

Hero-Man

By Jacob Makofske

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INT. LEWIS COLLINS's new house, SL.

Boxes are stacked all over LEWIS's Room. He uses stacks of boxes as a makeshift chair and desk. He writes in a blue book the size of a dictionary. All of the pages but one are flipped to one side. LEWIS finishes, satisfied, and slams the book shut.

LEWIS

I'm finally done! Its 9,609,000 characters, 1,921,800 words, 192,180 sentences, 960.9 pages, 38.436 chapters, 7 years of planning, eight months of writing this rewrite, of which there are eleven of course, blood, sweat, and tears.

JOSHUA, LEWIS's older brother, barges in suddenly from a door upstage. LEWIS looks mortified as JOSHUA snatches the book from out of LEWIS's grasp.

JOSHUA (*Attempting to sound out the words*)

Hey LEWIS, what are you writing? Some nerd thing? H-HERO...M-MA-AN?
That's kind of a dumb name. Why is it called HERO-MAN?

LEWIS turns to the audience.

LEWIS

It's terrible.

JOSHUA

But anyway, I gotta go, bro. Catch ya on the flip side.

JOSHUA exits, upstage.

LEWIS

This book is an embarrassment. It's disgusting. It's the worst thing the world has or ever will have experienced. This is it. I can't submit this. I need to re-write it again. I'm no writer. I'm a joke, and I'll never be worth anything. The book must be destroyed.

LEWIS stands up and begins to walk to the corner of his room. A red spotlight appears on a trash can. The trash can is overflowing with identical books to the one he holds. He places it on top. His mother enters from upstage.

MS. COLLINS

Hey sweetie, I just wanted to remind you that we should probably leave in about forty minutes to drop your book-oh no.

LEWIS

Doesn't anyone ever knock? Just leave me alone! I'm trying to brood.
Turn the lights out when you leave me to die.

LEWIS slumps onto a small couch which appears to be a makeshift bed.

MS. COLLINS

Honey, this is the last Young Writers Writing Association Competition for Young Writers Festival by Young Writers for Young Writers and not Old Writers you're eligible for. Are you sure you're going to do this again?

LEWIS

Yes.

MS. COLLINS

I was hoping once you got your book submitted you would spend more time outside. Talk to people.

LEWIS

I'm only here for half a year, so what's the point?

MS. COLLINS

Well what about your friends from last year? What happened to MORGAN?
Can you give MORGAN a call?

LEWIS

His name is MILTON and he hates me now, so it doesn't matter. People just don't like me very much.

MS. COLLINS

Why is that?

LEWIS raises his fist to the sky.

LEWIS

It would appear that society has dealt me a cruel hand.

MS. COLLINS

Well I think you're pretty cool.

She punches his arm lightly. This doesn't make him feel better.

MS. COLLINS (CONT'D)

I'll be back in 45 minutes to take you to drop off your book. Finish up any last minute details before I get back.

LEWIS jumps up off the couch.

LEWIS

But Mom! It's terrible!

MS. COLLINS turns to leave.

MS. COLLINS

Door open or-

LEWIS

Closed.

The door closes.

LEWIS

My mom could never understand. No one understands.

LEWIS grabs the book out of the trash can and sits down at his desk, in a panic, and pulls a comically large red pen from one of the boxes.

LEWIS (CONT'D)

"Once upon a time..." Stupid.

LEWIS colors in the page red.

LEWIS (CONT'D)

"Milton J.J. Diamondworth Senior died and Milton J.J. Diamondworth Jr. wanted all of the inheritance money, which doesn't necessarily mean that he's the killer..." Obvious. *Beat.* God, this is awful.

The lights come up on SR, revealing the set of a murder mystery novel. There's a stuffed moose above the fireplace, pictures of old men all over the walls, and a red carpet floor. Suddenly, an ensemble of characters walk into the scene such as EDNA GERTRUDE DIAMONDWORTH,

BEATRICE LOVEHANDLES, FRANKLIN ERNEST COLLINWALER, and HENRY MONEYBAGS. They look stereotypically rich. They bicker amongst each other like children as they come in. A masked man comes in with a trench coat from behind one of the paintings. He holds a gun in one hand and a knife in the other.

