

## Henry & Clara: A Love Story

It's 7am and Henry wakes up to his cell phone. He pushes the small slender button on its side and sleeps for 10 more minutes before he crawls out of bed and takes a shower and brushes his teeth and says his doctor's orders and eats two eggs over easy before hopping into his 2005 Toyota and limping off to work. Most of the time he listens to *Sticky Fingers*, but not today – last night Henry forgot to plug his i-Pod into his hp intel Pentium, so today Henry listens to 95.7 The Car (a fucking classic rock oldies station that bleeds so-so 70s) and drums on his rubbery steering wheel on his way to work. Henry eats a Butterfinger and the wrapper keeps getting in the way of his little bites.

How was work, Hen? She asks. Work is OK. Not bad. It is going. Same old Same old. Sometimes Julia pisses me off, though. Was work OK today? Today I found a fucking Jackson on the sidewalk on the way in – that is like an hour's worth of pay! This weekend I'm going to get fucking drunk and play ping-pong...Don't forget...Valentine's Day.

It's Wednesday. 5pm. So Henry goes to Dr. H, his psychologist. Dr. H. Bum bum bummmmm. Doctor Hell.

“You are a unique individual, Henry,” Dr. Hell says. “Say it.”

“You are a unique individual.”

“Now, Henry, don't be smart with me, ole' Doctor H... Henry?”

“What...well, Doc, *you* said to say, ‘you are a unique individual.’”...

“Henry.....”

“OK. Doc...I...I am a unique individual.”

“And., Henry, what else?”

“Well, I guess I don't feel that Valentine's is a unique thing. Everyone does the same shit, right?”

“Now, Henry. Valentine's is different for everyone. A way to show your love to your partner. Say it Henry. I am a unique individual and valentine's is a unique way to show my love for Clara.”

Doctor Hell makes Henry say, every morning in between his brushing and scrubbing, “I am a unique individual.” He, Henry, posts sticky notes around his house so he knows for sure, “I am a unique individual.” *Now if you spread this on your toast you can lose up to 40 POUNDS a week!* That's just too easy, isn't it, Jane? Says Clara. Yes, it just seems too good to be true. *But it's NOT! Says Television.* What are ya'll doing tomorrow night for Valentines? Jane says.

And but then she comes into their room late that night looking to get laid. Jane has convinced her, earlier, that she still may love him. She pulls the shades down and they rocket up toward the ceiling with a wap-wap-wap and she shivers as his body gets cold and she lies on top of it, just slow, before, and then she gets all wet and slimy and warm and wiggles and squiggles and.

At noon every day this guy comes in and asks if I want pizza. Well, it's got a ton of toppings on it! And so I don't eat. And I wish I didn't hate the pizza guy, but he is just always there with the pizza. Forcing the slices on me. But I eat them anyways and I just really always bank on the pizza guy right around lunch time. And so I think back to last night and how we meshed and squalled and slid into each other and how he wanted to put it in my ass and I said "no" because he was just drunk and he does mean things to me when he has been drinking. But he does it *anyways*, and I'm thinking how in the morning I'm going to have to pick up our kids and take them to eat and clean their shit and wipe their faces and say, hey, don't watch that ,or, don't pick that shit up, and it will just be too much, really, to think about him and.

Like in high school, right, she wants me to take her out for Valentine's Day and I don't see how that is really fair to throw that on me because I make like minimum wage and she wants to go to some sort of fair to throw the washers through the holes and eat corndogs and funnel cake and pay to watch those fucking little half-midgets and ride the bumper cars and static up her carpet going down the carpet slide and tell me that her teddy bear is *OK*, but not really the one that *she* wanted. And then I held her hand and she smiled at me and said, hey, I want to hold it, your hand, it's not you, just that this big fucking teddy bear is taking up all my like personal space and maybe tomorrow we can hold hands, but not after lunch because Jane might see us.

The alarm goes off. 7am. Snooze. 10min. Up n' atom. Shower. *I am a unique individual and.* Brush. Vroomm Vroomm. I got a lot on my head...must have been you. Back at work. Henry....Henry...

"I'm here," Henry says.

"She's a lot like you, Henry," Doctor Hell says.

"What? What do you mean?"

"She, Henry, Is a lot like you."

Doctor Hell makes Henry say, every morning, "I am a unique individual and..."

When I get home from work I just want to relax. That is all. Sweats (the pants), White (the wine), and that is it. I lie down and sink into my fluffy bear and he just comes in and says he had a rough day and wants his dick sucked and I can't do it, you know? I had a hard day too.

"Well, she doesn't seem to like me anymore. We don't seem to be clicking."

"How so?"

“Just, you know, the way she looks at me...it’s...not the same.”

“How so?”

“Her body. It turns from me.”

“How so?”

“Goddamnit! You fucking fascist! She just doesn’t love me anymore and I can feel it all over. She doesn’t look at me the same; she doesn’t fucking fuck me anymore; she doesn’t even say, ey, or adios, when I leave for fucking work. How *so* is that for you you fucking cunt, eh...

It’s hot and the bodies sink and make weird farty noises from the sweat when they shift, the bodies do. Through the window the moon is a half full glass of white wine. He is behind her. The big spoon. She is his little dipper. She is crying as he rhythmically, slowly, pumps. “Stop, Hen.” But he doesn’t. He just goes ssshhhh into her ear and nibbles on her lobe but her hair keeps getting in the way like a candy wrapper. She is sobbing now and hits his haunches – at first with the strength of a weak woman sobbing then progressively harder and harder and harder until he has her face pushed deep into the giant teddy bear and as he is thrusting hard and grunting Clara is no longer sobbing but making a loud noise like awwweee awwwee awwwee each time and.

*I am a unique Individual.*

When he came in I pretended to be asleep and he whispered in my ear, it’s been such a long time babe, it’s Valentine’s. And I just pretended to sleep but my heart rose and he goes hey, your heart is beating, you fucking liar. I know you too well. Wake up, the kids are down. Then I laughed and we like really fought and he took me in his arms and we made love. I liked that. There was this one time, in New Mexico, we were camping for Valentine’s and I took our two sirloins from our ice chest and hid them when he was off getting fire wood, and when he came back he just made this great big fire and smiled at me and then went to the cooler to get the steaks but there wasn’t any food in the cooler, just a case of Pabst, and so he walked back to the fire, thinking, maybe, that he had set them next to the fire and had just forgotten where he placed them after drinking too many cold Pabst. But they weren’t there. And he turned and looked at me and saw that I was smiling and he knows me so well and he just goes, “Where are they? Clara, where are the Steaks?” And I am just sitting there with a smirk when he gets up and yells, “Where are those goddamn Steaks,” and he punches me in the face and I start crying, but I’m still grinning inside...

Doctor Hell says to say it.