

The Attic Wars

Written by

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FADE IN:

EXT. IDYLLIC BACKYARD -- DAY

A pink, terry cloth towel hangs from a clothesline and sways gently in the breeze.

CARR (V.O.)

Terry cloth.

(beat)

Have you ever felt it? On your face? Hands? Knees? I have. It's luxurious. Oh, you like silk? Well, fuck silk. You're wearing caterpillar shit. I'd never be caught dead in it. But my wife did. She loved the stuff.

Blood splashes across the towel as the song "Hole In My Life" by The Police begins.

EXT. WASHINGTON D.C., DOWNTOWN -- DAY

A bustling street, alive with high-class citizens. JON SUNN (32), stands out from the crowd, a shabby brown stained suit and unkempt beard, easily mistaken for a bum in these parts of town. His face and body appear flabby from years of caloric abuse.

He enters a nondescript building.

MONTAGE

Sunn sits in a barber's chair. His hair is clipped, tidy.

Beard is closely shaved with a straight razor.

The barber rips a fat mask of Sunn, reveals slim, handsome face underneath.

Sunn is stripped of his shabby clothes. A fat suit is unzipped and pulled off him, reveals athletic body.

Sunn is measured then fitted into a black suit, white shirt, black tie.

Sunn stands in front of the mirror, admires his glorious image.

MONTAGE ENDS. MUSIC FADES AWAY INTO:

INT. BROTHEL, SAN FRANCISCO

WINSTON CARR (40s, spitting image of "fat suit" Sunn, but cleaned up) sits in a row of chairs against one wall of the waiting room. The decor is gothic and ornate, with the walls covered in crushed red velvet wallpaper and red candles the only light. He waits quietly, with his hands in his lap.

PEGGY HIPPI (20s, cute, All-American) enters, followed by a line of prostitutes, all of varying ethnicities, sizes and shapes, in various states of lingerie dress.

PEGGY
Welcome, Mr. Ca-

CARR
(interrupts, whispers)
Tiberius.

PEGGY
(sotto)
Sorry.
(out loud)
Welcome, Tiberius. Who will it be today?

Peggy walks over to the line-up of girls and holds her hand over the first one's head. Carr shakes his head. Peggy and Carr repeat this ritual several times until she holds her hand over the head of MS. EDITRIX (beautiful Japanese-American, early 20s). An almost imperceptible frown appears on her face.

PEGGY
(sotto)
Of course.
(beat)
Ms. Editrix, would you escort Tiberius to suite six?

HALLWAY

3.

Ms. Editrix takes Carr by the hand and leads him down a side hall lined with red doors, all with numbers starting from 1. They stop in front of 6 and disappear inside.

INT. IRISH PUB, WASHINGTON D.C. -- DAY

LIAM DANVER, early-30s, sits at a table in the middle of the pub. Liam looks up as Sunn approaches.

DISSOLVE TO:

Pint glasses litter Sunn and Liam's the table. Liam's eyes droop with the tiredness of an amateur alcoholic while Sunn sits relaxed, distant.

Liam has a small glass of scotch with a sugarcube dissolving at the bottom. Sunn has a tall, slender glass of lager.

LIAM

Do you have any idea how much you cost?

SUNN

Do we have to do this?

LIAM

Just drink up and hear me out.

(beat)

And what's with the glass?

SUNN

This glass?

Sunn holds it up to Liam's face who winces.

LIAM

It reminds me of my mother.

SUNN

Why?

LIAM

She was a model in the '60s. She also liked to dress me up like a ballerina and have me dance for her fucking druggie friends.

Sunn pauses with his glass in the air. He slowly sets it back down in front of him.

SUNN

Was this before college?

LIAM

Anyway, how much do you think it would cost to replace a woman? I mean, if she were an android or something, fabricated from parts and stuff?

SUNN

This again?

LIAM

Humor me, asshole.

SUNN

I don't know, Liam.

LIAM

Take a fucking guess.

SUNN

Are we talking replicant, or robot?

LIAM

It doesn't matter, but if you must have an answer, then I would say replicant, because who would want to fuck a metal girl?

SUNN

Well, if you're talking replicant, then I would have to say around, uh, twenty-two thousand dollars.

Liam coughs and some of his scotch drips from his chin.

LIAM

You're kidding, right?

SUNN

What do you mean?

INT. SAN FRANCISCO BROTHEL, ROOM 6 -- CONTINUOUS

Carr lays in bed with his eyes shut in a post-coital coma.

EDITRIX (O.S.)

I mean, do you ever think some
wealthy, great-looking guy will
come in here and fall for you?

BATHROOM

Ms. Editrix stands in the lavatory that adjoins room 6 and room 8. MS. CAMEL (30, Afr. Amer.) sits on the counter, paints her toenails.

CAMEL

Shit, girl. You here for the wrong
reasons.

EDITRIX

This guy keeps telling me he's some
super secret agent, on a special
mission and shit, but when I looked
in his wallet, I found out he's one
of those psychics, or palm readers
or whatever.

CAMEL

Had some guy say he was an
archaeologist and he wanted to
excavate my pussy. Wanted to use a
dildo on me that looked like King
Tut.

EDITRIX

All I get are these aging, flabby
losers that can't even keep it up
for more than a minute. Most of
their money pays for nap time. I
don't know why they don't just get
a hotel room and rent some porn.

CAMEL

Be thankful, girl. The last thing
you want is some pig sweatin' on
you for an hour.

Ms. Editrix looks back toward room 6.

EDITRIX

I never have to worry about that with *him*. It's over before it's even started. I get to catch up on my soaps while he sleeps it off.

(beat)

I almost got sick again.

CARMEL

Oh, no, baby.

Caramel hugs Editrix.

CARMEL

Baby, baby, baby. This ain't for you.

ROOM 6

Carr lays in bed wide awake as the girls converse. His lips tremble.

EDITRIX (O.S.)

(sobbing)

He always picks me. Why? I had to bite my hand just to keep from throwing up.

CARMEL

Oh, baby. Let Caramel take care of you.

(beat)

Talk to Ms. Deinomache. Maybe she could make it so you don't have to be with him again.

EDITRIX

You think? God, I would be so happy. I don't know if I can do this again.

(beat)

I don't think she likes me.

CARAMEL

Don't worry, baby. Caramel will
make everything all right.

A single tear runs down Carr's face.

INT. IRISH PUB, WASHINGTON D.C.

Liam and Sunn are still in the middle of their heated
discussion.

LIAM

What do you mean, it's all right?
Do you know how much it costs to
make a robot these days? R&D alone
is in the millions.

SUNN

Must have missed that episode of
Nova.

LIAM

You say that the female replicant
should cost twenty-two thousand
dollars. Is that right?

SUNN

Yes, depending on her looks. I
mean, I'm not paying 22-grand for
the Mona Lisa.

LIAM

That's a given... I think. I'm
talking about a beautiful girl,
like Asia Argento or Sandra
Bernhardt.

Sunn coughs, hides a grin by wiping his mouth with a cocktail
napkin.

SUNN

How can you put Asia Argento and
Sandra Bernhardt in the same
category?

One you would pay any amount to have while the other is maybe a blue-light special at \$9.95.

LIAM

It doesn't fucking matter, alright? Whatever you think is beautiful and whatever I think is beautiful doesn't fucking matter. All I'm saying is that our ideal, ok, our *ideal* is worth twenty-two thousand. Can we agree on that?

SUNN

Sure. Our individual ideal, no matter how fucked up it is.

LIAM

Yes, no matter-
(beat)

For fuck'sake, can we just have a normal conversation for once?

SUNN

Normal? What is normal about the list price of a female replicant?

LIAM

It is just an example. I don't even know why we're talking about replicants.

Liam finishes his scotch and waves to a waitress. He chews on the sugarcube.

LIAM

Listen, just pick out a girl that you like.

SUNN

Well, I like Lynda Carter.

LIAM

Wonder Woman? No, I mean someone in this bar.

SUNN

Oh. Well, I would have to say...

Sunn scans the women, all of varied ethnicities and forms. An Asian girl in the corner, two black girls at a table by the bar, a group of solidly-built softball players chatting by the window and a tired-looking brunette in the back. All women. Liam and Sunn are the only men in the place besides the bartender.

SUNN

How about the one back there?

LIAM

The Korean girl?

SUNN

No. Brown hair, at the table in the back. She kind of looks upset and tired at the same time.

LIAM

Upset and tired? What the fuck is that supposed to mean? Are you profiling her?

SUNN

If you don't want to play-

LIAM

Ok. Whatever. Now, considering you'd pay twenty-two thousand dollars for your ideal woman, what would you pay for her?

SUNN

Well, if my ideal is Wonder Woman, then I am basing all my assumptions on physical attraction and creative use of a lariat. But, what if she's completely uninteresting, or she hates everything I like, or she smokes, or has bad breath? In that case, she would only be my ideal for beauty, but not the whole package.

If the brown-haired woman's personality is perfect, then she would become my new ideal. How much then? Fifty thousand? One-hundred thousand? But it is not what I'd be willing to pay, but the manufacturer's perception of what men would think of her. To me she might be the ideal, but to the majority of consumers, she might be a blue light special.

(beat)

I'll be right back.

LIAM

You really have this uncanny knack for ruing every idea I ever have.

Sunn walks over to RAMONA (25) who sits alone at a corner table.

SUNN

Hi. My name is Sunn.

She doesn't seem to hear Sunn, engrossed in the swirls of her drink.

SUNN

Excuse me.

Sunn clears his throat to which she absently responds by holding out her empty glass.

RAMONA

Seven and seven.

Sunn takes her glass, turns to get her another drink, then stops and turns back to her.

SUNN

I'm sorry. I'm not a bartender.

RAMONA

Then what can you do for me?

SUNN

I'm an FBI agent. Maybe I could help you.

FADE OUT:

INT. FBI BUILDING, WASHINGTON D.C. -- CONTINUOUS

Sunn walks up to his office and sees FBI Department Director TONY DEUXCHAMP waiting for him. Deuxchamp glances at his watch.

DEUXCHAMP

The sun never seems to rise early around here, does it?

SUNN

I was up late last night working on the Void case.

DEUXCHAMP

Well, Sunn. I admire your persistence but your tardiness is only a reflection of the void in all of us.

