) rules.’ (Westby, 2014).

1. Screenplays are read, not watched: Screenwriters have been told time and time again they are making a blueprint for a film, so the script is a visual medium. This is only part of the truth, because screenwriters need to remember that their script is going to be read, not watched.

Readers need to picture a movie in their head as they read, but the script itself is not the movie. Some details cannot be left for the director/art department. Some details need to be described so the reader can picture it. However, these details can stop the story in its track, so be careful how they are worded.

It is also important to watch the verbs. Many characters in screenplays ‘look’ and ‘walk’ a lot, and this becomes boring. Adding stronger verbs will make a script more colourful and give the characters development.

2. Before finishing a draft, read the screenplay out loud by yourself. It will feel silly, but reading every word will expose typos, run-on sentences, incorrect scene headings and poor sentence structure.

3. Each scene should be able to stand on its own. You can take the scenes out of story order, read them on their own and ask questions like, ‘Is this scene absolutely essential?’ ‘Is it entertaining?’ ‘What is this scene doing to progress the A-plot or B-plot?’ ‘What is it doing to develop the characters?’ ‘Is there telling instead of showing?’ ‘Is there a beginning, a middle and an end?’ ‘Is there tension?’ and so on.

A great scene can incorporate all of these. Having multiple layers will make the story work on many levels.

4. Every writer is different. Some need to write where there are no distractions, others need ambient noise; some are most creative in the morning, some in the afternoon. The list goes on. A writer needs to find out what works best for them. They need to test himself or herself, like trying to write at a different time or place than usual. There should be no strict rules about when to write.

5. Every writer dreads clichés, but they have their moments. They can be the best or only way to get something across, or they are a way to get the story on the page. They are also great for challenging audience expectations and surprising them. If a cliché is going to distract your audience or break their suspension of disbelief, either figure out a way to tweak it or get rid of it altogether.

6. Writers should also read news stories for inspiration, look at funny pictures or memes to make them laugh, and check out articles for tips. They have a wealth of information at their fingertips, and they should take advantage of it.

7. A screenwriter might be self-conscious about doing work in a coffee shop, worrying their first screenplay will typecast them or they are trying too hard. They need to put those doubts and fears aside, and just write the thing.

8. If a screenplay is cheaper to shoot, it has a better chance of getting made. Very few first-time writers end up scripting a huge blockbuster film. Horror films are popular because of their built-in audience and because they are cheap (Westby, 2014). The writer should keep track of how much it would take to make their film. (I really wish I had read this before writing ‘How To Kill A Genre.’)

This sounds like a lot to keep in mind, doesn’t it? But writers should not worry.

Blogger George Thomas Jr realised two things while he was listening to a recording of a read-through of a script he was developing: he can write, and he can direct better. Does he worry about this? No, because there is no spoon.

What he means is screenwriting is much like ‘The Matrix:’ what looks real might be an illusion. This includes letting the audience’s reaction, or lack thereof, dictate what gets changed during rewriting. Sometimes, the writer has to trust their instinct.

Even if the audience did not react to an important part does not mean it will not work. The problem could be in how the scene was written or directed, or a line of dialogue should be given to another character, or rephrased.

As Thomas Jr. says in ‘Rewriting the Screenplay for the Better,’ ‘Because writers like to write, writers write more than writers need to write.’ (Thomas Jr., 2011). This is not a good or

bad thing; it is just how it is. Producers will be grateful for a refined screenplay and actors will love portraying the writer's well-rounded characters.

A writer can use the audience's reaction as a guide and the actors' interpretations of what's written. For instance, if the writing lacks clarity, an actor will be reading too many directions. Specificity is the key to writing great characters, dialogue and action. Screenwriters should ask themselves questions like, 'What is the purpose of a given action?' and 'What is the point of a given line of dialogue?' so they can craft a memorable screenplay.

Filmmakers and writers knew the importance of script reading even back in the 1940s. '*Double Indemnity*' (1944) is an American film noir directed by Billy Wilder, written by Wilder and Raymond Chandler and produced by Buddy DeSylva and Joseph Siström. The script was based on James M. Cain's novel of the same name. '*Double Indemnity*' is considered by many to be the film that set the standard for future film noir works.