HENRY MONEYBAGS
Greetings, MR. DIAMONDWORTH.

Suddenly, a scream is heard as the lights flicker. A flash of lighting sound effect plays. The lights come back on and a skeleton takes the place of FRANKLIN that had been standing with the crowd. People scream and back away from the skeleton.

MILTON J.J. DIAMONDWORTH
My goodness gracious! What chicanery is this?

EDNA GERTRUDE DIAMONDWORTH
Oh my stars! If only there were some sort of... HERO-MAN that could save us!

A man walks in the center of it all, dressed like a cross between a detective and a superhero. He steps forward, boldly.

HERO-MAN
This is stupid. I'm not doing it.

LEWIS jumps up.

LEWIS
What? You can't do that!

LEWIS speaks what he writes.

LEWIS (CONT'D)
Suddenly LEWIS is there. Like, in the story.

LEWIS walks from his bedroom to the other side of the stage and into the mansion. He puts the book down on a table against the wall.

LEWIS (CONT'D)
You can't leave! I need you!

HERO-MAN drapes his cape over LEWIS.

HERO-MAN

Kid, do you think you can accept the honor of helping me solve this mystery?

LEWIS

Uhhh-

HERO-MAN

Good. Thanks, kid.

LEWIS

Wait! I need you! They all need you!

HERO-MAN

It'll be okay. Just do it without me this time. Solving mysteries is great for your college resume. Want me to write you a pass or something?

HENRY MONEYBAGS walks up to HERO-MAN and LEWIS.

HENRY MONEYBAGS

Ah, so you are the "Hero" Man, I presume. I've heard great things about you.

LEWIS

Shut up for a sec, HENRY MONEYBAGS.

HENRY MONEYBAGS

Well I'd never!

LEWIS

Please, HERO-MAN. What am I supposed to do without a hero for my story?

HERO-MAN

Just do a book without a hero this time around, kid.

HENRY MONEYBAGS

Gentlemen, if you don't mind my asking-

LEWIS

No! I can't! Please!

HERO-MAN

No. Stupid book. Stupid story. Stupid characters. I'm even stupid!
I'm not going to play along anymore!

Throughout the dialogue exchange, HENRY MONEYBAGS becomes more and more concerned as he has an existential crisis, realizing he's in a book. He eventually plugs his ears and exits. HERO-MAN storms off. LEWIS sighs. He goes back for the book, but it isn't there. He looks at the characters, which are all huddled around bickering amongst one another, except for MILTON J.J. DIAMONDWORTH, who stands in the corner, being evil. EDNA gets a broom and sweeps up the skeleton into the fireplace, crying.

LEWIS

Okay. Who's the wise guy? I'm looking at you MILTON.

MILTON J.J. DIAMONDWORTH

Well I personally think it's a tad strange that MS. LOVEHANDLES was never around during the time of the attacks.

LEWIS

Everyone, out!

He puts his arm out, stopping MILTON.

LEWIS

Not you.

The other characters exit. LEWIS looks at MILTON. MILTON slowly turns to look at him. They stare at each other.

MILTON

What?

LEWIS

Um. So, MILTON. Have you seen a book by any chance? Just lying around. Could possibly directly affect space and time as you know it.

MILTON

You mean the will?

LEWIS

What? No. A book.

MILTON

You're after the family fortune!

MILTON runs at LEWIS. LEWIS screams as MILTON chases him around the coffee table. HERO-MAN walks back in with a plate of cookies he's eating. He watches them running in circles for a moment, before walking up and stepping in front of MILTON. MILTON bumps into HERO-MAN. HERO-MAN doesn't move, and just stands, towering over MILTON.

MILTON

Arrest this man! He's after the family fortune! He tried to kill me!

He looks back up at HERO-MAN's reaction. HERO-MAN just stares at him, annoyed. MILTON runs off.

MILTON

Someone help! They're after the family fortune!

LEWIS

Oh, man. You should probably go stop him before he turns everyone against you in the second act.

HERO-MAN

I'm not here to continue the story, kid. I just couldn't stand your screaming. I was trying to savor a moment alone in The Chamber of Think, when I heard you screaming your head off.

LEWIS

You have a think chamber too?