Sunn and Deuxchamp stare at each other.

Deuxchamp walks away to REVEAL Liam standing behind him. Liam waits until Deuxchamp is out of earshot.

LIAM

Well, you must have had a wild night, Hm? Probing the void no doubt.

Sunn opens his office door and pauses before going in.

SUNN

If by the void you mean a woman's vagina, then I would have to say your instincts have yet again failed you.

LIAM

What the fuck is wrong with you?
Last night you totally blow me off
and leave with that woman, though I
can't be too tough on you 'cause I
would have done the same thing, but
at least give me some details.

SUNN'S OFFICE

Sunn's office rarely sees the appearance of its master. No paintings or photos on the wall. No plants or knick-knacks or other such clutter. Just a leather couch against one wall and a desk against another.

Sunn sits at his desk and stares at his phone. A thin layer of dust is visible on the handset. Next to several buttons is a blinking, red light. Written in script on a piece of white tape is the word VOID next to the blinking light.

Sunn picks up the receiver and presses the button. He listens, and then presses the code 2112 on the keypad. He listens for a moment longer, then hits the 6 button. He listens again.

FADE OUT:

INT. CARR HOME, SAN FRANCISCO -- MORNING

Carr sits at the breakfast table in his kitchen. All the shades are drawn and the only light emanates from a single bulb hanging from the ceiling, a few feet above the table.

A photo of a Carr and a middle-aged Japanese woman sits on the table. The woman looks like an older version of Ms. Editrix.

He reads a newspaper and nibbles on dry toast. The headline on the newspaper reads:

DEVIL'S ADVOCATE KILLER LABELED 'SERIAL'

He listens to a morning talk radio news show.

RADIO ANNOUNCER

(from radio)

A confidential source from Washington D.C. reports that 46th President Nathan Ryhmes has been missing for seven days. Officials at the White House have remained close-mouthed about the report, as has the State Department.

The phone RINGS. Carr ignores it until 5 rings later. He gets up, folds his paper neatly and walks over to a wall phone next to his refrigerator, picks up the receiver on the 6th ring.

He listens for a voice. After a few moments, he hangs up the receiver and walks out the front door. The camera follows him outside, letting the intense sunlight BLUR TO WHITE.

INT. FBI BUILDING, SUNN'S OFFICE -- CONTINUOUS

Sunn is sleeping soundly on a couch.

OUTSIDE SUNN'S OFFICE

Liam and agent MANNA MARUYAMA (mid-20s, beautiful Japanese girl) stand outside Sunn's office. Liam presses his ear against the door.

MANNA

Anything?

LIAM

No. He doesn't snore, like a vampire.

Manna mouths the word "vampire" to herself, a look of amusement on her face.

LIAM

It's creepy when people don't make a sound when they sleep, don'tcha think?

MANNA

Not really.

LIAM
Should I knock?

MANNA
You wanted him to go to lunch with us.

LIAM
Do you think he avoids me?

MANNA
I don't think so. He probably just dislikes you.

SUNN'S OFFICE

Sunn lays on the couch in REM sleep. His eyes move frantically under his eyelids.

EXT. SAN FRANCISCO, MARINA DISTRICT -- CONTINUOUS

Carr is walking down the sidewalk of his neighborhood, filled with row upon row of townhouses. He crosses Fulton St. and enters Golden Gate Park.

GOLDEN GATE PARK

Carr avoids the footpath and picks his way through the undergrowth and trees to eventually arrive at a stream. He carefully crosses it, leaping from stone to stone and climbs up the side of an embankment.

At the top is a fenced-off field where buffalo graze. He jumps the fence and makes his way across the field, hopping the fence on the other side, reentering the woods.

Through the trees Carr spots the red and blue flashing lights of emergency vehicles.

CRIME SCENE

Local police are kneeling over a body covered by a yellow tarp. An ambulance crew is standing by to receive the body while two detectives confer.

Carr walks up to the body and stares at it. He kneels and looks closer at the form under the tarp. Long, blonde hair sticks out of one end of the tarp.

CARR (V.O.)

Let's see. Female, 30s, blonde hair, single but with two boyfriends, recently had surgery to repair a torn ligament in her left knee, tennis player, no, skier, no, snowboarder. Yes, snowboarder.

Carr pulls the tarp back to reveal a man in his 30s. His face is bloated and pale. He is naked except for a crooked, tux tie around his neck.

CARR

(sotto)

Shit.

DECKARD (O.S.)

I didn't think anyone called the psychic detective.

Homicide detective MAX DECKARD (50s, world-weary 4th generation cop) walks into the crime scene.

CARR

Got the call from the mayor, Max.

DECKARD

I still say you finding his kidnapped daughter was a lucky guess.

CARR

Look behind the couch.

DECKARD

What?

CARR

For your watch.

Deckard looks at his wrist. A pale outline of a watchband stands out on his wrist.

DECKARD

It's being repaired, you idiot.

(beat)

Just hurry up.

Carr straightens the tux tie and replaces the tarp. He stands to face Deckard.

CARR

Just as I thought.

DECKARD

(subtly sarcastic)

Really? That's good news. I was afraid this was another Devil's Advocate case.

CARR

Oh, it is.

DECKARD

But he goes after young women.

CARR

He?

DECKARD

I'm just quoting the FBI profile.

CARR

What the fuck do they know?

Carr looks for something around the clearing. Deckard follows.

DECKARD

The boys combed it thoroughly.
Nothing so much as a pubic hair.
Everything by the book.

CARR

That's why I'm here detective. To find the things that are *off* the book.

(beat)

So, what's the rumpus?

Deckard rolls his eyes at the antiquated lingo and flips open a notepad.

DECKARD

Victim appears to be strangled by a rope. No rope found, though we did grab some filaments. The bruises are covered by the tie. If you remember, the last four cases have been women, all thrown off the Golden Gate, made to look like a suicide. This one doesn't follow his M.O. What makes you think-

CARR

It's the Devil's Advocate, alright.
(points to a bush)
See this?

Deckard walks over and examines the bush.

DECKARD

What?

CARR

A footprint. Did your men get a picture?

DECKARD

Where?

CARR

Right there. I can clearly make out a dress shoe, most likely Italian. The heel is worn away on the outside. I'm assuming he's pidgeon-toed, or bow-legged. Maybe he rides horses.

DECKARD

You said *he*.

CARR

What?

DECKARD

You said *he*. As in, the Devil's
Advocate killer is a *he*.

CARR

I'm just using your reference, Max.
For simplicity's sake.

DECKARD

Thanks.

(beat)

I still don't see a footprint.

CARR

It's quite faint. I would say that
body has been here for quite some
time.

DECKARD

Forensic said four hours.

CARR

Right.

DECKARD

Listen, if you're done, they want
to take the body away.

CARR

Sure. I have all I need from here.

DECKARD

Listen, Carr. I'm not sure why
you've been given direct access to
crime scenes, being a swami and
all, but try not to play detective,
ok?

CARR

Afraid of a little competition?

DECKARD

Are you serious?

CARR

Very.

DECKARD

Should you even be working this case? Your wife was the first victim.

CARR

I can't think of a better reason, Max.

DECKARD

Maybe not.

Deckard turns to the waiting coroner and waves for them to take the body away. Carr walks off into the woods.

FADE OUT:

INT. FBI BUILDING, SUNN'S OFFICE

Sunn still sleeps on the couch. His eyes move rapidly until they snap open.

CAFETERIA

Manna and Liam are at a table together. Liam is eating a hamburger while Manna eats from a noodle bowl. The expansive cafeteria is half full of chatting employees.

MANNA

(sarcastic)
That looks really good.

LIAM

Fuck off.

Sunn walks up and sits down.

SUNN

Hi, guys.

LIAM

Who invited you?

SUNN

You did.

LIAM
Don't think so.

SUNN
You came to get me a little while ago.

Liam and Manna exchange glances.

MANNA
You better get something. The kitchen is closing soon.

SUNN
Right.

Sunn leaves the table and heads for the kitchen.

LIAM
What are you, his mom?

MANNA
Fuck off.

KITCHEN

Sunn grabs a tray and walks down the empty food line. A food service ATTENDANT awaits his order.

SUNN
How's the meat today?

ATTENDANT
Wet.

SUNN
Great. I'll start with that.

EXT. VIETNAMESE RESTAURANT, SAN FRANCISCO -- DAY

A line of people stand outside, waiting for a table. While the restaurant is in a run-down part of downtown, the people in line are a mix of tourists, businessmen and hip, urban youths.

Carr stands in line, waits to get a table in the cramped, Tenderloin restaurant.

He looks across the street and sees THOMAS WEATHERS (early-20s, black youth) leaning against a building.

CARR (V.O.)

23, maybe 25, 6-1, no father,
mother is a nurse, one, no, two
brothers, twins. Drug dealer, crack
cocaine, maybe some cannabis,
supports his girlfriend and their
son. Tenth grade education, tried
to go to trade school, wants to be
a mechanic like his old man.

A limo drives up and Thomas gets in.

Some of the YOUTHS hanging around near Carr start to talk.

YOUTH #1

Yo, did you see who that was? That
was Deddman, yo.

YOUTH #2

Fer reals?

YOUTH #1

Straight up. G's makin' mad money.
His last track went platinum.

YOUTH #2

Oh shit. What's he doin' in the
hood?

YOUTH #1

He's Westside. Born and raised in
Oaktown.

YOUTH #2

Keepin' it real.

YOUTH #1

Heard that.

CARR

(sotto)

Shit.

A Vietnamese man taps Carr on the shoulder and motions for him to follow. Carr enters the restaurant and disappears into a haze of steam and smoke.

INT. FBI BUILDING, CAFETERIA

Manna and Liam have finished their lunch. Sunn is still working on his massive plate of food. He also has water in a slim glass at which Liam stares intently.

LIAM

How much was that?

MANNA

Looks expensive.

SUNN

Not you, too.

MANNA

What?

LIAM

So, how'd your date go last night?

SUNN

It wasn't a date.

Sunn taps his glass on the table. Liam's left eye twitches.

LIAM

Well, I guess you wouldn't call picking up a complete stranger in a bar, a date.

MANNA

(to Liam)

What did he look like?

LIAM

Would you believe, a girl?