Before production began, Paramount purchased the rights to the novella. Due to its morally questionable characters, 'Double Indemnity' was considered unfilmable. The original screenwriter, Charles Brackett, had quit, and Wilder needed to find a new collaborator. He initially tried to get James M. Cain himself, but he was unavailable. Joseph Siström suggested Wilder work with Raymond Chandler, the popular writer of hardboiled detective fiction.

According to Gene Phillips in '*Creatures of Darkness: Raymond Chandler, Detective Fiction, and Film Noir*' (2000), Wilder wanted to use Cain's dialogue from the novella. Chandler, however, knew that it would not work as well on screen. Wilder became annoyed with Chandler for not including Cain's dialogue. They settled their argument by bringing in two actors to read it out loud. It turned out Chandler was right; in the end, Wilder and Chandler wrote most of the dialogue for the final film.

Screenwriters are not the only ones to benefit from the read-through. As Guy Goldstein writes in ‘Reading Your Screenplay Out Loud,’ the read-through is important to not only the screenwriter, but also the actors:

It is paramount for an actor to rehearse his or her lines out-loud. Truthfully, if you only rehearse lines in your head, you stand the chance of assuming that you know your lines far better than you do. In addition, an actor has to practice his or her sound with the neck and throat muscles, with the lung muscles, the abdomen and the face. The number one rule of rehearsing lines is to rehearse them out loud. If you’re only rehearsing your lines in your head, your mind can play tricks on you and give you the illusion that you know your lines when you read them and learn them silently. Rehearsing your lines out loud will help to establish whether you “really” know your lines or not (Goldstein, 2012).

How should an actor read a script? Billy Marshall Stoneking, poet, playwright, filmmaker and teacher, writes in ‘How To Read A Screenplay’ on ‘Where Is The Drama?’:

One reads a screenplay in order to EXPERIENCE the characters and their world. It is as much an aural experience as it is a visual one, maybe more so. To read effectively is to see *and hear* the characters in their immediacy and to remain open and sensitive not only to what they do and say but to what is implied or suggested by what they do and say. (Stoneking, 2014).

When reading a screenplay, we are not supposed to look for what we think is true, or for the truths we think our world (or the writer's made-up world) believes in. We need to find the truth of the script itself; to find those special moments where the story becomes more than the sum of its parts.

A reader needs to hear and see what is happening within the world of the screenplay, but not read too much into it. They need to let go of what they think or hope should be happening. Once this happens, reading a screenplay becomes an interactive experience.

Film director Elia Kazan once said, 'The first job is to discover what the script is saying, not what it reminds you of' (Stoneking, 2014). To analyse a script the right way, it is necessary to be emotionally detached. This is not easy since screenplays are meant to be emotional experiences. If possible, actors should read the script many times before the performance. If they put it off, they will affect their own acting in a negative way.

He also says when reading a script for the first time, the actor should realise its importance because it will never happen again. They should make time for reading so they will not be disturbed. Not giving a play the attention it deserves on the first reading is the greatest insult an actor can give it.

Now comes the actual read-through.

Casting director Marci Liroff, who has worked on such films as '*Footloose*,' '*St. Elmo's Fire*,' '*Pretty in Pink*,' '*The Iron Giant*' and many more, says this: 'Your audition should not feel like a visit to the doctor! It is your time to show us what you've got' (Liroff, 2014).

Liroff believes the read-through is just as important as the audition, and it is difficult to argue with a casting director of her calibre. It is also difficult to argue when she tells an anecdote

of a particularly frustrating table read. (For obvious purposes, she does not refer to anybody by name.)

Liroff was involved in an all-star read-through with the main actors, a superstar producer, the president of the studio, all the executives and the director and writer. The hot young love interest of the lead female actor came in wearing a baseball cap pulled over his eyes. Liroff suggested he take off his hat so they could see his face during the reading. The director also told him to take it off, and also spoke to each actor to make sure they were at 'performance' level during the read-through.

The guy did not take their advice. He kept this hat on and mumbled through the script. He was not only inaudible, he was just reading lines with no intention or character choices. Liroff believes he was afraid, probably because he was new to this experience. She knew right away he would be replaced and began thinking about other people to cast instead. Sure enough, the producer and director come up to her afterward and ask whom they could get to replace the guy.

Maybe he no longer wanted the part, and messed up his audition on purpose so he could get out of it. However, thanks to his behaviour, he not only blew the audition, he also blew any chance of ever working with those people ever again.

