

RING OF FIRE

by

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Registered WGAw

BLACKNESS

A match strikes in the darkness. It drops to the ground and quickly catches on some rags. Flames spread.

MONTAGE OVER TITLES

Flames engulf a small warehouse and light up the night sky.

Firetrucks race through the night.

Firefighters turn hoses on a burning office building.

As firefighters put away their equipment, smoke and steam pour from a burnt-out dock on San Francisco Bay.

A burning factory collapses with a ROAR that drowns out the shouts of firefighters.

Flames fill the screen.

INT. POLICE STATION LOBBY - NIGHT

WIN CASTLE, mid-30s, stands at the main desk of a San Francisco neighborhood precinct house. His skin is pasty and he seems dazed. Win waits quietly until the burly DESK SERGEANT looks up.

(Note: There's a sense of heightened reality to the environment, perhaps from high contrast or oversaturated color.)

WIN

I have some information for you.

DESK SERGEANT

Oh yeah?

WIN

That fire in the Mission last night? I set it.

The sergeant stares.

WIN (cont'd)

Aren't you going to arrest me?

INT. POLICE STATION INTERROGATION ROOM - NIGHT

(Note: Heightened reality continues.)

Win sits across a table from plainclothes DETECTIVE BURNS. Empty coffee cups sit between them. Burns stubs out a cigarette into an overflowing ashtray.

BURNS

Look, Mr. Castle. I'd really like nothing better than to charge you for this. We've been trying to catch this nut for months, but nothing you've said gives me any reason to think it's you.

WIN

Why would I come here if I didn't do it?

BURNS

Excellent question, but one better answered by a mental health professional, don't you think?

WIN

I'm not crazy.

BURNS

Maybe not, but I don't think you're an arsonist, either. It's late. Why don't you go home?

Win gets up and looks around, still dazed. Burns points to the door.

BLACKNESS

The BLARE of a car horn blends with a siren in the distance, coming closer. The sound transforms into the ROAR of a dragon.

INT. WIN'S BEDROOM - DAY

(Note: Environment returns to "normal" reality.)

Win jerks awake to the loud BEEPING of a truck in reverse gear. He's bathed in sweat. The bedroom is filled with books, in cases and in piles. Over the bed, there's a huge framed poster of St. George slaying the dragon.

Win's girlfriend, NINA KUBIAK, late 20s, moans and buries her head in the pillow.

As he walks to the window, Win pulls on the shirt he was wearing at the police station. His face is lit by the morning sun as he watches workmen unload radiators from a flat-bed truck.

Nina opens her eyes and grabs the clock off the bedside table.

NINA

Shit!

She jumps out of bed, already fully awake, and grabs her clothes from the back of a chair. She begins to dress. The economy of her motions belies the drive and practicality with which she approaches everything.

NINA

Didn't you set the alarm? I'm going to be late again.

He starts.

WIN

I'm sorry, what?

NINA

Where are my shoes?

He just looks at her.

NINA (cont'd)

You're no help at all.

He goes to her and tries to embrace her.

WIN

I had another one.

She gives him a quick hug, then pulls away and continues to dress.

NINA

Again? Oh, honey, I wish I could help, but I really don't know what to do anymore. I think you should see someone.

WIN

Hey, it was just a nightmare. I'm only looking for a little sympathy.

NINA

You have my sympathy, but it doesn't seem to make any difference. If that's all you needed...

WIN

Never mind, just forget it.

(pause)

You're going to pick up the ice for the party tonight, right?

NINA

Win, I told you yesterday, I'm not going to have time. This whole party was your idea; the least you could do is help.

WIN

I just wanted to have a few friends over. Now, you've invited everybody we know.

NINA

I thought the Screaming Mimis would liven things up.

WIN

You're always giving me flack about spending too much time with them.

NINA

No, I said you were spending too much time pretending to be a knight in shining armor.

WIN

Well, excuse me for aspiring to some honor and nobility in my life.

NINA

Nobility, huh? I think it'll do you a lot of good to see them out of their silly little costumes.

She exits.

INT. LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

A long, odd-looking couch sits along one wall. It's backless and has a wooden cylinder with handles at one end. A large crimson flag hangs above it, emblazoned with the legend, "Crimson Knights of the Barbary Coast." Against another wall is what looks like a large, fully-functioning aquarium, but no fish swim about. Instead, a can of tuna, a can of sardines and a can of salmon sit on the pebbled bottom.

Win follows Nina towards the front door, next to which stands a knight dressed in armor.

WIN

Maybe you'd be happier if I was still working ninety hours a week.

She grabs her purse off the table, which is mostly covered by a scale-model of a medieval siege-engine.

NINA

It's your happiness I'm thinking about. You've stopped doing everything you used to love, except playing dress-up. I woke up last night and you weren't in bed. You were out here working on that damn catapult again, weren't you?

WIN

We've been through this: It's a trebuchet. A catapult's just a big slingshot. A trebuchet is a complex machine. And I don't know what you're talking about. I was in bed all night.

She rolls her eyes.

NINA

Whatever you say. Don't forget the ribs. And the ice.

She gives him a peck on the cheek, then exits.

EXT. WIN'S BUILDING - DAY

Several shiny, brand-new radiators sit on the sidewalk outside Win's building. Some bored workers loll on the steps, reading the paper. A large headline shouts "Arsonist Strikes Again."

MRS. KELLER, the landlady, argues with a tall, thin man. He is ERNEST "MONSTER" JENKINS, Win's downstairs neighbor. Jenkins' aluminum-foil-wrapped glasses can't hide the feverish gleam in his eyes. He wears a small badge with the number "12" on it.

He gesticulates toward the foil-covered windows of his ground-floor apartment.

JENKINS

I finished the bug sweep. I spent years and I had to fool with the time-lapse photography to reveal the microwave ears in the floor. If anyone comes in, I have to start all over again.

MRS. KELLER

Bugs?! You got bugs? If you'd let the damn exterminator in, you wouldn't have bugs. Look, the city's going to fine me if I don't get the heat fixed.

(MORE)

MRS. KELLER (cont'd)

I made a special deal for you to be able to choose your own radiator. Just pick one, damn it.

Jenkins examines the radiators carefully with a homemade electronic device, which on closer inspection is revealed to be a transistor radio. He emits a constant stream of disjointed mumblings, which occasionally rise to the level of a rant.

JENKINS

This is my castle. It lives in authenticity, despite the CIA forcing their eyes in. You realize they have the electrical system. It's not apparent, but they're monitoring me. I hear them talking. I can't make out the words, but I know they're talking about me. My vision.

(to himself)

I was hanging from reality, after we left. It was nothing more than any medical grade...

(to Mrs. Keller)

I'll be damned if I let them insert more sensors into my house.

MRS. KELLER

(overlapping)

I'm tired of this nonsense. You're lucky you're a vet; it's the only reason I don't kick you out on your ass. Stop being so paranoid.

(pointing to the windows)

And what's with all the foil everywhere?

JENKINS

You call it paranoia. I call it reality. The problem of power is with our perception.

Win comes out the front door as Jenkins struggles to pick up one of the radiators.

JENKINS (cont'd)

(to himself)

What we had to climb to find midnight.

(to Mrs. Keller)

The foil prevents them from recharging the devices they've already planted.

He drags the radiator into the gutter and lets it drop with a CLANG.

MRS. KELLER

That's it, you're out of here.

JENKINS

Fine with me. I'll go. I'm being reclaimed by the door.

MRS. KELLER

(hopefully)

Does that mean you're giving notice?

Win catches Jenkins' eye. Jenkins grins and ceremoniously salutes.

Win automatically returns the gesture. They've done this a million times.

Mrs. Keller turns to Win.

MRS. KELLER

You. Talk some sense into Monster... I mean, Mister Jenkins. I can't understand a word.

JENKINS

Hey, I'm right here, not invisible. Nobody ever listens, like the time I told the Secret Service about the Trilateral Commission's plot to assassinate Betty Ford, because of her plans to reveal...

Win politely cuts him off.

WIN

Mr. Jenkins, why don't I give you a radiator out of my apartment? The CIA has no reason to be watching me, so it won't be bugged; I'll take one of the new ones.

Jenkins is dubious, but listens.

WIN (cont'd)

There are three in the apartment. Come up and pick one.

MRS. KELLER

Hold on, here. Who's gonna pay for all the extra work?

WIN

I'll take care of the cost. It'll be worth it to get the heat back on.

JENKINS

Oh no. You're not putting me in another brain-shaped glass box. Too many stones.

MRS. KELLER

(to Win)

Why are you trying to make me look like the bad guy?

Jenkins ponders.

JENKINS

All right. I'll let you do this for me in exchange for that autographed copy of Nixon's "Six Crises" I gave you.

Win is distracted by the sight of a man in his mid-30s who is wearing clothes from the 1970s. He walks down the street with two young Vietnamese children, a boy and a girl, protective arms around their shoulders.

Mrs. Keller snaps her fingers under Win's nose to get his attention. He looks at her blankly, then back down the street. He's disturbed when he sees that the children are gone.

WIN

I've got to go. Could you let the workmen into my apartment?

MRS. KELLER

Might as well; I've got to be here anyway.

(turning to workmen)

Come on. I'm not paying you to read the paper.

The workmen follow her into the building.

WIN

(to Jenkins)

I'll see you Saturday, right?

JENKINS

I don't know. I'm pretty busy. They're contaminating my apartment; it's going to need an extra-thorough sweep.

WIN

But I could really use the help.

JENKINS

Can't promise. I'll try.

WIN

(indicating Jenkins'
badge)

Twelve days left, huh? Feeling
pretty optimistic today?

JENKINS

Well, now. But the end could come
in a heartbeat. Things change. You
know that.

WIN

What do you mean?

JENKINS

You know.

EXT. WAREHOUSE - DAY

Establishing. A two-story warehouse in San Francisco's South of Market district. A sign on the front reads, "Family Tree" in big letters. Underneath, smaller: "International Adoption Facilitators. Second Floor." A smaller sign on the big garage-style sliding door reads, "First floor warehouse space for rent - 5000 sq. ft."

INT. WAREHOUSE - DAY

In the center of the vast space sits a full-size trebuchet, lit by the sun streaming in through a skylight. It's the full-size counterpart of the model in Win's apartment.

Win puts careful finishing touches of paint on the trim.

GUY LAMBERT, owner of the Family Tree agency, enters. He's a tall, well-dressed, extremely good-looking man in his 30s. He pulls a squirming toddler by the hand.

They are followed by a harried-looking assistant, who carries a crying infant.

Win glances up briefly.

As they move up the stairs, Guy tries to calm the children. They exit to the second floor office.

Win returns to his work.

After a moment, the door from the street opens again. GAIL HAMMOND, mid-30s, enters. She's straightforward, and (though she tries to hide it) she wears her heart on her sleeve.

She blinks, adjusting her eyes to the darkness.

GAIL

Excuse me.

He doesn't hear. She moves closer.

GAIL (cont'd)

I'm looking for the Family Tree
Adoption Agency.

Without looking up, Win points up the stairs with his paintbrush.

Intrigued, Gail walks around the trebuchet. She comes up behind Win and looks him over.

GAIL (cont'd)

Nice trebuchet.

He looks up and catches her checking him out.

WIN

Thanks.

Gail runs a finger along the wood.

GAIL

It looks powerful.

WIN

(modestly)

The secret is the length of the
shaft.

GAIL

How big a load can it handle?

WIN

A lot depends on the skill of the
operator.

GAIL

I've never seen one this large.

(pause)

I guess I should introduce myself.
Gail Hammond; I'm a reporter for
the Sun.

WIN
Win Castle.

Win extends his hand and they shake. The paint Win has spilled on himself causes their hands to stick together for a moment when they try to separate.

WIN (cont'd)
(wiping his hand on
his shirt)
I'm so sorry.

He hands her a rag.

GAIL
Don't worry about it. This is a
good color for me.

Win smiles gratefully.

WIN
I moonlight as a style consultant.

She laughs.

GAIL
Do you know where I can find Guy
Lambert?

WIN
He's upstairs.

Gail walks to the stairs.

GAIL
Maybe I'll see you later.

WIN
I'll get some more paint samples
ready.

He watches as she climbs the steps. Before she reaches the landing, the office door opens and Guy starts down. They chat briefly. Win watches as Guy shows Gail something he's holding. They come down the stairs together and walk over to Win, continuing their conversation.

GAIL
I certainly can't do a story on Bay
Area adoption agencies without
including the Family Tree Agency.
Everyone says your agency is the
model of success.

GUY

I should hope. I pay a large number of people quite handsomely to do so. But seriously, I should have some time later this week.

GAIL

That'd be great.

Win stops his work. To Win, Guy embodies all the chivalric qualities he wishes he had.

WIN

(to Guy)

I'm glad you're here. I'm almost finished.

(indicating
trebuchet)

What do you think?

GUY

It sure looks done. How many coats of paint have you put on the damn thing?

WIN

Hopefully, one more than the Glomfield team put on theirs.

Guy hands Win a wooden placque with an engraved bronze plate.

GUY

Think you can find a place for this?

INSERT - CLOSE UP: THE PLACQUE

"Medieval Arts & Rites Society (MARS), San Francisco Chapter. Authentic 15th Century Trebuchet. Designed & Built by Win Castle. Sponsored by Family Tree Adoption Agency."

RETURN TO SCENE

WIN

This is great. You didn't have to do this.

Win looks for a spot to mount the placque.

GUY

I know. But I wanted to.

WIN
 (to Gail)
 It never would have been built
 without his encouragement and
 support.

GAIL
 (to Guy)
 I take it he's on the payroll?

GUY
 (to Win)
 You'll get your check later.

WIN
 That's okay. I wouldn't want to
 lose my amateur standing in the Guy
 Lambert Fan Club.

GUY
 (to Gail)
 The MARS Annual Gathering is coming
 up. We have a long-standing rivalry
 with a team from down south.

WIN
 I've completely rebuilt the throw-
 arm. They're not going to beat us
 this time.

GAIL
 (to Win)
 So you don't just play with this by
 yourself?

GUY
 Win will be responsible for the
 Crimson Knights taking home the
 grand prize.

Win is uncomfortable with the praise and tries to shift
 the attention back to guy.

WIN
 (indicating Guy)
 And he's responsible for turning a
 bunch of guys who dress up and
 whack each other over the head into
 a bunch of guys who dress up, whack
 each other over the head and raise
 buckets of money for charity.

GUY
 I've never been praised so
 eloquently.

(MORE)

GUY (cont'd)
But unfortunately, as much as I'd
like to stay and hear more, I've
really got to go.

GAIL
I'll call you.

GUY
Great.
(to Win)
Make sure the catapult's ready for
Saturday, okay?

WIN AND GAIL
(simultaneously)
Trebuchet.

They exchange a look.

GUY
Whatever.

He exits.

There's a brief awkward silence.

GAIL
You seem to know Guy pretty well. I
should probably talk to you.
(pause)
For the story.

WIN
Oh, for the story. Okay.

GAIL
How about tomorrow morning?

WIN
Okay.

Another pause.

GAIL
Nice placque.

INT. WIN'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Win rifles frantically through his closet.

Nina enters. The air is charged with pre-party tension.

WIN
I can't find anything in here.