SUNN

I do one assignment undercover as a male model and you guys never let me live it down.

LIAM
She was Asian, wasn't she?

MANNA
Got a touch of yellow fever, Sunn?

Manna checks Sunn's forehead for fever.

SUNN
Liam knows who I left with.
(beat)
She wasn't Asian.

LIAM
Oh, that's right.

SUNN
Another testament to your
staggering powers of observation.

MANNA
I gotta go. Fill me in on the
sordid details later.

LIAM
Oh, a little midnight sex chat?

SUNN
(to Liam)
You want the rest of my water?

Sunn pushes the glass forward, Liam flinches.

INT. FBI BUILDING, HALLWAY

Sunn strolls along. Deuxchamp steps out of an office and waves to him.

DEUXCHAMP
Can I see you for a minute?

SUNN
Sure.

DEUXCHAMP'S OFFICE

Sunn follows him from the receptionist's front office to Deuxchamp's private room. Sunn sits in front of Deuxchamp's desk which is cluttered with photos of his family, small trophies and an ornate cigar case and lighter.

SUNN

Can I have a cigar?

DEUXCHAMP

No.

Deuxchamp goes to a file cabinet and retrieves a file folder with only a few papers in it. He sets it down on the desk in front of Sunn. Deuxchamp takes his seat behind the desk and stares at Sunn for a moment.

DEUXCHAMP

The Void.

SUNN

Yes.

DEUXCHAMP

Where are you?

SUNN

Well, I'm still building a database. I have almost all the info on the five victims, including the Jane Doe.

DEUXCHAMP

You still think she's part of it?

SUNN

Yes, I do.

DEUXCHAMP

Different M.O., no apparent connection. The first victims were men, residents. This woman's a transient.

SUNN

Change of pace. Maybe she got bored.

DEUXCHAMP

She?

SUNN

In my report, I profiled The Void as a she. It's in the file.

DEUXCHAMP

The men were all over six-feet tall, none under two hundred pounds. They were overpowered and strangled to death before being thrown off a bridge into the Potomac. You really believe a woman could have done that?

SUNN

A warrior of Scythia could have.

DEUXCHAMP

A what?

SUNN

It'll be in my next report.

Sunn goes to open the cigar case.

DEUXCHAMP

Don't do that.

Sunn pulls his hand back.

DEUXCHAMP

What's this Sith-ee-uh shit?

SUNN

In Greek mythology, Scythia was a nation of women warriors. They were supposed to have burned off their right breast so they could use a bow more effectively.

Most consider them a myth, but archeologists have found evidence of their existence.

DEUXCHAMP

An amazon?

SUNN

Well, amazon culture is spread all over the world, especially in eastern Europe, the Ukraine. These particular women were around the Black Sea and actually fought wars.

DEUXCHAMP

Like Xena?

SUNN

Yes, like Xena. But they were really built on fear of feminism. Whether amazons were as influential as myths present, well, that's hard to say.

DEUXCHAMP

I'm going to ask you one thing, and please, be honest.

(beat)

Have you written this down and given it to anyone?

SUNN

No.

DEUXCHAMP

(sotto)

Thank God.

(beat)

Do me a favor, and don't.

SUNN

My findings are far from complete. I'll have something in a few days. In the meantime, I'm going to interview Sarah Andromache.

DEUXCHAMP

Who?

SUNN

Her name was on a matchbook in the last victim's pocket.

DEUXCHAMP

You're kidding.

SUNN

Nope.

Sunn reaches for the cigar box.

DEUXCHAMP

One.

Sunn takes a cigar, lights it using a large, metal lighter in the shape of a naked woman on all fours. The trigger is her head and the flame comes out her rear.

SUNN

Do you want this?

DEUXCHAMP

My wife gave me that.

SUNN

So, you want to keep it?

DEUXCHAMP

Nah.

HALLWAY

Sunn strolls back to his office. He tosses the lighter back and forth between his hands, puffs on the cigar.

Two, massively-built MARINES are standing on either side of a closed door with a name plaque reading: SANCTUARY.

Sunn's path is blocked by the enormous arm of Marine #1 who continues to stare straight ahead when he speaks.

MARINE #1

According to the 1986 Surgeon General's report on involuntary smoking, the simple separation of smokers and nonsmokers within the same airspace may reduce, but does not eliminate, the exposure of nonsmokers to ETS, or, environmental tobacco smoke.

Marine #2 looks at Sunn, smiles.

MARINE #2

Would you please extinguish your cigar, sir?

SUNN

Can I throw it away in here?

Sunn turns to the door marked Sanctuary and attempts to open it. Marine #1 quick-draws his sidearm and points it at Sunn's head.

MARINE #1

This sanctuary is off limits to unauthorized personnel. Any trespass by such individuals will be prevented by any means necessary, by order of the President of the United States.

MARINE #2

Please use the toilet across the hall to dispose of the cigar, sir.

BATHROOM

ANGLE ON toilet bowl. Sunn's hand hovers over the toilet bowl and drops the cigar. He reaches for the handle to flush.

INT. SAN FRANCISCO BROTHEL, BATHROOM -- CONTINUOUS

The toilet FLUSHES and Carr steps out of the stall. He walks over to the sink and washes his face. He pulls a small bottle of mouthwash from his coat pocket and gargles. He throws it away and stares at himself in the mirror.

ANTEROOM

On the other side of the two-way bathroom mirror. JULIE DEINOMACHE (40's, exotic mistress of the brothel) watches Carr look at himself in the mirror. Peggy Hipp, Julie's perky assistant, stands by her side, attending to the video camera.

JULIE

I wish he'd do something. Men are so self-conscious in the bathroom.

PEGGY

Who was he with?

JULIE

Ms. Editrix.

PEGGY

She's new. Why does he like her so much?

JULIE

Oh, you'd be surprised at what the cattle get into.

PEGGY

Shall I continue rolling?

JULIE

No. It's a waste.

(beat)

Go ahead and edit the new tapes. And remember not to use that Loverboy song over the intro. I want this to be serious.

Peggy packs up the gear as Julie walks through a hidden door.

JULIE'S OFFICE

This is no ordinary office. No desk, executive chair or filing cabinets. It's more of a bedroom, with a large, round bed covered in black, crushed velvet sheets and huge heart-shaped pillows. A laptop sits on the bed as does a vibrator and a remote control.

Julie slides onto the bed and types away on her laptop. She uses the remote to turn on music.

LAPTOP SCREEN

"Dear Sir:

This letter is to inform you that a videotape of your activities at a brothel has surfaced. We wish you no embarrassment from this recording, only that you buy the tape from us. Please reply within seven business days or we cannot guarantee that the tape will remain in our confidence."

JULIE'S OFFICE

Julie hits the "Return" key. She closes the laptop and reaches for her vibrator.

Julie's face lights up as she falls back onto her pillows. She smiles and closes her eyes as the music SWELLS over faint BUZZING.

INT. JON SUNN'S APARTMENT -- EVENING

The BUZZING is now coming from Sunn's intercom in his foyer. He walks over to it and presses the button.

SUNN

Yes?

RAMONA

(from speaker)

It's me.

Sunn buzzes her in and opens his door slightly.

LIVING ROOM

Sunn sits down on the couch and continues watching a television show called GLADIATOR. It appears to be a reality show during which men and women dress up in Roman-style armor and fight to the death with weapons from the period. It is apparent that the show is happening live and is very real.

Ramona walks into the living room and sits down beside Sunn who continues to stare at the TV. Ramona looks at Sunn. After a moment, she turns to the TV and they both stare at it.

Sunn reaches over and turns off the lamp. Their faces are bathed in the strobe light of the TV.

ANNOUNCER

(from the TV)

It's a battle of the sexes as our current champion is challenged by two-time Gladiator champ, Ramone Chevalier, or as he is know in the arena-

(bellows)

ACILIUS!

Ramona looks at Sunn, then lets her head fall out of frame and into Sunn's lap. Her head bobs up and down.

ANNOUNCER

Let's go down to the cages and meet tonight's challenger. Betty?

BETTY

Thanks Jim. I'm here with Acilius, former champ in the arena.

(beat)

Acilius, have you fully recovered from the crushing defeat at the hands of Andromache?

ACILIUS

(Australian accent)

Yes I have, Betty. The gash on my leg is healed and I suffered only partial brain damage from the stone dropped on my head. I would like to give a shout out to Dr. Perkins at Grace Rehab. He did a great job putting my skull back together even stronger than it was before.

Sunn's eyes slowly close as he lets his head fall back on the couch.

BETTY

Great to hear that, Acilius. Jim?

INT. GLADIATOR BACKSTAGE -- NIGHT

BETTY (20s, pretty) is moving from the interview with Acilius to a door with a large, gold star on it. She knocks and waits for a response.

ANDROMACHE (O.S.)

Come.

DRESSING ROOM

Betty opens the door and walks into Sarah Andromache's (27) dressing room followed by a CAMERAMAN. The room is dark and Betty can barely make out the silhouetted form of Andromache sitting in a chair.

BETTY

Ms. Andromache. Are you ready?

ANDROMANCHE

Of course.

Andromache stands up and walks into the faint light. She is tall (at or over 6-feet) stunningly beautiful in her melancholy. Sparse armor shows off her slender but powerful legs. Her body, while not muscle-bound, is certainly ready for battle as several scars give mute testimony to her champion status.

BETTY

Great.

(to cameraman)

Ok, Barry.

The cameraman holds up his hand and uses his fingers to silently count down from three.

BETTY

(to camera)

Thanks Jim. I'm here with champion Andromache as she prepares to defend her title in a rematch of, what viewers have voted, the greatest war in Gladiator history.

(to Andromache)

You failed to kill Acilius in your last battle. Does this give him a psychological edge in tonight's confrontation?

ANDROMACHE

I made him a half-wit and a cripple. If anyone has the psychological edge, it would be me.

BETTY

Will you finish the job tonight?

ANDROMACHE

Shall I bring you his head as tribute?

Andromache's serious tone makes Betty nervous.

BETTY

That won't necessary -
(to camera)
- will it Jim?

EXT. GLADIATOR ARENA -- NIGHT

The arena is a replica of the Coliseum in Rome. Modern, digital advertisements line the bottom ring of the arena. Andromache and Acilius are in a violent battle. Andromache with her sword, Acilius with a pike. The crowd goes nuts as the combatants clash.