HERO-MAN

It's called The Chamber of Think. It's sort of like a secret hideout only way more awesome... and handsome.

HERO-MAN runs his fingers through his hair.

LEWIS

What do you even do in there?

HERO-MAN

I reminisce. *Beat.* In any case, it's time for you to go home, kid.

LEWIS

Can't. I lost the book. I think someone stole it.

HERO-MAN

You've gotta be kidding me. Fine. I'll help you find your dumb book if it means that you get to leave me alone so I can enjoy my early retirement. Deal?

The lights flicker as a thunder sound effect plays. A scream is heard from offstage.

BEATRICE LOVEHANDLES (Screaming)

How did her guts get all over the ceiling?

LEWIS

Sure, I guess.

HERO-MAN

Okay. We're going to wait it out. Someone dies once every five minutes, so once everyone is dead, we're left with the killer and the person who took your dumb book.

HERO-MAN sits on the couch, kicking his feet up.

LEWIS

What? You aren't going to try to save them? You can't just go off and sulk by yourself! You're supposed to be the Hero!

HERO-MAN

Save them? Why does it matter if I save them? They're poorly written characters. Maybe we'll get some interesting ones when these guys are all used up.

LEWIS is very clearly hurt by this. He tries to think of something to throw back at him.

LEWIS

You used to be cool. Back when you were a real hero. Y'know? Everyone liked you and you were nice, and-and now you're just a jerk!

It's silent.

LEWIS (CONT'D)

Whatever. You're probably right. This is stupid. MILTON is the killer. Let's go get him.

HERO-MAN

I know. Look, kid, I'm sorry I upset you. We can go get him if you really want. I just-I don't know.

LEWIS

LEWIS.

HERO-MAN

Yeah, I know. Sorry... LEWIS... Okay.

HERO-MAN stands.

HERO-MAN

Everyone who is left, get in here!

BEATRICE and MILTON walk in.

HERO-MAN

That's it? Yeesh.

Another flash of lightning happens. There's screaming from both BEATRICE and MILTON. The lights come back on. They're both skeletons.

LEWIS

What? That's impossible!

HERO-MAN

But, if they aren't the-

LEWIS's door swings open. His Mom walks in. She walks to the other side of the stage into the story, but does not acknowledge the mansion or HERO-MAN.

MS. COLLINS

Hey sweetie. I bought you some rice cubes and orange slices. You didn't eat lunch, so I figured you could use a little snack-

LEWIS

Mom! I told you to knock! I'm having a brainstorming session! Get
outttttttt!

MS. COLLINS

Have fun with your brain zone, dear.

She leaves the plate of food on a box.

MS. COLLINS (CONT'D)

Door open or-

LEWIS and HERO-MAN

Closed. Lights off. And it's called the think chamber!

LEWIS and HERO-MAN look at eachother.

LEWIS

This is kind of embarrassing.

HERO-MAN

No worries. *Beat.* Are you going to ea-

LEWIS

No.

HERO-MAN brings the plate over and starts eating.

HERO-MAN

Families can be tough.

LEWIS and HERO-MAN sit on the couch together.

LEWIS

And friends. Just people who aren't me, I guess.

HERO-MAN

It's fine. They're all terrible.

LEWIS

Yeah.

Beat.

HERO-MAN

Why do you keep writing me?

LEWIS

What?

HERO-MAN

Why do you keep rewriting me? Did I do something wrong? Was I not good enough?

LEWIS

What? No! It's not like that.

HERO-MAN

But it is. I know it is. It's my fault. I wasn't good enough and my wife got written out, followed by pretty much everyone else I cared about as you kept reinventing me. All of my friends left or turned against me, hell, I remember when MILTON used to be my sidekick! My friend! Then at one point I was goth for a while and then I got really chubby and depressed. I wish I could go back to my old life when everyone loved me and I was funny, and nice, and cool. I just want to be... good... again, but I don't know how to. To be frank, I don't even know why I'm here anymore. I just know that you're right. I'm kind of a jerk, and I'm sorry.

LEWIS

No, no, no! I didn't mean that. I just was saying that... I don't know. Look, I know how you feel, but I mean you gotta keep going, or something, right?

HERO-MAN

How?

They sit in silence for a while.