During another read-through, the actress insulted the material in front of the writers, studio executives and producers. She was not asked to come back and probably will never be hired by them again.

For another film, 'The Iron Giant,' they did not have their whole cast because one role was very difficult to cast. Marci Liroff wanted a particular actor for the part, but she could not convince him to audition. She also could not get the studio to make him an offer. She finally

convinced the actor and his agent to take a leap of faith and do the read-through. Sure enough, the actor was brilliant, everybody liked him and they offered him the role.

As Liroff says, ‘So many things can be tricky on a film. You always want to serve the material and be your very best. You never know.’ (Liroff, 2014).

### **3.1 INTERVIEWS**

*I selected Ed Zuckerman, Kevin Roberts, Darren Fisher and Chris Fitchett because all four have been involved in numerous script read-throughs. I interviewed Kevin, Darren and Chris in person while I emailed Ed because he was in New York. I thought this section would be a good place for the interviews because they have additional information.*

*The following are answers to the questions:*

1. What do you find most useful about doing the script read-through?
2. Is there anything about the process you’d like to change?
3. How important is this part of pre-production?
4. How much rewriting does a script go through after a read-through?

*The following are answers to the question: What do you find most useful about doing the script read-through?*

#### **ED ZUCKERMAN**

It is useful to hear how the script sounds coming out of the mouths of the actors who will perform it. I frequently make small changes in phrasing for purposes of clarity or simply smoothness. Often actors will make small changes as they read the script to make the words feel more natural, and I frequently adopt those changes in the script.

## **KEVIN ROBERTS**

You become acutely aware of excess words, excess speeches and badly worded dialogue. What's likely to trip an actor up in performance, what's unnecessary, how good your guest actors are and if there's any problems with the cast will come through in the way they interact during the read-through. You will also find out whether the director's on the ball and knows the material.

## **DARREN FISHER**

In my experience, a large part of why you do a table-read is because it kicks off the production. It's usually at the producer's house, there's lots of alcohol and it takes four hours. No other heads of department are there, unless they're friends with the director. You sit around, chatting, drinking and the director will read the scene description and the actors read their lines. It's an inaugural cutting of the tape. It's also touching because some of the actors won't see each other again until the wrap party. It's fun for them to get a sense of community, and it's a morale booster that's not taken very seriously. For me, as a writer, it's good because it's the beginning of the rewriting process. It's also the beginning of the actor's rewriting process, where you see how the actors read your lines. It's not a cold read, although it depends on who's there. It could be relatively cold for the lead actors. It's that start of rehearsal period where you'll cast an actor where they can be played one way or another. The writer is on call to adjust that dialogue. Different actors have different rhythms, and may or may not be a great fit for the dialogue. With the James Bond films, after Sean Connery was replaced, they had to completely rewrite Bond for Moore because he couldn't do the things Connery did. It's not like with Hamlet, where most actors have their own interpretations but stick to Shakespeare. Connery was physical while

Moore was witty. Since Moore would never copy Connery anyway, they had to make adjustments. Not better or worse, just different. This is where the read-through is useful.

## **CHRIS FITCHETT**

In the first instance, it's great for the writer to hear the dialogue, and the most useful thing is to hear how it's flowing in terms of interacting between the characters. Also, you can time it to judge the length. Afterwards, the feedback from the actors is also useful. With 'Blurred,' the most useful thing is getting the cast together so they can hear the other characters, and there's a sense of community in making this film.

There are three different types of read-throughs: one is where as a writer/producer, you got this script and you just want to hear the dialogue. It hasn't been cast, and you're getting actors in. Some might be volunteering, but will not necessarily be the actors used for the film. That's part of the script development process. As a writer, you're hearing the dialogue, how the structure is playing out and so on.

The second type is when you've cast the movie. With 'Blurred' (2002), we cast it and during rehearsals, we got everyone together and did a table read. They would sit around the table and read their dialogue. It isn't a development process; it's the first part of rehearsals.

The third type of read-through is done live in front of an audience. I have never done one publicly, but they do this in Melbourne. Comedy works especially well for live read-throughs, because you can hear the audience laughing. It is also good for marketing the project, and getting people with money interested in the project. You've got the script finished, but this read-through is to get feedback from the market place. During one read-through in Melbourne, they got an offer for distribution.