ACILIUS

I'm going to kill you, this time,
and fuck your skull.

Andromache steps back and lowers her guard, standing at ease.

ACILIUS

You give up?

Acilius throws his arms up in victory and plays to a crowd that starts to chant his name.

ACILIUS

I will grant you a swift death.
Just hold still.

Acilius charges Andromache, his pike aimed at her throat. At the last second, Andromache sidesteps and cuts Acilius' head off. His body continues to run forward for a few steps until it falls. His head flies backward and rolls along the ground.

Andromache picks up the head and holds it up for the crowd to see. They are stunned silent for a moment, then erupt into CHEERS.

INT. GLADIATOR BACKSTAGE

Betty talks to the cameraman.

BETTY

I want a tight shot on me, then
zoom out to get the arena in the
background.

Andromache taps on Betty's shoulder. Betty turns around and finds herself face to face with Acilius' severed head held aloft by Andromache. She faints and slumps to the ground. The cameraman pans down to her.

BETTY

(groggy)
Not me, the head- the head.

Betty faints again.

INT. CHINATOWN KNICKNACK SHOP, SAN FRANCISCO -- NIGHT

Carr is examining a similar naked-lady lighter to the one Sunn has. He flicks it on and off.

A CHINESE MAN waits behind the counter.

CHINESE MAN

You like?

CARR

Yeah, not bad. How much?

CHINESE MAN
Twenty dollar.

CARR
Hmmm. Twenty? How old is this?

CHINESE MAN
Not old. Fifteen dollar.

CARR
Ok, you sold me.

EXT. CHINATOWN SIDEWALK -- FOLLOWING

Carr admires his new lighter as he walks.

Three youths blow past him on skateboards, knocking him down.

Carr gets up, realizes the lighter is gone. He stares after the skate punks' getaway and sees one of them slip it into a backpack. They skate around a corner and out of sight.

Carr walks back to the store.

INT. CHINATOWN KNICKNACK SHOP

Carr walks up to the counter. Instead of the Chinese Man, a CHINESE GIRL (18) is behind the counter.

CARR
Where's the guy that was here
before?

CHINESE GIRL
(no accent)
My dad is at lunch. Can I help you?

CARR
Yeah. I was in here a few minutes
ago, well, a few seconds really,
and I bought a lighter.

CHINESE GIRL
What kind?

CARR
Well, it was-

CHINESE GIRL
The naked lady one?

CARR
(sheepish)
Yes.

CHINESE GIRL
Nice.

CARR
Well, it was just stolen from me.
Some punks mugged me and took off
with it.

CHINESE GIRL
That happens a lot here.
(beat)
We can't give you a refund.

CARR
Yes, I didn't think so. But, do you
have another one?

CHINESE GIRL
Let me check.

The girl disappears through a beaded curtain.

Carr looks around and for the first time, sees a large, glass jar collecting dust on a shelf. The water inside is very murky. He steps closer to get a good look at what appears to be a severed head floating inside.

CHINESE GIRL (O.S.)
Here it is.

Carr walks back to the counter.

CHINESE GIRL
I found the last one in the back.
You want it?

CARR
Yes.

CHINESE GIRL

Ok. That'll be thirty bucks, with tax.

CARR

Thirty? I paid fifteen.

CHINESE GIRL

The price marked is thirty and I can't bargain with you. My dad doesn't let me. You could wait for him.

CARR

No, that's fine.

Carr pays the money. The girl wraps the lighter for him.

CARR

Say, what's in that jar over there?

The girl doesn't look at where he's pointing. She continues to ring up the sale on the register.

CHINESE GIRL

That's my great-grandfather, Wong Fei-Wai.

CARR

Is it some sort of ceremonial thing?

CHINESE GIRL

No. It's for sale.

CARR

How much?

EXT. CHINATOWN SIDEWALK

Carr walks toward downtown carrying a small bag in his left hand, and a large box bound with twine in his right hand.

EXT. CHINATOWN KNICKKNACK SHOP, BACK ALLEY

The Chinese girl hands money to the skate punk. He hands her the lighter. He stuffs the bills into his pocket and skates off.

EXT. SAN FRANCISCO STREETS -- FOLLOWING

The skate punk rolls up and down the streets of Chinatown, into North Beach. He grabs onto a cable car and rides next to it until he gets near the Embarcadero. He skates the rest of the way to the wax museum.

He skates past a wax statue of Abraham Lincoln.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. LINCOLN MEMORIAL, WASHINGTON D.C. -- EVENING

Sunn and Manna stand at the feet of the Lincoln Memorial. They both have coffees and brown lunch sacks in their hands.

They take a seat on the steps leading to the memorial and open their lunch bags.

MANNA

What did you make?

SUNN

Peanut butter and jelly.

MANNA

Tuna melt with capers and pickled red onion.

SUNN

Nice going, Iron Chef.

They eat their sandwiches in silence, sometimes glance at each other and smile.

MANNA

Why couldn't you see me earlier?

SUNN

I had a visitor.

MANNA

The girl from last night?

SUNN

Yes.

MANNA

And?

SUNN

Her name is Ramona.

(beat)

All I really wanted was to get away from Liam. He was being particularly loathsome.

MANNA

I understand perfectly.

SUNN

I didn't really know what I was going to say. She seemed like she needed help. Her eyes were so sad.

MANNA

What was wrong?

SUNN

Hm?

MANNA

With the girl.

SUNN

Oh, nothing. The usual. She didn't really tell me. We left the pub and walked. I guess she wanted company. I followed her to her apartment and then left.

MANNA

No goodnight kiss?

SUNN

No, but the goodnight handjob was a surprise.

MANNA

So what did you do?

SUNN

We watched T.V. Gladiator was on.
Did you see it?

MANNA

Not really my thing.

SUNN

It was amazing.
(beat)
I think I know who the Void is.

MANNA

(surprised)
How?

SUNN

She was on T.V.

MANNA

Television.

SUNN

The show Gladiators. She was a
contestant. She was amazing. Took
this guy's head clean off.

MANNA

I'm eating here.

SUNN

Sorry.

MANNA

Do you have evidence?

SUNN

Not yet. It's really just a hunch.

MANNA

Fuck, Sunn. I thought you had some
evidence.

SUNN

No. Just a hunch.

(beat)

Aren't you friends with Aimee in
the press room?

MANNA

Yeah.

SUNN

Think she'd make me a press pass
for Gladiator? I want to meet
Andromache.

MANNA

Get her autograph before you slap
the cuffs on her?

SUNN

No, just an informal interview.

MANNA

You have a crush on her, don't you?
You thought this whole thing up
just to meet her.

SUNN

I would never do such a thing. It's
unprofessional. Not to mention
absolutely perverted... dangerous,
even.

INT. GLADIATOR DRESSING ROOM

Andromache punches Sunn in the face, knocking him to the
floor. She jumps on him and straddles his chest, pinning his
arms to the ground with her legs.

SUNN

I just wanted an autograph.

Andromache punches him into unconscious.

INT. SAN FRANCISCO BROTHEL

Carr is in the waiting room. He has the same, small bag he had when he left the Chinese knickknack shop, resting in his lap. The larger box sits next to him on the floor.

Peggy brings out the line-up of girls. Carr is anxious when he does not see Ms. Editrix among them. Peggy holds her hand over each woman as Carr shakes his head.

Peggy motions for the girls to leave.

PEGGY

What's wrong, Mr. Carr?

CARR

Tiberius, please. It's Tiberius.

(beat)

Where's Ms. Editrix?

PEGGY

She's not working today, Tiberius.

CARR

She's always here on Saturday.

PEGGY

She may be out sick. I can check for you.

CARR

Would you? That would be great.

Peggy exits leaving Carr to fidget. He nervously flicks the lighter and sets the bag on fire. He throws it on the ground and stomps it out. He kicks the ashes under the seat.

Peggy returns. She turns her nose up at the smell of smoke.

PEGGY

She is on a leave of absence.

(whispering)

Just between you and me, I think she went on vacation.

CARR
(disappointed)
Oh.

PEGGY
We have a lovely Japanese girl. She
just started last week.

CARR
No. That's fine.
(beat)
When she gets back. Could you give
her this for me?

Carr hands Peggy the lighter.

PEGGY
Sure, Tiberius.

CARR
Thanks.

EXT. SAN FRANCISCO STREET -- NIGHT

Carr steps out the door and onto the sidewalk. He gets a call
on his cellphone.

CARR
Carr.

MAN
(from phone)
You looking for Ms. Editrix?

CARR
Yes.

MAN
You see that woman standing on the
corner? She's wearing a black
jacket.

Carr looks up to see a tall, slim woman wearing black gloves
and black sunglasses. She is also wearing a black overcoat
that stops just above her knees.

CARR

Yes.

MAN

Follow her till I call you again.

CARR

Who is this?

The phone goes dead.

Carr follows the woman in the black coat as she strolls down several streets. After a while, Carr's cell phone bleeps.

CARR

Carr.

MAN

(from phone)

You see the woman?

CARR

Yes.

MAN

See that door she has stopped in front of?

Carr watches as the woman lingers in front of a brick tenement with a red door. She lights a cigarette, takes a puff and then continues on her way. Carr moves to follow her.

MAN

Hold on. Go to the door. Knock five times quick, then pause and knock a sixth time. They will know what to do.

CARR

Who?

The phone goes dead.

Carr knocks on the door. He notices the word "Attic" has been crudely written above the door. A tough looking man opens the door and ushers Carr in.

USHER

Welcome to the attic wars,
Tiberius.

The door closes, filling the frame with red.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. GLADIATOR DRESSING ROOM

Blood trickles from Sunn's nose. He rests on a couch. Andromache tends to his crushed nose. Blood is spattered on his shirt front.

ANDROMACHE

I apologize. I thought you were a stalker.

SUNN

S'ok. I don't blame you.

ANDROMACHE

What were you doing in the closet?

SUNN

I'm a huge fan of yours. I'm no stalker, but I thought a little souvenir wouldn't hurt.

ANDROMACHE

Here's your wallet.

(beat)

I looked inside. Hope you don't mind.

SUNN

Not at all. Turnabout is fair play.

