

THE INFECTIOUS IMAGINATION OF HENRY BRAMBLE

Written by

Derek Boyes

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Delfilm Ltd.
Tel: +44 (0)7814 011 396
Mail: derek.delfilm@gmail.com

INT. STORM DRAIN, MIDDLE EAST - NIGHT

RICHARD BRAMBLE (43) wearing an armoured vest and helmet with 'PRESS' on the back, scrambles through a five foot high tunnel, following their local guide.

A skinny photographer in his early thirties, dressed in the same protective clothing, follows closely behind.

There is heavy shelling on the streets above them.

Every now and then they hear a vehicle passing overhead at speed.

EXT. STREET, MIDDLE EAST - DAWN

Richard emerges from an open drain that is sheltered from the open deserted street by a burnt out van. A Syrian activist who has been waiting for them helps them out.

Using just hand signals, the activist directs them to where they need to go. Richard acknowledges that he understands.

He grabs the photographer by his shoulders and nods that he is ready.

With their heads down low, they run as fast as they can across the road. A sniper fires, but misses them as they find cover in the entrance of a smouldering building that has no roof.

Several civilians greet them excitedly and welcome them inside.

INT. BOMBED BUILDING, MIDDLE EAST - DAWN

Richard hurries down the busy corridor full of chaos. He looks in all the rooms where dozens of women and children shelter. Many have been injured from days of shelling.

MATILDE

Better late than never!

Richard spins around to see another reporter.

RICHARD

Matilde, good to see you

They kiss both cheeks.

RICHARD (CONT'D)

I didn't think anyone got through?

MATILDE

I'm not anyone! Come on, we're on the next floor, let's get you set up.

RICHARD

(to the photographer)
See, I told you we'd be alright?

The photographer doesn't look so sure.

INT. SECOND FLOOR, BOMBED BUILDING, MIDDLE EAST - DAWN

In a make-shift media centre, Richard has set up his portable satellite internet terminal which connects to his laptop.

A satellite phone is also connected and is stuck to his ear.

RICHARD

..What I'm sending now is just the beginning. They're taking us to the main refuge centre this morning and I'll be able to add more accurate details tonight.

As he talks he is reviewing his report. He scrolls back up and types in 'kath'. The auto suggestion menu drops down. He clicks on editor@theguardian.com

In the background one of the activists enters the room and starts talking to Matilde in his native language.

RICHARD (CONT'D)

...no we're okay. There was a lot of heavy shelling throughout the night but it's stopped now. I doubt we'll see anymore again today.

Richard looks up distracted by the worried activist.

RICHARD (CONT'D)

I better go, I'm sending it through now. Speak to you again tonight.

He hangs up.

RICHARD (CONT'D)

What's going on?

MATILDE

He's worried if we continue for much longer the government will pick up our signal.

RICHARD

Well I'm all done.

MATILDE

Great, then lets go.

Matilde escorts the rebel back downstairs thanking and assuring him.

The photographer gathers his equipment and stands up.

As Richard unplugs his phone, a message pops up on the screen from Kathryn Bramble - Urgent!

He clicks it open. It has one sentence. "Don't you dare forget to call your Son!"

RICHARD

Damn it!

Richard sighs and looks at his watch. It's 10:18 am.

PHOTOGRAPHER

You coming?

RICHARD

Yea, just give me a couple of minutes.

The photographer gives him a disapproving look and heads downstairs.

PHOTOGRAPHER

They won't wait for you?

RICHARD

Don't worry I'll be down.

Richard quickly opens Skype and calls 'home' while scrambling to get his jacket back on.

INT. LIVING ROOM, BRAMBLE HOUSE - MORNING

An I-pad mini vibrates on a coffee table in a messy but tastefully decorated living room.

In the background, KATHRYN BRAMBLE (38) comes rushing out of the kitchen drying her hands with a tea towel. Although slim and quietly attractive, she looks tired and drained.

She picks up the I-pad and seeing it's a call from 'Richard Bramble' hurries up the stairs.

KATHRYN

Henry! It's your Father, quickly!