NINA

The brownies are in the oven, and I picked up some extra chips, 'cause I'm sure Chad'll forget.

WIN

Where the hell are my black shoes? This place is a mess.

NINA

And this is my fault why?

But she helps him look.

WIN

Because your stuff is everywhere. If you'd just move in, we could get organized.

NINA

Please don't start, okay? Let's try to have a good time tonight.

She picks Win's jacket up off of a chair. The shoes are underneath. She hands them to him.

WIN

Hoping something better'll come along?

NINA

Just stop. You got the ice, right?

WIN

You said you were going to get it.

NINA

You always do this. We talked about it...

The doorbell rings.

NINA

They're here. Great. I guess I'll go get the damn ice.

INT. WIN'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

The party is getting underway. Music plays in the b.g.

In one corner sits Guy, holding court to a crowd of MARS MEMBERS who hang on every word.

Nina's GIRLFRIENDS from work, artsy but well-dressed, wait uncomfortably for her to make an appearance.

Win, edgy and distracted, stands by the kitchen door, talking with his friends--CHAD, CALVIN and BRENDA. Chad is sharp-tongued and cynical. Calvin is African-American and has a nerdy air. Brenda is Calvin's younger sister.

BRENDA

It just seems so weird--throwing a party to celebrate the anniversary of Nixon's resignation.

CALVIN

Welcome to San Francisco, sis.

WIN

(to Brenda)

Who are you going as?

BRENDA

I don't even know who any of those people were. The whole thing just sounds like a drag.

Nina's friends fill their plates at the food table. They're careful to take only non-fat, non-carb items.

FRIEND ONE

Did you get a load of the weirdos in the corner?

FRIEND TWO

(indicating Guy)

I don't know. That one's pretty cute.

FRIEND THREE

I kind of like Win. I don't know what Nina's been complaining about.

FRIEND TWO

Where the hell is she, anyway?

Across the room, Guy and some MARS MEMBERS discuss the upcoming competition.

GUY

(mid-conversation)

...one we have to watch out for is Jared of Colm. I can guarantee he'll try to unhorse you.

MARS MEMBER ONE

He should have been disqualified last year. I was black and blue for weeks.

GUY
 I'll have a word with the official
 from the Jousting Society before
 the competition--make sure they
 keep an eye on him.

Back to Win and his friends.

CHAD
 (to Win)
 Tell them who you're going as.

WIN
 It's supposed to be a surprise.

CHAD
 Deep Throat.

WIN
 Goddammit, Chad!

His friends are surprised at the outburst. He glares at
 them for a moment, then drops his eyes.

WIN (cont'd)
 Sorry.

They all regard Win warily.

BRENDA
 (giggling nervously)
 Deep Throat? Wasn't that a porno
 movie?

CHAD
 Didn't they teach you anything in
 American History?

BRENDA
 Yeah, but we only got up to World
 War II.

CALVIN
 Deep Throat was the one who leaked
 all the details of the Watergate
 scandal to the press.
 (to Win)
 How are you going to dress as Deep
 Throat? Nobody knows what he looks
 like.

As Jenkins approaches the food table, Nina's friends
 retreat.

A BUSTY WOMAN sitting near Guy watches Jenkins as he takes out his homemade scanner and waves it over a bowl of guacamole. She gets up and approaches him.

Jenkins self-consciously ignores her. He mechanically scans tortilla chips before putting them on his plate.

BUSTY WOMAN
(bad English accent)
What's your name, milord?

Jenkins stiffens, then turns his back on her. She circles around to get in front of him.

BUSTY WOMAN (cont'd)
Whatcha got there? Checkin' to see
if it's real?

He starts to turn away again, then looks at her suspiciously.

JENKINS
Why?

She gives a bawdy laugh.

BUSTY WOMAN
You're awfully cute, ain't cha? You
want to run that thing over me, see
if I'm real?

He freezes. His eyes dart around the room, checking for an escape route. He sees Win, who gives him a salute and an uneasy smile.

Jenkins backs away from her slowly. He points vaguely in the direction of the kitchen.

JENKINS
I gotta... I gotta... over...

He scurries away. The Busty Woman laughs and puts her hands on her hips.

BUSTY WOMAN
You know where to find me if you
change your mind, love.

Jenkins is about to disappear into the kitchen when he stops to listen to Win's group.

CHAD
(mid-conversation)
...that Nixon himself was Deep
Throat.

(MORE)

CHAD (cont'd)

He believes he's an honorable man, but he also believes the ends justify the means. The contradiction builds and builds, until he finally snaps from the guilt. He wants to confess his crimes, but Hoover stops him. So, he becomes Deep Throat, the unknown informant.

WIN

(nodding)

He needed redemption.

CALVIN

That doesn't make any sense. Hoover died in '72. Anyway, isn't blaming the FBI kind of a cliché?

Jenkins opens his mouth to speak, but he isn't quick enough.

CHAD

Clichés become clichés for a reason. Besides, the first Watergate break-in was in April and Hoover died in May. I suppose you're going to tell me that's a coincidence.

Win's attention is caught by the front door opening. Nina enters, carrying several bags of ice. She heads towards the kitchen as her friends call greetings.

NINA

(to her friends)

I'll be right out.

Win takes her arm as she passes.

WIN

Let me help you with that.

NINA

Don't bother.

She pushes past him into the kitchen.

CHAD

Ooh, frosty.

WIN

Shut up, Chad.

INT. WIN'S LIVING ROOM - LATER

Celtic music plays loudly. Several of the MARS people perform an intricate dance. The other MARS people clap along. Nina and her friends huddle in a far corner, trying to ignore the spectacle.

The music stops suddenly. Everyone turns toward the stereo, where Chad is taking the CD out of the player.

CHAD

Thank you, but the Riverdance auditions are down the hall.

Near the kitchen, Brenda, Calvin and Win play a drinking game.

BRENDA

(mid-conversation)

...if this Universe ended in a violent Big Bang, a new universe would arise from the ashes of the old, one in which the human spirit is not crushed by the petty strictures of alternate-side-of-the-street parking.

Chad puts in a jazz CD. Half the crowd grumbles, the other half applauds.

INT. WIN'S HALLWAY - NIGHT

Later. Chad and Nina wait for the bathroom to become available.

CHAD

(mid-conversation)

Well, if you're so worried about him, why do you treat him like shit?

NINA

What would you know about it? You've never had a relationship that lasted more than three days.

CHAD

That's not the point. It's been six months; he should be getting better, not worse.

NINA

It's not like he was even in the accident. He was just standing there.

CHAD

That's compassionate. You're a real Mother Theresa.

NINA

You don't see him every day like I do. You don't know how hard it is.

The bathroom door opens and Jenkins comes out. He scowls and exits to the living room.

Chad elbows past Nina and enters the bathroom.

CHAD

If that's the way you feel, why don't you just leave him?

He shuts the door in her face. She stares at it.

INT. WIN'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Nina approaches Win and pulls him aside.

NINA

Hi.

She puts her arms around him.

NINA (cont'd)

I'm sorry about earlier.

He shrugs.

WIN

Me, too.

NINA

I'm trying to apologize, Win.

WIN

You invited all these people. Maybe you should spend some time talking to them. Have you even met Guy yet?

NINA

Fine. I'll go mingle.

She turns away angrily and goes to her friends. She plasters a big, fat smile on her face.

NINA (cont'd)

Is everybody having fun?

FRIEND FOUR
 (hesitantly)
 I guess.

FRIEND ONE
 When are the real men going to show
 up?

NINA
 Have you even tried talking to
 anybody?

FRIEND ONE
 No.

NINA
 Neither have I. Come on, they can't
 be as bad as they look.

She leads them over to a group of uncomfortable-looking
 men.

EXT. WIN'S BUILDING/BACK PORCH - NIGHT

Later. Nina enters and closes the door behind her. She
 leans back against it and takes a deep breath.

GUY (O.S.)
 Hello, there.

Nina starts and turns to see Guy leaning against the
 railing. He smokes a cigarette.

GUY (cont'd)
 I hope you didn't come out here for
 some fresh air.

NINA
 You got another one of those?

GUY
 Ah, a fellow derelict.

He gives her a cigarette and lights it for her.

NINA
 Thanks.

She inhales deeply.

NINA (cont'd)
 That's better.

GUY
 Glad I could help. I'm Guy.

NINA
 (laughing)
 Of course you are. I thought you'd
 be taller.

GUY
 Taller than what?

NINA
 It's just the way Win talks about
 you...

GUY
 Are you Nina?

NINA
 Yeah, that's me.

GUY
 Finally we meet. I was beginning to
 think Win had made you up.

She starts to answer, but something in Guy's look makes
 her stop. She follows his gaze and turns just in time to
 see Win's face disappear behind the kitchen window
 curtain.

GUY (cont'd)
 He didn't look happy.

She shrugs.

NINA
 He's not.

INT. WIN'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

The ice broken, Nina's friends and various MARS guys
 dance to Celtic music, as Chad grimaces.

The Busty Woman drags Jenkins out onto the floor. His
 jig steps are rusty, but he gradually begins to enjoy
 himself. When he smiles, he almost looks like a
 different person. He can't take his eyes off his
 partner.

Win, Chad, Calvin and Brenda play another round of their
 drinking game. They're all a bit drunk.

BRENDA
 Fireman! I always wanted a fireman.

CHAD
 I bet you did.

BRENDA

No. I mean, I always wanted to be a fireman.

CHAD

Yeah, right.

CALVIN

Alright, fireman. Okay, Chad. Big Bang or Steady State?

On the dance floor, one of the MARS guys cuts in on Jenkins and whirls the Busty Woman away. She doesn't look back. Jenkins is heartbroken and crumples back into his former, withdrawn self.

He retreats from the dancers and leans against the wall near Win and his friends.

CHAD

(mid-conversation)

...what's the big deal with this whole macho fireman fantasy, anyway? Heroism is dead. The big strong guy coming to rescue the poor little kitty from the tree? I'd rather burn in Hell than be a fireman for all eternity.

BRENDA

You'll probably get the chance.

CHAD

Excuse me, I'm not finished.

EXT. WIN'S BUILDING/BACK PORCH - NIGHT

Guy and Nina stand shoulder-to-shoulder and look out at the view.

GUY

Why haven't I seen you at any of our events?

NINA

To be honest, the whole thing seemed kind of silly to me.

GUY

A bunch of grown men playing dress-up, right?

NINA

Well, yeah. Why do you do it?

GUY

I think man is basically an aggressive animal. The aggression's going to come out one way or another, and this is a harmless way to express it. There's not enough chivalry in the world. Besides, it's a lot of fun.

NINA

I always thought chivalry was just another way to keep women dependent on men.

GUY

I've always thought that when a man gives a woman the respect and adoration she deserves, he gives her the strength to be independent.

NINA

(wistfully)

Sounds like a fairy tale.

GUY

You should come Saturday and see for yourself. We're having the first demonstration of Win's machine.

NINA

Maybe I will.

INT. WIN'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Mid-game, Win passionately defends his position.

WIN

(mid-conversation)

...you're wrong. The fireman's the last undisputed example of true heroism. Everybody loves firemen. The police are corrupt, politicians are dirty, but you never hear of a crooked fireman.

BRENDA

(laughing)

I know you. You just want to slide down the pole.

WIN

That's why, if I had the job of fireman for all eternity, I'd want the Universe to last forever.

CALVIN

I'm judging this round. Chad very eloquently stated that he'd rather see the Universe end in a big bang than be a fireman for all time. However, Win's passionate oratory defending a steady state, in my humble opinion, must carry the day.

He pours a shot and hands it to Win. Win salutes Chad and drinks it down.

Jenkins scowls and pushes through them, heading for the front door. He exits.

CHAD

What's the matter with him?

WIN

It's hard for some people to have a good time.

He holds out the glass for another shot. He watches as Guy and Nina, laughing, enter from the kitchen. She puts her hand on his arm and says something to him, then heads over to her friends.

Guy looks around. He meets Win's eye and waves.

Win raises his glass in mock-salute. The contents slosh over the side.

INT. WIN'S LIVING ROOM - LATER

The party is winding down. The only remaining guests are Calvin, Brenda, Chad, Nina and Guy. They sit in a loose circle around the coffee table.

Another round of the game is underway.

CHAD

(mid-conversation)

...have to ask? Big Bang isn't nearly big enough. Keeping the world alive for lonely, pathetic housewives is not a worthwhile endeavor. Romance novelist? The only thing worse than writing them would be having to read them for all eternity. So I say, bang! Bang! Bang!

WIN

Nina, my love--your rebuttal?

NINA

If I were a romance novelist, I'd want the hot, throbbing universe to extend its rock-hard existence into the flowering bud of infinity for all eternity.

BRENDA

(fanning herself)

Oh, my. Is it warm in here?

Nina tries not to look at Guy, but somehow her glance keeps falling on him.

NINA

I'd like nothing better than to give hope to... They're not pathetic housewives! They're just waiting for their voracious passions to be unleashed. Every woman knows that there's that one guy out there, that one perfect guy, and reading about it makes you believe the fairy tale can come true.

CHAD

(aside)

Perfect "guy," huh?

GUY

(lifting his glass)

A true romantic.

He shares a smile with Nina. Win puts a possessive arm around her.

WIN

This woman... Thank you. That was really sweet.

CHAD

You're getting sentimental in your old age. It's all that knight-in-shining-armor crap. It's warping your brain.

WIN

I don't think anyone's ever called me their one perfect guy before.

CHAD

What makes you think she was talking about you?

NINA
Shut up, Chad.

Win looks around the room, then begins to catch on.

WIN
Well, who else?

NINA
It was just a theoretical debate,
that's all.

WIN
If it's not me, it must be somebody
in the room. Let's see, who could
it be? Chad? Nah. What about
Calvin?

NINA
Win...

WIN
Not your type? Then it must be...

He makes a flourishing gesture towards Guy.

GUY
I think we've all had a bit too
much to drink, don't you? Maybe we
should...

WIN
No, I want to know. If you don't
love me any more, just tell me.

NINA
This jealousy crap is getting
really old.

She gathers her things and heads for the door.

WIN
Wait.

She gives him a withering look, then looks at Guy.

NINA
I'm sorry.

She exits.

Win gets up to follow her.

CALVIN
 You really should wait until she
 calms down, man.

WIN
 (shaking his head)
 I can't.

He exits.

There's an uncomfortable silence. Guy stands.

GUY
 Well, it's getting late.

Nobody else gets up.

CHAD
 Yeah, it is.

Guy makes a gesture of resignation.

GUY
 Okay. It was really nice meeting
 all of you.

BRENDA
 (embarrassed)
 You, too.

Guy exits.

Brenda throws a pillow at Chad.

CHAD
 What?

EXT. NINA'S APARTMENT BUILDING - NIGHT

Win stands in the middle of the deserted street, singing
 drunkenly at the top of his lungs. He looks up at the
 darkened window of Nina's converted loft.

WIN
 (singing "Camelot")
 ...'til after sundown
 By six a.m. the morning dew has
 something
 Let it never be forgot
 That once there was a spot
 For something ever-aftering...

He chokes himself up.

WIN (cont'd)
Come on, Nina, let me in. I said
I'm sorry. Please?

He goes to the door and rings the bell. No answer.