*The following are answers to the question: Is there anything about the process you'd like to change?*

**ED ZUCKERMAN**

Not really. Actors should be given an opportunity (before production begins) to ask questions about their parts, but the read-through is generally not the best time to do that. Immediately after the read-through is fine.

**KEVIN ROBERTS**

In television, they can go on for hours, sometimes unnecessarily. They're not fixing problems, just cycling them. Guest actors need to be aware they are important and that it's not just a social get-together. The regular actors are relaxed because they do this every week, so the guest actors think it's okay for them to relax because they don't find themselves important.

**DARREN FISHER**

Not really. It's a take it or leave it. If the actors aren't available, you don't do it.

**CHRIS FITCHETT**

Not really, although I've noticed that some actors do a deliberate cold-read. It's better for the actors to get right into character rather than doing it flat. I would like everyone to get into character.

*The following are answer to the question: Has it always been a part of your process? If not, then why did you include it?*

**DARREN FISHER**

It's always been part of my work. I've been lucky where I've always able to do one.

**CHRIS FITCHETT**

No. I included it on 'Blurred' because the whole cast was together, and it would be a good way for them to get into it. I've included it in development because someone gave me money to pay the actors for being part of the process. You don't have to use the actors you want to cast in the film, but you do need to pay them. Don't include it unless you're getting reasonably good actors.

*The following are answers to the question: How important is this part of pre-production?*

**ED ZUCKERMAN**

It is helpful but not crucial. Not all TV shows do read-throughs, but I do them whenever I can.

**KEVIN ROBERTS**

Crucial in terms of fine-tuning, as long as everybody at the table realises that's what we're doing.

The script is effectively locked down after the read-through, or after the amendments.

**DARREN FISHER**

I think if you don't have one, the impact is minimal. It's a bit like not having a wrap party. It's not a disaster, but the experience feels incomplete. If you have no table-read and no rehearsals,

that's not good. But if you still have rehearsals, you're all right. It's fun, has a working function, is great for morale, you get to meet who you're working with and have them in one place.

It's always been part of my work. I've been lucky where I've always been able to do one.

### **CHRIS FITCHETT**

Read-throughs are important in pre-production if you have an ensemble cast where all the actors interact with each other. If you don't [have an interactive ensemble], it isn't that important. However, in terms of development, read-throughs are very important because it's important to hear the script read out loud. There have been times where I made changes to the script afterwards.

*The following are answers to the question: How much rewriting does a script go through after a read-through?*

### **ED ZUCKERMAN**

Just small stuff -- word choice, etc. At least in my experience.

### **KEVIN ROBERTS**

Depends on the people in the room, but certainly anything from half an hour to ten to twelve hours of work. It's usually a reflection of the state the script was in during the read-through. If it's undercooked, it will show. It's difficult to gloss over any faults.

### **DARREN FISHER**

It depends on the script and how you cast it. If you cast actors that are close to the characters in the script, changes will be minimal. But if the cast is further away from what's written, there'll be more rewriting. Now, the writer is tweaking the character, knowing full well who's going to play them. It's usually minor tweaks, and you'll continue to tweak during production. Though the director might draw a line in the sand, and ask when the evolution will stop.

## **CHRIS FITCHETT**

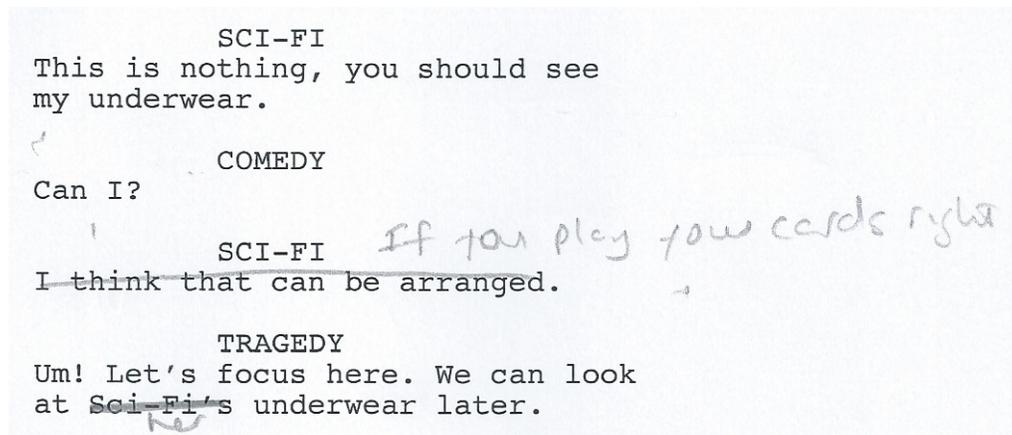
If it's part of rehearsals, then it's only bits of dialogue. If it's part of development, it can be a lot of polishing. The script should be in pretty good shape before the read-through. The best time to do a read-through is when the writer/director/producer thinks it's in good shape and read for the actors. At that point, any rewriting and polishing is dialogue and length of scenes, not story or structure.