INT. HENRY'S BEDROOM, BRAMBLE HOUSE -MORNING

Kathryn opens the bedroom door to find HENRY BRAMBLE (10) is still in his pants.

KATHRYN
Henry, your not even dressed? It's
twenty past eight.

She passes him the i-pad mini.

KATHRYN (CONT'D)
You'll have to be quick!

Henry clicks the green answer button and after a second his Father's pixilated face appears.

RICHARD
Hey squirt, how are you?

Henry grins with excitement, as Kathryn picks his school shirt up off the floor and shakes the creases out of it.

HENRY
Look what I've made.

Henry grabs a strange contraption off his desk that is made from old drinks bottles and food packaging.

RICHARD
Wow! Looks dangerous.

KATHRYN
Arm!

Kathryn pulls the shirt over Henry's back.

HENRY
It's a teleportation gun. You pull
this back to load it...

KATHRYN
Other arm!

HENRY
...and then fire where you want to
open a worm hole.

He pulls the trigger projecting a bright spiral of coloured torch light onto the wall.

KATHRYN
Henry!

HENRY
...I thought you could use it to
get back home, the next time you
get stuck in a bad country.

Richard looks at his watch.

RICHARD
That's a really great idea, look
Henry I'm really sorry, but I have
to go...

KATHRYN
Henry has something to tell you
first.

Henry's mother nudges Henry. Henry falls silent, ashamed. She
grabs the I-pad off him.

KATHRYN (CONT'D)
He got another detention.

RICHARD
For what?

KATHRYN
Making up stories about you.

Richard tries to hide his misplaced pride.

KATHRYN (CONT'D)
It's time you came home Richard.
Henry needs you here. I need you
here.

RICHARD
I know, I know, it's just... If you
could only see what's happening to
these people out here...

Kathryn hangs up the call and drops the I-pad on the desk.
Henry looks up at her in shock.

HENRY
What did you do that for!?

She tries to control her emotions, as Henry grabs the I-pad
to call him back.

KATHRYN
Don't you dare, turn it off ...NOW!

Henry reluctantly does as he is told.

KATHRYN (CONT'D)
You can try him again after school.
Get your shoes on quick!

Kathryn heads downstairs.

KATHRYN (CONT'D)
There's some toast for you
downstairs if you're quick!

Henry slips his shoes on and grabs the i-pad mini, stuffing it quickly into his school bag.

EXT. BRAMBLE HOUSE - MORNING

Kathryn pushes Henry out the front door as she organises her things. He stuffs toast into his mouth as he heads towards the car.

His Mother slams the door shut and with several bags over her shoulder, hobbles behind him.

As Henry approaches the car, Kathryn swaps her drinks flask over to her other hand spilling tea everywhere. She fumbles to press her key fob to open the car.

Henry climbs into the back seat. Kathryn flings her bags into the passenger side and takes a big swig of tea, throwing the remaining liquid into the bushes. She climbs in, dumps the empty mug in the car drinks holder and slams the door shut.

She is completely unaware that her dress has got caught in the door.

The engine starts, the radio comes on. The car screeches off down the road. In the distance Kathryn pulls a sharp right. Another approaching car beeps at her.

INT./EXT. BRAMBLE CAR, PRIMARY SCHOOL - MORNING

The car pulls up sharply outside a traditional primary school. The news headlines are being read.

Henry opens the door. Kathryn puts her hand on his leg to stop him.

KATHRYN

No more made-up stories okay.

Henry nods.

KATHRYN (CONT'D)

Give me a kiss.

KNUCKLES and WEASEL sit on the school entrance wall watching them kiss and hug inside of the car. They look disgusted.

Henry climbs out of the car and swinging his rucksack onto his back, slams the door closed.

His Mum offers a quick wave, watching him head into the school gates.

WEASEL

Having a nice cuddle with Mummy were we?

Henry ignores them.

She is distracted by the two bullies who stare back at her. She is oblivious to the radio.

"reports have just come in of an attack on a make-shift media centre in the upper east province, where several international journalists were reporting from, it is not yet known if anyone was hurt..."