ANDROMACHE

No I.D. What's your name?

SUNN

Liam. Liam Prick.

ANDROMACHE
(holding back a laugh)
I'm sorry.

SUNN
I live with it.

Sunn sits up and lets his head fall back as he dabs his nose. Andromache stares at Sunn, attracted to him.

ANDROMACHE
All better.

SUNN
Actually, I'd be disappointed if you hadn't crushed my face.

ANDROMACHE
I've gotta go. My match starts in an hour and I have a lot of promos to do.
(beat)
You can wait here, if you want.

SUNN
No, that's ok. I'm better. I should really be going. Don't want to jinx your pre-match ritual.

ANDROMACHE
Leave my assistant your number. I want to at least pay the cleaning bill.

SUNN
Sure. That would be nice.

OUTSIDE DRESSING ROOM

Andromache's assistant CYNTHIA DARLING (24, bookwormish, thick framed glasses) walks up, her hands full with a script, PDA and a costume.

ANDROMACHE
Cynthia. Get Mr. Prick's phone number, please.

CYNTHIA

Sure.

ANDROMACHE

(to Sunn)

See you.

SUNN

Break a leg-

(beat)

or someone else's.

EXT. GLADIATOR ARENA PARKING LOT -- EVENING

Sunn walks to his car. His cellphone rings.

SUNN

Prick here.

LIAM

(from phone)

What?

SUNN

Oh, Liam.

LIAM

Nice way to answer your phone,
Sunn.

SUNN

Funny, yeah?

LIAM

Deuxchamp's having a meeting
tomorrow morning.

SUNN

What for?

INT. LIAM'S APARTMENT

Liam is a fan of '70s kitsch. One wall is lined with metal lunchboxes from the era while others are covered in posters (Farah Fawcett, Cheryl Tiegs, etc...) More knickknacks reside on shelves and tables. Liam is talking on a Six Million Dollar Man telephone.

LIAM

They found Amelia Earhardt in a Nevada strip club.

SUNN

The Void.

LIAM

No shit. Be on time. I don't know anything about the case.

SUNN

Don't worry.

LIAM

Fuck off.

INT. ATTIC WARS, ENTRY ROOM

NATHAN RYHMES (40's but very fit) waits in a small, round, stainless steel room. He is naked and his hands are taped like a boxer's. He is constantly moving, anticipating something. In the background, we hear faint MUSIC (Radiohead's "National Anthem"). Two light bulbs, like those that signal parachuters, sit above a sliding door. One is red, the other green. It switches from red to green.

The MUSIC intensifies as the door slides open to reveal a narrow, stainless steel hallway about 50 feet long. At the other end is another door that slides open to reveal a Chinese man (30s, ripped) naked like Nathan, with black, kenpo gloves.

A loud BUZZ sounds and both men step into the hallway.

The doors close behind them as the stainless steel side walls lower to reveal plate-glass windows from one end of the corridor to the other. On the other side of the windows, chairs have been set up and hold various people. They are well behaved and quiet.

49.

On the other side, an area has been reserved for a drum set on a riser. Behind the set is Stewart Copeland.

The combatants move closer until they are within a few yards of each other. Then, they lunge toward each other. As they do this, the music is cut off and the drummer begins a frantic drum solo with a CYMBAL CRASH.

A brutal battle ensues with the action moving back and forth in each man's favor. Finally, Nathan sees an opening and beats the man to the ground. He sits on his chest, his hands clasped together over his head, ready for a final blow.

Nathan looks to the crowd as they all hold their right hand over their eyes.

Nathan looks up at a TV MONITOR and sees a frightened man tied to a chair.

Nathan looks down at his enemy and drives his fists into the Chinese man's face. Blood leaks out in a puddle behind the man's head.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. RAMONA'S APARTMENT -- DAY

Ramona is in her kitchen cleaning up a puddle spilled from maraschino cherries. Her door speaker BUZZES and she walks over to it, hitting the button.

RAMONA

Yes?

SUNN

It's me, Sunn.

RAMONA

Oh. Come on up.

Ramona buzzes Sunn in, unlocks her door and returns to clean up the mess.

Sunn walks in and watches Ramona throw the last of the mess into the trashcan.

SUNN
Can I watch your T.V.?

RAMONA
Sure.
(beat)
Want a drink?

SUNN
Do you know how to make a zombie?

RAMONA
The drink?

SUNN
Yes.

RAMONA
I can look it up.

SUNN
I'll have one of those.

LIVING ROOM

Sunn sits down on the couch and uses the remote control to switch on the television.

SUNN
Do you get the Extreme Channel?

RAMONA (O.S.)
Yeah. It's on 603.

SUNN
How many channels do you get?

RAMONA (O.S.)
Around 2,000.

SUNN
That's all? I know a guy at work
who's got almost 23,000. Mostly
webcam stuff.

There's this one girl he likes
watching and even called in sick
for a week when *she* had the flu.

Sunn changes channels and sinks deeper into the couch.

SUNN

I like your couch.

Ramona enters the room and sits next to Sunn.

RAMONA

Thanks.

(beat)

Why is a girl with the flu so
interesting?

SUNN

I guess she took a lot of hot
baths.

Ramona hands Sunn the drink. Like before, they both stare at
the T.V., entranced by the flickering cathode rays.

ANNOUNCER

(from T.V.)

Stay tuned, Gladiator is next!

INT. ATTIC WARS, BACKSTAGE -- CONTINUOUS

Winston Carr is led by two THUGS (the spitting images of the
marines) down the corridor to a door with a gold star and the
name "PREZ" underneath. In the background muffled music
throbs from the arena.

THUG #1

Wait here.

THUG #2

Or else.

The thugs look at each other, then knock quickly before
darting down the corridor. After a moment, the door opens
slowly.

RYHMES

Yes?

CARR

Uh, I was told to wait here?

Carr's eyes widen with a realization.

CARR

You're-

RYHMES

The president of the United States,
yes, I know.

CARR

But-

RYHMES

Listen, Carr. I don't have much
time. I'm due back at Camp David in
12 hours so I must be going.

(beat)

They tell me you're a friend of
Dienomache's.

CARR

Who?

RYHMES

Julie. She runs the brothel you
must frequent.

CARR

Brothel? I never-

RYHMES

Come on, Carr. Let's not waste time
with denials.

CARR

How-

RYHMES

Step in to my office.

DRESSING ROOM

The room is stainless steel with sparse furniture and clothes hanging from a rolling wardrobe. Carr takes a seat while Nathan sits in front of a makeup mirror and wipes his face.

CARR

I asked how-

RYHMES

I know you go to the brothel?

Carr nods.

RYHMES

Most of the patrons are videotaped. She's got a blackmail scheme going. I saw you on one of the tapes. You were crying. So I chose you.

CARR

Chose? Me?

RYHMES

To be my replacement.

CARR

What?

RYHMES

My time is up, here. I've done what they asked. I can go now and take Barry with me.

CARR

I don't understand.

RYHMES

Pictures, Carr, pictures. You see, the best kept secret in Washington isn't what's under Area 51, but what type of guy I go for.

CARR

Guy.

RYHMES

Yes. I'm gay. A homosexual. Fooled you didn't I. Well, I couldn't fool one guy with a camera. He snapped a photo of me with my lover, blackmail ensued. There was nothing I could do.

CARR

The F.B.I.-

RYHMES

-would only ruin everything. Only three people know of my, preference. If it were to get out, well, most people would accuse me of deception. Of course, what does being queer have to do with being president? Anyway, they said if I didn't come here to fight, they would kill Barry. You see, he had amassed quite a gambling debt. I really had no choice.

CARR

Fight? Why would you do such a thing? *How* could you?

RYHMES

It's all a matter of what we're willing to do for someone we love. You don't get to be president without a fight. I know how to handle myself. Which is where you come in.

CARR

Me.

RYHMES

You will fight in the arena. If you live, they let you go. If not, well-

CARR

This is bullshit. No fucking way.
What do I have to fight for?
They've got nothing on me.

RYHMES

Apparently they do. What could it
be, Carr? Think hard, what could
give you the motivation needed to
survive?

Carr jumps up and tries to run out the door. Ryhmes is too
fast for him and reels him back in, throwing him to the
floor.

RYHMES

I'm sorry, Carr. But I had to pick
someone.

Carr is enraged, seethes with anger but powerless.

CARR

Why me? Of all people. I can't
fight.

RYHMES

On the contrary. When I watched the
video from the brothel, I saw anger
in you, a hatred in your eyes. You
have such potential, Carr. You'll
do well.

Ryhmes stares at himself in the mirror.

RYHMES

I have work to do, work left
unfinished by this little detail.
You've been following my work,
Carr?

CARR

I've seen your state of the union
address.

RYHMES

No, not that. Nevermind. It will
become clear in time.

Ryhmes gathers his things, stuffs them into a duffle bag and
walks to the door.

RYHMES

My office is yours, now. Be
careful. I expect to see you soon.

CARR

Wait.

Ryhmes exits and Carr follows but is stopped by the two
thugs.

THUG #1

Goodbye, Nathan.

THUG#2

Take care, Mr. President.

RYHMES

I will, and take care of Mr. Carr
for me.

THUGS

(unison)
Will do, sir.

RYHMES

(to Carr)
Bye, Winston.

Carr looks up and notices the name on the door has already
been changed to "CARR".

THUG #1

You're on in 5 minutes, Mr. Carr.

THUG #2

Five minutes.

The door closes, locking Carr in.

INT. RAMONA'S APARTMENT, LIVING ROOM

Sunn and Ramona sit on the couch and watch Gladiator on T.V.

ANNOUNCER

(from T.V.)

Before we take you live to the arena, let's go to Betty who's standing by with current Gladiator champion, Andromache.

BETTY

(to camera)

Thanks, Jim. I'm standing next to an icon. A warrior of the highest caliber. I am speaking, of course, of Andromache. The greatest champion this arena has ever seen.

INT. GLADIATOR BACKSTAGE -- NIGHT

Betty continues her interview.

BETTY

Ms. Andromache. You've successfully defended your title 23 times. Acilius was your last triumph. What do you think of the newest challenger?

ANDROMACHE

I'm not sure Betty, since you guys have been keeping it a secret from me and the fans.

BETTY

Well, all I can say is good luck.