He runs back into the middle of the street and begins
singing again.

WIN (cont'd)
(singing)
Camelot. Camelot.

The light comes on in Nina's window and she sticks her
head out.

As soon as Win sees her he switches gears.

WIN (cont'd)
(singing "How to
Handle a Woman")
How to handle a woman?
Mark me well, I will tell you,
sir...

NINA
What the hell are you doing?

WIN
(continues singing)
The way to handle a woman
is to love her... simply love
her...
Merely love her... love her...

NINA
Will you get out of here?
Somebody's going to call the
police. I might even do it myself.

He immediately switches to "If Ever I Would Leave You."

WIN
(singing)
If ever I would leave you
it wouldn't be in summer,
Seeing you in summer
I never would go.

In spite of herself, Nina smiles.

NINA
Okay, okay. You win.

She points down to the door and disappears.

Win makes a grand bow to the empty window. As he does, he hears the sound of HOOFBEATS. He stands up straight as a KNIGHT IN SILVER ARMOR riding a huge white horse gallops past him. He watches in disbelief as it disappears down the street.

He shakes his head to clear it, then stumbles to the front door.

INT. NINA'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Win and Nina make love. She's enjoying it more than he is. Abruptly, he rolls away and sits up.

NINA
What's wrong?

He doesn't answer. She turns a light on.

NINA (cont'd)
What is it?

WIN
(embarrassed and
hesitant)
I'm sorry. I can't.

She reaches for his hand.

NINA
It happens. Don't worry. We both
drank way too much tonight.

WIN
That's not it. I need...

NINA
What?

He looks at her, trying to see if she really wants to know.

WIN
Will you do something for me?

NINA
(curious, but wary)
Maybe.

He opens the drawer of the nightstand next to the bed and roots around. He reaches way into the back and pulls out a pair of handcuffs. He holds them out to her.

NINA (cont'd)

I told you to get those things out of my house.

WIN

Please.

NINA

No. Not again. I told you, it doesn't turn me on. It's too weird.

WIN

I'm not asking you to put them on.

NINA

That's not the point.

(pause)

If this is what you want, maybe you should find somebody else, 'cause you're not going to get it from me.

WIN

Nina, please. I don't want anybody else. I don't even understand this myself; I just know I need it.

NINA

I can't take this any more. I've tried to understand, but I don't. I've told you how I feel. Why can't you let it go?

He knows it's hopeless, but he can't stop. He puts the handcuffs on his own wrists and holds them out to her.

WIN

See, it's no big deal. If you really loved me, you'd do this for me.

She can't look at him. She turns off the light, then lies down, her back to him.

NINA

Yeah, well, maybe that's the problem.

Win stares at her. Slowly, he brings his cuffed wrists up to his chest and starts rocking back and forth. A tear rolls down his cheek.

FADE OUT.

BLACKNESS

The sound of a car crash: Tires SQUEAL, metal SMASHES into metal. Glass SHATTERS, a gas tank EXPLODES, filling the screen with flames.

INT. POLICE STATION LOBBY - DAY

(Note: Heightened reality.)

Win enters and approaches the desk sergeant.

WIN

I have some information for you.

The desk sergeant gives him a skeptical look.

WIN (cont'd)

That fire in the Castro last night?
I set it.

DESK SERGEANT

Haven't you got anything better to
do?

WIN

Aren't you going to arrest me?

The desk sergeant sighs and points to a bench.

DESK SERGEANT

Wait over there.

He exits to an office in the rear.

INT. POLICE STATION OFFICE - DAY

(Note: Return to "normal" reality.)

Detective Burns sits at a desk, playing solitaire. A video monitor sits on a table nearby. Every few seconds, the image switches to another scene in the station, from lobby to parking lot to holding cells. When the lobby comes up, Win can be seen sitting on the bench.

The desk sergeant sticks his head in the door.

DESK SERGEANT

Hey, Burnsy, guess who's back?

BURNS

I dunno. Jimmy Hoffa?

DESK SERGEANT

Who?

Burns looks at the video monitor and sees Win.

BURNS

(groans)

I spent hours with that guy before
I was positive he didn't know what
the hell he was talking about.

DESK SERGEANT

You want me to get rid of him?

BURNS

Yeah, toss him out. I'm not going
through that again.

The desk sergeant starts to go. Despite himself, Burns' sense of duty kicks in.

BURNS (cont'd)

Wait a second. I'll probably regret
this, but I'd better talk to him.

INT. POLICE STATION LOBBY - DAY

Win, still sitting on the bench, shakes his head and looks around, confused. He gets up and wanders out the exit.

Burns and the desk sergeant enter and look around the empty lobby.

DESK SERGEANT

You want me to send someone out to
look for him?

BURNS

What are you, nuts?

EXT. COFFEE SHOP - DAY

Gail sits alone at a sidewalk table. She glances at her watch and finishes a cup of coffee.

She looks across the street at Jenkins, who is setting up a display of used books for sale at the corner.

She waves down a WAITRESS and points to her cup.

Win buys a paper from Jenkins, crosses the street and walks over to Gail.

WIN

Sorry I'm late.

He sits and puts the paper on the table.

GAIL

That's okay. It's good to be out of the office. This is a nice little place.

She picks up the paper.

INSERT - CLOSE UP: NEWSPAPER

Its title: "The Lone Nut." Its motto, Abbie Hoffman's famous dictum: "Free speech is the right to yell 'Theater' at a crowded fire." A banner headline screams, "City Burns: THEY Don't Do A Thing." The byline, "Staff Reporter Ernest Jenkins."

RETURN TO SCENE

GAIL

"They," huh? Nothing like a little paranoia with your pancakes.

WIN

There's never been a newspaperman like Ernest Jenkins. You can't imagine the sources he's got. But he can.

She laughs.

WIN (cont'd)

He's got a direct line on every conspiracy you ever heard of.

GAIL

You don't believe in that stuff, do you?

WIN

Not really.

GAIL

Then why do you read it?

Win shrugs.

WIN

His pension barely covers his rent, and he's too proud to accept charity. Buying the paper is the only way I can help him out.

GAIL

There's something attractive about being your own boss, setting your own hours.

WIN

I don't think he's looking for help, but if you ever want to leave the Sun, I can put in a good word for you. Of course, you'd have to change the name of the paper from The Lone Nut.

GAIL

To Double or Nutting?

WIN

(laughing)

Ouch.

The waitress comes by with a coffeepot and refills Gail's cup.

WAITRESS

(to Win)

You want some?

WIN

Sure.

She fills his cup and leaves.

WIN (cont'd)

So, what's this story you're doing on Guy?

GAIL

I'm doing a series about couples who can't have children of their own, and all the hoops they'll jump through. You know, in vitro, fertility drugs, adoption. Since Guy runs the most successful adoption agency around, I want to include him.

WIN

He's a real overachiever. He doesn't just run the agency. He does all kinds of volunteer work, and he's Lord of MARS.

GAIL

Oh yeah, that placque he gave you.

WIN

Yeah.

(grudgingly)

In the last few years, Guy has really given the group a new focus.

(MORE)

WIN (cont'd)

We started an outreach program to show inner-city kids how wars were fought in the Middle Ages. We even show them how to use some of the equipment.

GAIL

Oh great, that's just what we need. Ghetto kids with crossbows.

WIN

The weapons are just a way to get them away from the video games. What we're really trying to do is give them a code of ethics--teach them about honor.

GAIL

Interesting.

EXT. COFFEE SHOP - DAY

Later. The remains of breakfast litter the table.

GAIL

(mid-conversation)

I wouldn't have believed it, either, but there's a black market in children, and adoption agency operators are involved. It's all about supply and demand.

WIN

That's horrible.

GAIL

Some people want kids so badly, they'll do anything to get them.

Gail picks up a credit card receipt. They stand.

WIN

Where are you parked?

GAIL

Just around the corner.

EXT. STREET - CONTINUOUS

They walk towards Gail's car.

WIN

You don't think Guy's involved in anything illegal, do you?

GAIL

I don't think so, but you never know what people are capable of.

They pause at a corner and wait for the light to change. Win's jealousy of Guy feeds his growing disenchantment.

WIN

I always thought he was capable of anything. I admired him for it. Now...

Gail waits for him to finish, but he's lost in thought. The light turns to green and they start across.

GAIL

So, how long have you worked at the agency?

WIN

I don't work there. I just use the space to work on the trebuchet.

GAIL

Oh, I thought you... Well, what do you do?

WIN

I don't do anything. I mean, I did, but I'm done. You're looking at a Silicon Valley cliché. I owned a small software company and a bigger one bought me out.

GAIL

So, you're a free man?

WIN

Yeah, I guess.

GAIL

You're lucky. You can do whatever you want.

WIN

If I could only figure out what it is.

They look at one another and she nods.

EXT. GOLDEN GATE PARK - DAY

A musician in Renaissance garb sits under a tree, playing a lute.

About 35 men and women, knights and saucy wenches all, spar, clank tankards of ale and practice archery.

Guy, in shining plate armor (and obviously in charge), hands out cardboard armor to a small group of young boys. They're more interested, however, in some wenches erecting a banner announcing the monthly meeting of the Crimson Knights chapter of MARS.

Win's car, with the tarp-covered trebuchet in tow, pulls into the parking lot. Nina gets out of the passenger side and SLAMS the door. She sticks her head back through the open window.

NINA

You're just jealous. Trying to make him look bad doesn't make you look good, you know.

Win gets out from the driver's side.

WIN

I'm just telling you what she said. I'm not saying it's true.

Jenkins unfolds himself out of the back seat. Hypersensitive to the emotional climate, he'd rather be anywhere else than where he is.

NINA

You're taking a vague statement and turning it into an accusation. That's how rumors get started.

JENKINS

(under his breath)

Rumors start for a reason. Chat with cobwebs and spiders will bite.

Nina whips around.

NINA

Who asked you?

Jenkins ducks his head and moves away, mumbling. He busies himself with the ropes holding the tarp.

WIN

I shouldn't have brought it up.

He starts removing the tarp from the trebuchet.

NINA

Fine. Whatever.

Guy spots them and approaches.

GUY
 (to Nina)
 Milady.

He bows and kisses her hand. Pleased, she gives an uncharacteristic giggle.

GUY (cont'd)
 So delighted to have you.

NINA
 I've been looking forward to this
 all week.

WIN
 Oh, yeah?

NINA
 Win.

WIN
 (to Guy)
 Why don't you show Nina around.
 I've got a lot to do here.

NINA
 I'm here to help, if you need me.

WIN
 I don't. Go ahead. Enjoy yourself.

NINA
 (hurt)
 All right, I will.

Guy looks at Win, then takes Nina's arm and leads her away.

NINA (cont'd)
 I didn't think there'd be so many
 people here.

GUY
 The Crimson Knights are the fastest-
 growing chapter in MARS...

Win watches them move off, then jerks the tarp off the trebuchet.

EXT. GOLDEN GATE PARK/COMPETITION AREA - DAY

The trebuchet sits in the testing area. Win, now in full armor, makes final adjustments.

Jenkins monkeys with the ropes holding the counterweight in place.

Guy and Nina approach, followed by a group of MARS members.

WIN
(to Jenkins)
I checked those before. Just leave
'em.

Guy puts a hand on Win's shoulder.

GUY
Are we ready?

WIN
(coldly)
All set.

GUY
I see you found the perfect spot
for the placque.

WIN
(warming a bit)
Yeah, it looks good.

Guy gestures at Jenkins.

GUY
Who's that?

NINA
That's Monster Jenkins.

Win glares at her, then waves Jenkins over.

WIN
Guy Lambert, this is Ernest
Jenkins. Mr. Jenkins is my
downstairs neighbor.

They size each other up. Something about Guy makes Jenkins' skin crawl. Guy doesn't much like what he sees, either, but he tries to be polite.

GUY
(extends his hand)
Well, any friend of Win's...

Jenkins looks at the hand like it's a dead fish.

GUY
I've had my shots.

Nina laughs, sending Jenkins into a rage.

JENKINS
Joke, joke, joke. You get the zero truth rating. Your teeth chatter, but I don't hear you. How can you tell when a politician's lying? His teeth are moving.

WIN
Mr. Jenkins, calm down.

Jenkins shakes him off.

JENKINS
How many, how many are suffering because of you?

Guy laughs nervously.

JENKINS (cont'd)
You dress like a hero. Where are your wisdom teeth?

Win tries to hide a smile.

WIN
Mr. Jenkins, please.

GUY
(to Jenkins)
What are you talking about?
(to Win)
What is he talking about?

Jenkins looks to Win for support. A curious crowd gathers around them.

WIN
Nothing.

Win takes Jenkins' arm and tries to lead him off.

WIN (cont'd)
Let me handle...

Jenkins jerks away.

JENKINS
Greetings from the Voodoo Museum Store.
(MORE)

JENKINS (cont'd)
I thought you were the real thing,
but no. More graveyard antics.

Win realizes he's hurt Jenkins' feelings.

WIN
Mr. Jenkins...

Jenkins shakes his head and stomps off.

GUY
You know the most interesting
people. Alright, let's get this
show on the road.

Win gathers himself, stands a little straighter, and
turns to the crowd.

WIN
Hello, and welcome. I know you've
been waiting a long time to see
what your dues have been going for.
Well, here it is, the Crimson
Knights' official entry in the
Annual Gathering trebuchet
competition.

He indicates the trebuchet with a sweeping gesture. The
crowd applauds.

WIN (cont'd)
Although some people confuse the
two...
(looks pointedly at
Nina)
...the catapult is a poor relation
of the trebuchet, which harnesses
the power of the lever principle.
As Archimedes said, "Give me a
place to stand and I'll move the
Earth."

The crowd shifts restlessly, but Win's on a roll.

WIN (cont'd)
I say, give me a trebuchet with a
long enough arm and a big enough
counterweight, and I'll throw a
Buick through the side of a
building.

He pauses, but gets only a weak laugh. He clears his
throat and plows on.

WIN (cont'd)

They were used from Roman times through the Sixteenth Century. The design for this model was based on drawings dating from the 15th Century...

WENCH

Get on with it, will you?

WIN

I guess we should get on with the demonstration. But for those of you who are interested, I'll be around afterwards to answer your questions.

He picks up a wooden mallet and holds it high over his head. He brings it down swiftly, knocking out the wooden pin that holds the counterweight in place.

For a split second, nothing happens. Then the weight falls, pivoting the arm up into the air. It whips around, but alas, the ropes are tangled and the load slams into the ground five feet in front of the machine.

Stunned silence.

Guy shakes his head.

Nina, standing next to Guy, starts to giggle.

After a moment, Guy joins in.

The whole crowd explodes with laughter.

EXT. WIN'S BUILDING - DAY

Gail stands on the stoop of Win's building, listening patiently as Jenkins rants through his front window. His chest badge reads "1.7". In contrast to his previous demeanor, Jenkins is relaxed and focussed.

JENKINS

(mid-rant)

...proving that Nixon was the pointman for the Kennedy hit, because of his ties to the CIA, the Mafia and anti-Castro Cubans. He knew Jack Ruby through his brother Donald. Ford, who was in charge of the Warren Commission cover-up, paid off Bush for his help on the Bay of Pigs by appointing him Director of the CIA.