Kathryn watches the two boys jump down and follow Henry. She sighs.

"And finally a 55 year old man in Deal has set a new record of the most biro pens you can fit up your nose - an incredible 65 bic biros were stuffed into his nostrils in just 2 minutes and 36 seconds..."

Kathryn flicks the radio stations to some uplifting music and pulls away.

INT. CLASSROOM - DAY

The blinds are down. The room is dark. A thin dreary looking man in his late fifties struggles to operate his computer. The screen is projected onto the white board, showing a selection of cave paintings featuring Buffalo's.

TEACHER

The paintings were made during the Magdalenien period at about 17,000 years BC.

Henry is sitting in class listening intently to the teacher. He is mesmerised.

Behind him sit Knuckles and Weasel. They are rolling up pieces of paper and flicking them at the back of Henry's head. Henry tries to ignores them.

WEASEL

Hey, dummy day-dream!

Knuckles flicks the back of his ear.

HENRY

Cut it out!

The teacher squints through the projection light.

TEACHER

Henry pay attention please!

The two bullies snigger. Henry looks frustrated and then angry.

TEACHER (CONT'D)

There are more than 200 polychrome paintings in the caves...

Weasel quietly leans over his desk, unzips Henry's rucksack and pulls out his Mother's i-pad mini.

WEASEL

Ooh the little liar's got himself a new toy.

HENRY

Give it back!

TEACHER

...the majority of these are bison with some horses and the occasional mammoth.

The two bullies throw it back and forth.

HENRY

Please it's not mine!

KNUCKLES

You're Dad nick it off a terrorist?

TEACHER

...Interestingly it is believed the main food group at the time was reindeer and yet this is rarely...

WEASEL

Must be quite scary not knowing if he's ever gonna come back or not.

HENRY

What do you mean?

He leans into Henry's face.

WEASEL

Boom!

He flicks a dozen rolled up pieces of paper into his face.

HENRY

He's a journalist stupid not a soldier!

WEASEL

Whatever!

He throws the i-pad into the air. Henry scrambles frantically to catch it, crashing to the floor with a loud clatter.

TEACHER

What's going on over there!?

He turns the lights on.

One by one the class look round to see Henry has fallen into Lucy, the attractive girls lap. She pushes him off with anger. Henry is humiliated.

TEACHER (CONT'D)

Remove yourself from this classroom
at once. You can see me after
school.

Henry frantically opens the i-pad case to find it empty. He looks back at Weasel and Knuckles. They both grin at him.

HENRY

Where is it?

KNIUCKLES

Where's what?

TEACHER

Henry!

Henry ignores the teacher and looks all around their desks for his i-pad.

WEASEL

Sir, Bramble's touching me
inappropriately!

TEACHER

Henry! Leave him alone.

HENRY

Just give it back.

WEASEL

Give what back?

TEACHER

Henry Bramble I won't ask you
again!

Henry lunges at Weasel, but Knuckles pulls him off.

TEACHER (CONT'D)

Stop this at once!

Henry fearlessly tries to wrestle with him instead, but Knuckles is huge and pins him down. The teacher struggles to break it up.

TEACHER (CONT'D)

That's enough! Jason get off him. I
said get off him!

He slips and falls into the scuffle himself. The children stare wide-eyed at the commotion.

The classroom door suddenly swings open to reveal the headmistress staring into chaos.

HEADMISTRESS

What on earth is going on?

Knuckles stands up, brushing himself down.

KNUCKLES

Henry started it Miss.

The teacher struggles to his feet, his hair is a mess and his glasses hanging off his nose.

TEACHER

Get up!

Henry reluctantly stands.

HENRY

They took my i-pad.

They hold up their hands.

WEASEL

I don't know what he's talking about miss?

KNUCKLES

He's making it all up again in his 'imaginary little head' Miss.

HEADMISTRESS

Is he really?

The headmistress walks commandingly over to them. Lifts up Weasels desk and un-sticks the i-pad from two pieces of chewing gum that have been holding it in place.