## **5.0 MY READ-THROUGH OF 'HOW TO KILL A GENRE'**

Ever since I finished my first screenplay, 'How To Kill A Genre,' I have been planning to do a complete read-through of it. I have done three read-throughs:

The first reading happened in my Screenwriting 3 group. There were a limited number of people in the class, so some of them had to read two or three or even four characters. This was somewhat inconvenient because 'How To Kill A Genre' has a large cast of characters, which meant the students in my class were often talking to themselves. When most of the characters sound the same, it is difficult to get a feel for whom they are. I knew this ahead of time, so I did not have unreasonable expectations going into this script read-through. Even so, I still got a great deal of information out of it.

During the reading itself, I noticed clunky or dull dialogue that needed to be ironed out, which is the main thing that the writer should worry about.



None of the writers in Screenwriting 3 are actors, but you do not have to be an actor to spot bad dialogue. After the read-through, I received constructive criticism of 'How To Kill A Genre,' including making the Genres act more like the genre they are representing (ex. Comedy wearing a joy-buzzer, cracking bad jokes and wielding a swordfish head as a weapon). Another suggestion was to make the relationship between Adventure and Fantasy more believable, because it comes out of nowhere. An important piece of advice I got from this concerned the relationship between Erotica and Kid-Lit. Their interactions made my classmates uncomfortable, mainly because Erotica was dressed in bondage gear in front of a young girl. I have made sure to change this because it was never my intention for anything creepy to be going on between them; I have always thought of Erotica as being an older, protective sibling towards Kid-Lit because I liked the idea of there being an odd friendship between two very different Genres.

The second reading of 'How To Kill A Genre' happened with the Bond University Drama Society. We only got through the first ten pages, but this was more of a preview of a longer, future read-through. For this one, I was focusing on casting to type. This was where I learned how I wanted each character to sound. I managed to cast Adventure, Romance, Vampire,

Sci-Fi, Fantasy, Comedy, Tragedy, Mystery, Erotica and Kid-Lit. Not all of the members of BUDS are professional actors, but after working with them for a year now, I know they are very funny people. (Note: BUDS has been toying with the idea of adapting ‘How To Kill A Genre’ as a stage play to perform next semester. We will see how that goes.)

With my final read-through, I was looking for four things: that script was funny; not too confusing; the budding relationship between Adventure and Fantasy was believable; and if there were too many characters in the script. (I have had these issues in mind during previous drafts, but I was still not 100% sure I fixed them.) The biggest issue was the large number of characters in ‘How To Kill A Genre’; I have been told many times by my supervisors there are too many characters. Still, I have not cut out any characters because I am sure I can handle it.

Since there were only two guys, myself included, we ended up with a gender-flipped Fantasy. This worked out because I wanted someone who had a mercurial quality to them, which I felt the actress possessed. Also, I imagine the Genres can look like anyone and be any gender. I grew up watching Shakespeare’s plays, where gender bending is the norm.

During the reading, I skimmed the page description to keep the narrative going. Mark Piper, of The Byron Bay Film and Television School, suggested this when we were talking about ‘How To Kill A Genre.’ I skimmed the description, and the script read-through went for one hour and thirty-six minutes, which is how long I imagine the movie might be.

Playing more than one character kept each of us on our toes, which is always a good thing. We used different voices for each character, and most of the supporting characters had only a few lines anyway. It was sometimes difficult to hear each other due to people making noise in another room, but otherwise, everything went well. (We held the read-through in one of the gym rooms.)