(MORE)

JENKINS (cont'd)

Then he turns around and sets up Reagan to be assassinated by John Hinckley, and is conveniently out of town when it happens. So...

GAIL

(interrupting)

Did you know that John Hinckley's brother had a dinner date with Bush's son, Neil, the day of the Reagan shooting?

Jenkins stops. Slowly, he grins.

JENKINS

How'd you like to come to work for a real paper?

GAIL

What's your health plan like?

Suddenly, Jenkins' grin disappears. He retreats inside and slams the foil-covered window shut.

Gail turns and sees Win approaching dejectedly. He's still in armor and carries his helmet and gauntlets. His mood lifts slightly when he sees her.

GAIL (cont'd)

Nice suit.

WIN

It needs to be thicker. How'd you know where I live?

GAIL

Hey, give me a little credit.

WIN

So, you meet a guy and you start stalking him?

GAIL

(laughs)

Actually, I'm here because you might be able to help me with my story, after all.

WIN

Oh, the story. Right. Come on in.

They enter the building.

INT. WIN'S LIVING ROOM - DAY

Win and Gail enter from the hall. He sets the helmet and gauntlets down.

WIN

You want something to drink?

GAIL

That'd be nice. Anything cold.

He gestures toward the couch.

WIN

Have a seat. I'll be right back.

He exits to the kitchen. She looks around the room. Her gaze settles on the helmet. She glances toward the kitchen, then picks it up and puts it on. She starts humming a tune and tapping on the metal, listening to the echo.

Win enters with drinks and catches her. Embarrassed, she pulls the helmet off, sets it back down on the table and gives it a little pat.

WIN (cont'd)

(amused)

Here's your drink.

She takes the glass and goes to the couch. He indicates his armor.

WIN (cont'd)

I really need to get out of this stuff. Do you mind?

GAIL

No, go ahead.

WIN

You can try the rest of it on, if you want.

GAIL

That's alright.

He removes the armor elbow-pieces. He carefully wipes them down with a cloth and puts them on the form near the door. Gail watches his ritual with fascination.

WIN

So, what was it you wanted to talk to me about?

GAIL

Oh, right.

She digs in her purse and pulls out a mimeographed form letter. She hands it to him.

GAIL (cont'd)

A letter from Romania showed up at the paper and landed on my desk. This family, the Grivitas, their children have disappeared. They heard a rumor that they'd been stolen and brought here for adoption.

Win gives the letter back after reading it.

WIN

And they're writing letters to newspapers? That seems like a real shot in the dark.

GAIL

They're desperate.

WIN

What does this have to do with me?

He removes his armor shoulder-pieces and starts cleaning them.

GAIL

Probably nothing. It's just that Guy's agency handles a lot of foreign adoptions, and I got the impression from you that there might be something going on.

WIN

I don't know... Shouldn't you be asking him about this?

GAIL

I will, but I want to go in knowing what I'm looking for.

Win puts the shoulder pieces on the form. He pauses, then turns back to her.

WIN

Well, he is a friend of mine, and I don't want to jump to any conclusions, but...

GAIL

But what?

WIN

That day you came by the warehouse, he brought in a couple of kids who didn't look very happy to be there.

GAIL

They are orphans.

WIN

Okay, you're right. It's probably nothing.

GAIL

Probably not, but it's still worth checking out. Can you think of anything else?

WIN

I don't know...

GAIL

I don't want to put you on the spot. I know you're friends.

Win unbuckles his kneeguards, wipes them down and places them on the form.

WIN

Anyone can put on a suit of armor and look like a hero, but you never know what's underneath.

He turns and faces her. He's down to breastplate, linen pants and knee-high leather boots. He looks both vulnerable and protected, and she's captivated by the contradiction.

Uncomfortable with her feelings, she looks around for something else to talk about.

GAIL

This couch is pretty unusual. Is it really what it looks like?

WIN

Yup. I always wanted a rack when I was a kid, and when I grew up I got one. That's what I love about this town. You can get anything here.

GAIL

Why a rack?

WIN
It's cheaper than a chiropractor.

GAIL
Does it work?

WIN
Sure, it works. Of course, it's a little hard to use by yourself.

He removes his armor breastplate, revealing the linen shirt underneath.

GAIL
Yeah, I can see that. Uh...

He puts the breastplate on the mannequin and pulls off his linen shirt. Despite herself, she can't take her eyes off of him. He starts to remove the T-shirt underneath, but her gaze makes him self-conscious.

WIN (cont'd)
Excuse me. I'll be right back.

He exits. The sound of RUNNING WATER comes from the bathroom.

Gail gets up and examines the Crimson Knights flag hanging over the couch. She fiddles with the mechanism on the rack.

GAIL
(calling loudly)
I don't think I've ever heard the name "Win" before. Is it short for Winston? Wynton?

WIN (O.S.)
Windsor. Don't ask.

GAIL
Windsor Castle?

WIN (O.S.)
Blame my grandparents. They named my father Sanford, and after a lifetime of being called Sandy Castle, it was time for payback.

She laughs.

WIN (O.S.) (cont'd)
If I ever have a son, I think I'll name him Bob. Stop the madness.

GAIL
(looking at the
couch/rack)
So where'd you get this thing?
Sears?

WIN (O.S.)
What?

Win re-enters, bare-chested, drying himself with a
towel. She gestures toward the couch.

WIN
Oh. No, they were out of stock. I
had it custom-made.

GAIL
How does it work?

WIN
You really want to know?

GAIL
Sure.

WIN
It's kind of hard to explain. I'd
have to show you.

GAIL
I've heard some good lines before,
but that one...

WIN
Hey, you asked.

GAIL
You expect me to get on that thing?

WIN
Do you want to?

GAIL
I don't know.

WIN
Considering your profession, I'd
think you'd want to be the one
turning the crank.

GAIL
Oh, absolutely.

WIN
So I guess it's up to me, then.

GAIL
Isn't that putting a lot of trust
in someone you hardly know?

WIN
Yeah, it is.

A pause, then they share an "aren't-we-naughty" smile.

Win tosses the cushions to the floor, revealing ropes attached to the four corners of the device. He stretches out on the rack.

GAIL
(playfully)
What do I do?

He slips a wrist through a slipknot at the end of one of the ropes and pulls it tight.

WIN
You do the others.

She tentatively attaches his other wrist and pulls the rope.

GAIL
Is that too tight?

He shakes his head. With more confidence, she binds his feet.

GAIL (cont'd)
Now what?

WIN
You turn the wheel and I get
taller.

She laughs nervously and begins to untie him.

GAIL
Uh-uh. I think I've got the idea.

WIN
Come on, you can't stop now. How
are you going to get any
information out of me?

GAIL
Are you sure?

WIN
I'm sure.

The moment of truth. She grabs the wheel decisively and lifts an eyebrow.

GAIL

Ve haf vays uf making you talk.

He laughs. She gives the wheel a turn.

GAIL (cont'd)

You might as vell stop playing ze hero. In ze end, everyone confesses.

She gives another turn. He groans, not unhappily.

GAIL (cont'd)

(concerned)

Are you okay?

WIN

I'm tougher than I look.

Reassured, she slips back into character.

GAIL

Zey all act tough in ze beginning.

She slowly turns it another notch. Win moans.

She sees how turned on he is.

GAIL (cont'd)

Zis is harder zan I thought. You're enjoying zis a little too much, I think.

WIN

(dead serious)

I'm guilty. Punish me.

She's getting excited now, too.

GAIL

I could do anything I want to you right now.

WIN

So, what are you going to do?

She hesitates, then bends down toward him. He lifts his head as far as he can, and their lips meet. After a long kiss, Win drops his head back.

WIN (cont'd)
Tighten it some more.

FADE OUT.

BLACKNESS

The sound of a car crash: Tires SQUEAL, metal smashes into metal. Glass SHATTERS, a gas tank EXPLODES.

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

Fire fills the screen with a ROAR. The outline of a car burning out of control appears through the flames.

The roar of the fire crossfades to the loud BLARE of a car horn screaming in the night.

INT. WIN'S BEDROOM - DAWN

Gray light filters through the window. Win and Gail lie naked across the bed. Gail cradles him protectively in her arms.

Win jerks awake and pulls away.

(Note: Begin heightened reality.)

The sudden movement wakes Gail. She sits up and reaches for him, but he won't look at her.

GAIL
What is it?

He doesn't answer. He's in another world.

GAIL (cont'd)
Are you okay?

No answer.

GAIL (cont'd)
You know, this only has to be
awkward if we let it.
(pause)
Last night was really incredible.
(pause)
This is where you tell me how great
is was for you.

He looks at her for the first time.

WIN
I have to tell you something.

GAIL

Go ahead.

WIN

What I did was so terrible...

GAIL

It wasn't so bad. I wouldn't have believed it, but I had a really good time.

WIN

I killed them.

GAIL

Killed who?

He doesn't hear.

WIN

I have to be punished. I killed them. They were just kids. They said I couldn't do anything, but I could, I should have...

GAIL

Calm down, I'm here. Tell me.

Gail puts her hand on his shoulder. He abruptly snaps back.

(Note: "Normal" reality returns.)

He smiles at her.

WIN

Good morning, beautiful.

He leans toward her for a kiss. Startled, she pulls away.

WIN (cont'd)

What's wrong?

GAIL

You tell me. What the hell is going on here?

They're stopped by the sound of the front door opening.

NINA (O.S.)

Win, are you up? I haven't slept all night; I need to talk to you.

GAIL
Who's that?

WIN
Shit.

NINA (O.S.)
Win, get up. This really can't
wait...

Win and Gail freeze like deer caught in the headlights.
Silence from the other room.

NINA (O.S.) (cont'd)
Oh my god.

She bursts into the bedroom.

NINA (cont'd)
Well, isn't this cozy?

Win tries to speak, but nothing comes out.

NINA (cont'd)
Don't even bother.
(to Gail)
It's really none of my business,
but who the hell are you?

GAIL
It appears I'm the other woman.
(looks at Win)
Although I didn't know that was my
role.

She gets out of bed and moves toward the door. There's a
little dance, one partner naked, the other clothed, as
Gail tries to get past Nina.

WIN
Gail, I'm...

GAIL
Don't say it. It was my mistake.

She pushes past Nina and exits to the living room.

Nina immediately starts gathering her things from around
the room.

WIN
Nina...

NINA

I don't want to hear it. You actually did me a favor, you know? I came over here to break up with you. I was feeling kind of bad about it, but suddenly it seems a whole lot easier.

WIN

Wait, you don't understand.

NINA

Really?

WIN

After what happened yesterday, I felt so alone. I needed someone, and you weren't here. Things just got out of hand.

The front door SLAMS as Gail exits. Win winces. Did Gail hear that?

NINA

So you fuck the first bimbo who comes along?

WIN

She's not a bimbo.

NINA

Oh, well. That's okay, then.

She exits.

Win falls back onto the bed and pulls a pillow over his face.

EXT. APARTMENT BUILDING - DAY

Establishing. Gail's flat is on the second floor of an old Victorian.

INT. GAIL'S APARTMENT - DAY

The apartment is tastefully furnished. A few pictures are on the wall. One shows Gail in a wedding gown, smiling up at a handsome man in a tux. Another shows the same man in a police uniform.

Gail enters from the kitchen with coffee, which she sets in front of her friend PHYLLIS BASS (40s).

GAIL
(mid-conversation)
...still can't believe I slept with
a source.

PHYLLIS
You just told me he didn't have any
information you could use.

GAIL
I've never done anything like this
before. He must think I'm a total
slut.

PHYLLIS
The sex was good, right?

GAIL
Unbelievable. Phyllis, you have no
idea.

A thought strikes her.

GAIL (cont'd)
Don't tell Robert, alright? He and
Joe were so close.

PHYLLIS
He never tells me anything juicy
about his patients. Why should I
tell him anything you say?

GAIL
This is so crazy--I almost feel
like I should be talking to him
instead of you.

PHYLLIS
You don't need him. I'll give you
my professional advice as a woman.
It's been three years--it's time to
let it go. So maybe this guy isn't
perfect. He still sounds terrific.

GAIL
Excuse me, were you not listening
when I mentioned the part about the
girlfriend walking in on us?

PHYLLIS
Hey, anybody worth having is with
someone else when you meet them,
right? And from what you said, that
relationship was doomed anyway.

GAIL

It was just so humiliating.

PHYLLIS

You're upset because you think you're supposed to be. What it comes down to is this: Is it real or not?

GAIL

I don't know. It's too soon to tell.

(pause)

It might be.

PHYLLIS

There's your answer.

Gail hesitates, her eyes flicking towards the wedding picture.

EXT. S.F. STREETS - DAY

Head down, shoulders hunched, Win wanders the streets.

Win stands alone on top of a hill, staring out at the Bay. Every few seconds the beacon on Alcatraz Island winks.

EXT. WIN'S BUILDING - EVENING

Win stands across the street, looking at Jenkins' window.

INT. WIN'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Win lies in the foetal position on the rack. The phone RINGS in the other room. He doesn't move. The answering machine picks up and someone leaves a message.

INT. WIN'S BEDROOM - DAY

Win sits looking out the window. He sees the Vietnamese boy and girl standing on the sidewalk across the street with their protective companion, looking up at him.

He rubs his eyes and looks again. They're gone.

INT. WIN'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Win crouches in the corner. He holds a scarf that Gail left behind, twisting it in his hands, then pressing it to his face.

INT. WIN'S BATHROOM - NIGHT

Win wears his steel helmet. It covers his face. His eyes stare through the holes at his image in the mirror.

He smashes his head into the glass, which shatters.

INT. WIN'S LIVING ROOM - DAY

Win, dressed only in boxer shorts, lies asleep on the floor. The doorbell BUZZES, waking him up.

He goes to the door, and presses the intercom button.

WIN

Gail?

CHAD (O.S.)

Gail? Who the hell is Gail? Let me in.

Win hesitates, then BUZZES him in.

INT. WIN'S KITCHEN - DAY

Win sits at the kitchen table. Chad busies himself taking care of Win: brewing coffee, frying eggs, making toast.

CHAD

I don't see the problem. You got rid of Nina, and it sounds like this Gail is a real improvement.

WIN

I didn't want to get rid of Nina. She wanted to get rid of me. It doesn't matter; they both hate me now, anyway.

CHAD

Nina came here to dump you, right? Just explain it to Gail.

WIN

Explain what? How I forgot to mention that I already had a girlfriend when I went to bed with her?

CHAD

You want a little cheese with that whine? Get over yourself, will you? You never used to act like this.

WIN
Things change.

CHAD
So I've noticed.
(pause)
While I hate to admit there's
anything I can't do, I don't know
how to help you.

WIN
You think I'm crazy.

CHAD
I've always thought you were crazy.
There's nothing wrong with that, as
long as you're happy. But you've
been miserable for months, and now
you're making everyone around you
miserable, too.

WIN
I don't know what you're talking
about.

CHAD
Fine. If you don't want to deal
with it, I can't make you. But I
can get you the hell out of this
apartment.

He sets a plate in front of Win.

CHAD (cont'd)
Eat. Then you're going to take a
shower, which you really need, I
might add. And then we're going to
the Nixon Gala.

WIN
That's tonight?