HEADMISTRESS (CONT'D)

I will deal with you both later.
Henry, would you kindly gather your things please and follow me.

The headmistress escorts Henry out of the classroom, opening the door for him. Henry exits.

HEADMISTRESS (CONT'D)

May I remind you Mr Greenwood, the ability to control your class is key.

Mr Greenwood nods, filled with embarrassment.

INT. CORRIDOR, SCHOOL - DAY

Henry enters the corridor, as the headmistress closes the classroom door behind them.

HEADMISTRESS

You know these are not permitted in school Henry.

She hands the i-pad back to him. Henry puts it back into his bag. She nods for him to follow her.

HEADMISTRESS (CONT'D)

This way.

Henry is escorted down the corridor in silence. He looks nervous. She opens a set of double doors.

HENRY

I tried to ignore them miss but...

The headmistress looks down at him.

HEADMISTRESS

Phillip and Jason are the least of your worries right now Henry.

Henry heads through the doors, looking confused and worried.

HEADMISTRESS (CONT'D)

Secondary school is going to be very different. You must learn to concentrate in class and not be so easily distracted. ...It would not put you in good stead if your new headmaster got to know you as well as I have. It's time to grow up my boy.

She leads him into the reception. A woman stands with her back to them. Henry stops, looking confused. Kathryn Bramble turns around to face him and smiles sadly.

HEADMISTRESS (CONT'D)

Now Mrs Bramble please don't worry yourself, the end of school is less than a week away. I assure you Henry won't miss anything important.

She squeezes Kathryn's arm reassuringly.

HEADMIOSTRESS

You have our deepest sympathies.

HENRY

What's going on?

Kathryn looks very anxious and takes Henry's hand.

KATHRYN

I'll explain everything in the car.
 (to the headmistress)
 Thank you.

Kathryn and the headmistress exchange a knowing look, before Kathryn leads Henry out of the building.

He looks back at the Headmistress who offers a sympathetic smile, momentarily hiding her shock.

EXT. SCHOOL/INT. CAR - DAY

Kathryn opens the door for Henry. He climbs in as Kathryn moves round to the drivers side. Henry sees an envelope on the dashboard with plane tickets in. He looks behind to see suitcases packed, including his. Kathryn gets into the car and closes the door. She pauses, gathering her thoughts.

HENRY

Where are we going?

She turns to face him, taking his hands in hers. She looks directly into his eyes.

KATHRYN

You have to promise me that you
 won't let your imagination run away
 with you Henry.

Kathryn pauses. Her eyes fixed to his, slightly welling up.

HENRY

What is it?

KATHRYN

Your father has been in an
 accident. He's safe in hospital but
 they need me to go over there and
 look after him.

Henry just stares at her.

KATHRYN (CONT'D)

I'm afraid you won't be able to
 come with me. Do you understand?

Henry looks back at his suitcase again with confusion.

KATHRYN (CONT'D)

Your going to have to stay with
 your Great Uncle Geoffrey for a
 while.

Henry looks even more confused.

KATHRYN (CONT'D)
 You spoke to him at Grandpa's
 funeral remember?

CUT TO

EXT. GRAVEYARD - DAY

A polystyrene plane falls from the sky and hits the back of Great Uncle Geoffrey's legs. He peers behind at the plane on the wet grass and picks it up. Henry approaches him with a nervous smile, holding out his hand.

GEOFFREY
 This is a funeral not a playground.

Geoffrey crushes the plane in his hand.

CUT TO

INT. CAR - DAY

Henry is not impressed.

HENRY
 How long will you be gone for?

She looks at the time on the dashboard.

KATHRYN
 Damn it I'm going to miss my
 flight!

Kathryn helps him put on his seat belt. He looks at her waiting for an answer. She goes to start the engine.

HENRY
 Mum?

She pauses.

KATHRYN
 ...I don't know sweetheart.

She turns the key. Henry looks betrayed. The car pulls away from the school.

EXT. KENT COUNTRYSIDE - DAY

The car weaves through into the countryside, leaving the busy town roads behind.