ANDROMACHE

Thanks, Betty.

GLADIATOR ARENA

The capacity crowd is going crazy as they await the entrance of the combatants. First to enter is Andromache.

GLADIATOR PRODUCTION BOOTH

The small room is lined with video gear, monitors and mixing boards. At the helm are two engineers with the director, producer and announcer sitting behind them.

DIRECTOR

Go to camera two. I want a close-up of her reaction when she realizes she's first.

PRODUCER

I hope this doesn't backfire.

DIRECTOR

Believe me. After tonight, it won't make a difference. We'll have a new champion. And even if she wins, I still have an option.

ANNOUNCER

The fans love Andromache.

DIRECTOR

They love blood, and it doesn't matter who's it is.

PRODUCER

I really don't think she was asking for that much.

DIRECTOR

She has a contract, and if she wants to change it, she can go fuck herself.

INT. RAMONA'S APARTMENT, LIVING ROOM

Ramona and Sunn are making love on the couch. Ramona is on top of Sunn, slowly moving up and down. Their eyes are closed in the throes of passion.

ANNOUNCER

(from T.V.)

Andromache looks a bit flustered. She clearly thought she would be the last out into the arena.

So far, there's no sign of the challenger. That's got to really piss Andromache off. I do not envy the challenger one bit. Wait a minute. I think he's coming- yes- yes- it's the challenger. And- oh my word, look at him!

Sunn turns his head to look at the T.V., just as Ramona reaches her climax. A deafening CHEER erupts from the crowd.

INT. ATTIC WARS ARENA

The stainless steel door slides open at the end of the corridor to reveal Carr, dressed in his undershirt and pants, no shoes or socks and his hands taped in the style of a boxer's. He shakes badly and doesn't seem to want to step into the corridor.

The buzzer goes off again. To encourage Carr to walk out, the floor of the room is electrified. Sparks jump up as Carr leaps from the room into the corridor.

The door at the opposite end of the corridor has yet to open, and neither have the panels on the sides.

METTALIC VOICE

(in Esperanto)

Mr. Carr. Please direct your attention to the television monitor.

Above Carr's head, a screen comes to life. On it, he watches his wife, tied to a chair. She is gagged and struggles helplessly.

CARR

Susan? Oh, god, Susan.

He wipes sweat from his eyes and looks at the monitor again. This time, Ms. Editrix struggles in chair.

CARR

Dear Lord. Ms. Editrix.

Carr starts to walk back toward the waiting room but the door slides shut just as he gets there. The monitor goes blank.

The panels on the sides lower to reveal the audience. On the opposite side, the rockband Rush stands at the ready.

Another BUZZ goes off as the door at the end of the corridor opens. He sees the shadow of someone pacing in the room.

CARR (V.O.)

Wrestler, no, boxer, no, kung-fu expert. Six-one, 200 pounds, black hair, blue eyes. His daughter was kidnapped, no, his wife, no, his lover, the one he's been cheating with for three years. Just got back from a trip to Greece, maybe Hawaii...

Carr stares in horror as a full-grown, male lion appears in the opposite waiting room.

CARR

Shit.

Carr presses himself up against the door of his own room, trying to disappear into a corner.

The floor of the lion's room is electrified sending the beast into a rage and into the corridor. The door closes behind it.

The lion then sees Carr and starts to growl. Its haunches raise and after a moment, it charges.

Just as it does, Rush slams into the frantic instrumental break of "The Necromancer."

This time, instead of the spectators sitting in their chairs, they spring up and rush to the windows where they bang and howl like maddened fans at a hockey game.

EXT. GLADIATOR ARENA

Andromache looks on as her challenger enters the arena. He is huge (at least 6'8", 300 lbs) and is carrying a massive battle ax. He wears a helmet that covers his face completely.

He charges at Andromache who raises her sword. The challenger's first downward cut shears her sword in half.

INT. ATTIC WARS ARENA

Carr holds up his forearm to fend off a vicious swipe by the lion, only to get it ripped open. Blood flows freely as Carr screams in agony.

INT. GLADIATOR ARENA

Andromache crashes to the ground by the ferocity of the challenger's attack. She barely avoids another downward hack. In one, fluid movement, she rolls to the side, takes a knife from her belt and rams it to the hilt into the challenger's side. He screams but shakes it off, swings his arm, knocks Andromache away.

INT. ATTIC WARS ARENA

The lion, sensing the kill, pauses to lick up the spilled blood. Carr is frantic and begins searching his pockets for a weapon. His hand comes to rest on something in his pants pocket and a look of surprise spreads over his face.

INT. GLADIATOR ARENA

Andromache's mouth is bloodied. She is weaponless and backs away as the challenger stalks her.

ANDROMACHE

Take it easy, big boy. Can't a girl
get a moment to-

The challenger lunges at her, swinging his ax in a vicious arc from left to right. It looks as if the ax will cut Andromache in half at the waist.

INT. ATTIC WARS ARENA

Carr starts to slowly pull his hand out of his pocket when the lion senses something. It reacts and leaps for Carr's throat. Carr closes his eyes and turns his head while extending his arm toward the lion.

INT. GLADIATOR ARENA

Andromache turns toward the streaking ax head and slaps her hands on top and underneath it, catches it in mid-swipe. She throws it up in the air, the challenger's mid section left open with his hands over his head.

Before he can bring the ax down on Andromache's head, she leaps up and grasps his neck in her hands. In one swift motion, she snaps his neck. The SNAP is very loud and the cheering crowd suddenly falls silent.

The challenger stands for a moment, ax over his head, and then falls backward, hitting the ground like a redwood crashing in a forest.

ANDROMACHE

Oh, that's gotta hurt.

The crowd erupts in a deafening roar.

INT. ATTIC WARS ARENA

Carr pulls out a Zippo lighter, ignites it and holds it up as a last desperate attempt to keep the beast from pouncing on him.

The lion pauses. The lighter catches Carr's hand wraps on fire. He starts to wave his hand, trying to put the fire out. He pats the fire with his other hand only to spread the flames to both hands. The smoke and heat set off the fire alarm and sprinklers erupt.

The doors at each end of the corridor open. The lion bolts back to the room it came out of and into the crowd of spectators. It attacks the fleeing people, slashing at will.

Carr crawls out of the corridor and maneuvers through the crowd. He follows the people down a corridor and then sees Ms. Editrix in a room through the crack of a door that was left ajar.

HOLDING CELL

Carr frees the captive Ms. Editrix.

CARR

We've got to get out of here.

MS. EDITRIX
Tiberius?

CARR
You remembered.

MS. EDITRIX
What are you doing here? What's
going on?

CARR
I'm not sure, but we need to leave.

Carr grabs his clothes and they join the fleeing spectators exiting through a side door.

EXT. SAN FRANCISCO STREET -- NIGHT

Carr and Ms. Editrix move swiftly down a side street. Carr hails a cab and puts her in.

CARR
Go home, or wherever you feel safe.
Here's my card. Call me if you need
anything.

MS. EDITRIX
Thank you, Tiberius.

CARR
It's Winston.

Carr knocks on the roof of the cab and it drives away.

Down the street, Nathan Ryhmes slides into a limo.

Carr stops a second cab and instructs the driver to follow Nathan's limo.

INT. RAMONA'S APARTMENT, LIVING ROOM

Sunn is quietly getting dressed while Ramona sleeps on the couch. With shoes in hand he tip-toes to the front door.

RAMONA (O.S.)
I never figured you for a
starfucker.

SUNN
She's a suspect.

RAMONA
Right.

INT. GLADIATOR ARENA

Andromache kneels down and removes the helmet of the challenger. What she sees makes her fall back in fright.

On the massive man's body has been sewn the head of a young boy. Before she can get a better look, attendants sweep in and carry the body away.

GLADIATOR BACKSTAGE

Betty and her cameraman wait for Andromache.

BETTY
Let me know if she's got a head or
an arm or some other body part. I
looked like an amateur last week.

CAMERAMAN
(sotto)
No one watches this shit.

BETTY
Here she comes.

Andromache walks in as attendants take her weapons and armor. She seems in a daze. Betty faces the camera as Andromache arrives.

BETTY
Thanks, Jim. I'm standing with
Gladiator champion Andromache. She
just finished defending her title
for the 24th time against one of
her fiercest enemies.
(to Andromache)
It seemed like he gave you a real
battle. Did you ever think you'd
lose?

Andromache ignores her and walks slowly to her dressing room, Betty and cameraman in tow.

BETTY

Ms. Andromache. Did you hear my question? Ms. Andromache?

GLADIATOR CONTROL BOOTH

The director fumes.

DIRECTOR

(to engineers)
Go to a promo, now!

PRODUCER

Well, what do we do? Give her the new contract?

DIRECTOR

Fuck no. I go to plan B.

PRODUCER

Which is?

DIRECTOR

We get a new Andromache.

ANNOUNCER

You'll never find another like her.

DIRECTOR

What the fuck do you know about anything? I'll have this shit resolved by next week's show, and without a new contract.

PRODUCER

Let's just give her the money.

DIRECTOR

Shut up, Rick and get me a coffee.

DRESSING ROOM

Andromache slumps in her chair while Betty knocks loudly from outside.

BETTY (O.S.)

Ms. Andromache. We really need to do the interview. Tony will shit a brick if we don't. Ms. Andromache?

Andromache walks over to her closet, opens it and falls into the arms of Jon Sunn. She slides down to her knees, wraps her arms around Sunn's waist and begins to sob.

INT. MANNA MARUYAMA'S APARTMENT

Manna is sitting on her couch watching Gladiator. She is dressed in pajamas and eating ice cream.

ANNOUNCER

(from T.V.)

We'll throw it back to Betty in a moment, but first, let's see a replay of tonight's battle with the fight professor, Terrance Patterson. Terrance?

TERRANCE

(from T.V.)

Thanks, Jim. Right here we see Andromache apparently overmatched by the bigger and stronger challenger. But, she uses her superior quickness and a great deal of leverage to finally vanquish her opponent.

INT. LIAM'S APARTMENT

Liam sits on a couch. He makes an ice cup from his vintage Sno-Cone machine and watches the television.

TERRANCE

(from T.V.)

Here, the challenger is overconfident and lets his ax swing too wide when he misses. Andromache literally jumps on this mistake and is able to break his neck in one swift and fatal motion.