CHAD
If I'm going to be your social
secretary, I expect a salary.

EXT. GUY'S WAREHOUSE - DAY

Establishing. Gail's car is parked in front.

INT. GUY'S OFFICE - DAY

Guy sits at his desk, Gail across from him. A tape
recorder sits between them.

GUY

(mid-conversation)

I agree. It is sad that so many children in this country are unwanted because of the color of their skin, but the fact is that White couples in America want White babies. And those kids in Romania need homes just as much as minority kids here do.

The RECEPTIONIST sticks her head in the door.

RECEPTIONIST

If you don't need anything else, I'll be going.

GUY

No, that's fine. I'll see you tomorrow.

She closes the door behind her.

GAIL

It's getting late, so I won't keep you much longer. But I wanted to show you this--see if it means anything to you.

She hands Guy the letter from Romania, and he reads it.

GUY

This kind of thing makes me sick. It only takes one case like this to make us all look sleazy.

GAIL

So I take it you don't have any experience with this kind of thing?

GUY

No, not personally, though I hear the stories like everybody else. I will say this, though. You have to look at things from both sides. I've seen cases where parents put kids up for adoption and then change their minds. Then they turn around and say their kids were stolen.

GAIL

(skeptical)

Really.

GUY

It doesn't happen a lot, but it does happen.

GAIL

Uh-huh. Well, I guess that's about it. Thanks for your time.

She shuts off the cassette recorder and puts it in her purse.

INT. ADOPTION AGENCY LOBBY - CONTINUOUS

Guy and Gail walk toward the exit. Gail notices a toy on the floor and picks it up.

GAIL

Do you ever house kids here?

GUY

Only under extraordinary circumstances. It's funny you should mention it, 'cause it came up the other day.

GAIL

What did?

GUY

There was some confusion with the paperwork on a brother-and-sister double adoption, and we couldn't let the parents take the kids home for a couple of days. We're really not set up as a nursery, but everyone on the staff loves kids. They all pitched in.

Gail puts the toy down, and they exit.

INT. WAREHOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Guy and Gail walk down the stairs from the agency door.

GAIL

Were the children Romanian, by any chance?

GUY

Yes, coincidentally, they were. But I can assure you, they weren't stolen.

GAIL

I need to talk with some adoptive parents for my piece. Could you give me their phone number?

GUY

Not without their permission, but I'd be happy to ask.

GAIL

Thanks.

Gail spots the trebuchet and stops. Guy follows her gaze.

GUY

Saturday is the MARS Annual Gathering and Fund-Raiser. There'll be music and food. All kinds of revelry. You should come.

GAIL

I don't know.

GUY

Come on, it'll be fun. Besides, you said you wanted to talk with some adoptive parents, and a lot of my clients will be there.

GAIL

Sounds great. I'll see if I can make it.

EXT. HOTEL - NIGHT

One of the nicer hotels in San Francisco. Hundreds of people mill about and line up to enter the gala. Many are in costume, portraying key figures from Nixon's career.

Jenkins, his badge reading "23," hawks "The Lone Nut."

JENKINS

(shouting)

Read all about it. Secret Service funding outsourced to multinational corporations! President held hostage!

People laugh or ignore him completely, thinking he's part of the "pre-show entertainment." He switches tactics.

JENKINS (cont'd)

What's the matter with you people?
Little-brain blackbirds,
comfortable shoes! He killed
thousands in 'Nam, not to mention
the millions here. He went to China
and brought back Mickey Mao. None
of the CIA guys wanted to drive
those ice cream trucks, but ghetto
kids need their heroin, right? It
makes you want to toss your
cookies, but read the fortune
first.

Jenkins spots Win and Chad making their way toward the entrance. He starts to call out to Win, but changes his mind and goes back to haranguing the crowd.

JENKINS (cont'd)

Those bastards have been trying to
kill me for years. They already got
my dog. I knew, I knew. When she
stopped fetching, that was the end.

He begins to cry. People edge away.

INT. HOTEL LOBBY - NIGHT

Win and Chad enter the crowded lobby. The gala staff are dressed as Secret Service agents, right down to the sunglasses.

Win wears a nametag that says, "Hi! My name is DEEP THROAT." He pulls a paper bag with eye and mouth holes over his head. It's emblazoned with a large question mark. Chad, wearing a cheap, ill-fitting suit, dons a rubber Nixon mask.

As they move toward the ballroom, Chad elbows Win, pointing out Guy and Nina. Nina, dressed as Julie Nixon in a wedding gown, hangs on Guy's arm. Guy's in a tux.

Win takes a step in their direction, but Chad holds him back.

CHAD

(masked)

Forget about her. Let's get a drink
and you can tell me more about this
reporter.

Nixon and the paper bag stare at each other for a moment, then turn and exit to the ballroom.

INT. HOTEL BALLROOM - CONTINUOUS

Win and Chad enter, handing their tickets to the doorman.

Part circus, part disco, part parody of a political convention, it's a huge party. TV monitors play highlights of Nixon's career.

Win and Chad wander through the crowd.

Drenched in psychedelic lights, a band plays acid-rock.

WIN
(masked)
How're we going to find them?

CHAD
Just look for the tallest, blackest
J. Edgar Hoover you've ever seen.

Win turns his head and immediately sees Calvin, dressed as J. Edgar Hoover in dominatrix drag. He joins them.

WIN
(as Eddie Haskell)
Why Mr. Hoover, you're looking
particularly lovely this evening.

CALVIN
(masked)
Watch it, sonny. Don't make me tell
the press how you got the name Deep
Throat.

CHAD
(as Nixon)
Let me make one thing perfectly
clear. Don't get on the wrong side
of Hoover. In both senses, if you
know what I mean.

WIN
Where's Brenda?

CALVIN
Bathroom. Girls...

WIN
(removing his mask)
This thing is just too damn hot.

They pass a display claiming that John Lennon's death was actually a CIA assassination.

CALVIN

Lennon was the only one from the sixties who survived with his reputation intact.

CHAD

Survived until he got shot, that is. But come on, lying around doing heroin while your wife feeds you by hand doesn't do a lot for your reputation.

They walk past a display distributing information on the JFK assassination/Warren Commission cover-up.

CALVIN

I'm just saying the world would be a better place if Chapman had gone after McCartney instead.

CHAD

The one he should have taken out was Yoko.

CALVIN

It wouldn't help. All those Plastic Ono Band records would still exist.

At another booth, a sickly-looking true believer with bad teeth tries to hand them a flyer claiming the government practices mind-control through the fluoridation of drinking water.

CALVIN (cont'd)

(to Win)

What do you think: Lennon or McCartney?

WIN

Sooner or later, they all let you down.

They stop at a "Hit-the-tape-recorder-with-the-football-and-dunk-Henry-Kissinger" game. Chad pays the attendant a dollar. He tosses the ball and misses the target.

CALVIN

Does anyone besides me think Kissinger was Deep Throat?

CHAD

Whoever he was, he's an idiot for not revealing his identity, particularly after all this time. I mean, think of the movie rights.

Calvin takes his turn, also missing.

CALVIN

Maybe he's dead.

WIN

Dead or alive, if he hadn't come forward we'd never have known what happened.

CHAD

The only reason somebody hides behind anonymity is because they're guilty themselves, or they have something to hide.

CALVIN

Maybe you're right and it was Nixon all along. He couldn't admit his errors in judgment, so he became Deep Throat and made all these grandiose gestures in an effort to absolve his guilt.

Win, agitated, turns and whips the ball, dunking Kissinger with a splash.

Brenda appears.

BRENDA

I've been looking all over for you guys.

(to Win)

Hey, I saw Nina in the line for the bathroom. She looks radiant. I guess you patched things up, huh?

CHAD

Hardly. She's here with Guy.

BRENDA

(to Win)

Wow, and I thought you were just being paranoid the other night.

WIN

Thanks.

Win stomps off into the crowd.

BRENDA

Touchy, isn't he?

INT. HOTEL HALLWAY - NIGHT

At a long line in front of the ladies' room, Win comes up behind a dark-haired woman. Thinking it's Nina, he touches her shoulder.

She turns. It's not Nina.

WIN

Sorry.

He continues down the hall.

INT. HOTEL BALLROOM - NIGHT

Chad, Calvin and Brenda walk over to another booth, peddling "Your picture with Dick." There are headless cardboard figures of Elvis shaking hands with Nixon.

BRENDA

Calvin, we've gotta do this.
Hoover's head on Elvis's body? What
could be better?

They join the line.

PHOTOGRAPHER

Elvis gets a royalty on every shot.
He'll be here any minute to pick up
his cut.

Suddenly, a fire alarm SCREAMS. People look around to see what's going on.

CHAD

It's probably nothing.

A crowd moves past, heading for the exits. The people waiting to have their picture taken join the stream.

CHAD (cont'd)

See, now there's no wait.

BRENDA

Shouldn't we find out what's going
on?

An announcement BARKS over the p.a.

ANNOUNCER (O.S.)

Attention, everyone. This is not a
drill. Please remain calm and move
to the nearest exit. I repeat, this
is not a drill.

The tension level increases dramatically as people rush for the doors. Chad and company are swept along by the crowd.

EXT. ALLEY - NIGHT

(Note: heightened reality.)

Win stumbles out of a side entrance.

He turns back and sees the head of a fire-breathing dragon coming through the doorway.

Terrified, he runs right by Nina, standing in the middle of the crowd. She grabs his arm.

NINA

Win.

He looks at her wildly.

NINA (cont'd)

Have you seen Guy?

He yanks free.

WIN

I have to get out of here.

He heads quickly toward the street. Nina falls in beside him.

NINA

There's nothing to be scared of.
It's probably just a false alarm.

WIN

I saw the flames.

NINA

(annoyed)
We're safe out here.

WIN

It's my fault. I tried, but I
couldn't stop it.

NINA

I don't need any excuses, Win. It's
over, and that's it.

He looks back over his shoulder down the alley.

WIN

I have to pay for my sins.

This throws Nina. She's about to reply when Guy appears.

GUY

Thank God, you're all right. I've been looking everywhere for you.

He and Nina embrace. Win keeps walking.

GUY (cont'd)

Win?

Win doesn't respond.

GUY (cont'd)

(to Nina)

I guess you told him about us, huh?

NINA

No, but something's wrong. He's acting even weirder than usual.

EXT. HOTEL - NIGHT

(Note: Heightened reality continues.)

Lights flashing, firetrucks and emergency vehicles are parked in front of the hotel. A crowd is held back behind yellow tape.

Win walks up and stands quietly behind a group of FIREFIGHTERS and COPS.

COP

(mid-conversation)

By the time we got here, the sprinklers in the men's room had put it out.

FIREMAN ONE

Ever since they changed the smoking laws this happens all the time. Five-to-one says it was a smoldering butt.

FIREMAN TWO

Well, we won't know for sure 'til they finish the investigation.

The cop notices Win.

COP

Hey buddy, you wanna get back behind the barrier?

WIN
I set the fire.

The cop and firemen look at him in amazement.

WIN (cont'd)
Aren't you going to arrest me?

COP
I guess so. Sure.
(to Firemen)
I wish they were all this easy.
(to Win)
Let's go.

Reciting Win his Miranda rights, he walks him over to a parked police car.

(Note: "Normal" reality returns.)

Chad rounds the corner from behind the hotel, just in time to see Win being put into the back of the car.

He runs toward the squad car, but the crowd is too thick and the car drives off.

He approaches the firefighters and cops.

CHAD
That was my friend. What's going on? Where are they taking him?

Nina and Guy walk up.

FIREMAN TWO
Your "friend" just confessed to setting the fire. They're taking him in.

GUY
Win started the fire?

NINA
(to Guy)
I told you he was acting weird.

CHAD
(to Nina)
What do you know about it?
(to Fireman Two)
He couldn't have done it. He was with me the whole time.

NINA

No, he wasn't. I saw him come out of the hotel by himself.

CHAD

Would you shut up!

FIREMAN TWO

As entertaining as this is, I have work to do.

He turns away and starts rolling up a hose.

CHAD

I don't know what's happening here, but I'm going to find out.

GUY

I'm sure we won't be able to find anything out now. I'll make some calls in the morning.

CHAD

Don't bother. I'm going down there, now.

NINA

He's just trying to help.

CHAD

I'm sure Win'll appreciate your concern as much as I do. I'll tell him when I see him.

He walks away.

FADE OUT.

BLACKNESS

The EXPLOSION of one car smashing into another. Metal GRINDS, glass SHATTERS, a car horn BLARES. As the crash sound tapers off, the horn continues to blow.

Small flames appear and quickly grow, revealing the remains of a smashed-up auto.

The silhouettes of two small figures can just be made out inside the car, moving through the flames.

High-pitched screams blend with the car horn.

Small hands appear against the driver's window. They slide down and disappear, leaving a smear of blood.

A man's hands, blistered by fire, tug frantically at a car door handle.

The horn and screams cut off abruptly.

INT. JAIL CELL - MORNING

Win jerks into a sitting position. He looks around the cell, then drops his head into his hands.

INT. POLICE HEADQUARTERS - MORNING

A BORED CLERK argues with Chad.

BORED CLERK

(mid-conversation)

Nothing's changed since the last three times you asked. There won't be any information about your friend until the detectives finish questioning him, and they're not even due in until seven.

CHAD

Doesn't he at least get a phone call?

BORED CLERK

I'm sure they gave him his phone call. Now look, you've got two choices: You can quit bugging me or you can join your friend in a cell.

CHAD

Okay. Well. Thanks for your help. Maybe you could tell me if there's a payphone somewhere?

The clerk points toward the corner of the lobby.

Chad goes to the phone and dials 411.

CHAD (cont'd)

Yeah, I need the number for the San Francisco Sun. Thanks.

He presses the hook, then drops some coins in the slot and dials.

CHAD (cont'd)

I'd like to speak to Gail Hammond, please.

(pause)

(MORE)

CHAD (cont'd)

Yeah, okay, I'll take her voice-mail.

CUT TO:

Later. It's more crowded in the station, and the activity level has picked up. Chad sleeps on a bench.

Gail comes in and looks around to see if anyone is waiting for her. When no one comes up, she walks toward the front desk.

As she does, Guy and Nina enter behind her. They look around and immediately head over to Chad.

The bored clerk looks up at Gail.

BORED CLERK

Can I help you?

In the b.g., Nina shakes Chad awake. He's not too happy to see her.

GAIL

I understand you're holding someone named Win Castle. I'm supposed to meet a friend of his.

She turns to survey the room.

GAIL (cont'd)

Would you have any idea which one he...

She's frozen by the sight of Guy and Nina standing with Chad.

GAIL (cont'd)

Oh my God.
(to clerk)
Never mind.

Trying to work up the courage to walk over, she watches Chad and Nina bicker.

Guy, looking for escape, scans the room and spots Gail. He comes over to her.

GUY

Ms. Hammond. What a surprise.

GAIL

You have no idea.

GUY

I don't usually hang out in police stations, but a friend of mine's gotten into some trouble. Oh, you met him at the warehouse--Win Castle.

GAIL

Actually, that's why I'm here. I got a message from a friend of his named Chad.

Nina notices Guy and Gail and stops in mid-sentence. It slowly dawns on her where she's seen Gail before.

GUY

(surprised)

Oh. Why would he call you?