HENRY

Can't I just stay with Grandma?

KATHRYN

She's not well enough to look after you at the moment.

HENRY

What about Mr & Mrs Granger next door?

KATHRYN

They struggle to look after their own children, I doubt they'd want you running riot around their house.

INT. CAR - DAY

Henry is looking out of the open window at the rolling hills. The cool morning air blows his hair.

HENRY

I could stay at Federico's, his Mum lets his friends stay over all the time...

KATHRYN

Henry that's enough!

He is shocked and frightened by her tone. Kathryn realises she over-reacted.

KATHRYN (CONT'D)

If there was someone else I knew that could look after you, believe me I would be taking you there, but unfortunately I don't so Great Uncle Geoffrey will just have to do, okay?

Henry looks at her with confusion. He can't understand her odd behaviour. She closes his window. They sit in silence again.

EXT. GATES, COUNTRY HOUSE - DAY

The car pulls up at the gated entrance of an impressive Elizabethan country house.

INT. CAR, COUNTRY HOUSE - DAY

Henry's eyes light up.

KATHRYN

I want you to be on your best behaviour and remember your P's and Q's ...he's probably not had any visitors for a while, especially not children.

HENRY

He does know we're coming doesn't he?

She looks back at him.

KATHRYN

Everything is going to be alright.

Henry is clearly disappointed in her.

Kathryn gets out of the car trying to suppress her guilt. Henry reluctantly un-clips his seat belt and gets out too.

Kathryn opens the boot and hands Henry his suitcase and an envelope.

KATHRYN (CONT'D)

Make sure you give this to your Great Uncle, okay. It's very important.

She looks at her watch again.

KATHRYN (CONT'D)

Remember what I told you.

She hugs him tightly and kisses him. He is distant.

KATHRYN (CONT'D)

I love you very much Henry, you do know that don't you?

Henry can't look at her in the eye. He picks up his suitcase and shambles reluctantly down the driveway towards the majestic house, kicking the gravel with obvious unhappiness.

Kathryn holds back her tears of guilt.

INT. STUDY, COUNTRY HOUSE - DAY

GEOFFREY CRANBROOK, an incredibly reserved and pompous man in his early seventies, sits behind a polished ANTIQUE DESK, dressed in a brown tweed suit and a dark red bow tie.

Behind him HUNDREDS OF BOOKS fill the shelf. More have been stacked up in piles around him.

He looks down at the blank page on his 1970's TYPEWRITER through his well worn gold rimmed spectacles. He is in deep thought, staring at the page in front of him. He rubs his chin, an idea is forming behind his eyes. His fingers flex over the keys with anticipation. He raises his index finger and...

DING-DONG!

Geoffrey looks up in confusion, then frustration. He sighs, removes his spectacles and reluctantly stands up.

INT./EXT. PORCH, COUNTRY HOUSE - DAY

Henry is about to ring the bell again when suddenly the door bursts open to reveal Geoffrey's angry face. He looks up and down in disgust at Henry standing alone in the archway of the porch.

GEOFFREY

Would you kindly remove yourself
from my property. Whatever it is,
I'm not interested!

He slams the door closed again. Henry looks back to his mother at the other end of the long gravel driveway. She desperately ushers him on, checking her watch impatiently again. Henry steps into the porch and leaning against the door knocks quietly.

HENRY

Great Uncle Geoffrey, It's Henry.

He steps back and waits again - Nothing.

Henry sighs and starts heading back to his Mother when the door bolt unlocks again. Henry turns around. The door opens more slowly. Geoffrey peers out cautiously.

GEOFFREY

Where are your parents?

Henry nods up the drive. Geoffrey steps out to see what he is looking at. He peers around the porch to see Kathryn standing by her car. As soon as their eyes meet, she gets back into her car.

GEOFFREY (CONT'D)

No, no, no, what are you doing!

He hobbles up the drive as she reverses the car round.

GEOFFREY (CONT'D)

Kathryn wait!

The car drives away. He stops in his tracks. He is too late. His shoulders and head droop.