LEWIS

I didn't really think about it like that, and I'm sorry, but you are important. You're important to all of these people:

He gestures towards the skeletons.

LEWIS (CONT'D)

You're important to me.

HERO-MAN

I let them die so I could wallow in self pity.

LEWIS

Look-

HERO-MAN begins to choke. He grabs at his throat. HENRY MONEYBAGS enters, writing in the book.

HENRY MONEYBAGS

Don't bother trying to get up "HERO"-MAN. The closer you get to me the more you drown in your own incompetence!

LEWIS

Woah. Are you okay? H-HENRY MONEYBAGS? You stole the book? But why?

HENRY MONEYBAGS

Because my whole existence has been a character in a twelve year old's stupid fan fiction! Well the tables are turned! Now I get to be LOUIE!

LEWIS

LEWIS.

HENRY MONEYBAGS

Yes! Very good, LEWIS, or should I say-

He writes something in the book. There's a flash of lightning. LEWIS screams. When the lights come on they've changed clothing.

LEWIS

HENRY MONEYBAGS!

HENRY MONEYBAGS

What? You... Look, man-

LEWIS

And also now HERO-MAN is LOSER-MAN!

There's another flash of lightning. The H on HERO-MAN's chest becomes an L.

LOSER-MAN (While choking)
Nooooooooo!

HENRY MONEYBAGS
Change LOSER-MAN back, LEWIS! This needs to stop!

LEWIS writes something in his book. As HENRY MONEYBAGS gets up to attack him, he slows down.

LEWIS
Now you're really slow! And also the floor is really hot! It hurts your bones!

HENRY MONEYBAGS
Oof, ouch, my bones!

LEWIS
Get him, boys!

The dead characters walk in, puppeteering their skeletons and making spooky ghost noises. They slowly approach HENRY MONEYBAGS.

HENRY MONEYBAGS
No! Please! We can talk this out!

LOSER-MAN gets up from the couch, causing him clear distress. He dodges a skeleton, and marches forward using big steps as if the the floor is sticky and it's hard to lift his legs. He starts to choke more.

LEWIS
No! Stop. Hey. Hey. Stop. No. Don't. Don't. If you do this you're going to die, y'know! Are you really going to sacrifice yourself for HENRY MONEYBAGS?

LOSER-MAN grabs the book out of his hands as the skeletons reach HENRY. There's a flash of lightning. The lights go out. It's silent. When the lights come back on, HERO-MAN and LEWIS are the only ones left in the room. They're returned back to normal. HERO-MAN is crumpled on the floor.

LEWIS

HERO-MAN! Are you okay?

HERO-MAN
Actually, I'm super not okay.

LEWIS
Don't worry, I'll fix this! Where's the book?

HERO-MAN
You left it in the trash can.

LEWIS
But-

HERO-MAN
We both know you've been running around your room doing the voices
for forty five minutes.

LEWIS
We do.

HERO-MAN
Go submit your book. It's good.

LEWIS
But-

HERO-MAN
No buts. It's good. You're good. You're a smart kid, LEWIS, and I
believe in you enough for the both of us.

LEWIS (*Voice trembling*)
But what am I going to do without you?

HERO-MAN
Submit your book, go back to school, and for God sakes, leave your
own head every now and then.

LEWIS (*Now crying*)
I know I have to, but I'm scared.

HERO-MAN
I know, kid.

HERO-MAN goes limp, dead. LEWIS closes HERO-MANs eyes. The light on SR fade out. LEWIS walks back to his room and slumps down on the couch, deep in thought. MS. COLLINS knocks on the door.

LEWIS
Come in.

MS. COLLINS walks in.

MS. COLLINS
Time to go.

LEWIS is silent for a moment.

LEWIS
But what happens if I don't win?

MS. COLLINS
Well, I'll be proud of you no matter what, sweetheart.

She exits. LEWIS stands up. A spotlight appears on the trash can. He walks over to it and picks up the book on top.

LEWIS
9,609,000 characters, 1,921,800 words, 192,180 sentences, 960.9 pages, 38.436 chapters, 7 years of planning, eight months of writing this rewrite, of which there are eleven of course, blood, sweat... and tears.

LEWIS holds the book to his chest. He walks out, and closes the door behind him. The lights fade.