Nina strides over to Guy and Gail. Chad, confused, follows.

GAIL

Well, um...

Nina arrives and possessively links her arm through Guy's.

NINA

What are you doing here?

GUY

This is Gail Hammond. She's a reporter for the...

NINA

We've met.

(to Gail)

I didn't recognize you at first... with your clothes on.

Silence.

GUY

Oh, you're the...

Chad sees that Gail is mortified and steps forward.

CHAD

(interrupting)

I guess I'm the only one here you haven't met. I'm Chad. Win's told me a lot about you.

Nina snorts. Gail gratefully changes the subject.

GAIL

Your message was kind of cryptic.
What's going on?

CHAD

They've been holding Win all night,
and nobody will tell me anything.

NINA

(to Gail)

I'll tell you something. Before you
get any closer to Win, you should
know he's a raving lunatic.

CHAD

If you don't want to help, go home,
okay?

NINA

Fine. Come on, Guy. Let's go.

GUY

Why don't we all just calm down?

GAIL

(to Chad)

What was he arrested for?

CHAD

We were at the Nixon Gala last
night and there was some kind of
fire. Supposedly, Win confessed to
setting it.

GAIL

Why would he do that?

NINA

'Cause he's crazy.

GAIL

I have a friend who works upstairs.
Maybe he can tell us something.

Gail and Chad walk toward the stairs.

Guy starts to follow, then stops and turns back when he
sees that Nina's not coming. He holds out his hand to
her and she reluctantly goes with him.

GAIL (cont'd)

(quietly, to Chad)

So, what exactly did Win say about
me?

INT. HALLWAY - POLICE HEADQUARTERS - DAY

Establishing. A sign on a door reads, "Psychology Dept., Robert Bass, Ph.D."

INT. OFFICE - POLICE HEADQUARTERS - CONTINUOUS

Gail, Chad, Guy and Nina sit across from ROBERT BASS, Phyllis' husband.

GAIL

(mid-conversation)

I don't understand. Why isn't he being charged?

BASS

He didn't even know where the fire started, and there's actually no law against confessing to crimes you didn't commit. They could charge him with creating a nuisance or impeding an investigation, but nobody wants to go to the trouble. Unless it keeps happening.

CHAD

Why would he do something like this?

BASS

You would know better than I. If I had to hazard a guess, I'd say it's probably a reaction to some kind of trauma. Has anything unusual happened in his life recently?

NINA

Our relationship had been going downhill for a long time, and I just broke up with him. Obviously, that's what set him off.

GUY

Don't blame yourself. Win looks up to me. I'm sure it destroyed him when he found out about us.

A guilty look crosses Gail's face as she pictures her night with Win and its aftermath. She starts to say something, but Chad interrupts.

CHAD

(to Nina and Guy)

I don't believe this.

(MORE)

CHAD (cont'd)

How dare you try to take responsibility for his neurosis. Although I must admit, if anyone could drive him crazy, it would be you.

NINA

That's it. I'm not taking any more of this abuse.

(to Guy)

I'll be outside.

She exits.

CHAD

Finally.

(to Burns)

About six months ago, Win witnessed a pretty horrendous fatal car crash. He hasn't been the same since. I think that's what's behind all this.

BASS

That would be a pretty extreme reaction, but people do respond differently to traumas, depending on their mental state at the time. In any event, I'd get him into treatment as quickly as possible.

CHAD

Don't think it hasn't been suggested.

GUY

I have a client who's one of the best. I'll give him a call.

CHAD

Anyway, when can we get him out of here?

BASS

They'll release him as soon as the paperwork is processed. It shouldn't be too long.

They all stand.

GAIL

Thanks for your help, Bob. Say hi to Phyllis and the kids.

Chad and Guy exit. Bass stops Gail.

BASS
This isn't that guy Phyllis told me
about, is it?

Gail blushes.

GAIL
I can't believe she told you. She
promised.

Bass shakes his head.

BASS (cont'd)
Be careful, okay?

GAIL
I'll try.

She exits.

EXT. POLICE HEADQUARTERS - DAY

Win, unkempt and somewhat disoriented, stands with Nina
near the station entrance.

NINA
(mid-conversation)
That is such bullshit. "I don't
remember." Then why do you think
you spent the night in jail?

WIN
I don't know. It was just a big
misunderstanding. Don't change the
subject. What were you doing with
Guy?

NINA
That's no longer any of your
business.

WIN
I just think you should be careful,
that's all. You don't know him like
I do.

NINA
He's in there right now trying to
help you. You should be grateful,
instead of bad-mouthing him.
Besides, you've got a lot of nerve
telling me what to do, after I
caught you with that woman.

WIN

"That woman" is a reporter, and she told me that Guy is very likely involved in baby-smuggling.

NINA

That's ridiculous.

WIN

She showed me a letter.

NINA

Oh, and when was that? Before or after you fucked her?

Gail, Chad and Guy enter from the police station.

NINA (cont'd)

There he is. Why don't you tell him what you just told me?

Win and Nina are joined by the others. Win can't meet anyone's eye.

CHAD

So, they finally sprung you, huh?

NINA

Let's get out of here.

She starts to walk away.

GUY

Well, buddy, I'm glad to see you're okay.

He leans in to Win.

NINA

Come on, Guy.

GUY

(whispering)

I give you my word, I didn't sleep with her until after you'd already broken up.

He gives Win's shoulder a squeeze before following Nina.

CHAD

What a dick.

There's an awkward silence.

CHAD (cont'd)
Well, I'll go get the car.

He exits, leaving Gail and Win alone. Win, embarrassed, still can't meet her eye.

GAIL
About the other night... it was probably a big mistake. I mean, I hope you don't think I do that sort of thing all the time. And if I'd known you had a girlfriend...

She waits for his response, but he says nothing.

GAIL (cont'd)
It was just really unprofessional of me. Don't get me wrong. I really like you, but everything happened so fast.

Win sinks deeper into his misery. Gail starts to get pissed off.

GAIL (cont'd)
I thought you'd at least call me, or something. I guess it's just not the right...

She breaks off as Chad pulls up. Win looks toward the car, then focusses on Gail for the first time.

WIN
I... I...

Unable to continue, he turns away and gets in the car.

Gail, devastated, watches as they drive off.

EXT. WIN'S BUILDING - DAY

Chad pulls to a stop in front of Win's building. They sit in silence for a moment.

CHAD
Okay, if you don't want to talk about it, you don't have to talk about it, but you could at least show a little gratitude.

WIN
I didn't ask for any help.

CHAD

Too bad you have friends who care
about you, huh?

No answer. Win gets out and slams the door.

Chad shakes his head and drives away.

EXT. WIN'S BUILDING - CONTINUOUS

Win climbs the steps and puts his key in the lock. As he turns it, the door is opened from the inside by Jenkins. They're both startled.

Jenkins ducks his head and tries to walk past, pulling a luggage cart loaded with used books and copies of "The Lone Nut." His badge reads "3."

Win puts his hand on Jenkins' arm to stop him.

WIN

I wanted to apologize for what
happened the other day.

Jenkins jerks away.

JENKINS

Words, words, words. They're
poison. You're poison.

Win has never been on this end of Jenkins' wrath before. On top of everything else, it's almost more than he can stand.

WIN

(desperately)
I know I hurt you, but I really
didn't mean to.

JENKINS

You didn't mean, you didn't mean.
But you did.

WIN

I didn't treat you like a friend.
But it was a mistake. It doesn't
mean I'm your enemy.

Jenkins doesn't respond, but he's listening.

WIN (cont'd)

You were right about Guy. He's the
one who can't be trusted. He's the
enemy.

JENKINS

You're undiscriminated jelly, but he's what's wrong with the world. He's probably killed several people already. He's their version of the Ken doll. Same WASP face. Too rich, too good-looking. Poor Barbie.

Win laughs.

JENKINS (cont'd)

Don't you dare laugh. Have you ever been stung by a wasp? One way to deal with them; burn the nest.

WIN

I wasn't laughing at you. You're right.

(pause)

Look, would you be my assistant at the MARS Gathering? I really want you there.

JENKINS

(hesitates)

I can't. I've got something to do.

He heads down the front stairs, pulling his cart.

WIN

Hey.

Jenkins stops and turns. Win gives him their private salute.

Jenkins is touched, but is too proud to forgive so quickly. He merely nods, then continues on his way.

INT. SAN FRANCISCO SUN - NEWSROOM - DAY

The paper's logo is on the back wall. There's a constant din as reporters talk on the phone and shout to each other across their cubicles.

A clerk walks down the center aisle, pushing a mail cart. He throws mail into each cubicle he passes. At the end of the row, he reaches Gail's tiny workspace and tosses her her mail.

GAIL (O.S.)

Thanks, Rudy.

INT. GAIL'S CUBICLE - CONTINUOUS

Gail is at her desk. She puts the mail down, looks at the computer screen and hits the "print" key.

As she waits, she riffles through the mail. She stops when she comes across an airmail envelope with a Romanian return address.

She tears it open. A letter and picture fall out. The pictures shows a young couple with two children. She reads the letter, then writes something on the back of the picture.

She grabs an article as it comes out of the printer. Next to a photo of several people standing near a burning car, a headline reads, "Car Careens Down Hill, Kills 4."

She examines the photo more closely. One of the onlookers is Win.

INSERT ARTICLE - CLOSE UP:

The text reads: An 86-year-old man, an apparent heart-attack victim, lost control of his car and plowed through a busy intersection on Potrero Hill, leaving four dead, including two children, and six injured.

RETURN TO SCENE

GAIL

(reading to herself)

"...the husband and father of the victims, clearly distraught, said, 'No one did anything. They all just stood there and watched my family die.'"

Gail slowly lowers the paper and stares into the distance.

EXT. GOLDEN GATE PARK/PARKING LOT - DAY

A banner proclaims the "MARS Annual Gathering." Hundreds of people, most in medieval dress, fill an open meadow covered with tents and bales of hay. At a concession area, vendors sell crafts, clothing and food.

Across the meadow from the parking lot, there's a stage surrounded by banners representing the different participating chapters.

Win, trebuchet in tow, pulls into a parking spot. In the next space sits a super-size Ford Explorer with an elaborate crest painted on the side, the word "Glomfield" printed underneath. Three members of the Glomfield team unload their trebuchet from its trailer.

Win, dressed in his armor, gets out of his car. The Glomfielders AD LIB greetings.

GLOMFIELD CAPTAIN

You might as well leave that thing on the trailer. We're taking the prize home with us again this year.

Win smiles good-naturedly, but there's a desperate edginess behind it. He takes in the opulence of the whole Glomfield package.

WIN

Whereabouts in Glomfield are you from?

GLOMFIELD CAPTAIN

Beverly. Hills, that is. Swimming pools, movie stars, heads on pikes.

They all laugh.

Guy and Nina arrive in an expensive, foreign sports car, and park a few spaces down. Guy jumps out and runs around to open Nina's door. He takes her hand and helps her out. She's in a long white gown and has flowers in her hair.

GLOMFIELD CAPTAIN (cont'd)

(snickering)

Lambert's always got some new wench on his arm.

Guy sees Win and raises a hand in greeting.

Win pointedly ignores him and busies himself with the trebuchet.

EXT. GOLDEN GATE PARK/STAGE AREA - DAY

Later. Guy, now in full battle armor, lights a ceremonial olympic-style flame, as a large crowd watches. He walks to a microphone.

GUY

Lords and Ladies. I, Lord Lambert of the Crimson Knights of the Barbary Coast, officially welcome you to the fifth annual MARS Gathering. Let the festivities begin!

Win watches from the edge of the cheering crowd. He sees Gail heading backstage as, in the b.g., Guy continues his announcements about the day's upcoming events.

Win pushes through the crowd. He approaches Gail as she reaches the steps of the stage.

WIN

Hello. I'm surprised to see you.

She regards him silently. He takes a deep breath.

WIN (cont'd)

I know you said you're not interested in me, but I really like you and I think you should give me another chance.

GAIL

I don't understand you at all. One minute you won't even talk to me, and now...

WIN

I'm sorry about that. It was a bad situation.

GAIL

I have no right to judge you. I really don't even know anything about you.

WIN

Well then, ask me anything. What do you want to know?

GAIL

Oh come on, Win.

WIN

No, really. Anything.

GAIL

Okay. Tell me about the accident.

WIN

What accident?

She pulls out the article and shows it to him.

GAIL

This is you, isn't it?

He barely glances at it.

WIN

No.

GAIL

It sure looks like...

She catches sight of Guy as he comes offstage and is immediately surrounded by people clamoring for his attention.

GAIL (cont'd)

Can we finish this later? I've got to talk to Guy.

She pulls the letter and picture out of her bag.

WIN

What's that? Evidence against him?

I knew it.

(knowingly)

His time is coming.

Gail holds the letter and picture out of his sight.

GAIL

I never said Guy did anything.

He snatches the picture from Gail and looks at it.

WIN

Who are these people?

She grabs it back.

GAIL

This is my work, Win. Stay out of it.

WIN

I think I recognize those kids.

GAIL

What do you mean? How could you?

WIN

I think I saw them at Guy's office. Yeah, I know I did.

GAIL

When could you have seen them?

WIN

I spend a lot of time at that warehouse. I saw Guy bring those kids in. I'm sure of it. As a matter of fact, I can tell you exactly when it was--it was the day we met.

GAIL

I didn't see them.

WIN

You would have if you had gone into the office. Don't you remember? We were talking about the trebuchet, and Guy came out just as you were going to find him.

GAIL

This is a serious accusation. Are you absolutely positive they're the same children?

WIN

I saw what I saw. Don't you believe me?

GAIL

You're raising some definite questions, but I can't accuse anyone of something like this without proof.

WIN

Then I'll get you proof. We have to save them.

GAIL

"We" aren't going to do anything, Win. This isn't your business. Why don't you just go play with your catapult?

His face freezes. She turns and heads toward Guy. After a few steps she stops.

GAIL (cont'd)

(turning back)

Win, I didn't mean to sound so...

But he's gone.

EXT. GOLDEN GATE PARK/COMPETITION AREA - DAY

A trebuchet arm swings through the air, flinging its large stone load into the distance.

The crowd behind the torch-lit firing area cheers when the stone hits the ground.

Win intently adds more counterweights to his machine. His assistant (MARS Member One from the party) greases the pivot mechanism.

The target is a large circle painted on the ground. A JUDGE at the far end of the field uses a tape measure to mark the distance from the target to the striking point.

JUDGE
(through a megaphone)
15 yards from the target for the
Blue Dragons of Kantor.

The crowd cheers.

EXT. GOLDEN GATE PARK/STAGE AREA - DAY

Guy and Gail face off near the stage. Guy holds the letter and picture.

GUY
(mid-conversation)
You know why he would lie about
this. He's jealous because Nina
prefers me.

GAIL
That's the reason I came to you
first, because I realize you guys
have a history. But if I didn't
follow up on this, I wouldn't be
doing my job.

She points to the picture.

GAIL (cont'd)
And he swears that these are the
kids that you brought into your
office the day I first came to talk
to you.

GUY
That's just not true. In fact,
they're here with their parents
right now. Let's go find them and
settle this.

He starts off. She follows.