How she was able to snap that
beast's spine has me dumbfounded.

ANNOUNCER

Me too, Terrance. Well, the little
voice in my ear tells me Betty is
ready for her post-fight interview
with our champ, so take it away,
Betty.

INT. GLADIATOR BACKSTAGE

Betty and her cameraman stand outside Andromache's dressing
room.

BETTY

Well, Jim, Andromache has yet to
appear. I've never seen her so
flustered before. She seemed upset
after the match and disappeared to
her dressing room immediately. No
word as to why she's locked in. I
can only guess that-

Sunn walks out of the dressing room. He has a big smile on
his face as he addresses Betty.

SUNN

Hi Betty.

BETTY

Uh- hello, sir.

SUNN

I have a statement from Andromache.

BETTY

How is she? Can I speak with her?

INT. MANNA MARUYAMA'S APARTMENT

Manna's jaw is agape as she watches Jon Sunn on T.V. Her ice
cream-filled spoon hovers in front of her mouth.

SUNN

(from television)

She is not available for comment at the moment, but she has asked me to let all her fans know, that she regretfully announces her retirement from Gladiator.

INT. GLADIATOR CONTROL BOOTH

The director is smiling broadly as the announcement is made over the loudspeaker. The crowd in the arena erupts in a roar of disappointment.

DIRECTOR

What did I do to deserve such luck?

PRODUCER

I would love to know the answer to that.

GLADIATOR BACKSTAGE

Andromache's assistant, Cynthia Darling, has arrived. She is ushered into the dark dressing room by Sunn.

BETTY

Who are you, sir?

SUNN

Just a fan.

EXT. TAXI CAB, SAN FRANCISCO -- NIGHT

Carr occupies the backseat. The cab follows the black limo of Nathan Ryhmes.

CABBIE

If they leave the city, you'll have to get another cab, unless you're going to the airport.

CARR

Fine.

EXT. FOLLOWING CAB AND LIMO

Both cars wind their way along the streets of the city before stopping near a concert hall. The limo pulls in through a backstage gate while the cab stops across the street. Carr gets out and makes his way to the gated entrance.

EXT. CONCERT HALL, BACKSTAGE GATE

Several security GUARDS stand near the gate. They usher in people with backstage passes. Carr is stopped as he tries to sneak in with some tech people.

GUARD #1

Hold on, chief. I need to see your pass.

CARR

(searching his coat)
I seem to have misplaced it.

GUARD #1

(rolls his eyes)
Another one. Well, who are you with?

The guard holds up a clipboard, ready to check for Carr's name.

CARR

I'm with- um- Nathan.

The guard stares at him for a moment.

GUARD #1

Really. Hold on.

The guard leaves Carr at the gate to speak with another guard. After a brief conversation, the second guard walks over to Carr.

GUARD #2

You're with Nathan?

CARR

Yes.

GUARD #2

Do you know the password?

CARR

Uh-

(pause)

Attic?

Carr sees a look of recognition in the face of the guard.

GUARD #2

Ok. Just follow that group of people and then up to the VIP room. Enjoy the show.

The guard walks off. Carr follows after the line of people heading backstage.

INT. ANDROMACHE'S GLADIATOR DRESSING ROOM

Jon Sunn steps back inside and helps Andromache collect her things. Cynthia is sitting on the couch, sobbing.

ANDROMACHE

Cynthia. Would you have the rest of my things sent to me?

CYNTHIA

Of course, Ms. Andromache.

ANDROMACHE

I'm really sorry I have to do this.

CYNTHIA

I don't understand. You're so popular.

ANDROMACHE

It's not that. I just feel it's right for me to step down. Go out a champion.

CYNTHIA

But, you're so wonderful out there. The way you fight. It's so- so-wonderful.

SUNN

Cynthia? Is there another way out of here? Some way to bypass the prying eyes.

CYNTHIA

Sure. The last champion had a secret getaway tunnel that leads to the parking garage. Just push on the back of the closet and it will open.

SUNN

Great. Thanks Cynthia. You've been, well- wonderful, too.

Sunn kisses Cynthia on the forehead and she falls asleep.

Andromache leads the way through the secret door just as Betty and her cameraman burst into the room.

SECRET TUNNEL

Sunn and Andromache make their way down the stainless steel corridor. White arrows point toward the parking garage. Sunn notices a doorway halfway down. He stops in front of it.

ANDROMACHE

It must be just a little further, Jon.

SUNN

Where does this go?

ANDROMACHE

I don't know.

SUNN

Aren't you curious?

ANDROMACHE

Not really.

Sunn reaches into his jacket pocket and pulls out a small notepad and a mechanical pencil. He hurriedly writes an address, then tears off the sheet and hands it to Andromache.

SUNN

This is my girl- uh- my friend. You can hang out at her place for a while. I'm sure your apartment is mobbed by paparazzi.

ANDROMACHE

Where are you going?

SUNN

I want to see where this leads.

ANDROMACHE

You're being ridiculous, Jon. Come on.

SUNN

Don't worry. I'll meet you at the apartment. Hurry now.

Andromanche caresses his cheek.

ANDROMACHE

Thank you. You're my angel.

SUNN

Just doing my job. I think I knew all along you couldn't have done it.

ANDROMACHE

Done what?

SUNN

I'll tell you later.

Sunn opens the door and disappears down the dark hallway.

Andromache stares after him.

INT. CONCERT HALL, BACKSTAGE

Carr makes his way through the throng of stagehands, performers and groupies, finally reaching the dressing rooms. He spots Nathan Ryhmes going into a room with the name DeddMann on the door.

He walks up to it and is about to knock when it opens. A hand grabs his arm and pulls him into the dressing room.

INT. SANCTUARY

Sunn exits the tunnel and enters a bedroom. It is decked out in cheesy, '70s futuristic decor straight from the set of Barbarella. In the middle of the room is a small table. On one side, facing Sunn, sits CHARLES MEEK, who doesn't seem surprised by the intrusion. Sunn sits down at the table and both men stare at each other.

MEEK
Hi.

SUNN
Hi.

MEEK
I see you made it.

SUNN
Sure.

MEEK
Would you like something to drink?
I made a batch of zombies.

SUNN
Ok.

Meek continues to stare at Sunn while MARINE #1 enters the room with a serving cart. He pours two glasses and adds straws and cocktail umbrellas. He then wheels the cart back out. Meek and Sunn sip from their drinks.

MEEK
Good?

SUNN
Yes.

MEEK
Good.

SUNN

May I ask you something?

MEEK

Of course.

SUNN

Why are you here?

MEEK

Oh. Now that's a story. Where shall I begin?

SUNN

At the beginning.

MEEK

Of course.

(pause)

Well, as far as I can remember, I was sitting in my living room, very much like I am now, talking to my wife, or at least, I think she was my wife. And then, she introduced someone who I recognized as the mailman and he showed me a black case. He set it down in front of me and opened it.

SUNN

What was inside?

MEEK

Nothing. And yet-

(beat)

everything.

SUNN

A portal?

MEEK

Yes. Maybe.

SUNN

And yet-

MEEK

Blackness. And stars, lots of stars. Beautiful. I was staring into this void and felt myself falling in. First my thoughts, then my head, then my shoulders, then the rest of me. And I was floating- until I fell asleep. When I awoke, I was laying in that bed.

Meek turns his head and points to a single bed in the corner. He turns back and lifts a black case from beneath his chair. He sets it on the table and turns it around to face Sunn.

MEEK

I cannot explain any more. You'll have to go in.

SUNN

I can't. I am expected.

MEEK

This will take you where you want to go.

SUNN

Did you want to come here?

MEEK

I guess so.

Sunn unlocks the clasps and opens the case. He stares in and sees the night sky. He dips his head in and then lets the rest of his body slither inside. The case closes on its own as Meek continues to sip his drink.

INT. CONCERT HALL, DRESSING ROOM

Thomas Weathers (aka Deddmann) and his posse are partying in the large room. Groupies, band members, bodyguards and others are mingling or eating from the buffet. A massive bodyguard drags Carr over to Weathers.

BODYGUARD #1

Mr. Weathers. I found this guy hanging around the door. He doesn't have a pass. Should I hurt him?

WEATEHRS

(to Carr)

How'd you get in?

CARR

I knew the password.

The bodyguard begins straightening Carr's jacket.

BODYGUARD #1

Sorry about that, sir.

WEATHERS

You one of Nathan's boys?

CARR

Sure. We uh- fought in the Attic.

WEATHERS

Really? Oh yeah, I recognize you- from the video. You're the dude with yellow fever.

Weathers and the bodyguard share a chuckle.

CARR

Yellow-

WEATHERS

Yellow fever- means you like Asian girls, just like Tiger's daddy.

CARR

Oh, well- Ms. Editrix is special. It's not really because she's Asian.

WEATHERS

Sure, Tiberius, whatever you say.

A STAGE MANAGER pokes his head into the room.

STAGE MANAGER

Five minutes, Deddmann.

Weathers gets up as two women attend to his clothes and hair.

WEATHERS

Time to do what I do. You can hang here if you want.

CARR

Where's Nathan? I'd like to say hello.

Weathers gives a nod to one of his bodyguards who walks over.

WEATHERS

Take Mr. Carr over to the Roustabout. Make sure he gets there in time.

(to Carr)

I'll see you later.

HALLWAY

The bodyguard nods and leads Carr out of the room. They finally come to the end of a long hall. The bodyguard points to a laundry chute.

CARR

In there?

The bodyguard nods and helps Carr into the chute, feet first. Carr looks back at the bodyguard.

CARR

Will it hurt?

The bodyguard smiles as he places one finger on Carr's forehead and pushes him down the chute.

LAUNDRY CHUTE

Carr slides down the chute finally ending up on a large pile of dirty laundry.

LAUNDRY ROOM

Talkative Chinese women gather around him and help him off the pile. They strip him down and help him put on new clothes. Carr emerges from the crowd of women wearing a pure white suit. The women usher him into an old elevator.

INT. ROUSTABOUT LOUNGE, KITCHEN

The elevator lets Carr out. He finds he is in the kitchen of the Roustabout. French chefs are arguing while an assistant leads Carr out of the kitchen, down several hallways and finally into a large dance club filled with club kids.