After the read-through, I had the answers to my questions: ‘How To Kill A Genre’ got a few laughs, it mostly made sense, the relationship between Adventure and Fantasy did not feel forced and there were not too many characters. Even though there are a lot of characters, I think it helps they all have the same goal: stop Vampire.

Having said that, there are a few changes I would like to make to ‘How To Kill A Genre’: one was showing Paedewolf transforming into a wolf when he escapes Erotica’s house, to make the scene more dynamic; giving Erotica a rant about Vampire’s brand of erotic fiction, because s/he seems like the kind of person who would go on a rant; having the Genres escape through a trapdoor at Sci-Fi’s house because a trapdoor is more exciting than a regular door; and showing Adventure’s house going on lockdown just before the meeting starts to show the situation is about to get serious.

I have one regret about the script read-through: I forgot to talk to the actors about their characters beforehand. The drama club actors were already familiar with the story and some of the characters, but it would have been better if I had gone into more detail about whom they were playing.

(Note: I recorded the final read-through on a video camera and my iPad for future reference. I used two cameras in case one ran out of power.)

## **5.1 READ-THROUGH METHODOLOGY**

I have come up with a methodology for screenplay read-throughs after doing much research and talking with professionals who have done read-throughs.

Screenplays that have an ensemble cast are the best candidates for read-throughs since there are so many characters interacting with each other. Otherwise, it would probably be better

to have rehearsals with the actors who will be interacting together. There is no point getting actors together unless they are working together.

Another important aspect of a reading is casting the characters. I had known the actors for a while now, so I was confident I knew which characters they would be best at. None of us were exactly like the characters, but we came pretty close.

I found it is a good idea to do a read-through of the first ten pages of the script to give the actors an idea of what the rest of the story is like. If you give the actors all one hundred pages at once, it might scare them away. Also, it is a good sign if the first ten pages of the screenplay grab their attention.

I read the page description out loud, and to keep the pace going, I skimmed some descriptions. I found the scene headings (INT./EXT.) are the easiest pieces of writing to skim. There are a great number of them in any script, and reading them all slows the reading to a snail's pace.

After doing this read-through, I thought I would want to make a lot of big changes. However, the script was in good shape. This was surprising at first, but I remembered valuable advice from Chris Fitchett, Senior Teaching Fellow at Bond University: only do a read-through when you are sure the script is ready.

One mistake I made was I did not make sure everyone was available. I had invited seventeen people to attend but only seven showed up. The reading still went on, but I will keep this in mind for the future. If not enough people show up, it is better to reschedule.

During the actual read-through, it is important to have a video camera recording the entire thing so you can listen to it later. You will notice little details you did not pick up on during the actual reading because your mind will be more relaxed at this point. If possible, record

the read-through with more than one camera in case one camera malfunctions or runs out of battery.

Following these suggestions should make sure that any script read-through goes smoothly.

## **6.0 CONCLUSIONS**

I never thought writing a short story that made fun of ‘Twilight’ would lead to all of this. Yet here I am, at the end of my M Phil after having written a full-length version of ‘How To Kill A Genre.’

Along the way, I learned more about how reading work out loud helps writers. The best writing flows, and at times it is difficult to see that on the page alone. They will also hear what they cannot see, which could be spelling mistakes or even writing that does not say what they want to say. Reading out loud also forces the writer to slow down, which will make them pay attention and look at their work in a new way. This applies to novelists and screenwriters alike.

Meanwhile, the script read-through is a valuable tool for finding problems in the script. These problems include too much dialogue, plot holes, and characters that all sound the same. It can also reveal casting problems: a lack of chemistry between the principals or someone who lacks charisma.

I took what I learned and developed a strategy to get the most out of the ensemble script read-through: I made sure to cast it right, I skimmed the description while reading, I made sure everyone was coming and I recorded the event for future use.

As I have said before, when I first started my research, the main reason I wanted to do it was because I wanted to get actors to read my script out loud. However, I realised there is more

to doing a script read-through than I thought. I also realised that the read-through is not just for the screenwriter; it is also for the actors and the director.

With this research, I hope I have proved that script read-throughs are an effective tool for screenwriters, actors and directors. After all, filmmaking is a collaborative medium, and it is through this collaboration we are able to accomplish something greater than we could have done on our own.

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