EXT. GOLDEN GATE PARK/COMPETITION AREA - DAY

An OFFICIAL turns to the Glomfield Captain.

OFFICIAL

Captain of Glomfield, are you ready
for battle?

GLOMFIELD CAPTAIN

Yes, your lordship, for the honor
and glory of Glomfield.

OFFICIAL

Fire at will.

They fire off their load, which soars through the air
and lands very close to the target.

The judge measures off the distance.

JUDGE

Three yards for the Green Gargoyles
of Glomfield.

The crowd goes wild.

The Glomfield Captain turns to Win.

GLOMFIELD CAPTAIN

Beat that.

Win continues adding weights. His assistant looks
concerned.

MARS MEMBER ONE

(whispering)

Win, what are you doing?

WIN

New strategy.

The Glomfield Captain sees how much weight Win has added
and looks at him quizzically.

Win puts his helmet on.

In the b.g., Guy introduces Gail to the two kids from
the warehouse and their parents, then walks away.

Gail shows the picture to the parents, who look at it
and shake their heads.

The official turns to Win.

OFFICIAL
Captain of the Barbary Coast, are
you ready for battle?

Win is about to answer when Guy appears out of the crowd, with Nina on his arm.

GUY
Yes, your lordship, for the honor
and glory of the Barbary Coast.

Guy smiles grimly at Win.

OFFICIAL
Fire at will.

Win gives Guy an ironic thumbs-up and releases the lever, causing the trebuchet to send its heavy load into the air.

There's a gasp from the crowd as the load passes high above the target, heading straight towards Guy's beautiful sports car, parked in the lot.

Finally, the load begins to drop, landing SMACK in the center of Guy's windshield, SHATTERING it.

The crowd goes silent.

After a brief pause, the Glomfield Captain laughs.

Guy is speechless for the first time in his life.

NINA
You did that on purpose!

WIN
Of course I did it on purpose. You
think I could hit a target that
small by accident?

NINA
I never knew you were so petty. If
you're mad at me, you should deal
with me, not take it out on Guy.

Guy, enraged, shoves Win hard. Win falls to the ground, his helmet coming off.

Win cocks his head at the sound of approaching
HOOFBEATS.

Guy stands over Win.

GUY

Get up!

Win looks past him. Through a break in the crowd, he watches as the Knight in Silver Armor, battle lance ready, gallops closer and closer on his huge white horse, straight towards Guy.

Guy continues to harangue Win, but Win's attention is totally focussed on his saviour. Guy's voice and the sound of the crowd fade away to silence.

Just before the knight's lance hits its mark, the vision dissolves as Guy grabs Win's shoulder, lifts him up and punches him square in the face.

The ROAR of the crowd returns as Win falls back, his nose bloody.

Guy looks up and realizes that everyone is staring at them. He pulls himself together and goes into spin-control mode.

GUY

(to crowd)

I apologize for losing my temper, but this man has broken the code of honor by which all MARS members have agreed to abide.

(to Win)

You are no longer welcome here.

(to crowd)

The archery competition is about to begin. I'm sure no one wants to miss that. If you'll all follow me...

He takes Nina's arm and heads away, most of the crowd following.

Win, hampered by his heavy armor, struggles to get up.

Gail remains behind. She comes over and helps him into a sitting position. She tenderly holds a handkerchief up to his nose.

GAIL

That was by far the dumbest thing I've seen anybody do in a long time.

WIN

People like him get away with everything. I'm not going to let...

He stops, his attention caught by a movement in the crowd. He zeroes in on the two Vietnamese children, silently watching. He reaches toward them.

Gail grabs his chin and turns his face toward her.

GAIL

Listen to me.

He jerks away and looks for the children, but they're gone. Confused, he mumbles incoherently.

Gail tries to pull him to his feet, but he resists.

WIN

Those kids. I can save them, but I've got to get to them first.

GAIL

Win, calm down. I met the children you saw at the warehouse. They're not the ones we're looking for.

WIN

You don't understand. It's my last chance. I can't live with it, not any more.

He thrashes, accidentally striking her HARD on the jaw with his armor-clad arm.

She stumbles back, holding her face. It's hard to tell who's more shocked.

WIN (cont'd)

Gail, I didn't mean to...

GAIL

Don't. Obviously, I can't help you.

She walks away, leaving him struggling to get to his feet. By the time he does, she's out of sight.

INT. WAREHOUSE - DAY

Win, sans armor, places blocks behind the wheels of the trebuchet's trailer. There's dried blood under his nose.

He glances nervously at the darkened windows of the adoption agency office.

He takes a deep breath and heads up the stairs to the office.

He tries the knob, but the door is locked. He's momentarily flummoxed. He takes out his keys and tries a couple in the lock. No luck.

Frustrated, he leans his back against the door and looks around.

Without warning, he SMASHES his elbow through the glass window. The glass cuts his elbow, drawing blood, but he doesn't notice.

He reaches through the broken window and unlocks the door.

INT. POLICE STATION LOBBY - DAY

Win, still in his linen pants and shirt, walks up to the desk sergeant, who rolls his eyes when he recognizes Win.

DESK SERGEANT

Well, look who's here. Come to confess to another fire? Or maybe you've been selling milk after the expiration date?

Win, having no memory of his previous visits, is taken aback by the sergeant's attitude, but he plows on.

WIN

I've got some information about a very serious crime.

DESK SERGEANT

Yeah. Right. Go wait over there. I'll tell Det. Burns you're here. He'll be thrilled.

Win gives him a puzzled look, but goes over and sits on the bench. A beam of sunshine coming through the window illuminates him.

INT. POLICE STATION LOBBY - NIGHT

Win still sits on the bench. The windows are now dark.

Detective Burns, scowling, appears in a doorway and gestures for Win to join him.

INT. POLICE STATION INTERROGATION ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Burns ushers Win into the room and offers him a chair. They sit. Burns takes in Win's dishevelment.

Win holds out his hand to shake.

WIN
I'm Win Castle.

Burns ignores the outstretched hand.

BURNS
So, you've been cheating on us.

WIN
Excuse me?

BURNS
We heard you confessed to the boys
downtown about that hotel fire.
What, we're not good enough for you
anymore?

WIN
I don't know what you're talking
about; you must have me confused
with someone else. That's not why
I'm here.

BURNS
Then why don't you enlighten me?

WIN
I thought that you'd be interesting
to know that there's a black-market
adoption ring operating right here
in the city.

BURNS
Really?

WIN
Yes, really. I've got evidence that
Guy Lambert, owner of the Family
Tree Adoption Agency, is selling
stolen babies.

BURNS
You have proof of this, of course.

WIN
Not with me.

BURNS
Uh-huh. Why doesn't that surprise
me?

WIN
But if you'll come to his office,
I'll show you.

BURNS

I don't know what your problem is, but even if I wanted to, I couldn't get a search warrant based on your say-so. You're not exactly a credible witness, you know.

WIN

What do you mean? Look, this is important. Are you telling me you're going to let a dangerous criminal go free, just because you're too lazy to check it out?

BURNS

You were kinda funny at first, but I gotta tell you, I'm getting pretty sick of this. I've got better ways to waste my time. Thanks to you, I'm missing the "Hill Street Blues" marathon on Nick at Nite.

WIN

I'm not the only one who knows about this. Gail Hammond from the Sun is the one who first figured it out. She can verify what I'm saying.

BURNS

Yeah, well, I'll be sure to give her a call. First thing.

WIN

I'm telling the truth.

BURNS

You know, I've always thought the truth was a pretty simple thing. Either something happened, or it didn't. But every time I run into you, the truth just kinda disappears in a puff of smoke.

WIN

What? What are you--? I've never met you before.

BURNS

Okay, that's it.

He stands and grabs Win by his injured elbow. Win flinches. Burns notices the blood.

BURNS (cont'd)
What have you been up to?

Win looks at the elbow, surprised. Burns' grip has reopened the wound.

WIN
(to himself)
How'd that happen?

BURNS
Jesus, you're bleeding all over the place. Just get out of here, would you?

He hustles Win towards the door.

Win turns and grabs Burns by the shirt.

WIN
If you won't take care of this problem, I will. He's a hornet. And the only way to get rid of a hornet is to burn its nest.

Burns pushes him away.

BURNS
You're a fucking nut and I'm through wasting my time with you.

WIN
Maybe you're willing to let this go on, but I'm not. I'm going back to the warehouse. I'm going to stop him, whatever it takes.

BURNS
Yeah, right. Whatever you say. And to save you the trouble of coming down here later, let's just consider this your confession, shall we? Now get the hell out of here.

He pushes Win toward the door.

Desperate with frustration, Win lunges at Burns.

Burns punches him in the mouth and knocks him down.

WIN
(wildly)
I'm telling you the truth.
(MORE)

WIN (cont'd)

I'm gonna do it. I'm gonna burn it
down.

Burns picks him up by the scruff of the neck and drags
him out of the office.

INT. POLICE STATION HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Burns drags Win, still struggling, down the hall. Cops
stick their heads out of offices to see what's going on.

INT. POLICE STATION LOBBY - CONTINUOUS

Burns drags Win through the lobby, followed by a crowd
of curious policemen.

DESK SERGEANT

You want me to write him up?

BURNS

No, I just want him the fuck out of
here.

Burns hustles Win out the front door. The Desk Sergeant
follows.

EXT. POLICE STATION - CONTINUOUS

Win, his mouth bleeding, lands in a heap on the
sidewalk.

Down the street, Jenkins packs up his wares for the day.
He watches as Win gets up and stumbles in his direction.

DESK SERGEANT

That guy is completely whacked.

BURNS

Yeah, a real nut-job, and I've got
a bad feeling we haven't seen the
last of him.

He sighs.

BURNS (cont'd)

I guess I'd better call Doc Bass
downtown, see what we should do the
next time he shows up.

EXT. S.F. STREETS - NIGHT

As Win walks past Jenkins on the corner, Jenkins holds
out a copy of "The Lone Nut" for him to take.

JENKINS

Here you go. Hot off the press.

Win doesn't answer.

Jenkins follows as he goes over to a payphone and starts dialing.

JENKINS (cont'd)

You should take this; it'll be a collector's item. Last issue. They won't have Ernest Jenkins to kick around any more.

WIN

(to himself)

Nobody's paying attention; nobody's doing anything, but I will.

(into phone)

Guy? It's Win.

Jenkins waves his paper in Win's face.

JENKINS

You have to read this. You've got to know the truth.

Win turns away.

WIN

(into phone)

Shut up and listen to me. I know, I know about you. Even if nobody else sees it, I know what you've done. I'm giving you one last chance to admit it.

(pause)

I thought so. You think you can get away with this, but I'm not going to let you. I don't care if the police don't believe me. I'll show them and you.

INT. GUY'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Guy sits naked on the edge of his bed, holding the phone. He listens impatiently as Win rants.

GUY

Burn what? You're not making any sense. Look Win, we've been friends for a long time, so I've tried to be understanding, but I've had it. I'm hanging up now.

He hangs up the phone and sighs.

Nina sits up into view and puts her arm around Guy.

NINA

Don't worry about him. Come here.

She pulls him down onto the bed.

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

Win walks purposefully down the sidewalk. Jenkins is on his heels, still trying to give him the paper.

JENKINS

(mid-conversation)

It's payback time against that miscreant onion. I'm ready to peel.

WIN

You can't help me.

JENKINS

Tit for tat, tit for tat.

WIN

It's time to burn out the nest.

JENKINS

It won't do any good. He'll just find another one.

WIN

(to himself)

Nobody thinks I have it in me. They'll see.

JENKINS

(waving the paper)

Nobody thought I did, either. You don't know how much help I can give.

They reach their apartment building. Win gets into his car, which is parked out front. Jenkins shoves the paper in his face.

JENKINS (cont'd)

You have to read this. You need me.

Win tosses the paper onto the passenger seat and drives off, leaving Jenkins standing in the street.

JENKINS (cont'd)

And I need you.

Jenkins runs to a beat-up old bicycle chained to the porch railing.

He frantically opens the several locks securing it.

He jumps on and pedals furiously after Win.

EXT. S.F. STREETS - CONTINUOUS

Win, muttering incoherently, drives through heavy San Francisco traffic toward the warehouse.

Jenkins huffs and puffs as he pedals, struggling to keep Win in sight.

EXT. RESTAURANT - NIGHT

Establishing. A comfortable-looking steakhouse in Berkeley. Nice, but not too fancy.

INT. RESTAURANT - NIGHT

Gail and Phyllis Bass, having finished dinner, drink coffee at a table set for three. Gail has a slight bruise on her jaw.

PHYLLIS

(mid-conversation)

You said it was an accident, so how can you blame him?

GAIL

I'm not blaming him; I just don't understand him. Maybe he's just not my type. In fact, he may not be anybody's type.

PHYLLIS

I think you should give him another chance.

Gail gestures hopelessly.

PHYLLIS (cont'd)

Come on. How often do you meet somebody that makes your toes curl?

Robert Bass approaches and takes his seat.

BASS

Sorry about that. I always end up with the ones nobody else knows what to do with.

(to Gail)

You'll be interested in this: Your boyfriend has switched tactics.

(MORE)

BASS (cont'd)

He's gone from false confessions to making threats. He says he's going to burn down some guy's building.

PHYLLIS

Oh, Gail. You were right. This one is different.

Gail is embarrassed by their teasing.

GAIL

Is he in custody?

BASS

No, they don't really think he'll do anything.

GAIL

My mother always said taking in strays would get me into trouble, but for some reason I can't leave this one alone. I gotta make sure he's okay.

Gail gets up and gathers her things. A realization hits her.

GAIL (cont'd)

Oh God. Not some guy's building. Guy's building.

She rushes out.

Phyllis and Bass watch her leave.

PHYLLIS

Oh, boy, she's in trouble. You've met him. Is he sick sick, or just "normal man" sick?

EXT. S.F. STREETS - NIGHT

Win sits at a red light. He looks to his right at the sound of THUNDERING FOOTSTEPS. A huge dragon appears and crosses in front of Win's car. It turns its head and breathes a tremendous plume of fire directly at Win.

Win covers his eyes as the flame engulfs the car.

Silence. Then a car horn HONKS. Win carefully uncovers his eyes and sees the empty intersection, the light green.

INT. GAIL'S CAR - NIGHT

Gail, navigating through heavy Saturday-night traffic toward the Bay Bridge, steers with one hand and dials Win's number on her cell phone with the other.

After several RINGS, his machine answers.

WIN (O.S.)

Hi. I'm not home, but...

GAIL

(over message)

Damn. Damn. Damn.

The machines BEEPS.

GAIL (cont'd)

Win, if you're there, pick up. I know things look bad right now, but I can help if you'll let me. I care, Win. Are you there? Win? Shit!

She hangs up and has to slam on the brakes, barely missing the car in front of her. Traffic is at a dead stop as far as the eye can see.

GAIL (cont'd)

Shit!

EXT. S.F. STREETS - NIGHT

Traffic clears as Win reaches the South of Market district. Jenkins trails behind.

Win speeds up, disappearing from Jenkins' view.

INT. WAREHOUSE - NIGHT

The trebuchet sits in the middle of the warehouse, cocked and ready to fire. Win stares at it. His demeanor is calm and deliberate, unlike anything we've seen before. Guy's smashed-up car sits near the staircase.