DANCEFLOOR

Carr makes his way through the dancing throng, finally making it off the dancefloor. He sees Ms. Editrix sitting at the bar, drinking a margarita and sits next to her.

CARR

Ms. Editrix?

MS. EDITRIX

Hi, Tib- Winston. I just couldn't go home.

CARR

That's ok.

(beat)

I'm sorry if I ever made you, uh, feel bad in any way. I certainly meant no harm. You just seemed, well, to be sympathetic. I took one look at you and knew who you were.

MS. EDITRIX

What do you mean? How could you?

CARR

I have a special talent, you see. For figuring out who people are.

MS. EDITRIX

Really? Then who am I?

CARR

You're of Japanese decent. Parents moved here from Japan, I'd say Kyushu, in the early '80s. You speak Japanese but aren't comfortable with it. Your father was a priest, no, minister and you were raised without T.V. Your mother is a psychologist and you found it difficult to keep anything from them. Your younger brother was a model student and you rebelled against that. At the age of seven you moved to San Francisco and fell in with a tough crowd, though always keeping your grades high so your parents would leave you alone. You were bitten by a black widow, no, a brown recluse spider which is why you always wear long pants to hide the scar. Your past relationships have been mostly abusive and unrewarding. Your current lover seems to only take a passing interest in you, not caring that you work in a brothel. You only do it to try and get his attention. Your English degree has gone to waste and I would imagine you read a lot to escape the problems in your life. You tried drugs, and was briefly addicted to heroin, no, opium that an ex-boyfriend once taught you how to extract from dried poppy bulbs. This led to you getting fired from the magazine you worked for and sent you down the current road you are traveling. Now, you're mixed up in some sort of blackmail plot and you want out, but don't know how.

Ms. Editrix lets a tear roll down her cheek as a bartender slides a note across the bar to her. She picks it up without taking her eyes off Carr. She holds it up to her face and looks at it.

MS. EDITRIX

Nathan wants to see you. He's upstairs.

CARR

Will I see you later?

MS. EDITRIX

Not sure.

(beat)

You'd better hurry.

Carr smiles and then gets up from the bar.

He walks over to a staircase that travels up the side of the club to a bunker of mirrors. He is led through a door and into an office that overlooks the dancefloor.

ROUSTABOUT OFFICE

The mirrors are in fact two-way glass. Nathan is sitting on a couch against the wall. Behind an enormous desk sits EMIL TROTTER, Russian crimeboss. He looks nervous and for good reason. Two secret service agents stand on either side of him. One has a gun to his head, the other has a thin wire garrote wrapped around his neck. Two more agents stand just inside the door.

NATHAN

Mr. Carr. Please sit. I was just about to ask Mr. Trotter here why he blackmailed me.

TROTTER

No, Nathan. I didn't, really. I-

The agent tightens the garrote.

NATHAN

I'm the president of the United fucking States of America. You don't fuck with me, I fuck with you. Now, where are the papers?

TROTTER

What are you talking about?

NATHAN

The papers, pictures. Of me, doing what I do.

TROTTER

Your secret is safe with me, I swear.

NATHAN

Like I said, Trotter. I fuck with you.

As Nathan says "you" the agent slices off Trotter's head with the garrote, picks it up off the desk and places it in a jar filled with formaldehyde. He wraps it up in brown paper and ties it up with twine.

NATHAN

(to Carr)

I have to go now. The American people await my return. I'd appreciate it if you didn't mention this to anyone. I'll make sure you are compensated.

CARR

Compensated?

NATHAN

Sure. For your time, effort, expenses, loss of blood. I'll send you something. You still live at 43 W. 27th Avenue, right?

CARR

Uh, yes.

NATHAN

Great. Well, be seeing you, Carr. And thanks. I knew you'd pull through. And treat her good. She needs someone like you.

Both men stand and shake hands. Nathan salutes Carr, then walks out as the agents put a black overcoat, hat and sunglasses on Nathan.

Carr is finally alone. He sits down, leans back and stares at the large painting on the wall behind the desk. It depicts a naked woman in a sensual embrace with a tiger. The woman is in the same position as the brass lighter he bought at the knicknack store.

He walks over to the painting and runs his hand over it. This triggers a secret compartment in the desk to slide open. Inside sits a manilla envelope.

It is then that he notices the music has stopped thumping. He looks out the two-way glass and sees a force of police officers making their way through the crowd toward the staircase leading to the office.

He looks back at the desk and sees the headless gangster and leaps out of his seat. He grabs the envelope.

INT. FBI BUILDING, SUNN'S OFFICE

Sunn is sleeping on his couch, eyes moving frantically under his closed eyelids.

His eyes snap open and he sits upright, then walks over to his desk and dials a number. He waits as it rings.

INT. ROUSTABOUT LOUNGE, OFFICE

Carr is frantically searching for a way out. He trips over a lamp cord and falls into the couch, moving it from the wall.

He sees a trapdoor in the wall. He opens it and slides down another chute.

The trapdoor closes slowly behind him. The couch rotates back into place on a track.

The phone on Trotter's desk rings.

INT. FBI BUILDING, SUNN'S OFFICE

Sunn slams the phone down and runs out of his office.

HALLWAY

Sunn walks quickly down several hallways finally ending in front of the door marked SANCTUARY. The two marines still stand on either side.

SUNN

I need to go in.

Neither marine moves. They simply stare at Sunn.

SUNN

(agitated)

Really, I need to see him. I want to know where I've been - who I've been.

Sunn reaches for the door. Marine #1 slams on his wrist.

MARINE #1

I'm sorry, sir. As you were informed before, this sanctuary is off limits to unauthorized personnel. Any trespass by such individuals will be prevented by any means necessary, by order of the-

SUNN

(finishing his sentence)
-of the President of the United States. Fine, but he's not here right now. It's just us. No one watching. No harm done.

The marines look at each other and shrug their shoulders. Marine #1 nods his head toward the door.

SUNN

Thank you. You don't know what this means.

Sunn grasps the door handle and turns.

SUNN

It's locked.

Marine #1 puts his hand over the keys.

MARINE #1

I assumed that simply touching the door would ease your obvious sense of anxiety. Prof. Phillip Terster said in his book, *The Nine Ways of Being*, that anxiety, or troubled thoughts through loss, can at times be alleviated by the mere act of contact with the source of the distress.

(beat)

I take it from your current demeanor that your anxiety is not lifted.

MARINE #2

Got'cha.

In the blink of an eye, Sunn disarms the marines and points their .45 pistols at the forehead of each marine.

SUNN

I really need to get in there. And in answer to your query, no, I did not find relief from touching the fucking door handle. Now, unlock it.

Both marines seem unshaken by the turn of events and shake their head.

SUNN

Fine. It doesn't really matter. This is all a dream anyway.

Sunn shoots both men in the head. They slump to the ground, leaving splatters of blood on the wall behind them. Sunn drops the guns then reaches down and picks up the keys. He unlocks the door and enters.

INT. SANCTUARY

Sunn walks into the empty room. No Charles Meek. He sits down at the desk and places his hands on the black attache case.

INT. TUNNEL

Carr drops into a pitch-black tunnel. He sits up and feels his way down to a doorway. He opens it and steps into the room.

INT. SANCTUARY

Carr walks in and sees Sunn sitting at the desk.

SUNN

Hi.

CARR

Hi.

SUNN

I see you made it.

CARR

Sure.

SUNN

Would you like something to drink?
I made a batch of zombies.

CARR

Ok.

They both wait. Stare at each other.

SUNN

Oh that's right. I think we're out
of them.

CARR

S'ok.

SUNN

Have a seat.

Carr sits down across from Sunn. He lays the envelope on the table.

SUNN

What's that?

CARR

I don't know.

SUNN

Let's open it.

Carr opens the envelope and pulls out photos. They show Nathan Rhymes standing at the edge of the Golden Gate Bridge. In one, he smiles and holds a woman's purse for the camera to see. In another, he tosses the purse over the side. In the last one, he gives the camera a thumbs-up.

SUNN

Does this mean anything to you?

CARR

Yes, it does. I understand.

SUNN

Then maybe you should take a look inside.

Sunn slides the case around toward Carr.

Carr opens it. He reaches in and pulls out another envelope. He opens it and dumps the contents out. Photos scatter over the table.

Every photo is an 8X10 publicity headshot of Andromanche. Each is signed:

"To Jon, with love. Sarah XOXO"

SUNN

Shit.

INT. WHITE HOUSE BEDROOM, WASHINGTON D.C.

President Nathan Rhymes wakes up from a nightmare with a SCREAM. He swings his legs over the bed and wipes the sweat from his face. He looks over his shoulder to where the FIRST LADY sleeps soundly.

A SECRET SERVICE AGENT (30, spitting image of Jon Sunn, but crew-cut blonde hair) walks into the bedroom, gun drawn.

AGENT

(whispers)

Are you ok, sir?

NATHAN

I'm fine, just a nightmare.

AGENT

Fine, sir. If you need anything...
anything... let me know.

NATHAN

I will.

AGENT

Goodnight, sir.

NATHAN

Goodnight.

The agent slips out of the room.

BATHROOM

Nathan closes the door behind him and locks it. He flips the seat down on the toilet and sits.

He reaches over to a drawer and pulls out a magazine called "Buff Boys".

He holds the magazine open while his free hand dips into his pajama pants.

NATHAN

Well, hello boys.

A KNOCK disturbs him

FIRST LADY (O.S.)

You ok, honey?

NATHAN

Yes-

(sotto)

-you fat cow.

FIRST LADY (O.S.)

Come back to bed.

Nathan stuffs the magazine back into the drawer in frustration.

BEDROOM

The First Lady holds the sheets back for Nathan. He huffs and puffs but slides in.

FIRST LADY

That's better. Now, take this and you'll be all rested for tomorrow.

She hands him a pill and a glass of water. Nathan swallows it down.

FIRST LADY

There you go. I need you at your best for the conference.

NATHAN

Right, the conference.

The pill works fast and Nathan's eyes droop. He lays back and closes his eyes.

INT. FBI BUILDING HALLWAY

Carpenters use bricks and mortar to wall up the door to Sanctuary. They ignore the frantic knocking and screaming from inside.

FADE OUT.

THE END.

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