He puts some rags in a large can, then pours some gasoline into it, creating a makeshift Molotov Cocktail.

He places the can in the basket of the trebuchet.

He pulls out a book of matches and lights one. He takes a deep breath and drops the match on the rags.

Once the fire is burning strongly in the can, he releases the lever, sending the flaming load flying across the warehouse.

It strikes the wall and EXPLODES. Fire spreads.

EXT. S.F. STREETS - NIGHT

Jenkins circles around South of Market, looking for Win's car.

INT. WAREHOUSE - NIGHT

Win, surrounded by the quickly-spreading flames, moves toward the exit, but he's stopped by the sight of the flames licking at Guy's car. The engine catches fire with a loud WHOOMP.

Win's eyes snap shut at the sound. He cocks his head, listening.

MALE VOICE (V.O.)

Look at this! I've told you a hundred times, this not a toy!

WIN (8 YEARS OLD) (V.O)

But, Dad, I didn't mean to break it.

INT. WIN'S CHILDHOOD HOME - DAY (FLASHBACK)

The voice belongs to the man we've seen watching over the Vietnamese children. He is WIN'S FATHER, and he stands toe-to-toe with 8-year-old Win. He holds the remains of a broken model of a trebuchet in his hands.

WIN'S FATHER

What you meant doesn't matter. What matters is what you did. That's it - the workshop is off-limits until you learn some responsibility.

WIN (8 YEARS OLD)

That's so unfair! I hate you! You never let me do anything!

Win's father heads for the door.

WIN'S FATHER

We'll talk about this later.

Win turns his back on his father, who shakes his head in frustration and exits.

Win's mother enters from the kitchen.

WIN'S MOTHER

What is it this time?

WIN (8 YEARS OLD)

I hate him. I never want to see him again.

She gives him a hug.

WIN'S MOTHER

Be careful what you wish for, Winny. It might come true.

He pulls away.

WIN (8 YEARS OLD)

I hope it does.

From outside, the SCREECH of tires is followed by a THUMP. A second later, there's a CRASH of metal-on-metal.

Win's mother runs to the door, throws it open and goes outside.

WIN'S MOTHER

Oh my God! Sandy!

Win follows her outside.

EXT. WIN'S CHILDHOOD HOME - DAY (CONTINUOUS)

Win watches his mother bend over the recumbent form of his father, lying in the crosswalk. The car which hit him is embedded in a truck parked nearby.

WIN (8 YEARS OLD)

Daddy, no!

He begins to cry, and runs toward his parents.

Gasoline leaks from the wrecked cars. A spark, then the same WHOOMP sound as it bursts into flames, engulfing his mother back and engulfing his prostrate father.

INT. WAREHOUSE - NIGHT (RETURN TO PRESENT)

Tears squeeze out from behind Win's still-closed eyes.

SERIES OF QUICK SHOTS (M.O.S)

Win stands in front of Desk Sergeant in police station.

Outside the Nixon Gala, a policeman handcuffs Win and puts him in a cruiser.

Win sits across from Burns in an interrogation room.

BACK TO SCENE

WIN

Oh my God. What have I done?

He opens his eyes and turns back toward the trebuchet. Going to it, he takes the Crimson Knight flag and wraps it around his shoulders.

He takes a long look around at the burning warehouse, then sighs deeply.

Decision made, he slowly sits down by the trebuchet, strokes his hand along the wood, and settles back to wait.

His eyes close and his head bows.

Smoke surrounds him and he disappears from view.

EXT. GUY'S WAREHOUSE - NIGHT

Jenkins, nearly dead from exertion, spots Win's car and pedals toward it.

He stops when he sees the flames leaping from the warehouse roof. He jumps off the bike and runs into the warehouse.

In the open doorway, he's silhouetted by the flames. Then he disappears.

FADE OUT.

EXT. BAY BRIDGE - NIGHT

Win slowly regains consciousness. He's confused, then startled when he realizes where he is.

His car, pointing the wrong way, sits at an angle. It's behind cones blocking off the right lane of the upper roadway for construction.

Jenkins stands above him on the railing, holding onto a lamppost. Fog swirls around him.

Win gets to his feet.

WIN

What's going on?

Jenkins turns. Win sees that his badge reads "0.1."

JENKINS
I brought you here.

WIN
(angry)
Why couldn't you stay out of it?

JENKINS
You're the one who cares.

He turns and looks down at the Bay.

WIN
What are you...?

JENKINS
I thought it would be easier. My whole recapitulates the jungle. I froze there, too.

WIN
Goddammit! I had it all figured out. Now what am I going to do?

JENKINS
That's why I set the fires. Nobody cared.

WIN
I set the fire.

JENKINS
Not that fire, the others. The one in the Mission, the one in the Castro, that hotel.

This captures Win's attention.

JENKINS (cont'd)
Maybe now you can accept the truth.

He takes a folded-up copy of "The Lone Nut" from his back pocket and tosses it to Win.

Win unfolds it and looks at the headline: "ARSONIST PUNISHED."

WIN
(reading aloud)
"Ernest Jenkins, editor of this newspaper, took his own life immediately after confessing to the series of fires that have swept through the city."
(MORE)

WIN (cont'd)

Beginning six months ago with a blaze set in the basement of a Mission warehouse, Jenkins..."

(to Jenkins)

You?

JENKINS

I knew you would understand. Now I can go.

Win pauses, then laughs.

WIN

I don't believe this. You stopped me from killing myself so you could bring me here to watch you commit suicide?

JENKINS

It's not funny; I failed. I always fail.

WIN

(still laughing)

You think you're a failure? I've been confessing to the fires you set.

The laughter sticks in his throat. He starts to climb up on the railing next to Jenkins.

Jenkins pushes on top of Win's head to keep him from climbing up.

WIN (cont'd)

It's over. It's all over. Let me up!

JENKINS

You think this is a game, but it's not. You think about it, all day, every day, for years and years. Then you do it.

WIN

You think you're the only one who doesn't deserve to live?

JENKINS

You and your friends and that stupid game about the end of the world. You think choosing whether to live or die is a joke? I'll show you how big a joke it is.

He turns back to the Bay.

Win grabs Jenkins by the legs and pulls him down from the railing. They scuffle in the roadway like children.

Win breaks away and tries to climb up the railing. Jenkins drags him down from behind. He pushes Win, who falls to the ground several feet away.

Jenkins lunges for the railing and scrambles up it.

Win puts a foot up on the railing.

INT. CAR - NIGHT (CONTINUOUS)

POV of driver, watching Jenkins and Win fight. Driver slows down to get a better look.

EXT. BAY BRIDGE - NIGHT (CONTINUOUS)

The car (a small, red Volkswagen) slows almost to a stop as it draws parallel to Jenkins and Win.

The car behind can't stop in time and rear-ends the first car, pushing it sideways into the adjacent lane, where another speeding car broadsides it with an explosive CRASH. Traffic comes to a dead stop.

Win and Jenkins stop struggling. Silence. Then the horn of one of the crashed cars starts to BLARE.

Win, horrified, turns toward the scene.

EXT. STREETCORNER - DAY (FLASHBACK)

A horn BLARES.

Win runs toward the source of the sound.

A large Cadillac sits flipped over in the road. Its wheels are still spinning. Another smashed car, double-parked in front of a dry-cleaning shop, begins to smoke. Win surveys the wreckage.

RETURN TO PRESENT

The drivers of the cars that hit the Volkswagen exit their vehicles, shaken but not seriously injured.

Win looks toward the Volkswagen, but nobody gets out. He starts toward it.

He freezes as the huge dragon rears up from behind it, spitting fire at him.

Smoke pours from under the front of the Volkswagen.

FLASHBACK CONTINUES

Flames lick out from under the hood of the double-parked car. Within seconds, it's completely engulfed.

Win sees figures in the car, moving through the flames. He runs toward the burning car.

As Win approaches the car, he sees the two Vietnamese children trapped inside and hears their screams as they try to escape. The flames grow.

The children's FATHER comes out of the dry cleaner's shop. He drops the laundry.

FATHER

Somebody help! My kids are in there! My wife! Somebody do something!

The father is rooted in place on the sidewalk. He continues to AD LIB pleas for help, but is himself unable to move.

RETURN TO PRESENT

Win wants to help, but every time he moves, the dragon's head moves with him, blocking the path to the car.

Twenty or so cars back from the accident, Gail sits behind the wheel.

She gets out of the car to see what's going on. In the distance, she catches sight of Jenkins standing on the rail.

Leaving the car door open, she starts to run.

Back at the accident scene, the Knight in Silver Armor gallops toward Win.

The knight reins in his steed. His horse rears back on its hind legs as the dragon snarls.

Win waits for the Knight to slay the dragon.

WIN

Come on, do something! Kill it!

The Knight shakes his head and pulls his sword from its sheath. He holds it above his head, then tosses it to Win, who lets it land at his feet instead of catching it.

WIN (cont'd)
What am I supposed to do with that?

The Knight just looks at Win.

WIN (cont'd)
I can't do anything. You're the
hero, not me.

The Dragon snorts, spewing smoke toward Win. The
Volkswagen starts to burn.

FLASHBACK CONTINUES

Smoke engulfs Win as he tries to open the driver's door.
It's been smashed closed by the impact.

He looks through the window and sees the driver's head
resting against the steering wheel.

He tries the rear door, but it's also jammed.

Win tries unsuccessfully to break the window to allow
the children to escape.

The fire burns the skin off Win's hands. The heat is so
intense that his eyebrows and hair singe.

Hands grab Win's shoulders and pull him away from the
car.

Voices come from the crowd.

VOICE 1 (O.S.)
You've got to get back.

VOICE 2 (O.S.)
It's going to blow. There's nothing
you can do.

Win struggles to free himself from the hands holding him
back.

WIN
No! Let go! I can get them out!

The father stands crying in the background, his face
buried in his hands.

Win, still struggling, watches as the children's hands
pound against the inside of the window. Their screams
are more desperate.

The BLARING car horn and the screaming stop abruptly.

There's an eerie silence.

The car EXPLODES. Win and his unseen rescuer(s) are knocked to the ground.

Win gets to his knees, then shakes his head to clear it. He sees the car burning in front of him, and hears the voice of the husband from the accident.

FATHER (O.S.)

Nobody did anything. Why didn't anybody do anything?

RETURN TO PRESENT

WIN

(to himself)

I did. I did everything I could.

Win reaches down and picks up the sword. He holds it high above his head.

Jenkins, still standing on the rail, watches as Win starts toward the Volkswagen again.

Win stands his ground as the dragon charges straight for him.

Without hesitation, he holds the sword in both hands and plunges it into the heart of the dragon.

The dragon, sword sticking from its chest, rears back and SCREAMS, then dissolves into smoke.

Gail runs up in time to see Win push through the smoke to the Volkswagen, which is really starting to burn now.

He pulls open the driver's door and drags a half-conscious WOMAN out.

He pulls her away from the car, but she struggles.

WOMAN

No! My baby! My baby's in there.

WIN

Stay here.

WOMAN

No, I have to...

Gail comes over and restrains the Woman.

GAIL

You have to stay back.

(to Win)

Go.

He runs back to the car. The flames are bigger.

A crying baby girl is strapped into a car seat in the back.

He tries to open the door, but it's smashed shut.

Police cars approach, coming the wrong way towards the stopped cars.

Win looks around for something to break the window with, and sees a piece of metal from one of the smashed cars. He picks it up and SMASHES the glass with it.

The police cars pull up as Win reaches in through the window, unbuckles the baby from the car seat and pulls her out.

He runs away from the car, carrying the baby. The car EXPLODES into a ball of fire.

Win falls to the roadway, protecting the baby in his arms.

GAIL (cont'd)

Win!

Two UNIFORMED OFFICERS run up and help Win to his feet. One takes the baby and hands it to her mother.

Gail tenderly brushes some soot off Win's face. He grabs her hand and holds it tightly.

UNIFORM #1

That was really ballsy.

(to partner)

Radio for the EMTs.

He turns and sees Jenkins still standing on the railing, frozen.

UNIFORM #1 (cont'd)

We got a call about a jumper. I guess that's our guy.

WIN

He's a friend of mine.

UNIFORM #1

What's his problem?

WIN

Where do I start?

UNIFORM #1

Ask a stupid question... We'd better get him down before he falls and hurts himself.

Win, Gail and Uniform #1 approach Jenkins, who comes out of his trance.

JENKINS

Get back! You can't stop me. It's my time.

WIN

Mr. Jenkins, you don't have to do this. It's not the answer.

Jenkins begins to cry.

JENKINS

(to Uniform #1)

I set the fires.

UNIFORM #1

What fires?

(to Win)

What's he talking about?

JENKINS

Don't you read the papers, you idiot? That's the problem--nobody cares. The fires!

Win picks up the copy of "The Lone Nut" from the roadway and hands it to Uniform #1.

WIN

It's all in there.

Two more black-and-whites drive up, and cops get out. Sirens can be heard in the distance.

The newly-arrived cops keep the growing crowd of onlookers back.

A news van arrives.

JENKINS

Nobody listens. The state won't do its job, so I'm doing it for them.

Gail takes a notebook and pen from her pocket.

GAIL

You don't need to kill yourself to be heard, Mr. Jenkins. I'm listening.

He turns his attention to her.

JENKINS

I was there. That day. I wanted to help those kids, too, but I couldn't. I froze, just like in Nam.

(pause)

Just like today.

(to Win)

Then I saw what you did, and I was so ashamed. It burned. The fires, they were signal fires--to show them how to punish me. But they didn't see. They've never seen.

GAIL

And if you jump, they never will. They'll never understand.

This stops him.

GAIL (cont'd)

You can tell your story. Everyone will listen, but you have to come down from there.

Jenkins considers this for a moment, then slowly climbs down from the railing. The Uniforms grab him.

JENKINS

Wait, I need to tell her...

UNIFORM #2

You can tell her after you tell us.

They lead Jenkins away and put him in the back of a squad car. Through the window he looks back at Win and gives him their ritual salute.

Win returns the gesture.

He looks at Gail.

WIN

What are you doing here, anyway?

GAIL

I was looking for you, actually,
though I didn't expect to find you
in the middle of the Bay Bridge.

WIN

I thought you'd given up on me.

GAIL

Apparently not.

Behind the police barricade, the Woman is talking to an
on-camera REPORTER. She points at Win.

GAIL (cont'd)

What you did was really heroic.

WIN

I'm no hero. I need to tell you--I
really screwed up.

GAIL

What?

WIN

I set fire to Guy's warehouse. I
don't even know why any more. But I
do know I have to take
responsibility.

GAIL

You're a lot of work, you know
that?

WIN

I don't expect you to...

The reporter and cameraman come toward Win and Gail.

REPORTER

Excuse me...

GAIL

Get ready for your fifteen seconds
of fame.

Win hesitates.

WIN

I think I'll pass, thanks.

They turn and walk away from the crowd. The reporter
tries to cross the barricade, but is stopped by a cop.

GAIL

I guess that means you're going to
give me an exclusive?

He looks at her.

GAIL (cont'd)

Ve haf vays uf making you talk, you
know.

Win smiles, takes her hand and leads her away.

FADE OUT.

THE END.